

Development of the niger delta



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ROAD TRANSPORTATION AND THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE NIGER DELTA: A CASE STUDY OF WARRI METROPOLIS

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ABSTRACT

Road transportation is essential in the life of any modern society, this is because it entails the movement of people, goods, and services from one place to the other. It is the main medium used to revitalize the social, economic and political structures. It is also observed that the system of mass production relies on an efficient transport system for its existence. The data used for the study were mainly from primary and secondary sources and from the analysis of the data, it was revealed that road transportation has contributed tremendously to the socio-economic development of Warri metropolis. The development of the road transport system in Warri metropolis should therefore be encouraged because it has been and will continue to be a reliable means of promoting the socio-economic development of Warri metropolis.

INTRODUCTION

Transportation is an important activity in the life of any modern society. It involves the movement of people, goods and services on land, water and air. It refers to the process whereby objects are conveyed in space and involves the movement of these objects by a mechanism through an environmental medium. In commerce and industry, transportation is used to describe the broad range of activities concerned with the efficient movement of finished

goods from the place of production to the consumer and source of supply to the beginning of production line.

Spatial interaction is one of the most fundamental themes in human geography. It involves the movement of people, goods and services between various centres in space. In those countries where the basic road network is incomplete, it will usually be appropriate to adopt a relatively low level of geometric standards in order to release resources to provide more basic road links. This policy will generally do more to foster economic development than building a smaller number of road links to a higher standard (Transport and Road Research Laboratory, 1988).

However, Brian and Rodney (1995) observed that the comparatively low level of economic activity in many of the less developed countries is often reflected in the modest scale of their transport systems.

Transport is generally meant to promote development. Government is aware of this view hence they pay attention to the development of transport system in Nigeria (Atubi, 1995). Transport development in Nigeria, the Standard Research Institute aptly stated that the “ Economic history of Nigeria is largely the story of the opening up of its vast areas to various forms of transport resulting in the economic growth which in turn stimulated the demand for transport.” Socio-economic development of Nigeria major cities are impeded by the absence of good road transportation. It can be said that the overall pace of national economic and social development has been retarded by the present system of inequitable allocation of road transport investment between the various urban centres and rural areas.

In Onokerhoraye and Omuta (1994), Chapin (1976) argued that transportation is essentially a service, which enables people, firm and various entities to carry on activities at sites selected for this purpose.

As being observed by scholars notably Olanrewaju (1977), transport facilities contribute an important component of infrastructural facilities necessary for development. Transport according to him is regarded as a catalyst for economic development especially in rural areas.

Brown (1974), observed that the rise of motor transport in the last twenty-five years has had enormous effect. Mobility has increased and villages and towns have grown up beside roads. Also Alli (1975), observed that road network has to a great extent brought economic integration of the various states of West Africa through widespread international trade.

Omiunu and Onokerhoraye (1995) argued that rapid development of mechanical road transport has been one of the outstanding events of this modern era and has been a profound impact on the socio-economic life of a country.

Waugh and Bushell (1991), asserted that better accessibility can bring many benefits which include less time spent travelling, cheap travel, a great choice of holiday destinations, more markets for industrial products and increased trade.

Gakenheimer (1978), asserted that growing congestion in urban areas is providing an interdependent stimulus for a rethink of current transport policies.

Hammer (1976), in Wilson (1984), concluded that “ road transport has a considerable effect on our daily lives apart from ending some of them. The provision of transport is fundamental to all other forms of development. According to Akinbode (1975); in industry, the effects of transport have been two folds; firstly, through promoting specialization, a higher standard of living could be made. Secondly, the spread of information and ideas could be possible by an increasingly efficient transport system.

Kruger and Russell (2001), pointed out that transport is indispensable for the functioning and development of economic activities for the production and distribution of goods and services as well as for trade.

METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of data collection in the study area, stratified sampling technique was used to divide the study area into three zones – Okumagba zone, Ajamimogha zone and Ekurede Urhobo zone. Systematic sampling method was used to select some households, where there is more than one household in a house, random sampling method was used. The instrument used to elicit necessary information from the respondents include questionnaires, personal observations and oral interviews. However, only one hundred and fifty (150) persons were selected to represent the target population. This comprises of workers, traders, industrialists, passengers, owners of mechanical medium of road transport etc.

In analyzing the data, the statistical tools used include the use of tables, percentages and statistical technique such as the correlation statistics.

STUDY AREA

Warri is the headquarters of the Warri South Local Government Area. It is located in the Western Niger Delta region of Delta State and lies approximately between longitude $5^{\circ}44'$ and latitude $5^{\circ}30'$ and $6^{\circ}15'$ (see fig. 1). Its location in the Niger Delta area makes it a very low-lying town. The position of Wan-i is about 6 metres above the sea level on the average and no where does it rise above 8 metres. The Wan-i River borders the town on the south and eastern sides.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The means of transportation in any modern society occupies an important place in the society. Road transportation has been of great importance in our daily lives, since emphasis is now placed on punctuality to work than ever before and its necessity for greater industrial and commercial output, which has impact on our daily socio-economic life. From the field observation, several means of road transportation were identified. These include private cars, commercial taxi cabs, pick up vans, buses, motorbikes, trucks, bicycles etc. These have helped to facilitate the movement of people, goods, industrial raw materials and output and services in the area.

Table 1. 0: Road Transportation Has contributed to Socio-economic Development of your area

Effect	Respondents	
	Yes	No

Zones

Okumagba	43	7	50
Ajamimogha	39	11	50
Ekurede			
urhobo	41	9	50
Total	123	27	150
%	82	18	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2002.

From table 1. 0, it can be concluded that road transportation has contributed to the development of the area socially and economically. The result from the field survey shows that 123 respondents reacted positively to the question while only 27 respondents answered negatively. Also from the table above it can be concluded that road transportation has a lot of impact on the socio economic development process of Warri metropolis. The table 1. 0 shows that 82% of the respondents believe positively that road transportation has impact on the socio-economic development of their various areas. While only 18% believed otherwise.

Table 2. 0: Road transport, industrial and commercial output

Effect	Respondents	
	Yes	No

Zones

Okumagba	39	11	50
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Ajamimogha	33	17	50
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Ekurede			
urhobo	42	08	50

Total	114	36	150
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%	76	24	100
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Source: Fieldwork, 2002.

From table 2. 0 above, one can deduce that the road transportation network has contributed to the industrial and commercial output of the Warri metropolis. 76% of the respondents affirmed positive answer, this is to say that as a result of the condition of roads in the area industries and commercial output is low and not encouraged.

Table 3. 0: Most Preferred Public Road Transport

Mode	M/ cars	M/ Bikes	No. of respondents
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Zones

Okumagba	21	29	50
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Ajamimogha	18	32	50
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Ekurede			
urhobo	24	26	50
Total	63	87	150
%	42	58	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2002.

The table 3. 0 above, shows that a larger percentage of the respondents with 58% prefer to use motorbikes as their mode of public transport medium. According to them, the reasons are based on the fact that it is faster and convenient.

They also said that it is an alternative to motorcars when there is hold up or traffic jam. Those that prefer to take motorcars are the remaining 48% of the respondents who based their argument on the fact that the drivers of motorcars are more careful than those of motorbikes. It is safer and reduces cost, more convenient and above all accident is minimized.

Table 4. 0: Road Transport and Employment Opportunities

Effect	Responden	
	Yes	No
Zones		
Okumagba	48	2
		50

Ajamimogha	50	0	50
Ekurede			
urhobo	47	3	50
Total	145	5	150
%	96.7	3.3	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2002.

Table 4. 0 above shows that the respondents have been able to affirm greatly that road transportation has created employment opportunities to a large number of the population. The employment opportunities enumerated include drivers, mechanics, vulcanizers, spare parts dealers, motorbikes, commercial drivers, car washers etc which have increased in recent times. It was also noted that where new roads are constructed, commercial activities tend to spring up. However, those who gave negative response to this argument based their argument on the fact that in their area, there are no seasoned roads or no road at all and so transport mechanisms cannot in any way create job opportunity for them. They however, agreed that road transportation has created job opportunities in diverse areas in the metropolis.

Table 5. 0: Nature of Roads in the Study Area

Effect	Good	Fairly good	Bad	Very bad	No. of Respondents
Zones					
Okumagba	16	9	11	14	50
Ajamimogha	12	14	13	11	50
Ekurede urhobo	19	16	10	05	50
Total	47	39	34	30	150
%	31.3	26	22.7	20	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2002.

Table 5. 0 above, shows that 31. 3% of the respondents indicated that the roads in the metropolis are good, 26% indicated that they are fairly good, 22. 7% said they are bad and the remaining 20% indicated that the roads are very bad. However, from observation, it was observed that majority of the roads are very narrow, this may be because most of the roads have been built many years ago when the number of mechanisms in the metropolis was low and also when the developmental level of the metropolis was still at its initial stage. Then the density of the traffic was not envisaged to be as high as it is at present.

Table 6. 0: Condition of road transport mechanisms

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Effect	Good	Bad	No. of Respondents
Zones			
Okumagba	36	14	50
Ajamimogha	33	17	50
Ekurede urhobo	29	21	50
Total	98	52	150
%	65.3	34.7	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2002.

From table 6. 0, it is shown that road mechanisms in the metropolis i. e. cars, motorbikes are in good condition. This is based on the fact that 65. 3 percent of the respondents affirmed that they are in good condition. However, 34. 7 percent of the respondents declared that the mechanisms are not in good condition. From observation however, it was observed that a greater number of vehicles in the metropolis that are in good condition are privately owned mechanisms. The commercial cars and lorries are mostly in bad shape. This is due to ill maintenance. It was also observed that the motorbikes are not in good shape. Mechanically, most of the motorbikes expel a lot of smoke or gases that are poisonous and harmful to the environment.

Table 7. 0: Correlation Results

Product Moment Correlation RR² Significance

1. Socio-economic Dev. & Motorcar Transport 0. 50 0. 25 1. 0**
2. Socio-economic Dev. & Motorbike Transport 0. 50 0. 25 1. 0
3. Accident occurrence & Motorcar Transport 0. 95 0. 90 13. 4**
4. Accident occurrence & Motorbike Transport 0. 95 0. 90 13. 4**

**significant at 95% level.

From the analysis of the data in table 7. 0 above, it shows that the calculated value is 0. 50 and the table value is 6. 3 14 at 0. 05 or 95% confidence.

Therefore, based on this result it can be' concluded that a continuous increase in the number of motorcars is not a determinant of the relative increase on the socio-economic development of Warri metropolis. Therefore, it is assumed that as the number of motorcars increases, there is a decline in the socioeconomic development of the study area.

Conclusively, it can therefore be stated that motorcars and motorbikes which collectively form the mode of road transport in Warri metropolis has no significant relationship with the socioeconomic development of Warri metropolis. This is because an increase in the road mechanism rather than increasing the socioeconomic well being of the study area, causes problems such as traffic congestion, accidents, pollution, which in any way do not contribute to the socio-economic development of any area.

POLICY IMPLICATION

The government should provide good and all seasoned roads in the metropolis so that there can be easy flow of traffic. They should also include in the road construction plan a separate lane for motorbikes, in order to reduce the rate of accidents in the metropolis.

The government should also provide market structures for squatters or traders along the roads in order to reduce congestion and the rate of accidents on the roads.

The State and Local Governments should ensure that more roads are constructed in the metropolis to ease movement of socioeconomic activities in the area and also ensure that roads are well linked in order to reduce traffic hold up in the area. They should also try to dualise some of the major roads in the metropolis to ease the rate of traffic holdup in the study area.

The government should also provide parking space for motor vehicles and large lorries, in order to reduce the number of vehicles, motorbikes and lorries that are parked along the roadside which constitute part of the road congestion in the metropolis.

CONCLUSION

The result of the study shows that road transportation has contributed tremendously to the socio-economic development of Warri metropolis. It has provided efficient means of mobility of the populace and the movement of goods and services in the area. It has also created an enabling environment for both industrial and commercial activities in the metropolis.

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