Geospatial analysis of Street Hawking in Accra Metropolitan Area

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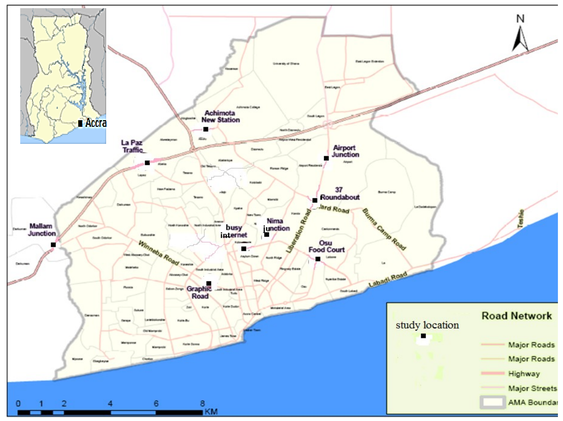
ABSTRACT

To the street hawker, hawking is a means of eking out a living, but to the city-elites and managers, street hawking is a menace that must be stopped either by fair or foul means. These two extremities have led to a game plan tie to the spatio-temporal diurnal traffic regimes. While authorities plan to evict by all means, hawkers game plan is to stay and maximize daily profit by all means, hence the emergence of make-shift hawking patterns and eviction strategies characterized by brutalities and prosecution. The fight of these two giants have put the general public in a fix, the public need clean and less congested city streets, yet hawkers and their dependents must survive. The study finds that the main factors fuelling street hawking are traffic congestion, profitability, the lack of employable skills and minimal entry capital requirement. The study suggests that city management-hawker relationship, public perception and bazaar city streets must be managed to make Accra metropolitan area livable. This calls for new approaches that address the aesthetic and open space needs and the same time meeting the socio-economic and survival needs of city dwellers.

Key Words: Street Hawking, Accra Metropolitan Area, Geospatial Pattern, Ghana

STUDY AREA (AMA)



METHODOLOGY

- Use of Questionnaires
- Personal Interviews
- Use of Global Positioning Systems (GPS) : Nine locations were selected randomly out of the 18 major hawking locations of AMA .These are the Graphic Road, the New Achimota Station Traffic Light, 37 Roundabout Traffic Light, Mallam Junction, Airport Junction Traffic Light, Osu Food Court, Busy Internet of the Nkrumah Circle, Nima Junction and Lapaz Traffic Light.
- Use of ArcGIS
- Ten representatives of the Accra Metropolitan Assembly were also interviewed

Interview guide

Respondents	Information
Total No. Respondents	180
Maximum Age	67
Minimum Age	9
Average Age	22
No. of Dependants	2 - 5
Duration of Hawking	1 - 15 yrs
Daily Turnover	¢5-100
Number of Hawking Spots	1 - 3
Selection / qualification	Simple random and Accidental: Willing to offer information

INTRODUCTION & RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Economic disparities existing between regions have the tendency of creating population drift. The more economically developed countries tend to provide the attraction which pull people from the relatively less developed areas in search of economic opportunities [Dickson and Benneh 1988]. The regional economic disparities between towns (cities) in Africa have made these cities centers for economic opportunities and personal fulfillment, hence any countryside dweller who seeks to better his/her life immediately thinks of moving to the city. However these economic migrants realize in the next day that the big towns and cities do not have ready and awaiting jobs for them as they might have dreamt of. This situation as opined by Friedmann [1992] leads migrants and indeed some indigenes into creating other forms of livelihood activities in their frantic bid to earn a living which includes selling on the streets as a means for survival, often termed street hawking. The activity of street hawking which by all intents and purposes forms part of trade, in recent times serves as a major avenue for income generation for sections of the urban population in Accra and most African cities where the case of urban unemployment is acute [Asiedu and Agyei-Mensah 2008].

In spite of the inherent benefits of the economy of Ghana [Cross 1995; Witt 2008; Chen 2001], street hawking which forms a lion share of the informal sector is considered illegal, unauthorized and constitute an encroachment of public spaces. Its continual existence is a source of worry which creates conflicts and attracts brutalities from city managers who are tasked with ensuring sanity in the city of Accra. Despite the various attempts by city authorities in Africa at halting the proliferation of street hawking, it is interesting to see how thriving it has become in most African cities, including Accra. In the midst of all the threats and intimidations, street hawking has proven to be the most visible spatial manifestation of the urban informal sector of developing countries [Bromley 1998 ; Hays-Mitchell1994].

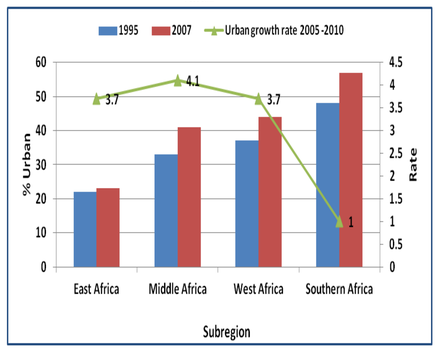
Asiedu and Agyei-Mensah [2008] mentioned the fact that most investigations into this subject area have been directed at the studies of informal manufacturing whiles there exist a very vast void in knowledge regarding the spatial dimension and modification of the urban landscape among others by these activities. It therefore makes imperative the need to examine who these hawkers are, where they come from, the spatial dimension of their operation and the problems they pose to the urban landscape Accra.

The questions addressed in details in this study are:

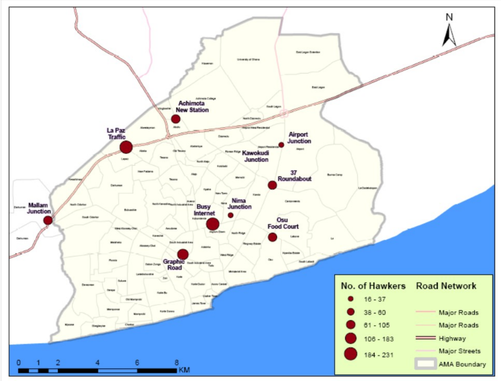
- What is the geographic pattern of street hawking in Accra Metropolitan Area (AMA)
- Why is street hawking endemic in the city of Accra?
- Is street hawking likely to end; why and why not?

Using a combination of GIS and several socio-economical data, this study provided answers to these questions to provide information on the geospatial pattern and geodemography of hawkers in the Accra Metropolis .

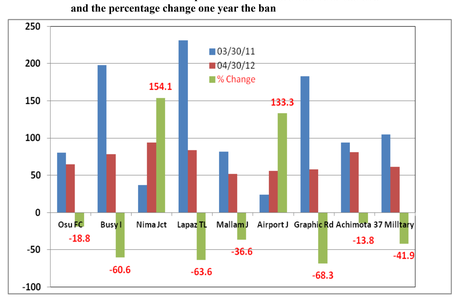
Projected urbanization rates for four sub regions of Africa



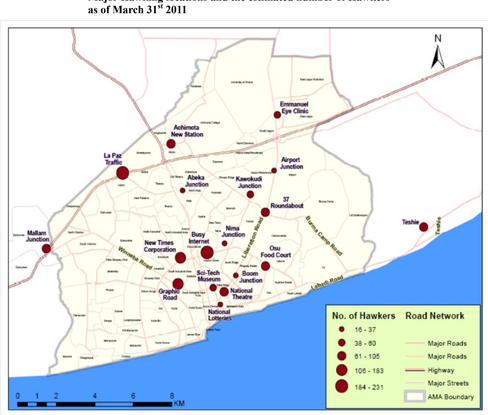
Sampled Hawking Locations and the number of Hawkers counted April 2012 one year after banning street hawking in Accra.



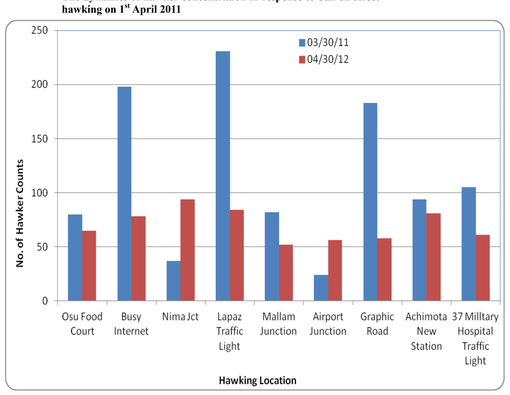
Hawker Count at the sampled locations before and after the ban and the percentage change one year the ban



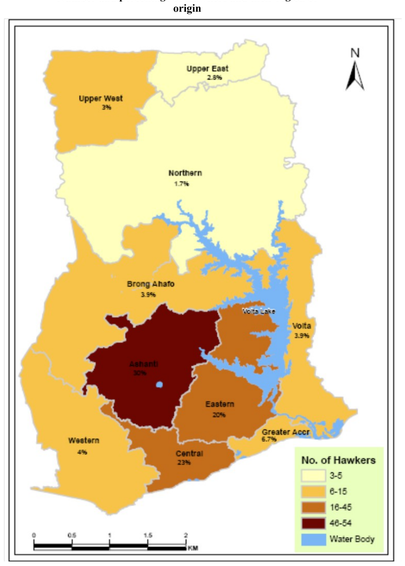
Major Hawking locations and the estimated number of Hawkers as of March 31st 2011



The dynamics of hawker concentration in response to ban on street hawking on 1st April 2011



Number and percentage of Hawkers and their region of origin



Hawkers at Achimota new station

MAJOR FINDINGS

- The Ashanti, Central and Eastern had indigenes dominating hawking activities.
- The Busy Internet area at the Kwame Nkrumah Circle, Nima junction and Lapaz Traffic Light are more favorable hawking location.
- Hawkers hawk in relation to traffic congestion which changes with the time of the day.
- Respondents thought that there are no better alternative locations hence their keeping up with the current locations.
- Hawking locations were chosen based on where they are likely to make more profit.
- In spite of the efforts by AMA, officials themselves believe the results can at best be described as mix.
- Hawkers were observed to have little formal education.
- Street hawkers have become the main bread winners of their families.
- A majority of respondents had no alternative source of income.

Recommendations

- Decongestion of city center.
- Reassessment and enforcement of the land use plan and code.
- The need political will and major policy shift beyond the powers of city authorities.

Conclusion

- Street hawking has both spatial and temporal dynamics that makes hawking more complex than observed.
- The spatial pattern has changed since the opening of N1 highway.
- Street hawking seems more profitable than public sector employment.
- Hawkers are very much concern about the harassment and molestations they received from taskforce.
- The need for survival and to take care of their dependents coupled with the precarious economic conditions of Ghana propel hawkers to grow resistant and adopt coping strategies to outwit law enforcers.

Hawkers at the 37 Roundabout Traffic Light