



**COMMERCIAL TRUCK DRIVERS AND FRSC COMMUNICATION MESSAGES
IN SOUTH-EAST NIGERIA: AN IMPACT EVALUATION**

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the impact of FRSC communication messages on commercial truck drivers in the South Eastern (SE) region of Nigeria, with a focus on the drivers' awareness and knowledge of road safety messages communicated by FRSC. The study adopted the mix method for the collection of data. Using the Taro Yamane formula, 210 respondents from truck parks in five (5) selected cities, one each from Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo were sampled using structured questionnaires. Descriptive analysis was used for data presentation. Findings showed significantly high level awareness and knowledge of FRSC communicated safety messages among the population. Result also indicated absolutely high awareness and knowledge of FRSC messages on some of the environmental/infrastructural challenges and threats the drivers experience which affect safety and service performance. They are: Poor road conditions (100%), Extreme weather conditions (100%), Non-evacuation of damaged/vandalized vehicles or their debris on the roads (100%) and, illegally mounted security checkpoints and roadblocks (100%). Similarly, there are significantly high awareness of the other variables such as Driver distraction by roadside advertising billboards (91.9%) and Non-availability of road signs (99.5%). The study recommended among other things that to consolidate on the effectiveness of its communication messages, there is need for FRSC to establish a conventional traffic radio station and ensure that all commercial trucks are equipped with radio receivers to access road safety messages from the station. FRSC

should also design specific on-the-go messages such as warnings, regular announcements and reminders for commercial truck drivers.

Keywords: Commercial Truck Drivers, Safety, FRSC, Communication Messages, South-East Nigeria

Introduction

Nigeria's economy is heavily dependent on the oil and gas sector with upstream and downstream activities necessitating road transportation of petroleum products to consumers across the nation. According to ThisDay newspaper of 9 January 2018, Nigeria's daily crude oil production with condensates stood at 2.25 million barrels per day (mbd), crude oil production alone standing at 1.8mbd.

NNPC declared that:

- Average of 1,255 trucks laden with petroleum products dispatch daily
- Equivalent of over 41 million litres are transported per day to fuel stations nation-wide. (Oyeyemi, 2018).

Oyeyemi (2018) states further that the road transport mode is mostly utilized in transporting petroleum products due to:

- Great market demand and complex distribution network
- Inadequate inter-modal transport system
- Limited/inadequate pipe-line product conveyance

In addition to petroleum products, high volume of goods are transported through trucks and articulated vehicles across Nigeria, particularly from the port city of Lagos in the South-West to the commercial hubs of Onitsha, Aba, Enugu, Oweri and Abakaliki in the South-East of Nigeria. Infact, roads by far handle the largest share of freight transport (Gbadegesi et al., 2022). About 80% of freight movements in Nigeria are done on the road with about 2,500 trailers in dry cargoes plying Nigerian roads daily (Makanjuola, Daramola, &Obemebe, 2007; Ubogu, 2011; Ukoji, 2014).

Nigeria has recorded several cases of road traffic crashes involving tankers/ trailers for which several stakeholders' engagements have been held and preventive measures carried out. Statistics from the Federal Roads Safety Corp (FRSC) revealed that in one year, between August 2020 to August 2021, 261 people have died from 60 separate truck accidents and tanker explosions across Nigeria (allafrica.com). This therefore puts in focus the characteristics of the drivers of trucks, particularly commercial trucks, which constitute majority of trucks. This is against the backdrop of road safety magazine, Brand Spur that most commercial truck drivers on Nigerian roads cannot decipher road markings, road signs and signals not to talk of reading highway codes, traffic acts and traffic regulations (Brand Spur, 2017). This brings the road literacy level of these drivers into focus.

Studies like (Ipingbemi, 2017) have attempted to show any relationship between the socio-economic characteristics, traffic behaviour and level of safety literacy of commercial drivers. It has also been shown that many commercial truck drivers put in long hours of driving on a daily basis (11 hours permitted out of a 14 hour work day). There is the possibility of driver fatigue during long drives common in over-the-road operations. This safety concern turns attention to the possibility of some commercial truck drivers using wake-promoting compounds (stimulants) in their attempts to maintain alertness and to sustain or enhance driving performance. The above concerns underscore the indispensability of effective information/communication strategies to road safety and have led to suggestions on how best to enlighten and educate the mass of commercial truck drivers on the adverse effects of anti-road safety behaviours.

Statement of the problem

Establishing and maintaining reasonable level of road safety along the roads and highways, especially in terms of the creation of a safe and predictable driving environment and thereby reducing the number of avoidable or preventable accidents has thus been of the major safety concerns for government at all levels. The high rate of road accident on Nigerian roads and highways led to the establishment of the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) in 1988 to oversee road safety management (FRSC 2007). One of the objectives of the corps is to educate road users most especially drivers on the importance of road discipline and proper use of roads and highways. The statutory functions include: Making the highways safe for motorists and other road users as well as checking road worthiness of vehicles, recommending works and infrastructures to eliminate or minimize accidents on the highways, and educating motorists and members of the public on the importance of road discipline on the highways.

In line with these stated objectives, the FRSC has made several efforts in the direction of public enlightenment. These strategies include: organization of workshop/seminars/lectures and drivers' improvement courses, carrying out rallies at motor parks, literacy campaigns inculcating in the road users the knowledge of the highway traffic code, playing of jingles on radios and televisions among others. Despite the above efforts, road accidents involving commercial truck drivers persist. This therefore raises the following pertinent questions: what communication messages and media does FRSC deploy to enlighten commercial truck drivers in the South East on road safety? Are the commercial truck drivers aware of FRSC's communication interventions on road safety? What is the extent of commercial truck drivers' awareness and knowledge of FRSC's communication interventions? This study proposes to answer these and other related questions in the hope of advancing measures that could enhance the effectiveness of FRSC communication strategies.

Objectives of the study

The aim of this study is to evaluate the impact of FRSC communication messages on road safety awareness and knowledge among commercial truck drivers in Southeast Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To highlight the types of communication messages and media used by FRSC deploy to enlighten commercial truck drivers in the South East on road safety.

2. To investigate commercial truck drivers' level of awareness of FRSC's communication interventions on road safety.
3. To determine commercial truck drivers' knowledge of FRSC's communication interventions.

Conceptual framework

All human to human activity and functioning cannot thrive without communication. From planning, through organising, to monitoring, it is essential that through these processes people must communicate either directly or indirectly. The implication of this is that every person's communication skills affect personal effectiveness (Brun, 2010). It will be correct to assume that the success of every human group endeavor depends on effective communication (Summers, 2010). Furthermore, good communication skills are very important if communication must be effective (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2010). Communication in the simplest scenario, denotes an exchange of ideas between two entities. Effective communication is the bedrock of every successful and result-oriented human relationship, be it informal or formal such as in organizational settings, in short term or long term working relationships. Effective communication is indispensable to beneficial human relationship (Green, 2010).

The statutorily identified the elements of the communication process as the sender, the encoding, the message, the medium, the decoding, the receiver and the feedback. If at any point in the process noise is introduced, complete clarity of meaning and understanding may never be established. The biggest problem with communication is the illusion that it has been accomplished (Shaw, 2011). For communication to be effective, the sender and the receiver must understand that it's a two-way process that requires effort and skill by both parties. Also, effective communication requires that the two main parties involved, the sender and the receiver, take up personal responsibilities to that effect. For instance, for the sender with a basic understanding of the communication process, should do the following:

In essence, the end of communication, all communication, is to exchange meanings with a view to elicit some sort of desired response from the communicants. Communication therefore helps to improve, modify and change behaviours. It is based on this premise that the Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) model was developed.

BCC is a research-based consultative process of addressing knowledge, attitudes and practices through identifying, analysing and segmenting the audience by providing them with relevant information through well-defined strategies, using appropriate means of any or a mix of, interpersonal and group communication, mass media channels and participatory methods (UNICEFROSA, 2005). BCC in social life encompass messages or interventions that centres on communicating messages to households or communities through various mediums in ways that can positively impact social behaviour.

There are various ways BCC can be delivered to persons, households or communities and they include but not limited to interpersonal communication (IPC) through counseling or group discussions, songs, shows, dances and other forms of fine and performing arts, also through one or a

combination of the mass media such as the internet, television, radio, books, flyers, leaflets, newspapers, posters and even magazines (Everett et al., 2011).

In contemporary society, BCC interventions can also be facilitated through other means like land and mobile telephones, computer and mobile phone apps., blogs through 'pop-ups' information, chat rooms and apps such as Whatsapp, Wechat, telegram etc. (Leslie et al., 2013). Researchers and practitioners such as health experts are also exploring the use of e-platforms such as doctor and patient interactions in real time and also random mobile or internet calls which continues to prove very successful although lack of accessibility to internet or mobile network sometimes restricts the reach and impact of the messages but studies have shown that the usage of mobile phones for BCC is growing phenomenally especially in developing countries (Riboli-Sasco et al., 2015). The use of mobile phones presents many opportunities for BCC messages to reach a widespread audience through text messaging (Riboli-Sasco et al., 2015).

BCC interventions are usually aimed at subtly enforcing a change in attitude, perception and ultimately behaviour. Unlike conventional communication which basically seeks to pass information or idea, BCC is usually embarked on with a view to changing or affecting existing behaviour or in some cases, social attitude. BCC follows the normal model of communication process which involves the sender, sending a message, through a medium, to the receiver and then the receiver, reacts in the form of a feedback. However, the distinguishing factors with BCC is that the sender usually packages the message in a way that the receiver is moved to change attitude or perceptions and then consequently, also change behaviour or improve existing behaviour. BCC also aims at providing a conducive or supportive environment that will help people adopt and sustain the desired behaviour outcome.

Another distinguishing factor in BCC is that often times it stems from research on existing behaviour analysis (eg, drivers' exhibition of poor awareness and knowledge of road safety regulations). After which, the message is packaged and communicated, followed by close monitoring and evaluation. Usually, the receiver of these messages are predetermined or identified and sometimes even before these interventions are implemented, they can be tested to ascertain the workability or otherwise of the communication. BCC is very popular and has been proven to be very effective in public orientation and awareness creation especially in Africa, Asia. Seen in the above light, FRSC communication interventions on road safety can be classified as Behaviour Change Communication.

FRSC deploys various media such as television, radio, newspaper, social media and internet as well as other publicity and public communications strategies like theatre for development to enlighten the public on road safety. Internet and social media remain the organization's most utilised media in its public communication activities. Its official website, frsc.gov.ng, constantly features such messages as warnings against drinking and driving, need to understand and obey road signs, need to maintain vehicles, etc. FRSC also has strong presence on social media platforms like Twitter (www.twitter.com/FRSCNigeria), Facebook (www.facebook.com/Federalroadsafetycorps), Instagram (www.instagram.com/FRSCNigeria) and Youtube (www.youtube.com/FRSCNigeria). FRSC's official website highlights the followings as major benefits it derives from use of social media and the internet:

- Easy Dissemination of Information such as traffic alerts Measure organizational performance
- It helps to provide a real time information on the activities of the Corps to the public
- It helps provide instant feedback on our operational activities
- It helps to share information and response to crisis situations promptly
- It helps create and increase operational and administrative awareness
- It aids positive public perception
- Tool for measuring performance from the public.

Access to ICTs and digital literacy are very vital to knowledge empowerment and information generation and utilisation. Nigeria, made up of 36 states and 774 local government council areas, with about 200 million people has ICT facilities that are largely limited to urban areas at exorbitant rates, affordable by the middle and upper classes of society, thus making many of the rural and suburban areas unable to fully participate in the emerging information economy (Ifijeh et al, 2016).

Digital inclusion revolves round three sequential classifications of the digital divide - opportunity (encompassing accessibility and affordability), infrastructure (network indicators and indices) and utilization (ICT usage and quality) (Ifijeh, et al 2016). However, access and usage of the internet have greatly increased among Nigerians in recent times largely due to mobile telephony technology and social media. An earlier published report revealed that about 70% of the Nigerian population uses the internet (Premium Times, 2015). The same report also indicated that more than 98% of internet users in Nigeria gain access to the internet through mobile telephone networks. It is access to ICTs and ability to find and utilize information from the ICT platforms that constitute digital inclusion. As Ifijeh et al., (2016) put it, going by these reports, a greater percentage of Nigerians maybe classified as digital inclusive.

Granted, FRSC safety messages are also occasionally aired on radio and television stations, albeit sponsored by other organisations such as churches, schools, etc. It is however; very instructive to note that FRSC does not deploy these traditional mass media in the same degree it deploys the new media. The corps, in fact, has makes no significant budgetary provision for communication on these traditional media (FRSC, 2020). This in itself is bound to constitute a major limitation especially considered against the backdrop that a significant percentage of Nigerians (commercial truck drivers inclusive) do not have sufficient access to the internet or lack the requisite knowledge to effectively use digital technology. That the commission's messages are hardly featured on the more popular and easily accessible traditional media of radio and television is a drawback and detracts from its efforts to reach commercial drivers most of whom are semi-literate.

Admittedly, the traditional media is strongly mentioned in the commission's roadmap as key partners. The roadmap states emphatically inter alia, the public awareness strategies of the commission:

- I. Motor parks rallies • FRSC commands should organize bi- monthly rallies
- II. Interactive session in print and electronic media • FRSC jingles should be regular on radio and television stations nationwide • Quality schools' debate and essay competition on Road Safety issues

- III. Production of bill boards fliers, posters/songs/rhymes • 100% total coverage using billboards or E – motions quarterly production of fliers and posters composition of Road Safety songs, jingles and rhymes to capture desired consciousness.
- IV. Community based Road Safety Programmes • There should be community based Road Safety/Crash rescue programmes (public enlightenment/training)
- V. Highway Code translation in all Nigerian Languages. • Develop and translate the Highway Code into all major Nigerian languages and ensure that every household has a copy of it. (Public enlightenment/training)
- VI. Liaise with stakeholders • Develop new public campaigns/ programmes in partnership with key stakeholder and run them quarterly (frsc.gov.ng/cmoroadmap.pdf).

The above statements notwithstanding, FRSC’s traditional media messages are very few and far between. Conversely, by far FRSC’s most effective communication and publicity strategy is direct campaign whereby its officers engage selected target groups in seminars, workshops, community theatre exercises, etc. These activities are equally captured and displayed on the organization’s various media channels.



FRSC officials mounting a sign by the road side (Source: FRSC, 2020)



FRSC road signs



FRSC billboards



CPEO/FRSC safety awareness campaign using community theatre in Kubwa, Abuja, July 11, 2019.
(Source: Nairaland.com).

Review of empirical studies

Several researches have overtime attempted to interrogate the interface between road safety communication, drivers' awareness and knowledge in Nigeria. While some studies have focused on the nature of message and media vehicles, others have focused on driver characteristics, while yet others have focused on the role of government. A study by Okafor, Odeyemi and Dolapo (2013) titled **“Knowledge of commercial bus drivers about road safety measures in Lagos, Nigeria”** sought to determine drivers' knowledge of selected road safety measures; that is, the pre-requisites for driver's license, road signs and speed limits. The study used a cross-sectional study carried out in Lagos, Nigeria. Simple random sampling was used to select the two motor parks used for the study and all the consenting commercial minibus drivers operating within the parks (407) were included in the study. Data was collected with a pre-tested, structured, interviewer-administered questionnaire and analyzed with epi-info statistical software. Results showed that 64.1% of respondents knew that

Visual Acuity test should be done before obtaining driver's license and 53.8% knew the correct minimum age for obtaining driver's license. Only 1% of the drivers had correct knowledge of the driver's license authorities in Nigeria. The drivers had poor knowledge of road signs (59.0%) and poor knowledge of maximum speed limits (100%). The oldest, least educated and least experienced drivers had the poorest level of knowledge. The study concluded that there is need for driver education to improve their knowledge. The significance of this study to the present research is that it underscores the centrality of driver education, literacy and awareness to effective road safety administration in Nigeria. However, the study is generalist in terms of classification of commercial drivers and thus, does not factor in the peculiar social characteristics of commercial truck drivers.

Another related study by Atubi (2022) titled "**Traffic Safety and the Driver in Nigeria - A Qualitative Study**" investigated the correlation between road safety and driver attributes in Nigeria. The study was spurred by the obvious dearth of an effective road safety policy and strategy for the country, as well as the inertia amongst relevant agencies that have compounded the road crash pandemic in Nigeria over the years. Drawing from a comprehensive list of reported road accident cases across five major tabloids in Nigeria between 2020 and 2021, the study argued that policies and strategies based on the safe systems approach should be introduced to mainstream and integrate various elements of road safety efforts into actualizing a safe motoring environment in Nigeria. In the view of the researchers, providing basic conditions and services to address road safety is primarily a responsibility of governments. This is especially in view of the decisive role that legislative bodies can play in the adoption of comprehensive and effective road safety polices and laws and their implantation. However, this is a shared responsibility to move towards a world free from road traffic fatalities and serious injuries and that addressing road safety demands much stakeholder collaboration among the public and private sectors, academia, professional organisations, non-governmental organizations and the media.

Admittedly, the above study acknowledges the complicity of drivers in the road safety challenges in Nigeria, and underscores the reality of the need for an effective policy/legal framework to address and arrest the problem of driver non-compliance to extant safety regulations. The study, however, is rather too generalized and does not factor in the unique attributes of commercial truck drivers, especially considering their unique position in the haulage industry in Nigeria. It however fails to address the critical issues of communication engagements between the FRSC as regulatory agency and drivers as primary road users, vis a vis, the potential of communication interventions to enhance a positive paradigm shift in driving behaviour. It is in this regard that the present study becomes very germane.

Theoretical framework

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) is particularly germane to the mutual understanding of this research. In psychology, the Theory of Planned Behaviour is a theory that links one's beliefs and behaviour. The theory states that attitude toward behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control, together shape an individual's behavioural intentions and behaviours.

The concept was proposed by IcekAjzen to improve on the predictive power of the theory of reasoned action by including perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1991). It has been applied to studies of the relations among beliefs, attitudes, behavioural intentions and behaviours in various fields such as advertising, public relations, advertising campaigns, healthcare, sport management and sustainability.

The theory of planned behaviour was proposed by IcekAjzen in 1985 through his article "From intentions to actions: A theory of planned behaviour" (Ajzen, 1985). The theory was developed from the theory of reasoned action, which was proposed by Martin Fishbein together with IcekAjzen in 1980. The theory of reasoned action was in turn grounded in various theories of attitude such as learning theories, expectancy-value theories, consistency theories (such as Heider's balance theory, Osgood and Tannenbaum's congruity theory, and Festinger's dissonance theory) and attribution theory (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). According to the theory of reasoned action, if people evaluate the suggested behaviour as positive (attitude), and if they think their significant others want them to perform the behaviour (subjective norm), this results in a higher intention (motivations) and they are more likely to do so. A high correlation of attitudes and subjective norms to behavioural intention, and subsequently to behaviour, has been confirmed in many studies (Sheppard et. al, 1988).

The theory has since been improved and renamed the reasoned action approach by Azjen and his colleague Martin Fishbein. Human behaviour is guided by three kinds of consideration: behavioural beliefs, normative beliefs, and control beliefs. In their respective aggregates, behavioural beliefs produce a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward the behaviour, normative beliefs result in a subjective norm, and control beliefs gives rise to perceived behavioural control. In combination: the attitude toward the behaviour, the subjective norm and the perceived behavioural control lead to the formation of a behavioural intention (Ajzen, 2002). In particular, perceived behavioural control is presumed not only to affect actual behaviour directly, but also to affect it indirectly through behavioural intention (Noah and Zimmerman, 2005).

As a general rule, the more favorable the attitude toward behaviour and the subjective norm, and the greater the perceived behavioural control, the stronger the person's intention to perform the behaviour should be. Finally, given a sufficient degree of actual control over the behaviour, people are expected to carry out their intentions when the opportunity arises (Ajzen, 2002).

Admittedly, some experimental studies challenge the assumption that intentions and behaviour are merely consequences of attitudes, social norms, and perceived behavioural control. To illustrate, in one study by (Sussman and Gilfford, 2019), participants were prompted to form the intention to support a specific environmental organization such as to sign a petition. After this intention was formed, attitudes, social norms, and perceived behavioural control shifted. Participants became more likely to report positive attitudes towards this organisation and were more inclined to assume their social group would share comparable attitudes (Sussman and Gilfford, 2019). These findings imply the associations between the three key elements--attitudes, social norms, and perceived behavioural control--and intentions may be bi-directional.

The TPB shows good applicability in regards to antisocial behaviours, like drivers' disobedience of road safety regulations. In our particular context, the TPB provides a framework for understanding and explaining the connection between the road safety communication texts/information truck drivers are exposed, the way they process and understand such information and the extent to which such information may influence their driving behaviour and performance. However, while the TPB does consider normative influences, it does not account for other variables that factor into behavioral intention and motivation, such as fear, threat, mood, or past experience.

Methodology

The approach for this inquiry was based on mixed method involving in-depth interview and a cross-sectional survey of the population of truck drivers using questionnaire. The choice of the method is informed by the need to "secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question. It is a strategy that adds rigour, richness and depth to an inquiry. Cross sectional survey of the population is designed to help the researcher obtain data through questionnaires across a population of inquiry. Specifically, cross sectional survey helped with the aid of coded information to elicit the appropriate responses needed at the same time giving room for statistical analyses. It is for these reasons that the researcher chose to use survey in order to gauge commercial truck drivers' awareness and knowledge of road safety communication and media messages from FRSC.

The Drivers Emblems Unit of 2019 puts the registration commercial trucks drivers in South-East Nigeria at 1,276 (FRSC, 2020). Using the Taro Yamane formula, 210 respondents from parks in five (5) selected cities, one each from Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo were sampled using structured questionnaires. Both descriptive and correlation analysis were used for data presentation. The data and analysis provided insights on commercial drivers' awareness and knowledge of FRSC's communication interventions and media messages on road safety in Nigeria and specifically within the south-east zone.

Research findings and discussions

Results showed that FRSC messages are mainly in forms of persuasions to encourage drivers to desist from unsafe acts such as drink-driving, consumption of hard substances, over-speeding, etc. These messages are mainly communicated through billboards, road signs and during seminars/workshops/road shows. Results also showed a significantly high level of awareness of FRSC communication messages among the commercial drivers. These include high level awareness and knowledge of messages highlighting the causative factors of road mishap such as driver behaviour, nature and road infrastructure. Respondents have high level of access to FRSC programmes on road safety regulations and driver self-management information. Similarly, there is particularly high level of awareness and knowledge of FRSC's organized workshop/seminars/lectures, drivers' improvement courses, rallies at motor parks and literacy campaigns, and FRSC's billboards, jingles on radios and televisions on the knowledge of the highway traffic code.

There is also a high level of awareness and knowledge of FRSC's road safety messages on such mass media vehicles as billboards, fliers/leaflets, newspapers and jingles on radio and television. The results also showed that this high level of awareness of FRSC's media messages and sundry

communications on road safety is mainly as a result of high levels of driver attendance of and participation in FRSC's awareness programmes as evidenced in the survey result.

These results in essence show that FRSC's interventions and communication initiatives which include organization of workshop/seminars/lectures and drivers' improvement courses, carrying out rallies at motor parks, literacy campaigns inculcating in the road users the knowledge of the highway traffic code, playing of jingles on radios and televisions among others, is highly accessible to commercial truck drivers in the south-east of Nigeria. It also reinforces the position of Sangowawa, Asuzu and Kale's 2011 study that there is a significant increase in outcomes of knowledge and awareness when effective communication strategies are deployed for driver education. These findings indicate that FRSC's communication strategies have been very effective in terms of raising the knowledge and awareness levels of commercial truck drivers in the south-east of Nigeria.

The survey results also showed a significantly high level of awareness and knowledge of messages highlighting the common leading human behaviour-oriented safety challenges faced by Nigerian commercial truck drivers. There was absolutely high (100%) level of awareness and messages on accident causative factors such as drinking before or while driving and poor vehicle maintenance among the drivers. Drinking of alcohol before or while driving (62.9%); Not having enough sleep (76.2%); Self-medication and certain beverages taken to keep awake (72.4%); Lack of understanding of road safety regulations (90.5%); Poor knowledge of road signs (88.1%) and Discussing with passengers while driving (59.5%). The above data negates the conclusions of Okafor, et al (2013) who posit there is relatively low literacy percentage among commercial drivers and that this is a limiting factor on their knowledge and awareness of road safety regulations. In fact, the data show that low literacy level notwithstanding, the awareness level of commercial drivers in South-East Nigeria of FRSC messages on the common leading human behaviour-oriented safety challenges faced by Nigerian commercial truck drivers is quite high. It is thus an indication that FRSC's efforts in this regard are effective.

The results also indicated absolutely high awareness and knowledge of messages on some of the environmental/infrastructural challenges and threats experienced by Nigerian commercial truck drivers which affect safety and service performance. They are: Poor road conditions (100%), Extreme weather conditions (100%), Non-evacuation of damaged/vandalized vehicles or their debris on the roads (100%) and, illegally mounted security checkpoints and roadblocks (100%). Similarly, there are significantly high awareness of the other variables such as Driver distraction by roadside advertising billboards (91.9%) and Non-availability of road signs (99.5%).

From the above data, it is clear that commercial truck drivers in the South-East Nigeria have a remarkably high awareness and knowledge level of FRSC messages on the variables and factors that constitute challenges and threats to road safety such as the common leading human behaviour-oriented safety challenges and environmental/infrastructural challenges/threats experienced by Nigerian commercial truck drivers which affect safety and service performance. Similarly, it shows a high awareness of forms of road safety literacy sensitization programmes made available to the drivers by FRSC. This is probably responsible for South-East's comparatively lower percentage of road accidents than their South-South and South-West counterparts as contained in the FRSC 2020 Road Accident Data.

Recommendations

Against the backdrop of the results of the study, the study recommends that to consolidate on the effectiveness of its communication messages, there is need for FRSC to establish a conventional traffic radio station and ensure that all commercial trucks are equipped with radio receivers to access road safety messages from the station. FRSC should also design specific on-the-go messages such as warnings, regular announcements and reminders for commercial truck drivers. Special radio programmes can be deployed for enhanced driver enlightenment this and FRSC should check and ensure that all commercial truck drivers have functional radios in their vehicles.

Conclusion

The study examined commercial truck drivers' levels of awareness and knowledge of FRSC's road safety communication messages in South-east, Nigeria. Based on the findings of the study, there is evidence to suggest that the effectiveness of FRSC communication messages and interventions could be argued to be responsible for the relatively significantly lower level of road crashes incidents involving commercial truck drivers in Southeast Nigeria.

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