

Shipping containers converted into livable facilities for commercialization in Cebu, Philippines



Lolita V. Velita ^{1,*}, Ronald M. Galindo ², Rosein A. Ancheta Jr. ³, Edgar U. Tibay ²

¹Department of Business Administration, College of Management and Entrepreneurship, Cebu Technological University, Cebu City, Philippines

²Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering, College of Engineering, Cebu Technological University, Cebu City, Philippines

³Department of Civil Engineering, College of Engineering, Cebu Technological University, Cebu City, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

In Cebu, Philippines during the pandemic, hospitals were full and would no longer accept patients, which led the researchers to make a study on shipping containers converted to hospitals, isolation, quarantine, and other livable facilities to address the problem. If another wave of the virus comes, the facility is already in place to accommodate patients. Numerous studies have been conducted about shipping containers on their functionality, performance, and quality but there is no study about its marketability to target markets. The study determined the marketability of shipping containers converted into livable facilities for commercialization based on the following objectives: i) the four Ps of marketing, ii) industry and competitor analysis, iii) challenges and opportunities, and, iv) to propose recommendations on developing the converted shipping containers into livable facilities. There were two hundred thirty-nine 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 a high demand for shipping containers to be converted into livable facilities which could be a profitable business once commercialized.

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1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has critically brought a lot of disasters to human lives. Governments worldwide have enforced lockdowns, closure of schools and establishments, travel restrictions, and quarantine protocols not to spread the virus and save peoples' lives. These lockdowns, closures, and regulations have resulted in economic shock, reducing business transactions and economic activities that tremendously affect business performance worldwide (Ćosić et al., 2020).

In 2020, the Eurozone's GDP dropped by 3.8 percent in the first quarter (Hiscott et al., 2020). It marks the sharpest decline in Italy, Spain, and France since the first collected records in 1995 ranging from 4.7 percent to 5.8 percent. The effect of COVID-19 on the U.S. economy is even more

damaging as it decreased by 1.2 percent in the first quarter, its most significant decrease since the financial crisis (Papadopoulos et al., 2020).

The pandemic had resulted in an economic shutdown. Several prestigious brands closed their operation as only a few customers purchased as they remain in their respective homes. Popular businesses in the United States were under substantial financial pressure. The tourism sector was mainly affected as several hotel rooms were vacant (airlines are slashing their jobs by 90 percent, and tourism destinations have no revenues (Donthu and Gustafsson, 2020). Companies have been seriously impacted and face many challenges, such as financial disruption, supply chain disruption, reduced demand, and reduced revenue, and profit (Shafi et al., 2020). Due to widespread business closures, national economies are expected to contract, particularly lower-income populations. It contributed to a dramatic increase in unemployment and poverty (Fabeil et al., 2020).

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization announced that COVID-19 was a pandemic. In April 2020, 192,019 deaths and 751,501 among the 2,735,117 individuals infected

* Corresponding Author.

Email Address: lolita.velita@ctu.edu.ph (L. V. Velita)

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Corresponding author's ORCID profile:

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8784-4297>

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with the virus worldwide were reported. In the same year, 7,192 individuals with 477 deaths and 762 retrievals were reported in the Philippines. President Rodrigo Duterte announced the State of Public Health Emergency and a Calamity Declaration.

The lack of hospital rooms observed during the pandemic opted the researchers for other alternative livable facilities as it caused severe disease infection, contamination, and even the worst deaths of people because hospitals were already full and were no longer accepting patients. Should the second wave of COVID-19 cases or deadly variants come, it is very beneficial that a healthy livable facility is already in place to answer this critical situation for patients in the community.

On the other hand, the facility could modify by customizing the design depending on the customers' needs. The design is not solely for hospitals, isolation, quarantine, evacuation center, or residential facilities but can be customized for other purposes. The plan could include a clinic, school, store, hotel, office, cafe, restaurant, bars, and other livable facilities. It can be cheaper than buying a vacant lot and constructing a building with a high cost of building materials including labor, overhead, and other expenses. Used container vans for accommodation and livable facilities are familiar and profitable businesses in other countries but are not so common in the Philippines. Thus, the researchers developed this kind of product invention and innovation. This study determined the market feasibility of shipping containers converted to livable facilities for commercialization based on the following objectives: i) Four Ps of marketing (product, price, place, and promotion), ii) Industry and competitor's analysis, iii) Challenges and opportunities, and iv) Recommendations on the improvements and developments of the converted shipping containers to livable facilities.

2. Materials and methods

The project employed mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative). Survey questionnaires were also utilized. Google Forms and interviews using a phone and other online platforms (Zoom, Google Meet, Facebook Messenger) were used.

A total of 239 respondents were MSMEs, Local Government Units (LGUs), and working professionals. Random sampling was used using the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) registered MSMEs in Cebu, Philippines. Convenience snowball quota sampling was used for LGUs and working professionals. The data were obtained from Facebook, marketplaces, websites, online shopping stores, business sites, Local Government Units (LGUs) sites, and various industries. Respondents answered via Google Forms and phone calls. Informed consent was obtained before the data gathering. The study covered the cities and provinces in Cebu, Philippines.

The questionnaire was composed of three main parts: i) Profile, ii) Five-point Likert-scale on the

awareness of converted shipping containers, agreement of converted shipping containers, willingness to buy the converted shipping containers, and the willingness to customize the shipping containers, and iii) Open-ended questions on their comments and suggestions on how to improve the design, feature, quality, maintenance, payment terms and support services of the invented livable products. The questionnaire was face-validated and tested for Cronbach Alpha for internal reliability.

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, a Google form link was also sent to the respondents to answer in place of the phone interview. Data was encoded in Microsoft Excel. Respondents were contacted again using mobile text messaging or Facebook Messenger in cases where clarifications on answers were needed.

The respondent's profile and other variable results were tabulated and analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Descriptive statistics were employed.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Profile of respondents

Table 1 shows a total of 238 respondents were selected randomly from the list of accredited and registered Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) from the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). Working professionals from various industries in Cebu. Convenience sampling was used. The respondents were predominantly single (55.9%) with the majority income of at least P20,000 per month. The majority do not own a property (55.4%) which motivated the researchers to conduct the study as they are the primary target markets of the invented livable container facilities.

3.2. 4Ps of marketing (Product, price, place, and promotion)

The marketing mix reflects the numerous actions that have been undertaken to establish and illustrate the link between the establishment of brand equity and marketing operations. In terms of product evaluation, the four pillars of the marketing mix are appropriate. Still, the extended marketing mix concept, which includes people, processes, and physical aspects, is used (Niazi et al., 2021).

Marketing contributes to the world's current environmental challenges like other company functions. It has a part to play in figuring out how to solve these environmental issues. According to the study, marketing through green marketing, specifically green marketing methods, is tackling the

problem with positive effects such as higher organizational performance and a better physical environment leading to long-term development (Kinoti, 2011).

3.2.1. Product

Table 2 shows that most of the respondents wanted to buy residential properties as it is ranked number one, followed by Farm or Agricultural Properties and Apartment for business purposes. These survey results would help the researchers design and produce more for these three most wanted livable facilities.

In the Philippines, residential houses are needed as seismic activity is expected in the country, and roughly 20 typhoons strike each year, devastating lives, livelihoods, and houses. According to the country's largest home developer group, the housing gap is anticipated to be 4 million units.

Table 1: Respondents' profile

Respondent's profile	Count	Percent (%)
Civil status		
Single	133	55.9
Married	95	39.9
Separated	4	1.7
Widow/Widower	6	2.5
Monthly income		
PHP 0–20,000	98	41.2
PHP 20,000–30,000	57	23.9
PHP 30,000–40,000	19	8.0
PHP 40,000–50,000	18	7.6
PHP 50,000-100,000	29	12.2
PHP 100,00 and above	16	6.7
Preferred Not to Say	1	0.4
n=238	238	100.0
Ownership of a property		
Yes	106	44.5
No	132	55.4
Total	238	100.0

Table 2: Property wanted to buy

Property they wanted to buy	Frequency	Rank
Residential	128	1
Farm/Agricultural properties	57	2
Apartment	53	3
Commercial business establishment	44	4
Beach resort	36	5
Townhouse	24	6
Container house	15	7
Business office	12	8
Hotel	7	9
Row house	4	10.5
Others	4	10.5
Clinic	3	12.5
Hospital	3	12.5
School	1	14

Table 3 shows that the respondents were aware (39.5%) and fully aware (37%) for a total awareness percentage of (76.5%) that shipping containers could be converted into livable facilities. These results mean that there is no difficulty for researchers to introduce and promote the products to respondents as future target markets as they are aware that shipping containers could be an excellent alternative to livable facilities depending on their needs and preferences.

Shipping containers converted into livable homes have the potential to increase their demand because of their quality, transferability, affordability, and being environmentally friendly (Abrasheva et al., 2012).

Predominantly in Table 4, the respondents agreed (59.2%) that shipping containers can be converted into livable facilities. This will help the researchers get realistic numbers to help them develop shipping containers into habitable facilities because of major respondent agreements for its conversion. Likewise, this result gives essential data that would help the researchers produce and continue the invention as many target customers agreed that it will be converted to livable facilities. Shipping containers can be reused for several architectural designs and benefits (Radwan, 2015).

Table 3: Awareness of livable shipping container conversion

Awareness of livable shipping container conversion	Frequency	Percent
Fully aware	88	37.0
Aware	94	39.5
Not aware	49	20.6
Fully not aware	7	2.9
Total	238	100.0

Table 4: Level of agreement of livable shipping container

Level of agreement	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	88	37.0
Agree	141	59.2
Disagree	9	3.8
Total	238	100.0

In Table 5, the respondents have a very positive result of their willingness to buy (50.85%) the converted shipping containers to livable facilities and very willing to accept (20.6%) with a total of (71.45 %) willingness to buy. This result has motivated the researchers to design and develop more shipping containers for livable facilities. There is a possibility of a bigger market for this new product development as (71.45%) of the respondents are willing to buy, which is already a captured market for this study. Residential house shortages could be addressed by recycling the shipping containers as a replacement, especially for developing countries as socialized housing.

Table 5: Willingness to buy

Willingness to buy livable shipping container	Frequency	Percent (%)
Very willing	49	20.6
Willing	121	50.8
Unwilling	59	24.8
Very unwilling	9	3.8
Total	238	100.0

In Table 6, the respondents have chosen the top three factors to buy: Quality and price, design, repair, and maintenance. Quality and price ranked first, followed by layout, and repair and maintenance as the third priority. These results will give an idea for the researchers to focus on the quality and price of the product. In this very competitive business world, an inventor and entrepreneur will prioritize the

quality of the product to excel in the market coupled with affordable price. Price and quality significantly impact customer satisfaction (Malik et al., 2012).

Table 6: Factors to consider in buying a livable shipping container

Factors considered in a livable shipping container	Frequency	Rank
Quality	182	1
Price	182	1
Design	119	2
Repair and maintenance	115	3
Shipping delivery	85	4
Others	2	5

Table 7 shows that the respondents are willing to customize the container facility with a total percentage of 85.7% comprising the highest rate of willingness (52.9%) and very helpful (32.8%). This result will help the researchers to develop creative designs from the perspective of their customers that would enable them to make the invented products attractive and saleable in the market. Product customization is now the trend in the market to fit and suit the varying and changing needs and wants of people in this very competitive digital business world. There is high demand for product customization wherein firms seek strategic fit for more effective customization (Pallant et al., 2020).

Table 7: Willingness to customize

Willingness to customize livable shipping container	Frequency	Percent (%)
Very willing	78	32.8
Willing	126	52.9
Unwilling	28	11.8
Very unwilling	6	2.5
Total	238	100.0

3.2.2. Price

Price is also a significant factor when people buy their products and services. In Table 8, respondents expressed that they are willing to pay the converted container for P350,000 for each facility with the highest percentage (81.9%). The researchers will try to find minimalist yet quality, comfortable, modern, and with proper insulation and ventilation. Also, inexpensive materials of good quality could also be looked for to match their pricing needs and capture the needed structures and components of the container facility. The price is the amount customers exchange for the benefits or services or the total worth of all the products or services (Riaz and Tanveer, 2012). The benefits of owning or using the goods or services are exchanged. The buyer must pay for the purchase of goods and the product's price to the consumer. The most crucial factor is price. This is a critical component that influences a customer's decision. The only variable in the marketing mix is the price (Al-Majali, 2012).

Price is an essential element in the marketing mix as it broadly impacts the profitability of any business (Singh, 2012). Prices affect the cost of the goods, marketing strategy, and costs associated with distribution, advertising costs, or price variations

like the market (Singh, 2012). Three essential capabilities, market intelligence, pricing, and product, will lead to a competitive advantage (Falahat et al., 2020).

3.2.3. Place

Table 9 shows the preferred location of the property where the respondents wanted to put the converted shipping container in the City/Urban community, the second is in the rural community, and the last is in a suburban neighborhood. They wanted to install their livable properties in the city for residential and commercial purposes.

Products should be readily available anytime to customers (Singh, 2012). Marketing channels and intermediaries are vital to make goods and services closer and more conveniently available to customers. Customer feedback is crucial to improving the quality of the product (Thabit and Raewf, 2018). Container dwelling supports bulldozer urbanism and perpetuates urban isolation by reducing the importance of urban residence in migrant workers' daily lives (Ling, 2020).

Table 8: Amount willing to pay

Amount willing to pay	Frequency	Percent (%)
PHP 0-350,000	195	81.9
PHP 350,000-400,000	24	10.1
PHP 400,000-500,000	10	4.2
PHP 500,000-600,000	3	1.3
PHP 600,000-above	6	2.5
Total	238	100.0

Table 9: Preferred location of livable shipping container

Preferred location of livable shipping container	Frequency	Rank
City/Urban community	138	1
Rural community	78	2
Suburban community	61	3

3.2.4. Promotion

Table 10 shows the preferred platform of promotional strategies to advertise the convertible shipping container is social media that comprise Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. TV commercials and websites follow social media platforms. Social media is the cheapest mode of advertisement now that has a broader coverage locally and internationally. This is advantageous to Filipino companies as Filipinos are fond of using Facebook.

According to World Stat, the Philippines is the 8th top Facebook user in Asia. Many Filipinos are fond of using it, specifically when shopping online for their needed products and services. However, how entrepreneurs create content spills the difference for customers to attract and persuade them to purchase.

3.3. Industry and competitor analysis

Shipping containers have several names that store the products and deliver them to different countries. It became famous as an alternative affordable means for a livable facility. There is an

increasing interest in this innovation because it is relatively inexpensive, structurally sound, and has an abundant supply (Abrasheva et al., 2012). In fact, in Bantayan, Cebu, Philippines, there is a well-known resort hotel made of containers. Few in the Philippines have already started using a shipping container as their residence, office, and commercial spaces. This is in the Philippines and is already widely used in the USA and European countries.

Table 10: Preferred platform of promotional strategies

Preferred platform of promotional strategies	Frequency	Rank
Social media	177	1
TV commercial	113	2
Website	96	3
Print Ads	78	4
Radio	34	5
Others	6	6

The idea of converting shipping containers could be the next big commercial real estate architecture trend. Using green roofs and walls was shown to be the most successful technique. They lowered energy consumption by 13.5 percent, compared to 3.6 percent for the courtyard, which only reduced total energy consumption by 3.6 percent. Photovoltaic (P.V.) panels were also installed to improve the environment's long-term viability (Taleb et al., 2019).

3.4. Residential shipping container construction is trending

A shipping container is a steel frame with a lid that is usually cuboid in shape and standardized across the board. Container is a term used in global trade. It is directly linked to a shopping container that can load various modes of transportation without requiring the contents to be unpacked (Radwan, 2015). Thousands of shipping containers lie in ports that could be turned into quality housing. The average shipping container is rated to carry 67,000 pounds and can withstand eight other fully-loaded shipping containers resting on top of it which is about 376 tons per square inch.

3.5. Challenges and opportunities

An open-ended question was asked from the respondents on the challenging comments and suggestions to improve the converted shipping container. Their responses were grouped according to themes. Thematic analysis was used to highlight important and relevant themes: Price, product, place, and promotion (4Ps of marketing).

3.5.1. Product

The respondents expressed that the converted shipping container should be uniquely designed, modern, aesthetic, affordable, and of good quality. It should have the necessities needed for living and appeal to the vast majority. The respondents

expressed proper insulation and ventilation since the Philippines is a tropical country and the container made of metal is hot. It should be eco-friendly, has a self-sufficient power supply using solar panels, and be free from hazardous agents. There is a rising trend of consumers willing to spend on green products and the potential of green products in the market. Green innovation has a positive effect on the firm's performance (Hasan and Ali, 2015).

The corporate competitive advantage was positively correlated with green products and green process innovation performance. As a result, the investment in green development and process innovation was beneficial to the businesses. Companies should understand green innovation's correct value and position (Chen et al., 2006).

3.5.2. Price

The respondents' primary consideration in buying the container is that it should be affordable compared to traditional housing, which is very expensive. Looking for affordable yet quality containers and materials should be used to manufacture the converted container to have a lasting performance of its usability. A minimalist design, "Less is more," to provide the essential parts of the container house is their primary concern. Affordable but has captured the necessary structure and design fundamentals in building a home or any livable facility is favorable.

3.5.3. Place

This refers to the location and the marketing channels. The respondents expressed that they wanted to put their container facility in the city or urban areas for residential and commercial purposes. Delivery should be fast and readily available. Retailers, dealers, and marketing channels should introduce to reach the provinces in remote areas with no access to electricity. Putting solar panels in container facilities can be very beneficial for those without electricity access.

3.5.4. Promotion

It refers to integrated marketing communication. They are advertising, direct marketing, sales promotion, internet marketing, and public relation. Respondents wanted the publicity of converted shipping containers to advertise for them to be aware. They wanted it via social media, especially Facebook, the most widely used social media platform.

Many businesses use green marketing methods to improve their image and commercial performance. Green marketing is the firm's ability to create safe yet environmentally friendly products and services through recyclable and easily decomposable packaging, better pollution control strategies, and

more efficient energy use (Mukonza and Swarts, 2020).

Formal marketing grew increasingly crucial as marketplaces became more competitive. It became increasingly vital as a way for businesses to continue to expand their markets and market shares. Because the wealth gained might invest in improving the quality of life of individuals within and outside, the comforting assumption was that the most promising strategy for development was to pursue economic expansion relentlessly (Peatti, 2008). Green promotion has a positive effect on the firm's performance (Hasan and Ali, 2015).

4. Conclusion

Two Hundred thirty-eight (238) respondents participated in this study. Most were single business owners with an income of at least P20,000 per month. Most of the respondents were aware of the conversion of a shipping container and were willing to buy the converted shipping facility. Quality and price are their primary consideration in purchasing the product. Most respondents considered social media as the primary means of promoting the product to them such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. They are willing to order the facility four months after the study and stressed their willingness to customize the product they would like to buy.

5. Recommendations

Highlighted are the specific recommendations which are proposed based on the results gathered. These should be considered to make the converted shipping container marketable, profitable, and sustainable. First, more creative designs of converted shipping containers could be made to resist hurricanes, storm surges, tornados, and earthquakes are perfect to be used in the Philippines, which is prone to natural calamities as it is situated in the Ring of Fire. The super typhoon international name, "RAI" just hit Central Visayas on December 16, 2021, and had devastating effects losing peoples' lives and damaging houses, infrastructures, roads, and bridges.

Second, recycling inventions like shipping containers converted to livable facilities that are more eco-friendly might be promoted. Not utilizing the bulk of unused containers in shipping yards and warehouses will add to the waste, air, and water pollution problems. Minimizing traditional brick and cement is very beneficial to people and the environment.

Third, green products, green infrastructures, and green businesses for healthier lives and a safer and sustainable green environment might be promoted.

Fourth, for the product, there will be more creative and innovative product designs trying to capture the changing needs and wants of target markets that are eco-friendly and not harmful to people and the environment. This type of building material is suited in the Philippines as shipping

containers are already typhoon and earthquake built that could stand and is stable amidst any calamities in the country as situated in the ring of fire where storm and earthquake are expected to happen.

While writing this paper, the Philippines just experienced the super typhoon with its international name Rai which hit the Visayas region on December 16, 2021, and lost many lives and properties. This is the cause of poor housing materials that could not stand the strong wind, heavy rain, strong sea waves, and storm surge. This invention is a good alternative for residential and other livable properties to save people's lives and personal properties. Adding solar panels for this converted shipping container as an added feature could be very advantageous to saving electricity bills and valuable to continue the business operation in case of an electrical shutdown, earthquakes, and typhoons expected to happen in the Philippines.

Fifth, for the price, it is recommended to produce affordable products but still maintain the quality of the product. The price is also the number one consideration of the respondents. With the advent of technology nowadays, people can shop from one store to another through Facebook, Websites, Instagram, and other social media platforms. They can compare products in terms of quality and price; selling at an affordable price could be better to attract and capture the target markets.

This invention of converting shipping containers as an alternative to housing and other livable properties could be competitive in terms of price. The traditional form of the house is very costly considering the high costs of construction materials and the labor of people to build or construct the structure which will take several months before it will be complete before occupying the building.

Sixth, for the place, marketing channels are vital to selling and marketing the product to its target customers and buyers. These people are the retailers, wholesalers, distributors, marketers, agents, and intermediaries who serve as the marketing arm to transfer and sell the product to its end users.

Inventors and producers could now focus on developing creative and innovative designs of products and services, quality, and product features to attract the market. At the same time, the marketing channels will also focus on marketing and selling the products to target customers and buyers.

Seventh, in regard to promotion, there is a need to promote MSMEs through advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, direct marketing, social media, and interactive marketing, MSMEs. Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, the social media platforms are currently the most effective and cheapest means of promoting the products. Most Filipino people use social media to buy their favorite products and services and easily connect to their family, friends, siblings, relatives, colleagues, business associates, and partners.

During the pandemic, Facebook is the fastest, easiest, most convenient, and no-cost mode of

communication in buying products and services to avoid buying the products physically to avoid COVID infection. The threat of new variants and another wave of the virus have made people rely on Facebook to buy their needed products online to be safe from this dreaded disease. Facebook and other social media platforms are highly recommended. You can use the Facebook page to boost your advertisement and quickly promote the products to the target audience and markets.

Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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