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Navigating the Entrepreneurial Transition of Car Owners into the Car Rental Business: A Multiple Case Study

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Abstract

This qualitative multiple case study aimed to describe the entrepreneurial transition of car owners into the car rental business in Kidapawan City. Five case units involving 15 participants were selected through maximum variation sampling, representing both owner-operators and consignees. Their experiences were explored using in-depth interviews and triangulated with accounts from people close to them. Data were analyzed through thematic and cross-case analysis. Four main themes emerged on their motivations: financial necessity and the strategy to sustain car ownership and earn extra income; opportunity recognition and social encouragement; personal and family-related needs and non-financial goals; and future intentions for business expansion and diversification. Five themes described their challenges and growth: financial burden and sustainability struggles, emotional and mental toll of risk, lifestyle adjustments and sacrifices, experiential learning and entrepreneurial growth, and resilience and adaptive practices sustained by partnerships, faith, and practical problem-solving. The cases were generally similar in using the car rental business as a means to stabilize finances while gradually developing entrepreneurial skills. The findings support the Push–Pull Theory and Effectuation Theory of entrepreneurship.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial transition, car rental business, car owners, multiple case study, Philippines, Kidapawan City

Introduction

Entrepreneurial transition refers to the shift individuals make from non-entrepreneurial backgrounds into business ownership, a process often marked by gaps in managerial skills, financial literacy, and strategic planning (Welter et al., 2017). Prior studies highlight that such transitions contribute to the high failure rates of new ventures, with nearly half of global startups collapsing within five years due to limited entrepreneurial knowledge and weak business management (Bosima et al., 2021). In the Philippines, although micro, small, and medium enterprises dominate the economic landscape, many struggle with sustainability as a result of insufficient financial competencies and constrained adaptability to market changes (Salazar & Miranda, 2020). Research also emphasizes that effective entrepreneurial transition fosters job creation, innovation, and long-term economic participation (Aldrich & Yang, 2014; Brüderl & Preisendörfer, 2021), underscoring its social and economic relevance.

Despite the growing interest in necessity-driven and opportunity-driven entrepreneurship, limited research focuses on individuals who transition into business ownership outside typical startup pathways. Existing studies predominantly examine formal entrepreneurs or those with prior business exposure, leaving a notable gap concerning non-traditional entrepreneurs who enter specific service-based markets such as car rental operations (Kautonen et al., 2015). In Kidapawan City, no empirical work has been found that explores how ordinary car owners navigate this transition or how they adapt to the responsibilities of business management within an informal and emerging rental industry.

This multiple case study addresses this gap by examining the entrepreneurial transition experiences of car owners who have become rental service operators. The investigation focuses on understanding their motivations, the challenges and opportunities they encountered, and how they adjusted to entrepreneurial roles despite having no formal business background. The purpose of the study is to generate empirical insights into how non-entrepreneurial individuals learn, adapt, and sustain participation in a growing local service enterprise, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on entrepreneurial transition in underexplored community-based markets.

Methodology

Research Design

The study employed a qualitative multiple case study design to explore the entrepreneurial transition of car owners who entered the car rental business without prior entrepreneurial experience. This design enabled in-depth examination of each case and comparison across cases to identify both shared patterns and unique experiences.

Setting and Participants

The research was conducted in Kidapawan City, Philippines, where car owners increasingly engage in car rental either through direct operations or consignment arrangements. A total of 15 participants were involved: five primary car owner-entrepreneurs (one per case unit) and two additional informants per case for triangulation.

Participants were selected through maximum variation purposive sampling to capture diverse backgrounds and transition experiences. Inclusion criteria for primary cases were: (a) car owners residing in Kidapawan City, (b) currently engaged in car rental operations (direct or consignment), (c) no prior

entrepreneurial background before entering car rental, and (d) at least one year of experience in the car rental industry. Triangulation informants were individuals closely familiar with each car owner's entrepreneurial journey (e.g., family members or colleagues) and able to provide corroborating perspectives.

Data Collection and Procedures

Data were collected primarily through semi-structured in-depth interviews using an interview guide aligned with the study objectives. The guide focused on participants' motivations, challenges, opportunities, and coping strategies related to their entrepreneurial transition.

Prior to data collection, formal approval was obtained from the Graduate School and ethics clearance was secured from the University of the Immaculate Conception Research Ethics Committee (Protocol Code GS-ER-08-25-0354). Potential participants received an invitation letter and an Informed Consent Form (ICF) explaining the purpose of the study, procedures, risks, benefits, confidentiality, and voluntary nature of participation. For face-to-face interviews, printed consent forms were signed on-site; for online interviews, consent was obtained through electronically signed ICFs sent via email.

Interviews were conducted either face-to-face or online, depending on participant preference, with at least half of the interviews held in person. Each in-depth interview lasted a minimum of 45 minutes, with duration adjusted based on the depth of responses. With explicit permission, all interviews were audio-recorded and supplemented by field notes documenting non-verbal cues and contextual observations. Participants were reminded that they could skip any question or withdraw at any time without consequence.

For triangulation, additional in-depth interviews were conducted with individuals close to the primary participants to validate and enrich the data on each case. All participants were assigned pseudonyms, and no identifying personal details were recorded in the transcripts.

Data Management and Analysis

Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim into text. The researcher reviewed each transcript multiple times to ensure accuracy and familiarity with the data. Transcripts and field notes were organized in password-protected digital folders, with backup copies stored in a secured institutional cloud drive accessible only to the researcher.

Data analysis followed a thematic and cross-case analytic process. First, initial coding was performed manually by identifying significant statements and assigning descriptive codes. These codes were then clustered into categories, which formed the basis for emerging themes. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns related to motivations, challenges, opportunities, and adaptive strategies in each case. After within-case analysis, a cross-case analysis was conducted to compare themes across all five cases, highlighting similarities, differences, and contextual nuances in the entrepreneurial transition experiences.

Trustworthiness and Ethical Safeguards

Trustworthiness was supported through several strategies. Credibility was enhanced by member checking, where participants were given the opportunity to review and validate summaries of their accounts and key interpretations. Triangulation was achieved by comparing data from primary car owners and their associated

informants. Dependability and confirmability were addressed through careful documentation of procedures, maintenance of an audit trail of decisions, and systematic storage of data.

Ethical standards were upheld by ensuring voluntary participation, informed consent, the right to withdraw, and strict confidentiality. All data were handled in compliance with institutional guidelines and the Philippine Data Privacy Act, and raw data were scheduled for deletion after completion of the study and submission of the final manuscript.

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