



Modernized Tradition: Transformation of Public Transport

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Abstract: Due to incrementing environmental issues, the Philippine government has aimed solutions for sustainable development by pursuing the Public Utility Vehicle Modernization Program (PUVMP), which was launched in 2017 and took effect in 2020. The program included the modernization of jeepneys, which is a historical icon in the country. The modernization of jeepneys affected jeepney drivers, operators, and commuters alike; thus it is crucial to take their opinions into consideration. In this study, the researchers ought to know the thoughts and opinions of jeepney drivers and commuters concerning the PUVMP in Baguio City. The study that was executed embraced a phenomenological approach. Due to the pandemic the world is facing at present, the responses were gathered using an online survey as it was seen to be fit for the current situation. The results exhibited divided opinions towards the program as drivers and operators were against it, while commuters supported the program. The jeepney drivers and operators used their financial status as a basis for their opinion, while commuters prioritized their safety and comfort. When asked how will they cope with the PUVMP, jeepney drivers showcased a negative array of choices. Their answers varied from complying just because it is what the government wants, opting for illegal schemes to earn money, to losing their jobs completely. The results acquired can be used as a basis for adjustments and changes to produce an ameliorated program which satisfies the needs and wants of the affected groups.

Key Words: Modernization; Jeepney; Drivers and Operators; Commuters; PUVMP

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Since the 1940s, jeepneys have been a huge part of the daily life of Filipinos, transporting local and non-local commuters to certain locations. It's not a stretch to say that their daily routines depend largely on public transportation. Not only are jeepneys a mode of transportation, it has become a historical symbol and is also one of the famous public transport here in the Philippines aside from tricycles and kalesa which are only in certain places. Jeepneys aren't usually seen anywhere else; that is why it strikes amusement and serves as an experience for first-timers. It also serves as a canvas showcasing arts because of the unique and delightful designs each jeep has. Jeepneys were made available to the Filipinos by the end of World War II. Nonetheless, the jeepneys back then didn't look exactly like the jeepneys we see today. The traditional jeepney was recycled from galvanized or stainless steel. They had fabric covers instead of side windows and longitudinally mounted benches with room for 20 or more (Meiners, 2016). The Filipinos then modified the jeep's appearance and size to accommodate more passengers. Adornments such as the signboard, the route, and colorful strips of plastic attached to the front sides of the jeep make it more

vibrant and known in the streets. In addition, jeepneys are the most affordable and budget-friendly kind of transportation, with fares starting at 7 to 8 pesos.

Although jeepneys are a major part of Philippine history, due to concerns regarding their contribution to the pollution in the environment, harsh restrictions and regulations are being implemented. Traditional models of jeepneys have violated multiple rules, which include overloading and pollution. These violations prove to be risky as these have contributed to health hazards, and by phasing out the traditional jeepneys, violations such as the ones aforementioned could be greatly reduced (Cudis, 2019). With the trial runs done by the government, the general public is ready to accept the revamped jeepneys as they agree that it'll be better for the people and the environment in the long run (Cudis, 2019).

As the Philippine government is aiming for more sustainable development to counter the environmental issues caused by vehicles, the Philippine government and DOTr issued Department Order No. 2017-011 (Re: Omnibus Guidelines on the Planning and Identification of Public Transportation Services and Franchise Issuance) or the Public Utility Vehicle Modernization Program (PUVMP), which was launched back in 2017 (LTFRB, 2017). Popioco and Morales (2017) further explain that the program



aimed to alter the country's public transportation systems to become more efficient and environmentally friendly by replacing old jeepneys with jeepneys that have a Euro-4 compliant engine or an electric engine that lessens the contribution of the said vehicle to the pollution present in the environment. As of May 2020, the LTFRB and DTI have presented 16 prototype jeepneys that were locally manufactured based on the guidelines set by the DOTr. These replacement jeepneys were set to substitute jeepneys that were 15 years or older, hence affecting drivers and operators who have been serving the industry for the longest time (Nano, 2017).

Alongside the PUVMP's budget of ₱2.2 billion (Cabuenas, 2017), The Land Bank of the Philippines estimated that each replacement jeepney will cost around ₱1.2 to ₱1.8 million (Popioco & Morales, 2017); thus, the PUVMP has been criticized as "anti-poor" (Philstar, 2017). Despite the criticism towards the program, multiple government agencies, transport groups (DOTr, 2017), and international partners (Abadilla, 2017) have expressed their support towards the program.

As estimated by Westerman (2018), the number of jeepneys in the country is around 180,000-270,000. With how commuters depend on these public transportations, drivers largely depend on their vehicles as well. Though commuters have a great deal regarding the fare they pay, Westerman (2018) states that jeepney drivers usually earn an average of 700 pesos every two days, but that amount is uncertain as jeepney drivers face certain setbacks that lessen the amount they make. Guss and Tuason (2012) add that certain setbacks include work-related problems that hinder the ability and time to transport passengers, which, in result, lessens the amount these road masters make. Furthermore, the money they spend on maintenance and gas is dependent on their income. As explained by Manuel (2019), the amount jeepney drivers gain in their livelihood is sometimes not even enough to provide for their families; thus, if the PUVMP is fully implemented and the jeepney drivers take out loans to pay for the replacement jeepneys, the additional debt will deprive them of their basic necessities. Manuel (2019) adds, with the number of jeepneys in the country and the hefty price operators and drivers will be paying for the replacement jeepneys, the greatest concern these road masters have is their livelihood as they are afraid that the hefty cost of the replacement jeepneys will leave them with nothing but debt and loss of their livelihood, making their already difficult lives even more difficult.

Due to the hefty estimated price of each replacement jeepney, the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with DOTr to provide aid

through the DBP PASADA Financing Program, which will help cooperatives financially under terms, conditions, and requirements that the operators should comply to. In addition, DOTr also signed an MOU with the Land Bank of the Philippines for ₱1 billion under the Special Environment-Friendly and Efficient Driven (SPEED) Jeepney Program for the financial assistance of individual drivers (Newman, 2017). To further ease the financial concerns of operators and drivers, DOTr and LTFRB will be providing financing schemes, which include an easy downpayment, very low interest rates, payability in seven years, and an ₱80,000 government subsidy, to be able to pay for a replacement jeepney (Mercurio, 2019).

However, no matter how ready the affected communities already are, it is prime to note that the PUVMP will bring about a drastic change; thus the phase-out shouldn't be immediate as the general public, jeepney drivers, and operators need time to get used to the new and modernized jeepneys. As the government failed to phase out traditional jeepneys by June 2020, as of March 2021, the program has been constantly improved to conform to the needs of the affected communities by including more benefits, which include monthly salaries, SSS, PhilHealth, and a separate profit from the cooperative (Mercurio, 2020).

1.2. Problems of the Study

As stated, commuters have a positive perception towards the modernization plan and jeepney drivers are against it due to the hefty price they will be paying. In this paper, the researchers aim to see if the positive perception of the commuters is indeed true, and on the other end, the researchers aim to gather responses from jeepney drivers to see if they have already thought of coping mechanisms once the program is fully implemented.

To be able to gather the data required, the researchers have generated two questions, one for commuters and one for jeepney drivers.

How do local commuters in the City of Baguio perceive the government's jeepney modernization plan?

How do the local drivers plan to cope with this jeepney modernization program?

Depending on the answers given by the respondents, the researchers were able to identify specific problems the program generated and ways such could still be developed and enhanced.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Design



The researchers embossed a phenomenological approach in this study. As stated by Creswell (2013), phenomenology is an approach to qualitative research that focuses on the commonality of a lived experience within a particular group. The fundamental goal of the approach is to arrive at a description of the nature of the particular phenomenon. The researchers' strategy was based on either their own or individual experiences and sensory perceptions. Utilizing qualitative conception, the researchers were able to frame the driver's and commuter's thoughts on the jeepney modernization plan.

2.2. Sampling Method

In this study, the researchers concluded that these two sampling methods were suitable for gathering respondents: simple random sampling and snowball sampling. Simple random sampling was used to find and collect data from commuters in Baguio City to get equal and unbiased responses as it was easy to find respondents willing to participate in the study. Simple random sampling is a method wherein the respondents are purely chosen by chance (Shantikumar, 2018).

The sampling method used to get data from jeepney drivers in Baguio City was the snowball sampling method. The researchers discussed the difficulty of collecting responses from the jeepney drivers in Baguio City due to the COVID-19 pandemic hindering access to jeepney associations and cooperatives; therefore, this non-random sampling method was used to help encourage other participants to take part in the study. As stated by Breweton and Millward (2001), snowball sampling is a sampling method wherein respondents encourage other possible respondents to participate in the study.

2.3. Population and Locale of the Study

The study respondents were nine jeepney drivers and nine commuters from Baguio City with social media accounts. The researchers chose commuter respondents from different fields and had different experiences with the traditional jeepneys. The nine jeepney drivers were drivers who traveled the Baguio Plaza - Holy Ghost route.

2.4. Data Gathering Instruments

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, an online survey became the most practical data collection tool, where a set of questions were sent out to a target sample to respond to the questions (Bhat, ND).

2.5. Data Analysis

For the data analysis, the researchers used thematic analysis as their method of analyzing the

data. The answers given by respondents were categorized into codes that corresponded to master themes. Thematic analysis, as defined by The University of Auckland (nd), is an analysis method that focuses on identifying patterns in the answers of the respondents.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Master Themes from Commuter Respondents Regarding Perception on the Government's Jeepney Modernization Plan

Master Themes	Corresponding Codes	Exemplar Quotes
Positive Perception	Modern Jeepneys	"To upgrade the old jeepneys into much safer and more environment-friendly ones."
	Safe	"Maganda ito para sa mga commuters at sa mga driver dahil para din ito sa safety ng lahat."
	Brilliant	"My thoughts on the jeepney modernization plan is a good plan."
	Spacious	"While it's great that our jeepneys would become eco-friendly and spacious in the future"
Negative Perception	Culture Loss	"Sadly, the touch of our culture would be lost, and I think that would be a shame to the future generation."

As established in Table 1, the key commuter informants positively favor the government's jeepney modernization plan. As quoted by some of the respondents, "My thoughts on the jeepney modernization plan is a good plan," and "While it's great that our jeepneys would become eco friendly and spacious in the future." Based on the test run of modern jeepneys conducted by Hino, the public seemed to favor the government's PUVMP as it proved to be much safer and comfortable compared to traditional jeepneys.

Table 2. Master Themes from Commuter Respondents Regarding the Benefits of the Government's Jeepney Modernization Plan

Master Themes	Corresponding Codes	Exemplar Quotes
Positive Expectations	Safe	"As a commuter, I will feel safer knowing that the drivers will be using new jeeps instead of the old ones."
	Comfortable	"It will also be convenient and comfortable for me since it will be more advanced."
	Convenient	"Can lead me faster to my destination"
	Cheaper Fees	"Lesser commuter fee"
	Less Pollution	"Less polluted environment caused by the old jeepneys"

As shown in Table 2, the key commuter informants expect benefits from the government's PUVMP as they look forward to the comfort and safety the modernized PUJs will bring. As quoted by one respondent, "As a commuter, I will feel safer knowing that the drivers will be using new jeeps instead of the old ones. It will also be convenient and comfortable for me since it will be more advanced." Cudis (2019) claims that by phasing out the traditional jeepneys, violations such as health hazards could be reduced as



the PUVMP's purpose is to replace old jeepneys with much safer, eco-friendly, and comfortable units.

Table 3. Master Themes from Driver Respondents Regarding Perception on the Government's Jeepney Modernization Plan

Master Themes	Corresponding Codes	Exemplar Quotes
Negative Perception	Change	" <i>Papalitan ng bago modelo ang mga jeepney.</i> "

	More Research	"To do more research about it"
	Expensive	" <i>Papalitan ng napakamahal na jeep</i> "
	Not Needed	" <i>Para sa akin ndi na kailangan ito</i> "

Unlike the positive perception from commuters, the key jeepney driver informants showcased negative perception towards the PUVMP. Table 3 showcases the jeepney drivers complaining mainly about the change of jeepneys and the cost they have to pay. Drivers also stated that the PUVMP is not needed.

Table 4. Master Themes from Driver Respondents Regarding Experiences Related to the Government's Jeepney Modernization Plan

Master Themes	Corresponding Codes	Exemplar Quotes
Negative Experiences	Burden	" <i>Maraming driver ang mawawalan ng trabaho pag dating ng jeepney modernization. Dahil hindi kayang bumili ng mga operator ang binebenta ng mga gobyerno na worth 2.4 million payable in 7 years.</i> "
	Pollutant	" <i>mausok na sasakyan</i> "
No Experiences	No experience	"None" " <i>Wala pa</i> "
	Needs further understanding	"Need to understand more."

Table 4 exhibits that key jeepney driver informants have negative experiences with the PUVMP. As quoted by one respondent, "*Maraming driver ang mawawalan ng trabaho pag dating ng jeepney modernization dahil hindi kayang bumili ng mga operator ang binebenta ng mga gobyerno na worth 2.4 million payable in 7 years. (Lots of drivers will lose their jobs because they are unable to pay the cost of the replacement.)*" As said by Manuel (2019), operators and drivers are afraid they won't have enough financial support to afford a replacement unit.

Table 5. Master Themes from Driver Respondents Regarding their Coping Ways if the Jeepney Modernization Plan will be Implemented

Master Themes	Corresponding Codes	Exemplar Quotes
Resignation	Cooperation	" <i>Walang magagawa kung ipapatupad ang modernisasyon dahil gobyerno mismo ang may gusto.</i> " "I will cooperate as long as the modernization process is good."

	Colorum scheme	"I'll go with colorum scheme as I cannot allow to put on hold my own franchise."
Denial	Hard time	" <i>Mahitirapan.</i> "
	Cannot cope	" <i>Hindi kakayanin yan ng ordinaryong operator. Kasi ang boundary ng jeep hindi akma sa buwanang hulog ng sasakyan</i> "
	Expensive	"I cannot pay the cost of modern jeepneys."
	No Jobs	" <i>Wala na pong trabaho.</i> "

As showcased in Table 5, the key jeepney driver informants are clearly torn between coping and not coping. As noted by 1 respondent, some jeepney drivers including himself will be going with the colorum scheme, which is an illegal public transport scheme, as they cannot afford the replacement units and putting their franchise on hold. Although, another jeepney driver stated, "*Walang magagawa kung ipapatupad ang modernisasyon dahil gobyerno mismo ang may gusto. (We can't do anything else as it is what the government wants.)*" This shows the lack of choices drivers have. If they won't comply, they will not be able to earn a living. Another respondent expressed concern about the financial crisis operators could be facing because of the implementation. He noted, "*Hindi kakayanin yan ng ordinaryong operator kasi ang boundary ng jeep hindi akma sa buwanang hulog ng sasakyan. (Ordinary operators can't afford it as the monthly income they get isn't enough.)*" According to Manuel (2019), the income of drivers and operators will not be enough to pay for the price of a new unit. Furthermore, if drivers and operators do afford a unit by taking out loans, they would be spending all their income to pay off their debts.

Table 6. Master Themes from Driver Respondents Regarding Suggestions to make the Government's Jeepney Modernization Plan Better

Master Themes	Corresponding Codes	Exemplar Quotes
Modern Upgrade	Recondition	" <i>Makakabuti sa lahat kung upgrading sana sa mga jeepney, papagandahin at aausin nalang sana at palitan nalang ng bagong makina keysa bibili pa ng napakamahal nilang inaalok na modernized jeepney.</i> " "Strict implementation of motor vehicle inspection especially smoke emission as not all old jeepneys with euro2 engines are bad smokers. Mine as I always maintain my jeep can have a smoke emission lower than modern cars."
Status quo	Discontinue	"No to modernization."

Table 6 exhibits the suggestions drivers have that can be used to improve the current bill. One respondent stated, "*Makakabuti sa lahat kung upgrading sana sa mga jeepney, papagandahin at aausin nalang sana at palitan nalang ng bagong makina keysa bibili pa ng napakamahal nilang inaalok na modernized jeepney. (It will be better if the jeepneys will only be upgraded and fixed instead of buying the expensive modernized jeepneys.)*" Another



respondent also expressed that “Strict implementation of motor vehicle inspection especially smoke emission as not all old jeepneys with euro2 engines are bad smokers. Mine as I always maintain my jeep can have a smoke emission lower than modern cars.” In summary, drivers suggested the discontinuation of the PUVMP, and a simple upgrading and regular inspection of old units can do the work.

4. CONCLUSIONS

After conducting surveys on both commuters and jeepney drivers, the respondents have provided their insights on the problems aforementioned.

The viewpoints from each group of respondents opposed each other as most of the commuters responded positively towards the jeepney modernization program, unlike the jeepney drivers, due to the fact that it is more environmentally friendly and would reduce accidents due to the mechanical failure of old jeepneys.

Jeepney drivers showcased varied answers when asked for their coping mechanisms once the PUVMP is fully implemented. Some drivers decided to just cooperate as it is what the government wants, while others would just opt for illegal methods like the colorum scheme. While some of the drivers came up with coping mechanisms, the other half of the respondents stated that they would not be able to cope, thus losing their jobs as jeepney drivers.

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