Motorcycles delivery innovation and performance of wholesale retail sector in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

In Kenya, the wholesale and retail sector has been undergoing a difficult time that has seen some of the big retailers closing due to myriad challenges in their performance in the dynamic environment. This study sought to establish the influence of motorcycle delivery innovation on the performance of the wholesale and retail sectors in Kenya. The study was anchored on social exchange theory. The research philosophy adopted for the study was positivism. A descriptive research design using a quantitative approach was used in this study. The study targeted all wholesale and retail shops in 47 counties in Kenya that employed commercial motorcycles for their last-mile delivery of goods. Systematic sampling and simple random sampling techniques were employed to select a sample size of 383 respondents and a questionnaire was used to collect data. Descriptive and inferential analysis was undertaken across all variables using SPSS software. The findings indicated that there was a strong relationship between delivery innovations and the performance of the wholesale and retail businesses in Kenya (0.785). On the hypotheses, the study found that motorcycle delivery innovation had a statistically significant influence on the performance of wholesale and retail businesses in Kenya (t = 16.560, p=0.000 <0.05). The study concluded that motorcycle delivery innovations/solutions have a strong and statistically significant relationship with the performance of wholesale and retail businesses. The study recommends that wholesalers, retailers, and motorcyclists to have collaboration as they have mutual benefits. The study suggests that another study can be conducted to investigate the influence of embracing motorcycles by online businesses on their performance and growth.

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Introduction

Wholesalers and retailers today are not only engaged in the constant exploration for strategies to beat the competition but also exploring strategies to help stay relevant in the dynamic market. The retail market consists of sales of goods to ultimate users by entities which include organizations, sole traders, and partnerships that provide the service of making goods available in convenient quantities and locations. Retailing involves buying from wholesalers or direct from producers, breaking bulk, displaying goods for sale either physically or online, and sometimes delivery (Adu, Bishop, Barber, Divall, Krasnolucka-Hickman, Kiracho, Muhia, Mwaipopo, Rettie & Porter, 2018).

The importance of wholesalers and retailers in an economy cannot be gainsaid. Studies have indicated the great contribution made by this sector to GDP (KNBS, 2017). However, the sector has been affected due to changes in market dynamics. One of the challenges faced by the retail sector and has been affecting its growth is distribution. The manufacturers, wholesalers, and retailers must decide on how best to distribute their products; since they rely heavily on service delivery solutions and this is critical to customer retention as well as winning new ones; thus, resulting in immense progress. This calls for a re-examination of the existing distribution channels, the use of a more proactive platform, and being innovative in reducing service delivery solution costs as well as giving thought to development plans and strategies (Starger, 2016). The sector was again severely again affected in 2020 due to the COVID-19 outbreak. During the Covid-19 pandemic, there was restricted movement of people and traffic. Transport has been disrupted, fuelled...
by the reduction of public and private transport capacity hence negatively affecting services delivery solutions for manufacturers, wholesalers, and the retail sector (Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA), (2020).

The trend of the struggling retail sector is a threat to the economy as this sector is expected to play a role in the realization of Vision 2030. Failure of the sector may mean that the country could not achieve its vision. The sector also employs a large number of Kenyans, and failure of the sector may mean mass job losses and less contribution to GDP. Strategies to reverse these trends are of great assistance to the sector. To remain relevant and maintain profitability, the wholesale and retail sector is entering into strategic collaborations with the motorcycle industry to benefit from motorcycle delivery innovations.

In Europe, motorcycle logistics indicates that there is a great potential for the usage of the motorcycle where on average, 51% of all motorized journeys in European cities involving freight transport can be moved to motorcycles. Due to this, Lenz and Riehle (2013) suggest that cycle freight can make up about 25 percent of downtown commercial traffic in the medium term and that there is a potential market. Melo et al. (2014) in their quantitative analysis of operational and external costs suggest that the usage of motorcycles is a viable solution to satisfy both public and private stakeholders. An important operational consideration here is that motorcycles are favorable in terms of cost, and payload, which makes them well-adapted to specific logistical challenges (Lenz and Riehle, 2013).

In Africa, the use of commercial motorcycles has been growing in the past decade as commercial public transport. Commercial motorcycles offer certain transport due to the ability to travel on poor roads, ease of maneuverability, and demand responsiveness (Ajar, 2011). Motorcycles have been recognized as a source of living for many people in Nigeria (Taruwere, 2012). Arosanyin, (2011) observed that motorcycle operators depended on them as the main source of income to meet households’ needs. In Northern Ghana, the lives of many urban residents have improved significantly due to the high levels of motorcycle ownership and use (Dinye & Ahmed, 2016). In Kenya, motorcycles have become popular as they can be used as an alternative channel of transporting goods, this is because they are cheaper in terms of fuel consumption, affordable, and can easily maneuver through traffic congestion thus making delivery of products fast, convenient and cost-effective (Goodfellow & Titeca, 2012). This study, therefore, sought to establish the influence of motorcycle delivery innovation on the performance of the wholesale and retail business in Kenya.

The retail sector, which slowed in 2019 was severely again affected in 2020 due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Transport connectivity on service delivery solutions plays a key role in the growth and economic development of the manufacturers, wholesalers, and retail sector. The majority of business in Kenya has been performing poorly since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. A survey by Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA), (2020) on the coronavirus pandemic’s impact on Kenya’s economy indicates that 61% of businesses had been affected by measures being taken around the world to contain the virus. Transport has been disrupted, fuelled by the reduction of public and private transport capacity, negatively affecting service delivery solutions for manufacturers, wholesalers, and the retail sector. Failure of the sector may mean that the country could not achieve its vision 2030.

Motorcycles can be used as an alternative channel of transporting goods during and after restrictions. Motorcycles became popular because they are cheaper in terms of fuel consumption, affordable, and can easily maneuver through traffic congestion thus making delivery of products fast, convenient, and cost-effective. Again, it has been noted that the motorcycle industry has embraced different innovations that can strongly support the retail and wholesale sectors. Several scholars have evaluated the performance of the retail sector in Kenya and the growth of the motorcycle industry in the country (Howe & Davis, 2002; Nyabuta and Muindi, 2018). Though studies have indicated that there are benefits of motorcycles in the distribution channel, there is no conclusive study that has been conducted to investigate motorcycle delivery innovations on the performance of wholesale and retail sector growth in Kenya. This leaves a gap that needs to be filled by this study.

**Literature Review**

**Theoretical Review**

Social Exchange Theory explains the human relationship as a beneficial relationship that develops because of internalized cost-benefit analysis by everyone in the engagement (Homans, 1962). It is argued that behavior is an internal process that is self-directed, and thus, not influenced by the environment (Homans, 1962) rather than the benefits from the interactions. Basically, according to this theory, there are those factors that interplay to influence and motivate people’s choice of relationships in a social setup may it be friendships, acquaintances, or otherwise. In this relationship, there is an aspect of a giver and a taker, although not mandatory that there is a balance of exchange. Some will benefit more and those who will benefit less in that relationship. Therefore, naturally, individuals will develop a comparison level to measure the ratio of give and take. This kind of reciprocity involves cultural reciprocity comprising the urban society (Malinowski, 1932).

Homans (1962) further observed that it is important to understand how individuals create and maintain social structures and how social structures influence their behavior in terms of rewards and stimuli. He, therefore, proposed three elements of social behavior. First, the interactions, which means ‘being an event in which an action of one man was the stimulus of an action of another. Secondly, a sentiment means “behavior expressive of a person’s attitude toward other persons and includes the liking and disliking of individuals, approval and disapproval of the things they do (Homans, 1947). Third is an activity which is “any action that people perform that may not require interactions with others or express interpersonal sentiments”. A person in an exchange relationship with
another person expects the rewards of each person to be proportional to his or her costs. The greater the costs, the greater the expected reward, and that then the rewards, or profits, of each man, be proportional to his investments—the greater the investments, the greater the profit. (Homans 1961).

According to Homans (1974), retailers and wholesalers were tempted and willing to undertake a particular action if they foresee a reward in that particular action. Therefore, the more likeliness of the reward the more likelihood of the performance of that specific action related to that reward. The motorcycle business has been viewed by retailers and wholesalers to be a very good collaborator compared to other modes of transport. This means that if the past happening of a successful action is related to a certain stimulus, then the subsequent happening/occurrence of such stimulus will attract a similar action (Homans, 1974). The amount of transport cost that the retailers and wholesalers save daily form part of the stimulating factor that influences them to use motorcycles compared to other modes of transport. Previous studies have shown that many retailers and wholesalers have benefitted from this motorcycle business. The Social exchange theory, therefore, supports by the fact that the retailers and motorcycle business people collaborate for mutual benefit.

**Empirical Review**

Transport is a crucial element for the development and economic growth of the wholesale and retail sectors. It plays a key role and is concerned with the movement of goods and services, from one destination to another for business purposes. As the core center of economic integration, transport infrastructure, and service facilities institute a foundation for facilitating trade and ease of flow of goods and services (Balikuddembe, Ardalan, Khorasani-Zavareh, Nejati & Munamura, 2017). When transport systems for the wholesale and retail sectors are efficient, they provide economic and social opportunities and benefits that result in positive multipliers effects such as better accessibility to markets, fast service delivery solutions, employment, and additional investments. Moving to places of work fast and in a much more convenient manner increases working hours and increased productivity leading to better economic growth (Nyabuta & Muindi, 2018).

Empirical studies show that the usage of motorcycles has become popular in other parts of the world. In Taiwan, around one out of four people use automobiles while the ratio of motorcycles used is about 1:2. This shows that motorcycles are quite popular in this country. The use of motorcycles is for both human and goods transport. The use of motorcycles in Vietnam for human transport and distribution of goods is even higher because of the lack of public transport and the available automobiles are out of reach for many because of low-income levels (Nkede, 2012). In China, commercial motorcycles have played a key role in supporting the lives of urban migrant subgroups from Vietnam, Taiwan, and Asia (Qian, 2014).

Wang and Niu (2019) investigated the distribution of small packages in the metropolitan area by motorcycle courier services. Small packages such as important documents, receipts, and gifts were usually distributed in a short time window in a metropolitan area of congested traffic and limited parking spaces. While conventional four-wheel vehicles are not suitable for intra-city deliveries, motorcycles are perfect since they are more mobile. The study was investigating business models suitable for distributing small packages in the metropolitan area by analyzing two courier networks: a point-to-point and a hub-and-spoke courier network. Kang, et al., (2015) felt that to stay relevant in this performance market, businesses need to come up with new delivery services and keep on adding value to their products by selling different products, improving packaging, developing new products, and improving quality. Business growth should be based on diversification through value addition by using simple and cost-effective methods of delivering their products and motorcycles come in handy.

Vissera, Nemotob, and Brownea (2019) investigated the impact of urban freight transport on home delivery. The research paper focused on the latest developments in home delivery, online shopping and the potential impacts on city logistics and alternative vehicle use. The review illustrated the rapid changes during the past few years and the potentially important impacts on patterns of transport within urban areas. Some of the changes result in increased pressure on road traffic networks in sensitive areas. Of importance was the fact that there was a high level of adoption of motorcycles in the delivery of goods due to innovation in the motorcycle industry.

As reported by Nemoto et al. (2018), the concept of local pickup points using convenience stores has been already successfully implemented in Japan. Convenience stores, open almost all the time, offer this service both for extra revenue and because it generates more in-store traffic. With a growing number of houses empty during the daytime and the standard delivery times between 8 am and 5 pm, the difficulties are obvious. There is a need to better understand when customers want to receive deliveries, and then meet these needs. Reducing the likelihood of these delivery problems would help reduce home delivery companies’ operating costs and increase customers’ satisfaction for Business to Customer driven home delivery services. Due to the size of items to be delivered, and varied delivery schedules for different customers and customers who are in different locations, motorcycles become and better option for convenience stores in reaching their customers.

Allan, David, Lee, Morgan, and Jeff (2017) investigated how E-commerce Growth has impacted the Transportation Network. The steady growth in online retailing continues to rattle long-established business models and the shopping patterns of consumers (who are also taxpayers, voters, and drivers). These consumers are opting for shorter delivery times and in some cases, they wish to receive their goods within hours instead of days. The demand for more immediate delivery requires retailers to be nimble and radically change warehousing logistics. Sellers are augmenting their reliance on million-plus square foot facilities, adding smaller sorting and
delivery hubs, and locating them closer to their customers. To achieve this, they are collaborating with motorcycles to take advantage of motorcycle innovative delivery models.

The studies undertaken in the recent past indicate collaboration between the business and motorcycle industry. However, the contribution of the motorcycle industry to the performance of the wholesale and retail businesses has not been comprehensively documented. Thus, this study purposes to fill this gap.

**Research Methodology**

This study adopted a positivist paradigm and adopted descriptive research design. The population of the study constituted 17,000 wholesale and retail businesses in the 47 Counties in Kenya. However, 10% of the counties were selected for the study according to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) who suggested a sample of 1-10% of the target population is appropriate for scientific studies. Systematic sampling was used to select 5 counties from which a sample size of 383 was determined by the use of the Krejice Morgan table and the respondents were identified through simple random sampling from the five counties. This study collected primary data using a structured questionnaire. The study ensured there is validity by undertaking a pilot study and reliability was checked by measuring the internal consistency of the questionnaire using Cronbach’s Alpha. Data was analyzed by use of both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics with the help of SPSS software. The coefficient of determination (R2) was used to establish if the model was significant and the extent to which each of the independent variables explained the changes in the dependent variable. F-statistic was determined at a confidence level of 95% to determine if a significant association existed between motorcycle solutions and the performance of retail and wholesale businesses in Kenya.

**Results and Discussions**

The study sought to examine the influence of motorcycle delivery innovation on the performance of the wholesale and retail business in Kenya. The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with motorcycle delivery innovations using a Likert scale where SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, N= Neutral, D=Disagree, and SDA=Strongly Disagree. The study adopted both descriptive and inferential analysis to form the conclusions and recommendations. The findings are presented herein in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>SA (%)</th>
<th>A (%)</th>
<th>N (%)</th>
<th>D (%)</th>
<th>SDA (%)</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The use of mobile apps by motorcycle service providers has helped our business grow</td>
<td>16(34.5)</td>
<td>17(35.9)</td>
<td>5(11.9)</td>
<td>2(4.4)</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of mobile money by service providers enhances easier payment</td>
<td>16(34.6)</td>
<td>17(35.9)</td>
<td>5(11.9)</td>
<td>2(4.4)</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet connectivity with motorcycles increases efficiency in our business</td>
<td>15(31.5)</td>
<td>16(33.2)</td>
<td>6(12.5)</td>
<td>2(4.1)</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of GPS by motorcycle service providers guarantees the safety of our goods</td>
<td>14(29.1)</td>
<td>16(33.2)</td>
<td>6(12.5)</td>
<td>2(4.1)</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of a Mobile App for booking motorcycles services ensures convenience for business</td>
<td>13(26.9)</td>
<td>16(33.2)</td>
<td>6(12.5)</td>
<td>2(4.1)</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Booking of designated motorcycles via Mobile App reduces the risk of losses caused by theft from wholesale and retail businesses</td>
<td>15(31.5)</td>
<td>17(35.9)</td>
<td>5(11.9)</td>
<td>2(4.4)</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motorcycles are fast in delivering products from retailers and wholesalers thus improving their performance</td>
<td>14(29.1)</td>
<td>15(31.5)</td>
<td>6(12.5)</td>
<td>2(4.1)</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customers can order a variety of items from different retailers and wholesalers in the comfort of their homes for goods to be delivered via motorcycle</td>
<td>15(31.5)</td>
<td>16(33.2)</td>
<td>6(12.5)</td>
<td>2(4.1)</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ability for motorcycle to access remote areas by use of GPS has made them more reliable for wholesalers and retailers</td>
<td>13(26.9)</td>
<td>15(31.5)</td>
<td>6(12.5)</td>
<td>2(4.1)</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Average Value</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 1, the ability for motorcycles to access remote areas by use of GPS has made them more reliable for wholesalers, and retailers were rated highest with a score of 4.27 where 93.9% agreed with the statement. Third was Motorcycles are fast in delivering products from retailers and wholesalers thus improving their performance rated 4.21 and the majority (84.5%) agreed with the statement. On overall average, the study findings revealed that the respondents agreed with the statements used to measure the use of motorcycle delivery innovations and the influence it has on performance with a mean score of 4.17 and a standard deviation of 0.69. The findings imply that wholesalers and retailers have embraced motorcycle delivery innovations as a solution to enhance fast, timely, effective, and efficient delivery thus improving the performance of their businesses.

Through regression analysis, the study tested the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between delivery innovation solutions and the performance of wholesale and retail businesses in Kenya. A simple linear regression analysis was conducted in which performance was regressed against motorcycle delivery innovations. The findings of this test were interpreted using the R², F-statistic, T-test statistics, and the P-values. The model summary results were as shown in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>Adjusted R²</th>
<th>Std. The error of the Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.785</td>
<td>.616</td>
<td>.614</td>
<td>.4401</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Predictors: (Constant), Delivery solutions
The coefficient of determination (R²) and correlation coefficient (R) shows the degree of association between delivery innovations and the performance of the wholesale and retail businesses. The results indicate that R² = 0.616 and R = 0.785. R-value indicates that there is a strong and positive relationship between delivery solutions and the performance of wholesale and retail businesses. The R² value of 0.616 indicates that motorcycle delivery innovation explains 61.6% of variations in the performance of wholesale and retail businesses. This implies that 38.4% of the unexplained variations in performance are accounted for by the other variables including logistics cost, timely delivery, and accessibility to the markets.

### Table 3: ANOVA for Delivery Innovation and Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>53.096</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>53.096</td>
<td>274.246</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>33.107</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>.194</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>86.202</td>
<td>298</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: Performance  b. Predictors: (Constant), Delivery solutions

From Table 3 the F test provides an overall test of the significance of the fitted regression model. The ANOVA F-statistics (F = 274.246) and p = 0.000 indicates that the model used to examine the influence of motorcycle delivery innovation on performance was statistically significant. The results showed that among wholesale and retail businesses in Kenya, motorcycle delivery innovations/solutions were a highly significant predictor of performance.

### Table 4: Regression Coefficients for Delivery Solutions and Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>.871</td>
<td>.199</td>
<td>4.375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Delivery solutions</td>
<td>.802</td>
<td>.048</td>
<td>.785</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: Performance

Table 4 indicates that there was a positive linear relationship between delivery solutions and performance as shown by a regression coefficient = 0.802, p = 0.000. The results showed that motorcycle delivery innovation/solutions increase of one unit resulted in an increase of 0.802 in the performance of wholesale and retail businesses in Kenya. The study findings imply that there is a higher likelihood of recording better performance by having or embracing motorcycle delivery innovations and solutions in place.

The model was summarized as follows:

\[ \text{Performance} = 0.871 + 0.802 \times \text{Motorcycle Delivery Innovation} + 0.199 \]

The results found on the hypothesis were in support of Roberts’s (2022) study in South Africa which established that the increased need for professional delivery services due to increased online services promoted the use of motorcycles in delivery solutions. The motorcycles were considered useful due to their ease of mobility even in congested areas and their innovative way of handling business. Similarly, Mwangi (2022) opined that on-demand delivery service made Glovo open up a new technical center in Nairobi, to provide faster and localized rider and customer support, and in turn faster deliveries, convenience, and customer experience to the users. In support of the study Porter, (2015) noted that mobile phones enable those living in rural areas in sub-Saharan Africa to access numbers stored on their phones to call a motorcycle operator and take the major road to pick up an intercity bus within a matter of minutes. This has seen business owners’ access customers and suppliers easily and as a result, growth of their businesses.

### Conclusion

The study concluded that motorcycle delivery innovations/solutions have a strong relationship with the performance of wholesale and retail businesses. This was attributed to the technological changes happening in the world where customers are purchasing goods online or via phone hence necessitating the wholesalers and retailers to embrace the changes and turn to motorcycles to provide a solution. The study concluded that the use of the mobile application by commercial motorcycles has assisted most business owners in delivering their goods to their consumers efficiently since the motorcycles use GPS which enables tracking of the delivery process thus guaranteeing safety. Use of motorcycles for delivery has ensured convenience, efficiency and timely deliveries resulting to improved performance.

The study recommends that wholesale and retail businesses should make use of motorcyclists as this helps the business in reaching a wide range of customers. At the same time, the sector should adopt and fully employ motorcycle delivery innovations to enhance the distribution of goods and services faster and minimize logistics costs. Motorcyclists should adopt ICT tools as this will make them collaborate well with wholesalers and retailers.
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Institutional Review Board Statement: Ethical review and approval were waived for this study, due to that the research does not deal with vulnerable groups or sensitive issues.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References


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