



Emergence of Commercial Motorcycle as a Means of Urban Transportation in Oyo Township

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Abstract

The collapse of public intra-city transport system paved way for the rise of motorcycles popularly referred to as 'okada' as means of public transportation in Nigeria. Motorcycles are used for public transportation in most Nigeria towns and cities. This study therefore, examined the emergence of commercial motorcycle as means of urban transportation in Oyo Township. The population of the study covered all commercial motorcycle operators in Oyo Township, with 100 commercial motorcyclists sampled using purposive sampling technique with information from primary source collected through the use of self designed questionnaire. The data collected were analysed using frequency count and simple percentage. The results showed that different factors contributed to the emergence of commercial motorcycle as a means of transportation in Oyo Township and that it has impact on socio-economic activities of the study area in terms of movement of goods and services as well as in creation of jobs for the people that engaged in it. The study therefore suggests that there is need for government to educate and enlighten commercial motorcycle operators on the laws guiding their operations; they also need to be empowered so as to reduce poverty.

Keywords: Transportation, Commercial motorcycle, Socio-economic activities, Motorcyclists, Job creation

Introduction

Transport is a critical sector of any economy, whose multiplying effects, particularly on socio-economic development, cannot be, ignored. Transport creates time and place utilities by changing the geographical position of goods and people. This role becomes more significant if one realizes that, spatial pattern of demand does not correspond with spatial availability of supply. Therefore transport is needed as an intervening

opportunity to overcome the spatial differences and regional inequalities through technological advancement. Man has been able to develop various form of transport that enables him to travel in any medium of the environment through water, land and air. The huge investment by the different tiers of government and private sector investors in transport infrastructure provision and the delivery of the transport services in Nigeria underscores the pivotal role of



transport in the overall development of the country. Besides, there is hardly any sector of the economy that is not linked to the transport sector. In short, rate at which the efficiency and effectiveness of mobility and accessibility of passengers and goods are achieved would determine the level of performance of the transport sector among other things.

The general increase in population and rural-urban movement lead to congestion in urban cities and rapid growth of demand on transportation system. At times, the conventional urban transport which consists of buses and taxis could no longer effectively fill the transportation need of our urban cities. Urban transportation in Nigeria has been largely by road, indeed of the trips made by vehicles, 70% are done through the private sector dominated public transport (Oyesiku 2002). Adesanya (1998) noted that decline in organized public transport system has led to rapid growth in non-conventional means of public transport, initially provided by mini buses and shared taxi, vans and motorcycles as means of transportation. Commercial Motorcycles or 'Okada' are also commonly used in some other West African countries, including, Benin (zémidjans), Burkina Faso, Liberia (phen-phen) and Sierra Leone (Odidi 2012; Mbella Mouelle, 2014).

A combination of factors can be identified as responsible for the use of motorcycles as means of intra-city transport in Nigeria. One important

factor was the rapid rate of urbanization in the face of inadequate means of transportation. Another factor that contributed to the emergence of motorcycles for commercial transportation in Nigeria was the high rate of unemployment prevalent in the country. Those who lost their job desperately sought for employment and many found a way out by employing themselves in the commercial motorcycle business, encouraged by government owned commuters that were grossly inadequate for the population that needed services. Olubomehi (2012) stated that the collapse of public intra-city transport system paved way for the rise of motorcycles as means of public transportation in Nigeria.

Another important factor that contributed to the growth of Okada business in Nigeria was the relative lucrative nature of the business. Khotkina, (2007) noted that this informal sector has thus become a major provider of employment especially in developing and transitional economies. The advantages which motorcycles have over other transport modes can also be said to have accounted for its use for commercial transportation and the widespread nature of the Okada business. One of these advantages is that it reaches location where commercial vehicles may not reach due to bad roads. There is no road too narrow and there is no one too remote for motorcycles to reach. Beside, unlike motor cars, they are able to take passengers to their door steps. Also,



they are faster and save time than other means of road transportation. They are capable of manoeuvring their way through traffic congestion and they do not stop like commercial vehicle at bus stop to pick passengers. This makes it a very fast means of transport. Moreover, all spare parts are cheaper and readily available than those of motor cars and buses.

While the above combination of factors contributed to the emergence and widespread use of motorcycles for commercial transportation in Nigeria, there some factors that have helped to sustain its operations over years. The government inability to provide conventional mode of transport has necessitated the use of motorcycles (two- wheel auto mobiles) and tricycles (three – wheel auto mobiles) to move people goods and services from one point to another under conditions considered to be unsafe and accident – prone. The inability to provide adequate motor vehicles for urban transportation has caused the influence of motorcycles for urban public transport into cities in Nigeria thus the increase in the use of motorcycle for urban cities in the country (Ogunsanya and Galtima, 1993). Motorcycles are now one of the primary modes of transportation in Nigeria, and considered as a cheap and adequate transportation system, the most popular informal one in the country so far. Even in remote villages they arrive at regular intervals. It has become a means of transportation regularly used by the young and the old, men and women. It can only be

assumed that this mode therefore evolved as public commercial transport in response to needs but there could be several other underlining factors. The understanding of these factors is crucial in planning for this mode of transport which has no role to play on any urban routes as intra – city public transport (Bawa-Allah, 1992). . Therefore, the main aim of the study is to determine the major factors encouraging the use of motorcycle for commercial transport in urban settlement of Oyo and as well as examine its impact on socio-economic activities of the people.

Rationale for the Research

In the last two decades, mobility and accessibility problems appear to have been the main challenged facing Nigeria and her cities in the country's desire for development. The government's inability to provide conventional mode of transport has necessitated use of motorcycles and tricycles to move people, goods and services from one point to another under conditions considered to be unsafe and accident – prone.

The significance of public transport in many developing countries lies in the fundamental fact the mobility and accessibility are essential for economic growth and of necessity to provide efficient and effective movement for goods and services. The failure of the public transportation system however and indeed overall transportation system in the cities has led to further marginalization of the greater majority of the people in these cities and



consequently; economic deprivation (Oyesiku 2002). The growth pattern in the settlements has also complicated transport demand situation and the public transportation services within the state have also been insufficient. Thus, inadequate and inefficient transport situation are issues of major concern. Therefore, there is need to examine the need for commercial motorcycle as means of solving problem of inadequate transport means in our cities.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to find out the factors leading to and encouraging the use of motorcycle for urban transportation in Oyo Township. The study also examined the impact of commercial motorcycle on socio-economic activities in the study area.

Research Questions:

The following research questions were raised for the study:

1. What are the factors encouraging the use of motorcycle for commercial transportation in Oyo township?
2. What are the socio-economic impacts of using motorcycle for commercial transportation in Oyo township?

The Study Area

In real political and administrative sense, Oyo was established around 1837 as a new capital of Oyo kingdom following the destruction of old Oyo (130km to the north) by Fulani's during a period of tribal and civic wars. The town is located latitude 7°N of the

equator and 3°E of the Greenwich meridian. Oyo lies in a transitional zone between tropical rain forest and savannah. Hence displays physical characteristics of both zones the regions about 55km north of Ibadan (Ibadan the capital of Oyo state). Oyo region comprises Oyo itself and all its sub-urban and settlement. The sub-urban and settlement include Ilora, Fiditi, Awe, Iware, Akinmorin and Jobele including the villages and farmsteads of this settlement e.g. Imini and Oluwatedo in Ilora Oyo region consists of four local government area namely Afijio, Oyo east, Oyo west and Atiba. According to population census of 2006, the region harbors almost 560,982 people.

Methodology

A descriptive research design of the survey method was employed in this study for information to be obtained from a representative sample of a target population to describe a situation. The population of the study covers all commercial motorcycle operators in Oyo Township, with 100 commercial motorcyclists sampled using purposive sampling technique. This sampling technique was adopted to ensure direct contact with the commercial motorcyclists in the study area. Twenty motorcycle riders were selected from each of the five major Okada parks, located at Owode; Water-Owode; Akeesan; Gedu and Oroki area of the town. The research instrument adopted to collect relevant data for this study was questionnaire. The instrument was validated and the reliability coefficient of 0.74 was



obtained and considered adequate. The method adopted in analyzing the results involved coding of the variable in the data collected with frequencies

which were later transformed into percentages. The results are presented in tables.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the factors encouraging the use of motorcycle for commercial transportation in Oyo township?

Table 1: Factors encouraging the use of motorcycle for commercial transportation

S/N	Items	Yes	%	NO	%
1	Non availability of public transport and Poor road networking in the study area	94	94.0	6	6.0
2	Low number of private commercial taxi and buses.	57	57.0	43	43.0
3	Need for door to door operation of motorcycle	64	64.0	36	36.0
4	Increase in population and rapid urbanization	65	65.0	35	35.0
5	Government empowerment programme	55	55.0	45	45.0

Table 1 displays factors encouraging the use of motorcycle for commercial transportation in the study area. Items 1,2,3,4 and 5 are found related to the research question 1. 94.0% of the total respondents supported the notion that non availability of public transport and poor road networking in Oyo town leads to the use of Okada as commercial means of transportation while (6.0%) did not. Limited number of privately owned taxi and commercial buses in the town accounted for by 57.0 % of the respondents while 43.0% had negative view about this. Accessibility and

flexibility of Okada as a factor of its use was supported by 64.0 % of the total respondents, while 36.0 % of the respondents had contrary opinion. Increase in population and rapid urbanization was supported by 65.0% of the respondents, while government empowerment programmes as a factor had 55.0% support of the respondents.

Research Question 2: What are the socio-economic impacts of using motorcycle for commercial transportation in Oyo township?

**Table 2:** Socio-economic impact of using motorcycle for commercial transportation.

S/N	Items	Yes	%	No	%
1.	Okada transport business is risky and costly	55	55.0	45	45.0
2.	It is economically viable and profitable	52	52.0	48	48.0
3.	It has promoted students drop-out from school	60	60.0	40	40.0
4.	It has provided job for people in the society.	62	62.0	38	38.0
5.	It has aided activities of the people in the area	59	59.0	41	41.0

The data presented in table 2 shows the respondents' opinion on commercial transportation business, 55.0% of the respondents are of the view that the business is risky and costly. Of the respondents 52.0% were of the view that despite this negativity, the business is economically viable and profitable. Moreover, 60.0% of the respondents indicated that Okada business promoted students drop-out from school, while 62.0% and 59.0% of the respondents agreed that Okada business led to job creation and enhanced economic activities.

Discussion

The study revealed that non availability of public transport; poor road networking; limited number of privately owned taxi and buses in Oyo town, led to the use of Okada as commercial means of transportation. This corroborated the view of Gambo, Ibrahim & Itari (2017), that the use of motorcycles for transportation and especially for commercial purposes, began about the mid-eighties as a result of the inadequacy in the scope, coverage and services rendered by the

public transport system. In addition, increase in population, rapid urbanization and government empowerment programmes donating or giving out motor bikes out on loan also contributed substantially to the use of Okada as commercial means of transportation. It was also evident that the need for door to door transport services that can be rendered by motorcycle equally supported its use as means of urban transportation in the area.

The finding also revealed that Okada business is equally embraced as a means of providing employment for people most especially young school leavers and artisans whose economic activities are turning to be unviable in the study area. This agreed with the works of Adesanya (1998), Solagberu, Nasir, Ogundipe, Adekanye and Abdur-Rahman (2006), Gbadamosi (2006) and Arosayin, Olowosulu and Oyeyemi, (2011) findings that commercial motorcycling are readily available means of livelihood to many unemployed youths (graduates and undergraduates), retirees and illiterates



in Nigeria. The findings also indicated that Okada business is lucrative to the operators. This finding supports Abdussalam and Wahab (2014) who affirmed that majority of the Okada riders interviewed believed that their standard of living has improved with the business.

Conclusion

This study has established that several factors contributed to the emergence and proliferation of motorcycle as a means of intra city transport in Oyo Township. The factors include rapid rate of urbanization in the area, collapse and in some instances non availability of public mass transit system and economic melt-down. These factors encouraged people to seek alternative means of survival and commercial motorcycles venture rapidly offered such opportunity. The motorcycle transportation business has contributed positively to the economy of Oyo town.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. There is need to educate and enlighten commercial motorcycle operators on the laws guiding their operations.
2. Commercial motorcyclists should be empowered so as to reduce poverty level.
3. Government should also aid the commercial motorcyclist through tax reduction on imported motorbikes so as to make them available at cheaper rate.

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