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| <b>Title</b>   | DISASTER MEDIA TOOLS, COMMUNITY INFLUENCERS, AND THEIR EFFECTIVENESS IN DISASTER RISK AND REDUCTION MANAGEMENT IN TIWI, ALBAY |
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### **ABSTRACT**

Traditional and non-traditional media have become essential communication tools or channels for disseminating, informing, mobilizing, and coping with disaster-related information/messages. They provide real-time data and information for use in the different phases of the disaster to help spread awareness, support, and warnings in relief for victims. This study examines the various traditional and non-traditional communication tools available as disaster media. It identifies broadcast (TV and radio), print (newspaper), digital (cellphones), and social media as sources of disaster information/messages and their effectiveness for Tiwi, Albay's Disaster Risk and Reduction Management (DRRM). Six (6) sets of data were utilized to examine and determine the quad media as sources of information/messages. This includes the effectiveness of the identified sources of information as regards timeliness, accuracy, relevance, and understandability, the existing disaster media communication networks, the issues or challenges encountered by the residents and community during a disaster and during the Tropical Depression (TD) Usman, as well as the preparations made by the local government to maintain communication and activity of information channels.

This research employed an explanatory-sequential design using a mixed method approach by combining empirical surveys, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews with the select heads of the families and communities as the main respondents. It utilized stratified and purposive sampling from the most affected barangay and the least affected barangay as the strata. Purpose sampling was used in the selection of the study locale, with the town of Tiwi in Albay identified as the hardest-hit town during the occurrence of TD Usman.

The findings revealed that television and mobile phones are the most dominant disaster media tools or communication channels/information sources. Megaphones and radios are the most important communication tools and channels used. SMART and Globe remained the leading communication networks actively present and operating in the community. The local officials, local community, and family are the major community influencers and most influential people in the studied barangays. Likewise, television, radio, cell phone/SMS, newspapers, social media, and its apps, such as FB, Twitter, and YouTube remain the important and effective disaster media platforms used. This is especially true in terms of ensuring the widest distribution, as it facilitates one-way information dissemination and creates opportunities for two-way dialogue and interaction between organizations, the public, and individuals. These disaster media platforms can also be used to identify both survivors and victims, particularly in helping the community to know if family and friends are safe. The disaster media platforms combined with

mobile phones help report an accident precisely and send requests to the authorities for any form of assistance within the community.

Among the major problems or challenges encountered by the community, during a disaster and TD Usman, ranged from lack of communication networks or service providers to poor/slow internet connection, particularly when using the internet, cell phone, and social media. People can access the radio during a disaster due to the termination of an electrical power supply. Other challenges encountered are inefficient use of technology and other sources of information; difficulty in accessing disaster media tools due to expensive data connections; improper choice of communication channels, particularly in seeking information from neighbors and relatives; when radio, television, and social media fail, and there is a proliferation of fake news.

Finally, specific recommendations were offered to ensure the effective utilization of these disaster media tools. These included: the need to develop effective communication strategies and programs utilizing the suitable media tools among partner organizations with budget allocation and resources; local officials should carefully plan access points for any services in the anticipation of communication lines being damaged and should clearly and widely communicate the target location to save more lives and property; integrate the community influencers in a disaster-community-media-based communication infrastructure; develop social media emergency plans that will serve as the first source of reliable information by people affected by natural disasters or calamities to save more lives and properties; communities should be educated about the variety of alternative communication channels such as social media and its applications like YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and among others so they will empower and equip them with more information about communication alternatives and in order to adopt new technologies to suit their peculiar needs during a communication network paralysis; and the need to set up policies to ensure that the information or the message is adequately and accurately delivered; and that mechanisms are in place for people to give feedback or communicate to the authorities through social media, announcements on how to prepare for upcoming hazards needs to be immediately received, understood, and processed by the people who may be potentially affected.