Abstract

The South African taxi industry plays a vital role in the public transport sector. However, its deregulation has led to challenges like congestion, increased taxi violence, and reckless driving, which have prompted the post-Apartheid government to try and reform it. Its attempts are visible through the Taxi Recapitalization Programme and the Bus Rapid Transit Network. Both of these programmes aimed to reform the taxi industry. However, they have differences amongst them. The taxi recapitalization programme focused on replacing ageing taxis with newer New Taxi Vehicles. The Bus Rapid Transit network is a bus-based network system with dedicated lanes, and it aimed to replace taxis on some of its routes in return for a stake in the Bus Operating Company and to operate the system. In this sense, this system rests on a partnership that promised to yield a win for the taxi industry and improve public transport. This study sought to understand how the taxi industry was affected by the BRT in light of this promised outcome. This question was answered through a case study of one of the associations that were affected by Phase 1A of the Rea Vaya, as Johannesburg's BRT is known.

The study used semi-structured interviews to gather data from taxi association bosses, taxi owners, taxi drivers, and officials and consultants hired by the City of Johannesburg. Secondary, data was also essential in understanding the introduction of the BRT and its key components. The study found that the varied interests within associations led to different perceptions of the BRT. The BRT split associations between pro and anti-BRT factions with associations mobilizing against the BRT. As a result, only the former faction embraced BRT and associations continue to operate alongside the BRT in their traditional routes. The study identified some obstacles towards the reform of the taxi industry and further provided recommendations that could help in overcoming them. Overall the study argued that although the City made a promise of a win-win outcome, it will not be feasible under Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) - the operational model of BRTs.