

THE FILIPINO IN FLUX

How transformations in digital technology and social media, transformed Filipino values.

How have we changed?

“Hay, naku, yan [commenting on political issues], yang mga anak ko, yan ang ginagawa...” Martha [name changed for privacy] says to her teenage children who were yet again engaging in political debates on social media. However, despite the disapproving tone in her voice, she allows them to continue. As in these challenging times, positivity and working hard on things within one’s control are truly what’s more essential for Martha.

Meanwhile, Hector [name changed for privacy], soon approaching 70, used to consider himself as a “techie.” In their office, he was the go-to-person for every new software and program. After retirement, though, reading and watching on the iPad was all the techie-ness he needed. Then COVID-19 struck. He needed the help of his son, Migs. Hector was about to embark through what became a whole new digital world. He learned all over again. Eventually, he not only became adept at new skills such as online banking and payments, but he also became the go-to-tech person: this time for other seniors in their Viber family chat. Migs is proud of his father’s accomplishment as he had witnessed his father learn new life skills.

These scenes might be familiar to you. You might relate to them because you’re also like Hector or Martha, or one of their kids. These scenes might represent a larger change happening in different homes in different parts of the country – scenes wherein technology and changing expressions of values across generations interplay with each other.

Rapid Digital Transformation, Cultural Evolution

Today, we are seeing at play the fast-paced digitalization brought about by recent years of technological advancement in communications and social media, as well as the even more rapid digital adoption brought about by COVID-19 and the necessary lockdowns¹. Yet, as our society continues to rely on, harness, and create technology for survival and progress, it is also worthwhile to pause and think: how is technology, in turn, changing us? After all, the advancements society creates have the power, in return, to modify and even alter the very culture that birthed it.



The changes can be simple and far-reaching: from how we greet one another (from a text message, now to Zoom and Google Meet links), to how we drink our coffee (from shops brimming with people to today’s upgraded personal coffee makers), and to how we read the news in the morning (print or tablet), to name a few. These changes can be seen in how we relate with one another: how our emojis have evolved, how we can call out mighty corporations, and how we turn the tables on bullies on social media.

So, how have we changed?

As digital adoption, technological advancement, and social media proliferation and usage keep going at a blistering pace, the big question we want to ask is: how has it changed our values - the very fabric and intricacies of a culture’s psyche - the Whys of what they do? That is what we wanted to find out through AdSpark Intelligence. *What is the effect of a more digital lifestyle on our value system as Filipinos?*

Finding out how the Filipino values have evolved or remained steady helps uncover impacts of technological advancements on the other, similarly-changing areas of the Filipino’s life. Understanding these effects also helps businesses in different ways: it can help employers train and retain their value-driven workforce, and help brands craft a communication plan grounded on the evolving Filipino value-system.

Methodology: Determining which values and who to ask?

The values to be discussed in this report are going to be based on the landmark study of Virgilio Enriquez.² This groundbreaking study was improved upon by himself and his colleagues in later years. This is to avoid casting too wide or too ambiguous a net and also to make sure the values chosen have their groundings and definitions based on peer-reviewed and time-tested studies. The six values to be tackled in this Thought Sparker include *Hiya, Utang na Loob, Lakas ng Loob, Pakikisama, Bahala na, and Pakikibaka* – looking at how they are at work in creating or fueling digitally-fueled phenomena today.

Every section will begin with how Enriquez clarified what could have been the original definition of the value – even before colonial mindsets may have changed the understanding of it – then examine how it is expressed today and phenomena that show these.

These are how Enriquez defined the values:

VALUES	DEFINITION ACCORDING TO SIKOLOHIYANG PILIPINO
HIYA	NOT just shame or a desire to please other people, but an internal sense of propriety.
UTANG NA LOOB	NOT just a desire to please or a debt-system, but a way to be grateful and united. It can be repaid even in the next lifetime, by the next generation. It binds one to place and culture.
PAKIKISAMA	NOT conformity or just “going with the flow,” but being ALONG with companionship.
BAHALA NA	NOT fatalism or resignation, but determination, and pumping courage into the system after having done all they could to prepare.
LAKAS NG LOOB	NOT just strength or foregoing convention, but gutsiness in the midst of challenges.
PAKIKIBAKA	NOT just activism or protest, but resistance, a desire to change the world.

The Generational Approach

To determine how social and digital have created an impact across time, the study not only went into current social listening and consumption scans but also through focus group discussions across several generations. While it is true that no generation has a monopoly of digital communication and social media, it is also true that there are more of the younger generations on social and on new digital technology³. Thus, we use a multi-generational approach for a good picture of the effect of these communication technologies across time and how they could have possibly caused viewpoints and subsequent value systems to differ.

Digital Tools

Social listening, online consumption scans, search trends, and online bulletin boards were utilized to paint a clearer picture of the phenomena and the people.

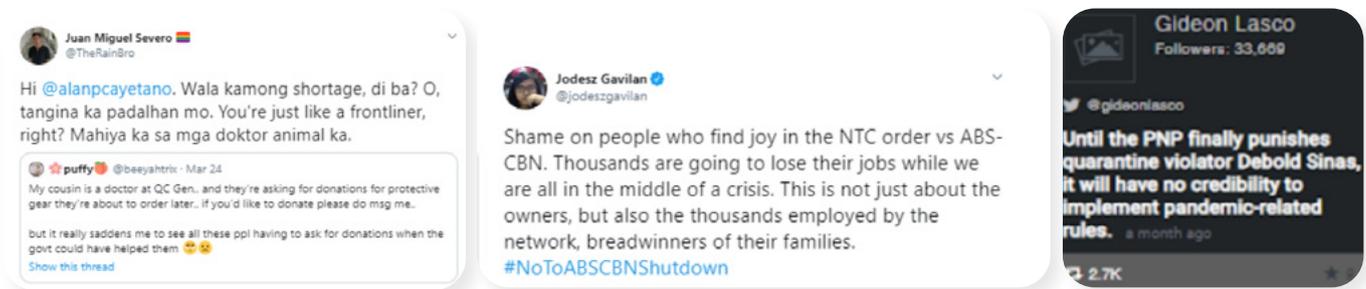
The more things change...

In uncovering what makes us unique, and how even the most cherished values evolve, we also found those that we share and remain the same. Considering these changing and unchanging values is crucial in understanding who we are today.

Hiya:

Breaking from propriety to correct impropriety

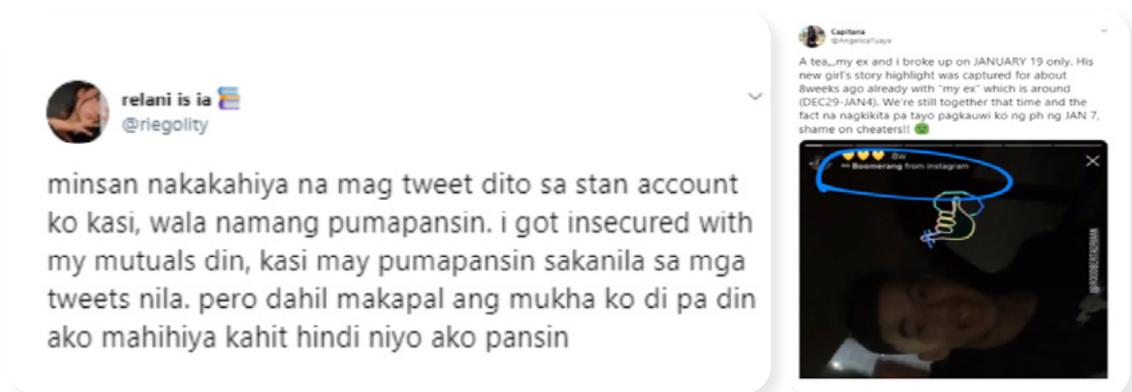
When the varying versions of community quarantines were placed on the country to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, compliance and violations then became hot topics on social media, with the biggest reactions caused by violations of the supposed legislators and leaders themselves. They also let the world know how they felt about certain leaders who they felt were misguided.



And when the rules were in place - the new proper ways of doing things - social media again became the way to call people back to what was deemed to be proper



Through social media, people took it upon themselves to call out what they felt were grave injustices being committed, from their respective point-of-views. Through Facebook and Twitter, they found a platform that cuts through the supposed rules and boundaries set by society. There, they could shout all they want, at all the people they want – and for a reason they found justifiable. This behavior on social media illustrates a dynamic between technology and the Filipino value, *hiya*. 'Hiya' is often understood today to be about shyness or even demureness. It is about not dancing lewdly or making too much noise, or even not getting the last slice of pizza.



Enriquez, however, uncovered that *hiya* means so much more than just appearances of modesty and avoidance of shame to please others⁴. To the Filipino, he argues, *hiya* is about an internal sense of propriety. This can perhaps be explained better when today, we make the term negative, as some of the people online who called out erring public officials: “walang hiya” – a loss of propriety. Therefore, when faced with the injustice that had to be called out, Filipinos had to find a way to go beyond what were considered the traditional and usual channels of protest as well. They had to go beyond writing letters of complaints and suggestions, beyond filing cases, and beyond street protests and placards towards the injustice in our society. Thus, they found social media:



Isa lang pala masasabi ko sa mga opisyal na magnanakaw ng 15B sa Philhealth! Kapal ng mga mukha nyo po! Mga walang puso!

At the same time, support for the current administration’s efforts, what they feel to be right, seem to be there as well:

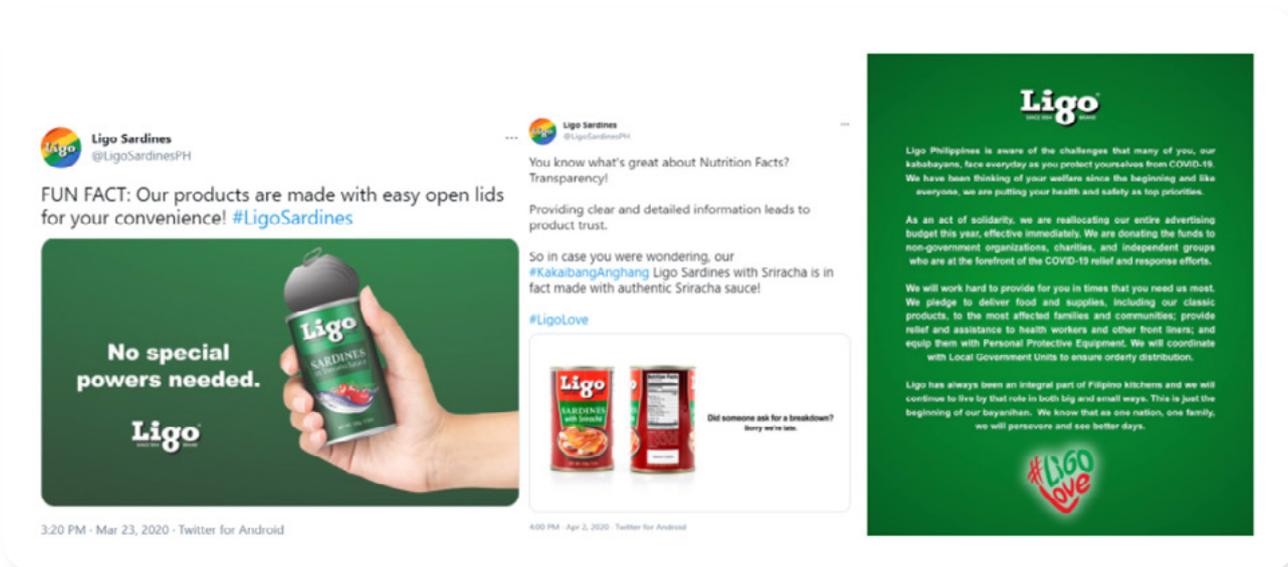


Interestingly, social media hides true faces. That is why, perhaps, it also becomes easier. There is a persona that is embodied through different scenarios, as people have different notions of self-presentation that are “accompanied by very different structured social worlds.”⁵. The same can be said with social media, that it allows us to hide our faces more, which has its benefits, such as taking away inhibitions. But on the level of society, can anyone hiding behind a screen just say anything they want? How far can this take our society, relying on a faceless platform to be able to call out those who have lost face?

In light of brand dynamics, this puts the transparency of a brand to the test. Any hint of going beyond out of line and the whole of the Facebook and Twitter universes can go out of their way to “cancel” the brand. This is probably why “cancel culture,” the “concerted effort to withdraw support for the figure or business that has said or done something objectionable until they either apologize or disappear from view,” has been able to find some sort of footing here in the Philippines and has perhaps also been a cause for distress in extreme cases⁶.



However, there is one brand, Ligo Sardines, that seemed to have gone out of the ordinary way to call out what must be done - in effect, a reverse of cancel culture. This time, a brand, instead of being cancelled, does the calling out. Through a series of witty social media posts, Ligo Sardines addressed various public issues during the initial weeks of the newly imposed quarantine lockdown measures⁷. Online communities took notice of this action, that a brand is taking a vocal yet humorous stand against the different social issues we have in the present circumstances we live in. Ligo Sardines takes it a step further by reallocating their 2020 advertising budget toward the various COVID-19 response efforts⁸.



Pakikibaka:

Changing the World – However changing the definition of “world” may be.

In a context as adverse and challenging as 2020, a response to change the way things are is very much expected. Filipinos did respond on social media - especially to things that they felt were not created by the virus, but what were felt to be injustices perpetrated by human action. Some examples of these were seen in the discussion above. Yet, when one talks to different generations, this call to action seems to be varying, if not strikingly different:

From the Gen Z Groups: “Tayo magmamana ng [bansa], so if we don’t fight for what is necessary or what we deserve, we’re going to suffer.”

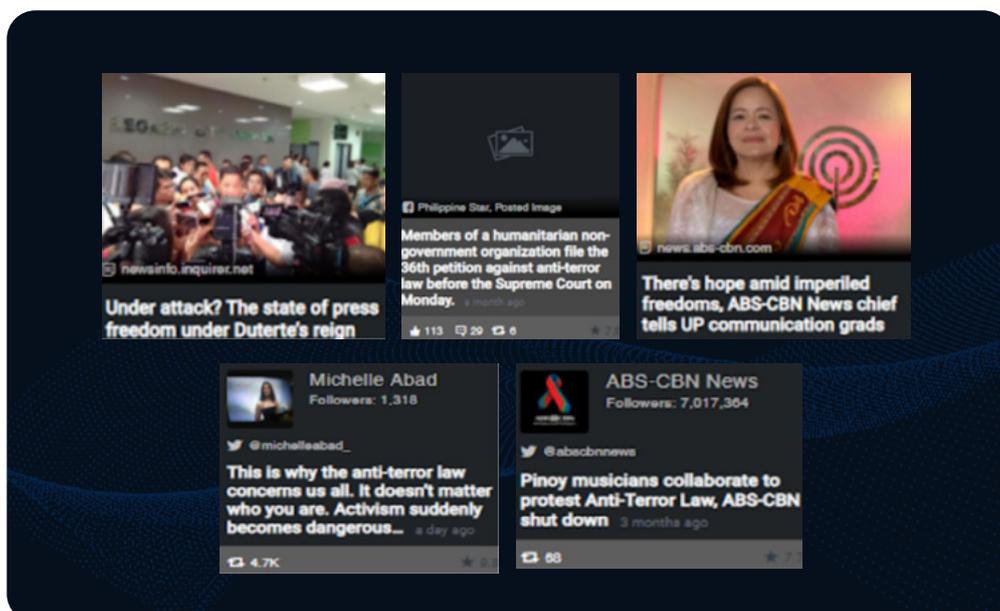
For the Millennials, they said: “Even if I don’t join rallies, I’ll see to it that I’ll share my opinion. Mine- make sure ko na maririnig boses ko sa kahit anong paraan. Kahit pagbibigay ng input sa social media.”

Baby Boomers: “We’re doers. We’re not that vocal on social media, but that doesn’t mean we don’t care. We’d just rather silently get the job done instead of focusing our energy on complaining.”

The story of Martha and her children at the start of this piece may not be an isolated case. If so, is it because the older generations don’t seem to care? This might not necessarily be true, as each generation had to face horrors and took it upon themselves to create their revolutions, through whatever response they could find. And don’t we all desire this better world? Or has social media changed our way of thinking about and creating change?

Enriquez did find that *pakikibaka* is not something just for activists, but for all Filipinos. It can be understood as knowing the plight of those in need and trying to change what needs to be changed, whether in government, in structures, or corporations. It is resistance – A cry that things need not and should not be the way they are. But perhaps each generation is just expressing it differently. At first glance, Generation Z can be seen as expressing this value a lot more than the other generations. They are, after all, called in various media, the woke generation⁹. They seem to take it upon themselves to know, understand and participate with their voices in issues that span not just the country, but the world.

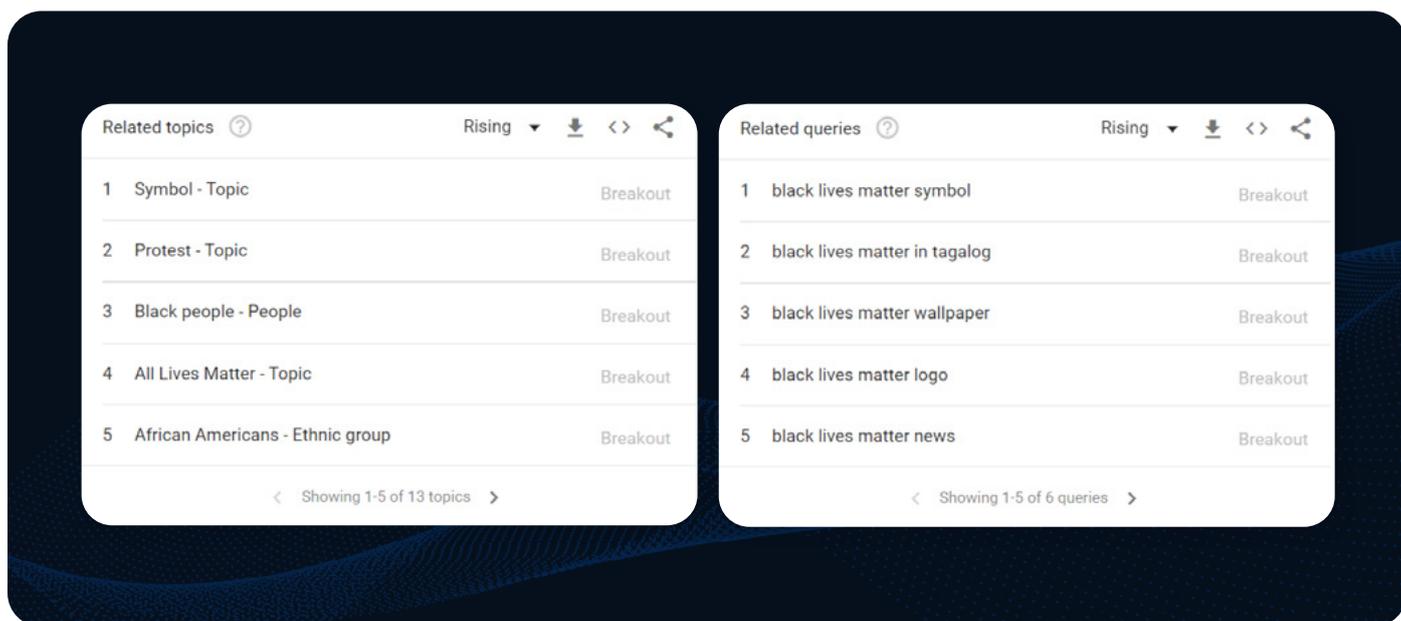
Consumption Scans do show that online Filipinos did keep on reading content related to such:



And they did post their own forms of protest, too:



They didn't stop at Philippine issues, though. They still voiced out concerns for things that were happening on the opposite end of the globe. One can argue that they may not have been directly affected by Black Lives Matter, for example, but they still sought out the topic on Google, and still voiced out about it.



So, is it true that younger generations place more concern over societal concerns compared to older generations, as other studies might also suggest?¹⁰

It is important to remember again that not every generation grew up around the same circumstances. Younger generations were surrounded by digital media experiences, empowering and informing them to be more outspoken when it comes to various societal issues. However, that might not necessarily mean that *pakikibaka* is a function only for the young. The life stage needs to come into play.

If the definition of *pakikibaka* is an innate value that has us desiring to change the world, then perhaps one should look at how the definition of “world” has been changing.

For the younger generations, because of the impact of social media, their worlds have expanded. Their world has become wider, diverse, and complex than ever.¹¹ Their “neighborhood” is filled with so much more diversity: in terms of people, issues, and causes. Thus, they are seeing a lot more issues and being forced to develop a voice at a younger age. So, when they want to change the world, they want to change the rest of the world as much as their definition can carry. For older generations, especially those that are now beginning to have more responsibilities in their work-life, especially to their families – the world has had a different definition. Their world has become their more immediate circles that need their utmost attention. It has been about making the worlds of those they are responsible for, better.

Thus, the Gen X-er and the Boomers talk about their responsibilities, it’s not so much that they don’t care about the world anymore. They seem to do so in a genuine way because they are still disturbed by the injustices, but they are now more focused on what they can change - the corner of the world that they have.

The first reaction from brands may be one of fear, especially if a brand is viewed as an “establishment brand,” part of what can be perceived as a status quo that needs to be changed. Especially in a climate that is quick to react and quicker to voice out, the need for adept social media and PR management is an absolute must. However, one may find that consumers today are in fact, asking for brands to join the crusade in changing the world, to have a purpose that is not only about being profit-driven but to also change the planet. Global Web Index, for example, tells us this:



And brands that do well here are also talked about well on social media:



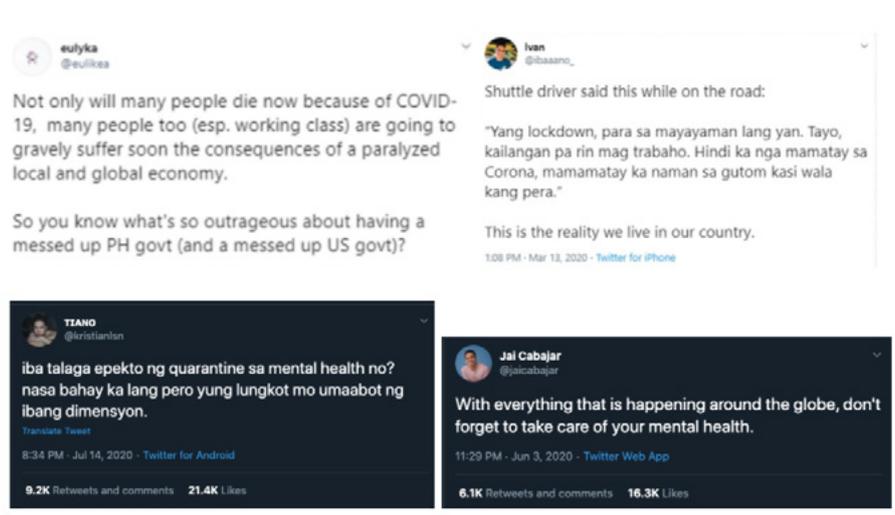
The key is to keep going back, perhaps, to why the brand makes the world a better place, and at the same time, to keep asking, *what is the definition of “world” for my target market? How can I help her in her quest to make it better?*

Pakikisama:

Together in collective trauma, working together to make a difference

The Philippines may be a very diverse nation but going through a collective adversity may have united Filipinos in some ways. The struggle with the virus may well be something Filipinos have fought together more than other battles in the past.

The same effort in mask-wearing, home-disinfection, and fear for one’s health and family may be felt in most, if not all islands of the archipelago. We are also undergoing what seems to be a collective trauma.



AdSpark, in its ThoughtSparker, A Portrait of COVID-19 as Filipino, saw how the Filipinos are going through a social trauma, an ordeal that we have to go through together, with societal wounds that will not heal quickly, even as vaccines, better treatments, and economic recoveries come. Going through a collective trauma is one explanation. Yet, even if people go through something together, what makes Filipinos seem to be readier to help strangers out despite differences? Enriquez and his colleagues would call it *Pakikisama*.

'Pakikisama' is often thought of as "going with the flow," or just simply being agreeable. Yet, the deeper term is richer, for if it were merely about saying "yes" all the time, even the informants in this study found that problematic. Thus, on the surface level, it might be about balancing relationships that hold sway over our lives:

Gen Z: "It's better to form allies than enemies."

Millennials: "Mauna kang mag-adjust sa sarili mo para pakisamahan ka, walang away."

Baby Boomers: "You have to learn how to balance this."

However, Enriquez found *pakikisama* to be more than just about conformity. They found it to be rooted in the Filipino's innate concept of *kapwa*. It is about being with and going along with our *kapwa* on the road of life. It is about companionship. One can imagine, therefore, how much deeper it goes into the psyche, and how much more relevant it is for a people that seem to be so innately bonded with each other.¹²

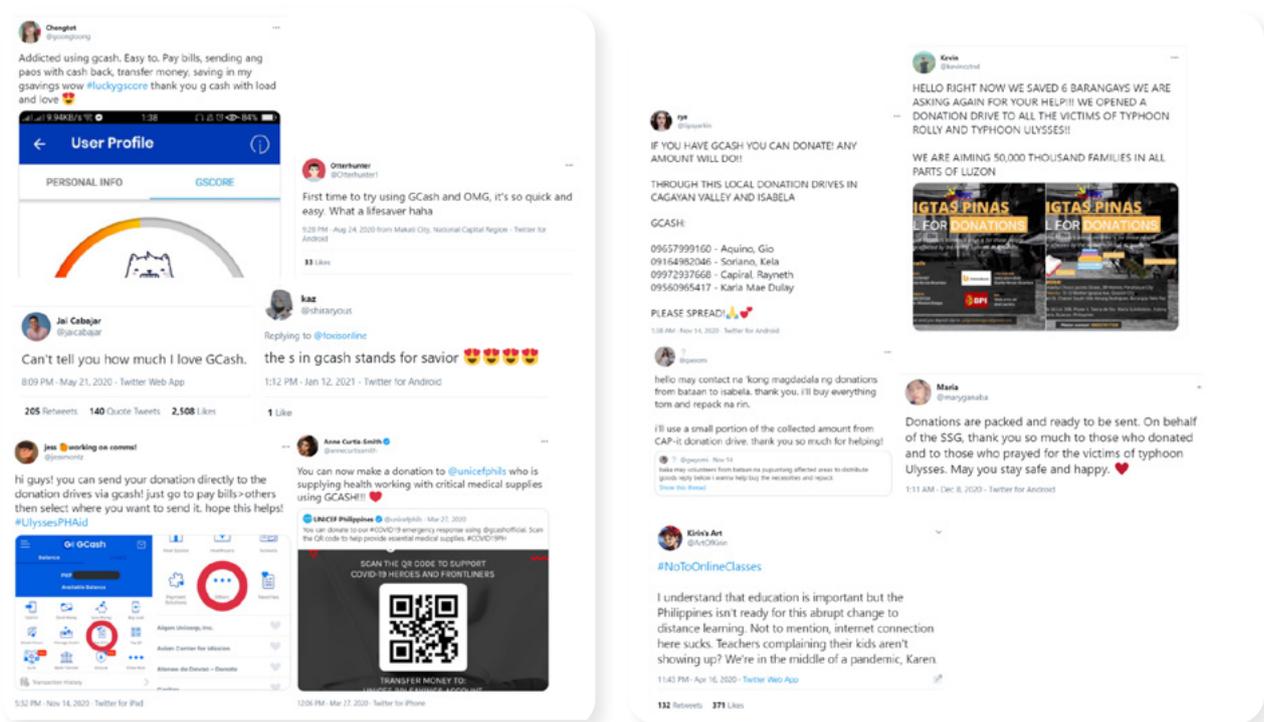
The next relevant question would be, *who is our kapwa?*

True, it is the immediate family for whom everyone in our study finds solace, comfort, inspiration, and purpose. It is also workmates, schoolmates, and other friends. However, *pakikisama* can also perhaps be the reason why one can feel so bonded even to total strangers.

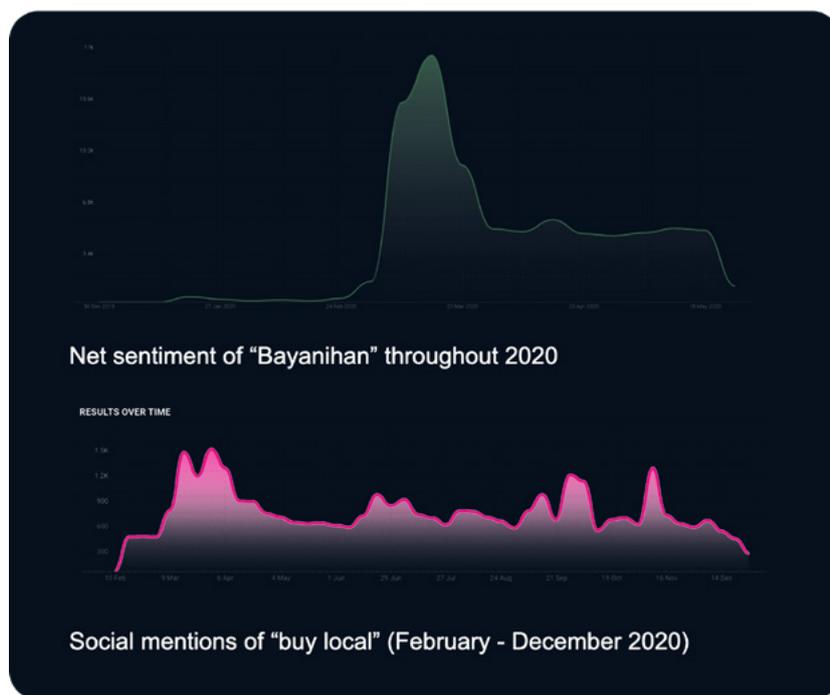


This capacity to not just see our neighbor, but empathize, has led to a lot of efforts that are no doubt fueled by the *pakikisama* spirit as well:

Some have raised a ton of donations for calamities that also befell people, during what is already a tough time. In a specific instance, during Typhoon Ulysses that happened in 2020, GCash became an accessible tool for people to give donations during this disastrous event. According to Fe Olivia Mir, Head of Growth for Globe Fintech Innovations, Inc., GCash's feature, "Pay Bills," became an avenue for people to donate to various organizations aiding those struggling because of Typhoon Ulysses, collectively donating nearly 21 million pesos during that period of 2020.



Some took it upon themselves to help local businesses to try to get back on their feet



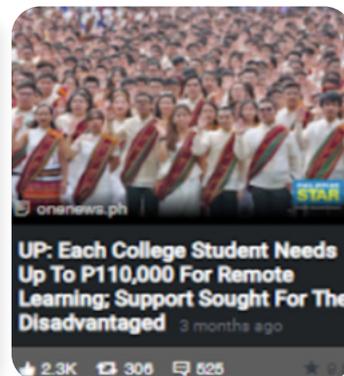
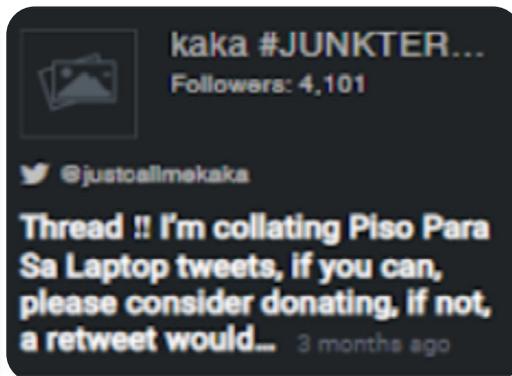
Thus, *pakikisama* helps us not just empathize with our *kapwa*, but it becomes a necessary step to be able to create steps to help them out.

Brands, therefore, need to see these bonds and be truly part of the conversation and efforts. In short, *kailangan ng brand makisama*. There has always been a conscious effort to derive insight from the bonds of family and friends – and this has led to powerful efforts. However, what about the bonds that we have formed and are still forming because of undergoing collective social trauma? Communicating in this space needs a great deal of sensitivity, as consumers can figure out right away if it is just for show, or if it is truly offering a way to be a *kapwa* to society.

Utang Na Loob:

A bond that binds not just to people we owe, but a sense of responsibility toward the greater good

As the pandemic wore on, it was becoming increasingly clear that classes would have to be opened in a more challenging and unprecedented way. Students of varying ages and social classes would need access to a stable internet connection - and a laptop. The internet would try to come to the rescue once more. Consumption scans show us what online Filipinos are reading about in relation to this:



Even the younger generations would rally and take it upon themselves to help out. **But what did they owe this next generation that had done nothing for them?**

Pakikisama might offer a way to understand this phenomenon, in the sense that a common adversity seems to bind us, so why not try to get out of it together? Another Filipino Value uncovered by Enriquez might explain: 'Utang Na Loob.' But it's not *Utang Na Loob* in the way we usually understand it today.

What binds a Filipino to her family? What binds her to her hometown? Why does she feel an immediate bond even to strangers? One answer is given by the Filipino value of "Utang Na Loob," which often has a negative connotation to it. It is usually said about how sons and daughters ought to have an innate sense of repaying a certain debt to their parents for raising them well. It can also be applied to other relationships, such as among friends or workmates. It is of course, subject to abuse: instead of gratitude, what is evoked is **lifetime indebtedness**.

Gen Z: "They're not doing it to help, they're just going to do good for the benefits they can get afterward."

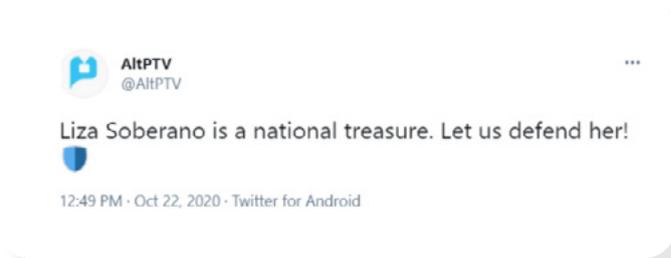
Millennials: "Minsan ayoko tumanggap ng favor sa ibang tao para di ako magka-utang na loob."

Baby Boomers: "Kailangan ko ito gawin para maibalik ko yung tulong na ginawa saakin."

Of less gravity but also on the negative side of the spectrum, is how "utang na loob" in speech has become a prelude to a negative statement (for example, calling out an erring official)



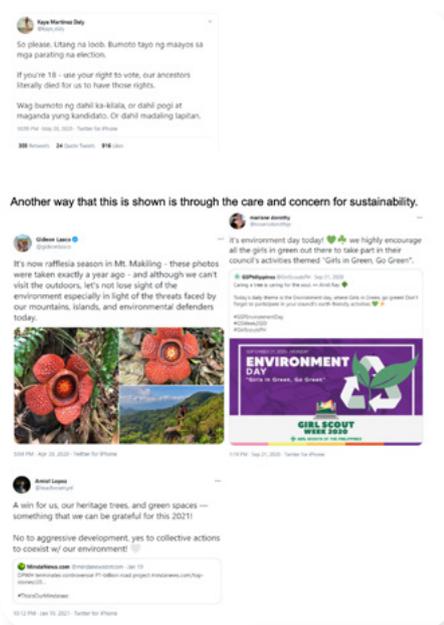
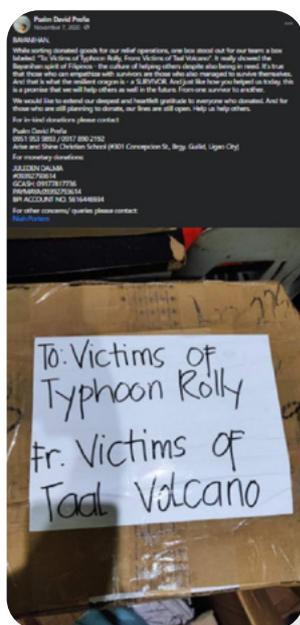
It shows how there was an expectation of owing something to one another internally, deeply, and how that vow was broken. Another extreme example is when fandoms go out of their way to defend their idols.



Utang Na Loob can be seen to be at play here, in the sense that the fans can feel a sense of indebtedness to their idols – to the point of defending them.

Enriquez had been seeing these negative connotations. They acknowledged the internal sense of Filipinos repaying one another, but they argue that it was not meant to be a tool for enslaving or abuse. Before the colonizers, it was meant to be a way to be grateful and united, a tool perhaps to other values. It can be repaid even in the next lifetime, by the next generation, as it binds one to place and culture. In this light, one can see how the positives, and not just the negatives found their place in this more digital world. However, we now get to see, also, how the positive side of it binds us inter-generationally.

The laptop-fund-drive, in this sense, was about helping the next generation – a generation that technically has done nothing for them yet, but they still feel a sense of responsibility towards them. They still felt that they owed it to that generation to help. In that sense, Enriquez was correct in the more hopeful definition of ‘*Utang na Loob*’: It is not just about repaying, but about an innate sense of feeling a responsibility towards people, cultures, and in this case even the next generation.



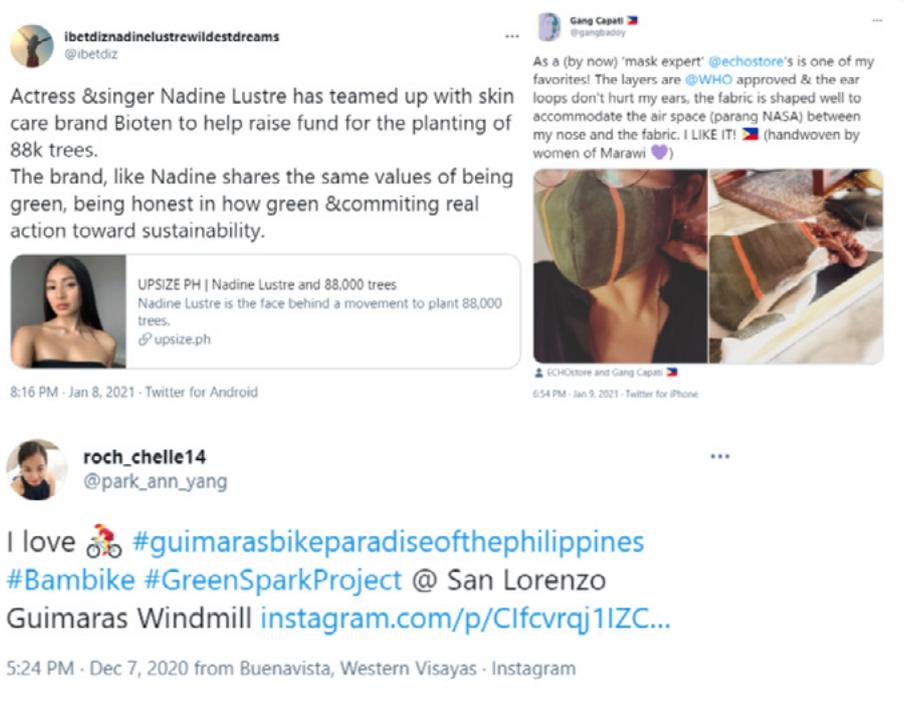
Search trends for sustainability, 2020

There has been a rise in caring for the planet and making sure it is in better condition compared to when the current generation received it. Again, the sense of obligation here comes not just from something that has already been received, but towards a common good to be shared by future generations. This sense of obligation and camaraderie is also seen throughout the COVID-19 lockdowns, specifically on the topic of staying at home. There are those who remind people they might not know to stay at home, for the sake of the sacrifice of people they also may not necessarily know.

Medical Frontliners are sacrificing their lives in order to end this pandemic, the sacrifice others can make is to just stay at home.



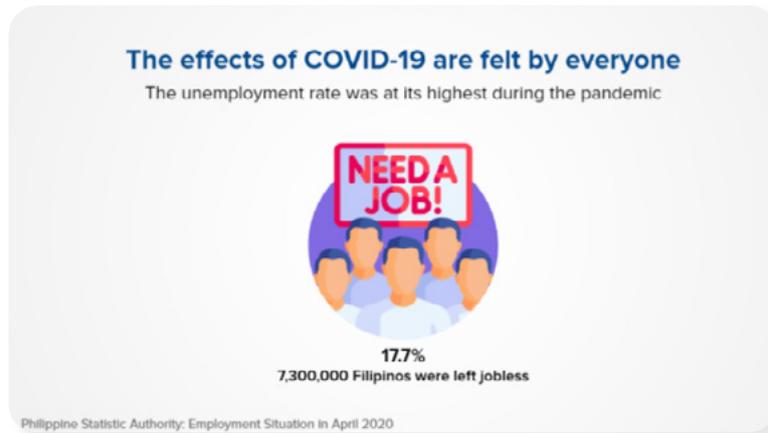
Brands today can empower this by **being very clear on their purpose**. Another step is to not just expect their consumers and fans to advocate for the brand itself, but a bigger common purpose. This allows them to be a platform for their fans to fulfill their sense of responsibility toward the next generations and the communities they belong to.



Lakas ng Loob:

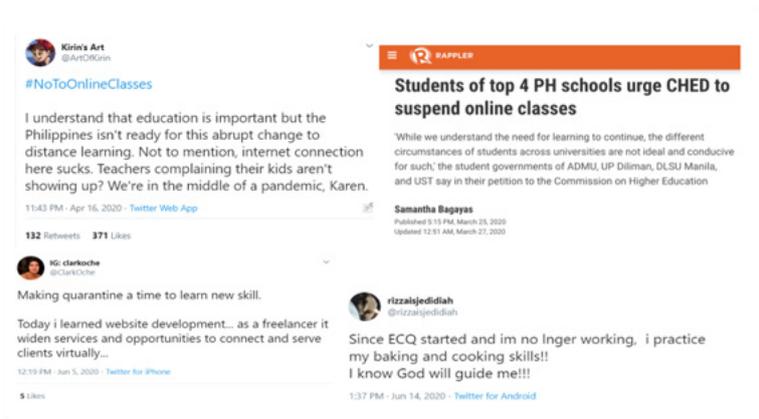
Turning from adversity into striving and thriving

The pandemic hit hard, and it hit harder for some compared to others. It altered lifestyles. It wrecked economies. It zapped jobs. Very personally, it hit wallets and family savings.

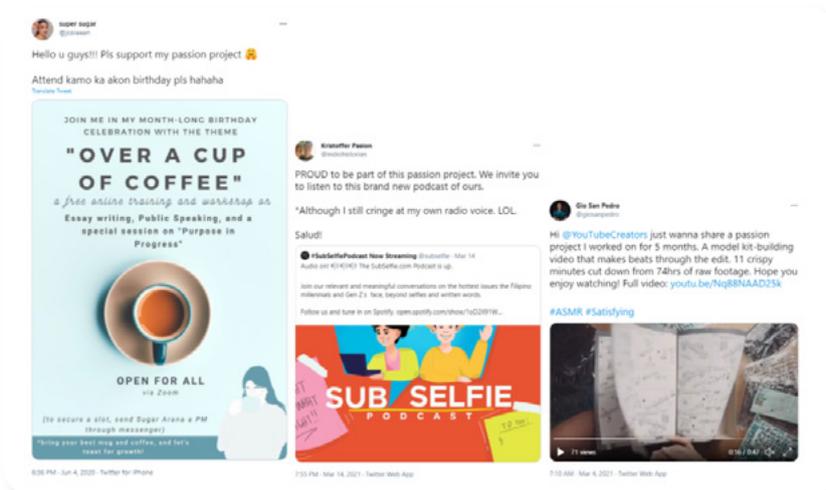


The necessity to not just survive, but thrive, persisted. It wasn't the best of conditions to begin businesses and try new things. Yet, many Filipinos persisted and didn't use digital to just make-do with the situation but made it even better for themselves and their families.

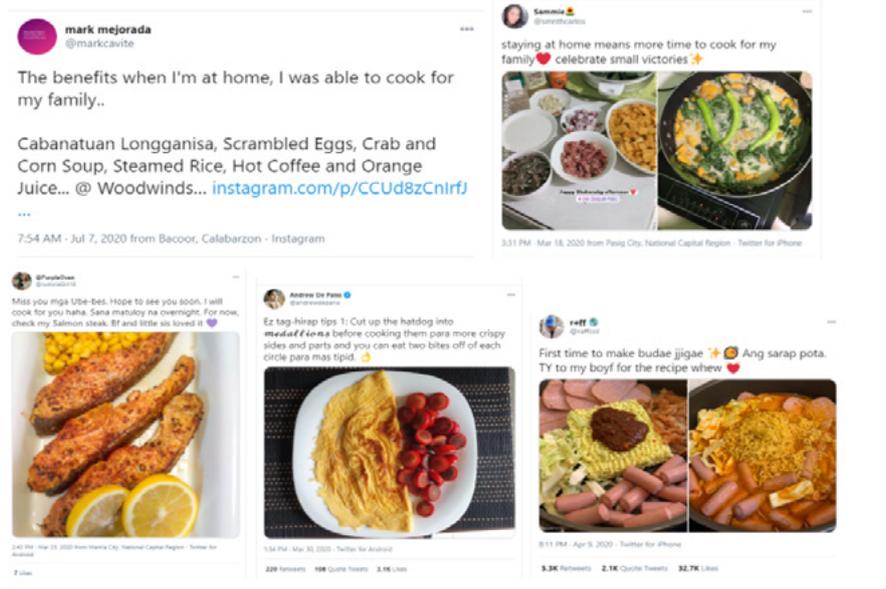
Online learning became a part of life, not just for students, but the bigger part of the population who wanted to better themselves.



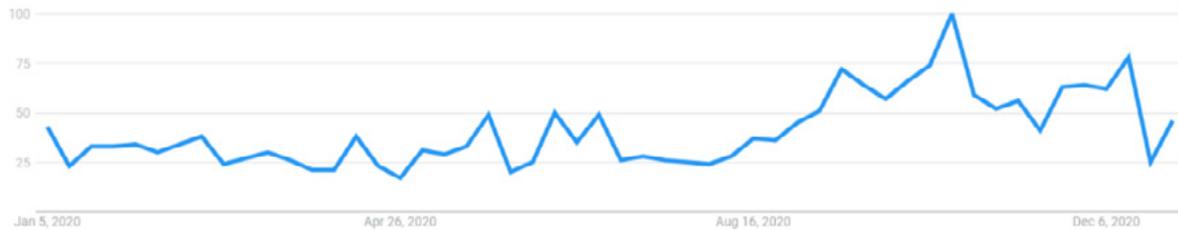
Other individuals mustered the courage to step out of their comfort zones, to start something they must have always wanted to make:



There are also those who tried out new recipes and even began cooking and baking.



And there were those who not only pursued a hobby and turned it into a serious craft, but also those who desired to help their family. Search trends for “new business” in 2020 continued to rise, as the Department of Trade and Industry in the Philippines (DTI) saw this boom in terms of registration, as well:



DTI registers 60,000 small businesses in 4 months

By: Roy Stephen C. Canivel - Reporter / @roycanivel_inq Philippine Daily Inquirer / 04:11 AM August 03, 2020

Using the lens of values as elaborated on by the Enriquez study, reflects the Filipino value of “Lakas ng Loob,” defined as gutsiness. It is not just about doing something different or doing something to pass the time. It is meant as a flag to be waved even in the face of difficulty.

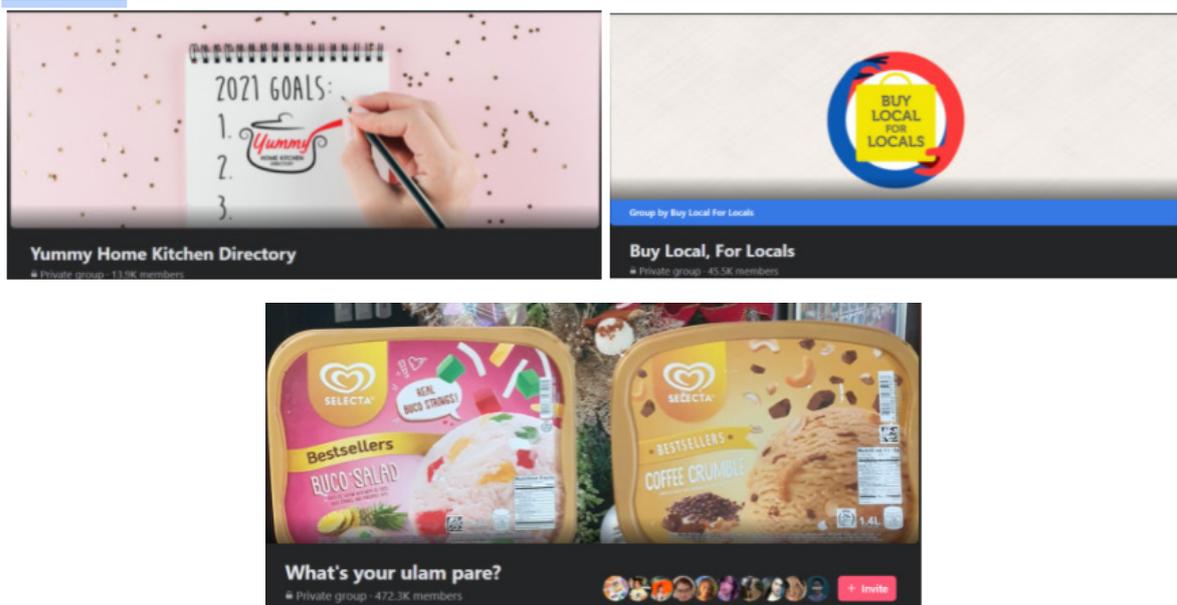
The different generations seem to agree on this value a lot more quickly:

Gen Z individuals see it as: “Gives you the attitude to be strong towards everything in life”

Millennials define it as: “A push towards a better picture or scenario.”

Baby Boomers: “You need the passion and fearlessness na labanan ang isa pang araw sa buhay mo.”

And they were able to band together, and find common ground, as seen through these groups:



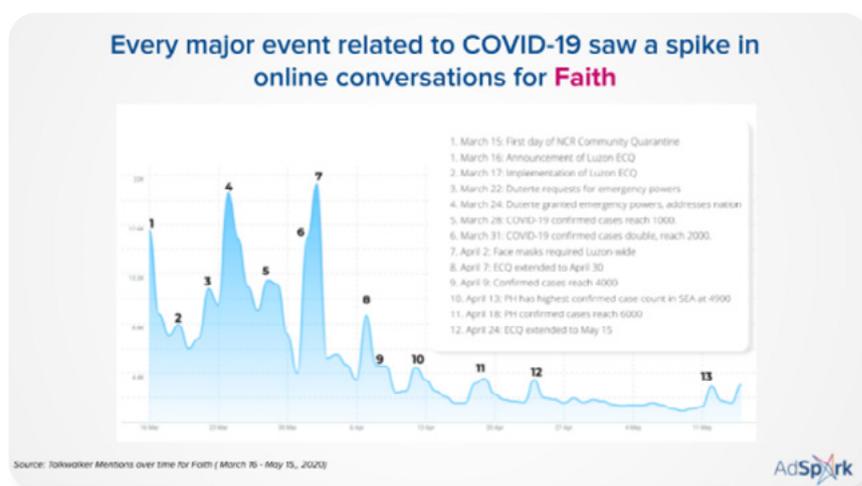
Now, how can brands today empower this sense of 'lakas ng loob' in a very real way?

While it is true that business owners themselves are trying to find their *lakas ng loob* in a very adverse environment and for some just trying to make it to the next payday, their own stories of staying true to their commitments to their employees and their customers will already inspire many.

More than breast-beating and brand communications, what can brands do beyond a feel-good salute? The question is, how can they provide platforms – whether as knowledge (recipes, classes etc.), as avenues to collaborate or even as means to bring like-minded folks together? We simply cannot just make everyone feel good. Rather, we have to offer a way for expressions of their inner strength.

Bahala Na: The Interplay of Faith and Action

With a challenge as daunting as this virus, Filipinos seemed to turn to a good-old-reliable they can lean on, their faith. In The Great Reset Thoughtsparker released by AdSpark last year, we found that as many things seemed to be on the reset, Faith was one consistent weapon Filipinos would always call on. It was no less different for this pandemic.



The role of the divine has always been seen to be a part of the Filipino's life. Whether as a believer in religion like the majority, or simply as hope and optimism, clinging on to a higher power that can restore things is something that Filipinos have.¹³

Yet, what is the role that we humans have, in this interplay between action and faith? After all, the pandemic is proving itself to be a challenge we need to face using all our human capacity. At the same time, it seems that for many, divine intervention is what is needed for a challenge bigger than us. It is this question that seems to be at the heart of the “Bahala na” value that Enriquez’s When “Bahala na” is said these days, it is usually meant to be fatalistic, or even a certain throwing away of responsibilities:



In fact, it is this shunning of responsibilities that turns people off from this supposed value:

Gen Z: “Kung ano nalang mangyari, okay na. Bahala na si Batman!”

Millennials: “Sa lahat ng values, yan yung pinaka-negative na puwede mong gawin sa sarili mo, kasi mababa lang chance na makuha mo gusto mo.”

Baby Boomers: “Bahala na si Lord, I say that when I have no choice, like sa COVID. But you also activate yourself to do something to make life easier when you’re waiting for the outcome of the ‘bahala na.’”

Enriquez, though, would argue that “Bahala na” used to have a more positive connotation. It is about “pumping courage into their system so that they do not buckle down.”¹⁴ Thus, it is not supposed to be about resignation or leaving everything to chance. It was meant to be said as a final summoning of courage before a certain reckoning point, and after one has done everything, he can. Where is this more positive interpretation of the value seen today? Or has the negative interpretation completely taken over?

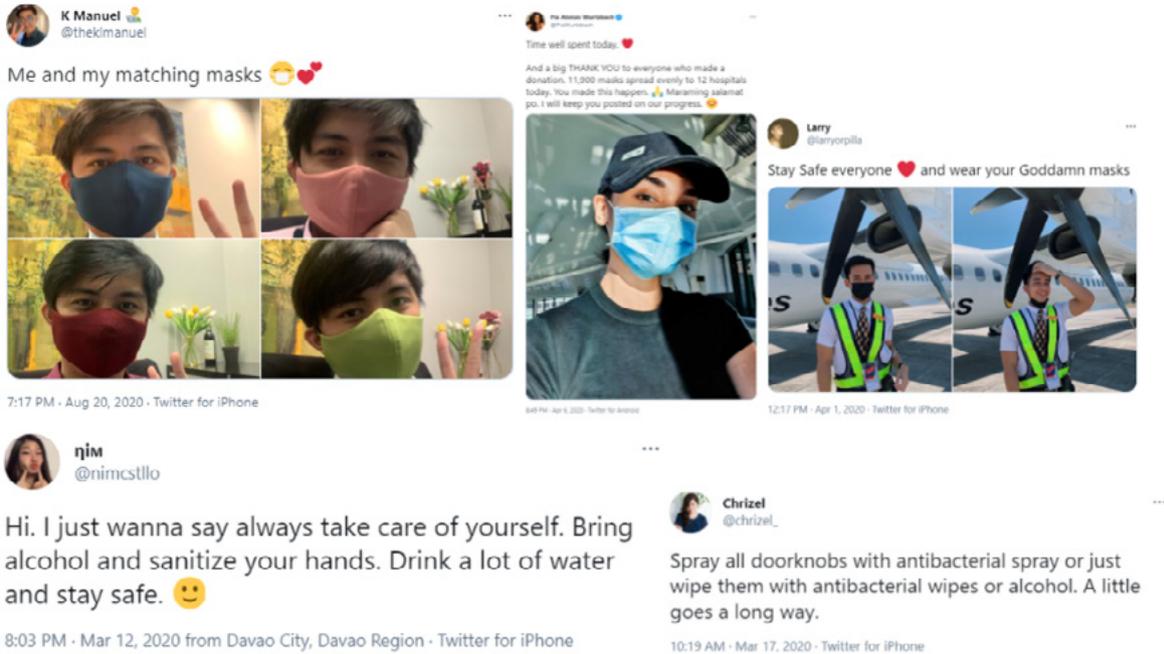
When one looks at the differences amongst the generations, it can be tempting to think that it is the older generations that rely on faith more, and the younger ones on their ability. After all, they would say these:

Boomers: Religion is important, to be active around the word of God.

Gen X/Millennials: “Maraming blessings kasi we get to give back to others.”

It does seem that way, until we see from social listening that the younger generations also do call out in faith, do implore divine help, and in some way rely on it. As they act and venture into what has become a more dangerous world.

They are, of course, doing the necessary steps to protect themselves and those near them:



However, they also lift up to the divine:



Thus, while the term is seen as a flippancy concerning responsibility, “Bahala na” is actually lived out more in its original intention. Nowhere is this most probably seen than with those who extend their hand to those in need, such as Rev. Eduardo Vasquez.



As soon as Manila was placed under lockdown, Rev. Vasquez took it upon himself to give aid in the form of food and masks to the less-fortunate citizens during this difficult time.¹⁵

In this interplay of faith, fate, and human action, how are brands supposedly going to get into the mix? It is by knowing the delicate balance, struggle, and how much more of a struggle it is today, given the context we are in. First, are brands fueling hope? Are they giving more than the promise of the now? Are they allowing their markets to hold on to a better future? Second, and perhaps more importantly, are they helping create this future beyond just spending on a video ad that talks about this hope?

SUMMARY OF THE VALUES

Here are the six values again, and how they seem to be playing out in today’s context:

1. **Hiya:** Breaking from propriety to correct impropriety
2. **Pakikibaka:** Changing the World – However changing the definition of “world” may be.
3. **Pakikisama:** Together in collective trauma, working together to make a difference
4. **Utang Na Loob:** A bond that binds not just to people we owe, but a sense of responsibility toward the greater good
5. **Lakas ng Loob:** Turning from adversity into striving, and thriving
6. **Bahala na:** The interplay of Faith and Action

The six values are very much alive in the Filipino’s psyche today. It is just that the way they are understood may have been altered or the way they are expressed is now in multiple ways, varying across generations, understandings, and even access to digital media

Digital, especially social media has become not just a mirror of these values. In some respects, it has become a molder, refiner, and an outlet to express them. Thankfully, it is also a way to continue seeing these values through a different lens. Despite the differences in how these values are lived out, some remain the same, even if they are not named in the groundbreaking study of Enriquez et al.

Loyalty to Family: Persistent through generations and technology. To name one, they are the familial bond. Social listening, as well as the sentiments from our informants, would bear out that their bonds to their families fuels them, gives them purpose, even if their expressions of it are changing.

OLDER GEN: “If it’s for your family, you need to let it go to push/strive for your family”

GEN X: “All your accomplishments mean nothing if you don’t have people to share it with, people who are genuinely happy for what you have achieved.”

GEN Y: “It’s important to keep connected to the family, worrying about the family at home.”

GEN Z Who is now helping the family: “They’ve done enough for me, they supported me, given me the things I want, so I want to give them the things they want too.”

One can argue that as they are valuing this inner community, Filipinos also value their fellow citizens, the country – and even the world – at large. The current COVID context now highlights that and allows us to see it.

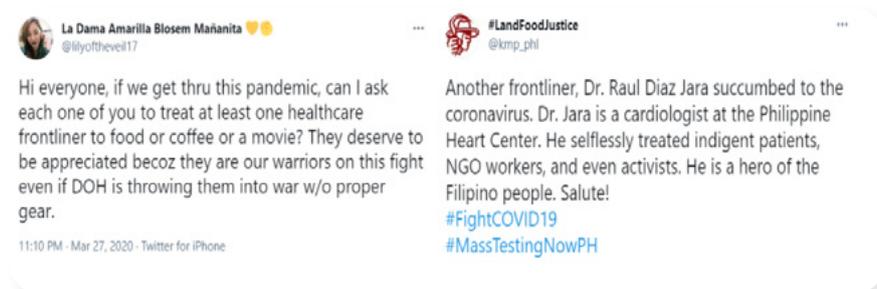
The values remain intact in some way, even as the understandings and expressions may have changed. The quest of continuing to see these values through the lens of the technology that shapes the understanding and allows the expression, hopefully, continues. Beyond this study and the realm of advertising, it can be used for example to understand that as many things divide us, there are many more things that unite us – it’s just that many times, we’re looking and listening in different ways.

Pinoy Pride: Don’t we all want to become better - together?

Pinoy Pride, or Filipino Pride, is a term seen and heard throughout Philippine culture. There have been countless moments when this sentiment was expressed, often seen when Filipinos are boasting the successes of their countrymen. The mad support of Filipinos for the country’s celebrities is glaringly obvious online.



Similarly, outstanding displays of Filipino Values would at times take social media by storm. We can see this in how Filipinos took pride in the frontliners, who in turn displayed *pakikisama* and *lakas ng loob* during the height of the pandemic

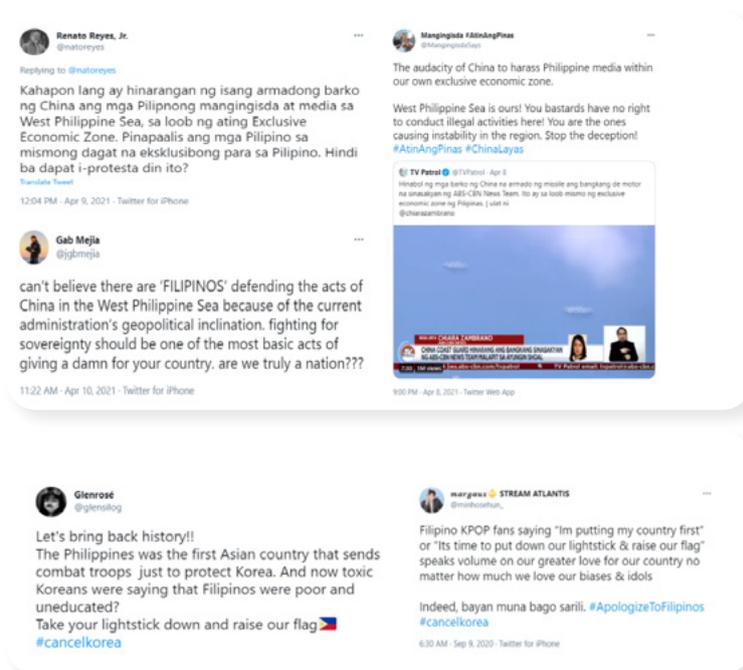


This nationalist rush is a bit more complex though and can have potentially damaging layers. Some say that it can be toxic, as Filipinos would be averse to criticisms due to their pride. Others would say that Pinoy Pride falls short of nationalism, as it resembles idolism more. Still, others say that Pinoy Pride is hollow, as Filipinos don't tend to act on it.¹⁶



These make us wonder: are we 'Filipinos' only at times when it boosts our ego, and stop being 'Filipinos' when it involves personal hard work, and inconvenience? Probably not.

Although too much (misplaced, or shallow) Pinoy Pride can be toxic, it is in how this pride is combined with other intrinsic Filipino Values, such as *pakikisama* and *pakikibaka* that even ordinary citizens choose to voice out online in defense of its culture, and act for the betterment of the country.



Community pantries are recent manifestations of Pinoy pride.

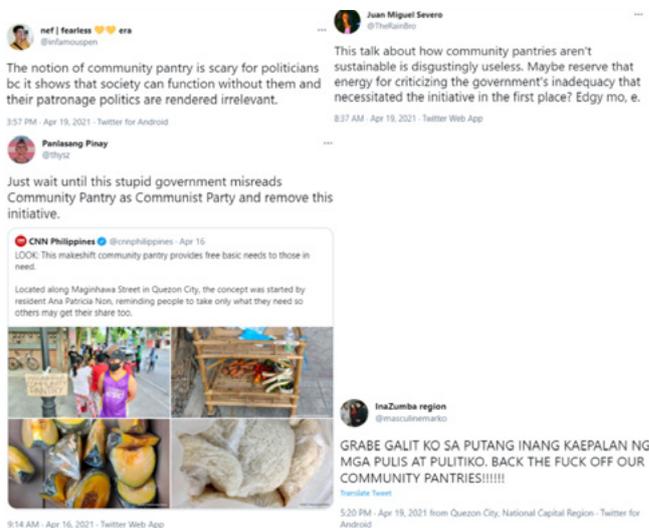
Its creation and proliferation show how Filipinos challenge the status quo with online communication and communal action. The first pantry originated in Maginhawa, Quezon City through the generosity of Ana Patricia Non, to simply help the other less-fortunate citizens devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁷ They provided free food supplies to those who need it and also accepted donations for those who wish to support the initiative. Citizens can simply go to the pantry, collect the appropriate amount for themselves, and leave the rest to others who also need it.



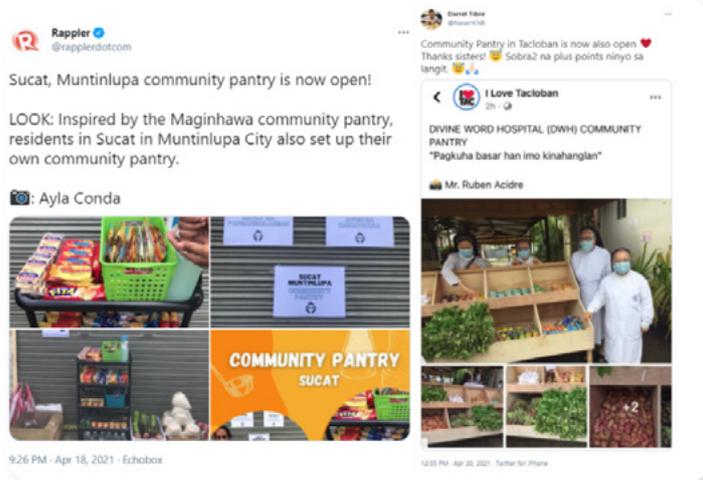
After the installation of the community pantry in Maginhawa, Quezon City, Filipinos online heard of the news, and started similar pantries for their communities.



Despite the overwhelmingly good intentions behind the initiative, there are other parties who make it difficult for the pantries to operate. Filipinos recently lambasted the unnecessary insults and red-tagging aimed at the community pantry initiative.



Despite these headwinds, more of these community pantries continue to be created during this unprecedented time. It remains to be an example of how the ordinary Filipino citizen can make a difference.



This is an example of Pinoy Pride infused with other values intrinsic to the Filipino and backed with positive action. It is patriotism that challenges seemingly insurmountable tasks, as Filipinos seek to shape a long-battered and broken system into a progressive one they can truly be proud of. This was also done on the ground (the pantries themselves), through the supporters who donated, and the people who shared online - everyone pushing towards the goal of a better country.

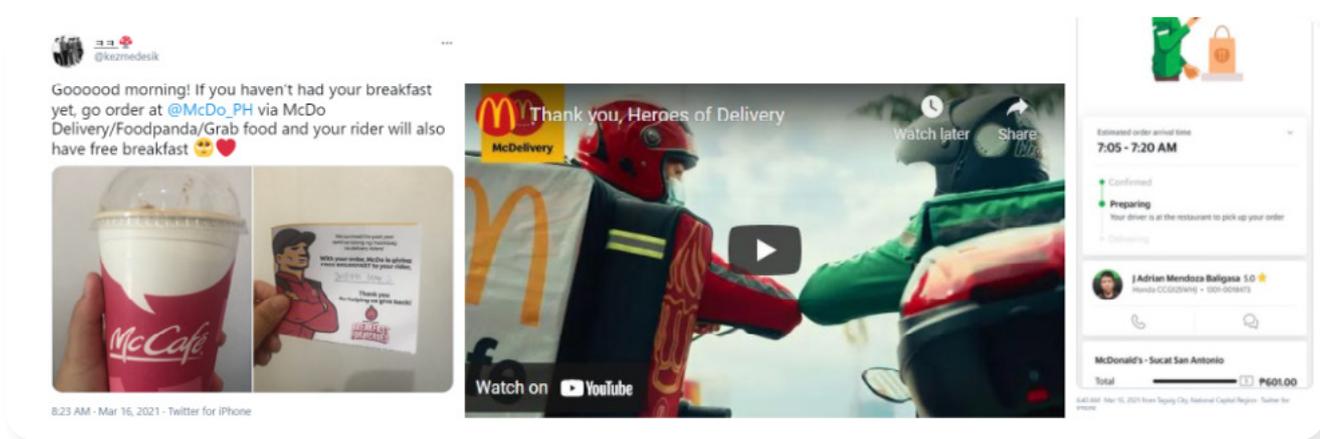


How can brands help?

Brands - and technology and media - today, are no longer just items on the shelf, or nice-to-haves in the living room. They are a means to make the world come to us and for life to continue in a time when life seems to be on pause.

Today, if brands can listen well to the consumers and act swiftly and meaningfully, they can be not just brands - but life-help to their customers.

Looking at the example of McDonald's: They banked on the online chatter fueled by Pinoy Pride, on the topic of Frontliners. They aligned themselves with the Filipino values of 'pakikisama' and 'utang na loob.' The brand then made it a policy to communicate their gratitude towards the delivery riders that supported the Filipino community during the pandemic and treat them to a hearty breakfast meal.



Just like McDonald's, brands can be relevant in these conversations by going beyond throwing "thoughts and prayers" statements, or just silently taking steps to support different issues in the country. Clearly communicating and acting to show that they are aligned with any or all of the Filipino values discussed previously and are geared towards supporting the welfare of the Filipino community is the key to being heard and standing out in the loud and passion-filled conversations online.

When the country moves towards a rebuilding phase, it will remain to be seen how brands like McDonald's can continue to listen, respond and lead the conversation meaningfully. Thus, fueling a nationalism that goes beyond a post - but driving action.

ABOUT ADSPARK INTELLIGENCE

A unique digital synergy of agility in insighting, ideation, and implementation through media. AdSpark Intelligence uses both conversation and consumption data to paint a complete picture of your audience.

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ABOUT ADSPARK

AdSpark, Inc. is a portfolio company of 917Ventures, the largest corporate incubator in the Philippines wholly-owned by Globe Telecom Inc.

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For Randy

Endnotes:

- 1 = (Nanyang Technological University, 2021; Munro, 2020)
- 2 = (Enriquez, 1978)
- 3 = (Cox, 2019)
- 4 = (Pe-Pua & Protacio-Marcelino, 2000)
- 5 = (Norris & Zweigenhaft, 1999, p. 215)
- 6 = (Urbain & France-Presse, 2020)
- 7 = (Cirineo, 2020)
- 8 = (Almazan, 2020)
- 9 = (Mkele, 2018)
- 10 = (Parker et al., 2019)
- 11 = (Spotify, 2020)
- 12 = (Osorio, 2018)
- 13 = (Cornelio, 2020)
- 14 = (Pe-Pua & Protacio-Marcelino, 2000, p. 55)
- 15 = (Aznar & Ives, 2020)
- 16 = (Nisay, 2018; Valderrama, 2015)
- 17 = (Suazo, 2021)

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