Social Media Use of Select Healthcare Institutions: A Unique Experience of Social Media Managers

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore the usage of social media by the healthcare institutions in Tagum City, Davao del Norte, the Philippines as a marketing communication and customer engagement tool through the lived experiences of their social media managers. Using a qualitative study approach and in-depth interviews, this research investigated the acceptance of social media by healthcare institutions as a marketing communication and customer engagement tool through the perceptions and lived experiences of their social media managers as well as their insights for recommendations on social media handling best practices. The data gathered from their interviews were then thematically analyzed. Accordingly, the social media managers revealed that Facebook is their social media platform of choice due to its popularity among Filipinos. They perceived their social media practices as possibly exhausting, having an easy service accessibility and communication, likely to boost their HCI's services, faster health information sharing, and the probability of online bashing and security risks. Further, they experienced insufficient administrative support, appreciation from satisfied clients and negative feedback from disgruntled customers. Their insight on recommended best practices includes content enhancement, better engagement with users, frequent posting, hiring dedicated personnel for handling the HCI's social media account, intervening during an online crisis and using social media as a supplement to traditional media. The results from this research may provide hospital administration with information for activity planning and improvement of social media handling. As far as the authors are aware, there is no published analysis on the experiences of social media managers of healthcare institutions of Tagum City.

Keywords: healthcare, social media use, hospital managers.

Introduction

With social media being a powerful communication tool, there is no surprise that the healthcare industry has also adapted to utilizing it in providing healthcare information and sharing announcements. According to Coiera (2013), "social media could contribute in valuable ways to health care provision, including improving care quality through facilitating patient feedback, disseminating public health messages, strengthening professional networks and supporting ongoing disease management".

The Philippines has 89 million social media users with the equivalent of 80.7% of its total population and 98.7% access social media via mobile phones. Filipinos are spending a high amount of time of up to 4.15 hours daily, hence being hailed as the "world's social media capital" (Digital 2021: The Philippines Report). Estares (2019) stated that social media is considered as a form of connectivity by Filipinos which fosters creation and strengthening of relationships.

Sanchez (2020) stated that "accessing the internet is now the most popular tool for consumers in the Philippines". And of all internet users, approximately 35 million have purchased products or services online (Sanchez, 2019).

With this immense prospect, a group of physicians started in 2014 the hashtag #HealthXPh on Twitter. Igna (2015) described it as "a collaborative effort of healthcare stakeholders to discuss and use developing technologies, and social media to bring a positive impact to the Philippine healthcare scenario".

Even though Filipinos have convenient access towards social media sites, there are still some hospitals and other healthcare institutions in the country who were slow and hesitant in adapting in using this technology to their advantage. One of these places observed is Tagum City. A first-class component city and the capital of Davao del Norte Province in Mindanao, Philippines, boasts of more than fifteen established hospitals, polyclinics and diagnostic centers catering to 259,444 residents which were managed by either publicly or privately owned corporations (City Government of Tagum, 2015).

Almost all of them have social media accounts or pages but based on the quality and frequency of their postings, it can be observed that they are underutilized. This stemmed from the different views of the hospital management on social media's usefulness to their organization. Social media use may be studied extensively abroad but there are limited published studies conducted in the country and scarcely in Tagum City. Therefore, the researcher intended to examine the use of social media sites at these healthcare institutions as a marketing communication tool through the lived experiences of their social media managers.

The results of this research will be an addition to the limited literature and can pave way to impart some of the best practices in social media use in the healthcare setting.

The Communication Theory: Uses and Gratification

According to Dunne et.al. (2010) as cited by Hossain (2019), "the Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) refers to the study of the gratifications or benefits that attracts and hold users to different media and various contents that fulfil the user's psychological and social needs". Simply, this theory aims to explain the reasons why a particular medium is chosen as well as the motives of the users' media interaction.

Hossain (2019) said that the Uses and Gratification Theory have been incorporated in much research in measuring the causes in the usage of various traditional media such as radios, telephones, newspapers, etc. And currently used widely in exploring communication technology and new media such as social network sites. This theory influences the study in examining how the healthcare organizations in Tagum are using social media sites to connect with their clients and the public.

The Technology Acceptance Model

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) was developed and posited in 1989 by Fred Davis, to determine what factors, influence a certain group or organization in accepting new technology (Hoong, Thi & Lin, 2017). According to Davis (1989) "the two highly relevant

individual beliefs regarding the individual's intention to use information technology are perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU)".

In this study, the TAM model is aptly suited to determine how the hospital management of Tagum City who are using social media sites accept this platform as a marketing communication tool.

Objectives of the Study
To answer the research question, the research objectives are:

1. To analyze their perception of social media management in their institution.
2. To understand the lived experiences of the social media managers handling the social media accounts of the healthcare organization.
3. To share their insights of best practices on social media management for the benefit of healthcare institutions.

Research Problem
1. How do the management of healthcare institutions in Tagum City accept the use of social media in their marketing communication and customer engagement, and,
2. What are their insights for best practices recommendations in handling social media better?

Overview of social media use
The most widely used social media platform internationally are YouTube, Facebook, and WhatsApp (Digital 2021 Global Reports) and they paved way for the immense information dissemination, which Chivandi, et al (2019) agreed "the rise in Internet accessibility and availability of smartphones has led to the new form of what is known as electronic word of mouth (e-WOM)". Garven J.J. (2010) as cited by Gupta, et al (2013) also emphasized on his study that "the power of social networking is its immediate access to the word-of-mouth exchange of information, and the word-of-mouth avenue itself is recognized as the single most effective form of advertising".

Social media use in healthcare institutions
With social media being widely accepted in the healthcare industry, the new term "Health 2.0" or "Medicine 2.0" was made to describe the use of this developing technology in facilitating relationships and communication among healthcare professionals and consumers (Smith, 2017).

Despite its promising value to healthcare organizations, social media use is still not well adapted in other parts of the world in creating brand awareness and healthcare-related information sharing.

Challenges in Maintaining Organizational Social Media Accounts
Burdensome to maintain:
Gupta, et al. (2013) concluded in their study that one of the challenges that healthcare organizations face in using social media is to keep up with online trends and getting the attention of a big audience. Further, "social media content can have very short memory in people's mind as new and interesting opportunities keep coming up".

Social media burnout:
The demanding role of social media practitioners can often lead to social media burnout. World Health Organization (WHO) defined burnout being an occupational phenomenon as "resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully

managed". According to Sehl (2021), organizational social media managers are prone to social media burnout and workplace fatigue brought by the pressure of the role which can be underappreciated, unrewarded and underpaid.

Insufficient administrative support:

One of the challenges faced by organizations using social media is the lack of manpower and resources. In a survey done by online tech business media The Manifest on the biggest challenges faced by 344 participating social media practitioners, 26% answered not having sufficient financial and human resources, while 24% said not having any formal strategy.

Social media use in Philippine healthcare setting

The Philippine healthcare industry has also embraced social media usage in facilitating better communication with online audience. Healthcare professionals are also engaging in social media and health informatics.

A group of local physicians made a trending hashtag #HealthXPh on Twitter in 2015. By using this free and open platform, it facilitated prolific discussion with stakeholders including healthcare organizations, healthcare professionals, patients, the academe, and policy makers on social media use in the Philippine healthcare scenario (Igna, 2015).

According to a statement by #HealthXPh co-founder Dr. Aguilar (2014), he stated "Some healthcare institutions in the Philippines are already using social media to solidify their online presence and engage their clientele. Physician associations and societies are beginning to build up their social media presence too. Further, Aguilar (2014) said that with the inherent.

Filipino traits of friendliness and bayanihan (the Filipino spirit of cooperation and civic unity), online patient support groups can proliferate and become valuable in the healthcare setting.

Despite these developments and the Philippines being called the "Social Media Capital of the World" (Digital Report, 2020), published literature about the use of social media in the healthcare setting is still scanty. The same is true in the context of social media use amongst healthcare institutions at corporate level and as a marketing communication tool. Mariano, et.al. (2018) has stated, "Social media utilization is commonly underestimated and underreported (in the Philippine healthcare setting)". This is also supported by Aguilar (2014) that in terms of social media usage, much is still needed to be learned and explored especially on patient engagement.

Methodology

Research design

This research utilized a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach to examine the use of social media by healthcare institutions in Tagum City through the lived experiences of their social media managers.

Phenomenological approach through this research design, the researchers aimed to understand deeper the perceptions and awareness of healthcare institutions' management on social media use on the corporate level and as a marketing communication tool via the lived experiences of their social media managers.

Data collection method

As a phenomenological study, (Creswell (2018) said "this design has strong philosophical underpinnings and typically involves conducting interviews". The research

strategy used in this study is a virtual in-depth interview with the identified participants through video call on Zoom and Google Meet, due to convenience on both the researchers and participants as well as getting the information needed essential to the study.

The research instrument utilized was an interview guide consisting of 15 questions based on literature review (Cash, 2012) all aligned to answer the research question and meet the study objectives. An interview protocol was also prepared and communicated prior to the conduct of the study.

Research participants and sampling method

For this study, it used a purposive sampling method. Creswell (2018) stated that the sample size for a phenomenological study is at least 10 research participants. With this, the researchers identified ten (10) social media managers of the select healthcare institutions in Tagum City as participants to interview.

Data analysis

This data analysis process includes data sorting for its likeness and dissimilarities, categorizing ideas and then generating the themes to better comprehend the phenomenon studied (Creswell & David 2018). In this study, thematic analysis was performed after the initial codes were identified. It was followed with categorization and analysis of responses from general to specific. Those answers having similar core ideas were taken and grouped together to formulate inclusive themes. Each theme consists of at least three core ideas to make it valid.

Results

Table 1: *Summary of the results*

Research Questions	Findings
1. How do the management of healthcare institutions in Tagum City accept the use of social media in their marketing communication and customer engagement?	The management of healthcare institutions accept the use of social media in their marketing communication and customer engagement as: Possibility of Exhaustion in Managing Social Media Platforms Prospect of Easy Service Accessibility and Communication Likelihood of Boosting HCI's Services Chances of Faster Sharing of Health Information Probability of Online Bashing and Security Risks Insufficient management support Acknowledgment from Satisfied Clients Negative Feedback from Disgruntled Customers
2. What are their insights for best practices recommendations in handling social media better?	Social media managers recommend the following best practices in handling social media: Content Enhancement Better Engagement with Users Frequent Posting Get Dedicated Personnel for Handling Social Media Account Intervening During Online Crisis Supplement to Traditional Media

Discussion

Perception on social media management in healthcare institutions

The social media managers who participated in the study shared their perceptions on social media management in their respective healthcare institutions. Based on their responses, five emerging themes (1) Possibility of Exhaustion in Managing Social Media Platforms, (2) Probability of Easy Service Accessibility and Communication, (3) Likelihood of Boosting

HCI's Services, (4) Chances of Faster Sharing of Health Information, and (5) Probability of Online Bashing and Security Risks were present.

Possibility of exhaustion in managing social media platforms

Prolonged hours of exposure and interaction on social media can lead to feelings of chronic stress, anxiety to the point of fatigue. The respondents perceived that managing their organization's social media account/page can be exhausting. Especially for those who are handling the account solely in addition to their administrative workload.

Smith (2017) has stated that managing social media accounts can be taxing because it requires commitment timewise in creating and maintaining the social media pages especially in regular updates and monitoring. Further, Thiefels (2020) said that since social media managers need to connect and respond to their online audience quickly, that need to be consistently online can be tiring and may eventually lead to social media fatigue.

Probability of easy service accessibility and communication

Some informants perceived social media management as having the probability of easy service accessibility and facilitating communication between organization and their online audience. Being highly accessible online, they can reach wider audiences and connect directly to their patients or potential customers in real time who may have questions about their services.

According to Hunt et.al (2015), "SNSs multiply opportunities for patients to establish peer-led support networks and offer new communicative platforms for supporting public involvement in health care both as informal consumers and as citizens with a more prominent voice over the shape of changes to the design, delivery, and evaluation of health care. Lee, et al, (2020) also said that communication is made much easier on social media since it allows healthcare institutions to get in touch with diverse customers and audiences.

Likelihood of boosting HCI's services

As a free communication platform, the respondents observed that using social media means a boost to their promotion and advertise their healthcare services, facilities, and affiliated consultants accessibly. It also allows them to share updates about their organizational activities which enhances their brand image. Social media can be used as a means for sending our standard marketing message for the organization including their credentials and services offered thus increasing brand visibility, strengthening their market standing and brand perception (McCaughey et al, 2014; Ventola, 2014.

Chances of faster sharing of health information

As an efficient means of communication, social media can spread information quickly and timely to answer people's needs. The respondents agree that using social media leads to faster sharing of health news, health campaigns and advisories especially from the national Department of Health (DOH) and the local government.

With the wide audience reach, Gonzales (2017) stated that launching health campaigns via social media will gain positive results and promoting interaction between healthcare providers and patients. Newberry (2020) also supports that social media can improve public health awareness whether it's a new health concern or annual issue. It is a convenient way to reach them, and healthcare providers can guide the public find credible information and debunk misinformation.

Probability of online bashing and security risks

There are also disadvantages in social media use as perceived by the respondents in handling their respective social media accounts. They related the concerns over the threat of hacking, having no control over people's negative reactions online and the vulnerability to online bashing. Cvetićanin (2019) stated that online hacking is a real threat when using social media and can bring possible issues such as security breaches of patient healthcare information and corporate records. Such sensitive data can expose both hospital and patients.

Lived experiences of the social media managers in healthcare institutions

The study participants revealed their lived experiences in managing social media account for healthcare institutions. According to their responses, three themes came out, these are: (1) Insufficient management support, (2) Appreciation from Satisfied Clients, and (3) Negative Feedbacks from Disgruntled Customers.

Insufficient administrative support

For an organizational social media platform to become successful and functional, it needs the support of the management in terms of resources and manpower. The respondents' statements on struggling to maintain a social media presence due to insufficient administrative support and thus hindering them in the implementation of their proposals.

Krakauer (2018) as cited by Herhold (2018) suggested that social media managers will have difficulty in reaching their target goals or implementation of strategic plans when resources are scarce. Nonetheless, social media presence is crucial for HCIs and if they wish to maximize this communication platform, the management will have to understand its long-term benefit and the resources it needs to run according to their set strategic goals (Herhold, 2018).

Appreciation from satisfied clients

A positive and meaningful interaction with customers online is one of the goals of setting up firm social media accounts/pages. The respondents have shared that receiving acknowledgement from satisfied clients are elating and encouraging especially when customers leave good reviews and recommendations about their services. As an important tool in customer/patient interaction, comments, reviews, and recommendations on social media are open to the public and customers with positive experiences of their service are likely to become the brand ambassadors among their peers (McCaughey, 2014 as cited by Smith, 2017).

Negative feedbacks from disgruntled customers

Social media's accessibility makes it prone to all kinds of e-word of mouth both good and bad (Chiosa, 2014). Hence the informants related their experiences of encountering negative feedbacks, bad reviews and unhappy customer experiences which has affected their organizational image. When a customer's feelings of brand unhappiness are publicized, it can easily spread out quickly which may affect the behaviour and decision making of other customers (Uyar, et.al, 2017).

Insights on social media management best practices

The respondents conveyed their recommendations on best practices in handling the social media account or page of their healthcare institution and extracted four major themes based on the transcriptions made. These five themes are: (1) Content Enhancement, (2) Better Engagement with Users, (3) Frequent Posting, (4) Hiring Dedicated Personnel for Handling Social Media Account, (5) Intervening during Online Crisis (6) Supplement to Traditional Media.

Content enhancement

The quality of content posted on a social media account can affect the organization's reputation and online presence. When it comes to content enhancement, Smith (2017) recommended that social media posts should be relevant and contain valuable information to gain more followers. As a country with diverse languages, The Economic Times (2020) have suggested that contents made and distributed in local languages is rising and more people consume them.

Better engagement with users

Healthcare institutions using social media enabled them to connect more with diverse customers and potential patients. The respondents suggested that part of their best practices is to engage with their audience more to make them feel that the HCI is listening to them. According to Pentescu, et.al. (2015), posting content on social media is not enough but patients should have a channel to engage and give feedback.

Frequent posting

Frequent posting on social media allows brands to have better online presence and visibility. The informants shared that to gain more audience and engage with them, it is necessary to post regularly with good relevant content. Ezeife (2017) suggested that for organizational social media to thrive, there should be clear and consistent content and posting.

Hiring dedicated personnel for handling social media account

Handling social media can be time consuming and demanding hence the need to have people dedicated to this job is necessary. The informants suggested to hire a dedicated social media manager/team with background in digital marketing and capable of producing graphics and audio-visual materials. Also, having qualified personnel enables efficient handling of the HCI's social media account.

Intervening during Online Crisis

Having a social media crisis is unavoidable to all industries and brands. Crisis may come from misinformation, negative feedback or unexpected occurring incidents like health crisis or emergencies. The informants shared that intervening during an online crisis is crucial to address the issue especially online bashing or arising negative issues and prevent further damage to the company.

According to Mirbabaie, et.al. (2020), social media has intensified consumer voice and can invite online crisis such as misinformation, rumors and negative publicity which can be spread easily and go viral. AHA (2018) recommended that part of the crisis communication of the HCI is to counter wrong information shared online and direct people to a more credible and reliable source.

Supplement to Traditional Media

Although more businesses are shifting towards using social media in client communication and marketing, the use of traditional media (e.g., print, radio, TV) is still

relevant. By using both forms of media, it has the potential to reach broader audience and can complement each other. In addition, access to the internet or social may not be readily available to everyone, therefore traditional media will still be used together in disseminating information or marketing.

conclusion

The findings of this research showed that all respondents are using Facebook as their social media platform of choice due to its wide popularity and ease of use.

Healthcare institutions in Tagum City accept the use of social media in their marketing communication and customer engagement well with perceptions on their social media management as possibly exhausting, having an easy service accessibility and communication, likely to boost their healthcare institution's services, faster health information sharing, and the probability of online bashing and security risks. Further, social media managers experienced insufficient administrative support, appreciation from satisfied clients and negative feedbacks from disgruntled customers.

The respondents also shared their recommendations for best practices in social media management which includes content enhancement, better engagement with user, frequent posting, hiring dedicated personnel for handling the HCI's social media account, intervening during an online crisis and using social media as a supplement to traditional media.

With the fast changing and digitalization of the world, healthcare institutions must recognize the significance of social media as a cheaper and empowering communication tool they can use to reach more healthcare consumers by disseminating public health messages quicker while improving the health literacy of the community. Hence, the local healthcare institutions can develop more structured and interactive posts on their social media pages, to bring brand awareness and widen reach to potential patients and clients conveniently.

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