



## The market feasibility of trucks converted to mobile store facilities in Cebu, Philippines

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### ABSTRACT

This paper aims to determine the marketability of trucks converted into mobile store facilities based on the following: 1. Marketing Mix (Product, Price, Place, and Promotion) 2. Industry and Competitors Analysis, and 3. Challenges and Opportunities. There were 231 MSMEs respondents. The study used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative data. The study found that there is a significant need for trucks that have been converted into mobile store facilities to transport both essential and non-essential products during disasters and pandemics to avoid any virus outbreaks. Respondents added that this also could save their money, time, and effort to go to distant stores to buy their needed stuff. The findings will improve the existing strategies to address peoples' changing needs and wants during pandemics and calamities vital for MSMEs to apply these strategies to capture the market amidst the challenges. The study provides information to Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and Startups to make their business grow and be competitive despite limitations encountered when they do business.

**KEYWORDS:** *COVID-19, green transportation, marketing mix, mobile store, recycling*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought a lot of disasters to human lives. It causes deaths of many people worldwide. It is not known when it will cease and when people are safe from this virus. Its existence not only brings infectious disease that destroys lives but also hampers the peoples' economic activity. People are stuck in their homes to avoid infection and be safe from this unseen virus. Malls and stores are advised to close their operation by the government to prevent people from being infected, and social distancing is also imposed. The closure resulted in people buying food through online stores, which they do

not know the safety and quality of the food as it will not arrive on the requested delivery time, and the worst it is delivered a day after the order date. People also encountered the high delivery cost even higher than the price of the food products they purchase as they are charging on a per-item basis. People have experienced high delivery costs ranging from P100-P150 per delivery. However, people have no choice but to buy to provide food for their families to survive. In 2019, an extraordinary coronavirus illness (COVID-19) struck the United States. On March 11, 2020, it was declared a global pandemic (WHO, 2020). The pandemic has influenced global health, and it has also impacted local communities' social and economic life (Wu et al., 2020; Javed & Muhammad, 2020; Yi, 2020). COVID-19 has profoundly transformed the dining experiences as consumers. Due to these changes, consumers' ability and willingness to continue having communal dining experiences have been hampered (Eilert et al., 2021).

The mobile store will travel every day from one barangay to another to bring quality, fresh and safe food products to people. This mobile store will now eliminate the high delivery cost imposed by online sellers and be free from infection. Food will be appropriately stored in this facility's freezers, clean and cool compartments. It is closed with an air conditioning unit that makes the food free from dust and contamination. It will use a solar panel as an added innovation to save energy with added features to suit the specific needs of individual buyer's preferences. It will just park in a safe corner or street of a barangay that is just a walking distance from the houses saving peoples' time, money, and effort rather than going to department stores in the city where they spend gasoline expense and a long line of waiting.

The food truck business is a more affordable option for first-time entrepreneurs who have never had a catering business before. It also allows quick and cost-effective testing of new menu concepts, recipes, and strategies. By selecting specific target markets and regions, the company offers the opportunity to expand its consumer reach. Businesses use food trucks as a mobile marketing strategy (Networld Media Group DBA Networld Alliance, & LLC, 2017). Mobile food cart or

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truck food business is becoming a profitable and robust business in other countries but not in the Philippines because it is safer, fresher, and cost-effective. There is a big market for this product as entrepreneurs will no longer invest in establishing their stores and restaurants, which entails a significant startup capital investment and avoiding high rental and leasing costs.

Moreover, during the pandemic, this is already the new normal way of buying things that will change people's buying behavior amidst the purchasing difficulty of their needs and wants to their favorite buying centers and department stores in the urban areas. To maintain social distancing and be free from COVID-19 infection, it is also advisable to buy from mobile stores. Thus, the researchers came up with this kind of product invention and innovation. This study determined the market feasibility of trucks converted to mobile store facilities based on Marketing Mix (Product, Price, Place, and Promotion), Industry and Competitor Analysis, Challenges and opportunities and aimed to propose improvements.

## **2 MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **Research Design, Methods and Statistical Analysis**

The project employed mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative). For quantitative by using the Four-Point Likert Scale and results were tabulated and analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Descriptive statistics were employed. For, qualitative by using open-ended questions for industry and competitor's analysis and opportunities and challenges. They were grouped according to themes highlighting only the significant themes that are relevant and important in the study.

### **Research Instrument**

The questionnaire was composed of three main parts: 1) Respondents' Profile, 2) Four-Point Likert-Scale on awareness of truck conversion, willingness to buy mobile stores and willingness to customize, and 3) open-ended questions on the challenges and opportunities and secondary data on industry study and competitor's analysis. The questionnaire was face-validated and tested for Cronbach alpha for internal reliability. Twenty pre-test questionnaires were developed and sent to experts to assure the validity of the questionnaire before conducting the online survey to respondents.

### **Research Respondents**

There were 231 MSMEs chosen from the list of accredited MSMEs from the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and working professionals from various industries. A random sample was used from the DTI list of accredited MSMEs. Convenience snowball quota sampling was used from Facebook, marketplaces,

websites, online shopping stores, business sites, and various industries in Cebu, Philippines. Respondents answered via Google forms and phone calls. Informed consent was obtained before the data gathering.

Potential respondents were initially contacted via phone calls, mobile text messaging, and private messaging using Facebook (via Facebook Marketplace). Upon obtaining consent to participate, an interview was scheduled (via phone or other platforms). If applicable or preferred, Google form link was also sent to the respondents to answer in lieu of the phone interview. The data were encoded in Microsoft Excel. Respondents were contacted again using mobile text messaging or Facebook Messenger when clarifications on answers were needed. Industry and Competitors analysis information was gathered through secondary data and environmental scanning while opportunities and challenges were from the respondent's responses to the open-ended questions.

## **3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents all the results of the quantitative data gathered from the questionnaire sent to respondents which was further analyzed by using descriptive statistics from Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software and the qualitative data using Thematic Analysis.

### **3.1 Profile of Respondents**

Table 1 presents the respondents' profile. 231 respondents responded to the google form questionnaire. They were the MSMEs randomly selected from the active MSMEs provided by the Department of Trade and Industry and Working Professionals from Facebook, Market Place, online stores, websites, business sites, and various industries in Cebu, Philippines. The respondents were predominantly single (61 %), mostly business owners (39.4 %), and mainly with a monthly income range of P20,000-30,000 a month (34.6% and 24.2%, respectively).

### **3.2 Marketing Mix (Product, Price, Place, and Promotion)**

Developing long-term strategies and tactical measures for a short-term marketing mix can be utilized as a strategy for a company. The most significant marketing terminology can be characterized as a marketing mix. It is also known as the 4Ps, and it is the operational aspect of marketing (Price, Place, Product, and Promotion). The marketing mix is defined as a set of well-executed marketing techniques. It took several organizations to acquire the required response in the target market (Putra et al., 2020). Businesses can offer unique features and differentiate their products from their

Table 1. Profile of the respondents (n=231)

Respondent's Characteristics	Count	Percent
<b>Civil Status</b>		
Single	141	61.0
Married	84	36.4
Separated	2	20.0
Widow	3	20.0
Did Not Specify	1	24.0
<b>Employment Status</b>		
Government Employee	54	23.4
Private Employee	76	32.9
Business Owner	91	39.4
No Definite Response	10	4.3
<b>Monthly Income</b>		
Below Php 20,000	80	34.6
20,000 – 30,000	56	24.2
30,000 – 40,000	25	10.8
40,000 – 50,000	19	8.2
50,000 – 100,000	28	12.1
Above Php 100,000	22	9.5
Preferred Not to Say	1	0.4

competitors by including products into their marketing mix plan (Ferrell & Hartline, 2005). To achieve success, businesses must always regard marketing as a critical component of their operations (Dang, 2014).

### 3.2.1 Product

Respondents' responses about the product are shown in Tables 2-7. They are the: Awareness of Truck Conversion (Table 2), Willingness to Buy Mobile Store (Table 3); Preferred Facility order (Table 4); Willingness to Buy Customize (Table 5); Factors to Consider in Purchasing the Mobile Store (Table 6) and Period Willing to Order (Table 7). The product is at the heart of the marketing mix strategy and it allows merchants to differentiate themselves from their competitors by offering distinctive features (Karim et al., 2021). According to Kotler & Armstrong (2010), a product is anything that may be presented to a market for attention, acquisition, usage, or consumption to satisfy a want or need. Recycling trucks into a mobile store is a green initiative trying to improve, enhance, and make it more valuable and beneficial to people rather than putting it into the trash or thrown away, which will add to our waste problem. A green economy is a profitable sector that comprises green products that marketers must seize this opportunity to gain a competitive advantage (Hasan & Ali, 2020). Numerous advantages for businesses in terms of enhancing the firm's brand image and increasing the firm's long-term environmental benefits (Yan & Yazdanifard, 2014).

The data on Table 2 show the awareness of truck conversion. Most of the respondents are aware of a truck converted to store with the highest percentage of (93.1 %) which comprises awareness of (43.3%) and fully

aware of (49.8 %). It is no longer difficult for the researchers to attract and convince prospective consumers and buyers to buy the product as it is already widely accepted by many people. Presently, with the advent of technology, many businesses are creating, developing, and offering very creative and innovative products to satisfy the needs and wants of people.

The majority of the respondents are willing to buy (70.1%) the mobile store facility with a total percentage of (85.3%) likely to buy off (70.1%) and very likely to buy at (15.2 %). Therefore, the product is marketable due to the high demand from respondents as per the study result. Food trucks have emerged as a new trend in the food and beverage business. Organizations with a strong brand or brand equity for their products or services benefit because they are easier to recall, more widely recognized, and have higher quality and reliability (Mokhtar et al., 2017). To maintain their quality, the trucks must be prepared and examined daily, and the personnel must be twice as fast while working in a tight space within the car so that clients are not inconvenienced (Butler, 2014).

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Table 2. Awareness of Truck Conversion (n=231)

Awareness of Truck Conversion	Count	Percent
Fully Aware		
Aware	141	61.0
Unaware	84	36.4
Total	2	20.0

Table 3. Willingness to Buy Mobile Store (n=231)

Willingness to Buy Mobile Store	Count	Percent
Very Likely	35	15.2
Likely	162	70.1
Unlikely	31	13.4
Very Unlikely	3	1.3
Total	231	100.0

Table 4. Preferred Facility to Order (n=231)

Preferred Facility to Order	Frequency	Rank
Food Store	127	1
Grocery Store	116	2
Coffee Shop/Bar	62	3
Restaurant	31	4
Clinic	29	5
Fish & Meat Store	19	6
Retail Store	13	7
Apparel Store	11	8
Food Store	127	1

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Furthermore, the operators of mobile food trucks must adhere to various local ordinances. Mobile food operators and street vendors serve food and beverages to customers at reasonable costs in convenient locations, particularly in public spaces with more people and easy access (Wessel, 2012). Food trucks must factor economic

expenditures such as "fuel and maintenance, business permits, kitchen equipment purchases or rentals, food supplies, insurance, advertising dollars, and any employee fees" in addition to the actual purchase of the truck and its conversion (Forbes, 2012). Mobile food trucks can also target specialized markets that are less price-sensitive. Food trucks have a lot of potential and the increased patronage that they may offer to the owner of a business (Holmes, 2018). The process of selling food on the street demonstrates a process of innovation in the production and consumption of food (de Souza Bispo & Almeida, 2020).

The respondents have preferred buying the truck converted to mobile store to the following rank of priorities. Their priority is that they wanted it to be converted to a food store, followed by a grocery store, coffee shop/bar, restaurant, clinic, fish and meat store, retail store, and the last apparel store. The top three signify their needs for a food business that sells food products such as the food store, grocery store, and coffee shop/bar. The researchers would focus on designing and producing the product according to target customer preferences, which are important to increasing sales, profits, and revenues. However, Food truck operators need creative training approaches and help (Ghezzi et al., 2020). During the economic downturn of 2007 to 2009,

Table 5. Willingness to Customize (n=231)

Willingness to customize the converted truck facility	Frequency	Percent
Very willing	70	30.3
Willing	137	59.3
Unwilling	20	8.7
Very Unwilling	4	1.7
Total	231	100.0

Table 6. Factors Considered in Buying the Mobile Store (n=231)

Factors Considered in Buying	Frequency	Rank
Price	191	1
Quality	188	2
Design	120	3
Shipping Delivery	112	4
Repair and Maintenance	103	5

Table 7. Period Willing to Order the Facility (n=231)

Period Willing to Order the Facility	Frequency	Percent
One month after the survey	40	17.3
Two months after the survey	21	9.1
Three months after the survey	22	9.5
Four months after the survey	148	64.1
Total	231	100.0

the food truck industry fared substantially better than other restaurant players because customers were looking for low-cost alternatives (Brennan, 2014). Many businesses adopt the food truck concept to the retail apparel market by selling their wares through fashion trucks or mobile stores taking inspiration from the food truck frenzy (Matthews et al., 2016). Food trucks also provide an interactive setting where customers can interact with cooks passionate about what they do (FoodTruckr, 2014).

The respondents are willing to customize the converted truck facility (59.3 %) with 89.6 % who are very willing (30.3%) and willing (59.3%). It is now the opportunity where future customers could make their design to satisfy their own needs and preference of the mobile store facility they will be ordering in the future. Customizing the mobile store according to customers' preferences would improve product design, features, and quality to fit the changing needs and wants of buyers and customers. Many brands allow customers to immerse themselves in computer-simulated settings where they can customize their products in today's market. (Pallat et al., 2020).

There are factors that respondents need to consider before buying the mobile store product. The first one in rank is the price, followed by quality, and lastly, the design. These factors are crucial that researchers need to consider even before designing the products to make their products attractive and saleable in the market. Food

quality/value is placed best among general food truck customers (Choi et al., 2020). However, according to Leong et al., (2020), the relationship between attitude factors and intention to patronize food trucks has the highest effect, followed by the convenience factors, product attributes, and perceived behavior control. A company's pricing power leads to a competitive advantage based on lower costs than its competitors (Falahat et al., 2020).

The period the respondents are willing to order the mobile facility is four months after the survey, which is (64.1%) a significant number already and (17.3%) after one month after the survey. This result motivated the researchers to start the production effective immediately to serve the needs of the respondents. The majority of the respondents are business owners (39.4%). These respondents are entrepreneurs who wanted to venture into mobile store business wherein the top three preferred mobile stores they wanted to buy are the food store, grocery coffee/bar shop store.

### 3.2.2 Price

The respondents are willing to pay the amount of at least P500,000 with the highest percentage of (63.4%) followed by the amount of P800,000 (29.7 %). It is not hard to sell the invented mobile store as they are amenable to paying at least half a million as this is really for business purposes that should be considered as one of their investments. They are starting with this amount of

Table 8. Price Willing to Pay (n=231)

Period Willing to Pay	Frequency	Percent
1-Php 0-500,000	146	63.4
2-Php 500,000 - 600,000	15	6.5
3-Php 600,000 - 700, 000	1	.4
5-Php 800,000 above	69	29.7

Table 9. Marketing Intermediaries (n=231)

Marketing Intermediaries	Count	Percent
Wholesalers	116	50.2
Retailers	30	13.0
Distributorship	70	30.3
Agents/Brokers/Marketers	15	6.5
Total	231	100.0

Table 10. Preferred Promotional Strategies (n=231)

Preferred Promotional Strategies	Frequency	Rank
Social Media	212	1
Television	113	2
Website	106	3
Print Ads	91	4
Radio	57	5

capital as one of the significant capital assets. Price is seen as the most significant aspect in consumer happiness and loyalty and the only element of the marketing mix that generates income (Išoraitė,2016). Green marketing should consider all of these factors when charging a higher price. Customers should be able to afford green products, which will motivate them to buy (Mahmoud et al., 2017). The expense of meeting the needs or requirements is included in the pricing and their worth must also be equal to what is delivered (Idris, 2021).

### 3.2.3 Place

Wholesalers got the highest rate of (50.2%), followed by distributorship of (30.3%) and the lowest was Agents/Brokers/Marketers. Marketing channels such as wholesalers, retailers, distributors, agents, marketers, and other marketing intermediaries are essential to any organization for long-term success and profitability. A marketing channel system is a collection of interdependent businesses that work together to make a product or service available for use or consumption (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010). This is to ensure the products are distributed and delivered to the right people at the right time to effectively and efficiently serve customers (Musungwini & Zhou, 2014). Customers will be impacted significantly by an organization's decision on where and when to make a product available (Mahmoud et al., 2017).

### 3.2.4 Promotion

The respondent's promotional strategies are also ranked from 1 to 5. The number one in the rank is social media (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram), followed by television, website, print ads, and lastly, radio. The top three promotional strategies, social media, television, and website, are crucial before any promotion and advertisement. It is done to ensure that these promotional platforms are where target markets frequently visit or search when they look for any product or service online, which is also the cheapest and most affordable way for both parties between buyers and sellers. Advertising has a long-term positive impact on sales (Musungwini & Zhou, 2014). Marketing strategies are effective tools used by businesses to engage with their customers (Niazi, et al., 2021). Facebook opens up many possibilities for beginning a business because it may use social media platforms to acquire customers. According to Statista, Facebook has 1.968 billion members (Yandug et al., 2020). Social media allows for the development, maintenance, and strengthening of social and professional ties with friends, family, and even businesses (Jacobson et al., 2020).

### 3.3 Industry and Competitor Analysis

This section presents the results of the qualitative data derived from secondary data for industry and competitor analysis and from the open-ended questions for challenges and opportunities. This was further analyzed using Thematic Analysis.

#### Market Introduction Stage

In the Philippines, food carts have been present for a long time. Food carts originated as a money-making franchise, a sort of business trend. While most of them still serve standard fare, a new generation of coaches is rising. These dinners on wheels or trucks are complete, with something for everyone. They continue to satisfy their regulars with the tried-and-true while attracting new customers with an ever-expanding menu of novel options. The food cart craze whetted the appetites of hungry clients and spurred a revolutionary notion in innovative entrepreneurs that would catapult the mobile food industry to new heights. It was past time to improve the cuisine and the wheels (Pepper, 2020).

### **Market Acceptance**

The Food Truck sector has grown significantly in the five years leading up to 2021, owing primarily to increased gastronomy in the United States. (IBIS World, 2019). This business model is currently prevalent in the Philippines. When we look at the stock market, the economy, and small enterprises, we can see that several industries, including the food industry, have started to thrive, which is excellent news for the Philippines (Filipino Wealth, 2020). Cebu's best food truck business is only a few: Burger Joint, Maya Mexican, and Bigdaddy. In Manila, they are Mexikombi, Schmidt's Gourmet Hotdog, The Barista Box, Tacos Chingones, Shawarma Bros, Truck Bar, and Mio Gelate. There is still a big market awaiting mobile store businesses in Cebu and Visayas region. It includes Luzon and Mindanao. It is growing and a good business opportunity for new entrants as only a few competitors are yet in the market.

### **Market High Demand During Pandemic**

In the wake of the pandemic, Leylam created a mobile food truck in June 2020, intended to drive and park at various sites when customers' mobility became an issue because of rigorous quarantine rules. At the height of the pandemic, Leylam managed to come up with new ways to adapt and survive (Philippine News Agency, 2021).

## **Challenges and Opportunities**

### **Challenges**

**Good Location and Rental Fee.** This is the primary concern of the respondents in order to have bigger sales and profits. Location plays a vital role to easily attract buyers to buy their needs and wants. On the other hand, rental fee is also considered as the better the location the more pricey it will become. They are worried if they could buy the container but they could not afford the rental of the location as it might be too expensive.

**Government Regulation and Restriction.** Respondents are worried if there are high traffic areas in the city where the government would not accommodate the mobile store as there are no policies nor laws about this.

### **Opportunities**

**Eco-friendly products.** Recycling containers into livable facilities could easily attract the market as people nowadays wanted to buy environment friendly products for the common benefit of people, planet and for sustainability.

**Affordable compared to leasing/renting.** Mobile store facility could be less costly than leasing/renting in commercial places which eventually helps the MSMEs save more money. This facility will have the opportunity to travel from one place to another thereby increasing their chances to look for better locations with high foot traffic that enable them to increase their sales and profits.

## **4 CONCLUSIONS**

Most MSMEs were single business owners with an income of at least P20,000 per month. The majority of the respondents were aware of converting a truck to a mobile store facility and were willing to buy the converted mobile store facility. Most of the respondents preferred to order the Mobile Food Store, Grocery, and Coffee/Bar Stores, and the price, quality, and design are their primary considerations in purchasing the product.

Most respondents consider social media as the principal means of promoting the product to them, like Facebook. Twitter and Instagram. These were followed by television and website. The majority were very willing to order the facility four months after the study and stressed the willingness to customize the product they would like to buy.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Highlighted are the specific recommendations proposed based on the results gathered. These could make the mobile store marketable, profitable, prosperous, and sustainable. More product innovations of converting trucks into mobile stores to address the difficulty of people buying physically in grocery stores, department stores, and restaurants, especially during a pandemic. People would prefer that mobile stores travel to their respective barangays or places to avoid infection of the unseen virus and save their time, money, and effort in going to malls, department stores and restaurants.

**Product.** There will be more creative and innovative green transportation product designs trying to capture target markets' changing needs and wants. Mobile stores are already familiar and in demand in the USA, Europe, and other Asian countries but not so in the Philippines. Introducing this product concept to Filipinos will address social distancing and will deliver essential and non-essential products directly to doorsteps. There will be added features of the product like putting a solar panel to save the gasoline cost by having light without using the electricity. The business operation will not be disrupted due to lack of supply due to power interruptions,

typhoons, and other calamities, especially in the Philippines, where the storm is likely to happen as it is situated in the "Ring of Fire."

**Price.** Produce unique mobile store designs at an affordable price to compete in the market. Presently, with the advent of technology, people will shop from one website to another or receive a lot of advertisements from social media. They can easily compare the product design, features, and price. Pricing it at an affordable price without compromising the quality could be an added advantage to attract prospective customers and buyers.

**Place.** Proper marketing channels are essential to expand the coverage of the market locally and internationally easily and fast through wholesalers and distributorship.

**Promotion.** Today's trend is using digital marketing wherein social media is the "in thing" in the business world. The most preferred one is Facebook, specifically in the Philippines as it is the number one Facebook user. There is no cost involved except if entrepreneurs want to boost advertisement by paying a minimal amount which is less costly compared to the traditional advertisement.

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