Giyera sa Droga (War on Drugs): An application of the Theory of Planned Behaviour to the influence of negative word-of-mouth communication to the tourists' intention to visit the Philippines

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ABSTRACT

War on drugs campaign commenced in the Duterte Administration in 2016. The campaign resulted to worldwide criticisms which spread negative word-of-mouth about the Philippines. The study applied the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) by Ajzen and Fishbein (1991) to test the negative word-of-mouth (WOM) communication regarding war on drugs to tourists' intention to visit the Philippines. Structural Equation Modelling was utilized to determine the relationship among the three factors of TPB namely, Attitude, Subjective Norm, and Perceived Behavioural Control to tourist intention. The data was collected from 242 foreign passport holders and through an interview conducted with the Department of Tourism (DOT). The result of the study reveals that Attitude does not affect tourist intention to travel. On the other hand, Subjective Norm has the strongest influence on tourist intention followed by Perceived Behavioural Control but does not necessarily affect their decision-making behaviour towards visiting the Philippines regardless of the campaign.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Philippines is renowned for its picturesque landscapes, cultural diversity, and warm hospitality, making it an attractive destination for international tourists. However, in recent years, the country's reputation has been marred by the controversial "War on Drugs" policy implemented by the government. This paper delves into the impact of the War on Drugs on Philippine tourism, specifically exploring its effects on international perception and the travel industry. Political conflicts influence the tourism and hospitality industry caused by the negative issues of socio-political incidents have shown both the destination and the country concerned may have a negative impact to the tourism activities and image of the area (Alvarez & Campo,

2014). Recently, the Philippines has gained global attention due to the anti-drug campaign of President Rodrigo Duterte called "war on drugs". The Philippine National Police has reported approximately 5,000 deaths including 3,151-gun encounters with the police force and 1,847 drug-related attacks by masked gunmen on motorcycle have been reported a year after the Duterte regime took office in 2016 (Johnson & Fernquest, 2018). Moreover, the former Philippine Department of Tourism Secretary has approached the media to minimize the coverage of the President's drug war campaign in the Philippines due to complications in marketing the country, with reports stating that foreign nationals are alarmed about extrajudicial and vigilante killings (France-Presse, 2017). The study aims to know how the negative word-of-mouth communication regarding war on drugs affect tourists' intention and tourism image of the Philippines through the Theory of Planned Behaviour. The researchers seek to answer the following questions: How does Attitude towards negative word-of-mouth regarding war on drugs affect the tourists' intention to visit the Philippines? How does Subjective Norm towards negative word-of-mouth regarding war on drugs affect the tourists' intention to visit the Philippines? And how does Perceived Behavioural Control towards negative word-of-mouth regarding war on drugs affect the tourists' intention to visit the Philippines? Moreover, the hypotheses of the study are stated as follows:

H_1: *Attitude towards war on drugs does not affect the visitor's behavioural intention to visit the Philippines.*

H_2: *Subjective Norm towards war on drugs does not affect the visitor's behavioural intention to visit the Philippines.*

H_3: *Perceived Behavioural Control towards war on drugs does not affect the visitor's behavioural intention to visit the Philippines.*
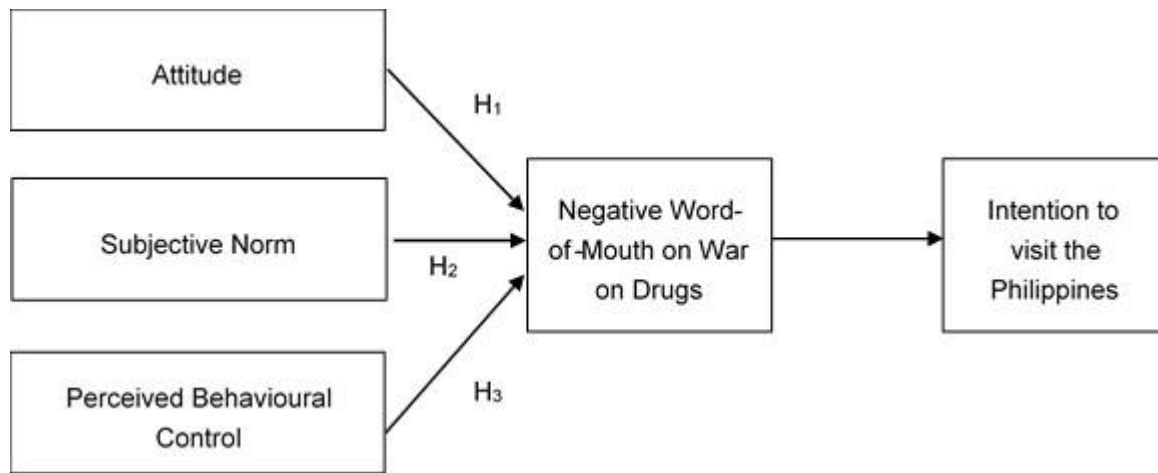
Figure 1. Hypothesized Model

Given the framework of Theory of Planned Behaviour, it will allow this study to assess whether negative WOM communication will influence tourists' intention before visiting a destination with drug war issues by adopting the concept of theory of planned behaviour. The analytical tool will construct the synthesis of the study which attitude as the first variable refers to the tourists' perceived travel behaviour and its understanding of the outcomes and engagement of events from an individual's nature and acquired beliefs. As posited in the hypotheses, the attitude of tourists towards negative WOM communication on war on drugs has a potential to adversely influence tourist intention to travel to the destination. Subjective Norm is the pressure that an individual receives within their social environment and the outcome of the normative belief of the person's significant others and their decision about the person's engagement in a certain behaviour (Wu, 2015). In this study, if the tourists are affected by the opinions of others on negative WOM communication about war on drugs, then it is subjected to subjective norm and will have an impact on the tourist's intention. The last variable in this figure is the Perceived Behavioural Control. It states the easiness or difficulty of an individual while becoming involved in a certain behaviour. It is the effect of a person's control belief of resources and its capability in controlling these impediments (Wu, 2015). With this, if a tourist has enough knowledge about negative WOM regarding war on drugs in the Philippines, this can affect their intention to travel to the country.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The implementation of the War on Drugs garnered widespread international attention and criticism. Human rights organizations and foreign governments expressed concern over alleged human rights abuses and due process violations. Such negative publicity had an adverse effect on the perception of the Philippines as a safe and welcoming tourist destination. According to Amnesty International's 2017 report, the War on Drugs resulted in a significant number of extrajudicial killings, raising serious human rights concerns (Amnesty International, 2017). The Philippine Department of Tourism reported a 10% decline in tourist arrivals in 2017, coinciding with the height of the War on Drugs implementation (Department of Tourism, 2018). Recognizing the detrimental effects of the War on Drugs on tourism, the Philippine government undertook initiatives to rebuild the country's image. It launched promotional campaigns highlighting other aspects of the country, such as its natural beauty, cultural heritage, and hospitable locals. "It's More Fun in the Philippines" campaign, launched in 2018, aimed to shift the focus away from negative news and promote the positive aspects of Philippine tourism (The Philippine Star, 2018).

According to Health Poverty Action (2015), the anti-drug campaign issue has failed to improve access to health, protect the environment, reduce violence, and protect human rights; hence, the war on drugs is already impacting the government's effort to achieve a sustainable development. As stated by Lachaze (2014), sustainability is meeting the needs of the current without compromising the needs of the future generation. Thus, drug issues, crimes, and corruption are obstructing the concept of sustainability by hampering potential social and economic developments. The War on Drugs brought attention to the importance of sustainable and ethical tourism practices. Travelers increasingly seek destinations that align with their values, including respect for human rights and social justice. As a result, the Philippine tourism industry had to adapt and implement responsible tourism practices to appeal to conscientious travellers. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, sustainable tourism practices have become essential for destinations to remain competitive in the global tourism market (UNWTO, 2019).

Saha and Yap (2013) specified that political instability influences tourism and can cause complications to the industry. These conflicts in the country significantly damages its overall image and the tourists' intention to visit through individuals' previous knowledge about a place before visitation due to information exposure by means of planned communication such as: movies, news, or word-of-mouth (Alvarez & Campo, 2014). Word-of-mouth (WOM) communication is one of the major factors that contribute to the marketing strategies of tourism. According to Podnar & Javernik (2012), negative WOM influences the consumers' attitude and purchase probability. Research has suggested that negative WOM is more influential and gives more attention than positive WOM due to hostile reviews that lead to consumer distrust towards the product (Beneke, Mill, Naidoo, & Wickham, 2015; Nugroho, Siagian, Oktavio, & Tarigan, 2022). Therefore, specific conflicts and negative events such as terrorism or acts of war may be magnified through the media by giving unfavourable connotations and interpretations to the specified occurrences (Hall, 2010 as cited by Perles-Ribesa, Ramón-Rodríguez, Such- Devesa, & Moreno-Izquierdo, 2018).

Negative feedback creates a concern for businesses which may be used as an offset for consumers (Sweeney, 2012). Thus, it is important to know the attitude, behaviour, and the subjective norm of customers to secure the right marketing strategies that can address the preferences of consumers and the intention to visit (Hsu & Huang, 2010).

3. METHODOLOGY

The research methodology discusses the collection of data that includes the concept and theories which underlie the methods. It presents the research approach, research locale, sample size and sampling technique, respondents of the study, instrumentation, validity and reliability of the instrument, data gathering procedures, and statistical analysis as shown in the table below.

Table 1. Methods

Research Approach	Research Locale	Participants	Sampling technique	Data gathering procedures	Data analysis
Quantitative	Manila, Philippines	Non-residents of the Philippines	Criterion Purposive Sampling	Survey questionnaire	Structural Equation Modelling
Qualitative		Department of Tourism	Purposeful Sampling	Interview	Thematic Map

The study utilized a mixed method approach to identify tourists' and the standpoint of the government regarding the subject matter. The quantitative method uses numerical figures as basis for generalizing (Regoniel, 2015). Hence, quantitative method is used in the study to determine whether the negative word-of-mouth (WOM) regarding war on drugs in the Philippines affects tourist' intention to visit the country. Furthermore, the researchers incorporated a qualitative method to determine the perspective of the Department of Tourism regarding the possible impact of the drug war campaign to the tourism image of the Philippines in addition to the quantitative method of the study.

The locale of the study is conducted in the City of Manila, specifically from the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) Terminals 1 and 3 and to various popular tourist attractions such as Intramuros, Fort Santiago, Rizal Park, and around the vicinity of Makati City. The researchers chose NAIA as one of their locations in acquiring respondents that will provide information for the study as it serves as the main international gateway for tourists traveling to the Philippines as well as the attractions wherein the tourists often visit. The target respondents are foreign passport holders who are travelling to the Philippines.

The study employed Criterion Purposive Sampling technique was applied for the quantitative method to support the study in achieving the correct targeted sample. In the utilization of this technique, the researchers concentrated on foreign tourists that are affected by the negative WOM regarding the war on drugs campaign in the Philippines and made used of a 7-Point Likert Scale for the survey questionnaire to determine the attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control's influence towards the intention. The development of the survey instrument was based on the study "Negative Word-of-Mouth Communication

Intention: An Application of Theory of Planned Behaviour" by Cathy Hsu, Simone Cheng, and Terry Lam in 2006.

The research instrument was reviewed by a panel of experts from tourism and hospitality academic institutions, and a pilot test was conducted to ten (10) respondents to evaluate the construction, presentation, and layout of the questionnaire. The survey questionnaire also underwent the Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test which passed the 0.70 threshold. Before completing the questionnaire, two screening questions are indicated in the questionnaire to ask the respondents if they are non-residents of the Philippines and if they are aware about the on-going war on drugs in the country. The first section of the survey questionnaire consisted of the demographic information that includes age, and the number and purpose of visit. The second section is subdivided to three variables of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) namely Attitude, Subjective Norm, and Perceived Behavioural Control. Each variable of TPB has corresponding statements in which the participants are expected to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement based upon the Likert-type scale.

Foreign passport holders are the subject for the quantitative approach data and the researchers applied the 7-point Likert Scale in the survey questionnaire, which were administered personally to the respondents during the data gathering procedure in October 2018. A total of two hundred forty-two (242) responses are gathered, which passed the minimum requirement, based on the rule of thumb of Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). According to Wang X. and Wang J. (2012), the lowest standard sampling size of SEM is 100 to 150 or 200 respondents. SEM is used to examine the relationships among the latent variables present in the study and measured through the Stata software. Another software used in the study is the SPSS otherwise known as the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences which generates descriptive statistics to understand and interpret the data findings or results. The researchers applied a margin of error of 5% and with confidence level of 95%.

The qualitative approach, however, is identified through the interview conducted with the Department of Tourism to investigate the influence of the negative WOM to tourism image.

The results of the interview were evaluated using thematic maps to further recognize the focal points of the information gathered.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Attitude towards War on Drugs Does Not Affect the Visitor's Behavioural Intention to Visit the Philippines

Table 2. Survey Questionnaire Tally - Attitude

ATTITUDE								TOTAL
Telling my travel experience about the Philippines despite the on-going war on drugs issue to people nearby or through an online platform …	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
is embarrassing	16	15	19	36	41	69	46	242
is useful	63	58	40	61	5	10	5	242
is undesirable	13	3	16	53	66	35	56	242
Not to patronize the Philippines as a destination and prefer other countries in the future after I heard about the war on drugs in the Philippines …	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	TOTAL
is usual	8	29	27	38	44	65	31	242
is a wise decision	12	23	11	45	55	44	52	242

Based on the personal interactions with the respondents during the data gathering procedure, the researchers were able to obtain information about the tourists' perspective regarding the drug war issue in the Philippines. According to the tourists, it does not have an influence their visiting intention. It does not affect them since they do not have any experience seeing people getting incarcerated or punished by the law enforcers because of illegal drug use. From the answers generated from the survey, results showed that even though tourists find the information useful, the question "telling my travel experience about the Philippines despite the on-going war on drugs issue to people nearby or through an online platform…" is rather found to be undesirable and embarrassing since war on drugs in the Philippines is not a topic of interest to talk about for them. Moreover, in the question under the same factor which

is Attitude, "Not to patronize the Philippines as a destination and prefer other countries in the future after I heard about the war on drugs in the Philippines…" most answers showed that tourists find it unusual and not a wise decision to stop patronizing the Philippines as a destination solely for the reason of the on-going war on drugs issue. This means that tourists are still willing to visit the country regardless of experiencing negative WOM regarding war on drugs.

Subjective Norm towards War on Drugs Does Affect the Visitor's Behavioural Intention to Visit the Philippines

Table 3. Survey Questionnaire Tally - Subjective Norm

SUBJECTIVE NORM								
Most people who are important to me (i.e., family, friend, colleague, and superior) …	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	TOTAL
think I should not patronize the Philippine tourism again due to the negative word-of-mouth regarding war on drugs and choose other destination in the future	14	26	17	53	58	46	28	242
will not patronize the Philippine tourism again due to the negative word-of-mouth regarding war on drugs and choose other destination in the future	16	8	30	41	51	59	37	242

Based on the answers of the respondents, the survey shows that tourists consider the opinion of significant people in their lives such as family, friends, or co-workers. The Table 3 above shows that these people think that they should still visit or patronize the Philippines as a destination regardless of having a drug war issue.

Perceived Behavioural Control towards War on Drugs Does Affect the Visitor's Behavioural Intention to Visit the Philippines

Table 4. Survey Questionnaire Tally - Perceived Behavioural Control

PERCEIVED BEHAVIORAL CONTROL	Extremely Likely	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely	Neutral	Somewhat Unlikely	Very Unlikely	Extremely Unlikely	TOTAL
For me, telling my travel experience and war on drugs issue in the Philippines in the future is easy	36	67	72	46	13	4	4	242
For me, not to patronize the Philippine tourism again due to the negative word of mouth regarding war on drugs and choose other destinations in the future is impossible	26	34	21	40	41	57	23	242

This part of the instrument shows the ease and possibility of tourists to share their travel experiences to others. From the results garnered, it showed that tourists find it easy to share their experiences in the Philippines to other people despite the on-going war on drugs. Moreover, it showed a high chance of re-visitation since most of the answers showed that it is possible for tourists to still patronize the Philippines as a destination regardless of the negative WOM regarding war on drugs.

The figure below shows the data gathered from the survey measured using Stata software. The SEM result shows the relationship of Attitude, Subjective Norm, and Perceived Behavioural Control towards tourists' intention to visit the Philippines despite the negative WOM communication regarding the on-going war on drugs.
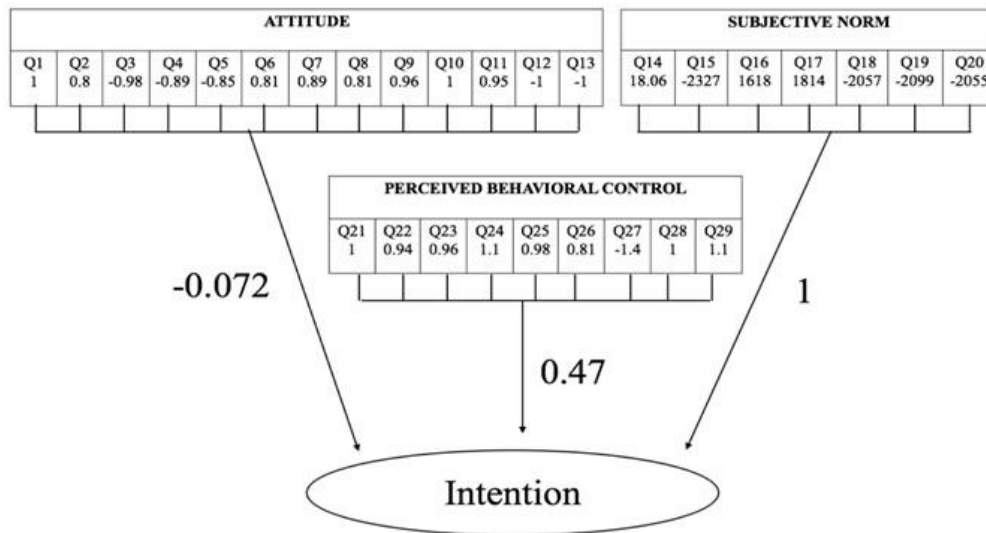
Figure 2. Unstandardized Equation Model

Table 5. Hypotheses Testing Results

Coefficient	Hypotheses	Decision
-0.072	**H$_1$: Attitude** towards war on drugs does not affect the visitor's behavioural intention to visit the Philippines	Accepted
1	**H$_2$: Subjective Norm** towards war on drugs does not affect the visitor's behavioural intention to visit the Philippines	Rejected
0.47	**H$_3$: Perceived Behavioural Control** towards war on does not affect the visitor's behavioural intention to visit the Philippines	Rejected

The results of this study were demonstrated using TPB as a conceptual framework to determine the travel intention of tourists in visiting the Philippines. The r-square resulted to 99% which signifies that the negative and positive relationship presented by the researchers' conceptual framework is valid. The table above shows that Subjective Norm which implies to important referents' recommendations in choosing the Philippines as a destination is an important factor to tourists as it has a positive coefficient of 1 than Perceived Behavioural Control with the positive coefficient of 0.47. This proves that both H2 and H3 are rejected. Moreover, Attitude has no effect to the tourists' intention and has a negative coefficient of 0.072. Therefore, H1 is accepted which implies that the Attitude factor of TPB on negative WOM communication regarding war on drugs does not affect the tourist intention to travel the Philippines.

The Attitude factor of TPB does not affect the tourists' intention to visit the Philippines because from their perspective, the drug war in the Philippines does not adversely affect their travel experience. Subjective Norm implies that the important people around them influenced their decision making towards considering a destination to visit and Perceived Behavioural Control does influence tourists' intention to travel since it is possible for the tourists to tell their travel experiences in the Philippines with the presence of war on drugs.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The War on Drugs significantly impacted Philippine tourism, leading to a decline in international tourist arrivals and tarnishing the country's image as a safe and welcoming destination. However, through proactive efforts to rebuild its image and prioritize sustainable and ethical tourism practices, the Philippines can gradually regain its position as a favoured tourist destination on the global stage. The data in this study is limited only in October 2018, the period which this study was conducted and completed. Thus, any developments after this scope are not included in the results and findings. In conclusion, this study resulted that Attitude does not affect tourist intention to travel while Subjective Norm and Perceived Behavioural Control can influence tourist intention to travel but does not necessarily affect their decision-making behaviour towards visiting the Philippines regardless of the drug war campaign. On the other hand, based on the results gathered from the interview with the Department of Tourism, war on drugs has no influence on the tourism image of the Philippines since the tourist arrival is continuously increasing despite the beginning of the "Oplan Tokhang" from the year 2016 to 2022. Hence, there are no proposed projects to counter the effects of war on drugs because the DOT claims that it does not have repercussions to the tourism industry.

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