

Comparative analysis on the photographic self-presentations of the top Philippine universities in their official websites

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Abstract

This paper is a visual analysis on photographs that were gathered from the main and secondary pages of the websites of the Philippines' top four higher educational institutions (HEIs), namely University of the Philippines Diliman (UPD), Ateneo De Manila University (ADMU), De La Salle University (DLSU), and University of Santo Tomas (UST). Specifically, this paper used denotative reading, analysis of visual grammar, and connotative reading on the photographs to ascertain how each of these four Philippine HEIs represented their self-images in contradistinction with each other in terms of their teaching, research, extension, internationalization, campus and facilities, and student life, as well as their overall positioning. This paper was able to establish that UPD has strongest self-representation in teaching, and campus and facilities; ADMU in campus and facilities, and teaching; DLSU in teaching and student life; and UST in student life, and campus and facilities. This paper was also able to establish that UPD has the weakest self-representation in extension and internationalization; ADMU in research and extension; DLSU in extension and internationalization; and UST in research and internationalization. This paper is significant as it is the first publication that analyzes the websites of Philippine HEIs and even of Philippine corporations, while contributing to meager international literature on websites of HEIs and corporations. By looking at individual and collective self-representations of the top Philippine HEIs, this paper aims to gather insights on the status of Philippine higher education including the challenges it faces.

Keywords: Philippine higher educational institutions, institutional websites, self-presentation, denotative reading, visual framing analysis, connotative reading

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Introduction

This paper is a visual analysis on images that were gathered from the home and secondary pages of the websites of the Philippines' top four higher educational institutions (HEIs). For the past several years, the Quacquarelli Symonds Asian University Rankings have consistently identified the University of the Philippines System (UPS), together with Ateneo De Manila University (ADMU), De La Salle University (DLSU), and University of Santo Tomas (UST) as the top four Philippine HEIs (QS World University Rankings, 2021). UPS is composed of eight autonomous units with the University of the Philippines Diliman (UPD) as its flagship unit. Thus, to more or less balance the sizes, structure, and the comprehensive nature of the four subject Philippine HEIs, UPD was selected, instead of UPS, as one of the subject institutions of this paper. The four subject Philippine HEIs of this paper are, therefore, UPD, ADMU, DLSU, and UST.

The visual analytic technique used by this paper is based on the schematization done by Lulu Rodriguez and Daniela Dimitrova (2011) involving four levels of visual analysis, namely the studies of visuals as: (1) denotative systems, (2) stylistic-semiotic systems or systems governed with visual grammar, (3) connotative systems, and (4) ideological representations. This paper, however, only used the first three levels of visual analysis in order to understand how each of these four Philippine HEIs represented themselves and positioned themselves in relation with the other top Philippine HEIs. The authors of this paper reserved the use of the fourth level of visual analysis in a separate paper involving the same images gathered from the websites of the said Philippine HEIs. It turned out during the actual process of writing that using all the four levels of visual analysis resulted in a manuscript that exceeded the maximum length allowed by most journals. Thus the decision to split the original manuscript into two.

Recent literature on Philippine HEIs have dwelt on exploring the challenges faced by these HEIs in complying with the research production that are expected from them by local and international accreditation organizations (Salazar-Clemeña & Almonte-Acosta, 2007; Salazar-Clemeña, 2006, Tan, 2012; Wa-Mbaleka, 2015), on the lack of public, compulsory, and internationally benchmarked accreditation system for the country's huge number of HEIs (Arcelo, 2003; Conchada & Tiongco, 2015; Padua, 2003), on the general structural and systemic problems that troubled the country's HEIs that is predominated by privately owned and managed institutions (Licuanan, 2017), and the readiness and challenges faced by these HEIs in as far as e-learning is concerned (Joaquin et al., 2020; Doculan, 2014). The websites of Philippine HEIs and how such HEIs utilize their websites are areas that are still unexplored by the recent literature on Philippine HEIs.

There is a handful of recent literature, however, on websites of HEIs in other locations on the globe. Tanja Lažetić's (2020) theoretical work presented pointers to future researches on websites of HEIs to veer away from focusing on institutional identities, self-positioning, and representations of various student groups, as these topics are already becoming saturated, and instead move toward organizational structure and hierarchies, disciplinary differences, leadership and management cultures, organizational aesthetics, and the representation of different non-student groups. Aliaksei Miniukovich and Maurizio Marchese (2020) did a cross-country study on the relationship between visual complexity and aesthetics of website designs of numerous institutions including over 500 HEIs. Gili Drori et al. (2016) did another cross-country study on the iconographic narratives conveyed by the logos, emblems, and seals from the homepages of over 800 HEIs. Riyad Shahjahan et al. (2020) examined how over a hundred Asian HEIs were photographically represented in the websites of two leading international university ranking organizations, namely the Times Higher Education and Quacquarelli Symonds. Azizah Abdul Majid et al. (2017) analyzed the public relations aspect of the websites of three Islamic HEIs in Malaysia. Yiqiong Zhang and Kay O'Halloran (2013) made a longitudinal study on the changing marketing-related self-presentation and positioning of the National University of Singapore through its website. Consuelo Vasquez et al. (2013) made a case study on how an academic department of a Canadian HEI engages in self-branding through its website. Jane Griffith (2013) focused on how the issue of academic integrity is discursively undertaken through texts and images in the websites of selected Canadian HEIs. Kurt Schimmel et al. (2010) surveyed some university students in the United States of America on the importance of HEI websites in relation with their actual decision making as to which university they eventually enrolled. Joy Gordon and Susan Berhow (2009) did a quantitative investigation on the presence of interactive features of more than 200 websites of HEIs in the United States of America, as to which discipline and institutional tiers these features proliferate, and as to their impact on student retention and alumni donations. Evelien Fiselier and James Longhurst (2018) examined over a hundred websites of HEIs in Great Britain and Northern Ireland as to how a 30-month old quality assurance policy from the central government had filtered through such websites.

The sparse literature on websites of HEIs outside of the Philippine context reveals that a three-level visual study on photographs gathered from the websites of a cluster of HEIs is a topic that is yet unexplored. Although Drori et al.'s (2016) project closely resembles this current paper, their project worked on logos, emblems, and seals, instead of photographs.

Furthermore, although the paper of Shahjahan et al. (2020) indeed focused on photographs of Asian HEIs, these photographs were not gathered from the websites of such HEIs but from two international university ranking organizations instead. Strictly speaking, the paper of Shahjahan et al. (2020) was not actually about self-presentation of selected HEIs. Furthermore still, although Zhang and O'Halloran (2013), and Vasquez et al.'s (2013) works were on self-representation of some HEIs, these were single case studies, unlike the cluster of case studies undertaken by this paper. The authors of this paper deem it justifiable not to heed the theoretical call of Lažetić's (2020) to veer away from focusing on institutional identities and self-positioning of HEIs in the websites in the sense that this current paper is a pioneering work on the study of Philippine HEI websites in particular and even of Philippine corporate websites in general.

There is also a handful of literature on websites of corporations, other than HEIs, and still outside of the Philippine context. Carole Elliott and Sarah Robinson (2014) presented a theoretical work that warns researchers on corporate websites not to be contented with treating these websites merely as electronic brochures, but instead focus also on the new and distinctive features of these websites, such as mobility, navigability, accessibility to multiple stakeholders, interactivity, visuality, and customizability. Stephanie Schnurr et al. (2016), and Christine Coupland and Andrew Brown's (2004) made single case studies on self-presentation in their websites of companies in the Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the Netherlands, respectively. Constance Kampf's (2007) and Vidhi Chaudhri and Jian Wang's (2007) papers focused on how corporate social responsibility were discursively presented in the websites of companies in the United States of America, Denmark, and India. Maria Cristina Gatti's (2011) and Jonathan Schroeder's (2003) publications were concerned with how specific values, namely competence and trustworthiness, were textually and visually represented in selected websites of companies all over the world, and in the United States of America. Lastly, Nitish Singh et al. (2003) compared and contrasted the cultural content, appearances, and features of websites of Chinese and American companies. The sparse literature on websites of corporations, other than HEIs, and outside of the Philippine context reveals that a three-level visual study on photographs gathered from websites of a cluster of corporations is again a topic that is yet unexplored. The authors of this paper deem it justifiable not to heed the theoretical call of Elliott and Robinson (2014) to focus on the new and distinctive features of websites in the sense that this current paper, as already mentioned, is a pioneering work on the study of Philippine HEI websites in particular and even of Philippine corporate websites in general.

Statement of the problem

This paper aims to understand how the top four Philippine HEIs visually represented themselves in their official websites, more specifically on how they negotiated their identity building in relation to and in contrast with each other in terms of their teaching, research, extension, internationalization, campus and facilities, and student life, as well as their overall positioning. By looking at the collective representations of these top four Philippine HEIs, this paper also aims to gain insights on the status of Philippine higher education and unpack representation vis-à-vis the interconnections between culture, power, and the institutions' webpages in the growing visualisation, spatialization, mediatization, and branding of the top four Philippine HEIs. This will likewise highlight the public pedagogic role of images in constructing the desires or aspirations of students, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders with the hope of attracting new consumers and retaining the existing ones. This paper, therefore, addresses these research questions: (1) how do the top four Philippine HEIs visually represent themselves in their websites in terms of their teaching, research, extension, internationalization, campus and facilities, and student life?; and (2) what are the status and challenges of Philippine higher education as reflected in the self-representations of its top four institutions?

Methodology

Subject HEIs. As already mentioned, the subject Philippine HEIs of this paper are UPD, ADMU, DLSU, and UST. UPD is located in the Diliman area of Quezon City, Metro Manila. As the flagship unit of UPS, it traces its history back to the founding of UPS in 1908 by the American colonial government. UPD started to physically exist in 1939, when UPS decided to set up a new campus in Quezon City. In 2008, the whole UPS was declared as the national research university of the Philippines. Presently, UPD has a little over 1,500 academic staff and almost 25,000 students.

ADMU is located in Quezon City, Metro Manila. It was founded in 1859 by Spanish Jesuit priests at the old walled city of Manila. Presently, ADMU has a little over 1,000 academic staff and almost 11,000 students. Although ADMU is producing a significant volume of research output, it did not officially declare itself to be a research university.

DLSU is located in Manila. It was founded by Irish-American Brothers of the Christian Schools in 1911. In 2011 DLSU declared itself to be a research university. Presently, DLSU has about 800 academic staff and 12,000 students.

UST was founded by Spanish Dominican priests in 1611 in the old walled city of Manila. Presently, UST has almost 2,000 academic staff at

almost 30,000 students. Although UST is also producing a significant volume of research output, it also did not officially declare itself to be a research university.

All of these four subject Philippine HEIs are comprehensive universities. One of these is owned by the state, while three are owned by Roman Catholic religious orders. Although all of these four subject Philippine HEIs are producing significant volumes of research output, only two are officially known to be research universities.

Data Gathering. The authors of this paper visited the official websites of these four top Philippine HEIs (<https://upd.edu.ph/>, <https://ateneo.edu/>, <https://www.dlsu.edu.ph/>, and <http://ust.edu.ph/>) during the last week of November 2020 and harvested all the photographs including captions that were found on their homepages. From each of these homepages, the authors also clicked into the secondary pages and harvested all the photographs including captions found there. All in all, the authors were able to gather 57 photographs from UPD, 43 from ADMU, 125 from DLSU, and 59 from UST, for a total of 284 photographs. The thumbnail versions of these photographs, as numbered and labelled by the authors, are found in Appendices A, B, C, and D of this paper.

Theoretical Framework. The theoretical framework of this paper is based on the schematization done by Rodriguez and Dimitrova (2011) involving four levels of visual analysis, based on their literature review of published researches on the analysis of images and photographs. The four levels of visual analysis identified by Rodriguez and Dimitrova are the studies of visuals as: (1) denotative systems, (2) stylistic-semiotic systems, (3) connotative systems, and (4) ideological representations. The study of visuals as denotative systems, as the first level of visual analysis, focuses on the identification of the objects and discrete elements that are actually shown in a given image or photograph. This can be done by noting who and what are being depicted, and by considering any accompanying textual descriptions or captions.

The study of visuals as stylistic-semiotic systems, as the second level of visual analysis, focuses on the stylistic conventions and technical transformations that were involved in creating a given image or photograph. Rodriguez and Dimitrova's term "stylistic-semiotic systems" is a little misleading in the sense that this will conflate the second level with semiotics as the philosophy/science of signs, following Ferdinand de Saussure, or as the analysis of signification, which if understood in a cultural context is already moving toward the parameter of the third level of visual analysis, following Charles Sanders Peirce, and which if understood in an ideological context is already moving toward the parameter of the fourth

level of visual analysis, following Roland Barthes. Thus, instead of following Rodriguez and Dimitrova’s term, this paper opted to use the sharper term “visual grammar.” Table 1 presents some of the fundamental elements and conventions involved in the study of visuals through visual grammar, as well as their corresponding meanings, as summarized by Shahjahan et al. (2020).

Table 1: Some of the fundamental elements and conventions in the study of visuals through visual grammar based on the summary of Shahjahan et al. (2020).

Element	Convention	Meaning
Viewpoint	Lower Angle	Objects/persons are endowed with power over the viewers
	Higher Angle	Viewers are endowed with power over the objects/persons
	Close Shot	Sense of intimacy
	Long Shot	Impersonal sense and wider view
Foreground/Background	Foreground	More emphasis
	Background	Less emphasis
	Contrast between Foreground and Background	Can create dramatic effects and suggests some sense of distinction to either the object/person on the foreground or background
Lines	In General	Can guide the viewers toward certain portions of the images or photographs
	Straight	Stability
	Curved	Softer effect
Lighting	Highlights	Focus on certain portions of the images or photographs
	Darkness/Brightness	Create atmospheric impressions of calmness, or warmth, or gloom

The conventions under the elements of viewpoint and foreground/background were derived by Shahjahan et al. (2020) from the work of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. The element of viewpoint generates differentiations in terms of power relations and social distance. The element of foreground/background generates differentiations in terms of emphasis. The conventions under the element of lines were derived from Bradley’s (2010) *The Meaning of Lines: Developing a Visual Grammar* (. The element of lines generates differentiations on rigidity/fluidity of images as well as creates mechanism for pointing toward certain segments contained in the images. The conventions under the element of lighting were developed by Shahjahan et al.(2020) from the work of Heinrich’s (2017) *Basics in Architectural Photography*. The element of lighting generates differentiations on the atmospheric effect as

well as creates additional mechanism for pointing toward certain segments contained in the images. Thus, if in the first level of visual analysis in the schematization of Rodriguez and Dimitrova (2011) the key question is what is being depicted, in the second level of visual analysis the key question would be how is such being depicted.

The study of visuals as connotative systems, as the third level of visual analysis, focuses on the culturally understood implicit meanings conveyed by the objects and persons in a given image or photograph. In the context of the iconography of HEIs, for some examples, a torch or a book are not only a torch or a book, but objects that symbolize knowledge; and a mechanical gear or a microscope are not only a mechanical gear or a microscope, but objects that symbolize technology and science. Thus, if in the first level of visual analysis the key question is what is being depicted, and in the second level of visual analysis the key question is how is such being depicted, in the third level of visual analysis the key question would be what is being implied or symbolized by the object or person being depicted in a given image or photograph.

The study of visuals as ideological representations, as the fourth and final level of visual analysis, is heavily based on Roland Barthes (1972) semiotic theory, and focuses on the ideological discourses, as well as sociopolitical and economic traces, that were consciously, semiconsciously, or even unconsciously tucked beneath some iconic images and photographs. Due to the influence of Barthes on semiotics as the actual process of analyzing significations, in distinction to semiotics as the philosophy/science of signs, this fourth level of visual analysis is usually taken the prime analogate of the term “semiotics.” Thus, if in the first level of visual analysis the key question is what is being depicted, in the second level of visual analysis the key question is how is such being depicted, and in the third level of visual analysis the key question is what is being implied or symbolized by the object or person being depicted in a given image or photograph, in the fourth and final level of visual analysis the key questions would be what interests are being pursued by such images and photographs, whose interests are these, whose voices dominate, and what deeper ideas are there.

This paper, however, only used the first three levels of visual analysis in order to understand how each of these four Philippine HEIs represented and positioned themselves in relation to the other top Philippine HEIs. The authors of this paper reserved the use of the fourth level of semiotics in a separate paper involving the same images gathered from the web sites of the said Philippine HEIs. If the idea, under the shadow of Barthes, that the fourth level of visual analysis is the prime analogate of the term “semiotics,”

then this paper can be deemed as a pre-semiotic project, with the intended succeeding paper as a proper semiotic project.

Organization of the Paper. This paper contains three substantive sections. The first substantive section covered the individual self-presentations of the four selected HEIs. After the 284 photographs were harvested by the authors of this paper, these were clustered in accordance with the main functions and features of HEIs, namely: teaching, research, extension, internationalization, campus and facilities, and student life. Using the first three levels of visual analysis the first substantive section examined how each of these functions and features are photographically represented in each of the four HEIs websites, as well as how frequently and clearly these functions and features are represented. Collectively speaking the frequency of representation of a given function or area connotes the conscious or semiconscious importance given by an HEI for such function or area in the context of its overall positioning. However, frequency needs to be tempered with clarity of representation as sheer number of vague representations would hardly contribute toward an HEI's desired positioning. The first two levels of visual analysis were used more in the first substantive section of this paper.

The second substantive section of this paper compared and contrasted the positionings of the four Philippine HEIs based on the individual findings of the first substantive section. Historical information about the four HEIs as well as data coming from the Quacquarelli Symonds Asian University Rankings were used to further en flesh the findings of the preceding substantive section. The third level of visual analysis was used more in the second substantive section of the paper. The first two substantive sections were designed to address the first sub-problem of this paper.

The third substantive section of this paper covered a deeper level analysis on the collective representations of the four Philippine HEIs as established in the second substantive section. In the third substantive section the findings from the preceding section are explored against the bigger backdrop of Philippine higher education. This third and last substantive section again necessitated the mention of further historical information and data coming from the already mentioned international universities ranking organization. The third level of visual analysis was also used more in the third substantive section of the paper. This third substantive section was designed to address the second sub-problem of this paper.

Ethical considerations

The data gathering of this research project did not involve human respondents, as it was primarily done through non-intrusive harvesting of

publicly available photographs from the webpages of the four concerned HEIs. In some cases the private or public nature of data from the internet might become blurred, but in the case of this study the artifacts involved are clearly public materials that were intended to be disseminated to the general public. Thus, no informed consent from the four concerned HEIs was secured. The authors opted not to anonymize the four concerned institutions as this will only result in confusion and as their thumbnailed photographs were appended in this paper anyway. Being the top four Philippine HEIs, these concerned HEIs can in no way be considered vulnerable organizations. The authors also see no harm in analyzing these four institutions side by side, as analogous analyses are routinely conveyed in the publicly available data of several international university ranking organizations. On the contrary, the insights gleaned from this paper can actually serve the interests of the four concerned HEIs in as far as their continuous planning cycles are concerned. The authors reduced the harvested photographs into low resolution thumbnails before putting them in the appendices of this paper. The authors are certain about the necessity of appending these harvested photographs for the sake of studying them, about the fact that they will not have any financial gains from borrowing such photographs, and about the fact that the top four Philippine HEIs will not incur financial losses due to such borrowing.

Individual self-presentations of the selected Philippine HEIs

The succeeding subsections are arranged in accordance to these HEIs recurrent places, from top to bottom, in the Quacquarelli Symonds Asian University Rankings. References to the thumbnailed photographs in the appendices are done with an uppercase letter, signifying the per HEI appendix, and a number, signifying the photograph number within a given appendix (for some examples, A1 for UPD photograph 1, B3 for ADMU photograph 3, C6 for DLSU photograph 6, and D11 for UST photograph 11).

University of the Philippines Diliman:

Seedbed for nationalistic and critical minded citizens

Teaching. 47% (27 photographs) of UPD's images convey its teaching. Most of these photographs (A3–4, A7–23, & A54–57) feature headshots of administrators and leading faculty members. The photographs of leading faculty members (A3–4 & A54–57) accompany writeups about their achievements in their fields of specialization. These photographs are close shots and provide a sense of intimacy between the subject and the viewer. The emphasis is on the subject or the faculty being featured. Collectively, these images represent the central role of educators in a university setting

and how UPD is banking on the reputations and track records of its professors. It must be noted that in many of these headshots (A3, A7–10, & A17–23) the subjects are wearing the *sablay*, a sash made of indigenous textile that serves as UPS’s official academic costume. There is also one photograph (A48) of groups of students wearing the same sash during a graduation ceremony. For UPD, the *sablay* symbolizes its nationalism and the importance it puts on the Philippine indigenous culture, which are among the values imparted by both UPD and UPS.

The *Oblation*, the iconic symbol of the university, is also given significant focus in the photographs (A1–2, A6, A35, A37, & A46). Photograph A6 is shown in Figure 1. This particular photograph was shot from a lower angle putting the statue in a higher position than the viewer thus endowing power over the latter. The statue is a work of the Filipino National Artist Guillermo Tolentino, and it depicts a man facing upward with arms outstretched. This is based on his interpretation of the second stanza of Jose Rizal’s “Mi, Ultimo Adios” (University of the Philippines, 2020). This selfless dedication to the nation is what UPD and UPS are trying to teach their students through their culture and tradition. The repetitive appearances of the men and women wearing the *sablay*, and of Oblation statue, emphasize the nationalistic and anticolonial mindset that is central to the UPD brand of education.



Fig. 1. Statue of Oblation from Appendix A6.

Research. 19% (11 photographs) of UPD’s images convey its research. These photographs (A3–4, A40–44, & A54–57) state its head start on research and scholarly production. The collected headshots (A3–4 & A54–57) that were mentioned earlier are also photographs about UPD’s research, as these show researchers and faculty members who received national and international recognition for their various works. On the research menu of the UPD’s website, a lone photograph (A44) appears of a female working on an experiment in a laboratory wearing lab coat and goggles. There is also a section on UPD’s website that is dedicated to its teaching and learning centers, where research projects of faculty members and students are pursued. On this section, four facade shots of the buildings (A40–43) can be found, and these long shots that were taken from a lower angle give viewers wider views of the infrastructure. These images were also taken during

daytime where the sunny ambiance of the images contributed to creating an atmosphere of brightness and peacefulness. According to Shahjahan et al. (2020), images of buildings using lower angle shots help construct an image of a powerful higher educational institution. Furthermore, buildings and its images offer tangible representations of the institution's economic capital.

Extension. 4% (2 photographs) of UPD's images convey its extension.



Fig. 2. Foreign visitors in front of the Carillon tower from Appendix A36.

Photographs A1–2 are used as moving headers in the main page to update website visitors on UPD initiatives in response to the ongoing pandemic and human rights issues. It is worth noting that in both photographs, the image of the Oblation statue appears again to highlight UPD and UPS's spirit of offering oneself to the nation.

Internationalization. 5% (3 photographs) of UPD's images convey its internationalization. These photographs (A34–36) are long shots taken from a lower angle and show a group from a Japanese university on a tour inside the UPD campus. Photograph A36 is shown in Figure 2. Given the viewpoint and the proportion of the building in the background in the image, what is emphasized are the facilities in the

background. The series also shows that one of the stops of the campus tour was in front of the main building with the *Oblation*. UPD has a dedicated unit for managing international linkages and the admission of international students. But these are not evident among the photographs collected from UPD's website.

Campus and facilities. 47% (28 photographs) of UPD's images convey its campus and facilities. Greater focus is given to facade shots of buildings (A1–2, A6, A25, A29, A32–37, A39–43, A47, & A49–51) that can be found within the vast UPD campus. Open spaces or fields are not represented directly except for a lone aerial shot of the UPD campus (A5), as shown in Figure 3. Although there are photographs (A47–48, & A52–53) of



Fig. 3. Aerial shot showing a section of UPD campus from Appendix A5.

outdoor university events that show a large group of audience participating in the activities being documented. In contrast, there are only five photographs (A28, A38, A44, & A45–46) photographs that display interior shots of UPD's infrastructure. The photographs about UPD's campus and facilities emphasize the spaces available for learning and research. Access to quality campus and facilities is one of the important factors considered by a student in choosing his/her university. Furthermore, such quality campus and facilities are also a tangible representation of the institution's economic and cultural capitals.

Student life. 39% (22 photographs) of UPD's images convey its student life. These photographs (A24–36 & A45–53) depict the culture and tradition of the university, and four of these (A24, A27, A29, & A31) show images from the earlier years of UPD. These photographs are generally long shots of students in activities conveying a perspective that the university is not student-centered. Furthermore, the photographs portray a sense of community within the campus. Photograph A29 is noteworthy in the sense that it reveals the critical tendency of UPD, especially with its explicit caption "UP Activism." Life inside the campus is also an important factor in a student's decision-making process when choosing his/her university.

Overall positioning. In terms of the quantity of photographs, UPD has the strongest self-presentation in the areas of teaching, and campus and facilities. In terms of the clarity of the photographic messages, it has the strongest self-presentation in the areas of teaching and student life. UPD positions itself as an educational institution that is dedicated to the nation through service and critique. Its educational standards are guaranteed by its luminary faculty members. This is reflected in the quality of photographs that are featured in the UPD website where luminary faculty members are taken using close shots. While photographs related to other facets of a university such as students and facilities are taken using long shots. But in terms of the quantity of photographs, UPD has the weakest self-presentation in the areas of extension and internationalization. Furthermore in terms of the clarity of the photographic messages, it has the weakest self-presentation in the areas of internationalization and extension.

Ateneo de Manila University:

Haven for transformative leaders

Teaching. 33% (13 photographs) of ADMU's images convey its teaching. Nine of these photographs (B8–10, B12, B15, B17, B20–21, & B32) depict the tools of trade that include the production studio, hallway, laboratory, building façade, laptop computer, and books. Meanwhile, four photographs (B5–6, B11, & B16) of statues and chapels suggest the religious tone of



Fig. 4. Statue of Saint Ignatius of Loyola from Appendix B5.

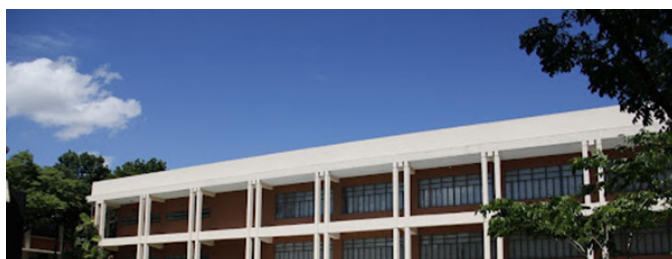


Fig.5. Faber Hall from Appendix B33.

ADMU's pedagogy. Photograph B5 is shown in Figure 4, communicating a robust Ignatian pedagogy as depicted by a low angle shot. The Jesuits' way of educating their students focuses on the totality of the persons through a progressive cycle of learning. This same pedagogy challenges its faculty members to know the background of their students and use this knowledge to impact on their learning. Jesuit pedagogy reminds its faculty members to instil reflective practice on their students for them to make meaning of their learning, move to action based on what they have learned, and evaluate the success of their action in so far as how these changed their lives and their communities. Collectively, the techniques used in the aforementioned photographs put emphasis on power using low angle shots, and display of broad scopes using long shots (Heinrich 2017; Kress & Leeuwen 2006). These contribute to a social imaginary of the university as a robust and prestigious educational provider.

Research. 5% (2 photographs) of ADMU's images convey its research. These photographs (B33–34) display the university's aim at opening new paths of intellectual exploration and pursuing scholarly investigation. Photograph B33 is shown in Figure 5. The broad scope depicted through a wide shot of the research buildings mean much more than a place to do work, but also the might of ADMU.

Extension. 7% (3 photographs) of ADMU's images convey its extension. These photographs (B40–41 & B43) represent the university's mission of forming men and women with and for others through its many programs created to alleviate poverty by helping capacitate and empower marginalized communities. The photographs used wide shots suggesting that their activities for community engagement are difficult to organize and complex tasks. It must be noted that community engagement goes beyond the conventional outreach and public services, and should be envisioned as partnerships that are characterized by mutual respect among the partners for what each brings to the table.

Internationalization. 12% (5 photographs) of ADMU's images convey its Internationalization. These photographs (B35–39) spell its initiatives to instill a stronger sense of global citizenship which include snaps of student interactions with foreign students. The photographs used long and wide shots which illustrate the goal for students to acquire the ability and habit to frame issues from a local, national, and global perspective, and develop the skills required to navigate the increasingly interconnected world.

Campus and facilities. 35% (15 photographs) of ADMU's images convey its campus and facilities. These photographs (B1–4, B7, B13–14, B18–19, B22, B26–27, B29–31) display its top notch facilities, highlighting its being one of the best universities in the Philippines. Photograph B3 is shown in Figure 6. The value of a physical asset and facility in shaping its teaching and learning environment was emphasized as depicted by the use of a wide, aerial shot. Collectively, the use of wide, aerial, low angle, and long shots in the aforementioned photographs communicates the significance of its infrastructural development in ensuring quality in education. ADMU values students' health, behavior, engagement, learning, and growth in achievement considering that its high quality campus and facilities are strong predictors for faculty retention and student learning.



Fig. 6. Aerial shot of a section of ADMU campus from Appendix B3.

Student life. 12% (5 photographs) of ADMU's images convey its student life. These photographs (B23–25, B28, & B42) cover a wide range of student activities from innovative academic instruction to participation in organizations, as well as other cocurricular opportunities for learning. These photographs used top shots, closeup shots, and medium shots to connect students to its beautiful campus. By and large, the longer a university can retain its students on its campus and academic environment, the greater its chance of imparting academic growth and success to such students.

Overall positioning. In terms of both the quantity of photographs and the clarity of photographic messages, ADMU has the strongest self-presentation in the areas of campus and facilities, and teaching. The deliberate weaving together of the core, majors and co-curricula so that the overall experience of learning imbues graduates with both specialized professional training and holistic formation is what makes Ateneo education distinctive. It makes its education integral, interdisciplinary, and one that seeks to develop intellectual depth, enhance creative imagination, deepen social involvement, and nurture spiritual maturity. By and large, it depicts the institution's commitment to hone its graduates to become transformative leaders. But in terms of both the quantity of photographs and clarity of photographic messages, ADMU has the weakest self-presentation in the areas of research and extension.

De La Salle University:

Home of student-centered education

Teaching. 70% (88 photographs) of DLSU's images convey its teaching. Most of the photographs feature in action photos of students attending a class, performing experiment, presenting to an audience, researching, and collaborating (C14, C29–50, C62–70, C75–77, C79–105, C107–111, C113–114, & C116–125). Photograph C33 is shown in Figure 7 is a representation of the execution of the images with close shot and taken at an eye level. These communicate an invitation to the viewer to get engaged and be part of the teaching and learning process. In addition, university personalities are highlighted with accompanying write ups about their achievements in their fields of specialization (C3, C11, C14–21, C56–59, & C61). Moreover, in action photos of the different stakeholders involvement in community service, forum, sociopolitical conversations, prayer rallies, vigils, and other related activities are also highlighted on the website (C1, C8, C22–25, C27–28, C84, & C120–123). Lastly, photos featuring the advanced technology in teaching are visible on the website (C7, C16–17, C29–30, C32–39, C41–50, C55, C64–70, & C82–117). These photographs feature the different views of the university in teaching. First, teaching as a collaborative effort

that involves its stakeholders. Second, teaching as a mission. Third, the holistic approach of teaching where educators seek to address the different aspects of learning such as emotional, social, ethical, and academic needs of the learners by engaging them in projects that apply critical-thinking skills toward solving real-world problems. Lastly, innovative teaching which incorporates responsive teaching practice, student ownership of learning, high levels of engagement, authentic contexts, the development of competencies and the strategic use of digital technologies to connect, collaborate, create and share learning.

Research. 44% (55 photographs) of DLSU's images convey its research. The website provided photos of students collaborating and doing an actual research (C30, C33–34, C37, C39, C46, & C83), students and teachers presenting their researches (C9, C16–19, C56–61, & C110), and facilities available to the researchers inside the university (C64–66, C68, & C89–105). Similar to the images in the teaching area, the photographs depicting research show images with close shot and taken at an eye level. Using the gathered photographs on the website, we can observe the following self-representations. First, research as a tool to provide insights into critical issues. Second, research as a tool toward its goal of being a world-class university. All colleges have shown evidence of their involvement in various research projects. Third, research as a tool for collaboration. Strengthened collaborations were highlighted on the photographs not only between the researchers, but also with their teachers, institutions, organizations, and/or communities. Lastly, research as a tool for effective partnership with different stakeholders.

Extension. 9% (11 photographs) of DLSU's images convey its extension. In terms of extension, DLSU focused its direction toward community partnerships. All photographs under this item are related to outreach programs (C1, C8, C22, C25, C35–39, & C122) and academic scholarship assistance of the university to underprivileged scholars (C14). These images reiterate DLSU's mission to be of service to the community by using close shots of the actual relief operations as seen in Photograph C1 in Figure 8. According to their website, the goal of the university is to provide their stakeholders with programs that will strengthen their faith formation, social engagement, and community-building programs. This is to allow each student to discover how they can contribute toward meaningful social transformation. This goal is realized through their various social engagement and community building activities that provide constructive opportunities for students to become involved on their campuses and communities through service work to others in need.



Fig. 7. Senior high school students from Appendix C33.



Fig. 8. Law students' relief operation from Appendix C1.

Internationalization. 11% (14 photographs) of DLSU's images convey its internationalization. Based on the gathered photographs on the website, the university is upgrading the opportunities of its students not only outside the classroom but also beyond the borders of the university. This is highly evident in some initiatives posted on the website like student exchange programs (C124–125), invitation of international keynote speakers (C9, C16–C19, & C56–61), and interaction with foreign students (C109). Lastly, in order to keep up with international standards, DLSU is participating in international benchmarking activities and accreditations (C3, C113, & C124–125).

Campus and facilities. 54% (68 photographs) of DLSU's images convey its campus and facilities. The website has repeatedly bragged of its buildings named after renowned personalities in the different fields like Henry Sy, Enrique Yuchengco, Carlos Rufino, etc. (C4, C10, C12–13, C24, C54, C71, & C112). In addition, majority of the photographs under this category featured the facilities available to its students like laboratories, classrooms,

open spaces, learning commons, libraries and other facilities needed for holistic learning and teaching encounters (C7, C10, C24–25, C32–36, C38–39, C42–50, C55, C64–68, C72–73, C81–83, C90–112, & C115). Moreover, a lot of photographs gathered emphasize the spaces available for students and faculty research activities. This manifested the high value of the university in research (C30, C33–34, C37–39, C43, C46–47, C49–50, C64–66, C68, C82–83, C90–102, C107–112, & C115). Lastly, in fulfilment of the university's mission to make Lasallian education more accessible to young learners and professionals, DLSU website has featured its different campuses such as Manila, Taguig, Makati, and Laguna (C2, C4–6, C12–13, C51–54, C71, & C78).

Student Life. 68% (85 photographs) of DLSU's images convey its student life. According to the university website, DLSU seeks to develop and implement programs that promote self-sustaining development and positive influence toward effective personal and organizational leadership. Based on the gathered photographs, the following opportunities that support the mentioned goal of the university in terms of student life have been identified. First, the university ensures that their students are empowered as potential leaders. This ensures a smooth and well-balanced opportunity for the students. This includes the implementation of cocurricular and extracurricular activities of the different student groups (C1, C8, C22, C24, C27–28, C69, C72, C75, & C118–125). Second, the university encourages student involvement. DLSU encourages student involvement and helps orient freshmen, graduate school learners, and international students on university life (C1, C8, C23–26, C28–30, C69, C72, C75, C79, C118–119, & C121–125). Third, DLSU provides quality Lasallian education through well-equipped resources inside the learning environment. Based on the gathered photographs, the university highlights the idea that they provide a variety of high quality and up to date resources to strengthen the experience of their students inside the university (C32–34, C37–47, C49–50, C62–68, C70, C72, C76–77, C80–85, C87–97, C99–100, C103–108, & C121). Lastly, the university gives the students limitless opportunities to explore the possibilities above and beyond the four walls of the classroom. Students are exposed through interactions and partnerships with local and international communities, students outside the university (local and international), local and international organizations, businesses, and other relevant partners (C1, C8, C14, C22–25, C48, C74, C86, C98, C101–102, C105, C109–110, C114, C116–120, C122, & C124–125). This is depicted in Photograph C48 in Figure 9 which is taken using close shot at a lower angle.

Overall Positioning. In terms of the quantity of photographs, DLSU has the strongest self-presentation in the areas of teaching and student life. In



Fig. 9. A Business students' event from Appendix C48.

terms of the clarity of the photographic messages, it has the strongest self-presentation in the areas of student life and teaching. Through the uploaded photographs on the website, we can say that the university is promoting dynamic and innovative teaching and learning practices and providing a well-equipped avenue for students' holistic learning opportunities. But in terms of both the quantity of photographs and the clarity of photographic messages, DLSU has the weakest self-presentation in the areas of extension and internationalization.

University of Santo Tomas:

A heritage complex for Catholic education

Teaching. 14% (8 photographs) of UST's images convey its teaching. While there are no photographs that directly portray classroom interactions or academic scenes, the website features images that highlight religious and spiritual formation events (D21, D38–40, & D43–46). Part of UST's tradition, for instance, is to start the academic year with an opening mass (D21 & D38–40) and conduct institutional retreats and recollections (D43–46). It is also worth noting that most of the collected images in this category were pictures of religious leaders. Highlighting religious leaders is one way to emphasize that UST, which was initially intended to be a "seminary-college" to prepare young men for priesthood, is a sectarian educational institution run by the Order of Preachers and its education is rooted in Catholic faith and tradition. In portraying religious pedagogy, eye level and medium closeup shots are used to communicate a welcoming environment and create a more intimate and personal setting. Employing eye level shots means that the institution intends to show a shift of power from traditional holders (religious leaders) to a more balanced and shared sense of power. Utilizing medium closeup frames, on the other hand, further emphasized the intention to provide a more intimate setting and create a personal relationship with the viewer. These religious themed photographs may also be attributed to the institution's pursuit of presenting Catholic virtues as the main focus of UST.

Research. 5% (3 photographs) of UST's images convey its research. The only image which can be found in the "research" menu of UST is

the photograph of Thomas Aquinas Research Complex (D11). This four-storey building houses research centers and laboratories and is considered as the main venue of research in UST. The image utilized a lower angle shot which gives symbolic power to the building and was also taken from a distance which highlights the unique features and stature of the building. The image emphasizes the institutions' research accomplishments as one of the leading universities in the country despite not declaring itself as a research university. On the other hand, the two images pertaining to *Discurso de Apertura* (D41 & D42), a scholarly lecture at the beginning of an academic year, communicate a more collaborative research environment and shared sense of power. *Discurso de Apertura* is a symbol of research conversation between distinguished academic leaders and beginning researchers. Photograph D41 is shown in Figure 10. Thus, the image of the speaker in an eye level and medium closeup shot underscores UST's desire to communicate that the stakeholders are of equal stature in the university's research agenda. It should also be noted that the university's Catholic identity is emphasized in the three photographs. The research complex was named after St. Thomas Aquinas, patron saint of the university and of Catholic schools, and the *Discurso de Apertura* is also being held at the Santísimo Rosario Chapel despite its academic nature. It was already discussed by Humboldt (n.d.) before that the creation of knowledge in a research institution should be free from political and religious intrusions. Thus, while the presence of religion in research-themed images or activities is a testament that the Thomasian education is rooted in Catholic faith, the underrepresentation of research in the UST website emphasizes the apprehension of the institution to transition into a research university. As already noted, despite its research achievements, UST does not declare itself as a research university.



Fig. 10. UST faculty member delivering a *discurso de apertura* from Appendix D41.

Extension. 15% (9 photographs) of UST's images convey its extension. These photographs are related to the university's COVID-19 pandemic response (D52–59), and highlight the involvement of the stakeholders in the production and distribution of 3D printing face shield visors and ear guard and the UST-developed Logistic Indoor Service Assistant (LISA)



Fig. 11. Collage of Community Development activities from Appendix D12.

Telepresence Robot. The website also features a collage of activities from UST's community development program (D12), as shown in Figure 11. Most of the extension related pictures utilized eye level and medium closeup shots to further emphasize the institution's shared mission of serving the nation through the generation, advancement, and transmission of knowledge to form competent and compassionate professionals, committed to the service of the Church, the nation, and the global community.

Internationalization. 7% (4 photographs) of UST's images convey its internationalization. Photographs D47–50 feature diplomatic visitors that are still taken at the same level as the viewer. These photographs of ambassadors delivering speeches or interacting with UST officials demonstrate the university's pursuit of meaningful engagements and partnerships with other countries.

Campus and facilities. 19% (11 photographs) of UST's images convey its campus and facilities. Being Asia's oldest existing university, the UST campus was declared a National Historical Landmark by the National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP). UST flaunts its heritage structures, such as the Main Building (D2, D8, D10, D13, & D51) and the Arch of the Centuries (D16, D25, & D34), as shown in Figure 12. The main building which is considered as the "face of UST" and the "bastion of Catholic education" is the first earthquake proof building in Asia and a historical landmark in Manila since it became an internment camp during World War II. On the other hand, the Arch of the Centuries, a four-century-old structure, was the original main portal when UST was still located in the old walled city of Manila prior to the World War II. These photographs were taken from a distance highlighting the symbolic early modern architectural design of the building and classical inspired arch fragment. These used lower angle shots to make the structures appear bigger. Vertical lines are

present in the compositions, which as Bradly (2010) states would suggest stability and dignity.



Fig. 12. Arch of the Centuries from Appendix D16.

Student life. 61% (36 photographs) of UST's images convey its student life. These photographs showcase student-events, performances, and traditional celebrations or practices. Most of these photographs are from the "campus life" menu, and display university traditions like the Freshmen Welcome Walk (D3, D22, D23, D24, D25, D26, & D27), Freshman Orientation (D18, D19, & D20–21), Christmas Festival (D14, & D28–32), Baccalaureate Mass (D33–37), the opening mass of an academic year (D38–40), Christmaseum Concert (D4), and Discurso de Apertura (D41–42). Photograph D26 is shown in Figure 13. Most of the featured events were for the new students depicting a welcoming environment for prospective students. It is also noticeable that these images were taken from eye level and utilized medium closeup shots which allow viewers to feel more connected with the subject. Previous researches suggest that HEIs increasingly rely on relational discourse to communicate a welcoming environment. There is also a dominance of students in the collected photographs and absence of teachers, thus, portraying the UST learners as active agents of learning.

Overall positioning. In terms of the quantity of photographs, UST has the strongest self-presentation in the areas of student life, and campus and facilities. In terms of the clarity of the photographic messages, it has the strongest self-presentation in the areas of student life and teaching. By frequently highlighting student activities and university traditions, UST represents itself as a site of history, culture, and heritage. On the other hand, as the Pontifical (referring to its patronage by the Pope), Royal (referring to its historic patronage by the Spanish monarchs), and Catholic



Fig. 13. Freshmen welcome walk from Appendix D26.

University of the Philippines, UST positions itself as a prestigious Catholic HEI in Asia. But in terms of the quantity of photographs, UST has the weakest self-presentation in the areas of research and internationalization. Furthermore, in terms of the clarity of the photographic messages, it has the weakest self-presentation in the areas of internationalization and research.

On the positionings of the top Philippine HEIs

Table 2 presents the summary on how the areas quantitatively and qualitatively rank in each of the websites of the four Philippine HEIs. The table presents as well the combined ranks of these same areas in each of the four websites.

Table 2. Quantitate, qualitative, and combined ranks of the six areas in the websites of UPD, ADMU, DLSU, and UST.

Areas	UPD			ADMU			DLSU			UST		
	Qnt	Qlt	Cmbi	Qnt	Qlt	Cmbi	Qnt	Qlt	Cmbi	Qnt	Qlt	Cmbi
Teaching	1.5	1	1	2	2	2	1	2	1.5	4	2	3
Research	4	4	4	6	6	6	4	4	4	6	5	5.5
Extension	6	5	5.5	5	5	5	6	6	6	3	4	4
International-ization	5	6	5.5	3.5	3	3	5	5	5	5	6	5.5
Campus and facilities	1.5	3	2	1	1	1	3	3	3	2	3	2
Student life	3	2	3	3.5	4	4	2	1	1.5	1	1	1

Table 2 shows that the top four Philippine HEIs have their own distinctive ways of representing their best selves through their websites. UPD emphasized its teaching, and campus and facilities; ADMU, its campus and facilities, and teaching; DLSU, its teaching and student life; while UST, student life, and campus and facilities.

While UPD, ADMU, and DLSU used the area of teaching in positioning themselves, they did this in their own distinctive ways. UPD did this by highlighting its nationalist commitment, as well as its luminary faculty members; ADMU, by accentuating its Jesuit pedagogy; while DLSU, by

underscoring its learner-centered education. UST diverged from these three HEIs by accenting its vibrant student life and heritage complex.

While UPD, ADMU, and UST used the area of campus and facilities in positioning themselves, they also did this in their own distinctive ways. UPD did this by showcasing its vast campus and infrastructural facades; ADMU, by this by displaying not only its wide campus and infrastructural facades but more so the interiors of these either new or well-kept buildings; and UST, as already mentioned, by flaunting its heritages, structures, and spaces.

Among the three private HEIs that are all owned by religious organizations, only ADMU and UST revealed the religious tone of their pedagogies. DLSU seemed to project a more secular pedagogy and did not even bother to capitalize on the fact that its patron saint, Saint John Baptist de La Salle, is also the patron saint of Catholic education.

Table 2 shows that the area of research played a stronger role in the positionings of UPD and DLSU, and this coincided with the fact that both HEIs declared themselves to be research universities about a decade ago. Table 3 presents the scores of the four Philippine HEIs in the research criteria of Quacquarelli Symonds Asian University Rankings 2021. It must be noted that UPS as a whole is the one included in the rankings and not its individual autonomous units, and that the average score column disregards the weights used by the said rankings

Table 3. Scores of the top four Philippine HEIs in the research criteria of Quacquarelli Symonds Asian University Rankings 2021.

Top HEIs	Papers per Faculty	Citations per Paper	International Research Network	Average Score
UPS	4.1	7.6	81.5	31.1
ADMU	3.7	5.9	9.3	6.3
DLSU	11.6	6.4	32.5	16.8
UST	1.9	2.8	6.0	3.6

UPS’s scores in table 3 may be buoyed by the higher citations and international research network of its medical autonomous unit, University of the Philippines Manila (UPM), but the higher average scores of UPS and DLSU here, compared to ADMU and UST, are consistent with their self-declarations as research universities.

Table 2 shows that the area of extension played a stronger role in the positioning of UST. This is a little surprising, considering that UST did not declare itself as a research university, and, in fact, in table 3 it has the lowest average score for research according to Quacquarelli Symonds

Asian University Rankings 2021. This means that UPD and DLSU are either unable yet to relate their higher research activities to extension, or unable to capitalize on their actual extension activities, as far as their self-presentations are concerned.

Table 2 shows that the area of internationalization played a stronger role in the positioning of ADMU. Table 4 presents the scores of the four Philippine HEIs in the internationalization criteria of Quacquarelli Symonds Asian University Rankings 2021. It must be noted again that UPS's score here may be buoyed by the higher international research network of UPM.

Table 4. Scores of the top four Philippine HEIs in the internationalization criteria of Quacquarelli Symonds Asian University Rankings 2021.

Top HEIs	Int'l. Research Network	Int'l. Faculty	Int'l. Students	Inbound Exchange	Outbound Exchange	Average Score
UPS	81.5	2.4	3.4	5.1	3.1	19.1
ADMU	9.3	10.0	16.8	26.1	35.2	19.5
DLSU	32.5	5.3	12.2	7.4	6.7	12.8
UST	6.0	77.4	24.1	88.4	99.8	59.1

Table 4 confirms that ADMU has indeed a higher internationalization score, compared to UPS and DLSU, but such score is actually much lower compared to UST's score. UST failed to take full advantage of its much stronger internationalization in its positioning.

Synoptic analysis on the representations of the selected Philippine HEIs

Table 5 presents the average combined quantitative and qualitative ranks of the six areas in the website of the four Philippine HEIs.

Table 5. Averages of combined quantitative and qualitative ranks of the six areas in the websites of UPD, ADMU, DLSU, and UST.

Areas	UPD	ADMU	DLSU	UST	Average Combined Rank
Teaching	1	2	1.5	3	1
Research	4	6	4	5.5	4.5
Extension	5.5	5	6	4	6
Internationalization	5.5	3	5	5.5	4.5
Campus and facilities	2	1	3	2	2
Student life	3	4	1.5	1	3

Table 5 shows that quantitatively and qualitatively, the top 4 Philippine HEIs construct their self-presentations by using the areas of teaching first, campus and facilities second, student life third, research and internationalization fourth, and extension last.

On teaching

There is very little surprise in knowing how the top 4 Philippine HEIs primarily used the area of teaching in constructing their self-representations. After all, prior to the creation of the modern university, the fundamental role of HEIs was actually teaching. But with the creation of the modern university, starting with the University of Berlin in 1810, research and, later on, extension were added as the other equally important roles of HEIs. With the Philippines' long history of colonial teaching universities and colleges, the area of teaching would indeed easily be picked as the primary element for the self-presentation of Philippine HEIs, as this is the role of HEIs that is most recognizable to Filipino stakeholders.

For all the other Philippine HEIs they will surely find it very easy to foreground their area of teaching in the websites. But to make their portrayals distinctive they must highlight their own specific brands of teaching, like what UPD, ADMU, DLSU, and even UST did.

On campus and facilities

There is very little surprise also in knowing how the top 4 Philippine HEIs secondarily used the area of campus and facilities in constructing their self-representations. After all these concrete and physical structures and implements would almost naturally lend themselves to photographic documentation. Campus and facilities symbolize the economic and cultural capital of HEIs as well as their stabilities and desirability as a destination for learning.

However, not all Philippine HEIs would find it easy to flaunt their area of campus and facilities in the websites as this area is not merely a symbol of economic and cultural capitals, but actually requires tremendous economic and cultural capitals to build through a considerable span of time. Even UPD, with its vast campus and status of being the flagship Philippine HEI, has difficulties showing its interior spaces. Certainly, ADMU, DLSU, and UST banked on its expensive tuition fees, accumulated infrastructural projects, and donations from wealthy alumni and philanthropic business tycoons.

On student life

There is very little surprise as well in knowing how the top 4 Philippine HEIs tertiarily used the area of student life in constructing their self-

presentations. After all its tangible events would also lend themselves almost naturally to photographic documentation. Student life symbolizes the quality of the leadership and soft skills training of an HEI, as well as its desirability, especially when back dropped by excellent campus and facilities, as a learning destination.

Other Philippine HEIs would find it easy to showcase their area of student life in their websites, as long as their events are meaningful, offer effective training opportunities, and are distinctive and appealing to stakeholders. Portraying the area of student life does not need as much economic and cultural capitals as does portraying the area of campus and facilities.

On research

Despite the fact that two of the four subject Philippine HEIs declared themselves research universities, and despite the fact that two other subject Philippine HEIs are producing substantial volume of research, collectively these Philippine HEIs are not taking full advantage of the area of research in constructing their self-representations. Table 6 compares the average scores of the four top Philippine HEIs in the research criteria of Quacquarelli Symonds Asian University Rankings 2021 with the average scores of the top 4 HEIs in Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia. In the ASEAN region, Malaysia and Thailand’s national strategies to transition their top HEIs happened more or less in the same decade when UPS and DLSU declared themselves as research universities. Indonesia is less explicit about its strategy in transitioning its top HEIs into research universities, but its reforms to intensify research production happened also more or less in the same decade. Thus, these three ASEAN countries are good points of reference in examining the area of research of Philippine HEIs.

Table 6. Average scores of the top four Philippine HEIs in the research criteria of Quacquarelli Symonds Asian University Rankings 2021 in comparison with the average scores of the top four Malaysian, Thai, and Indonesian HEIs.

Country	Top HEIs	Papers per Faculty	Citations per Paper	International Research Network	Average Score
Philippines	UPS	4.1	7.6	81.5	31.1
	ADMU	3.7	5.9	9.3	6.3
	DLSU	11.6	6.4	32.5	16.8
	UST	1.9	2.8	6.0	3.6
	Average of Philippine's top 4 HEIs	5.3	5.7	32.3	14.4

Malaysia	Universiti Malaya	50.8	88.1	100.0	79.6
	Universiti Putra Malaysia	43.9	24.1	99.8	55.9
	Universiti Sains Malaysia	35.2	21.0	99.9	52.0
	University Kebangsaan Malaysia	27.6	11.3	99.3	46.1
	Average of Malaysia's top 4 HEIs	39.4	36.1	99.8	58.4
Thailand	Chulalongkorn University	15.3	21.8	95.4	44.2
	Mahidol University	11.3	32.9	91.1	45.1
	Chiang Mai University	13.1	8.2	60.0	27.1
	Thammasat University	5.2	5.7	15.0	8.6
	Average of Thailand's top 4 HEIs	11.2	17.2	65.4	31.3
Indonesia	Gadjah Mada University	4.6	1.4	41.3	15.8
	Universitas Indonesia	7.4	1.2	33.5	14.0
	Bandung Institute of Technology	19.0	1.4	33.4	17.9
	Institut Pertanian Bogor University	5.3	1.7	28.0	11.7
	Average of Indonesia's top 4 HEIs	9.1	1.4	34.1	14.9

Again UPS's score here may be buoyed by the higher citations and international research network of UPM. Table 6 points out that the average research score of the top Philippine HEIs, at 14.4, is below the average scores of the top Malaysian HEIs, at 58.4, and top Thai HEIs, at 31.3; and is

comparable only to the average score of the top Indonesian HEIs, at 14.9. These comparisons suggest that the Philippines as a country was not able to catch up with the higher educational reforms of Malaysia and Thailand. Even the reforms in Indonesia that started years after UPD and DLSU transitioned into research universities have overtaken the Philippines. There is a need therefore for the Philippines to seriously reflect again on the transitions of UPS and DLSU as research universities, and consider guiding ADMU and UST to undertake their own transitions into research universities. The area of research is not just something that HEIs brag about in their websites, but rather it is actually crucial for the socioeconomic development of countries.

Other Philippine HEIs would also find it difficult to reveal their area of research in their websites. Building up the area of research needs immense economic and cultural capitals. But the few Philippine HEIs with considerable research activities, such as the handful of other leading private Philippine HEIs and top Philippine state universities, even if these may be below the volume of either UPD, DLSU, ADMU or UST, should capitalize on this area. Underscoring the area of research in the websites of say the top 20 Philippine HEIs will help educate the stakeholders about the importance of research not only in these HEIs but in the country as a whole.

On internationalization

Despite the fact that one of the four subject Philippine HEIs has a remarkable internationalization score based on Quacquarelli Symonds Asian University Rankings 2021, collectively these Philippine HEIs have a low priority in using this area in constructing their self-representations. Table 7 compares the average scores of the four top Philippine HEIs in the internationalization criteria of Quacquarelli Symonds Asian University Rankings 2021 with the average scores of the top 4 HEIs in Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia. Again UPS's score here may be buoyed by the higher international research network of UPM. Table 7 points out that the average internationalization score of the top Philippine HEIs, at 26.7, is below the average scores of the top Malaysian HEIs, at 86.8, of the top Indonesian HEIs, at 49.4, and of the top Thai HEIs, at 39.8. The area of internationalization is a vaguely understood area in the context of Philippine higher education. The accreditation instruments for HEIs of the Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities (PAASCU) does not include internationalization in its key areas. PAASCU is the oldest among the four Philippine accrediting organizations for HEIs and is the one subscribed to by ADMU, DLSU and UST. There is a need for Philippine higher education to grapple with internationalization to be able to

Table 7. Average scores of the top four Philippine HEIs in the Internationalization Criteria of Quacquarelli Symonds Asian University Rankings 2021 in comparison with the average scores of the top four Malaysian, Thai, and Indonesian HEIs.

Country	Top HEIs	Int'l. Re- search Net- work	Int'l. Faculty	Int'l. Stu- dents	In- bound Ex- change	Out bound Ex- change	Ave. Score
Philippines	UPS	81.5	2.4	3.4	5.1	3.1	19.1
	ADMU	9.3	10.0	16.8	26.1	35.2	19.5
	DLSU	32.5	5.3	12.2	7.4	6.7	12.8
	UST	6.0	77.4	24.1	88.4	99.8	59.1
	Average of Philippine's top 4 HEIs	32.3	23.8	14.1	31.8	36.2	27.6
Malaysia	Universiti Malaya	100.0	98.7	89.1	100.0	99.9	97.5
	Universiti Putra Malaysia	99.8	96.3	99.5	100.0	100.0	99.1
	Universiti Sains Malaysia	99.9	83.2	88.0	51.6	5.2	65.6
	University Kabangsaan Malaysia	99.3	75.4	85.5	83.5	81.8	85.1
	Average of Malaysia's top 4 HEIs	99.8	88.4	90.5	83.8	71.7	86.8
Thailand	Chulalongkorn University	95.4	42.6	9.1	46.1	34.4	45.5
	Mahidol University	91.1	25.7	22.4	93.8	43.3	55.3
	Chiang Mai University	60.0	25.1	14.2	18.2	10.8	25.7
	Thammasat University	15.0	46.8	5.6	54.2	42.6	32.8
	Average of Thailand's top 4 HEIs	65.4	35.1	12.8	53.1	32.8	39.8

Indonesia	Gadjah Mada University	41.3	92.0	7.2	81.0	52.8	54.9
	Universitas Indonesia	33.5	100.0	13.0	96.5	98.8	68.4
	Bandung Institute of Technology	33.4	82.4	5.0	13.4	13.7	29.6
	Institut Pertanian Bogor University	28.0	95.1	12.3	50.3	37.5	44.6
	Average of Indonesia's top 4 HEIs	34.1	92.4	9.4	60.3	50.7	49.4

meaningfully operationalize this area. If we are to limit internationalization to the criteria set by the Quacquarelli Symonds Asian University Rankings, the top 4 Philippine HEIs can actually learn from each other. UPS and DLSU have decent scores in international research networks which ADMU and UST can study, and UST has decent scores in international faculty, inbound exchange, and outbound exchange which UPD, ADMU, and DLSU can study.

Other Philippine HEIs would also find it difficult to display their area of internationalization in their websites. Building up the area of internationalization needs immense economic and cultural capitals. With the low volume of research production in many of these Philippine HEIs, and with the safety and security problems hounding the country, it would be very difficult for these Philippine HEIs to attract international research collaborators, faculty members, and students. Signing memorandums of agreement and understanding may no longer be enough, as many of the top ASEAN universities now frown upon sheer paper trails and prefer more active and concrete partnerships.

On extension

Collectively the top four Philippine HEIs have a low priority in using the area of extension in constructing their self-representations. The area of internationalization is another vaguely understood area in the context of Philippine higher education. Among PAASCU's accreditation instruments for HEIs only the one specific to agricultural programs includes extension as a key area. All the other instruments stretch the concept of extension to community service, involvement, or engagement. Whereas all extension activities are also community service, involvement, or engagement activities, these are not vice versa. Because extension activities are more

specific in nature in the sense that these flow from the faculty members' teaching and research roles. Thus, community service, involvement, or engagement activities that do now flow from the faculty members' teaching and research roles cannot be called extension activities. Most probably it was the long history of Philippine HEIs as teaching universities that and the very late transitions of UPS and DLSU into research universities, as well as the hesitation of ADMU and UST to undertake the same transition, that shaped PAASCU's conflation of community service/involvement/engagement and extension. Without serious research, extension does not make so much sense. The four top Philippine HEIs with their significant volumes of research production are actually capable of showcasing real extension in the websites. This paper already mentioned that research is needed for the socioeconomic development of countries, but research actually cannot achieve this without extension.

Other Philippine HEIs would actually find it difficult to present their area of extension in their websites. Building up the area of extension presupposes an already built and functional research area. If building up the research area requires immense economic and cultural capitals, building up the area of extension would require additional economic and cultural capitals. But the few Philippine HEIs with considerable research activities that can already start building up their area of extension and showcasing this in their websites.

Conclusion

This study was designed to unpack representation vis-à-vis the interconnections between culture, power, and the institutions' websites in the growing visualisation, spatialization, mediatization, and branding of the top four Philippine HEIs. Through the analysis of gathered photographs from the websites of the top four Philippine HEIs, this paper was able to establish that UPD has strongest self-representation in teaching and campus and facilities; ADMU in campus and facilities and teaching; DLSU in teaching and student life; and UST in student life and campus and facilities. This paper was also able to establish that UPD has weakest self-representation in extension and internationalization; ADMU in research and extension; DLSU in extension and internationalization; and UST in research and internationalization.

For the top four universities in the Philippines, the areas of teaching and campus and facilities are on average the most visually represented in their websites but they showcase these in their own distinctive ways. UPD did this by highlighting its nationalist commitment and luminary faculty members; ADMU, by accentuating its Jesuit pedagogy; while DLSU, by

underscoring its learner-centered education, and UST diverged from these three HEIs by accenting its vibrant student life and heritage complex. On the other hand, the images on campus and facilities gathered from the websites of the four HEIs emphasize the spaces available for learning and research in their institutions. More than being an area that would almost naturally lend themselves to photographic documentation, campus and facilities are also used to communicate that these HEIs have economic and cultural capital. Similarly, portraying a vibrant student life is also given emphasis on all the websites of the subject universities. This is again an area that lends itself almost naturally to photographic extension. Based on the photographs gathered we can sense the importance that these universities afford in promoting the kind of student life that their campus and facilities afford.

Although internationalization played a stronger role in the positioning of ADMU, collectively for these Philippine HEIs, this area has a low priority in constructing their self-representations. Research also ranked fourth in how the top 4 HEIs construct their self-representation on their websites but it played a stronger role in positionings in UPD and DLSU, and this coincided with the fact that both HEIs declared themselves to be research universities about a decade ago. The area extension ranked lowest as an area of priority for the subject universities. Although it is surprising that this played a stronger role in the positioning of UST considering that it did not declare itself as a research university.

This paper intended to understand the implications of the collective self-presentations of the four selected Philippine HEI's not only to the image of these institutions but also to Philippine higher education. Based on the analysis, there are areas that need to be strengthened and given priority.

Collectively, the top four Philippine HEIs should take full advantage of the area of research in constructing their self-representations. Two of the four subject Philippine HEIs, UPD and DLSU, declared themselves as research universities and the other two, ADMU and UST are producing substantial volume of research.

The top four Philippine HEIs with their significant volumes of research production are actually capable of showcasing real extension in the websites. This paper already mentioned that research is needed for the socioeconomic development of countries, but research actually cannot achieve this without extension.

UPD and DLSU are also yet to relate their higher research activities to extension and these two institutions should capitalize on their actual extension activities as far as their self-presentations are concerned.

In terms of using internationalization in their positioning, UST should take full advantage of its strong internationalization scores. UPS and DLSU have decent scores in international research network which ADMU and UST can study, and UST has decent scores in international faculty, inbound exchange, and outbound exchange, which UPD, ADMU, and DLSU can study.

Other Philippine HEIs would benefit in following the strategies of the top 4 Philippine HEIs especially in foregrounding the area of teaching in their websites. But to make their portrayals distinctive they must highlight their own specific brands of teaching, like what UPD, ADMU, DLSU, and even UST did.

They can also bank on showcasing their area of student life in their websites, as long as their events are meaningful, effective training opportunities, distinctive and appealing to the stakeholders. Portraying the area of student life does not need as much economic and cultural capitals as does portraying the area of campus and facilities.

Other Philippine HEIs with considerable research activities, such as the handful of other leading private Philippine HEIs and top Philippine state universities, even if these may be below the volume of either UPD, DLSU, ADMU, or UST, should capitalize on this area. Underscoring the area of research in the websites of say the top 20 Philippine HEIs will help educate the stakeholders about the importance of research and would benefit the country as a whole.

Similarly, other Philippine HEIs would actually find it difficult to present their area of extension in their websites. Building up the area of extension presupposes an already built and functional research area but the few Philippine HEIs with considerable research activities that can already start building up their area of extension and showcasing this in their websites.

Future research using the same approach and method may be conducted in other HEIs, say the state universities to ascertain how they represent their self-images in contradistinction with each other in terms of their teaching, research, extension, internationalization, campus and facilities, and student life, as well as their overall positioning. It is equally interesting to conduct a semiotic analysis of private HEIs self-presentations in their social media pages knowing that the global COVID-19 pandemic stir up the current plans and efforts of the Philippine higher educational institutions requiring them to be more creative and bolder to step out of their comfort zones to achieve their current or new strategic goals. Proactive research is therefore needed to reimagine Philippine HEIs and how they cope with the challenges that come with the new normal.

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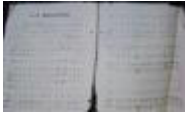









Appendix A: Photographs harvested from UPD Website










The following pictures were taken from the public website of UP Diliman (University of the Philippines, 2020) and used in the analysis of this article.

Photograph Number	Photograph	Caption
1		TatagUP (Tugon ng UP Diliman sa Hamon ng Covid-19)
2		Update UP Diliman Post-ECQ Guidelines
3		Arcilla, Gabriel (+), among Asia's best scientists
4		Ramon P. Santos: Dangal ng Wika
5		Photo by Gil Jacinto
6		N/A
7		Fidel R. Nemenzo, DSc March 1, 2020-Present Professor 12, College of Science

8		Michael Lim Tan, DVM, PhD March 1, 2014-February 29, 2020 Professor Emeritus, College of Social Sciences and Philosophy (CSSP)
9		Caesar A. Saloma, PhD March 2, 2011-March 1, 2014 Professor 12, College of Science (CS)
10		Sergio S. Cao, PhD 2005-2011 Professor 11, Cesar E.A. Virata School of Business (VSB) (ret.)
11		Claro T. Llaguno, PhD 1996-1999 Professor 12, College of Science (ret.)
12		Roger D. Posadas, PhD (†) 1993-1996 Professor 12, College of Science (ret.)
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17		Chancellor Fidel R. Nemenzo, DSc
18		Prof. Ma. Theresa T. Payongayong, PhD OVCAA
19		Prof. Adeline A. Pacia, MTM OVCA
20		Prof. Gonzalo A. Campoamor II, PhD OVCRD
21		Prof. Louise Jashil R. Sonido OVCSA
22		Prof. Aleli B. Bawagan, PhD OVCCA

23		Prof. Raquel B. Florendo, PhD OVCPD
24		UP Naming Mahal
25		UP Diliman Month
26		UP Fair (photo courtesy of Vince Golangco)
27		Cadena de Amor
28		
29		UP Activism photo courtesy of cowwww. arkibongbayan.org
30		UPCAT applicants
31		UP Hayride
32		UPD Pag-iilaw
33		UPD Lantern Parade











34		UPDIO Director Sir Anril Tiatco tours visitors from Takushoku University
35		Visitors touring the UPD campus. (Photo courtesy of Prof. Regina Banaag)
36		UPD visitors from Japan at the Carillon Plaza. (Photo courtesy of Prof. Regina Banaag)
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49		Kalayaan Residence Hall
50		Kamia Residence Hall
51		Molave Residence Hall
52		UP Fair 2015

53		Lantern Parade
54		Ramon P. Santos
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56		
57		

Appendix B: Photographs harvested from ADMUwebsite




The following pictures were taken from the public website of Ateneo de Manila University (Ateneo de Manila University, 2020) and used in the analysis of this article.

Photograph Number	Photograph	Caption
1		
2		<p>An education that empowers you for change is your best preparation for tomorrow.</p> <p>Since 1859, Ateneo de Manila has been preparing young people for the future, offering education and holistic formation that prepares you not just for work, but will set you for life.</p> <p>Ready for Tomorrow</p> <p>Online education the Ateneo way</p>
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13		Welcome to LS One: The LS Virtual One Stop Student Services Hub
14		Welcome to the School of Humanities on AteneoBlueCloud
15		AY 2020-2021 primer
16		AteneoBlueCloud: The Ateneo's distinctive approach to online education
17		Getting on AteneoBlueCloud
18		Academic calendar and key dates
19		Tuition and financial aid









20		Frequently asked questions
21		Resources and related issuances
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35		Live where you learn. Love where you live. On-campus living at Ateneo de Manila
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38		










39		
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41		
42		Creating new spaces for learning with Arete
43		Ateneo aid in adversity










Appendix C: Photographs harvested from DLSU website





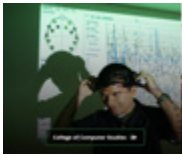



The following pictures were taken from the public website of DLSU Manila (De La Salle University, 2020) and used in the analysis of this article.









Photograph Number	Photograph	Caption
1		La Salle's future lawyers lead volunteer efforts
2		HEIs shift learning delivery, offer support in line with CHED ECQ guidelines
3		ASEAN Benchmarking
4		DLSU Henry Sy, Sr Hall
5		DLSU at a glance
6		About DLSU
7		Research
8		Community Engagement

9		Global
10		Visiting DLSU
11		Appointment of Br. Bernard Oca FSC as DLSU Chancellor
12		
13		Enrique T. Yuchengco Hall
14		SUF Meeting and Dinner with STAR Scholars
15		SUF Meeting with AUN-QA Assessors (Institutional Level)
16		AY 2016-2017 Fellowship Lecture by Prof. Susan Gallardo
17		Pearl Anniversary Fellowship Lecture by Dr. Ponciano Intal, Jr.
18		Society of University Fellows Forum on Higher Education: Educating Gen Z
19		First iCon Conversation with Dr. Pilar Ramos-Jimenez
20		





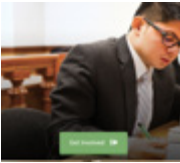



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29		Undergraduate Admissions






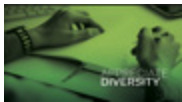


30		Graduate Admissions
31		Scholarships@DLSU
32		Grade School Integrated School Admission
33		Junior High School Integrated School Admission
34		Senior High School Integrated School Admission
35		Archer Achiever Scholarship Grantees for AY 2020-2021
36		St La Salle Financial Assistance Grant Information
37		St. Mutien Marie Scholarship Grant for Graduate Studies
38		Student Loan Program (SLP)









39		Graduate Scholarship Application
40		Downloadable Forms
41		The Future Begins Here
42		Brother Andrew Gonzalez College of Education
43		College of Computer Studies
44		College of Law
45		College of Liberal Arts
46		College of Science









47		Gokongwei College of Engineering
48		Ramon V. Del Rosario College of Business
49		School of Economics
50		Senior High School Integrated School
51		Manila Campus
52		Laguna Campus
53		Makati Extension Campus
54		Rufino Campus






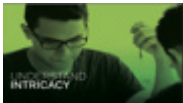



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56		Aging Migrant Women in Japan Wedged between Society's Many Expectations
57		Filmmaker Dipesh Kharel Speaks on Visual Anthropology in 5th SDRC Webinar
58		Dr. Iman Speaks on Minangkabau Matrilineal Society
59		SDRC Hosts "A Guide to Qualitative and Quantitative Research"
60		SDRC Newest Member of the Dignified Pacific Initiative
61		Funaki Joins SDRC as Its First Remote Visiting Researcher
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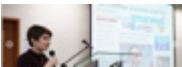
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69		Find your community
70		Get Involved
71		Prepare for your next steps
72		Have fun
73		Get assistance


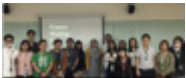




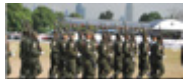


74		Finish strong
75		First Trimester
76		Second Trimester
77		Third Trimester
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79		Appreciate Diversity
80		Graduate Programs in Arts and Humanities
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85		Create Opportunity
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90		Push Innovation
91		Graduate programs in Information Technology and Engineering
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95		Explore Vitality
96		Graduate Programs in Life Sciences
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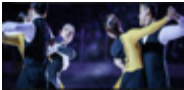
98		
99		Solve Complexity
100		Graduate Programs in Physical Sciences and Mathematics
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102		
103		Understand Intricacy
104		Graduate Programs in Social Sciences and Education
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110		Faculty
111		Facilities
112		Trimestral System
113		Support Services
114		Worldwide Networks
115		Lasallian Firsts
116		The Lasallians Schools Press Conference


117		The Lasallians Schools Press Conference
118		Comprehensive Media Education Program
119		SMO believes in the importance of building and maintaining camaraderie among the members of the major student media groups
120		SMO infuses a critical thinking component to the training program and encourages its members to render community service
121		Provide Holistic Formation to all the Students
122		Developing the Full Potential of Individuals
123		The Comprehensive Media Education Program is a hands-on and interactive training program that covers all topics in media.
124		
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Appendix D: Photographs harvested from USTwebsite

The following pictures were taken from the public website of UST (University of Sto Tomas, 2020) and used in the analysis of this article.










Photograph Number	Photograph	Caption
1		
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4		The UST Glee Club and the Haraya String Ensemble of Kolisko Waldorf School serenaded the Thomasian Community
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11		The main venue for research in UST is the Thomas Aquinas Research Complex.
12		The UST-SIMBAHAYAN
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14		The University pulsates with youthful life.
15		"There is more fun in UST!"
16		In December, the UST Grandstand and the Open Field become the site of ' <i>Paskuhan</i> '
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47		H.E. Carlos C. Salinas, Ambassador of the Philippines to the Kingdom of Spain (April 2017)
48		H.E. Rolando A. Guevara Alvarado, Ambassador of Panama to the Philippines (2016)
49		H.E. Esra Cankorur, Ambassador of Turkey to the Philippines (2016)
50		H.E. Sung Y. Kim, Ambassador of the United States of America to the Philippines (September 14, 2017)
51		This page serves as a hub for services of the University that cater to its internal and external stakeholders
52		The Faculty of Engineering, with support from UST and external partners in industry and alumni, are 3D printing face shield visors and ear guards, which have since been distributed to beneficiaries all over the country.
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57	 A photograph showing three people in a hallway. One person is wearing a white lab coat and a face mask, another is in a dark shirt and pants, and the third is in a white t-shirt and dark pants. They are standing in front of a wooden door.	
58	 A photograph showing three people outdoors. Two people are wearing blue shirts and dark pants, and one is wearing a blue shirt and dark pants. They are standing in front of a green fence.	
59	 A photograph showing two people in a room. One person is wearing a white lab coat and a face mask, and the other is wearing a green shirt and dark pants. They are standing in front of a counter with various items on it.	

