

Exploring a state college's dialogic strategies and public engagement on Facebook

Daniel Fritz V. Silvallana and Benjamina Paula G. Flor

Abstract

Technological advances influence the way organizations communicate and build relations with the public. Previous studies have explored digital dialogic communication in different organizational contexts; however, there is a paucity of studies that focus on dialogic communication in public institutions. This current study extends the investigation of online relationship building by exploring how a state college uses Facebook to facilitate dialogic communication with stakeholders. Through quantitative content analysis and key informant interviews, a complete enumeration of Facebook posts from January to December 2020 examined the use of dialogic features within the Facebook profile as well as in-depth interviews with the directors, office heads, and stakeholders. Results showed that the state college used a variety of dialogic internet principles on Facebook. Yet, one-way strategies were still more commonly used. The principle of conservation of visitors and organizational engagement for creating an online dialogue enhances public engagement outcomes of users' reactions, likes, shares, and comments. Moreover, findings from qualitative data demonstrate that a state college relied on social media more to disseminate information rather than a dialogic and interactive medium for governance.

Keywords: dialogic communication, public engagement, social media, Facebook, state college, higher education institutions, governance

Plaridel Open Access Policy Statement

As a service to authors, contributors, and the community, *Plaridel: A Philippine Journal of Communication, Media, and Society* provides open access to all its content. To ensure that all articles are accessible to readers and researchers, these are available for viewing and download (except Early View) from the *Plaridel* journal website, provided that the journal is properly cited as the original source and that the downloaded content is not modified or used for commercial purposes. *Plaridel*, published by the University of the Philippines College of Mass Communication is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode>).

How to cite this article in APA

Silvallana, D. F. V. & Flor, B. P. G. (2022). Exploring a state college's dialogic strategies and public engagement on Facebook. *Plaridel*, 19(2), 55-75. <https://doi.org/10.52518/2022-05slvnflr>

Introduction

The rise of social media influences the way organizations communicate and build relationships with the public (Bonson & Ratkai, 2012; Men & Tsai, 2016). These social media platforms serve public relations functions for many organizations as outlets for news releases and dissemination of organizational information (Carpenter et al., 2016). They also offer an immediate response to organizational problems and crises (Stageman & Berg, 2013).

In the 2020 Global Digital Report, close to five billion people worldwide use the Internet, increasing 7.3% from the previous year. Social media users have also grown by 13%, which is now equivalent to more than 53% of the world's total population (Kemp, 2020). Notwithstanding its public relations potential, social media remains underutilized by many organizations and under-examined by scholars as a tool for building organizational-public relationships.

Digital dialogic communication has become a well-researched topic in the organizational communication and public relations field, which focuses on analyzing online relationship building in various social media platforms (e.g., Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; Men et al., 2018). Scholars have also documented the positive and negative impacts of dialogic communication on public relations, such as trust, mutuality, and empathy (e.g., Yang et al., 2015).

Prior research on digital dialogue has primarily focused on nonprofit organizations and corporations; however, there were a handful of empirical studies on public institutions (e.g., Martin et al., 2015; Soon & Soh, 2014). De Jesus (2003) argued that effective governance, most especially public governance, requires effective communication. Improved governance is achieved through adequate flows of information between a public institution and its stakeholders. In this sense, public institutions have a crucial role in engaging their stakeholders both offline and online. Moreover, scholars have emphasized that dialogic communication is an essential form of ethical communication for mitigating power relations—a critical consideration for genuine organization-public engagement (Taylor & Kent 2014; Yang et al., 2015).

In the context of a state college, this study uses Kent and Taylor's (1998) concept of dialogue to examine the extent to which public institutions foster relationships with their stakeholders. Scholars like Kent and Taylor argued that dialogic relationships are constructed online. They pointed out that relationships between the public and organization "can be created, adapted and changed through the world wide web" (p. 326). Organizations need to understand how social media functions primarily by creating and

maintaining dialogic relationships. In addition, Kent and Taylor (2002) point out that dialogue is a relational orientation that “any individuals or organizations who engage in dialogue must willingly make dialogic commitments to the public” (p. 24).

Furthermore, engagement is an essential component of dialogue. When organizations and the public are engaged, they can make social capital decisions (Taylor & Kent, 2014). Therefore, in this study, we propose to examine the effectiveness of dialogic communication on Facebook, specifically if employing these principles leads to public participation and interaction.

Empirically, this study provides new knowledge linking dialogic communication and the public sector. Methodologically, by building upon the mixed-method approach, the study elaborates on the usefulness of providing both quantitative and qualitative data in dialogic communication research. Theoretically, it also seeks to expand the importance of the dialogue on social media in establishing and enhancing relations between the organization and the public.

DNSC as a case

A state college is an interesting context wherein one can examine how social media has been used to facilitate organization-public relationships. State colleges and universities have unique and diverse segmented audiences such as prospective students, current students, and alumni, and the generational differences, styles, and needs of each group.

As a flagship state college of Davao del Norte, Davao del Norte State College (DNSC) is a public higher education institution situated in the northern part of the Davao region. It has nearly 6,000 undergraduate and graduate students in its five academic institutes: Teacher Education; Humanities and Social Sciences; Leadership, Entrepreneurship and Good Governance; Aquatic and Applied Sciences; and Advanced Studies. It also offers postgraduate studies in educational management, marine sciences, fisheries, and information technology and certificate programs. The current study looks at how Davao del Norte State College incorporates dialogic communication to engage its key stakeholders.

Formerly known as Fisheries Institute, DNSC was established in 1995 under Republic Act 7879, which converted the Davao Regional Institute of Fisheries Technology into a state college. It is mandated to provide instruction and progressive leadership in education, engineering, arts, sciences, fisheries, and other fields (Davao del Norte State College, n.d.). As part of its strategic direction in 2020–2024, it is envisioned as becoming a pillar of the higher education system by becoming a premier higher

education that provides Agri-fisheries and Socio-Cultural development in the ASEAN Region (Davao del Norte State College, 2020).

DNCS is one of the public, academic institutions in the Philippines that has gradually embraced social media and fully integrated it as a form of marketing and communication strategy as a tool for communicating with the institution's key audiences. Specifically, the state college maintains an official website, Facebook page, YouTube channel, and Twitter account. These accounts received considerable participation from online audiences, an observation in January 2021 as we were gathering data.

The official Facebook page @davnorstatecollege has 20,381 followers and 19,430 likes and still counting (Davao del Norte State College, n.d.). This number is an indication that DNCS is working hard and committed to connecting its key stakeholders through social media despite the pandemic. It is important to note that these figures represent only official institutional-wide accounts and do not include other social media sites managed by individual institutes or programs.

Building online relationships

The theory of dialogic communication was introduced by Kent and Taylor (1998) to provide a framework on how to facilitate relationship-building with the public through the world wide web. They defined dialogic communication as "any negotiated exchange of ideas and opinions" guided by two tenets: (a) Although individuals engaged in dialogue do not necessarily agree, they are willing to reach a mutually satisfying agreement, and (b) dialogic communication is about mutual understanding or intersubjectivity (Kent & Taylor, 1998, p. 325). Dialogue values "interpersonal interaction" and emphasizes "meaning-making, understanding, a concretion of reality, and sympathetic/empathetic interactions" (Taylor & Kent, 2014, p. 389). As a public-centered approach, the theory also focuses on relational outcomes such as trust, satisfaction, and sympathy (Kent & Taylor, 2002).

Kent and Taylor (2002) further explicate the dialogic approach to public relations. They introduced the five features of dialogue: mutuality, propinquity, empathy, risk, and commitment, which can be incorporated into interpersonal, mediated, and organizational communication.

There were five dialogic internet principles proposed by Kent and Taylor (1998) to guide scholars and practitioners to operationalize dialogue through the world wide web. Specifically, they suggested that organizations should (a) create an interactive dialogic loop to solicit feedback and answer questions from the public; (b) provide useful, relevant information of interest to the public; (c) generate return visitors by providing an engaging and dynamic site; (d) conserve visitors by referring users to other information

provided by the organization; and lastly (e) design a user-friendly, intuitive interface.

In the past years, the dialogic internet principles have been empirically examined and tested in the online communication of different organizational settings (e.g., Ward & Sweetser, 2014). Recently, when social media became popular in many organizations, these principles were applied in social media settings (e.g., Men et al., 2018).

However, scholars pointed out that dialogue has been uncritically equated to two-way symmetrical communication, indicating that previous literature overlooked the philosophical underpinnings of the conceptual and operational definitions of dialogue when used in theory (Theunissen & Wan Noordin, 2012). In a systematic analysis of research applying principles of dialogic communication, Wirtz and Zimbres (2018) concluded that scholars applying the principles of dialogic communication to web-based organizational communication have failed to recognize and describe the concepts related to dialogue or dialogic communication.

Several scholars have re-examined the philosophical underpinning of dialogue to address these conflicting ideas of dialogic communication as mere medium design features (Kent & Lane, 2017). They argued that dialogue should be viewed as a “philosophical disposition” rather than a “physical action” that aims to achieve a predetermined outcome” (Theunissen & Noordin, 2012, p. 7).

Although dialogic internet principles provide a space for dialogue, operationalizing these principles alone does not automatically build relationships and enhance public engagement. It is imperative to address key principles of dialogue such as mutuality, propinquity, empathy, risk, commitment, and attributes of dialogic communication to realize a genuine dialogue.

Social media engagement

The concept of engagement has been considered an essential part of the dialogue. By engagement, organizations and the public can make decisions that create social capital (Taylor & Kent, 2014). Engagement emerged as one feature of the principle of propinquity. Dialogic propinquity means that “publics are consulted in matters that influence them, and for the public, it means that they are willing and able to articulate their demands to organizations” (Taylor & Kent, 2014, p. 26). In other words, engagement is an acknowledgment that interactants are willing to give their whole selves to encounters. It assumes accessibility, presentness, and a willingness to interact.

Men and Tsai (2013) have conceptualized engagement on social media as a hierarchical behavioral construct with varied activity levels from passive message consumption (e.g., viewing social media posts) to active content contributing, which includes two-way conversation and online recommendations (e.g., commenting and replying to other's SNS posts). In a web survey conducted by Men and Tai (2016), they found that social media users most frequently engaged in reactive message consumption behaviors (e.g., reading CEOs' posts) rather than proactive contributing behaviors (e.g., participating in conversations with the CEO and other fans).

Taylor and Kent (2014) argued that dialogic engagement should take place because "it enables organizations and stakeholders to interact, fostering understanding, goodwill and a shared view of reality" (p. 391). They added that engagement represents a two-way, relational, give and take between organizations and stakeholders/ public to improve understanding, make decisions for the common good and foster a fully functioning society—an essential indication of participatory communication among involved stakeholders.

On social media, public engagement can be in the form of reacting, sharing, and responding to the organization's posts which implies the publics' enthusiasm to interact and invest time and effort beyond what is required. The various levels of online engagement show the publics' interest and presentness in an open and negotiated discussion for achieving mutual understanding (Taylor & Kent, 2014).

Social media for governance

Despite the prevalence of dialogic communication in various organizations, prior studies have focused mainly on nonprofit organizations and corporations, while empirical evidence connecting dialogic communication in public institutions remains scarce. Some of these studies were conducted in national and local governments. For instance, Martin et al. (2015) analyzed the extent to which European local governments incorporate dialogic strategies in their Twitter profiles and found that most local governments were unaware of the benefits offered by dialogic principles when establishing online relationships with stakeholders.

Soon and Soh (2014) identified how Singaporean ministers need to commit to dialogic communication. Firstly, public institutions need to invest time and resources in sense-making, maintaining presence, and managing communication activities. Secondly, the public sector needs to evaluate current mindset and engagement practices to solicit opinions and policy development recommendations.

To expand the importance of digital dialogic communication in public institutions, the current study aims to explore the extent of the use of dialogic communication on Facebook, specifically in the context of a state college. A state college was selected as the subject of analysis because this type of institution is one of the public institutions using social media to communicate, connect, respond, and build mutually beneficial relationships with key stakeholders. Moreover, state universities and colleges are falling behind compared to private and comprehensive institutions in terms of knowledge and resources in using social media (Hall, 2014), which may affect their delivery of services and programs as a public entity.

Method

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed method design to understand better an interesting phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The data collection involved two phases in which quantitative data was deeply supported by qualitative data.

First, a content analysis was conducted from January 2021 to March 2021. Facebook was selected as the data collection platform because it was the top social media platform used by the state college, and it has analytical tools, which are easier to obtain the data from. The unit of analysis was posts from a Facebook page and retrieved through a Facebook analytical tool called Insights. The study selected posts from January 2020 to December 2020. The data was exported by inputting the data type (e.g., page, post, or video) and date range. The other data types were also selected, such as key post metrics for reach, impression, and feedback.

A total of 236 posts on the state college Facebook page were collected. Complete enumeration was used as this would provide detailed information on all or most elements of the content being analyzed (Lavrakas, 2008). However, three posts were categorized as statuses with no corresponding content, hence eliminated in the sample. Thus, the final sample consisted of 233 qualified posts.

A coding sheet was used to filter the posts on Facebook. This guide included the (a) post characteristics: identification, permalink, message; (b) dialogic principles; and (c) engagement metrics. Bortree and Seltzer's (2009) approach was followed to operationalize dialogic principles by eliminating "ease of the interface," which was deemed indiscriminate and by default in all Facebook profiles. In addition, consistent with Kent et al. (2003) and Bortree and Seltzer (2009), the principle of "usefulness of information" was renamed as "information of interest to the public." The study also added the dialogic principle "organizational engagement" proposed by Bortree and Seltzer (2009). Hence, dialogic internet principles were coded with five sub-

specifics: *conservation of visitors, generation of a return visit, dialogic loop, and information of interests to the public, and organizational engagement.* All the measurement items for the dialogic internet principles were adopted from previous literature (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; Kent et al., 2003; Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010) and modified to fit the study context of Facebook. They were coded as 1 being yes and 0 being no.

After conducting the content analysis, an in-depth interview was conducted with the heads of offices and the stakeholders such as faculty, staff, and students. They were purposefully chosen to be interviewed through virtual platforms due to the ongoing health restrictions (Patton, 2015). Heads of office were asked about the state college’s social media plans and strategy. Meanwhile, the faculty, staff, and students were asked about their engagement online with the state college’s Facebook page. The main questions were followed up with in-depth questions to encourage the informants to narrate and describe their experiences in social media engagement. There were five informants as heads of offices (e.g., director, head of communication unit, Dean) and five informants each from faculty, staff, and students. All of them are members of the state college community and familiar with the official Facebook page of the College.

Data collected from the content analysis were tabulated, coded, and analyzed using descriptive statistics. Meanwhile, the responses to the interviews were transcribed and then categorized based on the content analysis results. The interview data supported the tabulated data in percentage form.

Results

Characteristics of Facebook posts

Most organizations create Facebook pages to spark engagement in different ways. Organizations’ social media strategy and goals will likely impact the kind of posts they will be making. Thus, understanding the characteristics of Facebook posts becomes imperative.

Table 1. Distribution by post type in DNSC’s Facebook page

Type of Post	Frequency	Percentage
Photos	181	75.7
Shared Videos	22	9.2
Videos	20	8.4
Links	3	1.3
Status	7	3.0

Total	233	100
Day of Post	Frequency	Percentage
Monday	47	20
Tuesday	37	16
Wednesday	37	16
Thursday	37	16
Friday	14	6
Saturday	26	11
Sunday	35	15
Total	233	100

Table 1 presents the most common type of post used by the state college and the frequency of posts on their Facebook page. The majority of posts were photos (181 or 75.7%), followed by shared videos (22 or 9.2%) and videos (20 or 8.4%). Meanwhile, the smallest number of posts that included links (3 or 1.3%) and status (7 or 8.4%) were less used by the page administrators. Meanwhile, the distribution of page administrator’s posts was relatively uniform over different days of the week. On a daily basis, postings from Monday to Saturday ranged from 11 to 20%. Monday had the highest posting at 20%, and Friday had the least (6%).

The Public Information and Communications Office understood the value of creating content attractive to the state college’s target audiences. The Head of the Communication Office noted that, “we try to be excellent in everything we put out in our social media. Although it is not perfect at all times, we make sure the information will be competitive both content-wise and structure-wise” (C.N. Lanes, personal communication, January 15, 2021).

Social media managers believe that creating relevant, engaging content for social media channels is consequential for the state college’s social media communication. The interviews with the heads and directors revealed that the state college carefully sorted out information to be posted online. These gatekeeping decisions were made by the Public Information and Communication Office (PICO) along with the other offices such as Multimedia Office, Applied Communication, and Information and Technology Support Office. PICO is responsible for content creation, monitoring, and ensuring thoroughness and civility in all Facebook posts.

The Director for Executive Affairs revealed that their key social media audiences are mainly students, faculty, and alumni (M. Dalumay, personal

communication, January 15, 2021). Their main goal is to build awareness for the state college and tell stories via social media outlets such as Facebook to engage their multiple key audiences.

Features of dialogic communication

Table 2 shows the extent to which the functional features of digital dialogic communication, namely dialogic loop, generation of return visits, information interest to the public, organizational engagement, and conservation of visitors, were incorporated in a state college’s Facebook posts. The results of the study revealed that among the five principles examined, “dialogic loop” (139 or 58.2%) was the most commonly used, followed by “information interest to publics” (127 or 53%), “generation of return visits” (88 or 36.8%), “organizational engagement” (16 or 6.7%) and “conservation of visitors” (1 or 0.4%). The state college often used hashtags (139 or 67.1%) to initiate dialogue online; however, the state college rarely directly replied to users’ comments (22 or 10.6%) and reacted to the users’ comments on a post (16 or 7.7%). Memorandums, frequently asked questions (FAQs), and event announcements (103 or 59.2%) to provide information of interest to the public were also commonly featured. In addition, the state college provided links to other Facebook pages (82 or 79.6%) and links to other websites to offer additional information to followers and attract return visitors. Providing links to the College’s official website (1 or 0.4%) were least featured.

Table 2. Distribution of posts by principles of dialogic communication

		Frequency	Percentage
<i>Dialogic Loop</i>		139	58.2%
	Reply by the College to a user’s comment on a post	22	10.6%
	Like or other reaction by the College to a user’s comment on a post	16	7.7%
	The provision of surveys for users to express opinions on the College	5	2.4%
	The use of hashtags	139	67.1%
	Request to ask a question or leave a comment	10	4.8%
	Questions posted by the College to solicit feedback	1	0.5%
	College tagging/calling someone to engage in conversation	14	6.8%

<i>Information Interest to Stakeholders</i>		127	53.1%
	Press Releases	11	6.3%
	Speeches/written statements/column by the College	7	4.0%
	Statement of the College's vision/mission/goals	2	1.1%
	Memorandums/FAQ/Announcements/Events	103	59.2%
	Details on how to participate in activities or events organized by the school	32	18.4%
	Summaries of activities of the College	19	10.9%
<i>Generation of Return Visits</i>		88	36.8%
	Links to (not necessarily College website) websites where additional can be obtained	10	9.7%
	Links to news related to the College	4	3.9%
	Option to request information by mail/email	7	6.8%
	Links to other Facebook pages	82	79.6%
<i>Organizational Engagement</i>		16	6.7%
	Organizational comments in dialogic spaces	16	6.7%
<i>Conservation of visitors</i>		1	0.4%
	Links to the College's official websites	1	0.4%

The state college uses social media primarily to disseminate information. Facebook has been considered a cost-effective and accessible medium compared to traditional media such as television and radio. This approach to social media enables the state college administration to share information essential to their stakeholders efficiently. The Director for Executive Affairs said that, "Our Facebook page is one of the ways wherein we can update the different activities we have in school" (M. Dalumay, personal communication, January 15, 2021).

Social media is the quickest and fastest way to inform their stakeholders on events, policy issues, news stories, and other resources from the higher office. "For example, if there is an urgent memorandum like suspension of classes due to a calamity, social media is the best way and the quickest to inform them immediately regarding the college's administration actions," the Head of College Secretarial Affairs said (J. Barnido, personal communication, January 15, 2021). Compared to websites, social media becomes a "part and parcel" of people's lives which provides the state college with the best way to reach their stakeholders.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the state college maximized the platform to create positive attitudes toward online classes and other public issues. The state college primarily enacts this approach by creating posts such as #StaySafe COVID-19 updates and College’s accomplishments with COVID-19 response. For example, the state college creates posts on Facebook to provide uplifting messages. PIO said, “This is our way of online support to our existing programs and activities” (C.N. Lanes, personal communication, January 15, 2021)

The results also show that they want to increase awareness of the resources available for the stakeholders such as students. The Dean states that, “Social media becomes an avenue where prospective students ask for information about enrollment requirements prior to going to the campus” (A. Duping, personal communication, January 15, 2021).

Effects of dialogic communication on public engagement

Table 3 shows the effect of dialogic communication on public engagement using multiple regression analysis. The overall results suggest that among the five dialogic principles, the *principle of information of interest to the public* had negative effects on the total number of users’ shares, comments, and reactions. Meanwhile, the *principle of organizational engagement* was positively associated with the most engagement indicators in terms of users’ likes, comments, and shares. In other words, the state college’s interaction on discussion or wall spaces positively influences public engagement. In addition, the *principle of conservation of visitors* exhibited positive effects on the total number of likes. The state college provides links to websites where additional information could be obtained engendered public engagement.

Table 3. Summary of regression analysis results

	Predictor	User_Like		User_Comment		User_Share	
		β	t	β	t	β	t
Dialogic internet principles	<i>Dialogic loop</i>	.209	2.751	-.068 ^c	-.765	.034 ^c	.386
	<i>Conservation of visitors</i>	.166	2.665	.387	5.448	.430	6.365
	<i>Organizational engagement</i>	.183	2.441	.282	3.971	.466	6.908
	<i>Generate return visits</i>	.047 ^d	.664	.069 ^c	.950	.041 ^c	.604
	<i>Information of interest to the public</i>	-.016 ^d	-.252	-.084 ^c	-1.177	-.009 ^c	-.127

****p* > 0.001; ***p* > 0.01; * *p* > 0.05

Faculty and students' interviews revealed a medium level of social media engagement. The participants engaged primarily in message-consuming activities such as reading posts and watching videos. One student said, "I visit the Facebook page and often check the important posts from the College. When there are important announcements, I somehow mention or tag my friends, especially about enrollment" (N. Demetillo, personal communication, January 15, 2021). A faculty member also stated, "I keep up with the enrollment announcement. Although announcements are given to us in advance, I would like to know what the announcement looks like to the public so I can communicate to them accordingly" (S. Pampilon, personal communication, January 15, 2021).

Overall, public information is considered an essential function of social media in the context of the state college. They publish and coordinate opportunities for students, faculty members, alumni, and staff to increase their participation in campus activities. One student said, "Personally, the information I find extremely relevant to me as a student is about enrollment and school's activities" (R. Tagalicod, personal communication, January 15, 2021). Another staff member mentioned, "Invitations posted on the College's Facebook page resulted in a notable impact of more people who are attending the campus activities" (C.Fuentes, personal communication, January 15, 2021).

In the absence of physical interaction, social media also enabled the state college to become a place of interaction among members to interact with the school's representatives and other stakeholders. It allowed for more small social talk among stakeholders, fulfilling the critical function of providing information when members shared information that benefited the community. One student mentioned that they usually tagged their friends if essential information was helpful to them.

Discussion

The advent of digital media has allowed organizations to engage with their stakeholders. The present study explores the various dialogic strategies that state colleges incorporate in their social media and its accomplishments in running their school governance.

One major finding of this study is that state colleges used a variety of types of Facebook posts in communicating online. In engaging various audiences on social media, DNSC used a variety of visual materials such as photos and audio-visual materials such as videos. This finding is supported by interviews with social media managers, where they foreground the importance of creating engaging content such as audio-visual materials as their social media strategy. A previous study indicates that photos in a post

can cause high interaction levels (Pletikosa & Michahelles, 2013) and were more likely to encourage Facebook users to engage (Kim & Yang, 2017), similar to how DNSC's communication team evaluates the effectiveness of their efforts. Surprisingly, videos were not maximized by the state college when these mediums that involve five senses were assumed to have more likely gotten the attention of the online followers. Perhaps, the photos were more relatable and useful to its stakeholders than the shared videos and videos posted. Hence, this implies that the College did not maximize the use of Facebook to get the attention of its stakeholders. In terms of posting frequency, the results demonstrate posting activity of state college's Facebook page during early days of the week while Friday had the least posting activity, which connotes that fewer online users would bother to check on the page. The finding implies that the state college should capitalize on posting relevant information during the early days of the week to sustain engagement. However, previous studies indicated that the posting day had a minimal effect on public engagement (Pletikosa & Michahelles, 2013), probably because the nature of the posts matters much.

Previous literature has lauded the use of social media to facilitate dialogic communication and relationship building (Watkins, 2017; Bortree & Seltzer, 2009). Much of these studies have highlighted the variety of dialogic internet principles to operationalize dialogue online. DNSC's Facebook posts analysis indicates that various dialogic internet principles are used when communicating on Facebook. Overall, one-way strategies, such as the use of hashtags and providing information such as memoranda, frequently asked questions, announcements, events, and details on participating in activities or events organized by the College. However, the state college rarely directly replied to users' comments and occasionally liked or reacted to users' comments in initiating dialogue. Kent and Taylor (1998) described a dialogic loop as an "appropriate starting point for dialogic communication between an organization and its public" (p. 326). This is important to DNSC as a public institution because it relies on its stakeholders to achieve its vision and mission. However, it is essential to note that dialogic communication is a communicative give and take process; thus, the public should query the organization. More importantly, social media can help address campus issues by checking feedback on Facebook.

Moreover, the qualitative data revealed that the state college positioned social media as a one-way communication platform. This finding confirmed similar results even from previous studies on how organizations used web-based platforms to disseminate information rather than create public dialogue. Although an organization is not compelled to respond to the public, organizations must be inclined to make a dialogic commitment to

the public. The state college needs to have mutual recognition of coming into a relationship where the public is part and active participant of the communication process. Because of how social media reaches the public, one organization can affect the organization-public relationships with other institutions. As active participants, the public must be provided the space for rhetorical exchange where they are adequately consulted on the issues and concerns that influence them.

In the public institution, empathetic communication is indispensable as this can improve communication between the government and citizens by “walking in the shoes” of their public. Providing support and confirmation of public goals and interests will pave the way for a supportive and trusted environment, which is essential for the dialogue to succeed. Normally, the parties involved in a dialogue take relational risks, but it also has substantial rewards. Both organizational and interpersonal relationships have implicit risks. Hence, an organization must devote itself to dialogue, interpretation, and understanding in its interactions with the public. These beliefs encompass the implicit and explicit values that underlie the concept of dialogue.

While dialogue cannot guarantee the results of ethical public relations, a dialogic communication orientation increases the likelihood that the public and organizations will better understand each other and have basic rules for communication.

From an organizational perspective, dialogue equates to the organization’s high commitment of resources, especially to train representatives to communicate dialogically. A dedicated staff must be assigned to create content and graphics to attract and engage an audience online and training necessary to upgrade their skills and improve their strategies in using online platforms. More importantly, the organization must commit to maximizing the social media presence to engage in dialogue rather than just as an information dissemination tool.

Furthermore, our findings indicated that the state college’s use of dialogic strategies could foster public engagement on social media. The dialogic internet principle of “*organizational engagement*” satisfies the public’s information needs through organization comments in-wall or discussion boards and leads to public engagement (i.e., comments, reactions) and advocacy (i.e., likes, shares). Although least practiced, the principle of conservation of visitors contributes significantly to the public’s likes. The finding implies that while state college’s social media page was used as an informal venue to provide updates and other information, the two-way dialogic feature will help DNSC engage their stakeholders online more effectively. Because of the popularity of social media in many organizations,

social media will play a significant role in DNSC as a public institution could obtain the considerable benefits and potential offered by the platforms for their relationships with stakeholders, especially as concerns the public interaction generated by the co-production (between the public institution and the population) of ideas, content, and solutions (Martin et al., 2015).

Dialogic communication acknowledges individuals and indirectly communicates that participants play an active role in addressing issues confronted by the parties. The DNSC's Facebook page would have been an ideal opportunity to be a platform with a trusting and supportive environment where the relationship could be established. The Facebook page could hopefully be a forum where students are connected and an opportunity to successfully reflect the DNSC brand through which the community members can participate.

Suffice it to say that the state college's accomplishments through Facebook may not have resulted in full public communication, participation, and community cohesion in terms of governance. Dialogic communication as an offshoot for online interaction had not been maximized simply because creating the social media platform was meant for information dissemination rather than communication. In communication, interactions are expected; therefore, it is incumbent upon the management to initiate those to sustain a dialogue.

Conclusion

The advent of social media offers new opportunities for a public institution like the state college to create meaningful dialogue with its stakeholders. However, the state college used various media resources to encourage the digital public; however, not to a notable degree. In terms of principles of dialogic communication, one-way communication strategies were most commonly used compared to two-way strategies. However, without two-way conversations, communication can hardly be fully dialogic. This finding confirms that two-way communication such as organizational engagement and dialogic loop encourages online users to interact through likes, comments, and shares. Although social media or any other technological tool alone cannot achieve dialogue, its affordances, such as interactive, conversational, empowering nature, helps put into motion the potential for a dialogic exchange between the state college officials and the public.

Overall, the study results indicate that the state college operates under the monologic rather than the dialogic continuum. Monologic indicates communication as either propaganda or persuasion instead of dialogue based on mutuality and respect to all parties. Thus, the state college has managed social media as simply a public information tool that enables it to

convey the organization's message to its stakeholders simultaneously and efficiently share information about events happening in the College.

Limitations and Recommendations

The study delved around the concept of dialogic communication and what accomplishments the public institution had achieved governance-wise. However, it did not include the logistics that went into the design, development, production, and institutionalization of the social media account. It did not also include how messages were crafted, the reasons for posting a particular post, or the nature of the posts. Furthermore, the study was reticent about writing style or branding issues that may somehow influence influencers' online presence and presence. Future research can investigate other social media platforms such as Twitter Instagram by public institutions.

Moreover, the study was conducted in a state college made of smaller units such as institutes and departments. Each institute and department is even broken down into smaller units. On top of that, student and faculty organizations may also maintain social media platforms for communication. Thus, future research may explore the nuances among different units of an organization and how digital dialogic communication may be more evident in these units.

From a practical point of view, the findings suggest that the public information and communication office should offer recommendations to the school administrator to provide sufficient and value-added information tailored to stakeholders' needs and interests on their Facebook page. To complete the dialogic loop, it is also necessary to capitalize on the functional dialogic features of social media, such as replies and reactions to the public's comments and active interaction on discussion and wall boards. More importantly, to have genuine dialogue as a product of ongoing communication and relationships, the state college needs to recognize those relationships and have a commitment to giving itself over dialogue and understanding in its interactions with the public.

References

- Bonsón, E., & Ratkai, M. (2013). A set of metrics to assess stakeholder engagement and social legitimacy on a corporate Facebook page. *Online Information Review*, 37(5), 787-803. <https://doi.org/10.1108/OIR-03-2012-0054>
- Bortree, D. S., & Seltzer, T. (2009). Dialogic strategies and outcomes: An analysis of environmental advocacy groups' Facebook profiles. *Public Relations Review*, 35(3), 317-319. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2009.05.002>
- Carpenter, S., Takahashi, B., Cunningham, C., & Lertpratchya, A. (2016). The roles of social media in promoting sustainability in higher education. *International Journal of Communication*, 10, 4863-4881. <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/4694>
- Creswell, J., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods* (5th ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.
- Davao del Norte State College. (n.d.). *DNSC Milestones*. <http://dnsc.edu.ph/history/>
- Davao del Norte State College. (2020). *Davao del Norte State College Strategic Plan 2020-2024*. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1TjRvqeKz-OT4AV9UHm2AltR6-0w5Lvxx/view>
- Davao del Norte State College (n.d.). *Home* [Facebook page]. Facebook. Retrieved February 12, 2022 from <https://www.facebook.com/davnorstacollege>
- De Jesus, M. (2003). *Effective communication for effective governance: The press and the public*. Center for International Public Enterprise.
- Hall, S. (2014). *How higher education institutions utilize social media*. (Publication No. 132) [Honor College Theses, Georgia Southern University]. Digital Commons @ Georgia. <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/honors-theses/132>
- Kemp, S. (2020). *Digital 2020: 3.8 Billion people use social media*. We are Social. <https://wearesocial.com/uk/blog/2020/01/digital-2020-3-8-billion-people-use-social-media/>
- Kent, M. L., & Lane, A. B. (2017). A rhizomatous metaphor for dialogic theory. *Public Relations Review*, 43(3), 568-578. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2017.02.017>
- Kent, M., & Taylor M. (1998). Building dialogic relationships through the world wide web. *Public Relations Review*, 24(3), 321-334. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0363-8111\(99\)80143-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0363-8111(99)80143-X)
- Kent, M., & Taylor M. (2002). Toward a dialogic theory of public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 28(1), 21-37. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0363-8111\(02\)00108-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0363-8111(02)00108-X)
- Kent, M. L., Taylor, M., & White, W. J. (2003). The relationship between website design and organizational responsiveness to stakeholders. *Public Relations Review*, 29(1), 63-77. doi:10.1016/S0363-8111(02)00194-7
- Kim, C., & Yang, S. (2017). Like, comment, and share on Facebook: How each behavior differs from the other. *Public Relations Review*, 43(2), 441-449. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2017.02.006>
- Lavrakas, P. (2008). *Encyclopedia of survey research methods* (1st ed). Sage Publications, Inc. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412963947.n337>
- Martín, A. S., de Rosario, A. H., & Pérez, M. (2015). Using Twitter for dialogic communication: Local government strategies in the European Union. *Local Government Studies*, 41(3), 421-444. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03003930.2014.991866>

- Men, L. R., & Tsai, W. S. (2013). Toward an integrated model of public engagement on corporate social networking sites: Antecedents, the process, and relational outcomes. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 7(4), 257-273. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1553118X.2013.822373>
- Men, L. R., & Tsai, W. S. (2016). Public engagement with CEOs on social media: Motivations and relational outcomes. *Public Relations Review*, 42(5), 932-942. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2016.08.001>
- Men, L. R., Tsai, W. S., Chen, Z. F., & Ji, Y. G. (2018). Social presence and digital dialogic communication: engagement lessons from top social CEOs. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 30(3), 83-99. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1062726X.2018.1498341>
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Pletikosa, I., & Michahelles, F. (2013). Online engagement factors on Facebook brand pages. *Social Network Analysis and Mining*, 3, 843-861. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13278-013-0098-8>
- Rybalko, S., & Seltzer, T. (2010). Dialogic communication in 140 characters or less: How Fortune 500 companies engage stakeholders using Twitter. *Public Relations Review*, 36(4), 336-341. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2010.08.004>
- Stageman, A., & Berg, K. (2013). Friends, fans, and followers: A case study of Marquette University's use of social media to engage with key stakeholders. *Case Studies in Strategic Communication*, 2, 3-34. <http://cssc.uscannenber.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/v2art2.pdf>
- Soon, C., & Soh Y. D. (2014). Engagement@web 2.0 between the government and citizens in Singapore: dialogic communication on Facebook? *Asian Journal of Communication*, 24(1), 42-59. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01292986.2013.851722>
- Taylor, M. & Kent, M. (2014). Dialogic engagement: Clarifying foundational concepts. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 26(5), 384-398. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1062726X.2014.956106>
- Theunissen, P., & Wan Noordin, W.N. (2012). Revisiting the concept of "dialogue" in public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 38(1), 5-13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2011.09.006>
- Ward, M., & Sweetser, K. (2014). Connecting to a cause: An experiment testing dialogic theory and relationships within social marketing. *Public Relations Journal*, 8(1). <https://apps.prsa.org/Intelligence/PRJournal/past-editions/Vol8/No1/>
- Watkins, B. (2017). Experimenting with dialogue on Twitter: An examination of the influence of the dialogic principles on engagement, interaction, and attitude. *Public Relations Review*, 43(1), 163-171. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2016.07.002>
- Wirtz, J., & Zimbres, T. (2018). A systematic analysis of research applying 'principles of dialogic communication' to organizational websites, blogs, and social media: Implications for theory and practice. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 30(1-2). <https://doi.org/10.1080/1062726X.2018.1455146>
- Yang, S., Kang, M., & Cha, H. (2015). A study on dialogic communication, trust, and distrust: Testing a scale for measuring organization-public dialogic communication (OPDC). *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 27(2), 175-192. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1062726X.2015.1007998>

Grant Support Details

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, Daniel Fritz Silvallana.; methodology, Daniel Fritz Silvallana and Benjamina Paula Flor.; investigation, Daniel Fritz V. Silvallana.; data curation, Daniel Fritz Silvallana.; writing—original draft preparation, Daniel Fritz Silvallana and Benjamina Paula Flor.; writing—review and editing, Daniel Fritz Silvallana and Benjamina Paula Flor.; project administration, Daniel Fritz Silvallana and Benjamina Paula Flor. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: The authors received no specific funding for this work.

Acknowledgements: The authors would like to thank all the men and women that participated in the study for their time and commitment with the study. We acknowledge support from the Davao del Norte State College through the Office of Public Information and Communication.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

About the Authors

DANIEL FRITZ V. SILVALLANA is a faculty member at the Department of Communication of Davao del Norte State College in Panabo City, Davao del Norte (2017-present). He is currently the coordinator of the Applied Communication Unit of Research, Extension and Production Office and Head of Internationalization Initiatives and External Affairs. He graduated with a master degree in development communication at the University of the Philippines Open University (2017-2021) (corresponding author: danielfritz.sivallana@dnc.edu.ph.).

BENJAMINA PAULA G. FLOR is a Professor at the University of the Philippines Los Banos College of Development Communication and currently serving as program chairperson of Master of Development Communication, Faculty of Information and Communication Studies (FICS) University of the Philippines Open University.

