
The Socio-Economic Impact of Bus Transport Enterprises in Benin –City, 1978-2018

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Abstract

This paper discusses the emergence and impact of bus transport enterprises in Benin-City from 1978 to 2018. The traditional or pre-colonial means of transportation in Benin-City involved the use of human portage and water transport before the emergence of modern means of transportation. People in Benin transported themselves from their homes to farms, markets and other social economic activities by the use of human portage. They also use local canoes to move on rivers and for the conveyance of their goods. However, in the colonial period, the British introduced modern means of transportation in Nigeria areas including Benin. This paper has shown that there emerged a group of transport entrepreneurs who ventured into road transportation service to meet the increasing demands of travellers in Benin in 1978. They have transformed the road transport sub-sector and played immense role in the development of the economy in Benin-City.

Introduction

The pre-colonial means of transportation which includes bush paths, rivers and pack animals, were grossly inadequate and inefficient. It was to redress the inefficiency of these transportation systems that the British colonial government introduced modern means of transportation in the country.¹ First was the railway construction mainly aimed to transport the raw materials needed by the British industries and to create a market for these industries, this was later followed by the construction of feeder roads which led to the introduction of Motor vehicles into Nigeria between 1907 and 1909.²

The importance of road transportation in the expansion of the national economy was highlighted in the Stanford Research Institute's report of 1961 that stated that the economic history of Nigeria is largely the story of the opening of its vast areas by various forms of transport resulting in economic growth which in turn stimulated the demand for transport.³ Road transport, however, played a more significant role than the railways in opening up of the inaccessible areas of the country, majorly because of the local fluidity of the road transport system.⁴ Towards the end of the 1920s, more vehicles were imported into Nigeria and some private individuals took advantage of this and ventured into road transport business, especially in Lagos where motor transport services started.⁵

A look at Benin-City at a glance, one could observe the heavy presence of 'omnibuses otherwise called buses. Benin - City is the capital of Edo State, in the south –south region of Nigeria. It has three local government areas, Oredo , Egor and Ikpoba – Okha.

Benin –City lies within latitude $6^{\circ} 14^1$ and $6^{\circ} 21^1$ north of the Equator and within Longitudes $5^{\circ} 34^1$ and $5^{\circ} 44^1$ east of Greenwich meridian and measures approximately 112.5km^2 in area.⁶ The buses provide interstate and intercity transport services. They were not in existence before Independence in 1960. Some of the earliest automobiles used in Nigeria include Bedford, Peugeot, Volkswagen and few British Vehicles.⁷ From the 1970s, during the period of oil boom, the Government of Nigeria signed joint venture partnerships with Foreign car Manufacturers to assemble vehicles. However, from 1978, bus transport was introduced in Benin by some private transport entrepreneurs as one of the modes of road transport, and over the years, they have been a great development in their services with different models being used for transportation in Benin. Their emergence has greatly made road transport easy and comfortable for both the city and intercity journeys in Benin. The people have benefitted immensely from road transport than with other means of transport because bus transport service is the most frequently used in Benin.

The Emergence and Development of Bus Transport Enterprises in Benin

The transportation system in Benin-City as in other parts of Nigeria has witnessed series of developments since the colonial period. With the advancement of modern technology, the means of transportation has improved greatly across Nigeria thereby facilitating easy movement of goods and persons from one place to another. The occupation of colonial administration in Benin-City as in other parts of the country led to the development of

transportation infrastructure to facilitate the evacuation of raw materials from the hinterland to their industries.

Pre-Colonial and Colonial Transport Modes in Benin

Before the emergence of bus transportation in Benin-City, other types of automobiles were used for transporting people and goods from one place to another. Unlike in other parts of the country, Benin that was the capital of the then Mid-Western Region and later Bendel State and now Edo State, has no railway line, thus, the means of transportation was mainly by foot along footpaths and later by road during the colonial period. The first automobiles used for transport were trucks and lorries and later cars which were relatively scarce.⁸ Cars were only used by the colonial officials and few wealthy persons who were able to acquire vehicles at that time.⁹ The means of transport for many persons were by foot or human portage irrespective of the distance.¹⁰

Before the period of study, there were group of private transporters in Benin-City such as J.B.S Transport Service, Edokpolor, Alade and Goodname Transport Services and others.¹¹ Goodname Transport specialized in using trucks and Ten-ton Bedford in the transportation of goods and passengers. They conveyed goods and passengers from Benin to Warri, Sapele and other cities. J.B.S Transport service had fleet of vehicles for passenger services and goods within the then Midwest region.¹² From the late 1970s, the number of automobiles in Benin-City began to increase. This period coincided with the oil boom in Nigeria and people were able to afford cars, ranging from government vehicles, commercial and private vehicles. The commercial vehicles were owned and used

by private individuals who ventured into road transport enterprises in Benin –City. The brand of vehicles used during this period for transportation in Benin- City were Bedford popularly called " Blackmaria," Peugeot 404 and 504, Datsun 190k and 120k, Volkswagen and Pick-up.¹³ It is pertinent to state that the vehicles that were used for transportation during this period were not comfortable considering the nature of the vehicles and how they were used for passenger services, thus, many passengers were made to travel together without regard to their safety and comfort. Thus, transportation service was not comfortable for passengers before the emergence of modern bus transport entrepreneurs in Benin.¹⁴ Passengers patronized vehicles that were available at that time. These brands of vehicles were complemented with the introduction of buses by the Midwest Line owned by the Midwest State government that operated from Benin-City to Lagos, Kaduna, Kano and Jos.¹⁵

The Mid-West line was established in 1968 by the then Military Governor, late Brigadier Samuel Ogbemudia to run passenger bus services to different parts of Nigeria. During this period, there was also Armels Transport Limited, an expatriate transport service that specialized in carrying mails, luggage and passengers from Benin to other parts of the country.¹⁶ Later, the Armels Transport Limited was acquired by the Mid-West Government in March 1975 following the Indigenization Decree of 1972. On the creation of Bendel State¹⁷ in 1976, Armels and Mid-West Line were merged to form what became known as the Bendel Line Limited and it was made up of three divisions. These were the Bendel Line inter-state service, the Bendel intra -city bus

service and the Haulage Division.¹⁸ Bendel Line later became known as Edo Line after the creation of Edo State in 1991. However, Edo Line has presently been shut down by the Edo State Governor, Godwin Obaseki indefinitely and directed that its staff be absorbed in the State Ministry of Transport due to its collapse and indebtedness over the years.¹⁹

Although, the emergence of private bus transport service in Benin- City began in the late 1970s, the transportation system in the city has witnessed considerable expansion as a result of the advancement and improvement in the economy coupled with the increased demand for transport. The introduction of bus transportation was a great innovation that gave a face - lift to the transportation of passengers and goods in Benin. This is because they are well organized in their services.²⁰

Bus transportation in Benin brought comfort and relaxation to transportation and they are used side by side with other vehicles such as Audi and Datsun for both intra and inter –state transport. Other types of buses in Benin-City include Nissan Vanette, Mercedes-Benz, Ford, Hiace, Toyota and others.²¹ The emergence of bus for passenger transportation has become very popular over the years and has gradually replaced the previous types of vehicles that were used for passengers transport services in Benin –City such as the Bedford, Peugeot 404 and 505 and Pick Up.²² This means of transport has become very popular and has largely dominated both short and long distance journeys in the city and beyond.²³ The total number of buses operating in Benin is difficult to come by because most of the buses are not registered.

Organizational Structure of Bus Transportation in Benin-City

Before the emergence of private bus entrepreneurs, there were no parks or designated locations where intending travellers from various places converged for transportation to their destinations for both intra and inter-state travels, rather passengers waited with their goods or luggage at different junctions or under trees along the road where they could get vehicles driven by private individuals who were into transportation services, to be taken to their destinations at different charges depending on the distance.²⁴ At first, these parks were managed by touts known as "Agberos" who exploited the system and often caused chaos in such parks and thus the parks were taken over by the local governments in 1994, and this brought about the organization of vehicular movements and the safety of commuters.²⁵

The two main motor parks in Benin-City were Uselu and Okedo parks. Others include Iyaro, Ikpoba-slope, Sapele park, Agbor Park and so on. Iyaro park was mainly for passengers travelling to Lagos, while Uselu park was for those travelling to Ibadan and other cities in the south west, Ikpoba Slope park was mainly for those travelling to Agbor, Asaba, and other states in the East. while Sapele park was for passengers travelling to Warri, Sapele, Abraka and other cities in Delta State.²⁶ Transportation of passengers and goods in Benin-City was largely carried out by private transporters who operated both inter and intra transport services in Benin-City. It was from the existing motor parks in Benin that Idahosa Edegbe, the founder

of Edegebe Transport Company, left to start his private transport service in 1978, he is regarded as the pioneer of modern transport service in Benin City. Private individuals ventured into the transport service following the increase in the transportation demands. Some of the factors responsible for private transport services in Benin include increase in population, lack of railway system and the existence of road transport as the main means of transportation. Benin-City is a nodal town connecting eastern and western Nigeria, as well as between Northern parts with Southern Nigeria. The prevalence of private road transporters is a result of the fact that it provided employment to people as a means of earning their livelihoods since there are not much industries in Benin-City.²⁷ The bulk of inter- state passenger transportation in Benin-City has been undertaken by private transport enterprises. Some of the owners started as commercial drivers with single vehicle and gradually expanded and became registered transport companies. Presently, they own and manage transport enterprises at different locations with some of them having as much as between fifteen and twenty branches/terminals both in Benin and other parts of Edo State as well as in major cities in Nigeria. The terminals are quite different from public parks. They are well organized for passengers` comfort with waiting halls that are furnished with air-conditions, chairs and television sets.²⁸

They are employers of labour and with many workers who carry out different functions for the efficient running of the day to day transport enterprises. These private transport enterprises have different departments that are responsible for the smooth operations such as the administrative departments that are responsible for the general organization and administrative work

of the transport enterprises, the financial departments that deal with accounts and financial transactions, the Mechanical department which handle the repairs and maintenance of vehicles.²⁹ The availability of the mechanic department in a transport enterprise depends on how big and organized the transport company is.³⁰

For proper functioning, management and accountability of these departments, they have Transport managers, supervisors, accountants and auditors. Each transport terminal has workers known as loaders, who are designated to carry out different tasks such as proper loading and arrangement of passengers' goods. They helped passengers by either directing them or taking their luggage to the counters for payment of transport fares. At the counters, there are cashiers who received money and issued receipts to passengers. The buses were both air-conditioned and non-air conditioned buses and they are of different prices, thus, it is at the counter that the passenger makes his choice of the type to board.³¹ The transport charges ranges from three thousand naira to four thousand naira.

The receipt issued to passengers has the passenger's seat number and the number of the Bus the passenger will be travelling on. Also, at the counters different locations and bus stops are written out for passengers to know where to pay and collect their tickets after which passengers are directed to the waiting hall before the departure of the bus. Attached to the relaxation halls are convenience rooms for both males and females. The loaders arranged the passengers goods or luggage into the buses.

Refreshments such as water and soft drinks were also served to the passengers as a 'thank you' for patronage.³²

These private transport entrepreneurs ensure that their staff are properly trained for good customer relationship, they also ensure that their buses are put in order by servicing them regularly for safety and to prevent accidents on the road. Their drivers are tested to ensure that they are qualified and road worthiness and as well as mentally fit for such task. The Federal Road Safety Commission also give lectures to these drivers on monthly basis and sometimes, transporters were invited by the Commission requesting them to train drivers for some days which can be both within and outside the State including the Federal Capital territory Abuja.³³ To this effect, defaulters, that is the transport enterprise that defaulted or fails to send their drivers to such training were fined between one hundred thousand (#100,000) and one hundred and fifty thousand naira (#150,000) as fine for defaulters.³⁴ Bus transport enterprises in Benin-City have gradually expanded in their operations and many of them have different terminals at various locations. This is geared towards getting more passengers and for customers comfort.³⁵ The Table below shows the names of thirty one (31) transport enterprises, their locations in Benin and their founders.

Table: 1
Selected Bus Transport Enterprises in Benin-City

NAME	OWNER	ADDRESS
Edegbe Line	Late Mr Idahosa Edegbe	Plot 245, Ugbowo Benin-City

Efosa Express	Eng. Isaac Izogie.U.	4, Urubi Strret, Iyaro Benin-City.
Big Joe Motors	Late Joseph Osayende	56, Oregbeni, Ikpoba Hill Benin-City
Bob Izua Motors	Chief Osamede Adun	4, Ekpenede Street, Benin-City
Iyare Motors	Chief Abel Omoruyi	25, Urubi Street, Benin-City
Edobor Line	Mr Edobor	42 Uselu-Lagos Road, Benin-City
Muyi Line	Mr Osamuyi Osas	9, Uselu-Lagos Road, Benin-City
Agbonifo Line	Hon. Festus Agbonifo	211 Ugbowo–Lagos Road, Benin-City
God’s Time Motors	Not Available	26, Ikpoba Slope, Benin-City
Discoop Motors	Not Available	13, Urubi Street, Iyaro Benin-City
Goddy Edosa Motors	Chief Godwin Edosa	50b, Dawson Road, Benin-City.
Cliffosa Motors	Not Available	5. Urubi Street, Iyaro Benin=City
Ulo Motors	Not Available	4, Ikpoba Slope , Benin-City
Kings Motors	Not Available	54 Oregbeni Road, Ramat Park Benin-City
Ameosa Motors	Mr Monday Osayende	Agip, Sapele Road Benin-City

Osaro Motors	Not Available	Ist Ibiwe Street, Benin-City
Osas Motors	Not Available	40, Benin-Aucchi Road. Benin-City
Eagle Line	Late Tony Anineh	44, Daweon Road, Benin- City
Edionwe Line	Not Available	137 Benin- Agbor Road , Benin-City
Ohonba Line	Godwin Ohonba	222 Ugbowo-Lagos Road, Benin-City
Osayamen Line	Not Available	254, Ugbowo-Lagos Road, Benin-City
God Is Good Motors	Late Edwin Ajaere	202b, Uselu-Lagos Road , Benin-City.
Owie Motors	Mr Paul Owie	16 Urubi Street, Iyaro Benin-City
De Modern Transport Service	Jide Ofor	11a,Urubi Street, Iyaro , Benin-City
Eco Bus Transport	Not Available	147, Uselu-Lagos Road,Benin-City
Oghogho Express	Not Available	170 Ikpoba Slope, Benin-City
Unity Motors	Not Available	121 Ikpoba Slope, Benin-City
Ovia North East Line	Ovia Local Government Council	Opposite University Of Benin Main Gate
Greener Line	Not Available	168, Uselu-Lagos Road,

		Benin-City
Julglad Travels & Tous	Not Available	226. M. M Way Benin-City
Amma Transport Services Ltd	Not Available	100,Benin/Auchi Road Benin City

Source: Data collected by the Researcher during field work, (June – September 2018).

Sources of Capital

The sources of capital for some private bus transport entrepreneurs in Benin-City include: personal savings, family support and borrowing from friends and commercial banks. Transport entrepreneurs sourced their capital which they used in starting their businesses through various means. Capital, is therefore, very important and the success of any organization and its ability to make profound impact is to a large extent dependent on how it is funded and the ability of the owner to manage such an organization efficiently.³⁶ The sources of capital used by the transport entrepreneurs varies according to individual transporter. The number of buses owned and managed is a function of how much capital is generated by the entrepreneur.³⁷

Some of the transporters interviewed stated that they sourced their capital from their personal savings. Others maintained that they got family support, Hire purchase, borrowing from friends, as well as cooperative societies and banks.³⁸ With the growth and expansion of the fleet, profits were ploughed back into the business and used to acquire more buses. They also access loan from financial institutions. Thus, establishing and managing a

transport enterprise is capital intensive considering the amount put into the business and the running cost. The bus transport enterprise is run as a profit making enterprise, and so, the source of fund and the efficient and judicious use of funds in sustaining the enterprise becomes necessary.³⁹

Impact of Private Bus Transport Enterprise on Benin-City

Private bus transporters in Benin metropolis have impacted positively in the city as well as in other states they operate. Their impacts are numerous and they include Economic, Social and Political impacts. Every society of the world has different potentials and therefore, do not find everything they need in their nearest environments, they are forced to transport themselves and their goods from one place to the other. Thus, transportation cannot be separated from any human society as it exhibits a very close relation to the style of life, the range and location of activities and the goods and services which will be available for consumption.⁴⁰ Advances in transportation has made possible changes in the ways of living and the way in which societies are organized and therefore have an influence in the development of civilizations from the very old times by meeting travel requirements of people and transport requirement of goods. Such movement has changed the way people live and travel in Benin.

Economic Impact

Bus transport enterprises have considerable economic impacts that have contributed to the development of Benin-City. Bus transport enterprises facilitate the transportation of scarce resources from Benin-City to other parts of the country. Bus transport in Benin has helped in the movement of such resources

needed which were not within the immediate environment to Benin, by transporting these resources which are both human and material, from other parts of the country to Benin. Bus transport enterprises conveyed resources ranging from material things to knowledge and skills from Benin-City to other major cities in the country and vice versa. It facilitated the easy movement of knowledge and skills such as the movement of professionals such as doctors, technicians as well as other workers to and from Benin to places that needs them.⁴¹ The emergence of bus enterprises in Benin has extended the range of sources of supply of goods to be consumed, by making it possible for users to get varieties of resources with ease and at cheap prices and high quality. As people moved, they helped to generate economic activities which enhances economic development.⁴²

Bus transport companies helped in facilitating people's ability to have access to education, health care and jobs within and outside Benin. They ply major cities in Nigeria, and they contributed in conveying students, job seekers and those in need of health care services. For example, there are both private and public educational institutions in Benin which include colleges and universities among others, students, lecturers and other workers in such institutions travel mostly with buses both within the city and outside Benin and to other cities and towns. University of Benin for example, admits thousands of students yearly, a large number of these students are from other states usually patronized the buses.⁴³

It provided employment opportunities to many unemployed persons. It enhanced economic opportunities, quality of life and ultimately income for their workers in Benin. This is evidence in the large number of people that are employed under different categories in the transport enterprises in Benin-City such as managers, supervisors, accountants, auditors, cashiers, mechanics, drivers, loaders, securities, cleaners, car wash boys and other staff.⁴⁴ This in no small way increase the standard of living and reduced unemployment problem in Benin. These transport entrepreneurs have thus become employers of labour by employing different categories of workers to perform various tasks for the success of their companies. For example, Edegbe Line has more than two hundred workers (200),⁴⁵ Agbonifo Line has about fifty (50) staff,⁴⁶ while Edobor Line had above forty (40) staff,⁴⁷ God is Good Motors has about two thousand five hundred staff, (2,500),⁴⁸ Eagle Line and Muye Line each had over one hundred staff.⁴⁹

Bus transport enterprises provided a wide variety of new economic opportunities to stimulate the development of the economy. It facilitated business efficiency, the expansion of local activity and the integration of previously isolated market. To this end, bus transport stimulated the growth and expansion of markets centres in Benin. It has encouraged and eased trade in many commodities with business men and woman relying on their services for the conveyance of goods both within and outside Benin. The emergence of Bus enterprises have also increased the number of persons involved in the sales of automobiles in Benin, including transport related businesses such as auto spare parts dealers, for new and fairly used car. To this effect there are many

locations for the sale of automobiles such as Sapele road, Slope, Ugbowo and others as well as spare parts markets in Uwelu, Evbareke and other locations.⁵⁰

The transport sector is an important component of the economy; impacting on development and the welfare of the people. Road transportation penetrates into the nooks and cranny of the human environment than other means of transportation.⁵¹ Thus, bus transport expanded the area to which a given producer can distribute his or her products as they have the means of moving to other areas both within and outside the state for higher patronage. It is also a good source of revenue generation to the government. The increase demands for bus transport has increase government revenue arising from taxes and other related levies paid by bus transporters to the Edo State Government, to this end, bus transporters pay taxes to both the state government and local government councils where the transport enterprise is located.⁵²

The activities of bus transporters have also contributed in no small measure to the sale of petrol in the country, considering the number of transport companies and the number of buses that convey both passengers and goods within and outside Benin. There are about nine petrol stations within five junction and University of Benin, and within this area, there are also about seven private transport companies and three public motor parks including Uselu motor park.⁵³ Thus, the operations of bus transportation services has contributed to the sale and growth of petrol stations which in turn has a large labour force.

It encouraged and boosted retail trade and services. The emergence of bus transporters in Benin and their method of operation have provided opportunities for increase retail trade and services. The terminals of these bus transport services serve as a good market outlet for many retail traders and services. There are different categories of retailers found at these terminals. Some have been able to secure permanent space for their retail businesses, while others such as hawkers occasionally walked into these terminals at various intervals to sell their products. The goods showcased or displayed by the retailers include snacks, drinks, phone patches, handkerchiefs, shoes and other items.⁵⁴ Hawkers made good sales at these terminals due to passengers patronage.⁵⁵ The development of bus transportation service in Benin have, therefore, impacted positively by contributing to improvement in the standard of living of the people.

The media, that is, television and radio stations in Benin have also benefited from the services of bus transport companies and patronage. There are a lot of private bus transporter companies in Benin, and for high patronage, they compete among themselves by employing good and capable staff. They advertise on the television and radio stations using different jingles to advertise their services.⁵⁶ Sometimes also they attract customers by giving discounts and other incentives to them.⁵⁷

The impressive performance of the bus transport business over the years has given rise to the development of entrepreneurs in the road transport sub-sector. Entrepreneurship is often seen as one of the cornerstones of poverty alleviation. It is seen as one of the engines of economic growth. These individuals ventured into

bus transportation service and gradually expanded to establishing transport enterprises that made them become successful and employers of labour, thus improving lives and fostering development in Benin.⁵⁸ It has also given boosts to firms and industries in Benin to specialize in the production of goods and services which they can produce most economically in line with the principle of comparative advantage. Products in Benin which are not exhausted are therefore transported by bus to other parts of the country.

Generally, bus transport has contributed to economic growth whereby transport output and investment exerts a positive influence on the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which implies that improvement and increase in the road transport sub-sector will lead to an increase in intermediate services in the agricultural sector, manufacturing output and investment among others, which will stimulate the economy to grow.⁵⁹ Thus, bus transportation helps to build and maintain society by providing the means of moving goods, information, raw materials as well as finished goods. Bus transport thus has great economic effect on Benin city.⁶⁰

Social Impact

Transportation is responsible for the development of civilization from very old times by meeting the travel requirement of people and this has changed the way people live and travel.⁶¹ In this regard, the bus transport service in Benin has increased spatial settlement. It has played an important role in influencing the formation, size, pattern and development of societies. It has changed how people live, work, relate to one another, organize to

meet their needs and generally cope as members of society.⁶² Their services have also reduced the problem of inadequate transportation in the city because there are different models of buses ranging from Nissan, Mitsubishi, Toyota, Mercedes and others. The development of bus transport enterprises in Benin has facilitated the opening up of many residential areas across the city.

Bus transport in Benin has provided vital links between spatially separated facilities and enabled social contacts and interaction. Transportation in Benin has over the years increased livability, interaction among people and the gradual transformation of the city, and bus transport has greatly contributed to this because it is presently the most frequently used means of transport in the city for both inter and intra -transport services.⁶³

It facilitated social activities such as in wedding ceremonies, festivals, burial ceremonies, birthday and graduation parties as well as other social functions. They are mainly responsible for conveying guests and transporting items to such occasions. In these regard, both the twenty four (24) seat bus that operates inter transport services and the ten (10) seat bus which operates intra transport , are used depending on how big the ceremony is. Having an efficient and effective bus transport in Benin has made communication and movement of people quite easier and has brought about a reduction in travelling time across the country; this is because the different modern buses used by transporters are very fast and comfortable for travelling. It has brought the people of Benin into closer contact with other communities and states,

and this enhanced the exchange of ideas, and this has positively impacted the social lives of people.

It has impacted positively on the urbanization of Benin. The method of operation of these transport services has contributed to the transformation of Benin into a thriving urban area. This transport companies have well built structures with modern facilities and they added beauty to the city. Bus transport also complemented communication networks. Some of these transport enterprises also engaged in courier, transporting parcels and other packages from Benin to their destinations in other parts of the country. Examples are Muyi Line Transport Limited and Eagle Line Transport Service that have been operating logistics and courier services for their passengers/customers and public.

It has also stimulated population growth in Benin by enhancing the movement of people from nearby villages and other parts of the country into Benin. The migrants engaged in various commercial and industrial activities which led to a population increase in Benin. It helped to advance cross-cultural and regional relations through travelling, business and tourism. Many people in Benin depend on the services of bus enterprises for their social engagements such as travelling and tourism both within and outside the states thereby helping to narrow geographical space and strengthened national integration.

Private bus transporters in Benin also performed some corporate social responsibilities in terms of giving back to society and it is also geared towards improving the lives of the people in Benin.

The management of Big Joe Motors are involve in sponsoring sporting activities while Edegbe Transport company provides pipe borne water to its immediate community.⁶⁴ It was also discovered that some bus enterprises also support important activities in Benin by partnering with Edo State government and Non-government organizations (NGOs), as a way of giving back to society.⁶⁵

Political Impact

Transportation is a very important factor for effective political administration. This is because, for effective administration, there is a need for complete interconnection between government agencies and the people. Bus transport in Benin has been very useful in this regard, they have helped to facilitate political activities aids governance at different levels from grass root to the state level.⁶⁶ Bus transport service is very useful in Benin because their services are used by both government and non-government officials. In the case of maintenance of law and order, handling of emergencies, bus transport is very useful, especially when the number of government personnel is much to be conveyed. Bus enterprises have contributed to the political development in Benin in the distribution of electoral materials to state and local government Independent Electoral Commission offices and polling booths in the state during elections as well as distribution of educational and health materials to the people by the government. Bus transport services are also mobilized by politicians and government during election campaigns and elections through their union.⁶⁷

Challenges Facing the Bus Transport Enterprises

Despite the impressive impacts of road transport enterprises in the growth and development of Benin-City, it is beset by many challenges. The challenges are both from the government and the environment. The foremost challenge is the payment of multiple taxations to governments and unfavourable government policies.⁶⁸ These taxes were paid to the Federal, State and Local governments. Most transport companies lamented the problem of multiple taxations from different government agencies in the state and this greatly affected their businesses, because the resources that would have been directed towards improving their transport services were used in paying, sometimes illegal multiple taxations. They were also compelled to pay government levies which include payments for emblems, colour codes outdoor adverts and others.⁶⁹ There is also the problem of extortions by government agencies such as the Road Marshals, Road Safety Commission, Vehicle inspection Officers(V.I.O), the police, and soldiers through illegal roadblocks among others.⁷⁰

There is also the problem of poor road infrastructure. This is very important, as it has reduced the efficiency and lifespan of vehicles that ply the roads. The road network itself has suffered continuous lack of maintenance and investment by the governments both at the federal, state and local governments. It is also important to state that three major issues affect road network. They are road misuse, particularly as a result of axle overloading causing damage to roads; neglect of periodic and routine maintenance; and inadequate design and construction. Poor state of roads impedes the fast and safe movements of

vehicles, with the result that journeys are delayed and also costly⁷¹.

Added to these is the problem of road accident. Nigeria has a bad record of road accidents. The federal Road Safety Commission (2005), stated that the increased in death rate was caused mainly by the poor state of transport infrastructure. The Corp Marshall of the Commission noted that more lives had been lost through road accident in the past years as a result of bad road condition.⁷² A statistics released by the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) , between 2005 and 2010 indicated that more than 27,700 persons died and more than 118,900 got injured in 53,11 road accidents cases nationwide.⁷³ The bus enterprises are also faced with the problem of traffic congestion, especially in some major cities. Vehicles are seen crawling on the road. For long distance travels, this can be very stressful for the drivers and passengers which also delays time and other resources.⁷⁴

Other challenges faced by bus enterprises in Benin-City include armed robbery incidences. Bus drivers and passengers travelling are mostly apprehensive when travelling. One of the reasons is the fear of armed bandits who lay ambush to them on the highways. There are reported cases of armed robbers laying ambush on the Benin- Lagos express way, especially during festive periods. These armed bandits loot passengers' possessions and sometimes travellers are shot in the process. For those that had experienced such unfortunate incidences, said it takes time to get over such psychological trauma, thence, they are hesitant to travel.

There is also the challenge of an epileptic power supply. Many of the transport companies lamented this problem. Transport service companies spend a lot of money on diesel and other petroleum products to operate their facilities for business efficiency and customers comfort. The Bus transport enterprises pointed out that they need constant electricity to operate their television, air-condition, and for other uses at their terminals.⁷⁵

High cost of acquiring plots of land for building terminals was another challenge. Building transport enterprise needs a large space of land and also in an accessible location, in order for it to stand out. To acquire such plots of land is costly in Benin which has led to the difficulty of operating efficiently for transporters that are unable to secure permanent locations.⁷⁶

Other challenges faced by the transport enterprises are the problem of insecurity in Nigeria. The issue of Boko Haram and Fulani herdsmen attacks especially in the northern parts of the country has put transportation service business at great risk. It has also created difficult situation for passengers to be conveyed to such parts of the country. There have been reported cases of Fulani herdsmen attacking travellers journeying to their destinations, especially around the Benin- Auchi road, where travellers have been kidnapped for a ransom and sometimes shot.⁷⁷

There is also the problem of the high cost of buses that are used for transportation services. The Manager of Agbonifo Line, Mr. Austin Edokpolor, pointed out the cost of purchasing a Toyota

bus for the past five years is alarming. He posited that in 2015, Toyota bus was between five(5)-six (6) million Naira, but now it is about twenty –six (26) million Naira.⁷⁸ This is closely related to the problem of high cost of spare-parts and economic downturn in the country, negatively effects the transport service turnover and profit margin.

Mr. Odiase Osayemwenre, a manager with Edobor Line believed that most of the challenges confronting the transport enterprises could be solved or reduced if the government sets up agencies will improve the transport sector rather than making them pay high taxes and other levies.⁷⁹ This writer is of the view that there is an urgent need to ensure an adequate and efficient maintenance of the existing road networks and failure to do so impose a high cost of rehabilitation work. Therefore priority must be given to maintenance and improvement of these roads. Thus, except roads and bridges are kept in good conditions, they cannot support the desired socio-economic development of the country.

Conclusion

The study has examined the emergence and impact of private bus transport services in Benin City which at various times was the administrative headquarters of the Mid-West region and later Bendel State and now Edo State. Over the years, Benin City has experienced the development of infrastructure such as roads, hospitals, schools, transport companies and other vital social facilities which stimulated increased population. The road transport companies have played immense roles in the provision of jobs to the people and reshaping the urban space of Benin-City.

Bus transport service is the most preferred means of transportation for both inter and intra city journeys because they are more comfortable and provide good and value-added services to travelers. The study revealed that most of the transporters in the bus transport services in Benin ventured into the road transport sub-sector because of the location of Benin – City that connects the eastern, western, southern and the northern parts of the country. Findings from the study revealed that the Bus transport enterprises have facilitated the development of Benin in the economic, social and political spheres. The transport entrepreneurs ventured into bus transportation are successful because of the location of Benin to large cities such as Lagos, Ibadan, Onitsha, Enugu, Port-Harcourt, Abuja and northern Nigerian cities. The study has also identify the challenges they faced which include high cost of spare parts, bad roads, armed robbery attacks, government policies, high foreign exchange, multiple taxation and extortions by different government agencies. In addition, bus transport Enterprises in Benin have expanded with the opening of numerous terminals with fleet of buses across the country. Some of these transport companies have also diversified and invested in modern technology to make their operations easier and less stressful for travellers. The study inferred that private bus transport entrepreneurs in Benin- City have played significant roles in transforming the economy and therefore, impacted positively in the economic development of Benin-City, despite the numerous challenges facing road transportation service in Nigeria.

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