Characteristics of Periodic Markets in Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

One main characteristic of man is the ability to interact socially and economically. A way of achieving this in most parts of the world is the establishment of diverse trade units, one of which is periodic marketing. This study examined the uniqueness of periodic marketing system among the Yoruba race of the Southwest Nigeria as recorded in literature, and consequently attempted an assessment of the characteristics of selected periodic markets in a semi-rural society in Ondo State, southwest Nigeria. Data were collected with the use of questionnaire and planned group discussions. 120 questionnaires were administered to randomly selected buyers and sellers on market days. Responses were obtained on perceived problems facing the use of the markets, available infrastructure and approaches to solving the perceived problems. The study showed that individual choice of market to patronize was dictated by the distance the individual needs to travel. It also showed that most people prefer to buy or sell in the market that is nearest to them for fresh ‘perishable’ commodities, including food stuff, while many wholesalers and ‘whole buyers’ are ready to travel a longer distance for standardized (‘quality’) products. The study also showed that the markets lack basic infrastructure. The study therefore concluded that the nature of commodities offer in a neighbourhood market, as well as the economic status of the people within its sphere of influence affect the turn-outs in a periodic market.

Keywords: Semi-rural, Infrastructure, Periodic market, Trade, Social and economic interactions

Introduction

Periodic markets are centers for exchange of common goods and services, in both cities and the countryside all over the world (Khan and Ali, 1998). A periodic market could be defined as a type of market whose meetings are separated by market-less days, or an authorised public gathering of buyers and sellers of commodities at an appointed place at regular intervals. They are characteristically held at a regular time and place, and often link small towns and their surroundings to create grassroots-level networking trade systems in most developing regions of the world (McKim, 1972; Hill and Smith, 1972; Khan and Ali, 1998). One of the characteristics of the market that has attracted much attention and documentation is its periodicity. Fagerlund and Smith (1970) have mapped the periodicities of most markets in West Africa as varying from 2 to 8 days while a four day system is well developed in East and Central Africa (Tinkler, 1973). Elsewhere, such as China, Korea, India and Scotland, periodic markets also play important role in trading and social life of the people (Skinner, 1964; Whyte, 1979; Park, 1981; Khan and Ali, 1998).
Periodic markets in the southwest Nigeria, especially in the Yoruba land, could be grossly divided into five categories (Hodder, 1961). These are (i) urban daily market, characteristic of large urban towns such as Ibadan and Lagos, (ii) urban night market, which usually commence at dusk and continue to about 10 p.m. (iii) rural daily market, which is often only for fresh meat, (iv) the rural periodic night market, and (v) the rural periodic day market. The rural periodic market is perhaps the most widespread and important type of market in this region. The origin and relation of the periodic market system to the classical central place theory are, however, issues that have generated controversies in literature (Alao, 1968; Tinkler, 1973). Nevertheless, there is a general consensus that most periodic markets have originated as either a result of internal demand for exchange of goods and services among local communities (defined as indigenous concept) or that of an external stimuli, such as the incursion into a local area of long distance traders, for the start of periodic markets or by government intervention or any more complex reasons (exogenous concept) (Whyte, 1979; Ghosh, 1981; Wanmali, 1981). Markets have also been shown to create physical and financial incentives that supplement the numerous rural development schemes introduced by government and non-government planners in many countries, (e.g. McKim, 1972; Wanmali, 1981), been used as a profit making establishment and an example of a community’s social system (Tinkler, 1973). In addition, Hay and Smith (1979) reviewed the advantages of periodic market systems to consumers within factors including the range and prices of goods and services offered, consumer access and choice, and showed that a periodic market offers the element of access time and ‘convenience shopping’ for the consumers.

Furthermore, although many studies have attempted to explain the Walter Christaller’s Central Place theory and Stine’s concept of income density elasticity of demand and transport cost to the location, in relation to the origin of periodic market (e.g. Tinkler, 1973; Park, 1981), studies on markets in West Africa, and Nigeria in particular, have shown that these concepts showed less correlation with the indigenous periodic markets, especially in ‘Yorubaland’, in the southwest Nigeria. For example, Good (1975) and Riddel (1974) showed a clear distinction in the origins and nature of the periodic markets in the East and West Africa, respectively. Unlike the situation in East Africa, which is synonymous to Asia, and Europe where these concepts have been found applicable, Riddel (1974) argued that

‘trade and marketing were conducted throughout much of pre-colonial West Africa by a system of permanent and periodic markets; the notion that pre-European West Africa was a pure subsistence economy is simply not true. Although trade was low in volume, sporadic at times, and often disrupted, it was significant enough to integrate quite disparate economies and societies, and to support a small but important segment of the population. This trade was conducted largely in market places, which formed an integrated system of mobile and fixed nodes extending over most of West Africa’

Similarly, Hodder (1961) has noted that:

‘...the resulting network of markets (in Yorubaland) cannot be compared with patterns of market centres described in Europe and America by W. Christaller, R. E. Dickinson, and J. E. Brush. In spite of the seven-mile average distance similarity, which is presumably associated with the average convenient maximum walking distance, the evenly spaced pattern of markets in parts of Europe and America is quite different in that it is clearly and causally related to the pattern and hierarchy of settlements’

Most of the existing studies on periodic markets in Nigeria are however few and dated (e.g. Hodder, 1961; Alao, 1968; Hill and Smith, 1972; Tinkler, 1973; Riddel, 1974), hence it is not surprising that the uniqueness of the West African periodic market systems has often been generalised and justified on theories that were developed in the European nations. The present study is an attempt to characterise some periodic markets in a Yoruba dominant community in the southwest Nigeria.
Study Area

The study area is Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State, southwest Nigeria (Figures 1 and 2). Akungba-Akoko lies between latitude 7°21'N and 7°31'N and longitude 5°22'E and 5°30'E, surrounded by Supare-Akoko (in the West), Iwaro-Oka (East), Ikare-Akoko (North) and Oba-Akoko (South). The inhabitants of the study area are mostly Yorubas, and the population as at 2006 was 21200. The region is a semi-rural area because apart from a University and some banks, whose situation were encouraged by the location of the University, the settlement lacks basic industrial and financial establishments.

Figure 1: Map showing the situation of Akungba-Akoko in Akoko Southwest Local Government Area (LGA). Inset is the map of Ondo State, showing the location of the LGA.

Figure 2: Map of Akungba-Akoko showing the Studied Markets
Source: Ministry of Lands and Housing, Akure, Ondo State
Almost every settlement in the Akoko South West Local Government Area has a periodic market, probably as a result of the surpluses of their farm produce, means of product exchange, trade or a mere social interaction. Most of the periodic markets operate in four days interval, although the size of the markets, available goods and services and patronage are largely influenced by the population of the settlements of their situation, hence many of them are often referred to as ‘neighborhood markets’.

Periodic markets in many of these settlements are as old as the settlements. The location of many of the markets at the hitherto centres of the settlements (many of which have changed as a result of the growth of the settlements), e.g. Iwaro and Supare markets, and those close to the king’s palaces (e.g. Oka and Oba markets), and sometimes as neighborhood markets e.g. Ibaka and Okusa markets in Akungba-Akoko. However, the precise dates for the establishment of these markets are mostly unknown, probably because many markets were unconsciously formed as justified by the interaction of the people rather than a decision to have one, as is the case in the modern day markets. Nonetheless, when periodic markets first originated, exchange of goods required mutually convenient times and places and one party or both had to travel to a common place to trade. The time and place for commercial gathering had to be standardized because potential traders and consumers had to know where and when to meet.

Material and Methods

‘Ibaka’ and ‘Okusa’ markets, which are two main markets in Akungba-Akoko community, Ondo State, Nigeria, were selected for this study. 60 questionnaires were administered in each market, making 120 for both, using a simple random sampling technique. Responses solicited in the questionnaire were based on the justification for the periodic markets in rural areas, and the behavioral characteristics of the traders and the infrastructure within the markets. Responses were solicited from both traders and buyers. The data were subsequently interpreted by descriptive statistics.

Results and Discussion

Characteristics of traders and trades in selected markets

Figures 3 and 4 show the gender and occupational distribution of the respondents, which are taken as representatives of the traders in the selected markets. About 66.7% were female while male were lower, i.e. 33.3%. The gender distribution is however not surprising since most previous studies on markets in Africa (e.g. Good, 1965; Tinkle, 1973; Riddel, 1974), except, perhaps in Northern Nigeria (Hill and Smith, 1972) suggest that the female population is often higher than the male’s in market environments. While religious belief prevents most women from trading in the Hausa communities in Northern Nigeria (Hill and Smith, 1972), Olorunfemi (1990) described the women in the Southwest Nigeria as homemakers and managers, particularly in housekeeping, and will therefore encourage them to visit markets to trade and make purchases.

![Figure 3: Gender distribution of the respondents](image-url)
The occupational status shows that civil servants were only about 10% and a high proportion (about 60%) of this percentage claimed to have at least a shop/stall at the markets. About 40% were full time traders, and 21.7% claimed to be farmers. Students, mostly those of the only University in the town contributed about 21.7% to the population that patronize the market. Goods brought to markets are mostly foods crops, vegetables and tuber crops (35%) while manufactured goods including electronics, and cash crops such as cocoa, kola nut and coffee made up about 29 and 23%, respectively. 12% of the respondents sell fruits and vegetables.

**Factors affecting the decision to trade at the selected markets**

Figure 5 shows the most important factors that the respondents agreed to have spurred their interest to sell or buy in the selected markets. The figure shows that most of the respondents considered that large population and proximity to their residence have played an important role in the choice of where to trade. Hodder (1974) has reported of some markets in Ibadan where location of markets is determined by convenience of access from all settlements. On the other hand, Bromley et al (1975) argued that periodic markets could also be encouraged by their ability to meet the needs of the local producers, the organization of time, inertia, and comparative advantage. Furthermore, more than 70% of the respondents agreed that the periodic markets are sources of fresh food, as many farmers prefer to sell in the markets, immediately the products are brought from the farm. This is particularly important for vegetables and other perishable food items.
Infrastructure in the selected markets

It is believed that adequacy of certain basic amenities, such as good parking slots, access roads, toilets, and waste disposal units will strengthen the ability of markets to perform their role as factors of social integration and economic empowerment. In this study, more than 77% of the respondents believed that efforts to maintain the market environment have been the sole responsibility of the individual trader, especially the sellers. About 19% however revealed that the local government authority also contributed in some measures while only 4% acknowledged the contribution of the community as a whole towards the improvement of their markets. The community effort at cleaning the market before a major event day, such as ‘Akungba day’ was, however, acknowledged. Different areas of consideration are shown in Figures 6, 7 and 8.

Figure 6: Methods of waste disposal,

- 66% Open Space
- 28% Culvert
- 6% Dust Bin

Figure 7: Problems encountered by the traders while using the markets,

- 40% Inadequate Parking Space
- 36% Inadequate refuse disposal units
- 20% No Toilets
- 4% Others

Figure 8: Rating of the conditions of stalls/shops in the market

- 56% Satisfactory
- 30% Fair
- 14% Poor
- 30%

Figure 6 shows that about 66% of the respondents dispose their wastes in open space, 28% dispose theirs in the culvert while only 6% make use of the dust bin. This shows an unacceptable level of unhygienic condition in these markets, especially when many food items sold in the typical African market are raw and unprotected (Eludoyin et al., 2008). Other problems that are associated with these markets include poor or lack of parking space, and toilets. About 40% noted the non-existence of parking spaces, while more than 36% complained about lack of toilet facilities, 20% on nonexistence of disposals systems, and 4% mentioned other problems, such as poor water supply, unpredictable electricity and security challenges (Figure 7). The existing buildings were also rated poor by about 56% of the respondents, while the rest 44% considered the stalls as ‘manageable’ or ‘habitable’ (Figure 8).
Facility maintenance in selected markets

Despite the fact that the available facilities in the selected markets were grossly inadequate, some attempts were still made by both the community and government to maintain their present status. For example the traders (mainly the sellers) claim to pay tenement rate of a minimum of fifty naira (₦50) per stall, at each market day to the local government authority. This is perhaps one of the reasons why the traders believe that the authority should be involved in the development of infrastructure of the markets. About 40% of the respondents however claimed that the government was doing enough for the development of the market, while about 60% responded otherwise (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Condition of Infrastructure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
<td>60</td>
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The unsatisfied 60% based their responses on the location of the markets beside the major road in the community, with possibilities of accidents. Other reasons are, lack of good pedestrian tracks; a situation that often cause pandemonium and quarrel by impatient walkers; poor or absolute lack of storage facilities, lack of space for loading/off-loading of good items, etc.

Conclusion

This study has examined the uniqueness of periodic markets in Yoruba land, and assessed some of their characteristics using two markets in a semi-urban settlement in Ondo State, southwest Nigeria. The markets are characterized by local patronages, mostly for food items and few manufactured materials, especially electronics. The markets are, however, poorly served with regards to basic infrastructure for environment. The traders on the other hand, believed that the government is responsible to handle the problems, especially when they pay tenement rate. This study is however a preliminary assessment and further study is on-going to investigate further effects of these markets on the community, the contribution of the government and sanitation practices in the market, among others. Notwithstanding, the present study shows the selected markets as a basic conditioning form of social interaction among the people, as well as a form of economic arrangement.

References


