

Grassroots Organizations Go Online: The Case of Party-List Winners and New Media Technologies in the 2007 Philippines Elections

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Abstract

This study will look into the differences between the strategies of the Internet campaigns during the 2007 Philippines elections by the two groups that used Internet as a campaign tool: Gabriela (a women's group) and Bayan Muna (a militant group), both claiming to represent the poorest, disadvantaged and marginalized members of the society. Both party-list groups won seats in Congress and where Bayan Muna's strategies were more effective than those of Gabriela's. Drawing from theoretical concepts of Personal Influence by Gitlin (1978) and from Grönlund's understanding of the same, this study, through content analysis and in-depth interviews with members of the party, looked into where Bayan Muna had done right where Gabriela evidently fell short. The researchers address the following questions: Were the core supporters of both parties ready for the new style of campaigning? Did the parties effectively send the message to their supporters through the Internet? Will there be more active campaigning on the Internet in future Philippines elections despite the setbacks?

Key words

ITC, political communication, Philippines, Internet.

Resum

Aquest estudi analitza les diferències entre les estratègies de les campanyes per Internet durant les eleccions filipines a meitat del mandat del 2007 dels dos grups que van utilitzar la xarxa com a eina de campanya: Gabriela (un grup de dones) i Bayan Muna (un grup militant), els quals afirmen representar els segments més pobres, desfavorits i marginats de la societat. Ambdós grups van obtenir escons al Congrés, però les estratègies de Bayan Muna van ser més eficaces que les de Gabriela. A partir dels conceptes teòrics de la influència personal de Gitlin (1978) i de la seva interpretació per part de Grönlund, aquest estudi, a través de l'anàlisi de continguts i d'entrevistes a fons amb membres del partit, va analitzar on l'havia encertat Bayan Muna i on Gabriela evidentment es va quedar curta. Els investigadors van tractar les qüestions següents: els partidaris principals d'ambdós partits estaven preparats per al nou estil de fer campanya? Els partits van aconseguir transmetre el missatge als seus partidaris per mitjà d'Internet? En el futur hi haurà una campanya més activa per Internet a les eleccions filipines malgrat els fracassos?

Paraules clau

Noves tecnologies de la comunicació (NTC), comunicació política, Filipines i Internet.

Much has been studied about the emergence of new media technologies (NMT) in political communication but most of the literature is coming from the West where the use of the Internet and mobile phones seems to be quickly catching on, as seen in the political campaigning leading up to the 2008 US Presidential elections.¹ The new administration of US President Barack Obama is heavily engaging the Internet for public support through its change.gov website,² mainly because of their successful fundraising efforts on the Web that earned him hundreds of millions in campaign funds through online donations from supporters. This trend of high-tech political campaigning is crossing over to Asia, where political actors

in countries like India, Malaysia and the Philippines are creating their own websites for the purpose of reaching mass audiences. In the Philippines, where the number of Internet users is slightly over 14 million (merely 15% of the total population) and concentrated in urban areas, the aggressive approach to political campaigning on the Internet is picking up steam not only among individual candidates but also among civic and interest groups vying for party-list representation in Congress.

This article presents an account of how grassroots organizations in the Philippines, specifically the women's group Gabriela Women's Party (GWP) and a militant group Bayan Muna (People First), have joined the bandwagon of political

campaigning on the Internet and their experimental approach to NMTs as a strategy to reach more voters. To assess this, we analyzed the websites of both parties and conducted interviews with their representatives in Congress.

This article is comprised of three sections. We present relevant previous and current literature on political communication in both the Western and non-Western regions in the *Overview of Political Communication*, which has subsections on the personal influence hypothesis and accounts of the different NMT applications that we examined in relation to the two party-list groups and their use of these technologies. In the second section, we provide a background of the political landscape in the Philippines through a brief background of the system and a brief account of both the GWP and Bayan Muna is also provided. Finally, we present our findings on the use of NMTs by the two party-list groups in the third section. Our findings show that the use of these technologies in election campaigns is still at a premature stage, where we have observed both success and failure due largely to the lack of public access to such technologies. However, we see a trend of increasing political participation, mostly through social networking sites and discussion boards on the Web and through the popular mobile phone.

Overview of Political Communication

The study of political communication has considerably evolved from what once used to be a heavy concentration on the West to one that embraces the intricacies of politics in non-Western regions (Kluver 2007; Park et al. 2000; Takeshita & Makami 1995). Many election campaigns employ “attack and counter attack” strategies that are often observed in the American style of campaigning (Diamond & Bates 1988; Elebash 1984; Blumler 1987; Johnson et al. 1991; Karan 1994). Earlier accounts of political campaigning looked into mass and interpersonal campaigns that reported “partial success and partial failure” (Kraus & Davis 1976; Rice & Paisley 1981, Kluver 2007). In the Philippines, election campaigns are generally personality-based and seldom focus on issues of reform; thus, candidates win or lose by popularity or lack thereof. However, the Internet and new mobile technologies are changing the way political campaigning is done in the country from the one-to-many (candidate-to-electorate) model to the many-to-many, where members of the electorate tend to communicate more with each other regarding the issues (Karan, Gimeno, & Tandoc, 2008). Personal influence plays a vital role in this scenario.

Personal Influence

Gitlin (1978) and Grönlund (2001) explained personal influence as a process whereby people communicate directly with each other sans gatekeepers and middlemen, and that this type of communication promotes better understanding of the issues at hand. Although new technologies make interaction more dynamic, Grönlund stated that this does not always translate to

a higher number of voters in past years. This said, there are differences in the results achieved by both the GWP and Bayan Muna.

Social Networking Sites in Political Campaigning

Social networking sites are a category of personalized websites that contain an individual's or group's profile with several interactive applications that people encounter on the Internet. These are especially prevalent in elections in the West, where candidates and political parties make their profiles and platforms available online to the public. In the Philippines, where the first Internet service was provided in 1994, Cuevas (2004) explained that this new technology became prominent in political communication at the height of the country's massive criticism of the then President Estrada, as evidenced in disgruntled exchanges posted on message boards, blogs and political commentaries online. These activities are believed to have led to the ousting and subsequent arrest of the president. However, given the relatively young and less aggressive penetration of the Internet in the country, its effect on political communication in Filipino society can only be gauged with difficulty.³

Political Hyperlinking

One of the most important methods in analyzing candidates' interactions and presence on the Internet is by looking at their use of political hyperlinking (Karan, et al. 2008). Much like connecting offline to people and groups of similar beliefs to widen one's political network or further one's agenda, political hyperlinking has become very important to candidates. Several studies have looked into the benefits of hyperlinking, suggesting that they, among others, build presence and recognition and provide easy access to the electorate via a network of supporters who also have online presence, as well as a more robust and dynamic interaction that could increase political participation. Political hyperlinking is a two-way process where one links to others (outlinks) and where one also receives a link from others (inlinks) (Park, Thelwall, & Kluver 2005).

Mobile Phones in Politics

The mobile phone, with its portability and affordability, has become one of the most sought-after communication devices in most parts of the world, especially in areas where personal computers (and thus, the Internet) remain largely unaffordable. Pertierra (2005) and Steenson (2006) acknowledged that the mobile phone is changing the dynamics of people's relationships, depending on the cultural structures and economy of each country. For instance, Wei (2005) concluded that the device serves as a double-edged sword in political communication in China where, on one hand, people can express their opinions against the government and, on the other hand, it also facilitates more effective government control. In the United States, Dale and Strauss (2007) found that the mobile phone has increased youth participation in political communication. In the Philippines, most people are believed to have greater access to

the mobile phone compared to the Internet and are said to have the most number of users of the SMS application (Suhaimi 2008).

Grassroots Movement and NMTs in Philippine Politics

Political System in the Philippines

Since the Philippines were ceded by the Spanish to the Americans through the Treaty of Paris in 1898, this Asian country of more than 7,000 islands had been through several political transitions.⁴ The Philippines is a republic where citizens aged 18 and above are accorded the right to suffrage and its democratic, presidential form of government is comprised of the executive (the President), the legislature (Senate and House of Representatives) and the judiciary (Supreme Court and lower courts). After the much heralded bloodless revolution in 1986, elections are held every six years for the president and vice-president and every three years (called midterm elections) for 12 of the 24 Senate seats,⁵ congressmen and local officials. Election into office is by popular vote; whoever gets the highest number of votes in the whole country or district shall win the contested positions (unlike, for instance, in the US, where primaries are held and the president is not directly elected by the people but through an electoral college).

In 1995, more defined segments of the electoral population were given representation when Republic Act 7941 came into force, introducing the party-list system⁶ where civic and interest groups were allowed to run for seats in Congress. Under this quota system, 20% of the 260 seats in Congress are reserved for party-list groups and a two percent share of the total votes won entitles a group to one seat, with three seats being the maximum that can be won. The Gabriela Women's Party (GWP), a spawn of the well-known GABRIELA women's group, and its closest ally, Bayan Muna, are two of the most prominent groups to join this political system.

GABRIELA - General Assembly Binding Women for Reforms, Integrity, Equality, Leadership, and Action

GABRIELA was founded in 1984, two years before the dictatorial reign of Ferdinand Marcos was overthrown by a bloodless "people power" (a term made popular by this historic event in the country) revolution.⁷ Women's rights in the Philippines were largely neglected during this authoritarian regime and, together with 42 local organizations, GABRIELA sought to overthrow Marcos. When the first female president took office after the revolution, the status of women in the society still did not improve. As a result, GABRIELA found its place in the newly liberated country where the fight for women's rights was starting to peak (Alojamiento 2007). The group's name is also in honour of Gabriela Silang, one of the first female generals who led several revolutions against the Spanish in the 18th century. After more than two decades in

operation, the movement has expanded into an alliance of 250 groups with 100,000 members, including a chapter in the United States which opened in 1989. Core members of the movement include women workers, peasants, urban poor, housewives, professionals, religious groups, and students who have their respective GABRIELA chapters on campus. Several issues are said to be the focus of the movement which include land reclamation, militarization, prostitution and trafficking, among others. In describing the movement, Ty (2007) stated:

"GABRIELA, as a social movement, is a learning site that mobilizes and organizes women, moves them to critical reflection, raises the consciousness of women through popular education, and incites them to action. Unlike Western feminist movements, which treat women's struggle as a distinct struggle, Third World women's movements, such as GABRIELA, consider women's struggle as integral to the whole society's struggle against poverty and patriarchal domination (page 4)."

When the party-list system was introduced, GABRIELA was one of the most active groups to run for Congress and thus enlisted Gabriela Women's Party (GWP) as its official party name in the year 2000, although it only registered as a candidate in 2004, where it won a single seat with Liza Maza as its representative and the only party in Congress representing women.⁸ The major breakthrough for GWP came in 2007 when the party won again; this time, not just one but two seats represented by Maza and Luzviminda Ilagan. According to the Commission on Elections' (COMELEC) Results, GWP ranked fourth in the party-list elections, winning two percent of the popular votes behind *Buhay Hayaan Yumabong* (BUHAY or Let Life Grow, a pro-life group), Bayan Muna, and the Citizen's Movement Against Corruption (CIBAC).

Bayan Muna (People First)

Bayan Muna is a conglomerate of several civic groups that came together in 1999 to form a political group⁹ in anticipation of their participation in the newly established party-list system, which they formally joined in 2001, enlisting Gabriela's then Secretary General Liza Maza as its candidate; the group won amid legal conflicts with the Commission on Elections. Bayan Muna also won seats in the 2004 and 2007 party-list elections.¹⁰ Representing marginalized groups in the society with 13 regional offices and 57 chapters nationwide, Bayan Muna stresses that:

"We embody the yearnings and aspirations of the most oppressed and the least heard, the "common tao (people)" – workers, peasants, fisher folk, indigenous peoples, urban poor and other downtrodden. We also give voice to the concerns of the middle social strata and the cause of women and youth as well as other various pressing issues."

It is no secret that elections in the Philippines are often marred with violence and Bayan Muna is said to be among

those at risk. In a testimony by Amnesty International's T. Kumar before the United States Senate in 2007,¹¹ the human rights organization stated that, along with other legal leftist groups (i.e. *Anak Pawis* or Toiling Masses), Bayan Muna is on the list of the most-targeted by the Armed Forces of the Philippines based on accusations that these militants serve as front for the rebel Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA). The testimony further stated that there has been a marked increase in fatal attacks on these groups since 2003.

Findings

In an archipelago of 88 million people, about 10 percent of whom are working outside the country, the promise of progress attached to NMTs seem to cater perfectly to the needs of the Filipino people. We explored the role of these technologies in political communication in the Philippines by looking at the cases of two allied party-list organizations that won seats in the 2007 party-list elections: Bayan Muna and GWP. These groups, in their quest to reach as many voters as they could, had the motivation to maximize new technologies to further their political campaigns. However, we argue that, given meagre funds and weaker machineries compared to bigger and more established political parties, Bayan Muna and GWP should have taken advantage of the lower costs of mass communication offered by the NMTs.

Bayan Muna finished second in the party-list race with more than 920,000 out of the almost 17 million votes that were cast.¹² This success gave the party two seats in the 14th Congress. The GWP ranked fourth with some 620,000 votes which also gave the party two seats. We looked into the campaign strategies of these groups. More specifically, we looked into how they used the Internet by setting up their own party websites, building their presence on social networking and video sharing sites, and how one of them campaigned through text (SMS) messaging via mobile phones.

GWP's 'multi-media campaign'

In acknowledging their limitations in terms of machinery and funding, GWP campaign coordinator Cristina Palabay said they could not just rely on grassroots campaigning considering the widely dispersed geographical nature of the country (personal communication, December 2007). In order to reach as many voters as they could, she explained that the party "formulated a multi-media plan alongside grassroots campaigning". A staunch critic of the administration, the GWP maximized their popularity as an opposing force against an unpopular government by joining street protests and issuing statements to the press.¹³ The Internet proved helpful to GWP in disseminating their press releases for possible coverage by the mainstream media, replacing the tedious and slower fax machine. GWP member Joan Salvador said:

"Whereas before we would have relied solely on snail mailing and faxing to communicate and enjoin our members, network organizations and even various media institutions in our various campaigns and activities, we now make use of the Internet (e-mailing, web feeds, online petition/signature gathering, at some point multimedia feeds) to promote our analyses and positions on issues, our programmes, advocacies and campaigns (personal communication, October 2007)."

Political advertisements were allowed in the Philippines, so the GWP produced its own television commercial early into the campaign. Popular local actress Angel Locsin endorsed Gabriela in the plug. Palabay said they also got help from popular and well-known leftist film directors Bibeth Orteza and her husband Carlitos Siguion-Reyna, who directed the commercial. Locsin's endorsement was for free but, due to huge airtime costs, Gabriela only managed to run it on national television for three days. On provincial television stations, where airtime was much cheaper, they managed to run it for a week. To compensate for this lack of funding, the group decided to upload it instead on the video sharing site YouTube. Salvador stated: "This helped our campaign a lot, since our resources for putting these videos on TV were very limited and we could only afford very few exposures on TV and radio." Palabay added that the video's presence on YouTube helped the group reach out to the middle class and other poor urban youth who had access to the Internet, albeit limited. The video emphasized the essence of an average Filipino woman, her plight and survival against all odds. Two YouTube accounts hosted the video, one of which was started by Palabay herself. The video received a total of 2,913 views. It is simple footage showing Locsin as well as a montage of images of different sectors of women from those in the slums to those in Congress.

Bayan Muna and YouTube

The GWP's use of YouTube pales in comparison to how Bayan Muna maximized the free video sharing site. Our search of the group's name on YouTube in January 2008 led us to an account named "bayanmunadotnet" which was set up in April 2007 and had nine videos: the party's political advertisement, a music video of the group, two "grabs" of what appeared to be television news clips about Bayan Muna and five videos showing Bayan Muna representative, Satur Ocampo, being interviewed. The video with the most number of viewings (20,831) was one of the five instalments of the interview. Bayan Muna's use of YouTube was both creative and practical because it provided Ocampo with the much-needed media exposure at a time when he was forced into hiding amid arrest orders, after the government had filed murder charges against him in March 2007.¹⁴ Ocampo stated that it was his staff who suggested they upload videos on YouTube (personal communication, February 2008). While in hiding, Bayan Muna came up with the idea of doing an interview with him and uploading it onto

YouTube and, about this endeavour, Ocampo said: "It was an experimental move but it turned out to be successful." This success can be attributed not only to the number of viewings the videos got but also to the fact that the mainstream media used the videos in their reports. Ocampo believes that the attention they got from the videos built the "momentum" the group needed until he resurfaced in the Supreme Court on 16 March 2007

Bayan Muna's YouTube activity, quoted in mainstream media reports, also contained a link to the group's well-developed party website which also generated interest for the whole party because of the free promotion. Through this strategy, the group managed to direct online users to their website and Ocampo had only good things to say about this technology:

"Information technology is really a big help. It has enabled small parties which otherwise would be unable to spend on communications in an election campaign, to promote advocacies. It has become an equalizing factor for small parties against big-moneyed political organizations."

Building networks in Friendster

The Gabriela Women's Party started an account on the social networking site Friendster¹⁵ in February 2007, when the campaign period began. Exploring the party's account in October 2007, we noted that it described itself as "female, 29, single." In the section "More About Me," the party stated:

"...a sector party dedicated to promoting the rights and welfare of marginalized and under-represented Filipino women through participation in the country's electoral system and organs of governance. It is a sector party composed of women aged 18 years and above, having varied occupations, education, interests, ethnic origin, religious affiliations and sexual orientation. The Gabriela Women's Party seeks to harness the potential, initiative, skills and leadership of marginalized women towards empowerment, justice and equality"

By the time we visited the account, it already had 175 listed friends, the majority of whom were females, although at least 34 were males. There were also 13 militant groups, four Gabriela chapters and one school listed on its list of friends. There were also Friendster accounts of school-based Gabriela chapters at the University of the Philippines, Manila, University of the Philippines, Diliman, and Polytechnic University of the Philippines. But looking for "Gabriela" in a simple name search on Friendster is problematic because thousands of users are registered under that name.

Putting up websites

The GWP launched its website in time for the 2007 elections.¹⁶ Though started a few weeks into the campaign period, the site developed into an important tool for reaching Internet-savvy young people and overseas voters, as Palabay explained:

"We think having a website was a positive thing. We were able to reach some sections of the middle class as well as

some members of the young urban poor who access the Internet. They were able to access more information about GWP because of our website."

Palabay also said the party site created opportunities for women to report cases and to encourage them to seek help from the organization. However, there was a need to develop the website to make it more comprehensive in detailing the party's activities, ideologies and development strategies. We visited the website in November 2007 and noted that it mostly contained press releases about the party's progress during the campaign. These touched on issues of negative publicity and the party's stance on court decisions concerning election fraud, allegations of widespread cheating among contenders and other issues. Palabay does not attribute their victory to the website: "For a website to be popular, you have to develop and advertise it. We only mounted the website late into the campaign period, so time really mattered to us. We had a problem maintaining the website because we did not have enough funds."

The website of Bayan Muna is better organized and loaded with more information; it had basic information about the party, press releases and offered interactive email and RSS feeds¹⁷ when visited in December 2007. We also noted that neither Bayan Muna nor GWP asked for campaign donations on their websites. Both websites are mostly in English, which may be related to the difficulty of engaging other members of society whose exposure is to Filipino, the native language of the country.

Political Hyperlinking

Using the program PowerMapper Standard, we mapped the websites of both Bayan Muna and GWP to analyze their hyperlinking practices – whether their huge network of hundreds of members and groups in their respective alliances are reflected in their online presence.

Of the 1,000 web pages of Bayan Muna's website that we mapped, we found that the group "outlinked" to several organizations outside its domain, www.bayanmuna.net (mapped 8 April 2009). Some of the organizations that Bayan Muna linked to are its close ally *Bagong Alyansang Makabayan* (BAYAN – New Patriotic Alliance), KARAPATAN (Alliance for the Advancement of People's Rights), and the Philippine Congress and Senate websites. We found it surprising that Bayan Muna does not link to either GWP or GABRIELA.

We mapped GWP's website twice. First on 5 January 2008 and, at that time, its website did not link to any organization or individual outside their domain, www.gabrielawomensparty.net. Even when there was a chance for the GWP to link to their video they had uploaded on YouTube, the group embedded the video on the website instead. When we tried to access their supposed links in the 'Resources' section, all external links were invalid and could not connect us to any outside groups or individuals. The second mapping was done on 8 April 2009 and much has changed in the political hyperlinking practice of

GWP. It is clear that the party had been more active in establishing its website, unlike in 2007 when it was built haphazardly in time for the elections. GWP links mostly to other women's groups both in the country and abroad; it also links to Bayan Muna's website.

The software we used for site mapping is limited in that it does not show inlinks or other websites linking to GWP and Bayan Muna. This can only be done through a more advanced program or by looking at the websites of external organizations to which both groups link; in any case, we know that Bayan Muna received an inlink from GWP.

GWP and mobile phones

The GWP members expressed mixed feelings about the Internet and its potential in political campaigning but they appeared satisfied with their use of mobile phones as a campaign tool. The strategy was simple: a writer would compose messages and send them out during special occasions observed by the party. Palabay reported that the effort paid off in terms of expanding the party's social network: "We sent it (a text message) to our friends and urged them to send it to five of their friends. We also asked the members of our public information team to send the messages to everyone in their phonebooks."

When Overseas Absentee Voting (OAV) started in April 2007, mobile phones were also used to expand the campaign through text messaging to Filipinos abroad. Under OAV, Filipinos outside the country can register as absentee voters. The GWP appealed to their supporters in the Philippines to send text messages to their relatives abroad to urge them to vote for the party. A "Text Back" campaign, launched a week before Election Day, reinforced this approach. The campaign was significant; Palabay stated that the GWP had around 500 members in Australia and 1,000 in Hong Kong, each of whom sent a text message to their relatives in the Philippines.¹⁸

The GWP sent these chain text messages five times during the campaign period, beginning on Valentine's Day 2007, which they called "Mahalin Mo Ako (Love Me) Day." They also sent messages on International Women's Day (8 March). The next set of messages was sent when OAV began in April, on Mother's Day, and finally before the campaign ended on 12 May. Palabay personally sent each message to all 600 contacts in her phone directory, though it was impossible to track how many friends forwarded her message.

Traditional Campaigning

The GWP members we interviewed revealed that the party used new media minimally, usually to make communication more convenient. The online campaign functioned only to support the grassroots campaign. Salvador said there were limits to what the new media can do, since the support base of Gabriela are poor women in far-flung areas with no access to the Internet:

"The Internet is effective only if it is accessible and, unfortunately, the reality is that many Filipinos, especially those at

the grassroots, still do not have access to the Internet. This, of course, is a concern for Gabriela, which emphasizes the empowerment of grassroots women and whose primary means of communication is identified by the women and people they organize and try to empower.

To reach grassroots levels, Maza said they also conducted door-to-door campaigns and motorcades (personal communication, October 2007). Save for a few street protests they organized and joined, like the Labour Day Rally on 1 May 2007, Gabriela did not hold any party rallies or sorties. But these rallies not only exposed the party to bystanders in the street but also generated some mainstream media exposure. She noted that traditional door-to-door canvassing was important and the group also had small motorcades in some areas.

Discussion and Conclusion

We have presented how two successful party-list groups used new media technologies in their political campaigns for the 2007 national elections. Of all the new media technologies (NMT) applications we looked at, Bayan Muna's use of YouTube and GWP's use of the mobile phone provide relatively successful examples.

Bayan Muna's maximization of YouTube was born out of a need. Avoiding prosecution, Ocampo had to be visible to the public to continue their campaign and he found an ally in the Internet. However, the relative success of the group's use of YouTube can only be measured by looking at the number of visits or hits their uploaded videos got from Internet users and the resulting coverage from the mainstream media. We are unwilling to conclude that Bayan Muna's use of YouTube brought in a significant number of voters unless voters are questioned regarding the factors that influenced them to vote for the group. What is certain in Bayan Muna's case is that their efforts at capturing the mainstream media's attention through YouTube worked to the group's advantage, from what we have gathered in our interview with its representative.

The GWP also used YouTube and even Friendster, but its efforts were more organized and geared towards harnessing the mobile phone, a technology that is very common in the country. This is consistent with a previous event in the country where the SMS application is believed to have helped galvanize Filipinos during the People Power II demonstrations that ousted former President Joseph Estrada in 2001. Though surfing the Internet requires some skill, mobile phones are easier to use and have much higher penetration rates in the country compared with personal computers.

These examples show that the assessment of NMTs and their potentials in political communication should be juxtaposed with the prevailing social context. Though these technologies have not singlehandedly defined the outcome of the 2007 elections, contrary to earlier expectations put forward by studies

which had expressed high hopes for their potential, the examples of Bayan Muna and the GWP prove that NMTs have become important and promising components of a bigger network of political campaigning strategies. YouTube made it easier for Ocampo to keep himself visible while hiding from the authorities. The GWP used mobile phones to reach potential supporters inside and outside the country whom they otherwise could not have reached through door-to-door campaigns or through the Internet. The examples of these two successful political parties illustrate the growing importance of these technologies among the available and cost-effective political campaigning strategies. Trends in using NMTs in political communication, and particularly during elections, would be apparent and enhanced in the many Asian countries like Indonesia and India that are going to the polls in the near future. Political parties are constantly engaging the use of all available mass media and interpersonal forms to reach the electorate. New media technologies do not impose themselves as replacements of traditional strategies; rather, they widen the alternatives in an ever changing political landscape.

Notes

- 1 The Internet worked very well in Obama's favour since the rookie senator had very few resources to start a campaign. His aggressive online campaign is believed to have widened his political reach in mainstream America where the Internet plays a major role in people's daily lives. To see more, *Internet key to Obama victories*, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/7412045.stm>.
- 2 According to the website, it serves as the new administration's transition, featuring one of its most important groups, the TIGR (Technology, Innovation, and Government Reform). The website enables interactive participation from citizens through applications such as the "Citizen's Briefing Book" and "Join the Discussion".
- 3 Cuevas further explained that most candidates' websites and profiles on other social networking sites mainly present their personal details and political achievements. In other words, educating the electorate about pertinent issues in the country is not always a priority.
- 4 After its declaration of independence led by opposition leader Emilio Aguinaldo was not recognized, the country's political system went from military rule to a civil government under the Americans and would continue to fight for independence until 1946. In 1972, the Philippines were once again under military rule when Ferdinand Marcos declared Martial Law that lasted until 1981 (To see more, http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761557463/ferdinand_marcos.html).
- 5 Since 1992, the first 12 senators with the highest number of votes serve for six years and the remaining 12 for three years (Senate of the Philippines, www.senate.gov.ph).
- 6 The party-list system has been active in the 1998, 2000, 2004, and 2007 elections. It also saw the most active participation with 93 registered parties, the highest since 1998.
- 7 Also known as the EDSA Revolution (for Epifanio Delos Santos Avenue, the site of the massive protests), this event would be repeated in 2001 (known as EDSA II or EDSA Dos) when Joseph Estrada was overthrown in the same manner and for which the country was given the first Global Nonviolence Award.
- 8 To see more, <http://gabrielanews.wordpress.com/about/>.
- 9 To see more, <http://www.bayanmuna.net/about.php>.
- 10 Official records from the Commission on Elections show that Bayan Muna won the highest number of votes in 2001, winning more than one and a half million or 11% of the total party-list votes and again in 2004, winning 1.2 million. The party came second in 2007 with almost one million votes. To see more, <http://www.comelec.gov.ph/results/intro.html>.
- 11 T. Kumar is the Advocacy Director for Asia and the Pacific for Amnesty International. The testimony was delivered before the Subcommittee on East Asian & Pacific Affairs of the US Senate's Committee on Foreign Relations. To see more, <http://foreign.senate.gov/testimony/2007/KumarTestimony070314.pdf>.
- 12 More than 30 million voters participated in the 2007 national elections, but only 17 million voted for the party-list groups. Any group that earned at least 334,462 votes (two percent of the projected maximum total party-list votes), got one congressional seat.
- 13 Midway in the campaign period, the government accused five leftist group leaders, including Gabriela's Liza Maza and Bayan Muna's Satur Ocampo, of involvement in the slaying of activists discovered in a mass grave in a province. Throughout this period, Gabriela was very active in sending press releases to the media, reacting to accusations hurled against the group and condemning the government for alleged repression.
- 14 Ocampo was accused of being involved in the killing of suspected spies within the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the National Democratic Front between 1985 and 1991, an allegation he denied.
- 15 Friendster remains the most used SNS in Asia and in the Philippines and claims to have more than 60 million registered users and more than 33 million monthly unique visitors.
- 16 To see more, <http://gabrielawomensparty.net/>.
- 17 To see more, www.bayanmuna.net.
- 18 The GWP got the most number of votes from the Overseas Absentee Voting. Of the 77,993 Overseas Absentee Voters who voted in the 2007 elections, 9,921—or more than 18 percent—rooted for Gabriela.

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- Joan Salvador, GABRIELA IT Officer, 15 October 2007.