
Commercial Motorcycle: Income Generation And Harsh Economy

The urban informal transport sub-sector, the motorcycle taxis, is gaining prominence in the Nigerian society as it has provided opportunities of self-employment and income generation. To throw more light on the above, the motorcycle taxis was said to have been rampant in the late 1980s owing to the economic downturn in Nigeria which was partly a consequences of the adoption of liberalized economic policy in the form of Structural Adjustment Program (SAP). The consequences of the above policy such as rapid urbanization, unemployment and inadequate intra-city commercial transport etc. led to the inception of the motorcycle taxis. At this juncture, it is important to reiterate that the inadequate intra-city commercial transport gave more opportunities to the motorcycle taxis as they are fast, ready and swiftly navigate narrow and bad urban roads amidst hectic traffic.

Put succinctly, Madunago, (2004) argued that SAP brought about mass retrenchment and many of the retrenched workers, became commercial motorcycle riders. As the economic situation keeps worsening, the number of commercial motorcycle riders keeps increasing in the country. Ogbuiji, (2001) argued that the rise of commercial motorcycling was due to the high cost of doing other businesses necessitated by astronomic rents, epileptic power supply, heavy taxation and low patronage. Thus, as a means of combating unemployment and poverty, many humbled themselves to go into commercial motorcycling.

First, there is the economic and social situation that affects the cities of Sub-Saharan Africa: the economic crisis, the recessive effects of the structural adjustment plans that started to be introduced in the 1980s and massive under-employment, particularly among the young (deVreyer and Roubaud, 2013). As the job required few qualifications, many poorly educated young people saw motorcycle taxis as an opportunity to earn money (Howe and Davis, 2002; Dorier-Apprill and Domingo, 2004; Meagher, 2013). Along with non-compliance with administrative and regulatory formalities, the small proportion of businesses which take on bank loans, the fact that training is received “on the job” and the lack of social protection, this is one of the characteristics of transport enterprises belonging to the informal sector of the economy (Cervero, 2000; Dimitriou and Gakenheimer, 2011). Hirers fall in two groups, the work-and-pay drivers and the renters. A large number of drivers yearn to own their motorcycle, which has encouraged the spread of so-called work-and-pay contracts, which are usually written. These contracts exist in most cities, for example Accra (OtengAbabio andAgyemang, 2012), Douala (Ngabmen et al., 2000) or Nigerian cities (Oyesiku, 2001). They differ from the hire-purchase contracts that are sometimes available in other geographical areas with regard to the power the motorcycle owner has over the hirer (Panier, 2012).

Bike riding is thus an inherently paradoxical activity, potentially enabling riders to escape economically from the status of being dependent youth, while carrying the potential of remaining stuck in this liminal status because of its socially and morally questionable quality (Menzel 2011), in the long run endangering economic success. As already stated, becoming an adult, a relational person, having people depending on oneself rather than depending on others, thus having “wealth-in-people” (Bledsoe 1980; Shaw 2000, 2002), is determined not only by economic factors, but by fellow citizens’ social and moral recognition of one’s doing—and

denied morality means denied adulthood. Nathaniel King puts it: “The ‘haves’ strive for resources for prestige maintenance; the ‘have-nots’ strive for resources for survival” (2007:12).

In addition to the well-being of its users, public transport plays a vital role in the productivity of cities which in turn has a direct bearing on the national economies (World Bank, 2001; Lyndon and Todd, 2006). Generally, the Okada operators derive reasonable profit from their operations. Most of the operators interviewed claimed that they make an average of about N1,000.00 to N3,000.00 on a daily basis after satisfying all expenses (Personal Communication with Mr. Raphael Adeyeye, Okada Rider, on 24 June, 2011). They are seen as people who cannot get better jobs in the society (Personal Communication with Mr. Samuel Oladotun, an Okada rider, 27 June, 2011).

Another challenge confronting the Okada riders or operators is the high cost of setting up the business. A prospective businessman willing to go into Okada business would need between N100,000 and N180,000 to start the business. By this arrangement, an operator is allowed to own a motorcycle which he could use for business with the understanding of paying for it in installments until the cost of the motor bike is fully off-set (Personal Communication with Mr. TemitopeAtanda, an Okada operator, 12 August, 2011). Apart from this, operators of motorcycles could also become owners by borrowing money from micro finance banks, cooperative societies, family members and friends (Olaore, 2011: 33). Okada business has empowered many Nigerians economically (Personal Communication with Mr. OyeyemiKazeem on 4 July, 2011).

Several reasons have been identified to propel people (mostly male) to engage in commercial motorcycle. Among these are harsh economic environment, unemployment and retrenchment of service, poverty.

In addition, most females will not be able to meet up with the energy demanded this occupation which is so strenuous and requiring high risk ventures (Olusayo et al., 2015). From January to June 2016, the number of e-bike accidents accounted for nearly 70% of the total number of accidents in Jiangsu Province. sers in Beijing and Hangzhou. The results showed that gender and driving experience were significantly related to traffic accidents. Men were more likely to have accidents than women. The high level of unemployment also made a lot of people to join the business of commercial motorcycling (Salako et al., 2013).