DUTERTE'S IMAGE BUILDING IN THE 2016 PHILIPPINE PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES

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ABSTRACT

Debates are an interesting platform for image building given that they are only partially controlled by the candidates. This study looks into how the then President-elect Rodrigo Duterte harnessed the potential of the 2016 Philippine presidential debates for image building. The objectives of the study were to explain the role of mediation in Duterte's image building, uncover Duterte's strategies and topics in the debates, and critique the arising discourses in the televised debates. Using Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Benoit's Functional theory of political campaign discourse, this paper argues that mediation shaped and influenced Duterte's strategies and topics. Duterte used the dominant strategies of acclaiming and attacking in line with media's quest for spectacle and controversy. Moreover, Duterte had more policy pronouncements (issue topics) than character statements (image topics) which resulted in two dominant discourses—the discourse of provision and protection. A critique of these discourses reveals that Duterte used the debates to peddle an image of a paternalistic, iron-handed leader who resorted to shortcuts and appeals to expediency at the expense of more informed policy discussions.

Keywords: debates, Duterte, elections, Philippines, campaign discourse

1.   ELECTIONS IN THE PHILIPPINES

The Philippines has a multiparty system and a presidential form of government (Aceron, 2009). The country's multiparty system does not limit the number of qualified candidates who can run for the presidency. In the 2016 presidential elections, four candidates who ran for the presidency represented their respective political parties while one candidate ran as an independent. The country's president is elected via plurality of votes (Aceron, 2009). Candidates must then attract both command and free market votes (Teehankee, 2010) and "supplement more familiar modes of voter mobilisation" (Hedman, 2012, p. 32). Command votes are garnered through the use of political machinery that involves material incentives and dyadic networks while

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free market votes are attracted through national, media-based appeals of candidates (Teehankee, 2010). The appeal to free market votes includes the "phenomenon of 'political branding'" as an "important aspect of the trends in shifting voter mobilisation in the country" (Hedman, 2012, p. 32).

Candidates must not only depend on their political machinery to win the elections, they must also establish an image, a symbolic tool that will resonate with a national audience. Through political branding, a candidate's image is established. The importance of image cannot be overstated in a political context where celebrity and political pedigree give undue advantage to certain candidates (Quimpo, 2007). Moreover, political parties in the Philippines are characterised by weak ideologies and a lack of programmatic association (Quimpo 2007, p. 284). Hence, it is of no surprise why political branding became more apparent in post-EDSA Philippines (Hedman, 2012).

The Commission on Elections (Comelec) oversees the candidates' use of media for political branding (Hedman, 2012). The ComElec allots ninety (90) days as the official duration of a presidential campaign (Comelec, 2016a). Given the limited amount of time and the impossibility of meeting and interacting with all potential voters during the campaign period, the Comelec allows candidates to air political television advertisements, subject to the provisions of the Fair Elections Act of 2004 (Comelec, 2016b).

Political television advertising, however, has limitations. First, a candidate running for a national position is allowed a total of only one hundred and twenty (120) minutes of political television advertisements per television station during the campaign period (Gloria, Tabunda & Fonbuena, 2004, p. 36). Second, political television advertising may be costly for some presidential candidates, a concern which remains unaddressed even with the "Comelec Hour" or a provision in the Fair Elections Act which aims to give candidates free but limited airtime for their political TV ads (Gloria, Tabunda & Fonbuena, 2004, p. 43). Fortunately, another provision in the Fair Elections Act addresses these limitations—the airing of a series of televised presidential debates.

2.   THE PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES

In the months leading to the May 2016 elections, the Comelec had partnered with three private-owned television stations to host a series of presidential debates with each debate using a distinct format. This is in accordance with the provision in the Fair Elections Act or Republic Act 9006, signed in February 2001, which states that the Comelec "may require national television and radio networks to sponsor at least three national debates among presidential candidates and at least one national debate among vice-presidential candidates" (Esmaquel, 2015).

According to Comelec chair Andres Bautista, the series of presidential debates aims to "veer away from personality politics and toward more issues and platform-based politics" (Esmaquel, 2015). Comelec also aims to make informed electorates who will choose not on the basis of superficial qualities but significant considerations about a candidate's track record, competence, and the like. Each debate in the 2016 series of televised presidential debates lasted for at least ninety (90) minutes, minus the television advertisements.

The Comelec staged a series of debates in three different locations (Cagayan de Oro, Cebu, and Pangasinan) to represent the three island groups of the Philippine archipelago—Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. The Comelec also determined the format used in each debate and the questions or topics discussed. The candidates who squared off in the debates were then Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) Secretary Mar Roxas, Senator Grace Poe, then Vice President Jejomar Binay, the late Senator Miriam Defensor-Santiago, and then Davao Mayor and now president-elect Rodrigo Duterte. Figure 1 shows the candidates in the 2016 presidential campaign.

Figure 1. The Presidential candidates (from left to right): Binay, Santiago, Duterte, Poe and Roxas

Standing on the far left is Jejomar Binay who served as the Vice President from 2010-2016 and ran under the United Nationalist Alliance (UNA), promising free education, healthcare, and employment to voters. Beside him is Miriam Defensor Santiago who was an incumbent senator during her bid for the presidency, representing the People's Reform Party. Santiago's TV ads emphasised income tax reform, jobs provision, and anti-corruption as key issues. Unfortunately, she passed away months after the election.

Standing in the middle is Rodrigo Duterte who was a long-time mayor of Davao City in Mindanao and ran for the Partido Demokratiko ng Pilipino—Lakas ng Bayan or PDP-Laban on crime-busting platform. Beside Duterte is Grace Poe who ran as an independent candidate after Aquino endorsed Roxas. Her slogan is government with compassion ("*gobyernong may puso*"). Finally, Mar Roxas (far right) was the Liberal Party's standard-bearer, endorsed by outgoing president Benigno Aquino Jr. In his television ads, Roxas vowed to continue the gains of "*Daang Matuwid*" (*Straight Path*, the reformist platform of the Liberal Party). Figure 2 shows a still of the candidates in the first debate.

Figure 2. The first Pilipinas debates

The first debate was held in Cagayan de Oro on February 2016. The three-round debate used the moderator's format where the prepared questions were coursed through the hosts of the debate. Questions in the first round were about the candidates' profiles. The second round centered on the candidates' plans in alleviating poverty while the last round focused on the candidates' plans for Mindanao. A face-off round where two candidates asked each other questions was also in place. The debate concluded with the candidates' closing statements (GMA News, 2016). Meanwhile, Figure 3 below shows the four present candidates in the second debate.

Figure 3. Candidates in the second debate

The second debate was held in Cebu City on March 2016. The debate used the panel format where members asked specific questions for the candidates, including follow-up ones from the first debate. The second debate introduced the "*taas-kamay*" (raising of hands) segment where candidates were asked to answer yes-no questions on controversial issues, from the reinstitution of death penalty, to divorce, and the burial of the late President Ferdinand Marcos in the national hero's cemetery (Bloomberg

TV Philippines, 2016). All candidates were present except Senator Santiago who could not attend for health reasons. In the third and final debate, however, all candidates were again present. Refer to Figure 4.

Figure 4. The third and final debate

The final debate was held in Pangasinan on April 2016 and used the town hall format where members of the audience asked the questions themselves. The debate included pre-recorded videos to provide context for the audience members' questions. The issues discussed included labor contractualisation, the Philippine-China dispute, the traffic situation, and the plight of overseas Filipino workers, and affordable healthcare. The debate also included a "fast talk" segment where each candidate was asked a series of yes-no questions (ABS-CBN News, 2016). All candidates were present in the third debate.

2.1   Importance of debates

Debates are credited for its ability to "expand on information in news and ads" (Jamieson & Birdsell, 1988, p. 123). They also provide a preview on the possible communicative style of the president, revealing his/her habits of mind and providing standards by which a presidency could be judged (based on the promises made and articulations in the debates) (Jamieson & Birdsell, 1988). According to Coleman (2000):

> *Debate lies at the heart of democracy. Indeed, it would*
> *be reasonable to state that the two definitive prerequisites*
> *of democracy are the fair and inclusive right to vote and*
> *the opportunity to conduct informed, uncensored public*
> *discussion of ideas* (p. 1).

Debates are thus integral to democracy as platforms in which viewers get to know their candidates better (Greenberg, 2009). Debates also provide an opportunity for

candidates to discuss issues and engage the audience. They enable voters to talk about the issues themselves and make informed decisions to signal renewed interest in political affairs or civic commitment (Greenberg, 2009).

The study conducted by the Institute of Philippine Culture (IPC) (2005) found that while many poor Filipino voters (the largest voting bloc in the country) consider the track records and qualifications in their choice of candidates, they also want to know the candidates' personal character, their sincerity and trustworthiness (IPC, 2005). Male respondents listed power and dominance as important leadership qualities while female respondents emphasised caring and nurturing roles of a female leader. Finally, young voters prefer intelligence and organisational skills in their choice of leaders (IPC, 2005). All these qualities relate to the traits and attributes (knowledge, experience, competence, warmth, activity, strength, candor, dignity and stability) posited in character theories (Jamieson & Birdsell, 1988, p. 139).

Star power, popularity, and ability to connect with the masses are also expected of candidates when they join political parties (Quimpo, 2007). The last is often associated with likeability, goodwill, extraversion, sociability, and familiarity. It does not matter whether a candidate is really trustworthy, competent, or an expert— what matters is for them to be perceived as possessing such attributes. According to a Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ) online article:

> *Politics is no longer just addition. In the age of mass media, politics is image making. Amplified by television and advertising, a politician's image in the public's collective mind is greater than the sum of his actual attributes, assets, and accomplishments.*
>
> *Much of the behavior of 21st-century Filipino voters is based on images they have of Philippine government and society: Some of these images may have little basis in fact but they are very real to voters, so much so that even governance itself has become a competition for images or between images.* (Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, 2004)

Given the personality-centered politics in the Philippines and how voters look for certain qualities in candidates, this study looks at a candidate's image building through the debate—as a platform which is among the "range of communication options to shape and frame…. the campaign 'reality'" (Sanders, 2009, p. 177).

2.2   Debates as a platform for image building

There is little research on debates, much less televised presidential debates in the Philippines. Part of the reason is that "media outlets have traditionally held their own presidential or senatorial debates, but many candidates back out because they fear public scrutiny" (Esmaquel, 2015) since the last presidential debate in 1992 (GMA

News 2016). There are more studies on the use of political television advertising in campaigns and media coverage of Philippine elections (Gloria, Tabunda & Fonbuena, 2016; Coronel, Chua & de Castro, 2004).

Unlike TV ads, debates are only partially controlled by the candidates and their campaign teams (Sanders, 2009). In spite of the hours of practice and rehearsals that presidential candidates devote to it, the spontaneity of debates can still catch candidates off-guard with their gaffes and slips (Jamieson & Birdsell, 1988). Unlike rally speeches where candidates preach to the choir, messages communicated by candidates in debates can be challenged, attacked, or dismissed by their opponents in real time. In other words, debates can potentially expose the weaknesses or vulnerabilities of a candidate.

While candidates have a lot of time to craft and rehearse their messages through political television advertising, debates are unpredictable because of the level of interactivity between the candidate and his/her opponents, the moderators, and the audience. It is this interactive nature of debates which tests the spontaneity, candidness, and preparedness of a candidate to respond to questions and attacks from their opponents. Debates can reveal whether a candidate, for instance, has composure to respond to attacks launched by his/her opponents or whether they directly answer or evade a potentially damaging question. Debates are also worth studying as an image building platform because they provide equal opportunities for all candidates participating in the debates to a) "sell" and "package" themselves to the public, and b) argue with, reply, and respond to one's opponents.

2.3   Duterte's image building in the debates

Among the candidates, Rodrigo Duterte had not held a national post prior to running for the presidency. He was also the last candidate to express intention to run for the presidency. Duterte ran as a supposedly down-to-earth and no-nonsense candidate committed to an anti-crime platform. Duterte's image building efforts in the debates are worth studying for two reasons. First, he tested the limits of traditional, political vocabulary with his distinctive verbal communicative style and second, despite his controversial actions, he won the presidency by a landslide. This study will discuss how Duterte engaged the process of image building with the opportunities provided in the debates. As such, it asks: How did Duterte use the 2016 presidential debates as a platform for image building? In the process, it seeks to:

- Explain the role of the media in Duterte's image building;
- Uncover Duterte's strategies in the debates; and
- Critique the discourses in Duterte's image building

3.   FRAMEWORK

Fairclough's (1995) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was the overarching framework for analysis while Benoit's Functional theory of political campaign discourse was used to address the other objectives of the study.

3.1   Critical Discourse Analysis

McQuail (2010) argues that 'discourse' "has a broader connotation and covers all 'texts', in whatever form or language they are encoded. Discourse also implies that a text is constructed by those who read and decipher it as much as those who formulate it" (p. 305). McQuail (as cited in Scheufele, 2008) enumerates four features of discourse:

- Discourses refer to political or social issues which are relevant for society, or at least for a major grouping of people.
- The elements of a discourse are called speech acts, emphasising that they are a form of social interaction and wider patterns of social behavior.
- Discourse can be analysed by studying bodies of text of all kinds, including documents, transcripts of debates, media content.
- Discourses are processes of collectively constructing social reality, often in the form of frames and schemata, which allow generalisation.

According to McQuail (2010), the primary function of discourse analysis is "to uncover the substance or quality of a particular discourse, rather than to quantify the occurrence of different discourses" (p. 305). Critical discourse analysis, on the other hand, gives attention to the role of power (Smith & Bell, 2007, p. 80), its connection to some current significant social issue and its fundamental concern with "analysing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language'" (McQuail, 2010, p. 305). Through CDA, this study can contribute to literature by exposing how the debates can be held hostage by social practices or discursive processes which may counter the purpose of debates which is to advance a more issue-based discussion of socio-political, economic problems besetting the nation.

3.2   Functional Theory

The theory states that there are three ways or strategies by which a candidate can demonstrate his desirability—acclaiming (self-praise), attacking and defending. These strategies may also occur on two topics—character (image) or policy (issue). Benoit and Airne (2005) wrote that Functional theory "further subdivides both policy and character into three types. Policy includes past deeds, future plans, and general goals; character includes personal qualities, leadership ability, and ideals" (p. 227). There is a dynamic interplay between topic and strategy in campaign messages (Benoit & Hartcock, 1999; Benoit, 2007). The strategies and topics (or responses to topics) used by Duterte in the debates are coded to address the second objective of this study which aim to uncover Duterte's verbal and nonverbal strategies in image building.

4.   METHODOLOGY

Debate videos were used for analysis. GMA News (Mindanao leg), Bloomberg TV Philippines (Visayas leg) and ABS-CBN News (Luzon leg) uploaded videos of the debates on YouTube. The first debate has a total running time of 93 minutes without commercial breaks. The second debate lasted for over three hours including commercial breaks while the third and last debate has a total running time of five hours including the programme and interviews prior to the debate. The advertisements, programmes, and interviews shown prior the debates were excluded from the analysis.

4.1   Coding Procedure

All questions in the debates were first coded (Appendix A). The first set of questions in the Mindanao leg of the debates was about the candidates, Mindanao issues, and poverty/ development. In the second debate, there were closed questions (answerable by "yes" or "no") in the "taas-kamay" segment of the debate. I noted the responses of Duterte to these questions as they aid in image building. In the debate, specific questions were asked of each candidate and the issues focused on the candidate's proposals, policies, and personal notions of leadership. Finally, the questions and issues raised in the final debate or the Luzon leg of the debate included closed questions requiring one-word answers or short phrases for responses in the "Fast Talk" segment. These were also included in the analysis. The final debate used the town hall format where each question was directed to all candidates.

Following Benoit's Functional theory of political campaign discourse which posits that candidates acclaim on two topics (character and policy), Duterte's statements were coded either as related to character or policy (image versus issue) depending on their focus/ emphasis. Statements and responses that combine character and policy topics were also accounted for. The opening and closing statements of Duterte in the debates, along with his responses to the questions both from the moderators and his opponents were also coded. Finally, CDA's macro level (outer layer) explains what social practices Duterte engaged in using the debate as an image building platform in the context of the Philippine political culture.

4.2   Coding Guide

Sentences were the smallest units of analysis in this study. Duterte responded to questions and articulated his claims using phrases and sentences. He needed to elaborate one-word responses, if any, in order to use strategies of acclaiming, attacking, and defending. Moreover, he discussed image and issue topics using phrases and sentences. Duterte rarely had one-word responses (except for the "taas-kamay" and "fast talk" segments). The phrases and statements coded in the study were thus classified into one of the strategies as they express independent thoughts. Phrases or sentences alluding to the same idea or thought were counted as a single instance of acclaim, attack or defense. It must be noted, however, that not of all Duterte's statements used a strategy. As such, only the phrases and statements that employed a strategy (described in Table 1) were coded.

Each debate also provided an opportunity for the candidates to speak for four to five times, depending on the format of the debate. The segments of the debates such as the opening and closing statements, face-off between candidates' and moderator's questions allowed the candidates to discuss image and issue topics at length. Hence, all phrases and sentences delivered at a particular segment of the debate (e.g. closing statement) were counted as a singular instance of image or issue topic as long as they serve to elaborate one idea, thought, or argument. The tables below show how coding was done in this study. The concept of strategies in Table 1 can be divided into acclaims, attacks, and defenses, each with their corresponding description.

Table 1. Coding guide for strategies

Acclaim	Attack	Defense
Positive statements about the self and one's opponents	Negative statements against the opponent	Responses to an opponent's attacks or to moderator's questions about character/ policy

Meanwhile, Table 2 lists the description for the topics of character, policy, and combined image and issue topics. If the statements combine the strategies, they are coded separately.

Table 2. Coding guide for topics

Character (image)	Policy (issue)	Combined
Statements about one's or an opponent's image, qualities, traits, and personality	Statements about one's or an opponent's actions in the past, bills passed, promises made, and plans	Statements which mutually reinforce character and policies (public service record)

The tables above were used as guide in coding Duterte's statements in the debates, with attention to the nonverbal cues that accompany the statements. The verbal and nonverbal cues were both considered in order to assess how each dimension of his communicative style went together and to gain a more holistic picture of his image building. These tables also form part of the research instrument in this study.

5.   ANALYSIS

5.1   *Mediation and Duterte's image building*

The segments and questions in the debates were shaped and influenced by the TV stations which aired the debates, even as the Comelec partnered with the TV stations to determine the format, duration, and topics in the debates. The TV stations are commercially owned and they have an interest in sustaining viewership and attracting advertisers. While the debates can become excellent platforms to discuss issues, they can also be held hostage by media practices which highlight conflict and spectacle. Duterte's image was thus shaped and influenced by the candidate's messaging and what the debates highlighted through its format, segments, and questions.

Since the questions in the first debate were about the profiles of the candidates, not much were really debatable and contentious. Duterte gave normative responses to questions about whether he thinks the youth should emulate his actions, his admission about having killed a criminal, and having faced charges of acts of lasciviousness. Moreover, the issues and questions in the debate were not polarising. In fact, they elicited converging answers and solutions from the candidates. Duterte himself exclaimed, during his exchange with Roxas, that if given the opportunity, he would copy that of Roxas' plan to provide livelihood for our fisher folk. All candidates claimed that they were for poverty alleviation, improving the economy, and ensuring national security. Duterte's proposal to "copy" the plans of his opponents was thus his own brand of policy.

In the second debate, the panel format was used where questions came from the journalists/ broadcasters of TV5 and Bloomberg Philippines. Duterte was also pressed for a concrete plan in addressing crime and drugs that would hopefully go beyond mere generalities such as political will. Duterte responded by saying that he's different compared to the other candidates and that he offers leadership as opposed to platforms. This is how he established the pragmatics of his major campaign promise. While the media was well-intentioned in seeking a concrete response from Duterte, it can only do so much. After all, Duterte wasn't the only candidate in the debate and there was limited airtime to grill each candidate whenever they blurted unsatisfactory responses to questions.

The inclusion of the "*taas-kamay*" (raising of hands) segment was a welcome development in the series of the debates given that the candidates almost always agree on certain issues—alleviating poverty, reforming government, improving health care, and protecting the environment. The segment also allowed the candidates to choose between two absolutes—yes or no, agree or disagree. After all, "middle" positions in controversial topics can sometimes be construed "playing safe" or "being indecisive". While gray areas exist in relation to policy, the "*taas-kamay*" segment showed whether a candidate was willing to make a decisive stand on polarising issues.

In keeping with his image as strongman or ironhanded leader, Duterte agreed to reinstate the death penalty. As a supposedly unifying president, Duterte also proposed a hero's burial to former President Ferdinand Marcos. As a matter of strategy, Duterte was also able to tap support from Marcos loyalists as rumors spread

that Duterte is secretly endorsing the son of the late President Ferdinand Marcos for Vice-President. Meanwhile, Duterte—or any other candidate for that matter—did not express agreement to legalising divorce in the Philippines, suggesting that Duterte—while perceived as "non-traditional" then—may not be progressive enough even as he vowed to support the gay community.

In the third and final debate (Luzon leg), questions were not meant for particular candidates but were directed to everyone. This allowed each candidate to add to their statements, and react or rebut their opponents. The debate also had a face-off round where candidates exchanged questions and responses. As expected, candidates used the third debate in their last ditch effort to remind or cast doubt on the image of their opponents. Roxas, Binay, and Poe seemed to have engaged the Face-off round (from the Visayas leg to the Luzon leg of the debates) to remind the voters of their opponent's controversies. Duterte, for his part, started making concessions in the third debate as I will discuss in my succeeding analysis.

For all the opportunities provided in televised debates, the debates can be replete with negative aspects of political campaign messages. In the heated exchange between Duterte and Roxas, the issue about Duterte's capacity to fulfill his promise or the status of Roxas' rehabilitation operations in Visayas has been side-stepped by attacks on either camp's weaknesses. Roxas' statements against Duterte—his "brand of justice" (impervious to the law and only following what's on his mind) and Duterte's inability to catch the big fish (he only targets the poor, "maliliit na tao") were addressed by Duterte through threats and counter-attacks like Roxas is a "fraud", "weak", and "pretentious" leader. As such, the debates can be replete with *ad hominems* or character attacks. What further encourages the resort to these fallacies is the media's focus on sound bites, controversy, and attacks. According to Runkel, "there are three things that the media are interested in: pictures, mistakes and attacks… If you need coverage, you attack, and you will get coverage" (1989, p. 49). The candidates are also aware that the TV stations and networks which host these debates, as part of a commercial industry, are on the lookout for sound bites, controversies, and scandal in the staging of politics. It is of no surprise why after the second debate, TV news zoomed in on Duterte's heated exchange with Roxas when he called the latter a "fraud" and a "pretentious leader".

As a source of news and in the interest of viewership, it is also worth noting that each debate offered interesting segments in order to be newsworthy. The first of the three debates or the launch debate introduced the face-off segment between two candidates. The second debate included the "*taas-kamay*" segment where agreements to controversial issues are expressed by raising hands. The third debate, on the other hand, introduced a "Fast Talk" segment where candidates are asked to answer a series of questions merely by saying "yes" or "no" without the need to explain their answers.

While the debates are an ideal platform for fleshing out otherwise truncated discussions of local and international issues in the news, the candidates did not fall to the old tricks—giving sound bites to court favorable media attention, of engaging in *ad hominem* over attacking the arguments of their opponents, and regurgitating

the image they have established in their TV ads. The spectacle, however, is not just a product of the candidates' performances. The media organisers also designed the debates for possible scoop that will boost ratings and advertising revenue.

5.2   Duterte's image building strategies in the debates

I argue that Duterte is an unconventional candidate for three reasons. First, he was the only candidate to anchor a major campaign promise on peace and order—engendering a discourse of protection (order, safety, and security) while his opponents animated a discourse of provision (improving access to education, health care, and jobs). Second, unlike his opponents, Duterte categorically stated self-imposed deadlines to go with his major campaign promise (to rid the country of drug-related crimes in three to six months). Finally, Duterte's debate strategies of acclaiming and attacking have not been appropriated by his opponents effectively. I will explain these arguments in the succeeding paragraphs and finally provide a critique of Duterte's discourses and strategies in the final section of the analysis.

Binay, a populist, capitalised on the issue of poverty and how he could uplift the lives of poor Filipinos. Throughout the debates, he rarely mentioned anything about crime and safety. It is also notable that none of the questions directed at Binay in the series of debates referred to the issue of peace and order. If there is one thing to remember from Binay in the debates, it was the fact the he was consistently grilled about allegations of corruption, especially in the second debate where Duterte challenged Binay to quit the presidential race should either of them be found guilty of corruption.

For Santiago, a bottom-feeder in the pre-election surveys, the emphasis of her campaign is on "academic, professional, and moral excellence"—strengths which she touts and are known for. As I will explain in Duterte's strategies, Duterte never really pressed Santiago for details about the latter's campaign promises. Whenever Duterte had the opportunity to ask Santiago some incisive questions, Duterte opted to praise Santiago for her qualifications and intellectual capacity. It was clear that Santiago rarely stood a chance at the presidency so Duterte and all the other candidates for that matter did not attack the former.

Finally, Duterte's top rivals—Roxas and Poe both promised continuity and change—building on the gains of the previous administration while filling its gaps through "inclusive" development. Poe was always asked about her inexperience in public office while Roxas was made to account for the blunders of the previous administration and the Liberal party which chose him as its standard-bearer. Poe and Roxas were known to be "administration" candidates (then president Benigno Aquino Jr. chose between Poe and Roxas until he endorsed the latter). It can be recalled that former president Aquino made a last-ditch effort to convince Poe to back out of the presidential race to no avail. The result worked to Duterte's advantage because the supposed votes for the administration were split between Poe and Roxas.

Overall, it can be observed that none of the candidates capitalised on the issue of peace and order as much as Duterte did. At the onset of the televised debate,

Duterte declared:

> *I am here because there is so much criminality, drugs are flooding
> the country, calling the attention of the national government, and
> there is so much corruption in government. I propose that if I am
> president, I would get rid of criminality, drugs, and corruption. Just
> give me 3-6 months and I will do it for you, I will deliver. Again, I said
> we cannot go for economic growth unless we start with government.
> For as long as there are incompetent and corrupt officials in our
> government we would never reach our goal of a happy country.*

Having anchored his major campaign promise on the safety and security, Duterte distinguished himself from a set of candidates who seemed to promise the same things—education, employment, health care, and overall economic growth.

Secondly, while Duterte's crime-busting platform is a unique promise, what differentiates him further from the pack is his categorical self-imposed deadlines. In his closing statement in the second debate, he reiterated:

> *I will try to suppress crime I could not promise you heaven I will
> try to stop drugs and if president I said in 3-6 months I will stop
> corruption in government. I have to provide security for the present
> generation and the coming generation would take us into don't know
> where but they would be now in command of society.*

Duterte also made claims of jailing the "bastard" responsible for drug cartels in his first few days in office (second debate) and abolishing contractualisation within a month (third debate). The other candidates were cautious not to set deadlines for their promises at the risk of not being able to fulfill their promises. Duterte did not mind such risk. When pressed for details about how he would suppress the drug problem in 3-6 months, Duterte harped on political will and his brand of leadership. While there is nothing wrong with a deadline to go with one's campaign promises, I argue that such deadlines only serve as sound bites and rarely contribute to an informed, realistic discussion about how to restore peace and order in the country.

Finally, Duterte sets himself apart from other candidates through the use of two alternating strategies—acclaiming and attacking. As shown in Table 3, Duterte used acclaiming as a primary strategy in the first and third debates. In the said debate, Duterte was generous with praises for Santiago and to some extent, Binay. In the second debate, however, Duterte capitalised on attacks which he directed mostly at Roxas.

Table 3. Frequency count of Duterte's strategies

	Acclaiming	**Attacking**	**Defending**
1st Debate	8	4	1
2nd Debate	4	8	2
3rd Debate	10	2	2
Total	**22**	**14**	**5**

Duterte's use of acclaiming as a primary strategy relates to how he interacted with his opponents, particularly the female candidates, and how he "sold" his image to the public. First, he directed most of his acclaims not to himself but to his opponents. Duterte was very generous with praises for Santiago in the first and last debates and he was to some extent, also collegial to Poe. During the campaign, Duterte was embroiled in controversy for his joke about an Australian missionary (Duterte quipping that he should have "gone first", referring to the rape of the nun). In the debates, however, Duterte's verbal cues (his statements and language use) avoided sexist remarks for which Duterte was called out for in the media. His nonverbal cues towards his female opponents (gestures, body movement, facial expressions, and voice tone) were also far different from his raised voice, stiff body position and movements in his campaign rallies. Figure 6 shows stills of Duterte and his female opponents in the debates.

Figure 5. Duterte's interaction with the female candidates

In the first picture, it was Duterte's turn to introduce himself in the first debate. Before talking about his track record and performance, he took the opportunity to praise Santiago by saying that she is "one of only two candidates who are qualified to run for the presidency". In the second picture, the candidates were invited out of their podium for a photo opportunity, Duterte was seen escorting Miriam out of her rostrum, assisting the female candidate as they take the center stage. In the third picture, Duterte shook Poe's hands prior to asking the latter a question. Whenever Duterte interacted with either Santiago or Poe, he was smiling and freer with his hand and body movements as evidenced by his willingness to leave the podium to shake hands with and actually assist the female candidates.

Duterte's interaction with Poe and Santiago in the debates served as a counter-point to the perceptions about Duterte as disrespectful to women. Duterte, to some extent, used the debates to show that he was chivalrous and collegial and not vulgar or sexist. This is in contrast to his verbal and nonverbal reactions in his campaign rallies where he curses freely, lashes out at other politicians, and makes uncensored remarks. Duterte was aware that if he doesn't interact with his female opponents appropriately, then he would legitimise the perception that he indeed does not respect women. Thus, Duterte never attacked Santiago and Poe.

Overall, Duterte's treatment of his female opponents in the debates did two things. First, it helped dispel perceptions that Duterte was disrespectful to women and second, it solidified a macho image as evidenced by social media comments hailing Duterte as a "real man" for being a "gentleman" or chivalrous to Santiago which even prompted a hashtag on Twitter asserting the on-screen chemistry between Duterte and Santiago.

What further sets Duterte's acclaiming strategy apart is his emphasis on his ordinariness and limitations—a soft sell strategy that avoided making him appear as power hungry. Unlike other candidates who appraise themselves or tout the achievements of their parties, Duterte indirectly—if only marginally—acclaims himself. In hindsight, one can even think that Duterte is not acclaiming himself at all because emphasising one's weaknesses, ordinariness, or underachievement can be damaging. Duterte acknowledges his limitations as a person and mentions his "lackluster" academic record.

Duterte's emphasis on his "ordinariness" and "underachievement" also highlights a language of inclusion. After all, not everyone is as "excellent" as Miriam, as privileged as Roxas or Poe, and as successful as Binay. Duterte's statements on the "Filipino on bended knees", his anger at corrupt politicians, weak and ineffective leaders seem to channel the sentiments of poor, ordinary Filipino who identify not with the "privileged" and "superior" but with an "ordinary", "underachieving" man. Duterte, however, made references to unity as a value in spite of him downplaying his strengths. Figure 10 shows Duterte's stills in the debates.

Figure 6. Duterte talking about issues or policies

In the first picture, Duterte did the raised or clenched fist, a symbol he has used in his TV ads to connote solidarity and unity. Duterte has supported this symbol with

statements suggesting that he is a "unifying president". Among the candidates, it was only Duterte who used a symbol (clenched fist) connoting unity and solidarity. Roxas used the hand gesture for the letter "L" (referring to the Liberal party) while Binay used the hand gesture for number "1" (suggesting that he is the leading candidate). Duterte went beyond party lines and personal aspirations by using a symbol of unity in diverse, multi-ethnic, and socio-linguistically divided Philippine society.

The second and third pictures in Figure 6 show Duterte as he explains issues he has convictions for. In the second picture, he talks about the southern region of the Philippines (Mindanao) where he hails from and he has been in public service for twenty years. The third picture shows him explaining his stance on protecting Philippine territory. Aside from his acclaims for his female opponents and "marginal" acclaim for himself, Duterte was also friendly towards Binay. Figure 7 shows stills of Binay and Duterte in the second debate.

Figure 7. Binay and Duterte's interaction

In the first picture, Binay refused to ask Duterte a question in the second debate, saying that Duterte is qualified to be the next president of the country. Duterte then returned the favor by saying that Binay is qualified too, prompting the latter to react with a wide smile. As early as the first debate, Duterte was already cordial towards Binay. This worked to Duterte's advantage because Binay never attacked Duterte in the debates. While they did not willfully band together against Roxas, Binay and Duterte have distanced themselves from Roxas whom they labelled as weak and incompetent.

In the second picture, Binay and Duterte raised their hands in favor of giving the late president Ferdinand Marcos a hero's burial. Binay and Duterte were united in the said issue because they are both populists. As a political narrative, populism advances a pro-poor rhetoric and blamed entrenched elites for corruption and inequality (Thompson, 2010). Binay and Duterte were both appealing to the masses and when they raised their hands in favor of a hero's burial for late president Marcos (second picture in Figure 7), they were channeling a pro-Marcos rhetoric which appeals to a wide voting population (Bongbong Marcos, son of late president Ferdinand Marcos almost won the 2016 vice-presidential seat).

While Binay and Duterte were populists, Poe and Roxas maintained their image as reformists. Reformism as a political narrative is characterised by calls for good governance, honesty and integrity in public service, and proper management as a solution to corruption (Thompson, 2010). Duterte took the opportunity to identify an enemy. He identified Roxas whom he labelled as "weak" and soft—to provide contrast to his image as "tough" and "strong" leader. Figure 8 shows Duterte's heated exchange with Roxas.

Figure 8. Duterte's exchange with Roxas in the second debate

In the three pictures, Duterte's nonverbal cues include serious and displeased facial reactions, wide hand gestures, and a raised voice (paralanguage). Watching the debates, Duterte's reactions signal anger at Roxas' insinuation that the former cannot really fulfill his campaign promises. Duterte may have been angered but he was nonetheless careful to maintain his slow speaking pace and low pitch while avoiding cussing Roxas. What resulted was an image of Duterte as confrontational yet still in control. He neither panicked nor lost his cool in his exchange with Roxas. At no instance in any of the debates was he caught off-guard. He admittedly evaded certain refocused questions but his nonverbal cues always matched his statements.

In the second debate, the most notable attack he launched was about Roxas' supposed ineffectiveness as a "fraud" and "pretentious leader". To Binay, Poe, and Miriam, Duterte seemed more a friend than a foe. Duterte saw it necessary to attack only one candidate. As the standard-bearer of the Liberal party which was the ruling party then, Roxas represented the "establishment". Duterte has thus exploited the ills of the establishment in order to channel the sentiments of those who have been tired of and neglected by the system.

Another attack that Duterte launched was directed against an organisation. Duterte called the United Nations a "hypocrite" for its failure to sanction highly industrialised countries violating the UN commitment for alternative sources of energy security. Duterte calling UN a "hypocrite", being foul-mouthed, and his acts deemed "unbecoming" of a president are considered as part of a political "performance of bad manners" (Curato, 2016, p. 8). This kind of performance draws currency from appeals to a frustrated, vulnerable public who are angered by the system or the establishment that failed to protect them. Thus, it was not surprising for Duterte to identify Roxas as part of the "establishment" or the "system" (because Roxas was endorsed by then president Aquino and the standard-bearer of the ruling party) who failed the people.

Finally, Duterte did not resort much to defending as a strategy because there were few questions which required him to respond to criticisms about his character or policies. He stated that he kills in accordance with the rule of law when moderators in the first debate hinted at the issue of extra-judicial killings. Duterte's use of defense as a strategy allowed him to skirt or veer away from issues. When Roxas pressed Duterte for details about how he would fulfil his promise of eliminating crime and drugs in three to six months, Duterte used the opportunity to label Roxas as "fraud" for supposedly claiming that the latter has a degree from Wharton. Duterte was at the forefront of the spectacle as he constantly cracked jokes while effortlessly churning sound bites that were later picked up by news outlets.

5.3   Critique of discourses in the debates

The discourses were constructed through the conversation that the moderators, panelists, and the candidates had in the debates. A particular discourse is not only constructed by a single candidate, although one may espouse it more than the others. Table 4 shows the topics which Duterte engaged in the debates and from which certain discourses arise.

Table 4. Frequency count of Duterte's topics

	Image	Issue	Combined
1st Debate	7	6	0
2nd Debate	3	10	1
3rd Debate	3	11	1
Total	**13**	**27**	**2**

Duterte used issues/ policy as primary topics in the debates, followed by image/ character topics. Duterte's issue topics include ridding the country of drug and criminality in three to six months, solving corruption in government, ending labor contractualisation, protecting Philippine territory, and ending violence and conflict in Mindanao. Duterte's image topics or character statements were limited to how he downplayed his strengths—that he does not have impressive credentials but knows the law (Duterte is a lawyer), that he is a "native of the Philippines" (alluding to Poe who dealt with citizenship issues) and that he will provide leadership, as opposed to platforms.

I will now discuss the two dominant discourses in the debates—discourse of provision and the discourse of protection. The discourse of provision has been engaged more extensively by Duterte's opponents but I will focus on Duterte's statements in relation to the said discourse. The discourse of protection, on the other hand, was dominated by Duterte.

5.3.1   Discourse of provision

The discourse of provision was constructed through the candidates' statements that they will *provide* for the needs of their constituents. In other words, the candidates, through their pronouncements, assume a paternalistic role in view of the needs of their constituents. The leader/ candidate is postured to provide "unconditionally" for the welfare/ well-being of his/her constituents. The following translation of the candidates' statements illustrate the discourse:

> Binay (third debate): *By 2022, our country will develop under the Binay administration. Almost all Filipino families will have decent housing. Filipinos will be healthy and sick-free. There will be free medicines and hospitalisation for the poor…*

> Poe (first debate): *There has to be sufficient and affordable electricity in Mindanao (southern region of the Philippines). Second, jobs must be provided. 30% of the budget from the national government should go to Mindanao.*

> Roxas (second debate): *We have to continue providing conditional cash transfer to millions of families. We have to provide them health care. We need to build more bridges, roads and classrooms.*

> Santiago (third debate): *Our economy will be devoted to construction and reconstruction and will always – and will always be able to depend on 5% to 7% of the GDP…. In agriculture, we will modernize with irrigation, water impounding facilities, infrastructure, credit available for poor farmers and other technological advances in agriculture that other countries have already adopted.*

The statements above were responses by the candidates to different policy issues they were asked. A common promise in these responses is the provision of various needs of the Filipinos. Binay focused on affordable health care, reechoing his campaign promises when he ran for and won the vice presidency in 2010. Poe proposed a higher budget for the Mindanao region as well as job provisions. Roxas emphasised the need to continue projects of the previous administration (conditional cash transfers) and Santiago zoomed in on the Philippine economy and modernising agriculture. The candidates were basically promising to address common needs in the country. For Duterte, however, he did not focus so much on providing jobs, health care, education, but instead promised to provide "leadership" and "implementation". The following statements show Duterte's contribution to the discourse of protection:

> Duterte (first debate): *I said we cannot go for economic growth unless we start with government. For as long as there are incompetent and corrupt officials in our government we would never reach our goal of a happy country.*

> Duterte (second debate): *All of my opponents said they have presented a programme, I made short remarks, bullet remarks because all of these are platforms. I can tell you now that I will provide leadership, not only the platforms.*

> Duterte (second debate): *It is a very sad commentary that – actually, year after year, the appropriations are good. The problem is in the implementation because corruption, estimated about 30% of the total budget for it goes to corruption. If there is no corruption, straight implementation, there's really no problem in our country.*

While his opponents went straight to their promises, Duterte seemed to be offering a different diagnosis of the problem—starting with corruption and focusing on execution in order to address the economic woes of the nation. I argue, however, that despite Duterte's framing on the discourse of provision, he still has very similar promises to that of his opponents. In the third debate, Duterte said the following in response to providing affordable health care:

> *I plan to add more nurses, doctors, and medicines. But it would be a good idea if you can place one doctor per barangay (village, district, or ward) and he acts as the physician of that barangay. Now, if it needs hospitalisation, operation, they can always bring – I have 911. It's free. 911, bring them to the hospital and I will pay. Now for the entire Philippines, I will commit the PAGCOR funds, it's about 30 billion, is it? I will commit it as a trust fund to be used only for the payment of the Filipinos who are in hospitals and their medical expenses. I will require all hospitals – hospital for the rich, hospital for the poor – to go back to that facility of reserving 8 beds or 20 depending on the capitalisation.*

Duterte's statements such as the above shows that while he promises to address corruption and crime first as a springboard to solve economic problems, he is still a paternalistic leader who is willing to "pay" for the needs of his constituents. The discourse of provision then assumes that a candidate is instrumental in providing infrastructure for the people to access healthcare, education, basic social services and employment.

The discourse of provision cannot be detached from the fact that as a Third World or developing country, the Filipino social services remains wanting based on the promises of the candidates. The candidates suggest that they can "do it" or that the candidates can "provide for the people. This has implications on the way the candidates view or treat their audience. Since the candidates are the "providers", the citizens are the receivers/ beneficiaries. The audience are relegated to a role of passivity where what they do to improve their lot in life is de-emphasised in favor of what a candidate can do for them.

The discourse of provision misleads some people into thinking that paternalistic leaders are all that matters when it comes to making material differences in one's life. This is precisely why Duterte was also able to sell the idea that he can end labor contractualisation, provide job security, and rid the government of corruption, among other things. The problem with the discourse of provision becomes self-evident because a leader can only do so much in improving his/her people's stations in life.

Second, the candidates also failed to dissect economic problems to their core. They simply said that they will provide for the people. The discourse misses two things—that a Filipino's social mobility cannot be guaranteed by a single politician alone (institutions need to be at work) and that there are structural challenges faced by leaders in implementing their policies. Through the debates, the candidates had the tendency to focus on rosy promises without explaining how they could empower the citizens or make certain institutions work. In other words, the candidates lacked substantiation and grounding of their promises. This causes disillusionment on the part of the voters and in the process of elections as a whole which is viewed only as a platform for rosy promises without effecting much on-the-ground change.

5.3.2   *Discourse of protection*

While the discourse of provision suggests that candidates will provide jobs, education, basic services, or welfare to the people, the discourse of protection advances that the candidates—particularly Duterte—will ensure the people's right to life, liberty and property through peace and order, safety and security. The discourse of protection suggests that a candidate is the "savior/ messiah" who can save the people from impending doom, disaster, or the dangerous "other". In the most recent elections, Duterte labelled the "other" as drugs, violence, and criminality as he capitalised on the discourse of protection which targets something more basic than a person's welfare and well-being—the person's right to life and liberty. Up until the last debate, Duterte was consistent with his major campaign promise:

> *I will try to suppress crime I could not promise you heaven I will try to stop drugs and if president I said in 3-6 months I will stop corruption in government. I have to provide security for the present generation and the coming generation would take us into don't know where but they would be now in command of society. We protect the children we have to end crime, and I said drugs must be suppressed.*

Duterte knew that a person can only enjoy life or pursue happiness through welfare if his/her life has protection. This is what Duterte meant when he said in the first debate that he would prioritise peace and order as a step to solving the economic woes of the country. The discourse of protection used shortcuts and appeals to expediency. This "expedient" approach to solving long-standing problems is evident in Duterte's self-imposed deadlines and declarations that he would eradicate crime in three to six months, jail the "bastard" responsible for drug cartels in his first few days in office (second debate), and abolish contractualisation within a month (third debate).

The harms to the discourse of provision are obvious. First, it assumes that Filipinos are fearful, insecure, and vulnerable—in need of protection from impending doom or disaster. Duterte identified the crisis as "drugs" and "crime", as evidenced by his "war on drugs" which assumes that "drugs" is a public enemy that must be defeated. My critique of the discourse of protection stems from the fact that when Duterte was pressed for details about how he would rid the country of drugs and crime in three to six months, he harped on political will which failed to assess the dynamics of the drug problem.

In the debates, there was the lack of discussion about the causes of violence and criminality, how other progressive countries are dealing with it, and no scientific data that would inform policy was ever presented by any of the candidates. Hence, the solution proposed—a candidate who promised to deliver in three to six months—was a simplistic solution to a problem that was not exhaustively analysed. In the debates, Duterte did not mention anything about strengthening democratic institutions—a more effective police force, fast and fair dispensation of justice through the criminal justice system, etc—in order to solve the drug problem.

Moreover, Duterte also emphasised "penal populism" (Curato, 2106) where the emphasis is on punishments over rehabilitation as a way to dispense with justice. The following statements illustrate Duterte's use of penal populism:

> First debate: *Criminals, well, I go after them, as long as I do it in accordance with the rules of law, I will kill…continue to kill criminals. Any president can order the killing as long as it is, I said, in the guise of performance of duty in accordance with law.*
>
> Second debate: *You know, this is a very porous country and we are not a fascistic nation. We do not confront people in public. There was a raid in Davao and even here in Manila. Look what happened. I wipe out – I'm still wiping out.*
>
> Third debate: *They say there is extra judicial killing. It's not that I – you know, it's really the interest of the country. I will do it.*

Duterte has admitted in the debates that he has killed and is willing to kill criminals ("wiping out as he quipped in the second debate). In fact, he has said that one cannot be president if one is afraid to kill. He continues to deny extra-judicial killings, reasoning that he only orders "lawful" killings (first debate) and killings that are in the "interest of the country" (third debate).

The emphasis of penal populism is punishment at all costs (Curato, 2016). Duterte's discourse of protection paid no attention to values or ideals of rehabilitation, improving the criminal justice system, and strengthening the police force. The discourse of protection led to dire consequences. As witnessed, there was the international outcry against Duterte's "war on drugs". Poor, powerless Filipinos have been killed in Duterte's campaign against drugs and condemnation of Duterte's policies has only made other Filipinos apathetic. In the end, the discourse of protection did not solve any crisis. It instead foreshadowed it—in three to six months of Duterte's term in office, lives have been taken, even innocent ones.

6.   CONCLUSION

Duterte's image building throughout the debates was marked by the use of acclaiming as a dominant strategy, followed by attacks. These strategies fit perfectly with media's less obvious demands in these televised debates—conflict, spectacle, profit, and viewership. As an unconventional candidate, Duterte harnessed the potential of acclaims to support his opponents and downplay his own strengths. However, Duterte also animated the use of attacks as he represented the protest vote who is anti-establishment.

For his topics, Duterte capitalised on issues or policy pronouncements over character statements. Duterte's topics gave rise to the discourses of provision and protection. Such discourses peddled an image of Duterte as a paternalistic, iron-handed leader who resorted to shortcuts and appeals to expediency at the expense of more informed policy discussions. Duterte also drew on penal populism as a political narrative which emphasised punishment of criminals at all costs. Hence, Duterte has solidified an image of a candidate with unorthodox means to solve criminality and the drug problem. While the discourses seemed harmless, they continue to mask realities about Duterte's promises.

The discourses, which were products of Duterte's imaging, only foregrounded Duterte's personality. The discourses did little to assess the structural limitations to development (in the promise of Duterte to provide) or the larger dynamics of the drug problem (in Duterte's promise to protect). In the end, image building as a process helped advance certain discourses which promised that Duterte will avert crisis. However, the same process concealed that it was Duterte himself who would create crisis as seen in the unprecedented deaths on his "war on drugs".

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Appendix A

Questions and Issues raised in the Mindanao Debate

Round	Question	Issue / Context	Candidate
1	Were your properties inherited? Were they acquired prior to assuming office?	Corruption charges	Binay
1	Why do you like to become the next president of the Philippines and what's your motivation for running?	Health condition	Santiago
1	Do you think that you have already proven something in public service to be the next president of the Philippines?	Experience in public office	Poe
1	Do you think that the Filipino youth should emulate your behavior?	Presidential decorum	Duterte
1	Based on your track record, how can you prove that you will be an effective president of the Philippines?	Crisis management	Roxas
2	Do you have any plans to help our farmers without compromising consumer welfare?	Poverty	Binay
2	How will your administration provide livelihood for our fisher folk and enable them to protect and preserve our waters?	Poverty	Roxas
2	How will you make sure that our countrymen would also benefit from economic growth?	Poverty	Santiago
2	How will you ensure food on the table for the 2.6 million hungry Filipino families?	Poverty	Poe
2	How will your administration deal with rice cartels behind smuggling and price manipulation?	Poverty	Duterte
3	If you were to become the president of the Philippines, how would you address irregularities in infrastructure projects?	Mindanao issues	Duterte
3	What would you do about illegal drugs and drug cartels? Is there a need to reinstate the death penalty as punishment for these crimes?	Mindanao issues	Roxas
3	What would you do about the constitutional provision on political dynasty and would you pass this into law?	Mindanao issues	Binay

Round	Question	Issue	Candidate
3	Are you in favor of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement or EDCA? If not, is there an alternative defense for the Philippines against China's threats?	Mindanao issues	Santiago
3	Would you push for the Bangsamoro Basic Law or BBL or do you have other programmes?	Mindanao issues	Poe

Questions and Issues raised in the Visayas Debate

Round	Question	Issue	Candidate
1	Why didn't the Freedom of Information (FOI) bill "die" under PNoy's term? Who among your opponents will push for or block FOI?	Freedom of Information (FOI)	Poe
1	As president, what would you do if your son, Junjun, is convicted of charges of corruption?	Corruption charges	Binay
1	How can we honor our commitment to the UN if we are coal-dependent for our energy security?	UN commitment vs. energy security	Duterte
1	What are three "inadequacies" of the current administration and what would you do differently?	Continuity vs. change in policies	Roxas
2	How do you reconcile a tax reform programme with your massive infrastructure and public spending programme?	Tax reform vs. infra development	Binay
2	Why is the private sector faster in helping victims of super typhoon Yolanda compared to the government mandated to serve the people?	Rehabilitation	Roxas
2	How would you end crime in the Philippines in six months if crime is still rampant in Davao where you have been mayor for two decades?	Criminality	Duterte
2	Are you in favor of the government reclaiming the coco levy assets? How would you balance the interests of your donors and the farmers?	Coco levy funds	Poe
3	If the president (PNoy) really trusts you, why was there a need for him to rely on other officers and go there (Mindanao) himself?	Mamasapano encounter	Roxas

Round	Question	Issue	Candidate
3	If you wake up to the news that two of our Coast Guards were bombed by China, what would be the first three steps you would do as President?	National security	Poe
3	It's your chance to tell the people the truth and clear your name, given your failure to attend Senate investigations into alleged corruption.	Corruption	Binay
TK	Are you in favor of legalizing divorce in the Philippines?	Divorce	No one is in favor
TK	Are you in favor of reinstating the death penalty?	Death penalty	Poe and Duterte were in favor
TK	Do you agree to a hero's burial for former President Ferdinand Marcos?	Hero's burial for Marcos	Binay and Duterte were in favor

Questions and Issues raised in the Luzon Debate

Round	Question	Issue/ Context	Candidate
Opening statements	If elected president, how would you describe the Philippines by 2022 after your term?	Candidate's vision	Question for everyone
1	What can you do to help us, fisher folk, to earn a living and defend us from the Chinese Coastguard?	Stance on West Philippine Sea	Question for everyone
1	What can you do for the commuters and the traffic situation not only in Manila but the whole country?	Traffic situation	Question for everyone
1	How would you end labor contractualisation for those of who badly need permanent jobs to support our families?	Labor contractualisation	Question for everyone
1	What can you do to address the plight of Filipinos working abroad?	Plight of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs)	Question for everyone
2	Since you choose not to attend Senate hearings regarding corruption charges, this is your opportunity to explain	Corruption	Binay
2	What would be the role of women in your administration?	Gender	Duterte

2	Can you give me at least three examples of each kind of excellence that you have?	Qualifications of a president	Roxas
2	Didn't you renounce your Filipino citizenship even if you didn't need to work in the United States?	Citizenship	Poe
3	What can you do to address inadequate staff, equipment and medicines in our place where a lot are sick and dying?	Health care	Question for everyone
3	How can you help us with the repercussions of losing livelihood and our loved ones because of the conflict?	Peace in Mindanao	Question for everyone

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