Adopting Corporate Communication in Local Government Units for Successful Government Reform Initiatives

By: Miguel Ferido

1. Introduction

Currently, Filipinos' general distrust for the government is no understatement. Looking at the Philippines, the ADB (2005) observed that its governance patterns have evolved a rather intricate history highlighted with rages of foreign invasion, suppression of democracy, civil uprising, political conflicts, social unrest, and corruption. According Cielito Habito, the former National Economic Development Agency Secretary, the Filipinos' trust in their own government leadership has become a scarce commodity since over a decade ago, especially in the last five. Blemished with scandals of graft and corruption, political killings, its inability to deliver quality basic social services and mitigate incidences of poverty, it is no surprise that public opinion about the government is on a distrusting and disapproving note. According to Pulse Asia (2010), during the last quarter of the term, 59% of Filipinos disapproved of the PGMA administration. This result came as no surprise since approval ratings for her presidency was spiraling down since the controversy of election fraud, exposes of fixing of multimillion government contracts and misuse of government funds were made known to the public. What came to a surprise was that during the time these scandals were happening, the Philippines achieved continuous successful economic growth. This showed the disconnection between the developing Philippine economy versus the increasing public opinion, both national and international, on the disenchantment and distrust of its government. Furthermore, Habito further argues that this doubt on government "has diminished overall business confidence, impeded domestic and foreign investment, and constricted growth in the number of quality jobs that Filipino workers could have otherwise had".

With the growing disenchantment with the "*big government*"[1] in serving the people's interest and providing the much needed quality basic services, scholars have looked into local governments to provide good governance. The direction of reforms has now been shifted from centralism to decentralization of power to local units. According to scholars, efficient decentralization is equated to good governance in the sense of responsive public welfare that directly and immediately affects local levels and assures equal distribution of power and public goods. Furthermore, based on UNESCO's eight characteristics of good governance, decentralization pushes the government to be transparent and accountable because the people are able to closely monitor the one

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[1] Big government pertains to the National Government

seated in power (Naluz, 2010). According to the World Bank (1997), micro-level accountability reinforces macro-level accountability. This allows a bottom-top approach in promoting state capability, accountability and responsiveness at all tiers of government.

Gaining support by optimistic public opinion for government reform is critical for its success. According to Odugbemi and Jacobson (2008), public opinion processes matter if governance reform initiatives are to succeed. It is also critical that the public or critical stakeholders go through a non-coerced change in attitude, opinion or behavior, which is addressed through the use of communication. Black and Bryant (1992) present a purposive definition to communication which states that it is a process by which an individual (the communicator) transmits stimuli (usually verbal symbols) to modify the behavior of the individual. With regards to this definition, communication is a deliberate but no-coerced work that influences public opinion. Even with the existing realization that communication is important in government, there are not a lot of literature done on communication and public governance. Communication in governance has always been attributed to corporate governance. According to (Riel and Fombrun 2007a), corporate communication is set of activities involved in managing and orchestrating all internal and external communications aimed at creating favorable starting points with stakeholders on which the organization depends on. Furthermore, it also deals with how an organization delivers the same message to all of its stakeholders, in order to transmit coherence, credibility and ethic, thus building trusted reputation in public opinion.

This paper specifically looks at the role of communication, particularly corporate communication, in gaining support and sympathy of the public opinion to aid in the success of government reform initiatives at the local level. It will try to contextualize the need for communication in the local government by revisiting decentralization and its importance to promote good governance in the Philippines. It will also try to define communication and its importance to successful governance reforms, corporate governance and communication, and, lastly, identifies how local governments can use corporate communication techniques to influence public opinion to ensure successful government reforms.

2. Revisiting Governance and Local Government in the Philippines

2.1. Governance and Good Governance

To understand Local governments, we must first understand Governance. UNESCAP (2009) gives a simple definition of governance as the process of decision-

making and the process by which decisions are implemented or not implemented. Manasan, Gonzales, & Gaffud, (1999) adds to the mix that governance is a manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development. World Bank (1997) further explores this use of power in governance as traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised for the common good. In line with this definition, World Bank (2007) also associates governance to longer term results like robust growth, lower income inequality, child morality, and illiteracy, improved country competitiveness, and investment climate; and greater resilience of the financial sector.

In order for governance to be good governance, UNESCAP (2009) attributes it to eight major characteristics which are participatory, consensus-oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law. The UK Department of International Development (2006), hones these characteristics to only three requirements of good governance, which are state capability, responsiveness and accountability.

Local governance also adheres to the same definitions previously stated, but due to the relatively small geographic area there is more emphasis in collective action and participation. According to Shah (2006), Local Governance is the formulation and execution of collective action at the local level. They later define good local governance as "not just about providing a range of local services but also about preserving the life and liberty of residents, creating space for democratic participation and civic dialogue, supporting market-led and environmentally sustainable local development, and facilitating outcomes that enrich the quality of life of residents"

2.2.   Local Government

According to scholars, efficient decentralization is equated to good governance in the sense of responsive public welfare that directly and immediately affects local levels and assures equal distribution of power and public goods. There are many theories arguing that decentralization and a stronger role of local government promote accountability, efficiency, manageability and autonomy. **Table 1** presents a short summary of some theories in decentralization.

Table 1. Summary of Theories in Decentralization

Theory	Jurisdictional Design	Reason
Stigler's Menu (Stigler, 1959)	Decision making should occur at the lowest level of government (jurisdiction) with the goal of allocative efficiency	• The closer a representative government is to the people, the better it works. • The People should have the right to vote for the kind and amount of public services they want

The Principal of Fiscal Equivalency (Olson, 1969)	Optimal provision of public services is ensured by equating political jurisdiction to benefit area	• The free-rider problem is overcome • The marginal benefit becomes equal to the marginal cost of production
Correspondence Principle (Oates, 1969)	The set of individuals who consume the good should be included in the jurisdiction that determines the level of provision of each public good	• Establishes the concept of functional, overlapping, and competing jurisdictions • Lets individuals and communities choose freely among competing jurisdictions
Decentralization Theorem (Oates,1972)	Each public service should be provided by the jurisdiction having control over the minimum geographic area that would internalize benefits and costs of such provision,	• Local governments understand the concerns of local residents. • Local decision making is responsive to the people for whom the services are intended, thus encouraging fiscal responsibility and efficiency • Unnecessary layers of jurisdiction are eliminated. • Inter-jurisdictional competition and innovation is enhanced
Subsidiarity Principle	Functions (taxing, spending, and Regulation)should be exercised by lower levels of government unless a higher levels of government can justify otherwise	• Local government in order to be responsive and efficient must have autonomy to manage themselves

Looking at the table, theories in decentralization generally argue that putting faith in smaller jurisdictions like local governments to run themselves not only best serve the people by being responsive in providing services and allowing them to participate in government, but also promotes in fiscal efficiency, easier manageability and competition.

Local Government is defined as "specific institutions or entities created by national constitutions , by ordinary legislation, by higher level of central government, by provincial or state legislation or by executive order to deliver a range of specified services to a relative small geographically delineated area " (Shah, 2006). In the Philippines the local governments or local Government Units (LGU) were created and envisioned by the constitution to have local autonomy while general supervision was only exercised by the president. The 1987 Philippine Constitution states that:

> **1987 Constitution, Article X, section 3.** "the congress shall enact a local government code which shall *provide for a more responsive and accountable local government structure instituted through a system of decentralization with effective mechanisms of recall, initiative, and referendum, allocate among the different local government units their powers, responsibilities, and resources, and provide for the qualifications, election, appointment and removal, term, salaries, powers and functions and duties of local officials, and all other matters relating to the organization and operation of local units."*

This provided the constitutional basis for the congress to later enact the Local Government Code of 1991 or RA 7160, to strengthen the move towards decentralization and local autonomy. RA 7160 states that:

> *"policy of the State that the territorial and political subdivisions of the State shall enjoy genuine and meaningful local autonomy to enable them to attain their fullest development as self-reliant communities and make them more effective partners in the attainment of national goals"*

The Local Government Code of 1991 strengthens the move towards self reliance and local autonomy of local governments by providing their specific roles and responsibilities with regards to devolved national functions and share of internal revenue taxes or national taxes. Through this enacted law, the Philippines adopt the theories of decentralization which believes that small jurisdictions provide responsive, accountable and capable governments.

3. Importance of Communication in Governance Reform Initiatives

There is a simple explanation why communication is important in governance reforms. According Odugbemi and Jacobson (2008), governance reforms are technocratic solutions that are accompanied by strategies to understand and address obstacles to reform. These solutions often rely on communication between and among networks within and outside of government, among civil society organizations, and between citizens in the public sphere. In relation to this, communication facilitates adequate and efficient flow or exchange of information between citizens, tiers of government and other institutions, which in turn contribute to improvement of public governance.

According to Baker (2002), good communication strengthens our democratic system of government by developing partnerships, informs policy development and improves service delivery, anticipates issues and manages expectations and enhances community participation in government. Communication in the public sector ensures stakeholders such as citizens, leaders and institutions to be informed about the programs, services and matters which affect their benefits, rights and obligations. According to the Government Communication and Information System, in order to enhance democracy and promote a better life for citizens, it is imperative that the communication function in government is seen as an integral element of governance and service delivery. Communication in public governance is no longer limited to a "media liaison function which a respond during times of crisis or a marketing publicity function" but a basic service that should be provided by government (Naluz, 2010).

According to the Information and Communication for Development team of the Department for International Development (DFID, 2006) and the Development Communication Division of the World Bank, the communication processes and the media of communication are a fundamental part of how governance systems operate in any political community. According to them, communication, particularly at the local level, plays a role in: shifting community biasness and addresses unity; keeping in touch with the needs, concerns and aspirations of the community which can improve service delivery; and create accountability by provide citizens information about performance of elected officials which can directly influence quality of governance.

One important function of communication is its ability to affect attitudes, behavior and opinion. Public opinion is no more than the aggregate of all individual beliefs or opinion. Gaining support by optimistic public opinion for local government reform is critical for its success.

According to Odugbemi and Jacobson (2008), good governance straddles both supply and demand sides of governance by focusing on dynamic forces in politics (the power of public opinion) and structural force of politics (Public Arena or democratic public sphere). Simply put, it is how stakeholders like citizens, leaders and institutions coexist and relate to each other to make reforms within the system. Odugbemi defines, the Public Arena or the Democratic Public Sphere as the space between state and household where free citizens come together to share information, debate, discuss deliberate concerns. In this day and age, due to technological developments in mass communication, it has grown out of the physical realm and entered the virtual arena. Likewise, people, as it was in the past, do not have to go to physical locations to be informed or engaged in public discourse but can participate remotely through mass media. Due to this development, the public arena has become more accountable, transparent and accessible.

In relation to this, Odugbemi defines Public Opinion as: community values, beliefs and prejudice; political and academic elite opinion, individual attitudes on public issue; and majority view which has been debated and discussed in a public arena. One critical aspect of public opinion is that it legitimizes power and authority which in turn gives consent to rule over them. Thus, public opinion processes matter if governance reform initiatives are to succeed.

Considering the impact brought about by technology to make the Public Arena more participatory and Public Opinions importance to consensus building and legitimacy, it is

critical for public governance to make good use of these forces in politics. It is critical for government to maximize and use the technology available to tap into the public arena and used non-coercive methods to influence public opinion for government reform initiatives. Odugbemi sees "communication as a deliberate work to influence public opinion" and "ensures that crucial stakeholders go through a non-coerced change in attitude, opinion or behavior". This emphasizes the fact that communication plays a vital part in achieving consensus among stakeholders from both top- bottom and bottom to top approach for governance reform.

According to Meisel (2007), developing countries should focus on four main priorities when experimenting with governance in both the public and private sector. The four focus priority areas are on: increasing individual autonomy while increasing accountability; inclusive selection of government officials accessible to innovative newcomers; increase participation of new countervailing organizations other than hierarchal organizations in delivering activities toward general self interest; and improving communication and the quality of information flows. The latter focus area involves improving the quality of information and increasing the speed of dissemination to the public.

Not much is known about the use of communication in public governance. The appreciation and use of communication has always been tied-up to the public sector and corporate governance. In light of the new developments of corporate governance, link between corporate governance and public governance has become more evident. Thus, adopting communication principles used in corporate governance may be applicable to public governance.

4. Corporate Governance and Corporate Communication

4.1. Corporate Governance

According to Money and Schepers (2007) there is an emergence of a new corporate governance paradigm where stakeholders are in prime consideration along with shareholders. It has shifted from a shareholder-based approach to a stakeholder-based approach. According to Preble (2005) the term stakeholder was chosen as a literary device to call into question management sole emphasis on stockholders and instead suggested that the firm be responsible to a variety of stakeholders. The previous paradigm to corporate governance holds that mechanism of rule were designed to align the interest of the owners or capital and the managers (Young & Thyil, 2008), and issues around the control and composition of the board of directors, as well as shareholders' rights, in a "profit-centered model" (Shahin y Zairi, 2007). The new

paradigm suggests to emphasize on reputational risks and opportunities that corporate responsibility brings, and for these companies to align with corporate behavior with stakeholder expectations is an ongoing business priority (Dawkins, 2004).Stakeholders, in contradiction to what was previously seen, are not enemies or having conflicting interests but allies with mutual interest in the organization. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2004) that this new paradigm of stakeholder based approach corporate governance is one key element in improving economic efficiency and growth as well as enhancing investor confidence. Corporate governance involves a set of relationships between a company's management, its board, its shareholders and other stakeholders. This set of relationships that is based on mutual interest, ensures a zero sum game beneficial to everybody.

According to Sapovadia (2003), the positive effects of corporate governance on different stakeholders are strengthened economy; therefore good corporate governance is a tool for socio-economic development. The OECD (2007) provides a more in depth benefit of good corporate governance. They suggest that "good governance systems allow organizations to realize their maximum productivity and efficiency minimize corruption and abuse of power, and provide a system of managerial accountability. These benefits and goals are equally important and applicable for both private corporations and government bodies.

4.2. Corporate Communication

The origins of corporate communication can be trace to public relations. According to White and Mazur (1995), public relations is a vocation where practitioners who are advised on social attitudes and actions aim to win public support. Corporate communication does not veer far from this idea since "it is mainly concerned with non economic indicators such as changing attitude, altering perceptions and affecting what an audience believes about the organization" and factors like "public opinion and social responsibility are properly considered"(Dolphin, 1999).

According to (Riel and Fombrun 2007a), corporate communication serves as the liaison between an organization and its public. The liaison function entails conducting activities oriented towards managing internal and external communications to establish favorable relationships as well as enhancing organizations ability to retain legitimacy to operate. In relation to this, Dolphin considers corporate communication as managing company's reputation to build consent for the organization and its business. Dolphin further argues that it is the prerogative of organization to desire favorable attitude towards itself from key publics just as it wants heightened perception of its purpose and

culture. Corporate communication is beneficial to an organization, since it develops strong corporate culture, coherent corporate identity, reasonable corporate philosophy, genuine sense of corporate citizenship, an appropriate and professional relationship with the press, and understanding of current communication technologies ((Riel and Fombrun 2007a),

According to Dolphin (1999), a corporation is an artificial person in law. Being an artificial person entails having an identity which in turn makes an image and reputation. According to Balmer (1997), in order for organizations to secure favorable corporate image and reputation they must know and manage the organizations identity. Communication plays a vital role in this identity "knowing" and "managing process". Dolphin considers communication, particularly corporate communication, having a vital role in giving life and form to the organization function, its character and identity and dissemination to various audiences.

Corporate communication mainly deals with corporate identity, image and reputation. It can be said that corporate communication mainly deals with creation of corporate identity, managing corporate image and building corporate reputation. According to Balmer and Grey (1999), corporate identity is the reality and uniqueness of an organization, which is integrally related to its external and internal image and reputation through corporate communication. Albert and Whettan (1985) define corporate identity as organizational characteristics that are most central, enduring and distinctive. Argenti (1994) presents a more physical definition by arguing that it is the visual manifestation of an image as conveyed through the organizations logo, products, services, and buildings, stationary, uniform and all other tangible bits of evidence created by the organization to communicate to a variety of constituents. Dolphin (1999) simply defines corporate identity as what an organization really is and, unlike image, does not change from one audience to another.

On the other hand, Dolphin (1999) defines image as "what the organization appears to be" according to the "perception of the different audiences based on the identity as it is communicated". Moreover, it will also follow that image varies from one audience to another. According to Argenti (1994) it is a reflection of the organizations reality. Riel (2007), propose that it is the sum of all experiences that someone has with the institution. Marziliano (1997) proposes that an organization creates an image to be managed and controlled in order to survive to project a good perception of itself. Moreover, Balmer (1997), suggest that positive image and reputation should be built on an organization's identity.

According to(Riel and Fombrun 2007a), reputations are overall assessments of organizations by their stakeholders.   He further explains that is the aggregate perceptions by consumers, employees or investors of the organization's ability to fulfill expectations. Fombrun (1996) believed, as quoted by Dolphin (1999), reputation is partly, a reflection of a company's identity and image, and, partly, the manager's effort to convince audience of the company's' excellence. In order to achieve this, Fombrun suggest that managers can build, sustain and develop reputation by shaping a unique identity and project coherent and consistent set of images.

Argenti (1998) suggested that communicating image and identity is the most critical part of corporate communication. In addition to this, determining how an organization wants to be perceived and how it identifies itself is the foremost function of corporate communication. Thus, Dolphin (1999) argues that for corporate communication to succeed identity and image must be one in the same. Likewise, reputation is built from this juncture of identity and image as well as projecting coherent messages that build on the organizations credibility and ethic.

According to Riel the tools in corporate communication are: adoption of a centralized planning system; application of visual identity systems; use of integrated marketing communications; and reliance on coordinating teams. **Table 2** presents the tools and related activities.

Table 2. Tools and Activities in Corporate Communication

Tools	General Activities	Specific Activities
Adoption of a Centralize Corporate Communication Strategy	Audit of Internal and External Publics	• Determining stakeholders of the organization whom communication is directed
	Environmental Scanning	• Observing external audiences and environmental factors, and their impact on the organization
	Develop Strategic Communication Policies	• Developing polices on external images and internal identities (ex. mission statement)
Development of Visual Identity Systems	Develop Brand Names	• Establishing the qualities and characteristics that make the organization unique (ex. history, belief and philosophies)
	Develop House Styles	• Establishing of symbols associated with the organization
Use of Integrated Marketing Communication Strategies	Choose Marketing Strategies	• Using marketing strategies like sales promotion, public relations and marketing through interaction
Use of Coordinating Teams	Create or Involve a group Specializing in	• Communicating coherent messages to all of its stakeholders, in order to transmit

	Communication	credibility and ethic

Audit of Internal and External Publics. According to Riel (1999), "Publics" can be both internal (employees, stakeholders, i.e. share and stock holders) and external (agencies, channel partners, media, government, industry bodies and institutes, educational institutes and general public).Since corporate communication deals with various audiences, it is critical to the development of the strategy to identify audience or stakeholders. Anyone involved with corporate communications needs to be aware of their receivers' habits and idiosyncrasies before deciding on message and medium (Chin, 2005).

Environmental/Boundary Scanning. According to Dolphin (1999)**,** it is the process of observing external audiences and environmental factors; evaluating how- and what extent-they may impact upon the organization, carrying information to them and conveying information back to the organization. Moreover, it is crucial since communication with stakeholders and all those who form opinions about the organization is an essential plank to corporate strategy. Scanning can be through formal (media content analysis, public surveys, and focus group discussion) or informal (media contacts, monitoring complaints and suggestions) methods.

Develop Strategic Communication Policies. The ability to create external images and internal identities depends on strategic decisions enacted to make sense out of the present and future (Marzillano, 1997). Furthermore, corporate identity is revealed through organizational communication policies (Dolphin, 1999).According to Goodman (1994), the first communication policy must be the creation of the corporate mission statement-the first act.

Develop Brand Names. A brand name is a written or spoken linguistic element of a product which is often interchanged with trademark. It usually signifies ownership source of the service or product to the brand owner. The elements of the brand name is usually found as corporate slogans, products and services, product names, product features and positioning. Brand names must be a clear part of the corporate policy for strategic corporate identity.

Develop House styles. House styles are defined as common elements on symbols or graphics that represents the organization. These coherent elements associated with the identity of the organization makes it easily recognizable and strengthen reputation. According to Dolphin (1999), example of symbols that represent an organization are the

corporate name, logos , colours, icons, heraldy, flags, brand marks, corporate headquarters and employee uniforms. House styles can also promote the feeling of being collegiate and belongingness, increases employee self-esteem and self-awareness and establish an environment of consistent high performance.

Choose Marketing Strategies. Marketing communications can be categorized as sales promotion, public relations, and direct and marketing through interaction. Sales promotion is primarily done through direct marketing of products, services, employees, management and corporate behavior. Second, is public relations which is done through websites and advertising, products are not sold but information is readily given. Lastly, is marketing through interaction which is done by word of mouth.

Create or Involve a group Specializing in Communication. Corporate communication consists of the dissemination of information by a variety of specialists and generalists in an organization, with the common goal of enhancing the organization's ability to retain its license to operate (Riel and Fombrun, 2007). In addition to this an organization needs to talk the same message to all of its stakeholders, in order to transmit coherence, credibility and ethic. An organization, according to Dolphin (1999), also needs to impact upon its environment by communicating integrated, coherent messages and themes to those internal and external audiences with which it desires relationship for public support.

According to Dolphin (1999), image is the picture an audience has of the organization through the accumulation of messages that it has received and decoded. **Figure 1** is a diagram of how corporate image is managed.
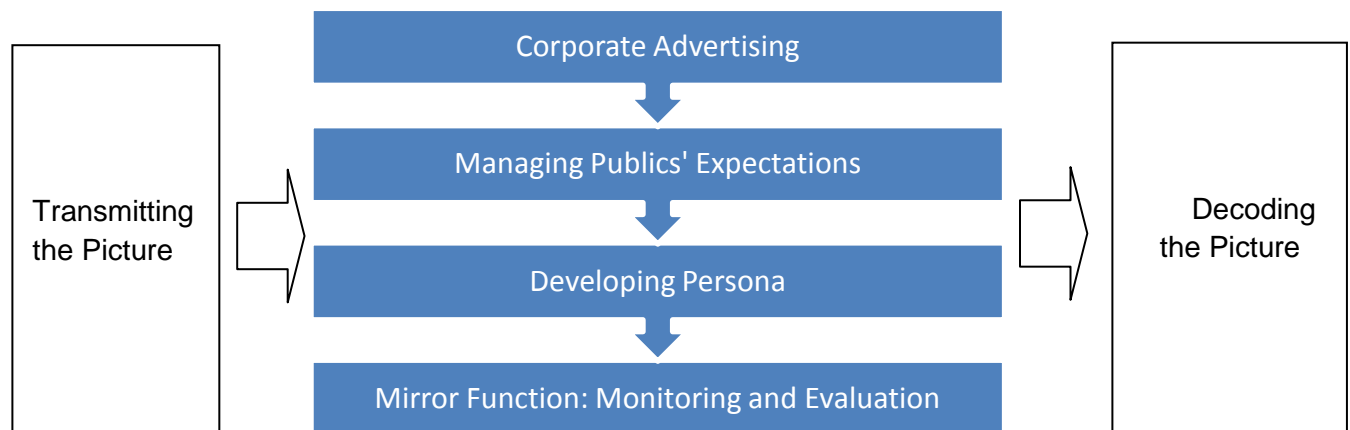

Figure 1. Management of Corporate Image

Transmitting the Picture. Dolphin (1999), quotes Jackson (1995), stating that the term used to describe how people perceive us is a term used in the art or photographic world- an image is a snapshot of a given moment. When an image is developed, publics interpret and judge this creating a picture of the organization. Dolphin adds that a corporate image results from a series of impressions communicated by an organization to its key publics. The images that are projected by the organization reflect the different ways the organization perceives itself.

Decoding the Picture. After transmitting the decoded image, the receiver decodes it and forms an image according to his perception. Moreover, what was necessarily the transmitted image may not be one in the same as the received image. Each audience may see the organization in different ways, but from these impressions publics come to know the organization as they perceive it. Over a period of time these impressions gradually accumulate and build a picture of the organization.

Activities like corporate advertising, managing public expectations, developing the persona and mirror function are crucial for managing the transmitting and decoding of accumulated images or pictures. These in between processes see to it that the accumulated images result into a positive impression of the company.

Corporate Advertising. According to Brown and Cox (1997), corporate image is the degree to which the company is perceived as possessing qualities that make it successful. Images, whether they are an accurate reflection of reality or not, may be created by advertising (Dolphin. 1999). Corporate advertising is a deliberate action of the organization to influence stakeholders to create a positive image of it.

Managing Public Expectations. According to Rindova (1997), image is momentarily shifting and adjusting visible representation of the organization. Image is a dynamic concept since it involves not only changing individual perceptions but different perceptions of various audiences. Managing public expectations would be juggling this various audiences, sometimes clashing in perception, to converge on a favorable perception of the organization.

Developing the Persona. According to Dolphin (1999), persona is ultimately the basis of the public's decision whether or not they wish to have a relationship with an organization. The persona reflects the reality of the corporation for which they are judge

by the audience. Persona may be seen as the reputation that bore out of the cumulative building up of image.

Mirror Function. The mirror function is reflection of the identity of the organization in the eyes of the stakeholder. Since much of corporate communication is towards bolstering corporate image (Riel and Fombrun 2007), it is imperative that organizations monitor and evaluate their reflection or publics perceived image at any given time. They should anticipate the consequences of their transmitted images so that persona will be develop according to their needs.

5. Conclusions

The purpose of the paper was to examine the role of communication, particularly corporate communication, in gaining support and sympathy of public opinion to aid in the success of local government reform initiatives. It wanted to put forth the two assumptions before concluding.

The first assumption is that the existing environment in the Philippines is leading to the belief that putting faith in local governments provided a better platform to provide a capable, responsive and accountable form of governance. In the Philippines, public opinion towards the government to serve peoples interest and provide quality basic services is generally on a distrusting and disbelieving note. This negative public opinion has put the focus on local governments to provide a more capable, accountable and responsive form of governance. In spirit of the Philippine Local Government Code of 1991, local governments are given local autonomy and are only generally supervised by the executive branch in all matters pertaining to operations of local units.

The second assumption is that since local government reform initiatives, involve working with various networks of stakeholders, it is critical for local government to use communication. It is even more vital since public opinion of government is a mixture of distrust and disapproval. In order for local governments to work collectively with different stakeholders, local government must deliberately influence public opinion through non-coercive methods. Through communication local governments create adequate and efficient flow of information for informed policy development and improved service delivery. It also improves accountability and transparency of elected officials and promotes unity by shifting community biases. These effects of communication contribute to building positive public opinion.

In connection to this, the use of corporate communication principles to influence public opinion would be beneficial to government reform initiatives. Furthermore, the use of corporate communication principles will give local governments a defined corporate identity which will allow them to establish favorable relationships with stakeholders and enhance their legitimacy to operate in the public's opinion.

I conclude that in order for local governments to be successful in functioning as organizations which will collectively work with a variety of stakeholders to create development by local government reforms, they should engage in developing and communicating their corporate identity and manage their corporate image to build their reputation. This will allow local governments not only establish favorable relationships and enhance its legitimacy on their stakeholders or publics, but also win desirable attitude and public support. It will also increase their degree of professionalism inside the local government by heightening their sense of purpose and culture.

7. Recommendations

The local governments may adopt principles in corporate communication by adopting an identity and managing an image. The first step into developing their identity is to create a corporate communication plan. In light of this, it is important for local governments to know whom they will communicate with and what are the factors affecting them. These questions can be answered by conducting a base line analysis of stakeholders and the environmental factors that affect them. Using this data they should be able to create informed strategic communication policies.

Flor and Flor (2007) in their study of typology of governance communication, differentiate corporate and public governance communication at the national, local and community level. By doing so, they present a template or starting points to identify the stakeholders, goals, core values and strategic thrust, methods and messages important to the local level. **Table 3** presents Flor and Flor's comparison of corporate governance communication and public governance communication at the local level.

Table 3. Comparison of Corporate Governance Communication and Public Governance Communication at the Local Level

TYPE/ ELEMENTS	CORPORATE GOVERNANCE COMMUNICATION	PUBLIC GOVERNACE COMMUNICATION (LOCAL LEVEL)
Goals	Corporate growth Increased profits Increased shareholders value	Increased effectiveness of local governments Increased demand for good governance
Primary Stakeholders	Management Employees Investors Clients or consumers	Provincial, district and municipal governments Civil society (academe, media, religious)
Core Values	Management efficiency Employee performance Investor confidence Customer satisfaction	Public service Transparency Equity
Strategic Thrusts	Corporate communication Products/services promotion Public relations	Program implementation Disclosure Peace and order
Media and Methods	Advertising Mass media	Local media New media

	New media	Dialogue/ Public forums Advocacy
Messages	Products and services Profits Corporate policy	Public policy Programs and Procedures

Local governments should also consider a broader perspective of their stakeholders. Stakeholders can be categorized as internal and external publics. Internal publics may include management, employees within the local government, while external publics may include the community, government institutions and business institutions willing to collaborate with the local government and clients of services provided by the local government. Local government should also consider how the changes or shifts of goals, core values, and strategic thrust affect both external and internal publics.

Once both auditing of internal and external public and environmental scanning is done. Data from both should be taken in consideration when developing strategic communication policies. Adopting Tucker and Short ridge (1994), 4 steps to keep in mind when developing policies on communication strategy:

- *Identify/prioritize the most critical publics/opinion leaders important to advancing the area*
- *Clarify desired behavior which will contribute to the development of the area of each identified public*
- *Develop a goal describing the end result that the organization is seeking*
- *Develop specific messages that reflect the desired behavior*

The Second step for developing ones identity is to develop a visual identity system. Visual identity systems are textual or graphical representations of the corporate identity of the organization. Once this is seen, it is associated with the organization. Local governments should position themselves using brand name and house styles in accordance with their corporate communication strategy . Establishing qualities and characteristics that render the local government unique and excellent combined with symbolic representations that enable publics to remember these qualities, makes a positive image. This image will eventually result into a positive reputation that portrays the organizations having the ability to fulfill expectations.

The third is deciding what marketing strategies are applicable to deliver these visual identity systems to various internal and external publics. Marketing communication strategies are categorized as sales promotion, public relations and marketing through interaction. Local governments may choose to use a singular or integrated approach depending on their capability and extent of coverage. One such approach is the use of information education campaigns and exhibits to disseminate the mission and promote services offered by local governments. They can also use technologies in mass media

like cable television, websites and radio. Community meetings and consultations can also be done at the grassroots level.

Lastly, it is important that local governments create an office composed of specialist and generalist, that is in charge with communicating an informing the public. This is important to maintain coherence, credibility and ethic. This is also important for monitoring and evaluating image and public opinion on the organization. Due to the dynamic nature of the publics, image is constantly changing. It is important to continuously monitor public opinion and image so measures can be made to influence them or improve the communication strategy.

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