

Isentia PH TRENDSPOTTING REPORT

PRELUDE TO THE POLLS

**An Overture to the 2022 Philippine
National Elections**



Taking it to the Polls

This study covers all discussions relating to the upcoming **2022 Philippine Elections**, specifically, when presidential aspirants officially made their bids for the position and filed their certificates of candidacy (COC).

This report covers data across different social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, and YouTube. Covered period of this report is **September 27 - October 8, 2021**.

The objective of this report is to identify the **trending** and **relevant conversations** relating to the 2022 Philippine Elections. By identifying these trends, Isentia can help certain industries or personalities leverage on relevant conversations.

The charts incorporated in this report were gathered from **Isentia's internal proprietary tool**.

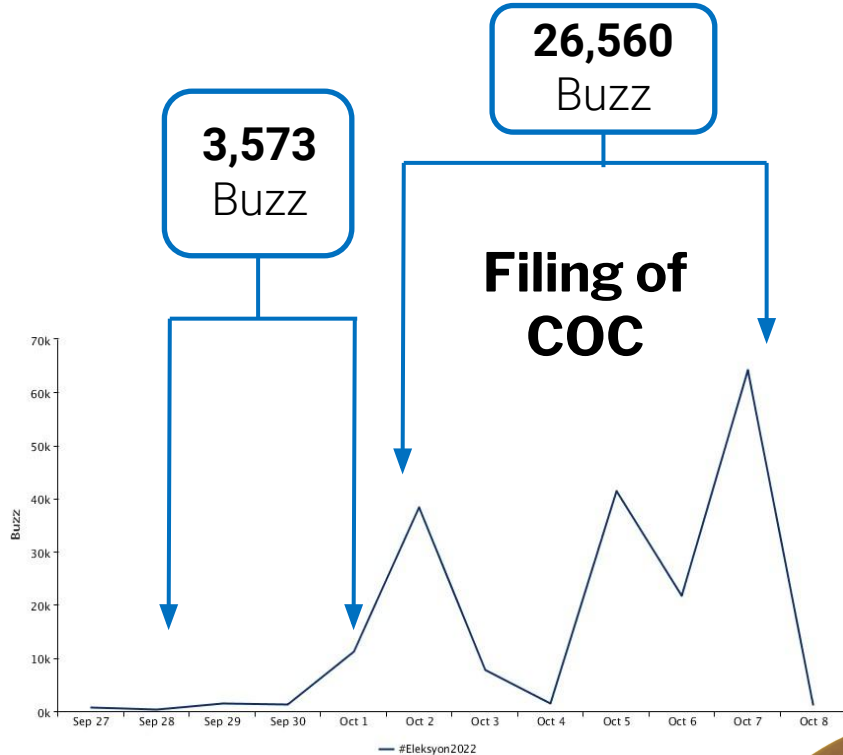


The COC Epicenter: 'Creation of Controversy'

Since the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) started accepting candidates for the highest government position, conversations for the 2022 Philippine Elections skyrocketed. This is no surprise to the digital public and the media alike. On October 1, mainstream and social media outlets began to cover stories regarding the presidential aspirants as the deadline for the filing of COCs drew to a close.



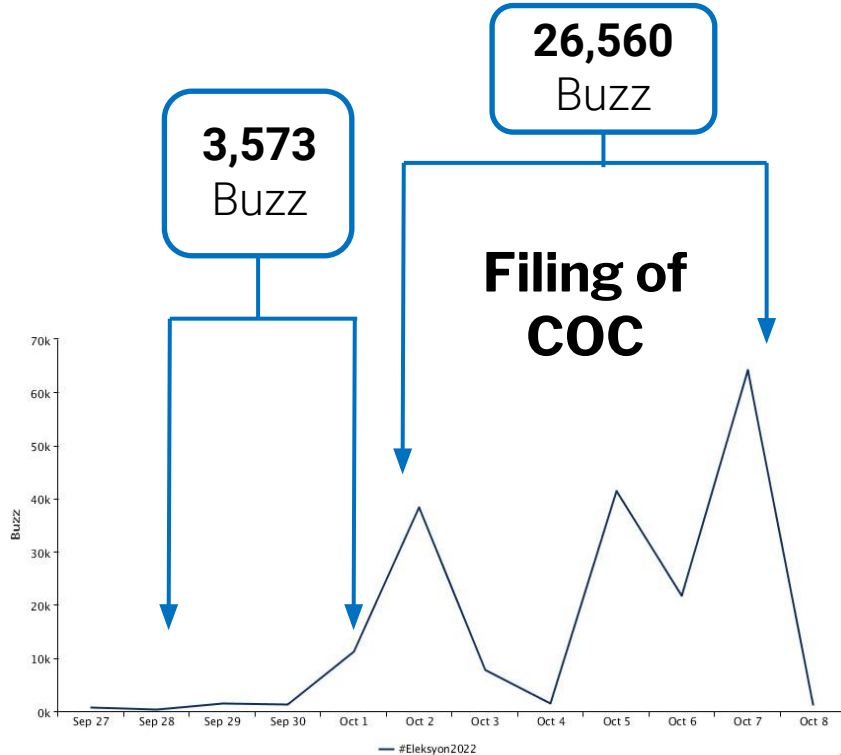
The COC Epicenter: Creation of Controversy



A week before October 1, the average social buzz on keyword **#Eleksyon2022** was only at **3,573**. Prior to the period of COC filing, only three candidates — Lacson, Pacquiao, and Moreno — had expressed their intention to run for president, hence the low buzz. For the other candidates, Marcos confirmed his candidacy a day before he filed his COC, while Robredo and Dela Rosa officially announced their candidacy on the day of their COC filing.



The COC Epicenter: Creation of Controversy



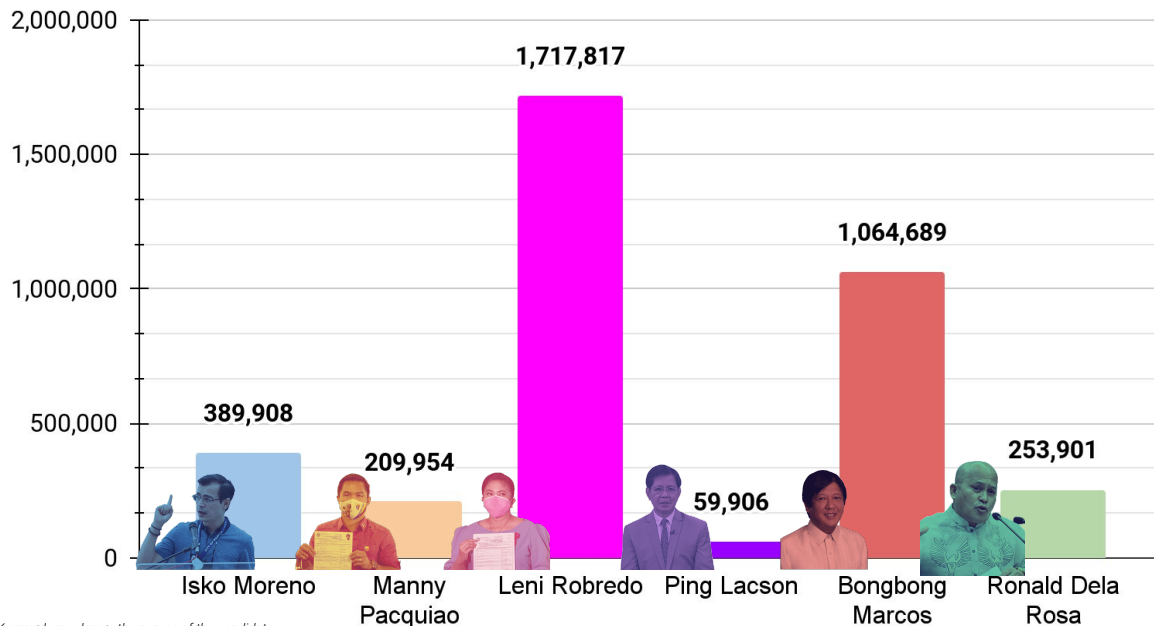
Meanwhile, the average buzz since the candidates began filing their Certificate of Candidacy (COC) on October 1 was at **26,560**. In addition to the aforementioned figures, there was also a **643%** increase in politics-related conversations. The growing interest of the digital public on the elections, the candidates, and their general speculations, fueled the spike in buzz.

With high buzz, candidates can look into leading conversations, top voices, sentiment - whether overall positive or negative, and even underlying messages being pushed by the digital public. Such information can be leveraged to devise effective communication strategies, well-thought of responses, and craft relatable and digestible content to further discussion.



A Look At The Numbers

Buzz Count via Name of the Candidate



Notably, **Robredo** and **Marcos** gained more mentions than each of the other candidates combined. The existing tension between the two - stemming from their rivalry for the Vice Presidential race in the 2016 elections, and multiple accusations of election fraud - has led to heavy online discussions from netizens supporting or criticizing either candidate. This would be the catalyst for the two's rise in mentions.

The trajectory in a mix of arguments, praises, and social media parley pertaining to Robredo and Marcos is an area the other candidates should look into. The rest of the presidential candidates can delve into the favorable or unfavorable conversation drivers and thematic messages coming out of Robredo and Marcos mentions which will help them understand what drove the gap in their buzz and if there is any underlying attributions they can take a cue from.

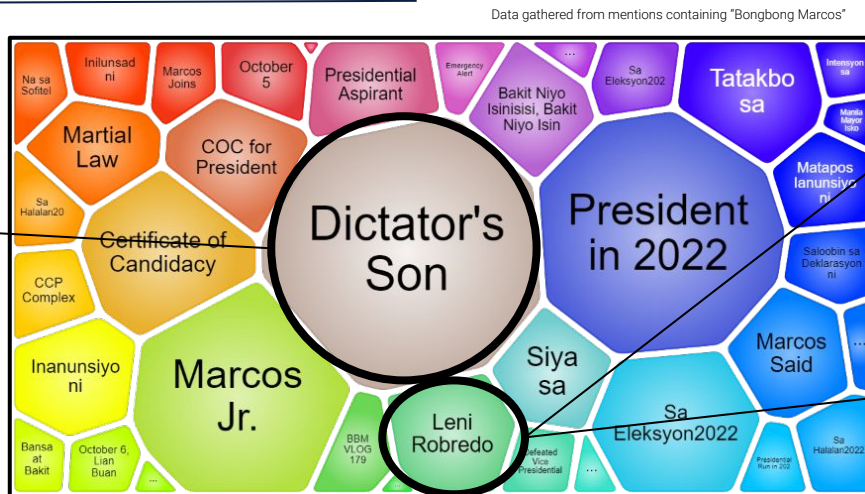
*Keywords used were the names of the candidates.

*Covered period is from October 1-8, 2021.

A Peep At The Clusters



*Keyword used was "Bongbong Marcos"
*Covered period is from October 1-8, 2021.



A look into the buzz cluster of words commonly cited alongside **Bongbong Marcos** highlights how prominently how **Vice President Robredo** has been co-mentioned. While plenty of these mentions focused on his lineage and formal announcement, the comparison between the two candidates' track record and capability to lead served as a notable topic during this time. This stirred conversations, marred with volatile opinions, resulting to their firm lead over the rest in terms of buzz count. Candidates must not only track mentions of themselves, but be more wary of conversations that co-mention them with other presidentiables. Knowing how they are being perceived based on these co-mentions would help them understand their footing compared to the other candidates. Culling out insights from these angles will aid them in formulating tactical responses or actions, if needed.

Your Choice, Everyone's Future

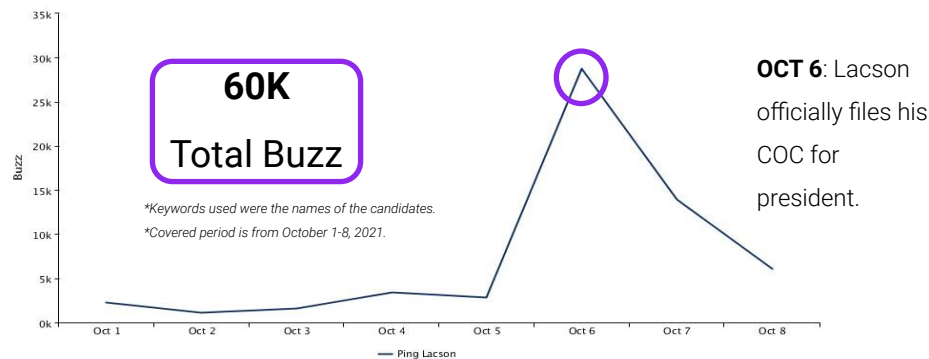
*A look into the highlights and lowlights
of the presidential frontrunners*





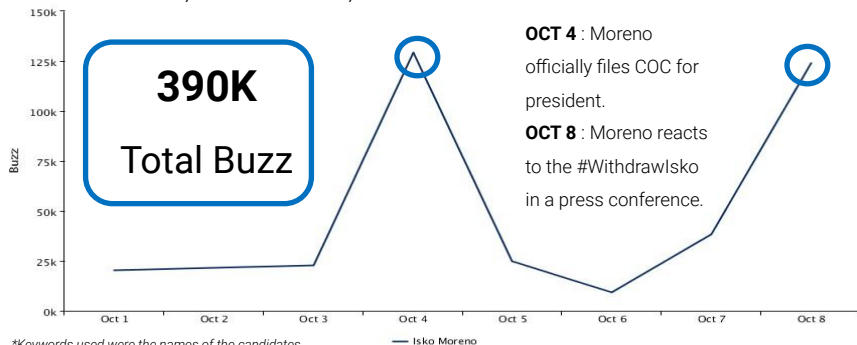
The Early Bird: Ping Lacson

Senator Ping Lacson's early announcement - taking place on September 8 - did not translate to sustained online buzz as Lacson logged the lowest mentions among all candidates during this period. Adding to this, Senator Lacson filed his COC on the same day as Bongbong Marcos, showing his mentions drowning out in the sea of social media discussions. With the considerable buzz linked to Marcos, Senator Lacson's filing was nonetheless **overshadowed**. Candidates must be conscious of when and where they would launch their materials and prepare for strategic content in the event an unanticipated announcement or happening kickoff at the same time. **Timing** and choice of priority **platforms** are significant factors to look into during critical milestones of the elections.



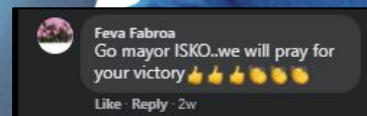
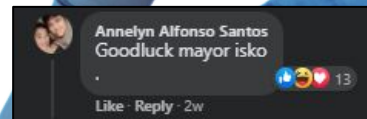
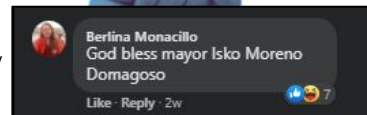
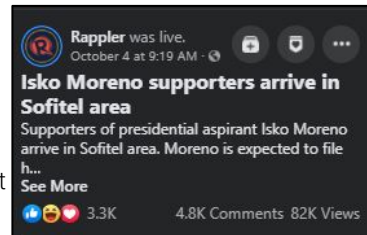
Manila's Golden Boy: Isko Moreno

The 46-year-old former actor and now Manila Mayor Isko Moreno filed his COC for President on **October 4**. While he made rounds on the same day, his name peaked more on **October 8** after he ignited in anger at a press conference responding to the coined **#WithdrawIsko** that trended - a catalyst of which was Vice President Robredo's decision to run for President. This suggests that the way a candidate reacts or responds to critical mentions drives conversations, albeit mixed that could make or break his media positioning. A candidate must remain to be on their toes and should be actively aware of mentions and messages relating to their name, and hence consistently monitor. This will help them prepare proper responses and avoid being blind-sided by possible criticisms, new narratives, and unknown unknowns.



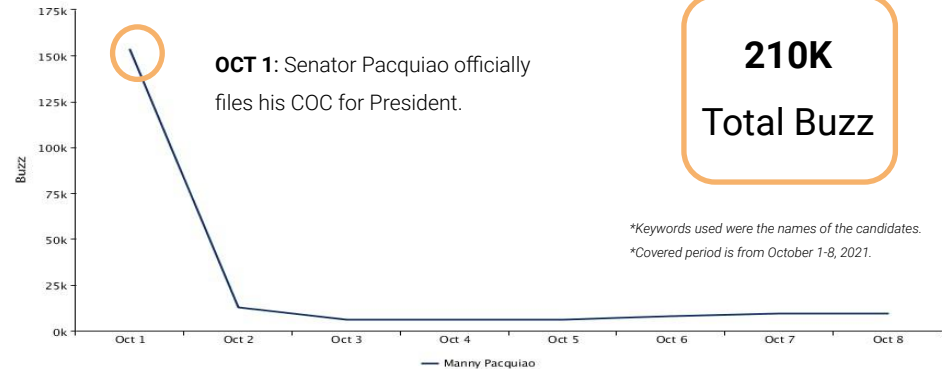
*Keywords used were the names of the candidates.

*Covered period is from October 1-8, 2021.



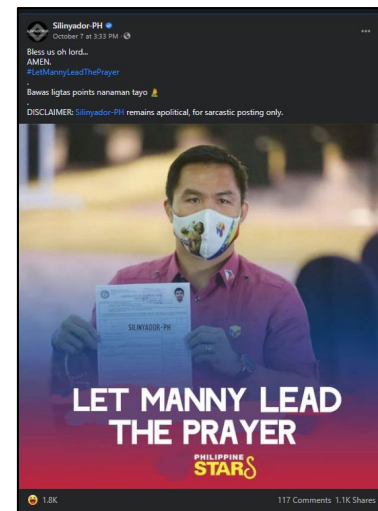
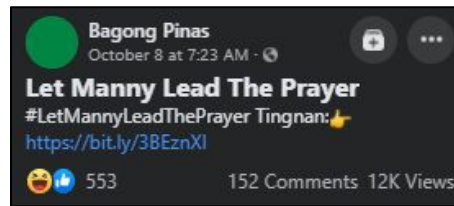
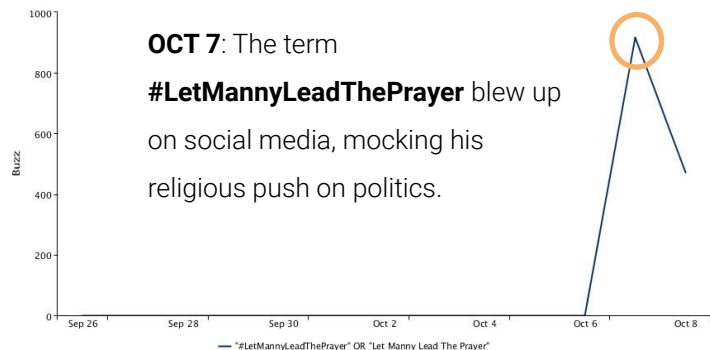
The Champ: Manny Pacquiao

Senator Manny Pacquiao's announcement generated a number of '**divisive**' buzz in the digital space with respect to his persona as a world-class athlete vis-a-vis his stand as a politician. Many poured praise and respect into mentions of the fighting senator, as he has helped a number of communities through charitable works. However, his equally vocal critics focused on his **lack of skills** in governance as seen in his track record. This showcases that a candidate's expertise and knowledge in politics-related matters - whether that candidate is an athlete, actor, etc. - is held in high regard by netizens at this time. As observed from buzz on Senator Pacquiao, it may be surmised that eager netizens set their eyeballs on candidates to practice and showcase their skill sets in governance, regardless of their background.



Praying His Way Out of Criticism

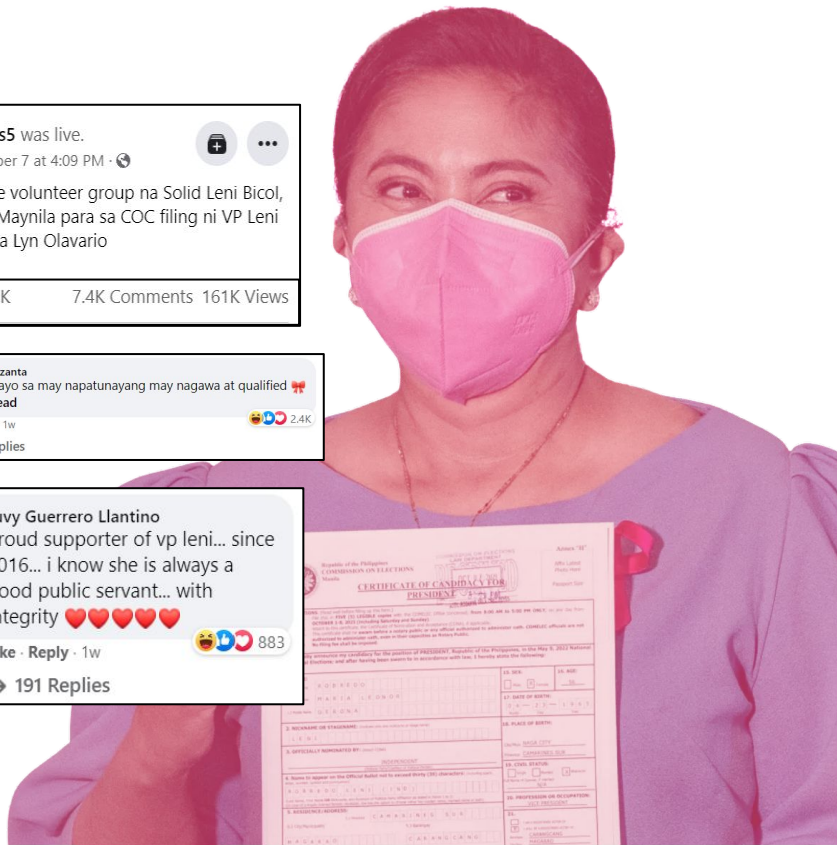
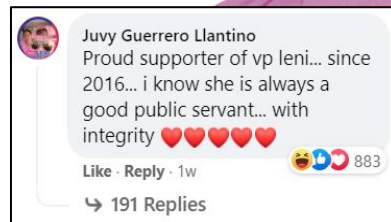
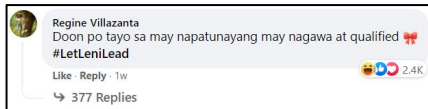
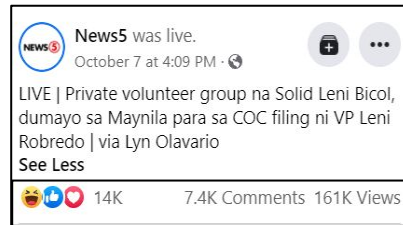
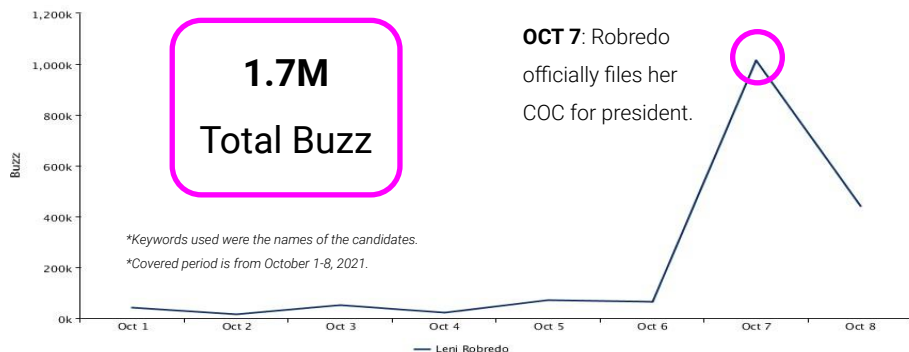
On **October 7**, supporters of Vice President Leni Robredo crafted the hashtag, **#LetMannyLeadThePrayer**. It was derived from **#LetLeniLead**, seeming to mock Senator Pacquiao's religious push on Filipino laws and politics. The trend highlights how important it is to keep a campaign relevant to the current needs of your target audience. While Senator Pacquiao has centered his career around his faith, the underlying questions on politics ask for a more appropriate platform.



The Advocate: VP Leni Robredo

After months-long discussions regarding the action the administration's opposition wanted to pursue this election, Vice President Leni Robredo expressed that it takes a respectable amount of courage for women to break free from **misogyny**. Building enough courage, the opposition leader announced that she will run for president while bannerizing her new color, **pink**.

After her announcement, netizens picked up on Vice President Robredo's cue. Different social media spaces were awash with waves of pink following declarations of support for her candidacy - a display of social mobilization at work.



The Pink Revolution

In a press conference at her office on October 8, it was stated that Vice President Robredo's decision for her campaign color was to represent the emerging global symbol for **protest** and **activism**, which she wishes to wage against bad governance. Through celebrities who have millions of followers on social media, Vice President Robredo's message and branding quickly painted the digital world in pink, showing a belief in her call for a change in governance style and encouraging Filipinos - supporters and critics alike - to take an active stand in the upcoming elections. This served as a positive take for the movement as the celebrity participation helped cascade the message of protest across spheres beyond politics.



With Vice President Robredo choosing a color that **clearly represents** her message, platform, and personality well, supporters with the same wants and perspective latched on to her "pink movement" from the jump. When initiating a trend, brands and/ or organizations need to ensure that the components they will use distinctly showcase their cause, movement, or message. Using elements that can be easily adopted and cascaded by supporters would also be beneficial for awareness and capturing attention.

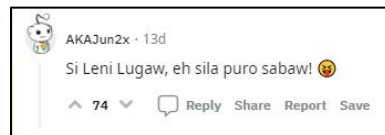
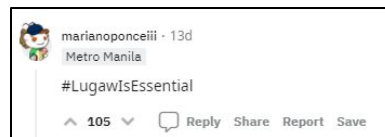
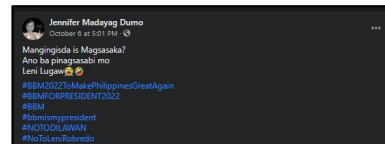


Embracing the Essential: Lugaw

As expected, not everyone was supportive of Vice President Robredo's declaration to run for President. Some netizens branded her as **"Leni Lugaw"** (porridge) as an insult. This was prompted after pictures of her campaign team associated with porridge spread online during the 2016 elections.

Despite this, Vice President Robredo's camp was ready to counter the supposed insult. She embraced the "lugaw" brand and turned the smear attempt to her advantage by serving rice porridge to the attendees of her presidential bid announcement.

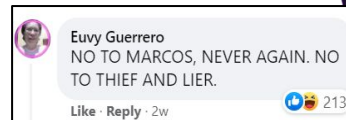
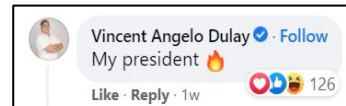
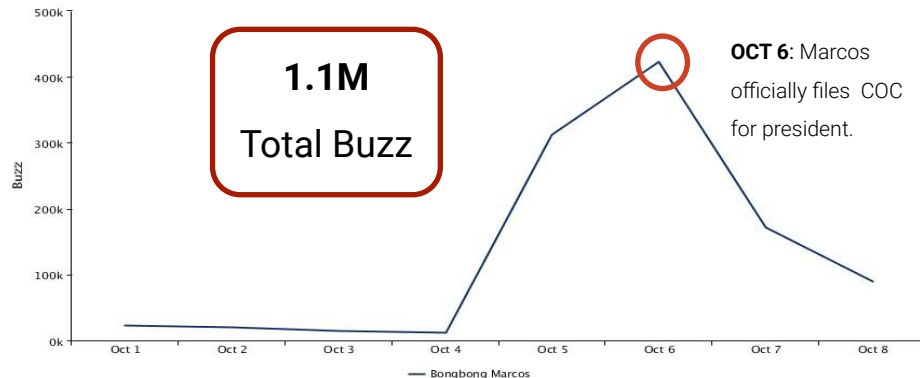
Netizens reacted positively to this as a post of her lugaw act reached the trending list of Reddit's r/Philippines with 99% upvote. This implies that the ability of a candidate to leverage on supposed negative traction, all while benefiting the public, can create a positive effect on their campaign.



The Son: Bongbong Marcos

The conversations surrounding presidential aspirant former Senator Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. heavily involved his family name - a reference to his father’s presidency for over two decades , including conviction of corruption charges. On **October 6**, former Senator Marcos announced his candidacy, leading to a sharp spike in buzz filled with mixed sentiments, mainly due to the history surrounding his family name - from themes surrounding martial law, dictatorship, corruption, hidden wealth, golden era of the country, “better” living conditions then, multiple killings, ill-gotten wealth, to history revisionism, among many others.

Being in the know of what conversations are surrounding your name is pivotal. Knowing this will help one understand if they themselves are the dominant subject being discussed, or if they are mentioned in passing or in comparison, and **where to focus their response.**



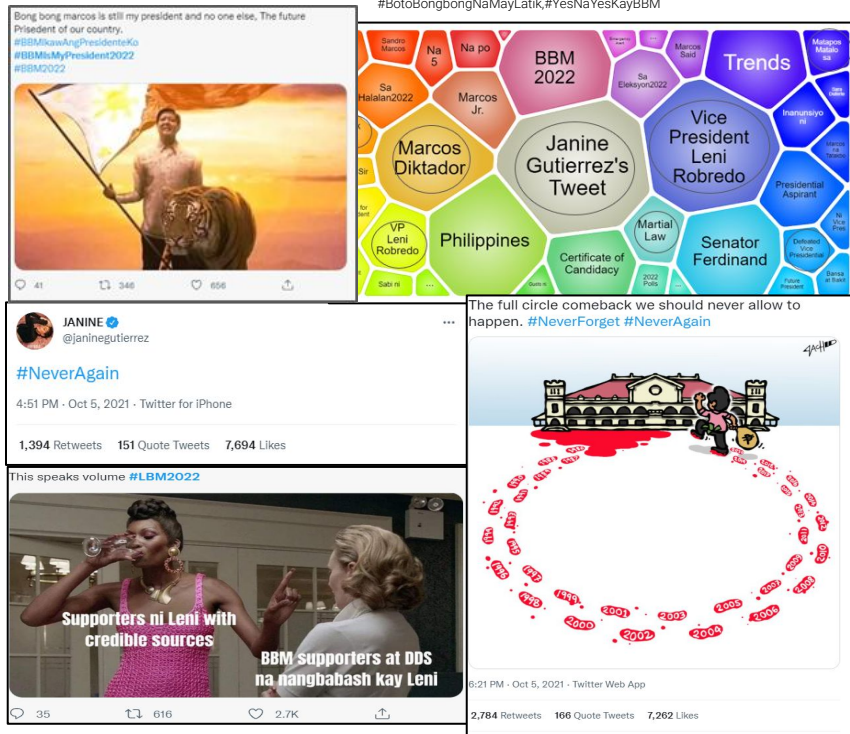
The Philippine Government: A Family Business?

Mentions of Ferdinand Marcos Sr. as a **dictator** was accompanied by the hashtags **#NeverAgain** and **#MarcosMagnanakaw**, were inevitably highlighted alongside the candidacy of former Senator Marcos. Both hashtags were used by the public and celebrity figures like Janine Gutierrez, that further fueled . These hashtags served as a reminder of the Marcos patriarch's tyranny, as well as a counterpoint to the underlying historical revisionism in discussions of the family. Marcos loyalists and supporters responded almost just as loud, with tweets praising the Marcos name for **excellent leadership**. These praises included inaccurate measures and anecdotes of the Marcos' wealth, presidency, and accomplishments, which have been fact checked by critics, further stirring exchanges on a sustained level.

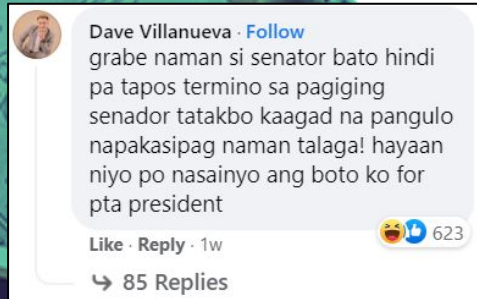
A push and pull action was observed in the sentiment of the digital public's opinions and conversations on former Senator Marcos. In terms of responding to criticisms, his camp has been taking a **passive approach**, distancing himself from his father's actions. He has not been vocal in terms of directly addressing critical mentions and allows his supporters to serve as his voice. In line with this, it is ideal for candidates to be able to spot **advocates** who will actively defend them with reason and are loyal to their messages. Presidentiables can leverage on the dominant themes and conversations their advocates rally behind to align with them.

This, in turn, helped showcase the massive support base he has in the social space.

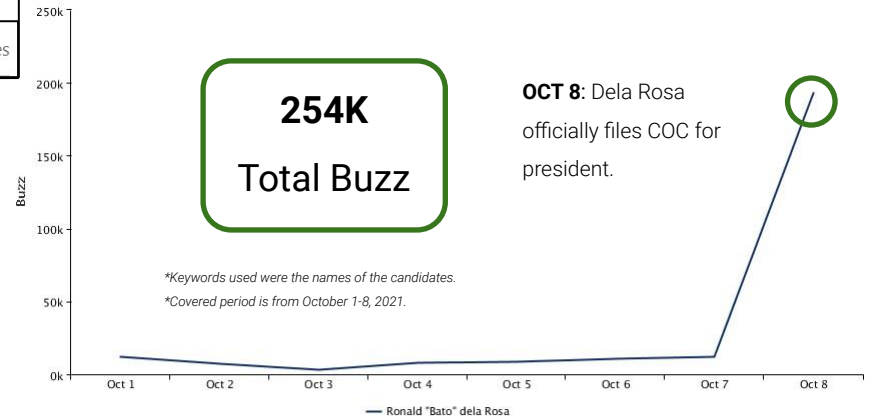
Data gathered from mentions containing #LBM2022, #BBMIsMyPresident2022, #MarcosMagnanakaw, #Neveragain, #BotoBongbongNaMayLatik, #YesNaYesKayBBM



The Unexpected: Ronald “Bato” Dela Rosa



In an unexpected turn of events, Senator Ronald “Bato” Dela Rosa filed his COC under PDP-Laban on the last day of filing. His decision to run sparked questions from netizens on his role in the party list - an earnest candidate or a placeholder for another PDP-Laban member? The element of surprise may catch up on the level of both digital public and mainstream media attention, but to leverage on this, the same must be backed by consistent messaging that will be the challenge of Senator Dela Rosa in coming days.

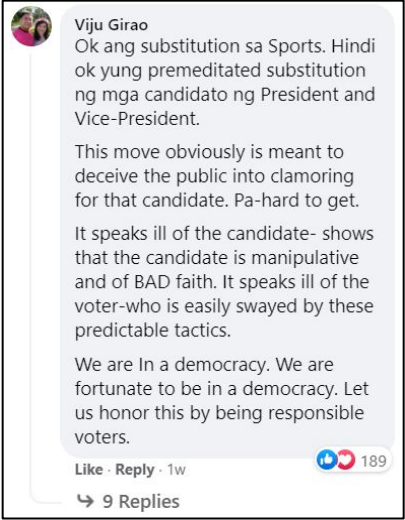
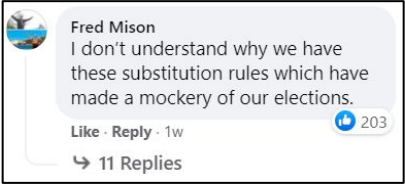


Runner or Benchwarmer?

With his partymate Davao City Mayor Sara Duterte-Carpio initially expected, but yet to file COC to run for President during the period, Senator Dela Rosa stepped in, to the shock of everyone including himself. Netizens speculated that Senator Dela Rosa is simply a **placeholder** candidate. Given this supporters of the Duterte family are anticipating an **election substitution** to happen by November 15, the deadline for such move.

The COC filing of Senator Dela Rosa under the directive of PDP-Laban generated negative feedback from netizens, on the likelihood of being a placeholder for Mayor Duterte-Carpio, with **no actual intention** to vie for the leadership position. As seen on the comments made on Global Daily Mirror's Facebook post, a number of netizens viewed this as merely added publicity and clamor for Mayor Sara Duterte to run for the highest post of the country. .

Senator Dela Rosa and the rest of the party received ire from the digital public. A few netizens expressed that they did not understand the substitution rules, mentioning that it makes a mockery of the PH elections. **Intent matters** when starting a campaign, and must be closely monitored in terms of perception from the digital public. The negative reception received by the senator stemmed from the unclear intention of his actions, making it seem "like a waste" to support him, amidst speculations that he is a stand-in.





Filipino Politics: Governance or Circus?

As presidential aspirants came forth to file their COCs, it may be said that a number of controversies, allegations, fact-checking, historical digging, and even fake news erupted.

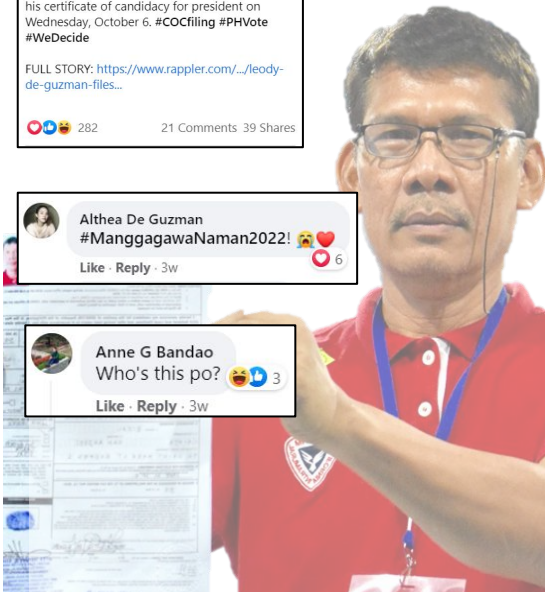
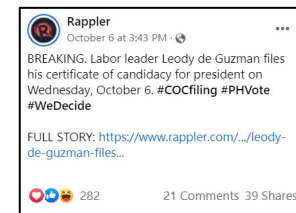
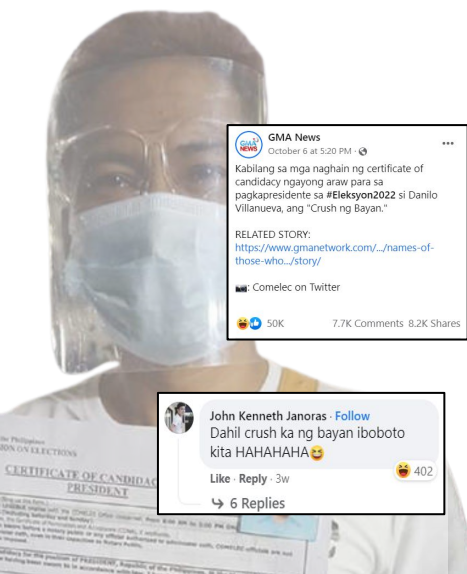
Filipinos openly questioned the viability of each presidential candidate. With a media storm surrounding the most notable candidates, wild discourse and focus turning away from the presidentiables' platforms have given us a show akin to a circus.

Nuisance or Unsung Heroes?

By the end of the filing period, the count landed with a total of **97 presidential candidates**. Apart from the well-known politicians, there were people from different backgrounds who filed for their candidacy. These seemingly ordinary citizens filed with the belief that they can **enact the change** that they have longed for by running themselves and saw it as an **opportunity to share their voice** to the public.

There are candidates like “Crush ng Bayan”, who filed a bid more for show and notoriety. While, there are also those like **Ka Leody De Guzman**, a renowned labor activist who made rounds online. Despite his failed attempt at a senate seat in previous elections, and being less popular when compared to the other candidates, mentions of him running for president still garnered significant buzz; mainly from media outlets. The labor leader identifies as an **“alternative” to the “elitist”** parties that have held the seat for the past decades - bannering his pro-worker advocacies. Alternative candidates highlight that there are choices present for those who want to exercise the right to vote, but are unsatisfied with the candidates who have been in office before, or are members of the same political parties.

Would-be candidates could consider putting attention to their messaging from the get-go and find ways to track if said messages are being received correctly by the intended audience or if there is a message gap. Candidates are expected to study and know their audience and communicate in a way that will effectively get their message to resonate well.



Who is Rastaman?: Meme-ing or Coping?

Ronaldo Plaza, popularly known as ‘**Rastaman**’, was a 2019 senatorial aspirant that made waves online via memes. A video of him filing his COC from the last elections, accompanied by an interview, resurfaced this period. Netizens began posting memes giving him their ironic support and earning traction across social media platforms. Rastaman gained virality overnight as a result of an interview wherein claims to be “half-human, half-zombie”.

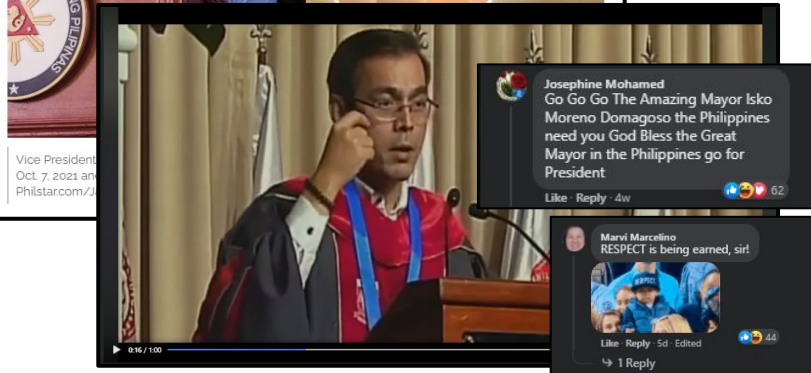
His popularity may be attributed to Filipinos finding **humor** in the candidate amidst the seriousness of the election season. The period leading to the polls has been marred with an overall sense of frustration in the middle of the pandemic, and the internet gave Rastaman a platform and his persona has ensued popularity because of a “**comforting absurdity**” - a key element in getting audience’s attention.

As the internet shifted from memes to serious conversations, a swing of emotions and sentiment could come from various factors especially with news coming the public’s way daily. Rastaman’s popularity is a clear showing of how important humor is to storytelling, messaging, narrative, public relations, leading to a comforting nature that drives engagement.



Robredo owns 'Leni Lugaw' tag anew by serving rice porridge to announcement attendees

By Jeline Malasig · October 7, 2021 · 1:19 PM



Response is Key

Good public perception is fundamental when it comes to elections as it is key to translate to votes come election day. Each candidate will be under close scrutiny as campaign season begins, hence properly formulated responses that highlight the right message amidst the noise is key. Whether it be Vice President Leni Robredo being tagged as “Leni Lugaw”, Mayor Isko Moreno’s showbiz background, or any other candidates’ visible flaw or history, there will be criticisms voiced out loudly and **amplified by channels easily available to everyone** in this day and age.

Seeing how one issue can lead to an online pile on, and further the “downfall” of a candidate, a well thought of response can **curve perceptions and preconceptions** that the public will unavoidably weigh on a candidate. Case in point, Vice President Robredo’s move turning the insult into service highlighted her leadership approach versus the preconceived opinions around her. Media intelligence-wise, this has tipped the sentiment to her favor. Another example is Mayor Moreno’s ad campaign, “Ako si Isko, Tayo si Isko”, which painted the former actor in explicit films in a relatable way to the everyday man; the politician he wants people to see, earned mentions to his favor. These serve as good examples of effectively ending a slant critics find against them - a strategy that fully leverages on what wouldn’t have been a negative take, turning it into narratives of being ‘genuine’ and ‘authentic’.



What Isentia Can Do To Help

Social media platforms have been a long running battleground for candidates to banner their personality, advocacies, and messages, including the branding of their politics. With how volatile the political conversations can be, a level of understanding of how **perception** works can further empower the identity and reputation of any willing candidate. Being able to identify if **communication lines** are being picked up, knowing how effective and efficient they are, and whether or not there are **gaps** in the reception versus intended communication would be of significance to strategies for implementation, content creation, and next steps to either push further or in some cases, pivot. Spotting **advocates** and their dominant and reasonable conversation points can help candidates gear their campaign to better resonate with their support base.

One can also go beyond the digital buzz to gauge their baseline awareness. Isentia can help address this need, taking into consideration not just how candidates are being talked about by the media and the public, but also what people are thinking about them through online surveys. Assessing these metrics may help candidates outline plans on how they can build a winning **reputation**.

Lastly, candidates should assess how the digital public discerns their every move — from responding to criticisms to what color of top should you wear on your next press conference. **This is where insights are non-negotiable for any well thought of campaign to rid any execution of the feast of missing out on what data says and tries to course correct.** Isentia can help election candidates, in strategically fine tuning their actions as well as leveraging on relevant discussions on both social and mainstream media to push for strategies that could turn mere spectators to supporters online, and voters on the day of the most important day of the country in 2022.

What our Insights Leaders in the Philippines say

Armand Eduard Oblenida

Insights Analyst, Philippines



"The conversations around the Philippine elections have had a strong focus on rivalry and controversy over political platforms. Social media's presence has drastic effects on this as well, as the dominant conversation drivers now rely heavily on public opinion and feeling versus information. With a very divided and vocal public, it is safe to assume that there will be plenty of "fireworks" regarding this topic."

Jamil Hadji Alawi

Insights Analyst, Philippines



"I have three different outlooks on the presidential election—*beginning/end of a good/bad governance*, or *continuity* of what we have now. I am certain that everyone wants good governance. Nowadays, people tend to be proactive in participating in discussions online expressing their views on the candidates, sharing facts, and most common now, spreading fake news. With this initiative, presidential candidates would know how they can run their campaign by hearing what the people have to say."

What our Insights Leaders in the Philippines say

Francis Angelo Calucin
Insights Analyst, Philippines



"After presidential aspirants came forth to file their COCs, controversies related to these candidates erupted. Social media, becoming a battleground for political campaigns, only fueled the flames that are the opinions and commentaries of the digital public. From commendations to attacks, personalities can leverage and shift these conversations by having a deep understanding of brand image and public perception."

Aldhen Jay Huenda
Data Analyst, Philippines



"It is that time of the year again. One of the hottest and trending topics recently on Philippine politics are those candidates for the upcoming national elections next year. One thing I found amusing was the long list of people filing for their COC for the presidency, over a hundred people eyed the land's highest position, six of which are frontrunners that generated divide and controversy in the digital space. Questions also arise, who among them stands for the real opposition or would there be one of them in that case?"



Please do not hesitate to get in touch with us
for more information on this whitepaper.

Contact Us

✉ : brand@isentia.com

🌐 : isentia.com

in : [linkedin.com/company/isentia/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/isentia/)

f : [facebook.com/isentiacom](https://www.facebook.com/isentiacom)