

Understanding the Dynamics of Migrant Traders in Seasonal Micro-Business in Maiduguri: A Proposed Framework

By
Yakura Ibrahim
Maryam Imam Ibrahim
&
Joseph Philip Dibal

Department of Business Administration
Borno State University, Maiduguri

Abstract

This Paper dwells on understanding the dynamics of migrant traders on seasonal micro businesses in Maiduguri metropolis. The study explored on the reason why migrants mostly engaged in seasonal businesses, what are the motivation(s) in venturing into the seasonal businesses and what are other alternative source(s) of livelihood of the migrant workers after every season. The majority of previous research conducted on seasonal engagements focused on the construction and mining, which the findings has not included the seasonal micro businesses that also contribute to the economy. However, the few studies that were carried out in the seasonal engagement has not given much emphasis on the micro seasonal businesses such as; fruits and vegetables sellers, be it hawking or stagnant point of marketing. The study response to calls for connecting academic studies with society and situating business practices within their contexts and also underlines the enduring importance of seasonal micro businesses.

Keywords: *Migrants, Seasonal, Micro Businesses, Traders, Hawking, Fruit, Vegetable.*

Introduction

Migrants in rural communities have been undergoing socioeconomic changes, with many facing the concrete reality of seasonal changes every year. This condition been the outcome for decades; lack of local employment opportunities, cuts in essential public services, and a situation similar to that of marginal or remote rural areas in other industrial States (Li et al., 2019). To counter these issues, small towns and municipalities across Maiduguri have been engaging in revitalization projects, many of which focus on attracting new residents or encouraging former out-migrants to return. Hope is being placed on in-migrants from other areas, considered vital for bringing much-needed population and human resources back to declining small towns and villages. In parallel, Nigeria has seen an increase in people moving from rural to urban areas seeking lifestyle change and more meaningful ways of living, driven by depression with a stagnating economy, growing social and economic uncertainty (Klien, 2020). This phenomenon can be likened to the broader concept of 'lifestyle migration' discussed in the international literature (Benson 2009).

However, humans have always been on the move and this has been an important means of economic and social development. In the past decade, the number of people moving within and across borders has been significantly increasing, surpassing global population growth rates (UN [United Nations], 2017). According to the UN, in 2017 there were 258 million international migrants globally, almost 70 percent increase compared to the year 1990 (UN, 2019). Of those, approximately 68 million were forcibly displaced persons, including over 25 million refugees and 3 million refuge seekers.

Research has been divided up according to the degree of voluntariness of the movement. So-called voluntary migration has focused on people who, in economic terms, move in order to

maximise their individual potentials, for example by reaping the benefits of wage differentials or job opportunities. On the other hand, studies on forced migration have investigated movements in response to conflict or violence. Moreover, theories, such as the neoclassical labour migration theory or push (from the origin)-pull (towards the destination) models, are limited to explaining only one of the dichotomous phenomena (de Haas, 2011).

There is a lack of structured overviews on the variety of determinants that influence an individual's desire and decision to move from his/her home. Also, these overviews are limited by being based on the traditional dichotomy of voluntary or forced migration and, hence, by considering only the respective causes and triggers (Docquier, Peri, & Ruysen, 2014; Helms & Leblang, 2019). While this study do not challenge the idea that certain situations exert a greater pressure on individuals to move than others, this study acknowledge the existence of a wider spectrum between forced and voluntary decisions. Hence, this study considers all factors found to be relevant in the respective literature that affect migration aspirations and decisions.

Reviews

An Overview of Micro and Small Businesses

Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) sector plays a pivotal role through several pathways that goes beyond job creation. They are growth-supporting sector that not only contribute significantly to improve living standards, but also bring substantial local capital formation and achieve high level of productivity of Micro and Small enterprises.

In Nigeria, the history of MSEs dated back more than six decades ago during the colonial era in 1946 with a ten-year development plan. The plan was for the then colonial administration to lay groundwork for the welfare and development of Nigeria. But despite the intentions, the colonial administration implicitly had preference for large scale industries in a push for industrialisation. During the period, trade, price, tax, and exchange rate policies as well as enabling environment were prioritized in favour of the large firms to pave way for large industries as catalyst for Nigeria's industrialization. Despite these, the large manufacturing sector could not drive the economy. The economy was a buyer's market for outside economies and seller's market for raw materials. Thus, the policy of local sourcing of raw materials were hardly pursued as a result easy availability of cheap exchange rate to import foreign components; these situations hampered the development of MSEs.

The import substitution policy of the post-colonial period posted a picture that tolled the anti MSEs policy. It emphasised on industries that could undertake mass production of consumer goods. In addition, credit and incentives were granted to industries that could not go beyond first step of producing consumer goods. To attract Foreign Direct Investment FDI, policies such as profit tax holidays, import duty relief which allows firms to import raw designated materials under duty free and concessional arrangements, accelerated depreciation on capital investment and tariff protection. There were also monetary incentives such as the establishment of financial institutions for loans and subsidies. A number of financial institutions were drafted to oversee these arrangements such as, Nigeria Industrial Development Bank, and Nigeria Bank for commerce and Industry. May 2012.

Generally, both trade and infrastructural policies favoured the large-scale industries. In spite of these incentives, the manufacturing sector remains unstable. The problem of large-scale manufactures was further aggravated by the collapse of the international oil market in the 1980s. The associated unemployment and low-capacity utilisation created balance of payment problem which forced Nigerian government to seek for a bailout from international credit institutions, International Monetary Fund and World Bank. As one of the pre-

conditions and requirements for such credit facilities, the government embarked on Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) to strengthen the economy. In other to drive home the policy objectives of the SAP, an inward-looking policy that emphasises the use of local raw materials was introduced to encourage local producers, particularly Micro and Small Enterprises (SMEs).

To harness the potentials of the MSEs, the sector became particularly a focus of attention during the era of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in 1986. Thus, the Structural Adjustment Policy of 1986 saw the rising profile of increased number of MSEs. As form of encouragement, policies were adopted to use the sector as stepping stone for both job creation and industrialization. Industrial development centers, industrial estates, World Bank assisted programmes were put in place to encourage the sector. Various SMEs institutions were also established, small scale industrial scheme, the National Economic Reconstruction Fund, the small and medium scale loan scheme, the people's bank of Nigeria, and National Directorate of Employment were also established.

An Overview of Seasonal Micro, Small Business

This study explores the seasonal businesses in Nigeria that have the potential for returns on investment. By capitalizing on the unique characteristics of each season, traders can maximize their earnings and contribute to the country's economic growth. In the agro-based seasonal businesses, the Nigerian agrarian economy experiences fluctuations in agricultural production throughout the year, leading to several agro-based seasonal businesses. These businesses include crop farming, livestock rearing, poultry farming, and fishery. For example, during the rainy season, farmers cultivate crops like maize, millet, and rice, while the dry season sees an increase in vegetable farming. These businesses adapt to the changing seasons to maximize their yield and profitability. This study will be based on the farming produce; fruits and vegetables. Every year after the rainy season ends and crops are harvested, hundreds of thousands of people leave their villages to do menial trade in the cities. In Nigeria, the seasonal influx of migrants increases urban market traders. After their arrival in the city, migrants find engagement in apprenticeship, marketing, or crafts, earning cash that is funneled back to their home villages to meet their necessities. This "eaters of seasonal trade" as termed are practitioners of seasonal trade.

It is certain and evident that seasonal micro business increase over time for the past decade (Rain, 2018). In Nigeria, migrant seasonal trade is one of the oldest activity that has endured the changes of the seasonal agricultural periods and continues to be a rational responsible to the hawking micro seasonal business for many people. The practice of hawking is deeply rooted in the Hausa culture, which is based historically on long-distance trade, hunting, and herding activities (Rain, 2018). Throughout Nigeria, movement from one state to another especially after the rainy season has become a norms and culture of some migrants. The movement can be termed as "*Cin rani*" and other movements that are partially determined by the seasonal changes are common in the northern parts of Nigeria, especially in Borno State. Seasonal trade requires a network of connections that spreads across space; it also requires being quick and resourceful; it requires being a good navigator. The mastery exhibited by the seasonal migrants, in the trade is a motive that will accompany the researchers throughout this study.

Seasonal trade mobility is an economic activity with a long history in Nigeria. This study explores the changing geography of seasonal mobility in Maiduguri through a contextual investigation of its practitioners. In doing so, it aims to answer large questions about the nature of change in Nigeria. Why migrants mostly engaged in such seasonal businesses, what

are the motivation(s) of the migrants in venturing into the seasonal businesses and what are the alternative source(s) of livelihood of the migrant workers after every season?

Circulatory movements are characterized by people moving from their places of residence for varying periods of time but ultimately returning to them. The reality of multiple, temporary, circular moves vectoring out from a permanent base has implications that contrast vividly with the decisive "move" in standard migration conceptions. Whether by accident or design, circular mobility is hidden in the shadow cast by assumptions of Western-style residential permanence. This is a predicament only partially explained by the difficulty of recording movements.

Nigeria, a country blessed with diverse climates and natural resources, presents numerous opportunities for seasonal businesses. These businesses cater to specific seasonal demands and can yield substantial profits when executed strategically.

Migrant Traders

Ward and Jenkis (1984) gave a broader developmental view of the studies of migrant traders in Western Europe, while Simon (1993) focused his studies of migration on the Nigerian contexts. These scholarly publications opined that migrants play significant roles in small and medium sized trade. In the same vein, the administrative barriers for migrants within Maiduguri have been reduced in the wake of the Security treat faced for over a decade. The main feature of economic restructuring in recent decades has been a paradigm shift from employment in large firms to self-employment in small firms. Generally, migrants tend to venture into self-employment more than similarly skilled native-born workers (Verheul *et al.* 2001). This has been the common practice among migrant groups within Nigeria for decades (Baycan-Levent & Nijkamp, 2007). There are four identified flows of entry for migrants: labour migration, family reunification, asylum (refuge), and the undocumented route (Stalker, 2002). The surge in the number of migrant traders gave birth to a corresponding rise in the volume of literature and data published by scholars and governmental institutions like the Nigerian Commission, and general private surveys. The importance of studying migrant traders in Nigeria is to have knowledge for policy makers and scholars.

In 2010, an innovative analytical framework called "Model of the Opportunity Structure" was developed for the analysis of migrant traders (Kloosterman, 2010). Kloosterman effectively explains the relationship between opportunities and access to markets. Due to market opening that creates room for the emergence of new businesses, traders have sufficient demand for a certain bundle of products. His model is bipolarly separated into differences in entry barriers and dynamics. The relationship between opportunities, resources and outcomes of migrant traders is presented as dependent on the business and market in question, meaning that the most efficient conclusions can be easily projected. A great advantage of the presence of migrant traders is that they serve as a source of revenue for the government and impact the local communities through job provision and urbanization (Marques, C.S.E et al, 2022). Migration provides many benefits and contributes immensely to economic growth and the creation of new jobs (Baycan-Levent & Nijkamp, 2007). These benefits are strongly connected with the willingness to utilise opportunities across regions, and the supply of jobs stabilises the flow of people seeking work (Baycan-Levent & Nijkamp 2007). Since trading is one of the frequently adopted ways to avoid unemployment in a host country, it is expected that migrants will make a strong effort to choose self-employment. Over recent decades, migrant trades have primarily been located in the Nigerian urban economy such as Maiduguri, and this has invariably made the largest cities in Nigeria become vibrant multicultural economies (Baycan-Levent & Nijkamp, 2005). These ethnic economies give a face-lift to social and economic change in Nigerian cities. These changes are characterised by

the presence of migrants, the challenge of a society dominated by people of different cultures, and new forms of integration between migrant and natives (Baycan-Levent & Nijkamp 2005).

Also of note is the integration of migrants in the sphere of work, coupled with the problems of the expansion of informal activities (Mingione, 2002). From another perspective, we need to consider the opportunities being created for cities due to the revitalization of formerly derelict shopping streets, introducing new products and new marketing strategies (Masurel *et al.* 2004). These give room for trade links between distant areas, fostering the emergence of new spatial forms of social cohesion (Kloosterman *et al.* 2002). However, after a comparative evaluation, the Nigerian models of migrant trade were identified and the determinants of migrant trade in Nigeria became evident, and this can partially describe the country-specific developments according to the level of integration of migrants (Baycan-Levent & Nijkamp 2005).

Migrants Traders and Seasonal Micro Businesses

Migrants bring new skills to receiving communities, they create flexibility in the labour markets, help address labour shortages, and contribute to the economy as employees and also as entrepreneurs, creating new firms and businesses (Collins *et al.*, 2020; Collins & Shin, 2012; Collins, 2003; Nijkamp, 2003; Kloosterman, 2003). The impact of migrant traders is an area where international knowledge is advancing (OECD, 2010).

Migrant business is a result of individual (personal), human capital, behavioural and cognitive, institutional, opportunity-related, economic, social, cultural, psychological, motivational (push-pull), family, and environmental factors. Individual factors are described by Irastorza and Peña (2014) as human capital endowments, psychological attributes, and perceptual variables such; as alertness to opportunities, fear of failure, and confidence about one's own skills. Individual factors explain migrant's business trends, trade experience, and business skills are also essential to business formation. Brush (2006) explains that human capital is important for business success, especially if the business ownership comes from a different background than that of the host community and this may influence the success of the business. Jones (2007) found that there are two types of traders, based on their motivation: first, those pushed to start a business because of dissatisfaction with their current situation in the labour market in terms of unemployment or underemployment and second, those attracted by a new business idea to start trading activities.

Mekwunye, U. (2018), study on micro, small and medium scale businesses, she found that, micro business has less than 10 employees, and less than N5,000,000 (excluding land and buildings); small businesses have between 10-49 employees, and N5,000,000 to N50,000,000 (excluding land and buildings); while medium businesses are having between 50-199 employees, and N50,000,000 to N500,000,000 (excluding land and buildings). Linking our study and that of Mekwunye, U. (2018), it is evident that our study fall under the micro business, since the study focuses on migrant micro businesses that are mostly sole traders.

Theories

Mixed Embeddedness Theory

The approach of mixed embeddedness as Granovetter, 1985 also aims at relating the resources of migrant entrepreneur to the opportunity structure. Opportunities for business in capitalist societies are intrinsically linked to markets. To create opportunities in the markets, there has to be a sufficient demand for a certain products, goods or services otherwise no trader can make a living. Markets are, thus, in our perspective, the crucial components of the opportunity structure. Openings for new businesses occur or are created in specific,

identifiable product markets. Setting up shop or business place in a particular market. Consequently, entails a description of a specific set of products, goods or services, opting for a specific set of possible business activities, and targeting more or less identifiable group(s) of consumers, customers or clients delimited in time and space (cf. Swedberg, 1994). Forms of highly capital-intensive businesses necessitate large minimum efficient scales and are, hence, not very accessible for the new traders (cf. Chandler, 1994).

To this end, this theory is relevant to the study because, it linked business and market opportunities, every business starts from the point of “demand” to need “satisfaction”. Therefore, to be able to start a particular business in market where a demand seems to exist, an aspiring entrepreneur such as the migrants micro traders has to have the right kind of resources; financial, human, social capital, and perhaps also understand the ethnic background of the host community. More so, markets, have to be accessible for migrants micro traders. It is therefore hard to find business start-ups by individual traders in a large quantity or scale. Most aspiring migrant traders, especially those coming to from other local governments, other than the study area, tend to lack financial resources or do not have easy access to significant funds. This implies that, generally speaking, these aspiring migrants micro traders can only start a business that requires a relatively modest capital.

Opportunity-Based Entrepreneurship Theory

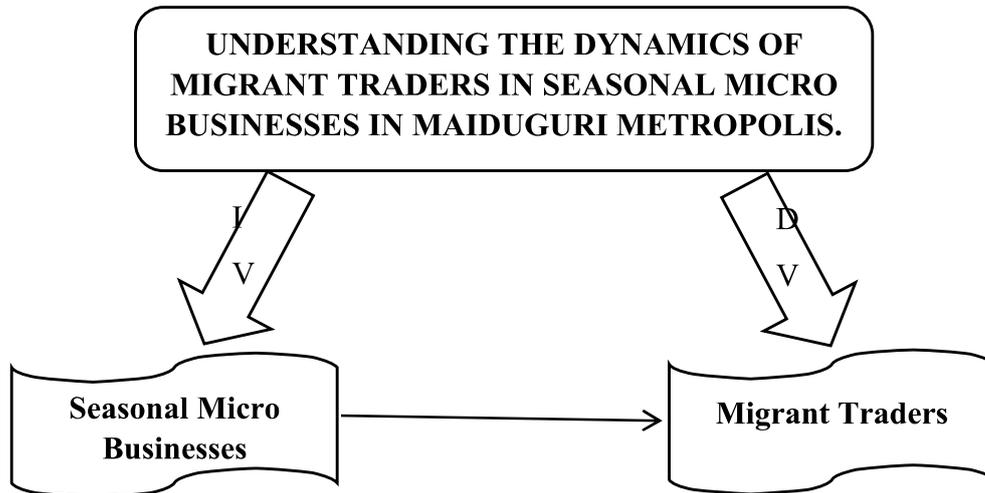
The opportunity-based theory is anchored by names such as Peter Drucker and Howard Stevenson. An opportunity-based approach provides a wide-ranging conceptual framework for entrepreneurship research (Fiet, 2002; Shane, 2000). It is assumed that entrepreneurs do not cause change but exploit the opportunities that arise when change happens (Drucker, 1985). Entrepreneurs actively seek and respond to changes in consumer preferences, technology and exploits it as an opportunity”. What is apparent in Drucker’s opportunity construct is that entrepreneurs have an eye more for possibilities created by change than the problems. Stevenson (1990) extends Drucker’s opportunity-based construct to include resourcefulness. This theory is relevant to the study because it also postulates opportunity in the market. There are various opportunity in the seasonal micro businesses in Nigeria, which Borno State has possess such opportunities due to large farming activities. The opportunities are mostly explored by migrants traders, the researchers focus is that most of the seasonal micro businesses are been dominated by the migrants across the Country to the study area. Looking closely at the fruit and vegetable traders in the Maiduguri municipality, migrants tend to venture more in the seasonal trade.

In this regard, Mixed embeddedness theory by Kloosterman (1999) and Opportunity-based theory (Drucker, 1985) is adopted as the lens through which this work will be scientifically projected. The three adopted theories are of great relevance which gives emphasis on labour, opportunity and market place in relation to the host community of the migrants. Invariably, a broad analysis of various scholarly perspectives on the entirety of migrant entrepreneurship in Nigeria will be establish.

Conceptual Framework

Owing to the few literatures found in the previous studies, this work developed a research framework to determine the relationship between Migrants traders and seasonal micro businesses in Maiduguri and its municipals. The framework has seasonal micro businesses as the independent variable while Migrant traders as the dependent variable. The study focuses on Migrant traders which eventually engage in the trade leading to the competitive economic advantage and need satisfaction. Seasonal micro businesses represent the opportunity and means of livelihood as signified by the mixed embeddedness (Kloosterman, Van der Leun &

Rath, 1999) which aims at relating the resources of migrant traders to the opportunity structure. Opportunities for business in capitalist societies are intrinsically linked to markets. To create opportunities in the markets, there has to be a sufficient demand for a certain products, goods or services otherwise no trader can make a living. The opportunity-based theory, an opportunity-based approach provides a wide-ranging conceptual framework for traders research (Fiet, 2002; Shane, 2000). It is assumed that traders do not cause change but explore the opportunities that arise when change happens (Drucker, 1985). The proposition of the framework is that Seasonal micro businesses has implication on the Migrant traders.



Conclusion

The efficacy of migrant traders in Nigeria is recognised by many scholars and policy makers, and there is a few literatures on this topic. However, the information on migrant workers and traders are not comparable and are limited, especially in Maiduguri. Most studies address a specific migrant group engaged in construction and mining in some city. And there is obviously a gap in evaluating migrant traders. When it comes to trade, the wider economic crisis across the globe, low levels of labour demand and high levels of unemployment among resident nationals have played a role in increasing the competition and difficulties for migrants seeking to integrate into the labour market when permitted to work.

This study provides a theoretical background explanation to Nigerian migrant trade. It further establishes a formidable foundation for empirical research into various factors that come into play when it comes to market access, growth, and survival of the business ventures of migrants in some host cities as Maiduguri. This aims to contribute to the body of knowledge by giving a broader explanation and understanding of the concept of Maiduguri migrant trade, theoretically analyzing its causal factors, opportunities, and challenges. This gives a more fundamental understanding and clearer impression of the field of Nigerian migrant trade within the Maiduguri context for all current and intending scholars researching within the scope.

The study will add towards extending the borderline of existing knowledge in the areas of seasonal businesses and migrants traders. This study also fills the literature gap by linking the dependency of the migrants traders to the seasonal businesses.

The policy implication of the study is to provide support for practitioners, especially government agencies and decision makers in the area of MSME development in Maiduguri, Borno State and Nigeria at large. Manager of micro businesses will also find this work as a valuable reference. It will also enlighten some individual with the knowledge that some seasonal traders are not natives of Maiduguri, but migrants from other rural communities and

States. Future studies should consider other produce of business order than the fruits and vegetables sellers.

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