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DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.33091.76322

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# Philippines - Media Landscape

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## Overview

The Philippine media landscape is full of contradictions. On one hand, it joins the global trend of technological disruptions ushering changes in the media economy, profession, and consumption. On the other hand, persistent socio-economic inequalities and the urban/rural gap limit the potential of these disruptions, thus maintaining the supremacy of traditional media (except newspapers) as source of information especially in the countryside.

According to the Media Ownership Monitor (2017), Philippines is "not a nation of newspaper readers" and print media (newspapers and magazines) is "losing its relevance" as a source of information as it lags behind television, radio, and even the Internet by rate of exposure. The national and major regional newspapers have already invested in online presence, as more and more Filipinos get their news and other content from digital media. However, community and regional press have seen growth in the past few decades and in many rural areas, community press banks on its reputation, the collective participatory interest of its audience and its perceived role in social cohesion.

Community press and radio continue to be preferred means of communication even for armed groups. Radio, in particular, is still seen as the most pervasive media, reaching even the remotest areas.

The country is labeled the "social media capital of the world" given the rate of social media usage (Pablo, 2018; Mateo, 2018) and belongs to the top 20 countries with highest Internet penetration rate (Internet World Stats, 2018). However, the telecommunications infrastructure of the Philippines remains underdeveloped in most areas, as the number of cell towers is far less than that of its neighboring countries. Internet speed is slower than in the other countries in Asia-Pacific and is even below the global average (Akamai Technologies, 2017) and mobile signal, even the older generation 2G connectivity, is unavailable in many rural areas.

The mobile phone and telecommunications market reflects some truths in Philippine demographics: The market is dominated by ultra-low-end smartphones which have a strong presence in the provinces. The "emerging affluent" are the heaviest users of mobile applications for an expanding array of services such as transportation and shopping (Visa, 2016).

The preference for much cheaper smartphones in the countryside could be an effect of poor (if not absent) 3G and 4G connectivity outside the cities – hence, mobile activity is limited to 2G-based activity, which does not require more expensive handsets – and heightened poverty levels. However, this assumed causality has yet to be tested by empirical research.

Duopolies are well entrenched in the television and telecommunications industry and the country has no strong measures to ensure fair competition (a law been enacted in 2015, but its implementation is an entirely different matter). The media market is private-sector led, and so is research and development, which suffers from poor state funding when compared with other

countries in Asia. Although technology-enabled companies are the most active agents in the innovation landscape, the attempts to bridge the digital divide by introducing innovation to the grassroots level are still largely a government affair.

The wave of digitalisation definitely offered people, at least in the urban Philippines, new opportunities, but the Internet has also become a "weapon" for politically motivated groups and individuals. Studies have documented the rise of systematised misinformation campaigns, with various components including deployment of "troll armies" to sabotage online discourse and proliferation of fake news (Bradshaw and Howard, 2017; Ong and Cabañes, 2016). The architects and operators of these campaigns were found to work for political parties and politicians, one of which is in fact the political party of the incumbent president (Bradshaw and Howard, 2017). This has largely contributed to social media networks, particularly Facebook and Twitter, being venues for online harassment and hostile exchange.

Although the Philippine media system has been described as one of the "freest" and "most outspoken" in Asia (Johnson, 2018. *Freedom for Media, Freedom for All Network*) given the respective constitutional guarantees and laws that seek to protect the freedom of speech, and enjoys greater independence when compared to some of neighboring countries, it is far from a rosy picture. President Rodrigo Duterte has for several times warned or lambasted mainstream media for publishing critical reports (see for example Ranada, 2017), while many pro-administration online influencers have described the media as "biased" against the government and mere obstacles in national development. Social media is also teeming with posts trying to delegitimise mainstream media and alternative media as sources of information. Especially among the mainstream media, there are cases in which commercial interests take precedence as evidenced by reporting slant. Some state functionaries and pro-state online influencers were quick to use this as a justification for vilifying the media as source.

Although the Constitution and relevant laws emphasise freedom of speech, in reality the country's media landscape has sometimes been dominated by a "culture of impunity", especially after the 2009 Ampatuan Massacre (single deadliest event involving journalists in the world). The majority of journalist killings remain unresolved and 12 journalists were killed in the first two years of the current administration (International Federation of Journalists, 2019).

With the multitude of sources and deluge of data, coupled with delegitimation efforts discussed above, mainstream media in the Philippines are struggling for audience engagement. The political and commercial pressures created numerous instances of compromise, as in the case of some journalists reporting that in their respective newsrooms, there is a command to tone down articles critical of the administration (Estella, 2018).

In the face of commercial and political imperatives, many outlets continue to implement business schemes that in some cases include rationalisation of labour. For starting journalists (and community journalists), "low wages" tend to be the most important problem, but those in the higher positions tend to see lagging professionalism as the main dilemma (Tandoc and Skoric, 2010). Indeed, professionalism in Filipino journalism is also a function of working conditions and overall media economy, as wages and working conditions can also be predictors of unethical practice or media corruption.

The pathways to a journalism career are diverse. Many of the professionals are graduates in journalism, communication, liberal arts, or even remotely-related fields. There has been a massive growth in the number of institutions offering journalism or mass communication programmes since the 1970s. Journalism conferences and competitions are held from the district to the national level and a special program for journalism is now being offered as a specialisation strand in senior high school. However, there is no current empirical data evaluating the state of journalism education in the country, which operates largely in an industry-centered perspective: The learning emphasis is on reproducing the standards of the industry (ie educators train students according to the norms of the industry). This observation goes hand-in-hand with the fact that journalism studies or research are not robust fields of study in the Philippines. Although practitioners see nothing wrong with this learning emphasis, such a perspective can be hostile to innovation and even critical thinking and can prevent the academy from

functioning as a critic of the industry.

# Media

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## Print

Mainstream print media in the Philippines, as in other parts of the world, is challenged by declining readership and finds itself hybridising by investing into online and mobile platforms. Based on the latest available data on media consumption, barely one in 10 Filipinos read newspapers everyday as of 2013 (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2013). About 28 percent read a newspaper once a week. The figure for magazine readership is only slightly higher. Print media lags behind television, radio, and Internet (particularly social media) when it comes to people's "exposure" level (the respondent is considered "exposed" to a medium if he or she accessed it every day or at least once a week or seldom in the last 12 months preceding the survey). Given this data, in 2017 the Media Ownership Monitor (MOM) concluded that "newspapers [are losing] their relevance as a source of information."

Philippines' newspapers come in broadsheet and tabloid formats, with the latter significantly outnumbering the former in terms of number and copies sold. There are roughly 40 national dailies (both broadsheets and tabloids), around 60 regional and community newspapers, and 14 newspapers in foreign languages other than English (mostly Chinese). According to a survey conducted by Nielsen in 2017, the list of top 10 most read newspapers is dominated by tabloids, which could be because tabloids are smaller, hence more convenient, and cheaper, and because most of these are in the native language. Only three broadsheets made it in the list. It should be noted that several broadsheets also have tabloid counterparts, such as broadsheet *The Philippine Star* and tabloid daily *Pilipino Star Ngayon*.

The content of Philippine tabloids is marked by an emphasis on crime, sex, and entertainment stories (Tandoc and Skoric, 2010), and the broadsheet content by its focus on politics and governance. The dominance of tabloids in newspaper circulation and readership provides a glimpse on the demographics of Filipino newspaper readers, most of which, based on general tabloid content, seem to prefer sensationalised content, mostly the bizarre and appalling (such as heinous crime and "show business" or "showbiz" stories). However, this assumption has yet to be tested by empirical research. Interestingly, the trend of putting up active websites among broadsheets does not appear to be as pervasive for tabloids (most of the tabloids with erotic content do not have a website).

When it comes to ownership, the four biggest newspaper companies have a readership of 21.5 percent of the sample, with each company having a readership of roughly five percent each, as noted by MOM in 2017. Hence, according to MOM, there is "not much concentration" in the print market. However, there have been criticisms on the precedence of commercial and political imperatives over public service among Philippine newspapers.

There is not much data on the circulation or readership of regional and community newspapers, which are mostly published in local languages (there are about 170 languages and dialects in the country). Interestingly, however, there is a growth in community newspapering in terms of numbers (Opiniano, Arcalas, Mallari, and Tuazon, 2015). Community newspapers and chains continue to thrive as some expand their reach, such as the *Mindanao Gold Star Daily*, which now publishes in 24 provinces. New community newspapers are emerging as *Metro* Manila-based dailies buy majority shares of existing community newspapers or establish new ones.

According to a study by Opiniano et al (2015), the primary source of revenue for the community press remains to be community-level advertising, but "the amount of revenues then depends on the level of economic growth in local communities, the presence of local enterprises and the aggressiveness of community newspapers' advertising and marketing personnel to reach a part of the market" (p 33). Hence, the community press in the richest regions is more "fortunate" in terms of local advertising as a revenue source (p 33), while those in other communities bank more on "community-level participatory interest" (p 31), longevity, and standing as source of information. As the Internet penetration rate continues to lag in countryside and impoverished communities, the community newspapers in these areas have yet to explore the possibilities of using the Internet in newswork and content distribution.

Several authors, meanwhile, noted the persistence of media corruption and poor reportage as an outcome of economic conditions among the community press (Chua, 2013; Opiniano, 2015; Tuazon, 2013). Although Philippine law actually grants journalists great freedom, the culture of impunity also threatens the community press, as the Philippines sits as one of the most dangerous countries for journalists (Reuters, 2014) and in the bottom third of the World Press Freedom Index (2018). There are documented cases of journalist harassment and even killings among print newsmakers, particularly those functioning in regional or community outlets. This is despite the fact that the Philippines is considered as a partly free media system (with journalism having a largely watchdog orientation) as opposed to its neighbors in Southeast Asia.

Print press has also been used by armed groups as a way to communicate with various audiences. The Communist Party of the Philippines, for example, publishes *Ang Bayan* in limited copies to disseminate content in different parts of the country. There is no secondary data on the circulation and audience of such newspapers.

## Radio

Radio continues to be a significant source of information for Filipinos, being the second most used media based on the most recent data publicly available (see Philippine Statistics Authority, 2013). About 41.4 percent of the population listens to radio at least once a week.

Moreover, radio reaches even the "remotest" areas, as noted by MOM (2017). According to the National Commission on Culture and Arts (cited by Communicating with Disaster-Affected Communities Network, 2012), radio reaches 85 percent of Philippine households (p 13).

The CIA World Factbook (2015) pegs the number of radio stations in the country at about 1,200 as of 2015. However, citing 2016 data from the National Telecommunications Commission, the MOM puts the number at about 1,500 (416 AM stations and 1,042 FM stations). Filipinos listen mainly to FM stations; the MOM noted that Filipinos listen to FM primarily for music 90 percent of the time. The AM stations, on the other hand, put emphasis on news and public affairs and public services.

Audience shares are heavily concentrated: Four stations (*DZMM Radyo Patrol*, *DZBB 594 Super Radyo*, *Radyo ng Bayan* and *DZRH*) have a combined audience share of about 84 percent, according to data from a Nielsen survey of 2016 (cited by MOM, 2017). More than 90 percent of the stations are privately owned and commercial (Communicating with Disaster-Affected Communities Network, 2012, p 24), although the government-owned station, *DZRB 738*, ranks second in terms of audience share.

In terms of ownership, seven broadcasting groups dominate the market (Communicating with Disaster-Affected Communities Network, 2012, p 24), and most of these, such as ABS-CBN and GMA, have television networks as well. Some radio programmes have television "spin-offs" or also aired-in television programmes simultaneous with the broadcast. A coordination in content production or appropriation of content in these two platforms can be observed quite often.

Because radio is described as the most "pervasive" media (MOM, 2017), it is not surprising that hundreds of regional and community radio stations operate in the country. Not much empirical data is publicly available when it comes to professional practices and consumption habits for community radio, but advertisers see radio, particularly local outlets, as the most effective means of reaching consumers (Rosales, 2006, p 149).

Community radio is also seen as a venue for educational programmes especially those under government agencies, such as those discussing nutrition and other grassroots issues. At the same time, some ethnic minority groups, as well as non-state armed groups, use radio as a logistic tool to support their face-to-face organising and activities. The Cordillera Peoples Alliance, for instance, occasionally runs radio programmes to boost cultural activism (Soriano, 2016, p 355). Radio journalists, more than print journalists, "bear the brunt of violence against media workers" in the Philippines (Rosales, 2006, p 148). Rosales (2006) attributed this to interweaving factors such as a "a post-Marcos legacy of all-powerful and well-entrenched military and politicians", who are often not punished despite misdemeanors. Other factors include a "weak judicial system", the "lack of professionalism among newsmakers" (see also Shafer, 1990; Tiglao, 1991) and a "lack of aid and protection for journalists from the station owners, who comprise a small, powerful oligarchy in the Philippines" (p 148).

## Television

Television is the most used and trusted media in the Philippines, according to the most recent publicly available data (see Philippine Statistics Authority, 2013). Around 81 percent of the population watch television, of which 71.6 percent at least once a week. In a Nielsen survey in 2016 (cited by MOM, 2017), television is the most trusted source of political information (58 percent of the sample). Cable/satellite technologies offer subscriptions to Filipinos based in other parts of the globe, although cable/satellite subscriptions are limited to only 12 percent of urban Philippines (MOM, 2017).

There are more than 400 television stations nationwide as of 2016, 23 of which are in Metro Manila. The television market is highly concentrated and is in essence a duopoly – the two biggest conglomerates, ABS CBN and GMA, have an audience share of about 81 percent (MOM, 2017). Constantly "engaged in a vicious ratings war", the biggest networks such as ABS CBN and GMA are among the most influential opinion shapers (Communicating with Disaster-Affected Communities Network, 2012, p 142). These conglomerates also operate regional stations or relay their programmes to independent regional stations.

These conglomerates, being almost unchallenged for the most part, reported massive net profits. For instance, in 2011, ABS CBN reported a net profit of US\$56m while GMA reported US\$40m (Communicating with Disaster-Affected Communities Network, 2012). However, in 2018, ABS CBN reported a 41 percent decrease in profits while GMA reported a 21 percent decrease, mostly attributed to a drop in advertising revenue (Camus, 2018).

The government-owned *People's Television Network*, on the other hand, has a significantly lower audience share than that of its private competitors. All television franchises, however, must be approved by the government, particularly the House of Representatives (lawmakers), and then regulated by the National Telecommunications Commission (also a government agency). Some churches or religious organisations also purchased television stations or launched their own.

Regular programming on weekdays is largely the same across the stations. The day begins with early morning news programmes, followed by a variety of lifestyle or home-making shows or cartoons for a younger audience. The lunchtime entertainment shows command significant audience attention and are consistently at the top of survey ratings. Most of the late afternoon slots are given to soap operas, followed by the evening newscast. After the evening news programmes, the primetime is usually used for screening of soap operas or reality television shows.

The critique on mainstream television lies mainly on the tendencies stemming from its commercial nature, an example of which is the massive amount of air time allotted to advertising, or the news emphasis on what sells.

## Digital Media

When we talk about digital media in the Philippines, we refer largely to Internet communication platforms. As of 2018, 67 million out of 104 million Filipinos (63 percent) use the Internet – a staggering 3,350 percent increase from year 2000s' figures, based on the data from Internet World Stats (2018), which combined the figures published by Facebook, International Telecommunications Union, and other sources. With these figures, the Philippines is ranked 12<sup>th</sup> worldwide in terms of number of Internet users, this despite having the slowest average Internet speed in Asia-Pacific as of 2017 (Akamai Technologies, 2017). Filipinos are also at the top spot worldwide when it comes to the amount of time spent on Internet: An average 10 hours and two minutes every day (We Are Social and Hootsuite, 2019, cited by Lamb, 2019).

Despite the convergence of technologies and the Internet coming of age especially in the urban Philippines, Internet penetration, literacy, and speed remain hindered by poor infrastructure particularly in the countryside (Pablo, 2018).

The younger population uses the Internet most often. The highest amount of Internet usage was observed among Filipinos in the 18 to 24 age bracket (81 percent), followed by the 25 to 34 bracket (65 percent), based on a 2018 survey by the Social Weather Stations (Flores, 2018).

Filipinos use the Internet primarily for social media (47 percent of the sample population in the survey conducted by On Device Research in 2014), followed by online shopping (29 percent). Other "priorities" in using the Internet include watching videos online (19 percent), playing online and mobile games (15 percent), and location search (13 percent). Philippines is also "the fastest growing app market" in Southeast Asia, as more and more Filipinos are availing of services (e-commerce, for instance) through their smartphones (Garcia, 2016).

The Philippine youth expect that the networked technologies that will have the greatest impact in their lives in the future include the "Internet of Things (IoT), virtual/mixed/augmented reality (VR/MR/AR), and next-generation computing experiences" (Microsoft Philippines, 2017). This is based on a survey with a sample of the younger population in Asia-Pacific. The IoT, ranked as the top technology projected to have the biggest impact on people's lives, now exist in the form of "confluence of power devices, cloud and data" (Microsoft Philippines, 2017). However, six out of 10 Filipino respondents in the sample felt that the country is "not ready to adapt to digital disruptions."

Print and broadcast media have long invested in online presence to expand reach given the pervasiveness of the Internet in the Philippines. Newspapers like *The Philippine Daily Inquirer* and broadcast networks like GMA put up their respective news websites, which either reprint stories or videos published in print or shown in television programmes (or appropriate content into the online format) or publish entirely new stories in real time. One firm, *Rappler.com*, is a purely online news outlet.

Like traditional media, news websites make revenues largely from advertisements, and advertising revenue is a function of reach and audience engagement. Hence, news firms re-post content in social media (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram), which as the above-mentioned data suggests, is where many Filipinos discuss or communicate with their networks.

The Internet coming of age also provided cause-oriented groups and individuals with a cheaper if not entirely free platform in which they can disseminate information to an increasing number of netizens. Even armed groups are using social media networks and websites to reach more audiences, as in the case of the websites of the Communist Party of the Philippines and of the Moro International Liberation Front and on their Facebook, Youtube and Twitter accounts.



Alternative or non-mainstream media found the Internet as a cheap platform for their content, which compensates for their meagre resources when compared with those of mainstream media. *Pinoy Weekly* and *Bulalat.com*, for example, publish most of their stories online, and these stories were mostly guided by news values different from those that guide mainstream news. However, alternative media outlets, which have a long history of reporting on government transgressions, recently reported cyber attacks, especially in January 2019. *Bulatlat.com*, for example, was inaccessible for a period of time because of a "Distributed Denial of Service" or DDoS attack, with the "attackers using 1,100 compromised computers to flood the website with requests" (Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility, 2019).

More and more Filipinos, like in other parts of the world, access the Internet through smartphones. The number of smartphone users in the Philippines are expected to more than double from about 40 million in 2016 to 90 million by 2021, according to the 2016 Ericsson Mobility Report (Jiao, 2016). To put these figures into perspective, one has to consider that the Philippine population is expected to reach about 109 million by the end of 2019 (Philippine Commission on Population, 2018, cited by Cepeda, 2018).

About 87 percent of Filipino adults use mobile phones, according to a 2018 report by advertising agency We Are Social and social media management platform company Hootsuite. In terms of mobile activity, the most common is using a mobile messenger (33 percent), followed by watching videos (26 percent) and playing games (23 percent).

The mobile Internet penetration rate was said to be increasing by 30 million users every year (Garcia, 2016), despite the dismally poor mobile Internet speeds. In the "State of the LTE report" published by mobile network research firm OpenSignal, the speed and availability of the long-term evolution or LTE mobile connection in the country fared so poorly that it ranked 74<sup>th</sup> out of 77 countries (Marcelo, 2018).

## Social Networks

For three consecutive years since 2015, Philippines has been at the top spot worldwide in terms of the amount of time people spend on social media, based on the report published by advertising agency We Are Social and social media management platform company Hootsuite in 2018. Filipinos spend an average of three hours and 57 minutes on social media in any device every day, hence the label "social media capital of the world" (Pablo, 2018; Mateo, 2018).

According to the same study, the Philippines has 67 million active social media users. This figure bears more significance if contextualised – the total population as of 2018 is roughly 104 million. About 62 million access social media through their smartphones. These figures are higher than the numbers in some highly developed countries like Japan and South Korea (House of IT, 2018).

Facebook is the most widely used platform – 94 percent of Internet users use the network, 40 percent higher than the US figure (We Are Social and Hootsuite, 2018, House of IT, 2018). It is also the "most active" platform, with 26 percent of the surveyed sample reporting that they use Facebook actively (We are Social and Hootsuite, 2018). This is followed by Facebook Messenger at 23 percent, Twitter at 13 percent, and Instagram at 12 percent.

Social media is also used somewhat extensively in e-commerce as 29 percent of the Internet-using population search and purchase products through social media (We Are Social and Hootsuite, 2018). Commercial firms maintain at least one social media account as a way of promoting products or services and getting in touch with the market.

Many government agencies and public figures, as well as private enterprises, have social media accounts to disseminate information and discuss with their followers. Advocacy groups and even armed groups are managing social media accounts

to communicate their cause and establish a wider audience base. The Moro International Liberation Front and the Communist Party of the Philippines, for example, are publishing some campaign materials and other related content in their Facebook accounts. This happens regardless of the fact that Philippines lags behind its neighbors in Southeast Asia when it comes to Internet speed and cost (Pablo, 2018).

Some researchers observed how social media, particularly Facebook, is used for "collective coping" among disaster-stricken communities, as in the case of Typhoon Haiyan survivors in the Philippines (Tandoc & Takahashi, 2016, p 1). Through interviews with representatives of different sectors (government, local journalists, and residents), the authors found that social media: 1) became a "platform for survivors to tell their friends and family they survived", 2) became the "means for residents to participate in the social construction of their experience", and 3) a way for survivors to "manage their feelings and memories by documenting and memorialising what they experienced" (p 1).

There is no publicly available recent data on how Filipinos use social media networks as their source of news and how they are able distinguish between factual and false information. However, there is a research report on how social media has become "weaponised" in this setting (Ong and Cabañes, 2016, p 1), as groups and individuals were found to be implementing massive disinformation and discourse-hijacking campaigns for political agenda (p 5). In this study, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews and online observation with operators of fake Facebook and Twitter accounts and the strategists who manage them. The researchers found that click farms, fake news, and troll armies were used systematically by players across the political spectrum to sow disinformation in social media. In another report, the political party of the incumbent president Rodrigo Duterte, Partido Demokratiko Pilipino Lakas ng Bayan or PDP Laban, was found to be hiring fake account operators especially during the campaign period (Bradshaw and Howard, 2017, p 17).

The researchers noted that "disinformation production is a professionalised enterprise: hierarchical in its organisation, strategic in its outlook and expertise, and exploitative in its morality and ethics" (Ong and Cabanes, 2018). They added that there is a system "has not only normalised political deception, but made it financially rewarding – especially for people at the top."

This systematic campaign to sow disinformation and delegitimize non-state sources of information – "cyber-attack (and) online harassment/trolling" – is perceived by Filipino journalists as the "second worst threat" in the current practice, according to a 2018 survey done by the International Federation of Journalists and Southeast Asia Journalists Unions (International Federation of Journalists, 2019).

The social media scene in the Philippines has also become space for gender-based violence (offensive language, online harassment, among others). In fact, "cybercrimes against women" is among the top three complaints received by the Anti-Cybercrime Group of the Philippine National Police (Occeñola, 2018).

## **Opinion Makers**

The idea of opinion makers in the Philippines can be broken into three types: first, the influencers in social media, second, the oft-discussed or oft-cited public figures in mainstream media and third, media personalities who provide insights in established broadcast programmes (such as news anchors). The second and third also manage their respective accounts or pages in social media.

The social media accounts with the most number of followers in the Philippines are those of celebrities. For instance, actors like Anne Curtis, Vice Ganda, and Angel Locsin each have more than 10 million followers in Twitter. In Facebook, actors like Marian Rivera and Angel Locsin have about 15 million likes on the pages. The number of followers on these celebrity pages easily dwarf those on the pages of public officials.

Media conglomerates and service providers like ABS-CBN and GMA also rank high in the list of accounts with followers numbering to at least 13 million (but these fall under the category of "professional news media outlets").

There are also bloggers who publish political content and who have a significant number of followers. For example, the controversial Facebook account of Margaux "Mocha" Uson, former assistant secretary in the Presidential Communications Group (appointed by Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte), has more than five million likes. If all these likes on her Facebook page are authentic, then she has a greater reach than the pages of many professional news media outlets. However, Uson was repeatedly accused of peddling fake news through her Facebook page (Hapal and Magsambol, 2017) and was even summoned in a Senate hearing on proliferation of fake news.

Filipino Internet users also follow influencers according to their respective interests. For instance, a certain Anne Clutz, a Filipino vlogger with about a million subscribers on YouTube, posts makeup tutorial videos and product reviews. James Deakin, now a television host at CNN Philippines, is also a YouTube vlogger with a following among car enthusiasts and vehicle users.

There is no up-to-date empirical data on the visibility and framing of public personalities (eg President Rodrigo Duterte) in mainstream media. However, in a survey with a sample of journalists in 2018, a significant number of respondents reported that there is an effort to tone down articles critical of the Duterte regime or to "avoid antagonising" the administration (Estella, 2018).

## Sources

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#### Television

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- [IBC 13](#)
- [INC TV](#)
- [Net25](#)
- [People's Television Network](#)

- [TV5](#)
- [UNTV News and Rescue](#)

#### Digital media

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- [Bulatlat](#)
- [Entrepreneur Philippines](#)
- [Kami](#)
- [MindaNews](#)
- [PEP](#)
- [Philippine News Agency](#)
- [PhilOnline](#)
- [Rappler](#)
- [Spin.ph](#)
- [YugaTech](#)

#### Opinion Makers

- Celebrities (such as [Angel Locsin](#), [Vice Ganda](#), [Marian Rivera](#))
- Interest-based bloggers/vloggers (such as [James Deakin](#) for car enthusiasts, [Anne Clutz](#) for makeup enthusiasts)
- Media networks (such as [GMA](#), [ABS-CBN](#))
- Political bloggers (such as [Mocha Uson](#), [Pinoy Ako Blog](#), [Thinking Pinoy](#))

## Organisations

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### Trade Unions

With a constitutionally guaranteed right to assemble and "petition the government to redress grievances", the Philippines has some 600 registered national trade unions, industrial federations, and plant-level unions (International Labour Organisation, 2016). Examples of these are *Kilusang Mayo Uno* (May First Labor Movement - KLU), *Sentro ng mga Nagkakaisa at Progresibong Manggagawa* (Center of United and Progressive Workers - SENTRO) and the *Katipunan ng Manggagawang Pilipino* (Trade Union Congress of the Philippines - KMP/TUCP). These registered unions, however, represent less than 10 percent of the total 38.8 million workers (International Labour Organisation, 2016).

For Camilon (2018), trade unions "perform a critical role in the democratisation of wealth" in a society by "securing good collective bargaining agreements with company owners and by shaping pro-labor government policies." However, he noted that "union density" has drastically declined. Based on the data from the Philippine Department of Labor and Employment, the number of wage and salary workers organized into unions dropped from 20.2 percent in 2003 to about eight percent in 2014 (Camilon, 2018).

Given the reported labor flexibilisation and contractualisation schemes in Philippine media firms (National Union of Journalists of the Philippines, 2018, cited by Cabico, 2018), the rise of clamorous media worker unions is something that can be

expected. However, union organising among media workers appears to be not as robust as it is in other industries or sectors, despite the recent layoffs in some firms like CNN Philippines and TV5 (labeled with the euphemism of "right-sizing"). Since 2010, very few media union campaigns have managed to command significant attention (that is, have made it to the headlines, which is not surprising given that such reportage would be against the networks' interests). Notable examples include the 2010 struggle of ABS CBN Internal Job Market Union for security of tenure and the recent victory of Talent Association of GMA Network in its campaign for regularisation (TAG, however, is not a registered labor union). In both cases, the Philippine Court of Appeals decided in favor of the workers' case.

Union organising in media and telecommunications appears to follow the general trend of union organising across industries: a "steep decline" due to the "continuous assault on the fundamental rights of workers, particularly to security of tenure, and the existing barriers that keep workers from fully exercising their rights to self-organisation and collective bargaining" (Camilon, 2018). In many companies, for instance, workers who are not yet "regularised" (labeled as "under probation" or "contractual") cannot join unions for fear of losing their already "uncertain" jobs. In general, only regular employees can be *bona fide* union members, and this observation is true for media workers unions.

## Journalist Associations

The Philippines has a handful of organisations and trade unions for journalists or media workers, but few with a strong national presence. Some associations have individual journalists as members, as in the case of the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP), National Press Club of the Philippines (NPC) and Economic Journalists Association of the Philippines (EJAP). Some have outlets or firms as members, such as the Philippine Press Institute (PPI), an association of newspapers and also one of the oldest professional media organisations, *Kapisanan ng Brodkaster ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas* (Association of Philippine Broadcasters - KBP), and College Editors Guild of the Philippines (CEGP) for college publications.

Some of these associations campaign actively for media freedom and decent working conditions for journalists. They also release statements and conduct activities condemning what they described as "culture of impunity" in the country, a condition that enables journalist harassment (online and offline) and even killings. The NUJP, for instance, recently published several press releases on the recent arrest of a prominent journalist, Maria Ressa, head of news outlet *Rappler*, which published stories critical of the current administration. The NUJP slammed the arrest as "a move of a bully government" (2019).

The CEGP, meanwhile, participates in campaigns aside from those that primarily concern the media. These include human rights campaigns particularly in light of the at least 5,000 deaths in police anti-drug operations (Ellis-Petersen, 2018; Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency, 2018, cited by Tomacruz, 2018; Rappler, 2018) since 2016. The number does not include the vigilante killings that occurred in the same period. The CEGP, the oldest alliance of student publications in the country with hundreds of member publications, also publish press releases and other materials containing its stand in issues such as poor labor conditions and what it deems as flawed government policies.

Other associations adopt a monitorial and regulatory rather than an advocate role, as in the case of KBP. The KBP, with 121 member broadcast stations and corporations, established its "own system of self-regulation and standards for radio and television stations in the country" (2016).

## News Agencies

The official newswire service of the Philippine government is the Philippine News Agency (PNA), which is under the supervision of the Presidential Communications Office. The PNA was established in 1973 under the regime of dictator

Ferdinand Marcos as a means to "control all sources of information" (Inquirer Research, 2018). It has been tapped mostly for coverage of presidential activities and world events in the Philippines, such as the conferences of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation. It also has a "long-standing working relationship" with the news agencies of ASEAN member states and the Asianet, an Australia-based consortium of newswire agencies. (Philippine News Agency, 2017). In its website, the PNA declared that it is now trying to modernize its operations through additional funding to purchase equipment that it used to lack, such as new laptops, desktops and fiber connection.

News firms in the country also source some of their stories from global newswire agencies, largely from Associated Press (AP), Reuters, and Agence France-Presse (AFP). These stories are mostly about foreign affairs, which is not surprising given that news organisations are rationalising resources and cannot (or opt not to) send correspondents abroad.

## **Audience measurement organisations**

Perhaps the most prominent audience measurement organisations in the Philippines are the marketing research firms that the television networks often cite when reporting their ratings. For television networks, the most oft-cited audience measurement firms are Kantar Media and AGB Nielsen Media Research Philippines. Kantar Media, a multinational research group present in more than 80 countries, also provides custom audience research for radio and digital media.

As of 2013, AGB Nielsen uses a panel size of 1,980 households based in urban areas, which represent about 60 percent of the total television-viewing population (Dumlao, 2013). Kantar Media, on the other hand, uses a nationwide panel size of 3,500 urban and rural homes, reportedly representing 100 percent of the total viewing population (Makabenta, 2017).

The two broadcast giants, ABS-CBN and GMA, each claim ratings lead whenever these audience measurement firms release their findings. However, in 2007, ABS-CBN filed a civil case against AGB Nielsen over alleged tampering of ratings in one area. Through its AM station DZMM, ABS-CBN reported that according to AGB Nielsen, GMA was behind the fixing of data, to which GMA responded with a libel case for PhP15m (more or less US\$780m) (Makabenta, 2017). In 2008, the court dismissed the case of ABS-CBN.

Audience measurement for digital media is largely conducted by international companies or organisations. Nielsen, the parent company of AGB Nielsen, launched its Digital Ad Ratings service in the Philippines in 2015. Another example would be Comscore or NASDAQ-SCOR, which introduced Mobile Metrix® in the country in 2016 "for the reporting of mobile web and app audiences on smartphones and tablets" (Comscore, 2016). In 2017, the Philippine Digital Measurement Board, comprised of representatives from advertising, research, and global platforms like Google, launched the Digital Measurement Standard (DMS), a unified, "industry-wide measurement standard that puts clarity and direction on how to evaluate digital marketing and advertising performance" (Llamas, 2017). The DMS, which is the first of its kind in the country, aims to cover a broad range of digital experiences and platforms.

In the case of print media, there are still no institutions or research firms that authenticate the circulation rates of newspapers and magazines.

## **Sources**

### Trade Unions

- [Center of United and Progressive Workers](#)
- [Computer Professionals Union](#)
- [Federation of Free Workers](#)

- [Geodetics Engineers of the Philippines](#)
- [Geological Society of the Philippines](#)
- [Institute of Electronics Engineers of the Philippines](#)
- [Institute of Integrated Electrical Engineers](#)
- [Integrated Bar of the Philippines](#)
- [Integrated Midwives Association of the Philippines](#)
- [Occupational Therapy Association of the Philippines](#)
- [Pharmaceutical Association of the Philippines](#)
- [Philippine Association of Medical Technologists](#)
- [Philippine Association of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers](#)
- [Philippine Institute of Certified Public Accountants](#)
- [Philippine Institute of Chemical Engineers](#)
- [Philippine Institute of Civil Engineers](#)
- [Philippine Institute of Environmental Planners](#)
- [Philippine Librarians Association](#)
- [Philippine Medical Association](#)
- [Philippine Nurses Association](#)
- [Philippine Seafarers Union](#)
- [Philippine Society of Agricultural Engineers](#)
- [Philippine Society of Mechanical Engineers](#)
- [Philippine Society of Mining Engineers](#)
- [Philippine Society of Sanitary Engineers](#)
- [Philippine Veterinary Medical Association](#)
- [Society of Aerospace Engineers of the Philippines](#)
- [Society of Metallurgical Engineers of the Philippines](#)
- [Solidarity of Filipino Workers](#)
- [Trade Union Congress of the Philippines](#)
- [United Architects of the Philippines](#)

#### Journalist Associations

- [Association of Broadcasters of the Philippines](#)
- [Economic Journalist Association of the Philippines](#)
- [National Union of Journalists of the Philippines](#)
- [Philippine Science Journalists Association](#)
- [Philippines Press Institute](#)

#### News Agencies (usual newswire sources of local media outlets)

- [Agence France-Presse](#)
- [Associated Press](#)
- [Philippines News Agency](#)
- [Reuters](#)



- [AGB Nielsen](#)
- [Kantar](#)

# Policies

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## Media legislation

Philippines has been described as a "flawed democracy" with a "partly free" media system (The Economist, 2018, cited by ABS CBN News, 2018). This observation is congruent with the reality that while Philippine journalism generally adopted a watchdog orientation, it is hounded by a string of limitations. Some of these limitations are created by media legislation.

Freedom of speech and access to information are guaranteed by the Philippine Constitution, the highest law of the land. Article III Section 4 states that "No law shall be passed abridging the freedom of speech, of expression, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble and petition the government for redress of grievances." Section 7, meanwhile, states that "access to official records, and to documents and papers pertaining to official acts, transactions, or decisions, as well as to government research data used as basis for policy development, shall be afforded the citizen." However, despite these constitutional guarantees, the practice of journalism remains stunted by threats to freedom such as harassment and even killings. In fact, the Philippines has been labeled as the "deadliest peacetime country for journalists in Southeast Asia", with 185 journalists killed since 1986, and only 17 of which were partly resolved (International Federation of Journalists, 2018).

Apart from the constitutional guarantee that mandates access to information, Philippines has the Freedom of Information (FOI) Executive Order, signed by the president in 2016, which provides policy guidelines for the release of information from public offices. The Executive Order, however, is not a law, as the Philippine Congress failed to pass the actual bill. It has been more than 30 years since the first FOI bill was filed in Congress. Although some groups laud the signing of the FOI order, several groups criticize it for having a long list of exceptions and conditions (166 exceptions, to be specific), which defeats the purpose.

Moreover, although the free speech clause is in place, other laws have been used to restrain free speech or as a form of political vendetta, such as the criminal libel law and the Cybercrime Law. The first penalises libel under the Philippine Revised Penal Code (RPC), which states that the act is punishable by imprisonment from six months to six years. The law penalises the "defamatory imputation" that is "presumed to be malicious, even if it be true." In other words, whether or not the statement is true does not matter; what is being punished is the intent to "discredit" or "to cause dishonor." Different provisions apply for public figures.

Journalist groups have long called for the decriminalisation of libel in the Philippines (Patag, 2018). A criminal libel law, as opposed to civil libel laws in other countries, is disproportionate as it mobilises the resources of the state in arresting and prosecuting the "offending" journalist (Noorlander, 2013). The journalist might be imprisoned and the criminal record can affect his work and travel in the future.

For the state functionaries such as incumbent Presidential Spokesperson Salvador Panelo, libel laws are in place as a check

on possible abuse of freedom of speech (Patag, 2019). However, for the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines, a journalist trade union, the "antediluvian libel law and its threat of jail time is one of the weapons of choice of corrupt officialdom against those who dare scrutinize and call out their venality and abuse" (Patag, 2019). In 2007, for example, then presidential spouse Mike Arroyo, filed 10 libel cases against 46 media workers who wrote on corruption allegations hurled against him (the libel cases were eventually dropped). Perhaps a more recent example that begs to be discussed is that of *Rappler* executive Maria Ressa, who was arrested for cyber-libel as defined under the Philippine Cybercrime Law.

In essence, the definition of libel in the Revised Penal Code is carried over to the Cybercrime Law, albeit appropriated to the online platform (this therefore considers the "sharing" and "re-posting" of content deemed libelous). Enacted in 2012, the law was opposed by various human rights and journalist groups because it may enable the state to clamp down on groups and individuals sharing progressive content. Moreover, the Cybercrime Law triples the penalty time for libel from 50 months to a maximum of 12 years in jail.

In the case of Ressa and *Rappler*, a certain Wilfredo Keng filed a libel complaint in 2017 over a *Rappler* story published in 2012, months before the Cybercrime Law was enacted. According to *Rappler*, the Philippine National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) initially dismissed the complaint because the one-year prescriptive period for libel had lapsed with the complaint filed five years after the publication of the story" (Patag, 2019). However, the NBI revived the complaint in 2018 and recommended the indictment of libel charges versus *Rappler*, which has long been publishing articles critical of the current administration. According to Manuel Eduarte, NBI Cybercrime Division head agent, the article is covered by the Cybercrime Law because it can still be seen or read at the time of the effectivity of the law (Patag, 2018).

Proposed amendments to other existing laws may threaten the function of free media in Philippine society, as in the case of proposed changes to the Human Security Act (HSA), according to the International Federation of Journalists (2019, p 43). The HSA or the Anti-Terror Law could penalise content published by groups or persons by labeling them as "incitement" or "glorification" (p 43). A proposed amendment to the Constitution, meanwhile, includes the addition of the modifier "responsible" to the free speech clause: "No law shall be passed abridging the responsible exercise of the freedom of speech, of expression, or of the press." However, the crucial question is who or what will define "incitement" or "responsible."

## Accountability systems

With the presence of well-entrenched laws described as restraints in the exercise of free speech, accountability systems for Philippine media are not as robust as campaigns for media freedom. Thus, accountability systems, for the most part, take the form of legal measures or prohibitions (eg libel laws and other laws within the Revised Penal Code of the Philippines). For this reason, the media has been wary of political imperatives masking under the guise of "checking media responsibility", as they believe that such initiatives can, as proven by a history of martial rule, be used to silence the press.

Some media networks and newspapers, such as ABS-CBN, have their internal ombudsman who deals with journalism ethics complaints, especially those which gained traction from the audience (eg viral in social media).

Definitely more active and visible than the in-house ombudsmen are the organisations that lean more to a monitorial role, such as the Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility (CMFR) and *Kapisanan ng Mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas* (Association of Philippine Broadcasters - KBP). The CMFR evaluates media coverage and even calls out cases of media corruption or unethical practice. In numerous instances, a CMFR representative was interviewed in television news programmes especially at times when media responsibility as an issue came to the fore.

The KBP, meanwhile, "established its own system of self-regulation and standards for radio and television stations in the country", which binds – but only to some extent – its 121 member networks or corporations. However, the CMFR has

expressed doubts on the future of self-regulation in Philippine media, citing the feeble penalties imposed by the KBP on its erring members (CMFR, 2011).

The Philippine Press Institute (PPI), as well as the KBP, developed a code of ethics: the Philippine Journalists' Code of Ethics that has been used and studied in journalism schools. However, in actual practice, the interpretation of these codes leaves gray areas as the media landscape – and the working conditions of journalists – is far from ideal.

## Regulatory authorities

Although associations of broadcast corporations and newspapers exist with a set of regulatory standards, it appears that these self-regulatory systems lack teeth, and more so for outlets that are not members. As of 2011, according to the Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility (CMFR), "the media are not only failing to regulate themselves; more importantly, some media organisations are actually depending on the government to intervene, in effect eroding the very principle of self-regulation itself." A case that should illustrate this is that of a hostage-taking incident in 2010, in which the *Kapisanan ng Mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas* (Association of Philippine Broadcasters - KBP) investigated the accusations of reckless reporting that partly compromised police operations at that time.

The government then asked the KBP to intervene and impose appropriate sanctions, given that there is no government body mandated to regulate Philippine media. Almost a year after the hostage-taking incident, the KBP decision, which found its member networks guilty of ethical lapses, "has come down to feeble fines of P30,000, and a virtual slap on the wrist (Lingao, 2011). The CMFR likened to situation to a "mountain laboring to produce a mouse" (2011). Worse, the GMA network, one of the media giants that constitute what is essentially a television duopoly, was not penalised because it withdrew its KBP membership in 2003 (it had a tiff with the association over commercial loading limits). Hence, the KBP asked the government to act on the ethical lapses under GMA, which was ironic given that "media self-regulation means that media institutions themselves enforce ethical and professional standards among their members without intervention from the government or any other external agency" (CMFR, 2011).

The KBP members that were penalised – ABS-CBN, RMN, and then ABC-5 – even filed appeals to reverse the KBP decision. Instances such as this led monitorial organisations such as the CMFR to "doubt the future of self-regulation" among Philippine media.

In terms of ownership regulation, the legal framework allows government bodies to interpret legal guidelines and process applications for setting-up media outlets. Protectionist laws require mass media to be owned and managed wholly by citizens or corporations wholly owned and managed by them. However, as the Media Ownership Monitor (2017) noted, the implementation of these protectionist laws are severely lacking, as in the case of tycoon Manuel V. Pangilinan's media and telecommunication empire, the ownership of which can be traced to Indonesia.

The telecommunications industry, unlike mass media, is classified under the "public utility regulatory regime", which mandates only a 60-40 ownership scheme (at least 60 percent owned by Filipinos and 40 percent by foreign equity). However, proposed amendments to the Philippine Constitution include a removal of such protectionist measures.

For a broadcast outlet to operate, it needs to follow the so-called twin franchising principle. It has to register with the Philippine Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) to acquire a franchise approved by the Congress. It also has to secure a second authorisation – "a second franchise" – from the National Telecommunications Commission, which is called the Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity.

In terms of monitoring ownership concentration, the Philippine Competition Commission, a newly established body under the

Fair Competition Act of 2015, is mandated to spot anti-competition agreements and break up media monopolies if the case requires.

Recent events, however, shed light on the possibilities in which the government can exercise control over media outlets through the existing legal framework. For example, the SEC last year revoked the operating license of *Rappler*, an online media outlet that published articles critical of the administration. The SEC ruled that *Rappler* is "liable for violating the constitutional and statutory Foreign Equity Restriction in Mass Media" (Tomacruz, 2018) because one of its investors is a foreign philanthropic investment firm, Omidyar Network. Omidyar invested in *Rappler* in 2015 through Philippine Depositary Receipts, which allows foreigners to invest in a Filipino company without owning part of it or without being involved in its management. *Rappler* executives such as Maria Ressa believed that there was no due process and that the firm is being singled out in what was described as a politically motivated move (Rappler, 2018).

Also last year, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte said that he will "object" to the renewal of the operating franchise of ABS-CBN, citing allegations that the network aired ads critical of him during the 2016 presidential campaign period.

## Sources

Pertinent laws

- [Cybercrime Law](#)
- [Freedom of Information Executive Order](#)
- [Human Security Act](#)
- [Libel under the Revised Penal Code of the Philippines](#)
- [Philippine Competition Act](#)
- [The 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines](#)

Some concerned government agencies

- [National Bureau of Investigation](#)
- [National Telecommunications Commission](#)
- [Philippine Senate](#)
- [Securities and Exchange Commission](#)
- [The House of Representatives](#)

Media associations with a self-regulation mechanism

- [Association of Broadcasters of the Philippines](#)

## Education

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### Universities and schools

The Philippines has seen a staggering increase in the number of journalism schools and institutions offering either a journalism or mass media course in the past few decades. In 1970, only 13 institutions offered degree programmes either in

communication or journalism. In 2006, this figure ballooned to 291 institutions offering journalism as either a degree programme or a subject (Chua, 2006). These journalism schools started as a department or program subsumed under the broader fields of communication or liberal arts and became separate and independent institutions over time.

Most of the institutions offering journalism courses are in Metro Manila, albeit there is a growth in the number of schools offering mass communication and journalism courses outside the capital region. The Metro-based schools include the Journalism Department of the University of the Philippines, awarded with the "Center of Excellence" recognition by the Philippine Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and the University of Santo Tomas (UST), which has the longest running journalism programme in the country. The largest state university in the country, the Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP), also has a journalism programme based in Metro Manila. Both UST and PUP were awarded with the "Center of Development" recognition. Outside Metro Manila, one of the most notable journalism schools is the Silliman University, the first journalism school to be established outside the capital region.

Although the number of communication and journalism schools increased dramatically since the 1970s, there are only 18 institutions offering degree programmes specific to journalism as of 2006 (Commission on Higher Education, 2005). Many courses deal with communication in general, with journalism as a specialisation.

There is no publicly available data on the recent number of journalism and mass communication programmes nationwide. What is available is the data on the enrollment rate and number of graduates in the "Mass communication and documentation" area – the number of graduates in 2018 is a little over 29,000, an increase of about 2,000 from 2008 figures (Commission on Higher Education, 2018). However, this data does not include institutions that subsumed journalism under humanities programmes.

The Bachelor of Arts programme in Journalism (BA Journalism), as prescribed by the CHED, should have a total of 140 units (usually a four-year programme). More than a quarter of the total number of credits is allotted to general education courses (36 units) and about half (60 units) are allotted to core and required courses (journalism and communication theory courses and internship). Institutions that were granted the status of "autonomy", or autonomous from CHED, are free to modify the prescribed credit load. Recently, the CHED endorsed a new programme, the Bachelor in Journalism programme, which is a "professional non-thesis degree" with the lesser number of units allotted to core and required courses (a three-year programme as opposed to the four-year BA Journalism course).

There is no systematic empirical research evaluating the state of journalism education in the country, but there is a 2006 descriptive study that aims to provide an overview (see Gapasin, Mirandilla, San Pascual, and Sanqui, 2006). In this study, the authors observed that journalism education in the country, by and large, struggles with "theory versus practice" debates in setting educational standards (an offshoot of the longstanding industry versus academe divide in journalism), poorly qualified teaching personnel, and lack of necessary facilities, equipment, and materials. However, the general objective of the journalism education system is still to cater to the demands of the industry, or to perpetuate the norms and standards of the industry rather than be its corrective or critic.

Although the CHED specifies that journalism faculty should have at least a master's degree and at least five years of journalism experience, this is not always the case in many institutions. Tuazon (2006, cited by Chua, 2006) said that only a fifth of journalism educators have work experience, while some have an educational background that is only tangential to journalism. Teodoro (2006, cited by Gapasin et al, 2006) noted that "a closer look at the qualifications of the teachers reveal that some come from disciplines that are not even remotely connected to journalism or communication" (p 106).

Another dilemma lies on the contradiction in the role of the journalism educator: should they cater to the demands of the industry or should they focus on the standards of academic work? This contradiction, which is often resolved in favor of the

industry-centered perspective, is the reason there are many journalism departments or institutions with a few number of PhD holders as faculty or without a strong academic research tradition. While many practitioners see nothing wrong with this situation, several scholars have recently called for a journalism education tradition that aims to prepare students for ushering or coping with disruptions in the field (technological, economic, and epistemological disruptions) instead of simply reproducing current industry standards (Folkerts, Lemann, and Hamilton, 2013; Hirst, 2010; Mensing, 2010).

Despite so much scholarly and professional interest in technological disruptions as drivers of change in the field, trends like big data journalism and algorithmisation of newswork (as journalism becomes increasingly influenced by computer algorithms based on user behavior or preferences) appear to be remotely considered in journalism curricula of most institutions. This is probably because such trends have yet to manifest in significant levels in Philippine newswork. Moreover, especially in schools outside Metro Manila, the quality, inadequacy or lack of facilities and equipment for digital reporting hinders educators and institutions from keeping pace with emerging standards. This begs for empirical research on how the pervasiveness of social media and other digital trends are accommodated into journalism curricula, and what meso- and macro-factors influence this.

In the basic education level, meanwhile, the Philippine Department of Education (DepEd) has long been conducting journalism conferences and competitions from the district to the national levels. In some elementary and high schools, journalism is offered as an extra-curricular subject to selected students. However, according to many public school teachers, journalism is "not a priority" because it is not part of the "Basic Education Curriculum" (Estella, 2018). Fortunately, in 2017, DepEd started to offer a "Special Program for Journalism" in the senior high school level, which acts as a bridge between basic education and college. In the tertiary level, CHED also conducts journalism conferences and competitions nationwide.

## **Professional development**

The pathways to a journalism career are diverse. Not all journalists have a degree in journalism or related fields. Some journalists have a degree in the liberal arts, political science, and even in hard sciences. Many practice journalism as a passion, but not all of these practitioners have adequate training. Unfortunately, although the number of journalists in the Philippines is pegged to be somewhere around 3,500 (Arao, 2018), there is no recent data on the general profile of the Filipino journalist in terms of age, gender, and educational attainment.

Internship or on-the-job training appears to be highly valued among employers, so much so that for many graduates, the internship is their point of entry into a news organisation. News outlets also provide scholarships and trainings to a targeted institution or group. Upon graduating, scholars of these news outlets will have to work for at least a year under their sponsors, as stipulated in their scholarship contracts.

The idea of professionalism or professional development in the Philippine setting cannot be divorced from the political economy of the media. Tandoc (2016), in his survey with 349 Filipino journalists, found that younger journalists with lower wages tend to identify "low wages" as a problem more than others, while those with higher salaries tend to identify lagging professionalism as the "most important problem." In other words, wages and job security are also predictors of appreciation for journalistic competence in the country.

Journalistic professionalism in the Philippines is largely defined by the norms and standards of the industry, and so future newsmakers are only socialised into existing roles and later reproduce these current orientations and standards. It is not surprising that practitioners and even many journalism educators see nothing wrong with the idea, but for some scholars like Hirst (2010) and Mensing (2010), such a notion of professionalism can be hostile to innovation and creative disruptions, which characterise the global field of journalism today.

# Media Development Organisations

Media development organisations in the Philippines can be broadly classified into two: 1) international organisations that usually partner with local ones to promote professionalism and/or in support for a cause (eg media freedom and human rights) and 2) local organisations or centres with similar objectives. A notable example for the first category would be the UNESCO, which partnered with several local institutions and groups for activities such as developing journalism curricula and drafting campaign plans. For instance, in 2018, the UNESCO provided technical advice to the coalition of journalist groups tasked with creating a "national plan of action for the safety of journalists" in the Philippines. This is in line with the task of UNESCO as the "global facilitator of the implementation" of the UN "Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity" (UNESCO Office in Jakarta, 2018). Another international organisation involved in the creation of the national plan is the International Media Support (IMS), a Denmark-based organisation aiming to help develop the media sector into "well-functioning and independent media."

Like UNESCO, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, a "political foundation" based in Germany, partnered with a local educational institution for the training of newsmakers. The Konrad Adenauer Asian Center for Journalism was established in 2000 and was envisioned as an "educational hub" providing learning opportunities for working journalists in the region.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), meanwhile, gives awards to journalists who wrote excellent humanitarian reports (*Red Cross Award for Humanitarian Reporting*) in partnership with the Philippine Red Cross. The award aims to promote "for human dignity amid armed violence and to promote international humanitarian law, the rules that seek to limit, for humanitarian reasons, the effect of armed conflict" (Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility, 2013).

In the local scene, we have organisations that offer training and other learning opportunities for journalists, promote advocacy for the protection of practitioners, and seek support especially for the families of journalists slain or incapacitated in the line of duty. For example, the Philippine Press Institute, an association of newspapers, organises training sessions especially for print journalists. The Freedom Fund for Filipino Journalists (FFFJ), meanwhile, is a coalition of media groups aiming to "raise funds and receive donations for the protection of journalists under threat; to provide immediate assistance to the families of journalists killed in the line of duty; to act as a support group for journalists in distress by, among other means, forming quick-response teams to investigate and report attacks against journalists; and to follow up the prosecution of cases involving attacks against journalists."

When it comes to promoting quality of newswork and professionalism, the local organisations that need to be mentioned are the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ) and Vera Files. Established in 1989, PCIJ is a non-profit agency aiming to promote investigative reporting and "to create a culture of it within the Philippine press." It funds investigative projects, publishes books on current affairs, produces documentaries, and conducts seminar-workshops. Vera Files, established in 2008, has fairly the same objectives. Having published specialised reporting projects supported by grants (eg elections in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao), Vera Files describes itself as having the expertise "in the production of research-intensive and in-depth reports in multiple formats, and the training and mentoring of journalists, students and civil society organisations."

## Sources

Universities/schools of journalism

- [Ateneo de Naga University](#)
- [Batangas State University – Nasugbu](#)

- [Bulacan State University – Main Campus](#)
- [Centro Escolar University](#)
- [Colegio de San Juan de Letran](#)
- [Colegio de San Lorenzo](#)
- [De La Salle University Dasmarinas](#)
- [Kalayaan College](#)
- [La Salle University Ozamiz](#)
- [Laguna State Polytechnic University – Siniloan](#)
- [Lyceum of the Philippines University](#)
- [Mindanao State University – Main Campus](#)
- [Misamis University](#)
- [Palawan State University](#)
- [Pasig Catholic College](#)
- [Polytechnic University of the Philippines](#)
- [St. Paul University Dumaguete](#)
- [St. Paul University Manila](#)
- [St. Scholastica's College](#)
- [The Manila Times College](#)
- [University of Eastern Philippines](#)
- [University of La Salette Santiago](#)
- [University of Luzon](#)
- [University of Perpetual Help System DALTA Molino](#)
- [University of Rizal System – Angono](#)
- [University of San Jose-Recoletos](#)
- [University of Southern Mindanao](#)
- [University of the East](#)
- [University of the East – Caloocan](#)
- [University of the Philippines Diliman](#)
- [University of the Philippines Los Baños](#)
- [Visayas State University](#)
- [West Visayas State University](#)
- [Western Mindanao State University](#)

Media development organisations

- [Freedom Fund for Filipino Journalists](#)
- [International Media Support](#)
- [Konrad Adenauer Foundation](#)
- [Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism](#)
- [United Nations Economic, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation](#)
- [Vera Files](#)



# Telecommunications

## Mobile network ecosystem

Mobile communication in the Philippines has seen a massive growth in terms of the number of mobile phone users and subscriptions and range of mobile activity (from 2G-based communication to availing of services through online mobile applications). This is despite the deeply entrenched duopoly in the telecommunications industry – a duopoly that has raked immense profits for decades now (Camus, 2018) even as reports of poor or spotty service and "unfulfilled" advertising promises found their way in both informal and formal venues (Elchico, 2015).

It is ironic that the country is at the top of the list in social media usage and amount of time spent in the Internet, but infrastructure inadequacies prevent a significant number of users from taking advantage of mobile activity in its full potential. Internet speed in the country lags behind that of its neighboring countries and is even below the global average (Akamai Technologies, 2017). The availability of stable mobile signal – and all the more 4G connectivity (Opensignal, 2018) – remains concentrated in the urban Philippines. The industry players continue to blame government bureaucracy for the infrastructure inadequacies such as inadequate cell towers (Philippines has far less than neighboring countries Vietnam and Indonesia), and while the government has drafted the first ever "common cell tower" policy to fast track the construction of more towers, visions of the future are clouded with disagreements among industry players and government representatives (Camus, 2018).

Nevertheless, mobile phone usage has become so pervasive that there are documented cases of it being used to disseminate information in far-flung indigenous communities (see for example Zapata, 2016). There are also documented cases of mobile phone usage among government workers at the grassroots level (eg village health workers communicating through SMS with patients and other stakeholders).

The digital divide that persists partly because of poor telecommunications infrastructure in the countryside is also a function of socio-economic inequalities in the country. In the urban Philippines, more and more people are availing of services (transportation, purchase of products, mobile banking, among others) through mobile apps. However, particularly in the case of mobile banking and purchase of services, the "emerging affluent" tend to use applications in an extent more than the lower income strata (based on the results of the Visa Consumer Payment Attitudes study in 2016).

The smartphone market is dominated by ultra-low-end phones with a strong presence in the provinces (International Data Corp, 2018, cited by Reyes, 2018). The lesser preference for higher-priced phones (capable of more sophisticated mobile activity) in the countryside could probably be explained by heightened poverty levels as well as lack of 4G, even 3G, connectivity in the area.

When using the Internet through smartphones, Filipinos tend to spend the most time on mobile messenger, followed by watching videos and playing games. It appears that Filipinos in general feel a constant need to connect with their networks local and abroad, especially with the increasing number of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs). OFWs total to about 2.3 million as of 2017 (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2018), a 61-fold increase since 1975, when the first statistics for overseas employment was recorded (International Organisation for Migration, 2013, cited by Lozada, 2013).

## Company profiles

The telecommunications industry in the Philippines is a duopoly of the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company (PLDT) and Globe Telecom (Globe). Both are private companies, with PLDT being partly owned by Hong Kong's First Pacific Group and Globe being part of Ayala Corp. In terms of mobile subscriber base, Globe is ahead by a narrow margin as of 2017, with

about 60.6 million subscribers as opposed to PLDT's 58.2 million (Lamiel, 2018).

Both companies have reported immense profits: from 2000 to 2016, PLDT paid its shareholders with more than PhP380bn (US\$7.3bn) in cash dividends, while Globe has paid about PhP135bn (about US\$2.6bn) (Camus, 2018). However, for several years now, consumers have complained about what they described as "poor" or "inconsistent" service from these telecommunications giants. According to Trade Undersecretary Vic Dimagiba, the Philippine Department of Trade and Industry has received 55 complaints against Smart (under PLDT) and Globe over "poor Internet service, slow speeds or unfulfilled promise of an advertised service" in 2015 (Elchico, 2015). This is merely an official record and of course does not include reports made on informal channels such as social media.

These claims appear to be bolstered by findings from different research firms. Philippines has the slowest Internet speed in Asia-Pacific as of 2017 (Akamai Technologies, 2017), with an average speed of 5.5 mbps, lower than the global average of 7.2 mbps. In another report compiled by Cable.co.uk in 2017, Filipinos need to wait about four and a half hours to download a high-definition movie, 50 percent longer than in Vietnam and more than 14 times slower than it would take in Singapore (Camus, 2018).

In November 2018, Filipino authorities selected Mislattel, joint venture of China Telecom and a Filipino tycoon as the "provisional" new major telecommunications player that will challenge the telecommunications duopoly (provisional as the other bidders can still file an appeal).

When it comes to 4G connectivity, Philippines is behind its neighbors in Southeast Asia, despite the fact that 4G networks arrived in the country around 2013. According to a report by research firm Opensignal (2018), 4G signals remain "hard to find" in the country and neither of the two Philippines operators reached the 70 percent availability we have seen in more mature 4G markets."

## Main trends

The Philippines emerged as the "fastest growing app market" in Southeast Asia as of 2017, as reported by global trade body Mobile Ecosystem Forum (Galvez, 2018). With the number of mobile phone subscriptions exceeding the total population as of 2016 (Globe Telecom, 2016, cited by Garcia, 2016), an increasing number of activities and transactions are done through mobile applications. Moreover, the Philippine market "can be a gold mine for app developers" because of "high install growth (driven by low cost devices and cheap data plans)" and the fact that "app localisation is almost unnecessary" as a significant part of the population speaks English and 40 percent of mobile Internet users prefer it over the national language Filipino, according to global mobile advertising company Applift (2015). However, although it was predicted that the app market would grow 2019 onwards, "expansion in value will be limited by the very slow connection speeds the current 4G network can achieve" (MarketLine, 2018, p 7).

When it comes to using networked services through mobile phones, the most common activity is using messaging apps (33 percent), followed by watching videos (26 percent) and playing games (23 percent), according a 2018 report by advertising Agency We Are Social and social media management platform company Hootsuite. There is no recent empirical data on the demographics of mobile app users and which particular apps are used by which group. The available data shows that the younger population uses the Internet most heavily, although it does not specify whether the access is through mobile apps, desktop apps, or browser. The highest amount of Internet usage was observed among Filipinos in the 18 to 24 age bracket (81 percent), followed by the 25 to 34 bracket (65 percent), based on a 2018 survey by the Social Weather Stations (Flores, 2018). From this data, one can assume that mobile app users are mostly the younger Filipinos – or the digital natives, so to speak.

By economic strata, the "emerging affluent" tend to use apps for a variety of services, such as booking transportation, more than the other socio-economic categories, based on the data from the Visa Consumer payment Attitudes survey in 2016. About 70 percent of the "emerging affluent" in the sample use apps to avail of services, higher than the average 6 out of 10 for all strata.

The app ecosystem in the Philippines is diverse: Filipinos use apps for social networking, banking, movie and series streaming, deliveries, music download and streaming, transportation, mobile money, and even healthcare. A significant number of Filipinos are using mobile money services offered by the telecommunication giants PLDT and Globe Telecom. In 2012, Maurer (2012) noted that people remit money to family members residing in remote islands through Globe GCASH, which at that time was used by over two million people (p 589). PLDT's mobile money app, Paymaya, along with its mobile money Smart Money, has eight million users as of 2018 (Esmael, 2018). According to Paymaya executive Paolo Azzola, the company is targeting 30 million users by 2019.

Especially in the urban Philippines, most Filipinos now tend to use mobile banking instead of visiting branches. According to the Visa Consumer Payment Attitudes study in 2016, nearly three in four Filipinos have a banking app on their mobile phones and 80 percent of Filipinos prefer to transact through the app instead of going to the bank branch. Furthermore, 65 percent have used their smartphones to make purchases and 41 percent make mobile payments at least once a week.

The use of mobile apps for the healthcare sector is also emerging, as health maintenance companies started using apps to streamline services. PhilhealthCare, for example, introduced apps to "allow members to consult with doctors using smartphones, skip the long lines in waiting for medical care, produce electronic vouchers, find the nearest clinics, generate letters of authority or obtain an electronic medical prescription" (dela Cruz, 2018). Although empirical usage data are not yet available, it can be assumed that these digital services are used in particular by the urban middle class.

## **Mobile coverage**

The mobile network coverage in the country, currently offered by a telecommunications duopoly, has expanded widely through the years to reach even remote areas. However, due to limitations in infrastructure (such as insufficient number of cell towers), mobile signal remains unavailable in some areas especially in the Mindanao (one of the major island groups) countryside. The existing telecommunications companies blamed this infrastructure problem for the inconsistent quality of the mobile signal and Internet.

In late 2018, the government organised a public consultation for the draft of the first ever "common cell tower" policy of the country, which includes the measure "to remove all future cell tower building activities from incumbents PLDT and Globe Telecom" as a way to fast-track the roll-out of cell towers, as well as requiring the telecommunications companies to share their cell tower assets (Camus, 2018). The number of cell sites operates by PLDT and Globe total to about 16,000, a mile less than those of neighboring countries like Vietnam with 70,000 towers and Indonesia with 90,000 (Camus, 2018). However, the consultation became a protracted, thorny debate among stakeholders and possibilities of a legal row came to the fore.

Based on real-time data from nPerf, an online application company that churns out geo-localised statistics on Internet connection, many areas in Visayas and Mindanao, particularly the coastal areas, do not have consistent mobile signal. 4G connectivity is still heavily concentrated in urban Luzon, while most areas with mobile signal coverage only have 3G. This data is congruent with the 2018 report of mobile research firm Opensignal, which found that 4G connectivity in the country is "hard to find" and is offered in a much lesser extent than it is in other countries. The telecommunications companies PLDT and Globe have already declared investments amounting to billions of pesos in an effort to expand coverage and improve 4G

availability.

Interestingly, there are studies that documented the pervasiveness of mobile phone usage even among indigenous communities in rural areas such as the Applai and Bontok Igorot communities in the Cordillera mountain range (Zapata, 2016). The use of mobile phones in such areas are largely influenced by the "indigenous social code" (p 1) and is limited to 2G-based information dissemination (eg sharing news or announcements to the community). Most of the respondents in the study received their phones from more affluent relatives living in the city and many households share a unit because of the cost.

## Mobile ownership

More and more Filipinos, like in other parts of the world, access the Internet through smartphones. The number of smartphone users in the Philippines are expected to more than double from about 40 million in 2016 to 90 million by 2021, according to the 2016 Ericsson Mobility Report (Jiao, 2016). To put these figures into perspective, one has to consider that the Philippine population is expected to reach about 109 million by the end of 2019 (Philippine Commission on Population, 2018, cited by Cepeda, 2018).

About 87 percent of Filipino adults use mobile phones, according to a 2018 report by advertising agency We Are Social and social media management platform company Hootsuite. In terms of mobile activity, the most common is using a mobile messenger (33 percent), followed by watching videos (26 percent) and playing games (23 percent).

The mobile Internet penetration rate was said to be increasing by 30 million users every year (Garcia, 2016), despite the dismally poor mobile Internet speeds. In the "State of the LTE report" published by mobile network research firm OpenSignal, the speed and availability of the long-term evolution or LTE mobile connection in the country fared so poorly that it ranked 74<sup>th</sup> out of 77 countries (Marcelo, 2018).

The use of mobile phones has penetrated everyday life to the extent that even the poorest consider mobile phone services as a "necessity" despite it being a greater cost burden for those at the "bottom of the pyramid" (Aguero, de Silva, and Kang, 2011, p 19). The ultra-sensitive smartphone market reflects the massive income disparity in the Philippines, as the ultra-low-end smartphones (Php 5,000 or US\$96 and below) dominate at 59 percent market share, followed by low-end and mid-range smartphones at 35 percent market share (Ooi, 2018, cited by Reyes, 2018). The manufacturer Cherry Mobile, in particular, leads at 23 percent market share owing to its "pervasive presence in the provinces" coupled by its low-end prices (International Data Corp, 2018, cited by Reyes, 2018). These figures are congruent with the fact that 4G, and even 3G, Internet connectivity is absent in many rural areas especially in the coastal areas of major island groups Visayas and Mindanao, which could explain the lesser need for mobile Internet activity (eg availing of services online), and hence the lesser preference for more capable but higher-priced smartphones.

The use of mobile phones for grassroots activity has been documented in several academic and professional works. SMS has been used for grassroots health communication in remote villages in the Philippines, as in the case of how government *barangay* (village) health workers communicate with stakeholders in a rural area at southern Philippines (see Sumaylo, 2013). Among health professionals and students, basic mobile phones remain to be the most used media at home and at work (Gavino, Ho, Wee, Marcelo, and Fontelo, 2013, p 303).

Mobile phone usage has also found its way into indigenous communities in highly remote areas. For example, according to an ethnographic study (Zapata, 2016), the Applai and Bontok Igorot communities in the Cordillera mountain range use mobile phones as a way of disseminating information to the community (as opposed to visiting all homes to share news). The usage of mobile phones is heavily governed by the "indigenous social code" (p 1) and is still hindered somewhat by infrastructure

inadequacies.

## Sources

Telecommunications companies

- [Globe Telecom](#)
- [Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company](#)

Leading mobile phone companies by market share

- [Apple](#)
- [Cherry Mobile](#)
- [Huawei](#)
- [MyPhone](#)
- [Oppo](#)
- [Samsung](#)
- [Torque](#)
- [Vivo](#)

Concerned government agencies

- [Department of Information and Communications Technology](#)
- [National Telecommunications Commission \(NTC\)](#)

## Innovation

### Landscape analysis

Perhaps the most visible agents in the innovation landscape are the private companies that currently use and are actively looking for transformative technologies. These companies, for example, hold conventions for "business leaders" and executives, usually as a method to market products and services or to keep abreast of emerging trends. This reflects the reality that research and development (R&D) is "largely private sector-led", as 64-73 percent of the R&D investments came from the private sector in 2002 – 2011 (Aquino, Correa, Manalo, Faylon, 2014).

Furthermore, the government investment in science, technology, and innovation "pale in comparison" with those of its ASEAN neighbors and China (Aquino et al., 2014). The country allots only 0.1 percent of its GDP to R&D, far smaller than the allocation of countries like Japan and Korea. The number of researchers per million people is also lower in the Philippines compared with those in some of the neighboring countries like Singapore (Aquino et al., 2014). One contributing factor (and also an outcome) of the poor investment in R&D is the "exodus" of researchers and scientists either to the private sector or abroad.

However, the government, particularly the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) and the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), are still the most decisive forces in setting the policy regulatory environment and overcoming the digital divide. Although the Philippines has seen a massive increase in Internet penetration

rate (63 percent as of 2018, according to Internet World Stats, which compiled data from Facebook, International Communications Union, and other sources), there is still a huge chunk of the population that was never exposed to the Internet. Furthermore, this Internet penetration data does not take into consideration Internet literacy levels. The number of mobile phone users in the country is expected to reach 90 million (majority of the population) by 2021 (Ericsson Mobility Report, 2016, cited by Jiao, 2016) but the lack of mobile signal and 4G connectivity hinders users in many rural areas from taking advantage of the full potential of mobile connectivity (of course, another decisive factor is poverty levels in the countryside).

In the global scale, Philippines is ranked only 101<sup>st</sup> out of 176 economies (near the lowest third) in the ICT Development Index (IDI) as of 2017. Through the IDI tool, the International Telecommunication Union, an agency under the United Nations, ranked "the performance of 176 economies with regard to ICT infrastructure, use and skills, allowing for comparisons to be made between countries and over time" (Talavera, 2017). For Marasigan (2017), the digital divide in the country "is a problem that persisted due to a confluence of reasons: one is the government's refusal to invest in digital infrastructure, another is the bureaucracy in seeking permits by private companies from local governments." For Veal (2017, cited by Marasigan, 2017), the digital divide is a "symptom of the more persistent socioeconomic inequalities", an observation that appears to be at the root of the digital divide, given that the income inequality in the country remains "stubbornly high (above world average)", according to a 2017 report by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Asian Development Bank, and the UN Development Programme (Caraballo, 2017).

For its part, the government has drafted roadmaps, or programs and policy directions, in the effort of addressing the digital divide. An example of this would be the "ICT roadmap for the next six years" (starting 2017), which includes the implementation of the "Digital Terrestrial Television Broadcasting Migration Plan", the first ever Telecommunications Summit, and the development of the eGovernment Master Plan 2.0 (Department of Information and Communications Technology, 2017). Government agencies like DICT are also aiming to build smart cities, which "entails the integration of efficient communications technologies to be introduced [...] into the everyday lives of citizens" (Department of Information and Communications Technology).

Apart from the developing policy frameworks, government agencies like the DOST also invest in programs aiming to improve the productivity and profitability of small and medium enterprises through technology interventions.

## **Profiles of main tech parks, accelerators, hackathons**

The diffusion of innovation in the Philippines can be described in two ways: 1) cutting-edge developments in technology are usually introduced in private sector-led venues, which is also often flocked by the early adopters of the technology, and 2) the diffusion of technology to the grassroots and the remote areas is usually a government-led affair. Government agencies, such as the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) and the Department of Agriculture, also allots funds for research and development programs and scientist grants.

Technology-enabled companies organise conferences and conventions both as a marketing initiative and as a way to connect with developers. For example, the Philippine Digital Convention (PDC), organised by PLDT, is held supposedly to "[connect] local industry leaders with tech visionaries and pioneers" (Rappler, 2018). The PDC is attended by business executives and developers.

In the part of the government, agencies like the DOST implement projects that aim to bring innovation closer to small and medium enterprises, rural communities, and grassroots government workers. For example, DOST has the "Small Enterprise Technology Upgrading Program", which, according to DOST Secretary Fortunato De la Peña, provide technological

assistance to about 45,000 medium and small enterprises, thus generating 227,000 jobs (Lopez, 2018).

The DOST also aims to narrow the digital divide partly through its Digital Empowerment Program, one component of which is the *Juan Konek Free Wi-Fi Internet Access in Public Places Project*. The project seeks to provide an additional 7,118 free wifi hotspots in 43 major cities and 967 municipalities across the archipelago (Department of Science and Technology, 2016).

## Sources

Government agencies primarily concerned with innovation and research

- [Department of Agriculture](#)
- [Department of Information and Communications Technology](#)
- [Department of Science and Technology](#)
- [National Telecommunications Commission](#)

## Traditional forms of communication

### Summary

Although digital modes of communication are increasingly becoming ubiquitous, some information channels and discussion spaces within the community remain highly important especially in the grassroots level. In the *barangay* (village), local leaders hold face-to-face activities to disseminate information, as in the case of public consultations, health seminars, among others. As the "basic unit of governance", the *barangay* "serves as the primary planning and implementing unit of government policies, plans, programs, projects, and activities in the community", as per the 1991 Local Government Code of the Philippines. Although insufficient funding hinders "any significant infrastructure development or institution building in the *barangay*" level, it is still found to be effective in "resolving people disputes" and attending to "civic and civil matters" (Punongbayan, 2018). For this reason, barangay leaders are tapped by higher officials in introducing programs to constituents and soliciting support during electoral campaigns.

*Barangay* officials are also starting to use digital tools in increasing community participation especially during assemblies. For instance, in some villages, the councils use Facebook and even Twitter for information dissemination and event documentation. The "Events" feature of Facebook is even used by a number of *barangay* councils as far as the northern Mindanao region in the southern Philippines (Gepuela, 2017). The Philippine Communications Operations Office, tasked with disseminating information about the executive branch of the government, declared in 2018 that it will provide satellite receivers with internet access to the over 42,000 *barangays* in the country (Musico, 2018).

For *barangay* workers and volunteers, the SMS was also described as a "convenient" way to instruct or to inform stakeholders (Sumaylo, 2013, p. 106). For example, in Sumaylo's (2013) study, *barangay* health workers (BHWs) in a village in Mindanao reported that text messaging is the most commonly used medium in their work. Interestingly, SMS is still perceived as an "informal" channel in the community, so BHWs feel the need to "reinforce" this with "face-to-face interaction" (p 106). In most rural areas where 3G and 4G signal are either absent or inconsistent, it is not surprising that text messaging appears to be the most commonly used medium by those working in the grassroots level, reinforced by face-to-face interaction and vice versa.

Religious leaders in the community are also a force to be reckoned with, as church activities and gatherings become venues for networking, information dissemination, or simply connecting with groups of the same interest. An overwhelming 86 percent of the population is Roman Catholic, thus the label "only Christian nation in Asia" (Miller, 2019), an outcome of over 300 years of Spanish colonisation. About six percent belong to other nationalised Catholic denominations, while some two percent belong to over 100 Protestant denominations.

The country also has a four percent Muslim minority, most of which are in the southern part of the archipelago (according to the Philippine Statistics Authority in 2017, 93 percent of Muslims in the country reside in Mindanao), and a two percent minority following "non-Western", indigenous beliefs (Miller, 2019). In Mindanao, several areas have suffered under decades of conflict between the Philippine military and Muslim armed groups, such as the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and its splinter group Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). It should be noted, however, that these groups also have Lumad members, or members from indigenous groups. As Özerdem and Podder (2012) noted, recruitments into such groups "is not simply about religion or ideology", such categorisation is a "simplification of its underlying support base" (p 521). Deeply entrenched poverty, geographical location, and a "disparity in governance delivery" are also decisive factors (Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities, 2012; p 8; Özerdem and Podder, 2012, p 521). The insurgency is rooted on the struggle for self-determination – the autonomy of the Moro people in a reclaimed ancestral domain. The 40-year conflict has left at least 120,000 dead in affected areas (Ishii, 2013).

Filipinos in general have "conservative" views on issues, owing largely to their adherence to Catholic teachings (Lipka, 2015). For instance, 67 percent of Filipinos find divorce "morally unacceptable", which for comparison is three times the number of Americans who share the same view. In fact, apart from the Vatican, the Philippines is the only country in the world that does not allow any form of divorce (except for Muslims). Ninety-three percent of the population also view abortion as immoral, which makes the country the most "universally opposed to abortion on moral grounds" among the 40 nations surveyed in a 2015 study by Lipka. Ironically, church attendance among Catholics has declined by 24 percentage points from 1991 (64 percent) to 2017 (40 percent) (Social Weather Stations, 2018), posing the question: is the influence of the Catholic church fading in Filipino communities? The decline in church attendance can also be discussed vis-à-vis the outright hostility of the incumbent Philippine president toward Catholic bishops (Reuters, 2019). President Rodrigo Duterte has denounced the bishops in several profanity-laden speeches after the latter criticized the administration over the anti-drug operations that have claimed over 5,000 lives (Reuters, 2019). However, empirical research has yet to be done to examine the links between attitudes toward the current administration and church influence.

As a predominantly Christian country, the Philippines is home to hundreds of religious festivals – known as the "fiesta" – honoring the patron saint of the town or city. Such occasions become venues for community gatherings as people participate in a string of activities on the day or even the week of the festival, which includes a mass, processions, games, beauty pageants, parades, among others. Many of these festivals were a kind of "religious syncretism", in which Filipino indigenous beliefs and practices (Filipinos mostly held "animistic" beliefs prior to Spanish intervention) were blended with European Catholic practice (Russell, 2010). Catholic missionaries were also believed to have created the "fiesta" to "gradually persuade the population to convert to the Roman Catholic faith" (Ethnic Groups Philippines, 2016). Other festivals are rooted on farming traditions, appreciation for nature (such as the Halamanan Festival in Bulacan province), and the promotion of the flagship product or commodity in the area.

In a study done on 10 *barangays* or villages in the province of Batangas, community members "strongly agreed that [festivals] help in the preservation of local culture and traditions" (Gonzales, 2017, p 14). Festivals also "help recreate the image of the town" in tourism (p 14), but several critics pointed out that indigenous rituals can be distorted and festivals can be heavily "commercialised", losing the essence of the event as a community practice. In the case the Panagbenga festival, the annual



flower festival in the northern city of Baguio, critics believed that "the solemn and sacred traditions of the ethnic people [are] being reduced as mere entertainment to tourists" (The Manila Times, 2016).

The Philippines is home to about 14-17 million indigenous people belonging to around 110 ethno-linguistic groups (United Nations Development Programme or UNDP, 2013). These people were largely excluded from the waves of colonisation since the Spanish rule, thus retaining most of their animistic beliefs and rituals. There is a rich diversity of practices, beliefs, and forms of communication (such as oral literature) among the indigenous peoples, but they "remain among the poorest and most disadvantaged peoples" (UNDP, 2013). Although Philippine law through the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997 guarantees the right of indigenous peoples to their ancestral domains, they often suffer under "exclusion, loss of ancestral lands, displacement, pressures to and destruction of traditional ways of life and practices, and loss of identity and culture" (UNDP, 2013). As of 2017, some 3,000 Lumad, the largest indigenous group based in Mindanao, have been forced to evacuate due to militarisation (accredited schools were shut down), aerial bombings, and harassment (Save Our Schools Network, 2017, cited by Rappler, 2017). According to the United Nations State of the World's Indigenous Peoples, foreign large-scale mining in the country has displaced Lumad communities from their ancestral lands (Rappler, 2017).

Mobile technologies are slowly being adopted in indigenous communities in remote areas. In a study by Zapata (2016), the Applai and Bontok Igorot communities in the Cordillera mountain welcome the use of mobile phones as a convenient way of sharing information, which reduced the work of visiting all homes in the community. Zapata (2016) found that mobile communication in these communities is heavily guided by the "indigenous social code" (p 1) and is limited by economic and infrastructure restraints (not everyone has a phone and most phones are handed down by wealthier relatives in the city).

Although there is an attempt to include traditional and folk art as topics of learning in Philippine schools, "the efforts have not been sustained long enough to create substantial impact" and are also "largely undocumented and isolated" (Loza, de Guzman, and Jose, 2008, p 125). Worse, there is little educational emphasis on rediscovering the "use of indigenous art materials which should be well considered for their cultural, environmental and economic values" (p 125), a reality that continues despite the declared intention of the Philippine Commission on Higher Education to "advance learning, research and the enrichment of the country's historical and cultural heritage."

In some of the conflict-torn areas in the country, traditional forms of communication, such as theatre, can provide people with the means to cope with or to heal from trauma, as well as regain their sense of community and promote the advocacy of peace. For example, in Bau's (2017) study on the UNICEF "Art for Development" programme in a displaced people's camp in Zamboanga, she observed that by collaborating in art forms, in this case puppetry and photography, adolescents "begin to build a broader sense of peace and understanding" and "recognise the importance of their role in identifying problems and solutions together with others" (p 10). In a study of 2008, Schank and Schirch already noted that a group of theatre artists was travelling in various parts of Mindanao to promote "peaceful co-existence" among Muslim, Christian, and indigenous communities. "Arts-based interactions" were also found to be helpful in healing and coping with stress following natural disasters, noted Zerrudo (2016), who discussed examples from the Philippines and Nepal. In these examples, people revisited community folklore on which their performances (story-telling, creative play, music, among others) are anchored. Zerrudo wrote that "as community rituals sprung from creative engagement with catastrophe become central to our "everyday," we have the potential to protect land and sea through nuanced environmental conservation while recording and perpetuating our rich cultural narratives" (p 169).

In much of the countryside where mobile technologies and internet access are largely unreliable, face-to-face interaction and traditional forms of communication play an important role in the campaigns waged by belligerent groups. In the case of the New People's Army, for example, members sometimes hold "cultural nights" in which the community is invited to performances promoting the ideology and praxis of the Communist Party of the Philippines, as reported by a primary source

who refuses to be named due to security concerns.

When it comes to music, there appears to be a strong preference for music produced by foreign artists among the younger population. Although many of these artists are US-based or Western, Korean artists are also becoming widely popular. Filipino artists, particularly the independent or "indie" artists, took advantage of the disruptive digital technologies in the form of streaming services like Youtube and Spotify (Beltran, 2018). However, making a living out of music in the country is full of practical struggles. According to Schoop, a post-doctoral researcher in musicology who spent most of the decade doing fieldwork in the Philippines, the number of artists who can make a living out of music in the country is "so small that, in all her time spent doing fieldwork in the Philippines, [she] mostly encountered musicians who...had to have day jobs to make ends meet." Nevertheless, the country still has artists producing music in local languages or dialects, mostly aired in the local or regional radio stations. However, there is no empirical data on the reach and following of (or appreciation for) these "hyperlocal" songs, as well as the life narratives of these artists.

In both rural and urban communities, the everyday Filipino becomes an artist during special occasions (birthday parties, festivals, weddings, among others) where karaoke or videoke singing is the primary leisure activity. For Sood (2011), "it is an understatement to say that Filipinos love karaoke", as almost every household has a karaoke system or something similar.

## Sources

Authorities for pertinent religions

- [Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines](#) (Roman Catholicism)
- [Iglesia Ni Cristo](#) (Church of Christ)
- [National Commission on Muslim Filipinos](#) (Islam)
- [National Council of Churches in the Philippines](#) (Protestantism)
- [Philippine Orthodox Church](#) (Eastern Orthodoxy)

About the *barangay* as a grassroots unit of governance

- [Barangay](#)

Some sources for Philippine traditional and folk art

- [Cultural Center of the Philippines](#)
- [National Commission for Culture and the Arts](#)

## Conclusions

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### Conclusion

The Philippine media landscape is rife with contradictions. On one hand, digital communication is steadily becoming ubiquitous, as shown in the surge in Internet use and mobile activity figures. However, the widening socio-economic inequalities and the gap between urban and rural infrastructure maintain the digital divide. Hence, while the urban Philippines, particularly the youth, is expecting a future reality enabled by the "Internet of Things" and artificial intelligence, legacy media –

with the exception of the newspaper – remain as prime sources of information outside the cities and for the entire nation in general.

Nevertheless, Internet and mobile activity pervade everyday life in a pace unprecedented, so much so that groups and individuals, many of which working under political parties, exploited the technology for political agenda. This resulted in the documented systematic misinformation campaigns (proliferation of fake news) and deployment of "troll armies" aiming to sabotage online discourse, which lead to the "weaponisation" of the Internet to serve political interests.

Internet as a source of information also sped past print media, which is losing its relevance for much of the general public as current figures suggest, albeit community and regional newspapers have seen tremendous growth over the years. Print media, as well as radio and television, invested in online presence to expand reach obviously for relevance and profit, to an extent that we see news outlets that are purely online or more active online. If these trends continue, it is likely that national newspapers and magazines may either merge with others, diversify into other platforms (especially online), cease publishing and set up an online platform, or worse, cease operating. The forecast may be different for community and regional press, most of which operate in areas where the Internet is not yet an indispensable part of everyday transactions, or where the Internet and mobile connectivity infrastructure is sorely underdeveloped. It is in these areas where legacy media, particularly radio and community newspapers and magazines, remain as tools for social cohesion.

Digitalisation in the Philippine media landscape, like in other parts of the world, clearly ushered new business models and transformed the media economy. Unfortunately, these changes often include unjust rationalisation schemes, such as depression of wages for entry-level journalists. If the Internet penetration rate continues to rise and if the private sector-led telecommunications industry continues to invest more in infrastructure development, the greater access to the Internet may generate more and more rigid competition for a highly distracted audience. This competition – as well as the delegitimisation efforts that discredit mainstream media as source of information – may urge firms to create more aggressive profit-maintaining schemes, which may lead to journalists being overworked and underpaid. These conditions are at the root of unethical practices, media corruption, and lagging professionalism.

The current administration has so far maintained an antagonistic stance toward mainstream media, which pro-administration online influencers routinely describe as "biased." The current administration has issued strong warnings against some media outlets, including the threat of not renewing the operating license of one broadcast network. These statements can contribute to a climate of distrust in which people view reports critical to the administration as merely false or "biased", especially because this latter continues to enjoy a high trust rating. The mainstream media is not exactly a clean slate – there are documented cases in which commercial interests take precedence over public service, which the pro-administration forces were quick to use as an excuse for legitimising measures and statements detrimental to media freedom. If the efforts delegitimising the media will succeed in the time of intense competition in the industry, there is a possibility that outlets will have to deviate from the watchdog orientation that has long characterised Philippine journalism.

Although government agencies are making efforts to close the digital divide and increase information literacy, the current contradictions in the Philippine media landscape will persist if the structural dilemmas are not addressed. These are rooted on the massive socio-economic inequalities, heavy concentration in the media and telecommunications industry (the duopolies), and inadequate investment in science and technology research and development. The income disparity that continues to rise is in fact the mother of poor information literacy, a tool that one can gain from access to education and a must in the time of fake news and troll armies.

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Document generated on 20/07/2019