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## **JOLLIJEEP: DOING BUSINESS ON THE STREETS**

**JASTINE JOYCE S.A. DE JESUS**

*Bulacan State University, Shell Shared Services (Asia) B.V., Makati City*

**EMERLITA S. NAGUIAT, PhD**

*Bulacan State University*

### **Abstract**

This study aimed to gain insight into the micro food services in Makati by conducting a study in Jollieeep business, a mobile canteen found in the central business district of Makati. It sought to answer the current status of Jollieeep business, how entrepreneurs sustain their business, their business strategies, the challenges they encounter, and its contributions to the quality of life and the socio-economic uplifting of entrepreneurs' lives, workers, and economic growth of Makati City.

The researcher believed that accurate results could be best obtained using the Phenomenological type of qualitative research as this described the experiences of entrepreneurs on their journey as Jollieeep operators. Through this, the researcher had in-depth conversations and interviews with the chosen informants. These informants were the following, eight (8) Jollieeep entrepreneurs, three (3) workers for each Jollieeep trailer, and three (3) customers for each who were patronizing the products for a year or more. The researcher believed that these informants provided accurate responses for the interview guide.

Based on the findings, it was concluded that the Jollieeep business is of great help to the entrepreneurs and the workers, customers, and society from the study results. This microenterprise should be treated as an opportunity and not a liability by the people and government as it provides lots of benefits to the city. It has been visible that not only has it helped the families rooting in this business on their daily survival, rather it has created wealth, improved their lifestyle, and uplift their socio-economic life as well.

### **Introduction**

The Philippines was listed by the American multinational investment banking firm Goldman Sachs as one of the 21st century 'Next Eleven' economies based on macroeconomic stability, political maturity, the openness of trade and investment policies, and the quality of education. One of the contributors to this growth is the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). These MSMEs have been growing and contribution is evident as it plays a significant role in the economic development of one country. These enterprises are notably skillful in maximizing

capital resources and can be partnered with larger businesses by supplying locally available materials in unprocessed and semi-processed.

However, this study only focused on microenterprises, a small business that employs a small number of employees. A microenterprise usually operates with fewer than ten people and started with a small amount of capital. Most micro-enterprises specialize in providing goods or services for their local areas. Thus, this small business can be easily found on every corner, mostly are stands in the streets and sidewalks. Entrepreneurs engaged in this business are working for livelihood with fewer products, lesser capital, and somehow limited access to financial security and support.

The growth of the food services can be seen in the business's formal economic side and the informal sector. However, the activities of the informal sector often operate outside the framework of the law. The majority of these entities operate without a necessary business permit and often are harassed by local authorities. They have no business location, no business hour permit, and no fixed income. Due to the way they operate, they have no formal access to formal resources in capital credit, facilities, and workforce and training programs.

The abovementioned issues portray the kind of life the micro foodservice entrepreneurs live and the coping mechanisms one uses. This study aims to gain insight into these issues by researching one of the micro food services in Makati, the Jollijeep, a mobile canteen in Makati's central business district. A type of street food vending which uses dilapidated jeepneys, now are nonmobile trailers to sell their foods along the streets. It offers home-cooked food for breakfast, lunch, merienda, and dinner. The term came from two separate words; one is Jolli, which refers to the country's biggest fast-food chain, and jeep, which refers to what the owners used to haul their home-cooked goodies. From being illegal to a legalized business with the help of Ayala Land through its Makati Commercial Estate Association Inc., and the government of Makati.

Despite the profusion of a fast-food restaurant and air-conditioned food courts in Makati, many people still prefer to order at Jollijeeps to offer accessible and affordable home-cooked meals and snacks. Its target market is the blue-collar workers, working-class members who perform manual labor, and office workers. Therefore, the study aims to tackle Jollijeep business's sustainability by its long-term survival and ability to have sustainable profits over a period despite having larger and longer-life competitors in the market. The purpose of the research is to describe the extent of business practices in sustaining the operations of Jollijeep. This aims to answer how this business overcomes the challenges in their day to day business operation and if there are government support programs involved.

## **Foreshadowed Problems**

The central problem of the study is: How do entrepreneurs sustain their JollijEEP business in Makati?

The study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What is the current status of the JollijEEP business?
2. How do entrepreneurs sustain their business?
3. What are the business strategies being used by entrepreneurs to sustain their business?
4. What challenges have been encountered by the entrepreneurs in the operation of their business?
5. How does the business contribute to the quality of life and the socio-economic upliftment of entrepreneurs' life, workers, and economic growth of Makati City?

## **Integrated Review of Related Literature and Studies**

To have a better and accurate findings, theories, literature and studies were gathered to gain insight into the current status and challenges of JollijEEP business and other related microenterprises. Current status refers to the type of ownership whether sole proprietorship, partnership, or corporation, number of years the business is operating which refers to the number of years the business is operating and how long the entrepreneurs are engaged in the business, number of workers employed which refers to the number of individuals currently employed and working for the business and sources of funds or capital.

In Pepper, Velasco (2014) featured Makati as a home to a handful of cozy cafes and posh restaurants; however, they have these JollijEEPs that seemed to be competitors as it feeds most of the working force with its home-cooked style Filipino meals and specialties. These are carts in a gray color that serve lunch and merienda to most employees and workers in Makati. Velasco also mentioned that few from these JollijEEP already made a mark in the country's working force for the cheap but tasty meals they offer. Some of the included in the lists are Porkchop along Palanca Street, Mang Liro's, Palanca Street, Rada Sisig, Bulalo and Pares from Esteban, JollijEEP behind Mercury Drug, Valero Street, JollijEEP behind Dela Rosa Car Park, and JollijEEP in front of Citibank.

Challenges relating to microenterprises were also looked into. Investopedia (2019) discussed the five biggest challenges faced by small businesses. One of the biggest achievements by entrepreneurs was starting a business; this is the larger challenge to maintain and sustain it. Five main challenges were client dependence, money management, fatigue, founder dependence, and balancing quality and growth. Client dependence provided the importance of

diversifying clients though difficult, is vital for business growth. The second was money management; business owners and every individual should have the cash to cover bills. Small business owners must be heavily capitalized or have extra income to shore up cash reserves whenever needed. Next was fatigue; most business owners get stuck working longer than other employees. Fourth was founder dependence; a business that cannot be operated without a founder is a business with a deadline.

Lastly, balancing quality and growth, a business must sacrifice to grow and scale, and may not mean managing every client relationship personally. What makes a business semi-successful is found at the level of personal engagement and attention to detail.

Lalu (2019) on Inquirer tackled how metro mayors complained about cat and mouse games in the streets. Several mayors in Metro Manila complained about the illegal vendors whenever clearing the streets was imposed in the localities. Department of the Interior and Labor Government (DILG), with other local executives' help, confirmed that they have consistently tried to clear the streets caused by illegal vendors. Authorities called this a cat and mouse game because vendors come back to their area after the government cleared the locale and shifted their attention to another. Taingco, mayor of Navotas, attested that it was in 2002 that anything found in the street was considered garbage and such will be disposed of when an ordinance was passed. He added that it would be hard for them to clear the areas without the locals' active participation. Hence, they were asking for the participation of everyone and the accountability of the barangay officials. A memorandum was released in August this year that gives a 60-day ultimatum for local executives to get rid of these street obstructions, and failure to comply with this will be penalized. He or she will be preventively suspended for two months.

Related studies were taken into account to show other sets of perspective that were significant to the study. According to the study of Uwitije (2016), street vending activities contributed to the livelihoods of millions of people and national wellbeing at large, especially in developing countries. However, this sector had been undermined by policymakers who perceive street vending as a liability rather than a potential. Hence street vendors were exposed to various challenges. The need to better understand the dynamic of the street vending sector, whose objective was to analyze the contributions of street vending activities on the livelihoods of urban poor in Kigali City, prompted this study. Through this, one can have an insight not only on the activities but also with the attributes and contributions the entrepreneurs provide to the economy and social well-being of developing countries like the Philippines. This study was used as a basis for a change in the outlook for street vending as a potential and opportunities, instead of being a liability. This can be a venue for the local government to know of possible help and assistance they could give to these small businesses.

The Urban Geography of China has been around for thousands of years but has seen ongoing repression from authorities who view them as not modern, chaotic, and out of place. As the literature review of this study had shown, this situation was not specific to China alone but existed throughout the Global South. The battle over public space was one of the ordinary people versus the power of capital. It was one concerning ordinary livelihoods, or concrete space, against the increasing commodification of urban and public space, or what could be referred to as abstract space. While the challenges faced by vendors over the right to the city and their ability to access public space to earn a living are place-specific, what remained clear was that commodification of urban space has not made life easier for the urban poor and migrants who used vending as a way to get by and support their families. The question of public space's public nature became an essential question that must be answered in places-specific contexts (Winter, 2017 P. 197). The study on re-appropriating of street vending in Nanchang was a reminder of the humble beginning of the Jolliejeep business. Looking back on how it started from being informal operators, retreating to other streets and marked it as their new territory when being shooed away by traffic aides or any officer from local government, to being recognized as small business entrepreneurs. This was of relevance to the emerging importance of street foods and other small food businesses to be and stay in the market as they provided convenience and services to people in the same way that these vendors get a livelihood in return. This strengthened the government's need to accept and provide some assistance to these individuals or provide space for them to sell their goods.

Another study of Destombes (2010) on informal entrepreneurs covered the street vendors, their livelihood, and their social capital influence. It discussed the extent to which the organization among the street vendors contributed to realizing their goals and the consequences for their livelihoods. Street vendors were part of the informal sector of the economy. They enjoyed the benefits of being informal, such as savings on zoning, tax, and other costs. At the same time, they experienced pitfalls such as demolition threats, lack of legal protection, and lower capital efficiency. Street vendors in Cebu City faced notorious eviction, the threat of demolition of their stalls from the local government; on the other hand, they used their profits solely to improve their business or maintain their livelihoods.

In practice, they do often have a fixed working place and pay a (six) 6 pesos fee called 'arcabala' every day. This illustrates the ambiguous position they were in or 'shady' practice that street vendors were subject of. An important variable in the livelihood provision of street vendors was widely debated: the notion of social capital. A definition of social capital is the expected returns to social relationships. Or: relationships with and between others to help individuals accomplish goals they cannot achieve independently. Social capital has aspects on both the individual level (investments, relationships, reciprocity, resources) and collective level (trust, norms, cohesion). Marginalized people suffered the most from a decline in social capital since it directly influenced

their livelihood. Street vendors relied on a very important part of their social capital in executing their business. They had trusted relations with their suppliers, often family or 'suki'. A suki was a trusted relation, with whom a regular exchange of business took place, based on trust and mutual agreements. The communal version of social capital was mainly membership of a street vendor's organization. These geographically bound groups of street vendor's principal task were to negotiate the vending space for vendors. Since they were illegal by law, this form of social capital was essential in maintaining their livelihood (Destombes, 2010 pp.7-8).

This was of relevance and importance as it discussed the goals street vendors have. This meant that entrepreneurial activities are not only for the large businesses and those that are in the formal sector but also for those that are in the informal one. It also explained that it is important for every entrepreneur to have a goal to plan in mind the needed process they need to do and the action plan for problems that may come along in achieving such. Like in the present study, both have a mediator who made their business a little easier to vases them in the streets. As for the Jollijeeep, they have Metro Store that handles them.

## Methods

The study's main objective is to investigate the sustainability of the Jollijeeep business entrepreneurs in Makati City using qualitative research by the use of Phenomenology, an approach to qualitative inquiry grounded in certain traditions of philosophy and the humanities, aiming to reflect on pre-reflective human experience. The researcher chose to use this since this type of qualitative research discusses lived experiences.

There are a lot of Jollijeeep trailers in Makati Central Business District and twenty of which can be found along the streets of Rada, Esteban, and Bolanos. Out of these twenty (20) entrepreneurs, the researcher selected eight (8) Jollijeeep entrepreneurs based on sustainability and established business. These informants are operating for more than five (5) years and are believed that will be helpful in the data analysis as they survived in the business for more than five years.

Furthermore, the researcher chose different types of informants that captured the different scope of the phenomenon. These informants were the following, eight (8) Jollijeeep entrepreneurs (same with the above), three (3) workers for each Jollijeeep trailer, and three (3) customers for each who were patronizing the products for a year or more. All informants were selected purposively. The researcher believed that these informants provided accurate responses for the interview guide.

The researcher made use of interview guides in a basic form and simple manner for the informants' convenience to answer the questions accurately and comfortably. This was

presented in a schematic form of questions with relevance to the current status of Jollijeeep business, how do the chosen informants sustain their business, what are the business strategies being used by them to sustain their business, what are the challenges encountered by the entrepreneurs in operating their business and how does the business contribute to the economic growth of Makati City. The researcher also observed the setting in a social situation to examine the people involved. Questions were conducted in a semi-structured interview to gather aspects of the study that needed to be clarified and expounded and explore other possible significant aspects of the study by providing pre-determined and open-ended questions

The researcher was the one who administered the research instrument to the selected informants in Makati City. The researcher personally conducted a face-to-face interview with the chosen informants using an interview guide that generally lasted 30 to 45 minutes.

The interviews were recorded to ensure that all informants' information was taken into the study based on conclusion and recommendation. This was kept in a safe place until the study was completed. The recordings were then interpreted and written down in the results portion. The researcher also asked for some relevant documents that were beneficial for this research.

## **Significant Findings**

### **1. What is the current status of the Jollijeeep Business?**

All Jollijeeep entrepreneurs are engaged in the business for more than five years, from which most are already operating even before the Jollijeeep was institutionalized and legalized. They have workers who served in the production and sales, usually during the daytime from Mondays to Fridays, to cater to students and the workforce who demand convenience. They use capital primarily to support the business, and the menus they offer are depending on the schedule determined by the entrepreneur and the availability of supplies in the market.

### **2. How do entrepreneurs sustain their business?**

Each Jollijeeep entrepreneur uses their capital to run and expand their business, making sure that they set it aside for business alone. However, few entrepreneurs admitted that they tend to run out of capital, and they will need to enter some lending activities to finance their day to day business. Also, they abide by the rules and regulations implemented for Jollijeeep business to avoid fines and continue their business life. The researcher also noticed that entrepreneurs are busy during the interview and would only want to take their time for a few minutes. Indeed, Makati is a busy city. Workers and entrepreneurs are hands-on in their businesses, and

customers come and go in between their business hours. During the interview, entrepreneurs are not so focused on the interview as they try to foresee what is going on with the business.

### **3. What are the business strategies being used by entrepreneurs to sustain their business?**

Almost all JollijEEP entrepreneurs have the same strategies: being “magiliw” or hospitable and friendly to their customers. This is one of their business strategies to gain customers and sales daily, a very common Filipino trait. They are establishing a relationship with their customers, not just an entrepreneur-and-customer relationship but a friendly relationship, rather. They used to crack jokes and start a conversation with humor with their customers, and from there, they will be able to market their products. This has been affirmed by several customers that have been interviewed. Another strategy is cooking delicious meals and finding workers who can cook their goodies and viand the best way at an affordable price. Maintaining the cleanliness of the trailer is also one. These are why they have these “suki” or customers who keep on coming back to buy foods from them.

### **4. What are the challenges encountered by the entrepreneurs in the operation of their business?**

The primary challenge of those entrepreneurs is illegal vending on the streets, not until the JollijEEP was institutionalized and legalized for Makati citizens who would like to venture into this kind of business. Another problem encountered is lack of sales during rainy seasons due to the design of the trailers and customers, since most are office workers, are not in the mood of going outside to buy foods from these JollijEEP trailers. With this, they could incur losses. Even if there is no sale, still, they need to give their workers the amount of salary due to them for that day, including the capital used to buy the raw materials. The third is the lack of supplies in cooking; they will not be able to sell if they lack anything needed to cook their menus. Lastly, the lack of available workers is hard to serve and cater to each customer's request when one is not present. These are the major challenges the entrepreneurs are facing in the current time.

### **5. How does the business contribute to the quality of life and the socio-economic uplifting of entrepreneurs, workers, and economic growth of Makati City?**

Regarding the benefits they are getting from the JollijEEP business, it has been affirmed that a lot of people and families are rooting for this business to survive their daily living, from the entrepreneur to the workers and the customers. All of the entrepreneurs and workers have a family to support, and they see this JollijEEP as an answer to provide for their daily needs. Not only that it has helped them for their daily survival, but it has also improved their lifestyle and uplift their socio-economic life. Since they are in line with the food industry, workers are given the privilege of eating and taking out any of the menus they want for themselves and their families.

Also, because of this business, all entrepreneurs were able to send their children to school; in fact, most of their children already graduated from college. It allowed them to have savings for themselves and for emergency purposes, which, according to them, they could not have before establishing the said business. Most of them were able to buy and improve their own houses. Others have already bought their car.

## Conclusion

The researcher concluded that the JollijEEP business is of great help to the entrepreneurs and the workers, customers, and society from the study results. This microenterprise should be treated as an opportunity and not a liability by the people and government as it provides lots of benefits to the city. It has been visible that not only has it helped the families rooting in this business on their daily survival, rather it has created wealth, improved their lifestyle, and uplift their socio-economic life as well. All entrepreneurs confirmed that their life has improved since they established said business, they were able to send their children to school and have foods to eat whenever they want. It also helped them to expand their houses, have their car for business and family use. They now have savings of their own for emergency purposes. It has created jobs in Makati city; it provided less qualified people for a job and have one. JollijEEP entrepreneurs own and manage the business, but they are under Metro Store, from which they pay taxes and fees. And since they are legal stores with necessary business permits, they are also paying for taxes in the government, and that alone is proof of their social significance.

## Recommendations

Based on the result of the study, the researcher would like to recommend the following:

1. JollijEEP entrepreneurs should improve the cleanliness and safety of the foods they sell and check the lighting on trailers to foresee a possible leak of unsanitary materials.
2. Maybe they can adopt other entrepreneurs' way of handling money by keeping their capital aside, so they can refrain from resorting to lenders that cost them interest.
3. They must have their daily inventory to ensure there are enough stocks and materials to cook their menus.
4. They can opt to add healthier menus, as requested by customers.
5. They can consider enrolling in online food deliveries, especially during the rainy season, to maintain sales.

6. Other researchers in the field of Business Administration have a larger sample size to further provide insights into other entrepreneurs' business journeys.