Understanding Grace Poe’s Campaign Messaging(s)

Mr. Arjan Aguirre
Department of Political Science, School of Social Sciences
Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines
Introduction

- The study aims to make sense of the conceptualization, actualization, and appropriation of the campaign messaging of Grace Poe during the May 2016 election.
- ‘Gobyernong may Puso’ as the master frame
- Methodology: Participant observation, KII, Discourse Analysis and relevant literature
- Qualitative analysis (Detection of what went wrong? Why?)
- Problem: Why did the ‘Gobyernong may Puso’ fail to politicize the campaign period last election?
Discussion

- Important points of Poe’s campaign messaging:
  - Principles of ‘inclusivity’ and ‘open government’
  - Tethers other campaign messages
  - Political ethos of ‘caring government’
  - She is no longer just the daughter of FPJ
- Despite four strengths, why did it fail to dominate and influence people during the campaign period?
CLAIM 1 – Mixed Messaging is due to multiple sources of Poe’s campaign messaging

![Diagram showing the typology of campaign consultants in the Philippines](image)

Figure 1
*Typology of Campaign Consultants in the Philippines* (This is a crude appropriation of the existing ‘four-fold typology of consultants’. The same criteria of background and client type are considered. See Farrell, Kolodny and Medic 2001 for the ‘Types of Political Consultants’).
CLAIM 1 – Mixed Messaging is due to multiple sources of Poe’s campaign messaging

- Poe has more ‘traditional politicians’ and ‘marketing experts’
- Less ‘party strategists’ and ‘professional consultants’
- Mixed inputs from ‘traditional politicians’ and ‘marketing experts’
CLAIM 2 – The activation of Poe’s campaigning messaging was relatively passive and reactionary.

Figure 2: Typology of Campaign Messaging (This is again a rudimentary adaption of the dominant typology campaign messaging. See Bowler and Farrell 1992; Scammell 1998; Farrell, Kolodny, & Medvic 2001; Stromback 2007; Grossman 2009).
CLAIM 2 – The activation of Poe’s campaigning messaging was relatively passive and reactionary.

- The inability to have simultaneous activations of campaign messaging has rendered the campaign helpless against the assertion of the messaging of other candidates.
- The focus on informative campaigning can be seen as a mere reaction to, first, the disqualification case filed against her, and second, to the emerging popularity of Duterte.
CLAIM 3 – The messaging on Poe’s fight for her citizenship substantially undermined the hold of the master messaging.

- Here are some of the campaign messaging that were appropriated by the general public:
  a. ‘Walang maiiwan’
  b. ‘Gobyernong may Puso’
  c. Kababaihan
  d. Tapusin ang Endo

- From an advocacy of changing ‘governance’, it has become an advocacy of surviving the electoral protest.
- The succeeding messaging are reactionary to Duterte
CLAIM 4 – Lack of professionalization of electoral campaigning allowed the problem of DQ distraction to happen

- Campaign professionalization means the overall changes in electoral campaigning which involve, a.) campaign actors who embody skills, competencies, and dispositions; b.) utilization of new communicative tools and resources; c.) organizational ethos, dynamics and outcomes that are objectivized toward winning an election; d.) strategic and tactical campaigning (Gibson & Römmele 2009; Lisi 2013)
CLAIM 4 – Lack of professionalization of electoral campaigning allowed the problem of DQ distraction to happen

- Poe is relatively weak on these four areas (See Gibson and Rommele 2009 for the CAMPROF Index that is used nowadays in measuring the level of professionalization):
  a. Campaign consultants are composed of ‘traditional politicians’ and ‘marketing experts’
  b. Paid media: Reliance on TV ads weak on social media presence / Free media: Focus on the DQ case
CLAIM 4 – Lack of professionalization of electoral campaigning allowed the problem of DQ distraction to happen

c. Numerous campaign organizations (not consolidated and well-coordinated)
   i. Poe-Escudero campaign
   ii. Poe Campaign
   III. Volunteer groups
d. Strategy was merely focused on conventional things. Poe’s campaign did not have some of the qualities of strategic campaigning.
Parting shots

- Poe’s failure to win can be (also) explained by seeing Poe’s campaign messaging as a product of Poe’s electoral campaign mishandling.
- My claims tend to support this conclusion and point to the core of the problem of Poe’s lost bid—professionalization of electoral campaigning.
- Professionalization of electoral campaigning involves the ability to approximate, not predetermine, the political nature of electoral campaigning.
Consulted materials:


