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## THE EMERGENCE OF SHOPPING MALLS AND THE NEW MARKET CULTURE IN AWKA METROPOLIS

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### Abstract:

Awka has no purposefully built shopping complex that provides a forum for shopping, interaction, leisure and entertainment. Awka, being the capital of Anambra state with booming population, lacks in economic growth, reshaping most urban areas. Given, the city has Roban stores, Radopin and a list of other one stop shops, but no shopping mall with inclusive facilities, hence, the need for a shopping mall. This paper aims to bring to the attention of the Awka urban area communities, the need to join the new pattern of shopping experience developing in other parts of Nigeria and in advanced world, shopping in consolidated and integrated shopping malls where all kinds of activities take place. This work investigated the spatial integration of the Awka communities markets and the architectural solutions to improving Awka's one stop shopping center's behaviours. The authors were careful with the analytical instrument and tools used. The disciplinary area of focus is market architecture, as such, the instrument of one research strategy: qualitative research method and its tactics were used. The shopping mall in the area will stand out as an edifice that will enhance and improve the Awka communities shopping behaviors and will act as a focal point for the development of new neighborhoods and enhance mutual interaction between the different users. Awka lacked proper and adequate planning and the urban development laws guiding growth and developments were not adhered to resulting in, indiscriminately and randomly building of houses and shelters in both legal and illegal lands. In the process, unemployment and the growth of unskilled workers are growing without remedies. The introduction of shopping malls in an area combines the convenience of multiple shopping privileges essentially, promotion of a healthy shopping experience along with the social aspects that are imaginable and attracts both young and old. Hard evidence exists, showing that shopping malls transform abandoned and left over lands into expensive and high in demand properties and powerhouses for development as a result, this paper recommends the promotion and introduction of shopping malls in Awka and especially, in areas seen as slums with unstructured buildings and with high unemployment rates.

**Key words:** Awka, growth, architecture, shopping, markets, employment

### Introduction

For nearly as long as people have existed, they have been sharing, bartering, selling, and consuming resources. To trace the complete history of commerce back to its inception, we must travel to a time when wooly mammoths still walked the Earth. People exchanged cows and

sheep in trade as far back as 9000 BC. The first proper currency which extends as far back as 3000 BC was in Mesopotamia (Meyer, 2003). The first retail stores take up the mantle a bit further down the line. By 800 BC in ancient

Greece, people had developed markets with merchants selling their wares in the Agora in the city center. These ruins are of ancient Greek agora and people would come there not only to shop, but to socialize and participate in government (Agora, 2013).

In the 1900s, department stores appeared in major cities in the United States and Europe. Mechanical inventions, such as the steel frame and escalator, allowed the expansion of department stores. In 1922, the first unified planned shopping mall was built. In the 1940s, the development of new shopping malls responded to the population growth. However, there are differences between the development in the United States and Europe. There was plenty of available land and good road networks and accessibility in the United States that stimulated expansion in demand, manufacture, and suburban living. At the same time, shopping centers rapidly increased with some new stereotypes. These shopping centers were planned on green fields near highways and interconnections to serve suburban residences (Koolhaas, Chuihua, Inaaba, and Leong, 2002).

Developments in Europe differed in some important respects. After the world war, many bombed cities were rebuilt to accommodate the increasing population. Gradually, the pedestrian area concept was introduced in the city centers. Particularly in the Northern and Mid European countries, retail planning was strongly enforced with the concept of a functional hierarchy as its hallmark. Rather, shopping malls expanded along the streets in the center of these cities, where only pedestrians were allowed. Only, more recently, retail planning became more liberal, leading to more peripheral developments, although city centers remained strong (Widiyani, 2018).

### **Shopping Malls**

In 1956, Victor Gruen introduced his first enclosed shopping mall in Detroit. It created a new kind of environment. The mall was a remarkable copy of down towns and a magnetic place with its variety

of stores (auditoriums, bank, post office, local retailers and supermarket), its individuality, lights, color, and even crowds (Wall, 2005).

Kotler and Armstrong (2012), defined shopping malls as group of retail businesses built on a site that is planned, developed, owned, and managed as a unit. In literature we often face these two concepts, shopping malls and shopping centers. In essence, they express the same thing. A shopping mall, shopping centre, shopping arcade, shopping precinct or simply mall is one or more buildings forming a complex of shops representing merchandisers, with interconnecting walkways enabling visitors to easily walk from unit to unit, along with a parking area – a modern, indoor version of the traditional marketplace. These large retail establishments, usually located in the suburbs outside the city center and the traffic congestion are a group of diverse retail shops combined together in a single, specific plan (Kumar and Thakur, 2014).

Shopping centers of the latest generation are currently under intensive development. These multifunctional, integrated premises are becoming not only a shopping destination, but also a place in which it is possible to satisfy other needs: social and cultural needs, the need for entertainment, recreation, sport or relaxation. At another stage of development, the facilities of fourth and fifth generation have been observed. They are distinguished by impressive architectural design, careful interior design, and number of exercised functions, modern technological solutions and extensive marketing strategy that uses a wide range of means to attract the attention of consumers. There are also housing estates, hotels and offices built within them. They also provide specialist services, e.g. medical and consulting services, and even universities, churches, theatres or art galleries (Heffner and Twardzik, 015).

This was seen as the future shopping mall in the United States. The Europeans started to develop

enclosed shopping malls in 1960s. Between 1960 and 1970 mixed-use shopping malls, that was development types of US shopping malls, spread across Europe. In the 1970s, shopping malls became a place not only for shopping, but also for socializing by incorporating food courts, cafes, and restaurants. Increasingly, the focus of shopping malls added to their economic role a social role as a communal meeting place. During this period, a covered enclosed shopping mall, which looks like a box, became prominent in the world. The interior design of shopping malls has been more sophisticated than the exterior. Simultaneously, the sizes of shopping malls were stretching and facilities were added (Kingston, 1994).

In the 1980s, shopping malls became a popular destination not only for shopping but also for recreation. A new format of shopping mall emerged. Malls with a combination of retail and major leisure, recreational elements, and or an indoor theme park opened both in the US and Europe. In addition, at the end of the 1980s, lifestyle centers were introduced in the US, providing upscale retailing and fine dining in an external environment. During the 1990s, the development of shopping malls still focused on entertainment, although, in this era, shopping malls also started to integrate with new urban retail formats, such as concourses of train stations and airports. Globally, the rapid growth in the number of shopping malls continued, but they became more varied in terms of location, composition, and design (Widiyani, 2018).

Shopping malls, with remarkable increase in the number, are now one of the popular public spaces. They can be considered as “new driving forces” of economy as well as the new way of “socializing places” where visitors can experience different modes of interactions. They are the products of the collection of different elements of the retailing sector in an enclosed atmosphere and under a single managerial organization in order to supply

consumers with one-stop shopping in life (Caliskan, 2010).

Shopping malls play an important role in a retail sector and these malls have been in existence for more than 90 years. They have adapted to new designs and tenant varieties to meet the changes in consumers' needs, desires, values, and lifestyles. They are characterized as venues that provide a comfortable shopping experience, have turned into social centers, recreational and entertainment facilities for various activities (Sipho, 2016).

### **Old Order Market**

Throughout history, people have gathered in certain areas and over time to socialize, share information and exchange products. Markets as it were then in our rural environment was open to air with people displaying their goods on mats (ground) and tables in a parallel arrangement. They were completely open to air under trees; thatched roof shelters, timber make shift shops inadequate and exposed to the adverse effects of the weather. These hazards were influential factors that brought about the emergence of market squares where people converge to carry out business. Apart from being a forum for commercial activities, a market square in the traditional setting is a place for social cultural interactions. As a social gathering, people meet people, make friends and enhance their relationships with other people (Fatowore, 2008).

It has been a long time since commercial spaces have become one of the bases for each living organization and in fact, it has played the role of heart in them. With the entrance of cars to the cities, the cultural changes caused by relationships with western countries and enhancement in the presentation of industrial products, the lifestyle, facilities and connections of the commercial spaces have faced basic changes in recent years. Today, because of the problems caused by urbanism

and lack of the opportunities and new facilities, clients prefer to go to the shopping centers in their cars and purchase their needs for the month or the week in the shortest possible time. Therefore, in recent years, the establishment of chain stores in which all the necessities and demands of the buyers are presented have increased intensely and the competition between them has led to the creation of new ideas in presenting important systems and services to bring about customers' satisfaction. Social sustainability in architecture deals with the flowing events within the space. Therefore, social sustainability focuses on sustaining events for long years and adapting the space with the behavioral patterns of the present and also, increasing the quality of the flow of life (Rahimi and Khazei, 2018).

These social activities are activities that involve human interaction and include strolling, social meetings, sitting in public places, speaking with strangers and watching other shop. Shopping mall visitors indulge in consumption of experiences and shopping malls have become important meeting places, especially for young people. The mall visitors can visit shopping malls to watch movies at movie theatres and watch soccer matches at different restaurants (Sipho, 2016).

The ultimate success of shopping malls depends on their ability to attract customers. Beyond market size, which largely depends on the (relative) location of the mall, it depends on the portfolio of stores in the mall, its atmospherics are also critical attributes. An improved understanding of consumers shopping experience and interactions in a shopping mall and how they make their decisions before shopping or what is called pre-shopping decisions (e.g. shopping purposes, shopping mall choice) and inside the mall or what is called mall-use shopping decisions (e.g. store choice, movement or path choice) will therefore contribute to better-informed formulation of design plans and development strategies (Widiyani, 2018).

Therefore, it becomes imperative to understand visitors' perception about shopping malls, social relationships and activities they engage in during their mall visits. Understanding the consumers' reasons for visiting shopping malls could assist in providing valuable input into the development of design strategies to attract more consumers to visit the shopping malls, and further increase their frequency of visit at the mall (Sipho, 2016).

Today, Nigeria is experiencing a tremendous shift to a more sophisticated structure as formal or organized retail continues to gain ascendancy. The distribution chain and the organization of outlets continue to reflect those of a rapidly evolving economy as standards of living improve and as the population continues to increase. More than ever, the Nigerian consumer is interested in a decent shopping environment, neatly-arranged and labeled commodities and the experience that goes with buying at an organized outlet. There is also the presence of shopping malls even though mostly on regional basis. Since 2005, when the Palms Shopping Mall, Lekki, Lagos State, was erected as the first and largest shopping mall in the country with a land mass of about 40,000 Meter square, there has been the establishment of other shopping malls in the country (Chukwuemeka, Olajumoke, Hilary, Nkolika and Moses, 2020). This experience is however, not too common in South East Nigeria although, Palms Shopping Mall equally has been established in Enugu.

### **Awka Capital Town**

Prior to the Nigerian Civil War, Awka towns' people maintained the city on their own. Market traders cleaned around their stalls; streets and pathways and compounds were swept. Blocked storm drains would be cleared by residents. Yet, now Awka is often seen as the state capital with the worst infrastructure in Nigeria (a country sharing the same state of infrastructure) with less than 10% of its roads paved, inadequate

storm drainage, no public water supply, garbage dumped on the sides of roads and a nonexistent sewage system. This has been because Awka has suffered from decades of neglect and poor urban governance in Anambra State due to corruption and deception from many of state governors (Obiadi, 2018).

Awka as the capital of Anambra State and with the steady increase in the population around of Awka and its suburban communities, the development of shopping centres will greatly stimulate the area's economy by providing employment opportunities for both the youths and the elderly and in turn, contributes to the income per capital of the people. Equally, it would generate revenue for both the local and national governments. Some of the initial major benefits of the development of shopping centres in areas like Awka are the direct employment and immediate marketing services they provide.

Awka has no purposefully built shopping complex that provides a forum for shopping, interaction, leisure and entertainment, needed to join the world's economic class. Awka, being the capital of Anambra state with booming population lacks in economic growth, reshaping most urban areas. Given, the city has Roban stores, Radopin and a host of other one stop shops, but no shopping mall with inclusive facilities, hence, the need for a shopping mall.

#### **Aim of the Study**

This paper brings to the attention of the Awka urban area communities, the need to join the new pattern of shopping experience developing in other parts of Nigeria and in advanced world, shopping in consolidated and integrated shopping malls where all kinds of activities take place yet, people are shopping.

#### **Research Method**

This work, examines the spatial nature of the Awka markets and the architectural solutions to improving Awka's one stop shopping center's behaviours. The disciplinary area of focus is market architecture, or better said, the architecture of a shopping mall. As such, the instrument of one research strategy: qualitative research method and its tactics were used. It is imperative that one of the pertinent concerns covered in any major land development is how best to plan a development and the location, followed by such questions as: who needs the development? what is the development for? how can it be acquired and secured? This however, indicates that plans must be executed where the land is located and for the project to be successful there must be cooperation, support and the involvement of the people whom the project is developed. Other than that, emphasis must be laid on the objectives of the development and how best to make sure that the aim is successfully accomplished (Orum, 1995) as a result of this, qualitative research method was adopted for this paper.

#### **Findings**

The shopping mall in the area will stand out as an edifice that will enhance and improve the Awka metropolis shopping behaviors and will act as a focal point for the development of new neighborhoods. It will enhance mutual interaction between the different users. **Anambra State** was created from the former East Central State. East Central State was a former administrative division of Nigeria. It was created on 27 May 1967 from parts of the Eastern Region and existed until 03 February 1976 when it was divided into the separate states of Anambra and Imo. Anambra and Imo States were further divided into many more states: Anambra, Imo, Enugu, Ebonyi and Abia (East Central State, 2006). Anambra State as a state

of her own was created August 27, 1997 with Awka as the capital. Its name was inspired by one of its Northern and riverine clans Anam, but merged with "branch". The colonialists who travelled from the present day Anambra region to present Northern Nigeria often described where they were coming from as "Anam branch". The term coupled with Omambala, the Igbo name of the Anambra River formed the name Anambra. The capital and seat of government is Awka (Anambra State, 2019).

In modern times **Awka** has adapted to the republican system (pro-republic, democrat, antiroyalist, antimonarchist and monarchist) and is currently divided into two local government areas of **Awka** North and **Awka** South with local representatives resulting from the creation of the state and local governments in 1997. Over the years, **Awka** Town has attracted people from other states in Nigeria and has a significant number of immigrants from northern Nigeria, Delta, Enugu states, Cameroon, Ghana, etc. now comprising more than 60% of residents in the town. With the creation of the state and influx of people into Awka City, the two major markets, Eke Awka and Nkwo Amaenyi markets that served the city exploded in population, congested and overcrowded without rooms for expansion (Wikipedia, 2015).

The largest market in Awka is the Eke **Awka**, named after one of the four market days in Igbo-land. Located on a former community burial ground in the center of the city, Eke **Awka** has grown from a small market serving the needs of residents of the Agulu, Ezi-Oka and Amikwo sections of Awka to functioning as the main retail outlet for the city and neighboring towns. It houses an estimated 5,000 lock-up shops and stalls all tightly packed into less than 35,000 square meters of space and has become infamous for causing tremendous traffic chaos with a medley of shoppers, buses, wheel barrows all jostling for the limited amount of space available. The second largest market in Awka is Nkwo Amaenyi, located

further down on the busy Zik Avenue business district artery. It is far smaller than Eke Awka with less than 100 market stalls in an area estimated at around 3,000 square meters (Wikipedia, 2015).

Along the same line, Awka like most Nigerian cities is defined by large rudimentary informal markets where everything from basic food produce to clothes, cosmetics and household items are sold. These rudimentary markets are springing up in Awka and creating urban environmental problems for the city (plates 1).



**Plate 1:** Zik Avenue's commercial area showing a building and electric pole atop the pedestrian sidewalk. Source: Obiadi



**Plate 2:** Zik Avenue's commercial area showing pedestrians and cars, jostling for access. Source: Obiadi.



**Plate 3:** Eke Awka-Zik Avenue's roundabout.  
Source: Obiadi



**Plate 4:** Eke Awka-Zik Avenue's roundabout.  
Source: Obiadi

According to Obiadi and Nzwei (2018), in their *Architecture and Infrastructure of a Confused Awka major thoroughfare, Zik Avenue, Awka, Anambra State*, they cited Anetoh (2014), who indicated that, that people are confused is a common saying in Nigerian communities and saying that most of the Nigerian cities are confused may confuse more people, but it is true. Awka City and her environmental development are confusing. For years, Awka stood out as a

metaphor for all that could possibly go wrong with Anambra. The largest market in the town is Eke Awka located long Awka's Zik Avenue. The market has negatively outgrown the area, congested and out of character for a city looking to identify and to match Dubia both in architecture and tourism (plates 1 to 5). Both Eke Awka and Nkwo Amaenyi markets are the best Awka has to offer and they are both market slums.

With the influx of people into the city, Awka city is witnessing the development and growth of Supermarkets, to cater for the house hold needs of the steaming population. As Awka's informal markets continue to grow, evidence shows the addition of morden day markets, structured and more organized. Around Aroma junction and along Zik Avenue of Awka are two Radopin Supermarkets, Inter-City Supermarket is located in Amudo and not too long ago, the Roban Stores established a branch around the Central Bank area, off the Enugu Onitsha Expressway, behind the Anambra State Housing Development Authority (plate 6). The development of these modern day markets in Awka shows a new trend and the changes in behavior of both the market structure type and the shopping behavior of the people and their willingness to embrace one-stop shopping facilities.



**Plate 5:** Roban Store, in Awka  
Source: Obiadi, July 10, 2021

## **Conclusion**

Awka remained a small town, known for farming, metal arts and craft and petty trading until after the end of the Biafran war in early 1970, when the population started increasing because most Easterners from the region saw Awka as their new base and had no desire moving back to the northern part of the country where they lived before the war broke out. People from the Eastern part of Nigeria lost a lot of their family members during the war. Equally, at the beginning of the war, relocating from the North back to East, the Easterners lost a lot of people because the Northerners blocked the roads to the Eastern part and killed as many people as they wanted in the process. As a result of the massive and unnecessary killings, after the civil war, the people were reluctant returning to the North and so settling in Awka, Enugu, Onitsha, Aba, Umuahia and a few other major urban areas in the Eastern region. Since the end of that civil war and Awka becoming the capital of Anambra State, the city has been growing in population and without adequate infrastructure to sustain the growth. The city lacked proper and adequate planning and the urban development laws guiding growth and developments in Awka were not adhered to resulting in indiscriminate and random building of houses and shelters in both legal and illegal lands. In the process, unemployment and the growth of unskilled workers are growing without remedies.

The illegal and unstructured housing and shelters turned some parts of Awka into slums. Shanty homes, illegal shops, mechanic shops, and others, littered the streets and neighbourhoods of Awka and subsequent administrations in Anambra State have tried ameliorating the urban development problems of Awka and without success. With the new trend and focus on structured market facilities called shopping malls, the unemployment and refocusing of Awka's neighbourhood character could be addressed. The introduction and establishment of departmental stores in Awka has shown that they absorb and hire a lot of people and

with the introduction of shopping malls, a lot of employment would be generated, the neighbourhoods around the shopping malls would be improved following neighbourhood development associated with shopping malls. The per capital base and revenue of the communities would greatly improve.

The introduction of shopping malls in an area combines the convenience of multiple shopping privileges essentially, promotion of a healthy shopping experience along with the social aspects that are imaginable and attracts both young and old. As in the developed world, as shopping malls grow in the suburbs, they grow along with the development of housing, schools, churches, parks and other facilities needed to develop a community. In most cases, they transform abandoned and left over lands into expensive and high in demand properties and powerhouses for development. Not only that, shopping malls act as landmarks and they are known to change the face and value of their locations.

Hard evidence exists, showing that shopping malls transform abandoned and left over lands into expensive and high in demand properties and powerhouses for development. They create employment and foster social gathering and interactions as a result; this paper recommends the promotion and introduction of shopping malls in Awka and especially, in areas seen as slums with unstructured buildings and with high unemployment rates.

With high student population numbers in Awka, the shopping malls will greatly serve the first time work opportunities of the students and will equally promote the development of affordable housing around the shopping malls if not for any other thing, to accommodate the housing needs of the low income earners of the city.



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