

Information Needs and Information Seeking Behaviour of Commercial Motorcycle Operators in Benue State, Nigeria

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Abstract: The study investigated information needs and information seeking behaviour of commercial motorcycle operators in Benue State, Nigeria. Five objectives with corresponding research questions guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population for the study comprises of 38128 commercial motorcycle operators in Benue State. The sample size for the study was 396 commercial motorcycle operators who were selected using proportionate stratified and convenience sampling techniques. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled “Information Needs and Information Seeking Behaviour of Commercial Motorcycle Operators’ Questionnaire (INISBCMOQ) which was validated by experts. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha method and a reliability coefficient of 0.83 was obtained. The data collected for the study was analyzed using Frequency Counts and Percentages. The findings of the study revealed that, CMOs need information on how to own a motorcycle, prices of motorcycle, how to avoid accidents, more lucrative routes, safe routes, where to get best spare parts and traffics regulations among others. The findings also revealed the information sources of CMOs to include customers, consulting friends, listening to radio, watching and listening to television and visiting drinking joints/ beer parlours. Further, the findings revealed the difficulties encountered by CMOs in the course of seeking for information to include: inability to read, inability to use library catalogue, irregular power supply, inability to access newspaper/ magazines and lack of knowledge of computer/ internet use. The study concluded that commercial motorcycle operators just like any other category of people have a variety of information needs, ranging from general information to specific information about their commercial activities. It was recommended that, public Libraries in Nigeria should as a matter of urgency, embark on an aggressive library awareness campaign so that everybody including commercial motorcycle operators could use library resources like the internet and published materials as their source for reliable information and libraries and information centres should also see everybody as a potential information user and as such package information services for the less educated populace such as commercial motorcycle operators in a language they will understand.

Keywords: Commercial Motorcycling, Information, Information Needs and Information Seeking Behavior

I. INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, many transportation systems exist, these include Air, sea, road and railway systems. In the road system of

transportation, motor vehicles and motorcycle which include private and commercial are used to convey people, goods and services from one location to another. Commercial Motorcycle transportation has recently assumed prominent mode of moving people, goods and services as a consequence, become means of making money and livelihood for many unemployed youths in Nigeria. Those who engaged in using motorcycles for transportation for money making purpose are known and called Commercial Motorcycle Operators (CMO) or “Okadas” in some part of Nigeria including Benue State.

Commercial motorcycling has come a long way in Nigeria. According to Okah, (2008), Okada Riders’ phenomenon is a child of necessity in Nigeria. They are called “Okada,” “Achaba,” and “Going” or “Inaga” in different parts of Nigeria. It is one of the modes of transportation in Nigeria and by far, the most common form of informal transport system in Nigeria (Cervero, 2005). Akanmode (2001) described commercial motorcycling as a monster, which until the 1990s enjoyed no significant place in the nation’s socio-economic activities. The author adds that the once inconsequential motorcycle business has now occupied a centre stage in the nation’s transport system taking the cities by storm. In the words of Alao (2003), the introduction of ‘commercial motorcycling’ as an alternative means of transportation, has been one of the most discussed subject in cities in recent times. Commercial motorcycling according to the author are everywhere, in the streets, on major roads and have even dared onto the expressways to compete with other motorists. Olukunle in Adetoro (2004) did report that commercial motorcycle operators are reputed for their fast services; the flexibility of the movement of the motorcycle is often taken for granted by the operators, consequently the cyclists usually display recklessness. In the view of Ogunnowo in Adetoro (2004), commercial motorcycling is an adaptive and innovative transport service that came as a drastic response to the decline in the acquisition of new public transport service vehicles following escalating prices of vehicles

The popularity and widespread acceptance of commercial motorcycling has rapidly risen in recent years because the commercial motorcyclists have adapted easily to the prevailing economic climate in the contemporary Nigerian society which is being plagued by the dearth of taxi and bus services, hyper congestion, and poor state of roads. Also, they

become the ubiquitous features of Nigerian cities because of their low cost purchase and fuel efficiency (Cervero, 2005). The author maintained that commercial motorcycling has been described as “a unique experience” by regular passengers and tourists because in major cities like Lagos for instance where traffic congestion (and inevitable delay) represent an ever-present threat to businessmen, government workers, students of various schools and colleges, commercial motorcycling came into play to rescue countless and helpless customers from the bad and unmotorable roads.

Today, many people have seen information as one of the crucial elements of economic and national development. Access to information is regarded as a vital resource if any individual is to function effectively in the society. Commercial motorcycle operators in Nigeria, just like any other category of people in the society, require the same accessibility to information if they are to function effectively. It is as an essential resource to which individual in every society should have unimpeded access. Information is one of the tools for social, economic and a sustainable national development and has become almost indispensable for development. Sanusi (2003) buttressed the above claim that information is central to the recent social and economic transformation in both industrialized and developing nations to improve their socio-economic and developmental goals. It has also helped people in various ways of endeavour irrespective of age, gender, race or level of education.

It is very apparent today that without information, no meaningful development can be achieved. This is true for commercial motorcycle operators because it has been observed that poor information and lack of proper information by these category of people are partly responsible for many havocs and agonies they cause to themselves and the masses they serve. Information can be an agent of change both negatively and positively depending on the content and user interest. The various meanings of information from different scholars have indicated that information is vital to every individual including motorcycle operators. All that we have is based on information because it is an all pervasive creation available at many levels in previously unimaginable forms, in overwhelming quality. It is obvious that people from different walks of life have needs for information because as the population grows, and the society becomes complex, the production and need for information also expands. Moreover, with the advent of Information Communication Technology (ICT) which has made the world a global village; there is increased need for information in order to keep abreast with the new trends in the society.

Information need arise from an imbalance existing between what a person knows and what the person is supposed to know (Ozoiko, 2007). In order words, there is a gap existing between the present situation and the more desirable situation. However, information needs of various groups of people may depend on the nature of their work or the environment they find themselves. When a need is felt for something, more

often than not, people take action in order to satisfy the need and different strategies or modes of actions are resorted to. These strategies used by people in order to satisfy their need for information is the information seeking behaviour.

Information seeking behaviour is a broad term, which involves a set of actions that individuals such as commercial motorcycle operators (CMO), take to express information needs, seek information, evaluate and select information and finally uses this information to satisfy his/her information needs (Fatima and Ahmad, 2008). It is therefore described as an individual's way and manner of gathering and sourcing information for personal use, knowledge, updating and development. Though, Singh and Satija (2006) see information seeking behavior as a human process that requires adaptive and reflective control over the afferent and efferent actions of the information seeker in which behaviour results from the recognition of some needs perceived by the user, who as a consequence makes demand upon a formal system such as libraries and information centres or some other person in order to satisfy the perceived information need. Thus, the authors pointed out that information seeking behaviour essentially refers to the ability to locate discrete knowledge elements concerned with three basic resources namely, people, information and system.

The researcher has observed that, the full range of CMO's needs is at the root of motivation towards information seeking behavior. It is worthy of note to recognized that these needs arise out of the roles they play in their social life. The most relevant of these needs is their “commercial motorcycling” which constitutes most part of their daily activities within their immediate society in pursuit of their earnings and other satisfactions. CMOs just like any other individual differ and so are their approaches to information. Information seeking behavior of people can be influenced by the source of the information, content of the medium, language of communication, time and nature of information.

Commercial motorcycling is actually a development within Benue State towns that has come to stay. The current use of motorcycle to convey passengers within Benue State towns was borne out of innovation and adaptation. Virtually, every Benue town has heavy presence of commercial motorcycle operators who have done a great deal in complementing the existing taxicabs in the provision of transport service. CMOs anywhere requires information just like every other person as earlier pointed out. The sources, information needs, and quantity of information they get and their information seeking behaviour will to a large extent determine how effectively they will function as members of the larger society and contributing to a sustainable development of Nigeria.

Researches have been conducted on the information needs and information seeking behaviour of commercial motorcycle operators over the years. Adetoro (2004) carried out a study on information provision patterns, needs and seeking behavior of commercial motorcycle operators in selected Ijebu towns of

Ogun State. The study found that the information needs of commercial motorcycle operators in Ijebu towns are not being met; commercial motorcycle operator in Ijebu towns are in serious need of information to make decisions, solve problems and to reduce uncertainty; they depend more on their customers and their motorcycle association as their sources of information, more than civilized sources like libraries, the internet and published materials; information is not always available and the available information is not adequate to cater for their needs. Also their information seeking behaviour and the channels through which they seek for information are unreliable. In another related study, Nwagwu and Olatunji (2012) investigated Life Saving Information Behaviours of Commercial Motorcyclists in a Metropolitan City in Nigeria. Findings revealed that the CMOs expressed a higher level of consciousness about their own safety than the safety of their passengers. They also have a high level of awareness about, and preferred, radio and television as sources of information much more than any other. Similarly, Ozioko and Eke (2010) carried out a study to investigate the information needs and information seeking behaviour of commercial motorcycle operators in Nsukka metropolis in Enugu State of Nigeria. The result revealed that their most important information needs are; information on how to avoid accidents, where to get the best (superior) spare parts, and to know the most lucrative routes, while the most common strategies adopted to get information are through the union activities, consulting friends and experts. Some of their problems associated with seeking for information include time factor, illiteracy and absence of information centres.

Problem Statement

CMOs just like any other persons need information to effectively go about their commercial activities. The CMOs especially in Nigeria and Benue State in particular are a section of the society whose information environment needs to be investigated. It is well known that the use of motorcycle for commercial purposes has impacted significantly on the economy of Benue State. These groups of people contribute to the economic growth of a nation through the payment of taxes. In view of their place in the society and considering the dearth of statistics concerning commercial motorcycle operators in Benue State, the present study was necessitated. Their information needs, how they source information, their reasons for sourcing information, the difficulties they encounter in the course of sourcing information and the challenges encountered as a result of lack of information is the concern of this study. Hence the study sought to investigate information needs and information seeking behavior of Commercial Motorcycle Operators in Benue State.

Objectives of the Study

The study sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. Ascertain the information needs of Commercial Motorcycle Operators in Benue State

2. Determine how Commercial Motorcycle Operators go about seeking for information they need in Benue State
3. Determine the reasons for which Commercial Motorcycle Operators seek information in Benue State
4. Determine the difficulties encountered by Commercial Motorcycle Operators in the course of seeking information in Benue State

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the information needs of Commercial Motorcycle Operators in Benue State?
2. How do Commercial Motorcycle Operators go about seeking for information needed by them in Benue State?
3. What are the reasons for which Commercial Motorcycle Operators seek information in Benue State?
4. What are the difficulties encountered by Commercial Motorcycle Operators in the course of seeking information in Benue State?

II. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population for the study was thirty eight thousand, one hundred and twenty eight (38,128) CMOs in Benue State. The population comprises 11,121 CMOs from Zone A Senatorial Zone, 16784 from Zone B and 10223 from Zone C Senatorial Zone of Benue State. The sample size for the study was 396 CMOs in Benue State. The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane Formula. Proportionate stratified and convenience sampling techniques were adopted in selecting the sample. The instrument employed for data collection was a self-constructed structured questionnaire titled "Information Needs and Information Seeking Behaviour of Commercial Motorcycle Operators' Questionnaire (INISBCMOQ) which was validated by experts. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha method and a reliability coefficient of 0.83 was obtained. Data for the study was collected with the help of research assistants. The data was analyzed using Frequency Counts and Percentages to answer the research questions and Chi-Square statistic to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance

III. RESULTS

Research Question One: What are the information needs of Commercial Motorcycle Operators in Benue State?

Table 1: Frequency Counts and Percentages of the Information Needs of Commercial Motorcycle Operators in Benue State

FREQUENCY PERCENTAGE(%)						
S/N	ITEMS	YES	NO	YES	NO	DECISION
1	Information on how to own a personal motorcycle	298	90	77.8%	22.2%	Info needed
2	Information on the prices of Motorcycle	309	79	79.6%	20.4%	Info needed
3	Information on how to avoid accidents	236	152	60.8%	39.2%	Info needed
4	Information on more lucrative routes	321	67	82.7%	17.3%	Info needed
5	Information on safe route	270	118	69.6%	30.4%	Info needed
6	Information on where to get best spare parts	315	73	81.2%	18.8%	Info needed
7	Information on traffic regulation	211	177	54.4%	45.6%	Info needed
8	Information on how to dress while on duty	199	189	51.3%	48.7%	Info needed
9	Information about police Check points	362	26	93.3%	6.7%	Info needed
10	Information about Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) checking points	377	11	97.2%	2.8%	Info needed
11	Information on how to obtain motorcycle particulars	352	36	90.7%	9.3%	Info needed
12	Information on where to get fuel during periods of scarcity	289	99	74.5%	25.5%	Info needed
13	Information on where to access best motorcycle mechanics	312	76	80.4%	19.6%	Info needed

Table 1 shows information needs of Commercial Motorcycle Operators in Benue State in Frequencies and Percentages. As revealed on the table, all the items have percentage of ‘Yes’ above 50% benchmark. This indicates that, the Commercial Motorcycle Operators in Benue State need all the information presented on Table 1.

Research Question Two: What are the sources of information of Commercial Motorcycle Operators in Benue State?

Table 2: Frequency Counts and Percentages of the Sources of Information of Commercial Motorcycle Operators in Benue State

FREQUENCY PERCENTAGE(%)						
S/N	ITEMS	YES	NO	YES	NO	DECISION
14	Customers (Passengers)	333	55	85.8%	14.2%	Info source
15	Consulting Friends	348	40	89.7%	10.3%	Info source
16	Listening to Radio	261	127	67.3%	32.7%	Info source
17	Watching and Listening to Television	197	191	50.8%	49.2%	Info source
18	Visiting drinking joints/beer parlour	370	18	95.4%	4.6%	Info source
19	Motorcycle association meetings	384	4	99.0%	1.0%	Info source
20	Reading newspaper/magazines	121	267	31.2%	68.8%	Not info source
21	Using computer/internet	87	301	22.4%	77.6%	Not info source
22	Visiting newspaper stands	202	186	52.1%	47.9%	Info source
23	Consulting newsmen	57	331	17.7%	82.3%	Not info source
24	Visiting Library	29	359	7.5%	92.5%	Not info source
25	Reading some collections like traffic regulations	83	305	21.4%	78.6%	Not info source

Table2 shows the information sources of Commercial Motorcycle Operators in Benue State in Frequencies and Percentages. As revealed on the table, only item 20, 21, 23, 24 and 25 have percentage ‘Yes’ less than 50% benchmark. This indicates that other items (item14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 22) are the sources of information for commercial Motorcycle Operators.

Research Question Three: What are the reasons for which the Commercial Motorcycle Operators source information in Benue State?

Table 3: Frequency Counts and Percentages of the Reasons for which Commercial Motorcycle Operators Information in Benue State

FREQUENCY PERCENTAGE(%)						
S/N	ITEMS	YES	NO	YES	NO	DECISION
26	To update Riding knowledge	310	78	79.9%	20.1%	Reason
27	To be Conversant with road traffics	367	21	94.6%	5.4%	Reason
28	To develop personal riding competency	312	76	80.4%	19.6%	Reason
29	To enlighten other Okada Riders	352	36	90.7%	9.3%	Reason
30	To keep abreast with better lucrative routes	339	49	87.4%	12.6%	Reason
31	To keep abreast with general riding skills	371	17	95.6%	4.4%	Reason

32	To be conversant with road safety practices	381	7	98.2%	1.8%	Reason
33	To be aware of safe routes	348	40	89.7%	10.3%	Reason

Table3 shows the reasons for which Commercial Motorcycle Operators in Benue State source information in Frequency Counts and Percentages. As revealed on the table, all the items have percentage of ‘Yes’ above 50% benchmark. This indicates that the all the items are the reasons as to why Commercial Motorcycle Operators seek information in Benue State.

Research Question Four: What are the difficulties encountered by Commercial Motorcycle Operators in the course of seeking for information in Benue State?

Table 4: Frequency Counts and Percentages of the Difficulties Encountered by Commercial Motorcycle Operators in the Course of Seeking for Information in Benue State

FREQUENCY PERCENTAGE(%)						
S/N	ITEMS	YES	NO	YES	NO	DECISION
34	Mobile network failure	106	282	37.3%	72.7%	Not Difficulty
35	Inability to read	198	190	51.0%	49.0%	Difficulty
36	Inability to use library catalogue	311	77	80.2%	19.8%	Difficulty
37	Irregular power supply	378	10	97.4%	2.6%	Difficulty
38	Inability to access newspaper/magazines	213	175	54.9%	45.1%	Difficulty
39	Lack of knowledge of computer/use of internet	304	84	78.4%	21.6%	Difficulty
40	Unavailability of library in my area	299	89	77.1%	22.9%	Difficulty
41	Inability to understand English Language	167	221	43%	57.0%	Not difficulty
42	Lack of time/limited time	291	97	75%	25%	Difficulty

Table4 shows the difficulties encountered by Commercial Motorcycle Operators in the course of seeking for information in Frequency Counts and Percentages. As revealed on the table, only items 34 and 41 have percentage ‘Yes’ above 50% benchmark. This implied that all the other items presented to the Commercial Motorcycle Operators are the difficulties they encounter in the course of seeking for information.

IV. DISCUSSION

Findings of the study as shown on table 1 revealed that, the information needs of CMOs in Benue State includes information on how to own a motorcycle, information on the prices of motorcycle, information on how to avoid accidents, information on more lucrative routes, information on safe routes, information on where to get best spare parts, information on traffics regulations, information on how to dress while on duty, information about police checkpoints, information about Federal Road Safety Commission checkpoints, information on how to obtain motorcycle particulars, information on where to get fuel during periods of scarcity and information on where to access best motorcycle mechanics. The finding agrees with that of Adetoro (2004) who reported that, commercial motorcycle operator in Ijebu towns are in serious need of information to make decisions, solve problems and to reduce uncertainty. According to the author, information is not always available and the available information is not adequate to cater for the needs of CMOs which contradicts this finding. The finding is also in consonant with that of Ozioko and Eke (2010) who in their study reported that, the most important information needs of CMOs are; information on how to avoid accidents, where to get the best (superior) spare parts, and to know the most lucrative routes. In the same vein, Afolabi (2003) stated that the natures of information used by commercial vehicle drivers are as follows: Information about spare part(s) mechanic and tools; price of vehicles; garage/Bus stops and union information; vehicle particulars/inspection of related information; road safety, road items information, police and law matters and related information .It can be seen for this finding that that, the CMOs in Benue State are in dire need of information as they agreed to all the information needs presented to them. However, the finding as revealed on hypothesis one showed that, the information needs of the CMOs in Benue State significantly differ. This implied that, the CMOs are in dire need of different forms of information to be able to carry out their commercial activities effectively.

The second findings of the study revealed that the information sources of CMOs in Benue State are; customers (passengers), consulting friends, listening to radio, watching and listening to television, visiting drinking joints/ beer parlours, motorcycle association meetings and visiting newspaper stands while reading newspaper/magazines, using computer/ internet, consulting newsmen, visiting libraries and reading collections like traffic regulations are not their information sources. This finding concurs with that of Adetoro (2004) who reported in his study that, the CMOs depend more on their customers and their motorcycle association as their sources of information, more than civilized sources like libraries, the internet and published materials. The finding also agrees with that of Ozioko and Eke (2010) who in their study reported that, the most common strategies adopted to get information by Okada Riders are through the union activities, consulting friends and experts. Nwagwu and Olatunji (2014) reported that CMOs

preferred, radio and television as sources of information much more than any other. It can be seen from the findings of this study also that, the CMOs do not depend on some civilized sources of information such as reading newspaper/ magazines, visiting libraries, consulting and reading collections like traffic regulations.

The third findings of the revealed that the reasons for which CMOs seek information in Benue State are; to update riding knowledge, to be conversant with road traffics, to develop personal riding competency, to enlighten other CMOs, to keep abreast with better lucrative routes, to keep abreast with general riding skills, to be conversant with road safety practices and to be aware of safe routes. The finding agrees to the study of conducted by Nwagwu and Olatunji (2014) who reported that the CMOs expressed a higher level of consciousness about their own safety as a reason for seeking for information. It can be seen from this finding that, the CMOs in Benue State have different reasons for which the seek information. Similarly, the finding on hypothesis two revealed that, the reasons for which CMOs seek information significantly differs. This implied that the CMOs have a plethora of reasons for which they seek for information in Benue State.

Lastly, the findings of the study revealed that the difficulties encountered by CMOs in the course of seeking for information in Benue State are; inability to read, inability to use library catalogue, irregular power supply, inability to access newspaper/ magazines, lack of knowledge of computer/ internet use, unavailability of library and limited time while inability to understand English Language and mobile network failure are not among the difficulties they encounter. The finding is in agreement with that of Ozioko and Eke (2010) who reported in their study that, some of the problems associated with seeking for information by CMOs include time factor, illiteracy and absence of information centres. From the finding therefore, only the inability to understand English Language and mobile network failure among many are not the difficulties encountered by CMOs in their course of seeking for information.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that commercial motorcycle operators just like any other category of people have a variety of information needs, ranging from general information to specific information about their commercial activities. Interpersonal sources of information, which include discussion with friends, colleagues, and family members, were the preferred sources of information. They however encounter difficulties the course of seeking for information some of which are inability to read, inability to use library catalogue, irregular power supply, inability to access newspaper/ magazines and lack of knowledge of computer/ internet use.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the finding of the Study, the following recommendations were made

1. Public Libraries in Nigeria should as a matter of urgency, embark on an aggressive library awareness campaign so that everybody including commercial motorcycle operators could use library resources such as the internet and published materials as their source for reliable information.
2. Libraries and information centers should see everybody as a potential information user and as such package information services for the less educated populace like commercial motorcycle operators using mother tongue or pidgin English to get the information across to them
3. There is also an urgent need for the government and information professional to carry out a revitalization of the information industry for sustainable overall development of the people.
4. Information repacking should be seen as a strategic means of information dissemination to users especially to the less aware and the less enlightened citizens by information providers like librarians

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