

Nostalgia for Normalcy: Online Producership in a Filipino Food-Related Facebook Group Amidst a Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

Interest groups have been flourishing on Facebook since the creation of the Facebook Groups feature. Focusing on interest groups that are into food, the author examined the Facebook group “What’s your ulam pare?,” which is composed of members who post pictures of their food and other food-related memes. Putting the lens on online producership (Axel Bruns 2008) and using the digital ethnography method, the author observed and documented posts and comments that pertain to food nostalgia from March to May 2020, which was the peak of the Community Quarantine in Metro Manila, Philippines. Curated online posts ranged from trending food hacks to creative recipes using canned foods, and from recreated restaurant food to comments and discussions posted about new developments during the Community Quarantine in Metro Manila, Philippines. An examination of these online posts and discussions showed notions of nostalgia for normalcy among the Facebook group members. Moreover, the act of posting and participating in the discussions is seen as a way to compensate for deprivation of face-to-face interactions. More than the craving for food, findings showed that the Facebook group “What’s your ulam pare?” fostered a collective memory-making of connectedness.

Keywords: COVID-19, digital ethnography, Facebook group, Food studies, online producership

INTRODUCTION

With over a year in lockdown, the Philippines is now considered one of the countries with the longest lockdown since the COVID-19 pandemic took the world by surprise in January 2020. The entirety of Luzon, including Metro Manila, was put under Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ), or better known as 'lockdown,' on March 12, 2020, in a proclamation by Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte that the Philippines is in a state of calamity (CNN Philippines 2020a). The ECQ was supposed to end on April 12, 2020, according to the original announcement, but on April 7, Duterte and the Inter-Agency Task Force for Emerging Infectious Diseases or more commonly known as Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) announced that the ECQ was extended until the end of April (Tomacruz 2020). While others were already in General Community Quarantine (GCQ), such as Rizal province, Metro Manila adopted the Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine (MECQ) for May 2020 (Ranada 2020).

This lockdown has affected the prevalent eating culture in the Philippines, in which food has been an integral element in many social interactions, such as birthdays, fiestas, and Christmas (see Fernandez 1994; Julier 2013). It is a common scenario in Filipino kitchens that members of the household are seen helping each other in curating the menu, preparing the meals, and setting the table (see Fernandez 1994, 156, 160). In fact, Filipinos are known to greet people not only with the usual "Hi" and "Hello" but with invitations such as "*Kumain ka na?*" (Have you eaten?) and "*Kain tayo!*" (Let's eat!) (San Agustin 2019).

With the advent of the lockdown, which forced millions of Filipinos to stay at home, the uncertainty of having the chance to dine outside their homes compelled many of them to resort to social media for their gustatory and social cravings. In the April Global "Statshot" report 2020 from *We Are Social*, *Hootsuite*, and *Kepios*, there is an increase in digital activity across the globe due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Kemp 2020). In the Philippine context, the *2020 Global Digital Report* (Kemp 2020) stated that the Philippines is still considered the top Internet user in the world with its citizens spending an average of nine hours and 45 minutes on Internet use on any device, 55 hours and 11 minutes using mobile internet, and four hours and 34 minutes on laptops, desktops, and tablets. There is a 64% increase of social media users from March to April 2020, including the increase of work from home (WFH) set-ups (Kemp 2020). This is the reason why many still consider the Philippines as the social media capital of the world, as well as the Facebook capital of the world (ABS-CBN News 2019; Kemp 2020).

I am particularly interested in online groups on Facebook where people with comparable interests convene, discuss, and share insights, as in the case of the food-related Facebook group "What's your ulam pare?" [transl.: "What's your dish, brother?"]. This study is informed by Bruns' concept of produsage (2008) as linked to Jenkins' convergence culture (2006). Situated in digital spaces and active

participation, both concepts contribute to studies on how new media technologies (NMTs) enable media consumption and participation among members of the Facebook groups. Employing both concepts in this study engenders nostalgia and memory-making in digital spaces (Jenkins 2006). With this in mind, this study attempts to answer the following questions: 1) To what extent does the pandemic and community quarantine create nostalgia for normalcy among members of food-related online groups through online produsage, and 2) In what ways does online produsage alleviate or generate nostalgia for normalcy amongst members of food-related online groups?

FACEBOOK USE IN THE PHILIPPINES

As mentioned, the Philippines is still considered the social media capital of the world, which implies that Filipinos use social media very frequently. Studies have begun to investigate the widespread use of digital media in the Philippines, specifically of Facebook as it is the most used platform in the country (Kemp 2020). Facebook has helped connect people with similar interests, as in the case of Filipino transnationals in India (Lorenzana 2016) who connect with fellow Filipino workers who are part of the gig economy (Soriano and Cabañes 2020). Studies show that social media, like that of Facebook as a platform, is also used for political participation, especially among the youth who are considered tech-savvy people (David 2013). Interestingly, Facebook is also used as a coping strategy, as in the case of the survivors of Typhoon Yolanda (Tandoc and Takahashi 2017), and as a platform for digital mourning of Filipino migrant workers (Babis 2020). These studies have established the usefulness of Facebook's technological affordances (see Boyd and Ellison 2007; Treem and Leonardi 2013) in allowing connections with people, including strangers with similar interests, at the same time, its affordance of allowing people to participate in various activities that are normally observed in the offline world.

DIGITAL FOOD STUDIES

Food studies have intersected with other fields in exploring various trends, such as consumer behavior and perception of food (see Lee and Yun 2015; Stasi et al. 2018). Production and policy are also common themes in food studies, especially when it comes to food security (see Shepherd 2012). Food culture, as another parlance for this type of research, focuses on various areas, contexts, and approaches on aspects of food preparation, interactions among social groups, and the like (see Parasecoli 2014; Amone 2014). In the Philippine context, some studies focused on food sovereignty and food security (see Ramos 2011) while some studies have focused on food cultures and food politics (see Joven 2014; Javellana 2015; Milgram 2020) and even food in literature (Xie 2019). In these studies, Doreen Fernandez (1994) has an important contribution in her book *Tikim* which explores various food cultures in the Philippines.

With the breadth of literature on food studies, I focus then on 'digital food.' Though research trends on digital food focus on the business aspect of online food stores and businesses (see Suhartanto et al. 2019; Grant, Fernie, and Schulz 2014; Rahman et. al. 2020) and digital food photography (see Taylor and Keating 2018; Pennell 2018), my study takes focal concern on an emerging theme that takes stock of the connection of social media platforms and food (see Middha 2018; Rodney et al. 2017; Marino 2018, and Seddon 2011) at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic because it forced many individuals to migrate to the online space.

This study builds on existing literature on food studies, particularly on digital food in the Philippine context by examining the vast literature on food cultures and consumption practices and by focusing on the digital food culture of online groups. It contributes largely to studies on the use of Facebook by Filipinos to lend voice to members of an online community who were joined together because of food. Furthermore, this study piqued on a general concept of memory-making and nostalgia through food.

FRAMEWORK

The concepts of online *produsage* by Communication and Media scholar Axel Bruns (2008; see also Bruns and Schmidt 2011), *convergence culture* by Henry Jenkins (2006), and *network individualism* by Rainie and Wellman (2012) are utilized in this study. Bruns (2008) and Bruns and Schmidt (2011) presented the concept of online produsage from the combination of 'produce' and 'usage' where individuals or 'producers' gain the ability of becoming both consumers and producers through new media technologies. Bruns argued that produsage comes from the cycle of both usage and production of content. This concept is akin to the term 'prosumption' which is the combination of production and consumption (Toffler 1980). I juxtapose the concept of online produsage with that of Henry Jenkin's (2006) lens on convergence culture. In convergence culture, various convergences of media, both old and new, allow for more active participation from digital audiences. According to Rainie and Wellman (2012), the digital platform enables network individualism, which allows individuals to connect with other people while still being in the central node of their individual networks. People from various backgrounds are now connected because of the same interest and these individuals still retain their individualism because there is no need for solid connection in the offline and physical space. This study then highlights the process of participation and consumption that is facilitated by digital media. Social media platforms, such as Facebook, affords participation and consumption through the comments section, share button, including the reaction features. The ability to create things is extended on the Internet which has a social dimension wherein users become creators and are given the space to share their works with other people online (Gauntlett 2011, 3 and 82).

This article looks at active participation and consumption in social media, particularly on Facebook, in the context of individuals connected as one online community. I look at the process of consumption and production of posts in the Facebook group and the process of what I call "nostalgia for normalcy," which is a digital visual community diary as part of the creativity that members of the Facebook group practice.

METHODOLOGY

Digital ethnography is a method for examining the experiences, social worlds, and localities of people online, which allows elaborations on relationships and communities established in the online space (Pink et. al 2016). Digital ethnography as a method was employed in this study to explore the Facebook group *What's your ulam pare?* Consent was obtained from the administrators of the Facebook group to include the name of the group in this article. This selected online community, of which I am also a part, unfolds their social experiences during the quarantine in relation to food posts online. My period of involvement and observation in the Facebook group was from March 16 to May 2020, which is the period of the ECQ in Metro Manila and other areas of the Philippines. Posts examined in this study are those with captions containing the terms: 'ECQ,' 'MECQ,' 'GCQ,' 'Lockdown,' 'quarantine,' etc. They allude to varied experiences and ways of implementing community quarantine in the Philippines. Utilizing digital ethnography as a method of study was helpful in highlighting online produsage (Bruns 2008), which enabled me to discuss the consumption and production of posts in the selected Facebook group.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Food Related Facebook Group

The study focuses on the Facebook group "*What's your ulam pare?*," which is a private group with more than 414,000 members as of November 2020. One cursory check in its "About" page shows that this group started in March 2017 with the name "*What's your ulam kumpadres?*," which was then changed to its current name after a few days. This Facebook group focuses on daily food experiences and memes about food. In the early days of the group, members are "answering the question: "What's your ulam pare?" by posting their dish for lunch or dinner, mostly curated photos that were considered as food porn or aesthetically pleasing food. In an interview with *Pepper.PH* (2017), AJ Braga Jr., one of the group's administrators, mentioned that it was initially for his friends and family, but it boomed and had gained 100,000 members, including Filipino celebrities such as Ai-Ai Delas Alas and Gretchen Ho. In the same interview, Braga Jr. said that their members are around 25 to 45 years of age because,

interestingly, members are using the words “petmalu” [slang for *malupet* or cool] and “lodi” [slang for “idol”] (*Pepper.PH* 2017).

Nowadays, members of the group post any kind of food photos including desserts and drinks, whether highly curated or not. Sometimes, the posts are accompanied by humorous captions, while some posted photos are not originally owned by those who contributed them but are images grabbed from somewhere else and are re-posted as food-related memes in the group. *What’s Your Ulam Pare?* has been featured in numerous articles regarding food and online groups that people have used during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Examples are in features of recipes (Isinika 2020) that people share during the lockdown and of what people are eating for various meals (Katipunan 2020). Various articles pointed out that the group provides a sense of belonging and helps people cope with the quarantine (Eugenio 2020; Rivera 2020).

The succeeding sections below discuss the different themes observed during the conduct of digital ethnography and participant observation in the group. The screenshots provided below have been de-identified by removing identifiers such as comments, authors of the post, and the names in the reaction portion.

Frustrations, Promises, and Hopes

The country’s lockdown period elicited many nostalgic messages and texts on food. Directed at longing for food that is prepared and served outside their homes, the lockdown brought about a stream of posts and throwback images of patronized food and restaurants. Some people even expressed frustrations that they were not able to eat such meals before the announcement of the lockdown, accompanied by regrets of not being able to eat at such restaurants during lockdown. Meanwhile, phrases such as “Let’s do this after ECQ,” “after ECQ,” and even “first order of business after lockdown” became common in posts and comments from fellow members, with actions of tagging their respective Facebook friends with the promise to each other that they will eat these meals soon. These comments are found in the posts discussed in the following sections. These phrases signify hope for things to return to normal.

Food Trends and Food Hacks

One interesting thing that happened as soon as the whole world was put into lockdown was the virality of food trends found on TikTok (Dei 2020), which made its way to the Facebook group *What’s your ulam pare?*, wherein individual members were able to re-create videos and share it in the group. One of the

most viral posts is on the Dalgona Coffee, a Korean food hack or recipe that is essentially a whipped coffee topped with milk or another liquid (Kirkwood 2020). Figure 1 below shows an example of a Dalgona Coffee post in the Facebook group.

The posts featuring Dalgona Coffee went viral during the first days of the ECQ accompanied by statements by individuals saying that they do not have anything to do during lockdown. Some posts on the Dalgona Coffee were attempts to re-create the recipe with details on alternative ingredients and instructions on how they achieved this frothy coffee drink (see Figure 1).

Variations of Dalgona Coffee preparation also went viral. Appearing in the Facebook Group posts are the following variations: Dalgona Matcha, Dalgona Strawberry milk, Dalgona Milo or Chuckie (Milo and Chuckie are famous brands of chocolate drinks in the Philippines), among others. Figure 2 above shows examples of such variants. Interestingly, members of *What's your ulam pare?* posted variants since they cannot drink coffee, or they cannot stand the palpitation caused by caffeine. Re-creating variants for recipes shows exploration by the Facebook group members.



Figure 1. A post about Dalgona coffee. Source: Screenshot by the author.

Other food hacks from *TikTok* repeatedly posted in the group were pancake cereals and cookie cereals. These are mini versions of the original food turned into cereals. Another food trend in the group is a homemade Korean barbecue meal dubbed as 'Samgyupsabahay' (see Figure 3), which is a combination of 'samgyup,' or the localized and shortened term for 'samgyeopsal' (Korean pork belly, a common meat for Korean barbecue) and 'sa bahay' (at home). Samgupsabahay is also a pun based on the name of a local Korean barbecue restaurant in the Philippines. These trends, the Dalgona Coffee and

Samgyeopsal at home, are indications not just of people following trends on *TikTok* and other social media sites but also of the worldwide consumption of Korean culture, including food.



Figure 2. Variants to Dalgona Coffee – Dalgona Chocolate and Dalgona. Source: Screenshots by the author.



Figure 3. Sample set-up for 'samgyupsabahay'. Source: Screenshot by the author.

The virality of the Do-It-Yourself Korean barbecue meal is an indication of people wanting to go back to 'normal' and eat at Korean barbecue restaurants. Some would even go to the extent of buying a butane gas stove or a non-stick electric grill so they could eat Korean barbecue at home. Many of those

who posted these samgyupsabahay meals tried to convince people that they were able to complete their meal with lots of meat purchased at a cheaper price. Another thing to highlight here is that some were able to buy marinated meats from Korean groceries while others opted for different cuts of meat that can be found in non-Korean grocery stores and markets. Creativity is highlighted here because of the different varieties produced by Facebook group members. Online produsage is thus seen in the context of food trends. A clear example is the Dalgona coffee from its original ingredients and preparation.

The Announcement and Lifting of the Liquor Ban

Several local government units in Metro Manila, such as in Quezon City (Tuquero 2020) and Manila City (CNN Philippines 2020b), and nearby provinces in Luzon announced liquor bans until the end of the ECQ period. This made major liquor producers request for the lift of such a ban amidst the community quarantine to protect the plights of their workers (Yumol 2020).

Many members of the Facebook group *What's your ulam pare?* posted their frustration over the liquor bans. Some people said they could not enjoy their Do-It-Yourself Korean barbecue meal because they cannot buy soju or Korean rice wine. Some posted food that was usually partnered with liquor with captions saying that because of the ban they could not fully enjoy such food. One post during the first days of the liquor ban asked people where to buy liquor but received a lot of "Ha-ha" reactions and warnings of being caught for violating the ban.

In relation to the liquor ban, which was implemented in some cities during the community quarantine period, an interesting post that went viral is the breaded chicken skin and chicharon *bulaklak* – or crispy pork intestines – that are usually prepared and eaten with beer (see Figure 4). These are popular Filipino food choices consumed with beer. When these kinds of photographs were posted in the Facebook group, people started asking where they could purchase alcoholic beverages. In response, the author of the post said that they have a stock of liquor since before the start of ECQ and there was no liquor ban in their area. Some included caveats on their posts, saying that the alcohol on the picture was old stock or just for display. This changed when the liquor ban was lifted when many cities and municipalities were the given an MECQ status, albeit with a short time window for selling liquor (Rappler 2020). People started posting their "haul" of alcohol from stores. Many commented and posted that these kinds of posts establish notions of normalcy, which help them cope with the pandemic.



Figure 4. Post featuring alcohol amid a liquor ban. Source: Screenshot by the author.

The liquor ban accentuates the deprivation that Filipinos are experiencing during lockdown. This deprivation pushed people to crave for something – in this case alcohol. Ultimately, while studies on craving focused more on the negative side, such as substance abuse (Drummond et al. 2000), this craving refers to the craving for what is normal—a time before the pandemic.

Creative Recipes for Canned Goods

With the pending start of the ECQ last March 2020, many rushed to grocery stores to stock up on canned goods and other ready-to-eat meals, such as canned sardines and instant noodles, among others. The country's two most famous online shopping websites, Lazada and Shopee, showed that during the start of ECQ, the best-selling items, alongside rubbing alcohol and surgical masks, were ready-to-eat meals and other grocery items (Diomampo-Grana 2020). Aside from stocking up on canned goods from grocery stores, group members also posted relief packs distributed to Filipino families by local government units and other non-government organizations. Called "ayuda" [transl. "aid"], canned goods and other food items reached different households and employees of private companies during the first weeks of the ECQ, which contributed greatly to the virality of food preparation for canned goods and other easy-to-cook food items.



Figure 5. A creative way of cooking canned goods. Source: Screenshot by the author.

Figure 5 shows creative ways to cook and present canned goods or “de lata” [trans. “in can”] to make them more appealing. It is a humorous yet creative way of cooking canned goods because of the “gourmet” plating along with the caption of “Duet fish and beef entree.” Some posts show food straight from the can or simply heated with onions and garlic with the caption mentioning that their stock of meat has already been depleted, so they resorted to eating canned goods. Prodisage is also seen in this context of creative recipes of using canned goods and other ready-to-eat meals as people try to recreate the posts in the group and explore creative ways of presenting canned goods (Gauntlett 2011).

The Rise of Online Food Business

Another interesting trend that I observed in the Facebook group is the emergence of online food businesses during the first days of ECQ. Many lost their jobs due to the prolonged community quarantine because many companies were forced to reduce their workforce (Lopez 2020). Reports

showed different people of different work backgrounds opening their own food businesses (GMA News 2020).

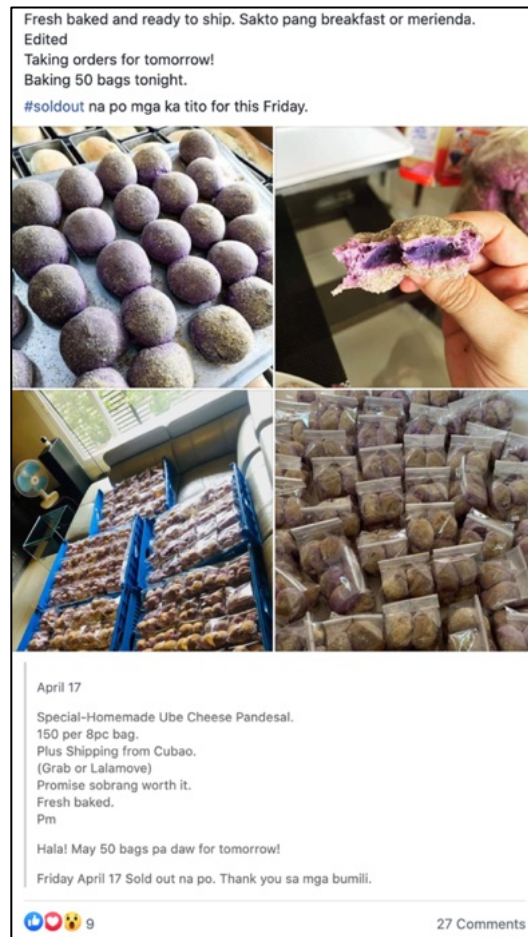


Figure 6. Food business advertisement in the Facebook group. Source: Screenshot by the author.

Online food sellers posted their products in the group (see Figure 6). Featured in the Facebook group were photographs of 'ube pan de sal,' or salt bread filled with yam, which became one of the most patronized food during lockdown. Aside from the 'ube pan de sal,' other varieties of this kind of bread, such as those filled with pandan and chocolate, also became popular. Cheesecakes sold in tin cans became popular too. Aside from sweets, savory food such as aluminum trays of lasagna, flavored chicken wings, including sushi bake or baked sushi in a pan, and the like, were also sold in the Facebook group. Notable here is the process of people posting food products for sale. Some posted their versions of those foods in the group and people in the comments section encouraged them to pursue opening a business. Afterward, these people provided updates either in the original post or through new posts, stating that they are now accepting orders and providing instructions on how to order, call, and pay.

Delivery, Take Out, and Dine-in

With Filipinos confined in their homes, they relied heavily on food deliveries. To cater to this new need, various restaurants made food packs and easy-to-prepare meals (Uy 2020). On the other hand, the IATF announced that dine-in options for restaurants in locations under the GCQ category were allowed (CNN Philippines 2020c). Even with the placement of certain areas in Metro Manila under the GCQ category, which allowed restaurants to accommodate dine-in guests, Arnaldo (2020) observed that many opted for a smaller number of guests or remained closed for dine-in arrangement. This became a part of the 'new normal.'

Figure 7 shows two images about dining options. The first image was posted in April 2020 and accompanied by the official hashtag of the food chain mentioned. In this post, the author ordered from a fried chicken chain restaurant and posted their set-up at home. Other posts on food deliveries included items best served hot. To ensure the quality of these kinds of food, restaurants provided reheating instructions. Commenters for these types of posts tagged their friends and added comments that they would order the same food from the same restaurant, or they would call another restaurant that offers similar food.

Figure 7's image on the right was posted in June 2020 when dine-in options were already allowed. A sign on the table says that it has been disinfected and sanitized for the safety of the customers. Comments on this post included instructions on strict policies such as temperature-checking and alternate seating arrangements to ensure that social distancing rules would be followed. It is noteworthy that these posts garnered comments of people tagging their "mutuals" (or friends and loved ones) and inviting them to visit the same food establishment.

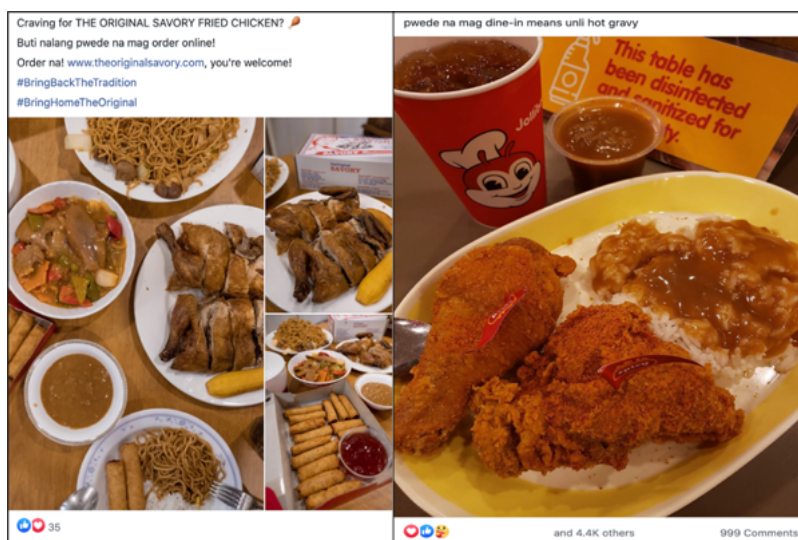


Figure 7. Delivery and Dine-in options during the community quarantine. Source: Screenshots by the author.

Other posts in this Facebook group showed that their preferred establishment does not allow dine-in options, so they resorted to take-out (or to-go option) and ate inside their cars. Comments on these posts included information on other branches that allowed dine-in options. One interesting comment was a query on whether the taste of the take-out or delivered food was the same as eating inside these food establishments. These kinds of posts garnered different responses from the Facebook group members who discussed why dining in the restaurants is still better than bringing it home or having the food delivered.

Recreation of Food from Restaurants

Due to the less income restaurants have gained, they opted to sell frozen versions of their food. An example that was repeatedly posted on Facebook was the frozen Chickenjoy, a fried chicken prepared and cooked by the popular Filipino fast-food chain Jollibee (ABS-CBN News 2020).



Figure 8. Creative ways of cooking frozen Jollibee Chicken Joy. Source: Screenshot by the author.

The classic Jollibee Chickenjoy became subject to different types of meal preparations by any buyer. Examples of such creative ways can be seen in Figure 8, where individuals are shown tweaking the recipe by using a different breading or a different sauce. To add humor to the post, the frozen Chickenjoy was also reinvented as the main ingredient for Tinolang Manok, a Filipino chicken ginger soup with chayote or unripe papaya. The longing for Jollibee's Chickenjoy can also be observed through some posts. Individual members of the Facebook group tried recreating the Chickenjoy by using found ingredients in their own homes, while others relied on "food hacks" available online. A Facebook group member posted a comment saying that he recreated the recipe simply because he missed going outside and dining in that restaurant. That specific post garnered many comments, including some containing tags with commenters' friends or "mutuals."

Generating Nostalgia through Food

Throughout the different themes that were discussed, one thing is common: the prevalence of Facebook group members' comments where they tag their friends and loved ones and write promises of recreating the dishes from the posts or ordering those food and dining in restaurants as soon as it is safe to go out. Observable in these kinds of posts is the longing for company. Resonating from the posts and comments on eating specific food is the longing for face-to-face interactions and feelings of connectedness. This process is what I call the nostalgia for normalcy which alludes greatly to the pre-COVID-19 quarantine period. With the COVID-19 pandemic and the forced quarantine in the Philippines, feelings of uncertainty and frustration emerged, which can be seen in the Facebook group posts and comments. Feelings of frustration are not limited to eating or dining out, rather, this stems from the Facebook group members' feelings of uncertainty on going back to the pre-pandemic forms of socialization, where interactions are conducted face-to-face.

The generation of nostalgia for normalcy is facilitated by convergence culture (Jenkins 2006) and, in effect, produsage (Bruns 2008). Produsage is seen in the form of tagging and replying to "mutuals." These discussed themes are cases of produsage in the online community. Food trends or recipes that became popular are exemplary cases of online produsage as people are shown to reproduce the recipe and others came up with their alternative versions. Produsage can also be seen in the context of food businesses. In the context of this study, members of the group were encouraged by their fellow members to pursue a business on food because of their online posts. Produsage is also seen in the case of recreation of restaurant dishes, as well as in the case of food deliveries and the like.

Another thing to consider is the creativity (Gauntlett 2011) used by members of the Facebook group. Memes are great examples of audience reach that elicit thousands of reactions despite its usual sloppiness (see Douglas 2014) and unconventional ways of presenting food. Since the main purpose is

to produce a humorous post, memes and other content like that of the Dalgona Coffee in Figure 1 with a *hugot line* or emotional catchphrase received thousands of reactions. This example exhibited the interplay between Facebook's technological affordances (i.e., use of reaction buttons and posting of comments) and creativity (Gauntlett 2011) of online group members in generating nostalgia.

To elevate this discussion on the generation of nostalgia for normalcy, I borrow insights from memory studies, particularly digital memory (see van Dijck 2011; Hoskins 2009). Memory studies scholars have discussed potentials not just of creating memory on social networking sites such as Facebook (see Kaun and Stiernstedt 2014), but also of creating an archive of collective memories, as argued by Ivana (2018) through the works of Lohmeier and Pentzold (2014), Pentzold (2009), and Garde-Hansken et al. (2009), among others. These studies highlighted that the affordances of Facebook helped in making and collecting memories. Building on this, I argue that these affordances like asking its users the question "What's on your mind?" as well as this notion of togetherness that online groups engender helped build up the digital visual diary of a community of strangers and thus enables this generation of nostalgia for normalcy while still maintaining their individualism (Rainie and Wellman 2012).

While some might dismiss the produsage observed in the Facebook group as simply a bandwagon of participating in various "life hacks" or meme postings, this activity highlights a sense of community among food enthusiasts. I argue that this collective digital visual diary is thus made possible because of produsage (Bruns 2008) and through convergence culture (Jenkins 2006), emphasizing not just the active participation of members of the online community but also the technological affordances of the platform.

CONCLUSION

In this article, I utilized digital ethnography in looking for notions of nostalgia for normalcy in a food-related Facebook group during the community quarantine period in the Philippines. While as of this writing, many parts of the Philippines are still under community quarantine, many citizens still undergo and generate nostalgia for normalcy with hopes for a post-COVID-19 society where everything will return to normal. Online produsage in the case of the Food-related Facebook group *What's your ulam pare?* goes into the notion of reactions, recreation of recipes, among others.

I raise three points here. First, people used online produsage (Bruns 2008; Bruns and Schmidt 2011) as a means of coping and building solidarity or notions of togetherness or connectedness with fellow individuals who were enjoined in the online network by celebrating food through a digital visual community diary. Second, online produsage enabled the Facebook group members to continue to hope and to look forward to a post-COVID-19 world through posting photographs, memes, and comments

that elicited nostalgia for normalcy. In this study, prevalent posts were about normal dining experiences like cookouts and picnics and eating together in restaurants that set the tenor for nostalgia for normalcy. And third, convergence culture (Jenkins 2006) enabled produsage while still maintaining networked individualism (Rainie and Wellman 2012), which enabled individuals to continue to communicate with one another in the practice of creating a digital visual diary. Convergence culture then allowed members of this Facebook group to be more engaged in sharing their experiences by posting their ways of consuming food and producing more content. This, in turn, enabled the Facebook group members to establish a connection in relation to their experiences during the community quarantine period. Recognizing the affordances of Facebook afforded people with similar interests to converge as one community of food enthusiasts.

Online produsage allowed people who were isolated from each other to appear to be “alone together” (Turkle 2017) because of the community quarantine measures, and connections were established because of the posts and comments about food. Members of *What’s your ulam pare?* continue to hope that they could return to their usual food-related activities such as eating out and cooking with friends and loved ones. To date, the pandemic is still not over and a cure is yet to be discovered but people continue to stay at home and rely on technology to continue to become *alone together* (Turkle 2017). This digital visual community diary from the online group normalizes nostalgia as this diary has not yet reached its final page and continues to develop and generate nostalgia from its members. Social media, particularly Facebook, helped the members of the group, through its affordances, to generate and build this digital visual community diary and this helped the members of the community to cope together while remaining to be apart from each other during the period of the community quarantine. Interestingly, one thing that helped bind these members is food. Thus, social media and food helped members of the online community to cope with and handle stress while still waiting for things to return to “normal.” Future studies are recommended to look into other online groups, other forms and variations of normalized nostalgia, other forms of digital memory, as well as digital memories in the context of other platforms.

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