Modified Microcontroller Based Hybrid Electric Rickshaw as a sustainable means of transportation for Nepal

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Abstract: Rickshaw, a small scale low cost, local means of transport used in some part of Nepal especially plain belts and cities requires a lot of human effort and time in pulling which increases the working hours for travelling the particular distance thereby reducing the income of rickshaw puller. Most of the drivers are only male and elderly person and in some cases they are found to be drunk while driving to get relief from pain which makes the travel really unsafe. Moreover e-vehicles commonly used in southern belts of Nepal costs around 5000$ which is unaffordable for low class families and rickshaw drivers. Microcontroller based hybrid e-rickshaw the modified version of conventional rickshaw can overcome the problems associated with the conventional one. Micro controller based hybrid e-rickshaw is a battery powered, hybrid three-wheeler with provisions of dual drive system either from paddle or electric motor. Micro Controller is used to control the speed of the rickshaw using accelerator which works on the principle of speed control using Pulse Width Modulation (PWM) technique. The micro controller is also used to prevent the supply from the battery when the battery reaches its Depth of Discharge (DOD) in order to prevent it from being damage thereby increasing the lifecycle of the battery. The feature of hybrid system allows the travellers to reach the required destination whenever the battery is fully dead using the paddling system. Moreover braking switch is provided with controller applying the electrical brake to gain the rapid stop of the motor. The electric rickshaw is designed at top speed of 15 km/hour on the plain road with two passengers on board and can also operate at 10 degree slope. The designed e-rickshaw which increase the comfortness and reduce human effort decreases the working hours for travelling particular distance and thus uplifting the socio-economic condition of the rickshaw pullers can eliminating the problem of drunk and drive too. This cheapest e-rickshaw which cost around 1500$ will encourage women and economically weak families for driving thereby empowering the involvement of women and financially backward people in employment.

Keywords: E-rickshaw, E-vehicle, Conventional Rickshaw, Permanent Magnet Direct Current, Hybrid, Pulse width modulation, Grid, Battery powered, Depth of discharge

1. Introduction

For the past few decades it was common to see conventional rickshaw in various cities in Nepal. Most widely it is operated in flat land like Kathmandu valley, Pokhara valley and southern cities of Nepal, but for past years due to increased traffic in hilly cities, conventional commercial rickshaw operation became quite unpopular and now it is only limited in southern cities of Nepal. And in the context of southern cities due to continuous ascension inflation rate in monitory economy of Nepal, rickshaw business is now under the threat of diminishing. Along with it, rickshaw pullers are shifting towards other income generating activities since effort required to pull rickshaw is higher and relative to effort the income generated by rickshaw pullers is nominal. This problem had adverse effect on rickshaw puller’s business as well which has diminishing percentage of almost 61% according to General Federation of Nepalese Trade Union (GEFONT).

For the past years due to rise in inflation rate many low-income people are losing their daily business and among which rickshaw pullers are in great numbers. According to the survey done in Chitwan among the rickshaw owner 7 out of 10 rickshaw owners are forced to shut down their business because of less people getting motivation to pull rickshaw and due to the new rising trend in business. Since rickshaw pulling job requires a lot of manual effort (peddle power), it pays back very limited amount compared to the effort it requires. Not only were this but also conventional rickshaw pullers found drunk to be free from pain while pulling rickshaw. Therefore, rickshaw pullers
need an alternative to raise their economic status within
the society to address the economic threat and to
address their daily basic needs. Some rickshaw owner
who used to have more than 20 rickshaws at their
company purchased E-Rickshaw to sustain their
business but due to its backup failure it is not a
sustainable solution to the ground problem.

Introduction of the E-Hybrid rickshaw however can be
of great use to address the problem of rickshaw pullers,
owners and passengers as well. Since passengers in
rickshaw get facility to be picked and dropped at their
house or their preferred location, these vehicles had
been people’s preference. Upgraded rickshaw will be
convenient for pullers to pull easily with extra function
of increasing the speed with less effort and control
mechanism to control the rickshaw. This comes with
simple technic to which puller will find easy to use. By
the help of this upgraded rickshaw, pullers can make
several trips in a day and can earn more money than in
conventional rickshaw with the usage of less effort.
Passenger for rickshaw has long history of riding
conventional rickshaw. For many passengers, it was
easy to be dropped at exact location to which current E-
rickshaw and other auto rickshaw doesn’t address this
need.

2. Existing Tricycle Scenario

The number of owner varies in southern Nepal as
the convenient and traditional means of transportation
is rickshaw. According to General Federation of
Nepalese Trade Union (GEFONT) who are registered
as a member in Nepal Rickshaw Pullers Union are
6170 in number. These rickshaw owners own
minimum of 5 rickshaws to maximum around 20
rickshaws. This gives rough information to minimum
of 30,850 to maximum approximately 123400 around
the country.

However, the existing rickshaws are so poorly designed
that running them takes a heavy toll on the health of a
rickshaw puller. The gearing and the mechanical
advantage of the pedal is very poor. Hence the
rickshaw puller has to work very hard while climbing
even a slight slope. The braking system is also very
poor with only front brakes on the rickshaw. Thus
when going downhill at high speeds sudden braking
produces catapults affect which results in overturning
of the rickshaw. Similarly the seating arrangement is
very uncomfortable and the aerodynamic drag of the
system is very high. There are estimates that rickshaw
pulling is far more stressful than even hard labor Thus
there is a need to improve the existing rickshaw to
make it user friendly and bring quality control in its
manufacture.

3. Electrical model of a PMDC motor

Electrically, permanent magnet brushed DC motors can
be modeled as a series of three basic electrical
components: a resistor, an inductor, and a source of
electro-motive force (EMF), or voltage. This voltage
source is commonly called the “back-EMF” or “counter
EMF.” The origins of the resistive and inductive
components are easy to see. The resistor in the model is
a result of the finite resistance per unit length of wire
used to construct the coils in the armature. The
inductor is a result of coils of wire that make up the
armature windings. All coils of wire act as inductors.

Characteristic constants for Permanent Magnet
Brushed DC motors

As a motor turns faster, more back-EMF is generated
since the coils in the armature are moving faster
through the stator’s magnetic field. The magnitude of
the back-EMF is related to the rotational speed through
a constant $K_v$, called the speed constant or voltage
constant.
\[ E_b = k_e \omega \quad [V], \]  

Where \( E_b \) = back e.m.f in volts  
\( k_e \) = voltage constant in volts per rad per sec  
\( \omega \) = rotational speed in rad per sec.

If the losses are negligible, then the mechanical power into the generator, \( T \omega \), will equal the electrical power out, \( E_b I \).

\[ P = E_b I = T \omega \quad [W] \tag{2} \]

Where \( T \) = Torque developed in N-m.  
Combining equations 1 and 2 we get,

\[ k_e \omega I = T \omega \]  
that can be further simplified as,

\[ T = k_e I \quad [N-m] \tag{3} \]

Also, \( T = k_i I \)  
Where \( k_i \) = Torque constant in N-m per ampere.

This distinction between \( k_i \) and \( k_e \) is particularly useful in that numerically \( K_i = K_e \) when compatible units are used (e.g. N-m per ampere and volts per radian per sec).

**Characteristic equations for constant voltage**

To more fully understand the torque and speed characteristics of a motor we can start by examining what goes on when we place the motor into a circuit with a driving voltage.

Using Kirchhoff’s laws to write a loop equation to describe the steady-state current flow in this circuit.

\[ V = IR + k_e \omega \tag{5} \]

Where \( V \) = Applied voltage \([V]\),  
\( I \) = Current \([A]\),  
\( R \) = Resistance of motor coils \([\Omega]\)  
\( k_e \) = Voltage constant \([\text{volts per rad per sec}]\),  
\( \omega \) = rotational speed \([\text{rad per sec}]\)

From equations 1, 4 and 5 we get,

\[ \omega = \frac{V}{k_e} - \frac{R T}{k_e k_i} \]

This shows that for a given voltage \( V \), torque and speed for a motor are linearly related. Thus speed can be controlled by varying the armature voltage.

**PMDC motor characteristics**

4. **Modified Microcontroller Based Hybrid Electric tricycle**

Micro controller based hybrid E-Rickshaw includes system with both paddle and electricity driving mechanism. The process of development includes modifying conventional rickshaw by incorporating PMDC motor and Battery with separate gear system. The speed can be controlled using accelerator. It will have smooth speed control with PWM control, electrical braking system. The maximum speed of 15 km/hour at 10 degree slope with no passenger on board. It Can Carry Three Persons on board including driver.
5. Mathematical Modeling

A. Motor Selection

Rickshaw weight = 60 kg
D.C Motor = 10 kg
Battery (4x 15) = 60 kg
Other Parts (Speed Controller, Power Transmission System) = 15 kg
Pay load = 140 kg (2 person + extra load)
Rickshaw puller = 70 kg
Total Weight = 335 kg

Velocity of the rickshaw = 15 kmph = 4.16 m/s

1) Road Resistance:
   For vehicle running on “Hard Dry Clay” = 430 N/1000 kg=0.43 N/kg
   \( F_r = 335 \text{ kg} \times (0.43) \)
   = 144.05 N

2) Acceleration force required:
   Considering the time taken for full acceleration to be 10 sec
   \( F_a = ((4.16 - 0)/10) \times 335 = 139.36 \text{ N} \)

3) Force requirement to overcome the slope:
   Considering 11° slope to overcome
   \( F_s = \tan 11.3^\circ \times 335 \times 9.81 = 657.27 \text{ N} \)

4) Air Resistance
   \( F_{air} = 0.045 \times (3 \text{ m}^2) \times (4.16^2) = 3 \text{ N} \)
   \( 0.045 = \) coefficient of air resistance
   \( 3 \text{ m}^2 = \) Area of rickshaw facing against the velocity of wind.

Therefore the maximum force required to drive the rickshaw is 943.68 N.
To drive the rickshaw on plane road, force average= 286.41 N

5) Mechanical Torque requirement :
   \( T_{max} = \text{total force} \times \text{radius of the back sprocket} = 943.68 \times 0.05 \)
   = 47.184 Nm (maximum)
   \( T_{avg} = 286.41 \times 0.05 \)
   = 14.32 Nm

6) R.P.M required for wheel(N):
   Considering the rpm of the back sprocket and wheel to be same.
   Velocity = 4.16 m/s
   Radius of wheel (r) = 0.33 m
   \( \text{Velocity} = 2 \times \text{pie} \times N \times r \)
   \( 4.16 \times 60 = 2 \times \text{pie} \times N \times 0.33 \)
   Therefore \( N = 120 \text{ rpm.} \)

7) Power Required:
   Maximum Power required,
   \( P = (2 \times \text{pie} \times N \times T_{max})/60 \)
   = (2 \times 3.14 \times 120 \times 47.184)/60 \)
   = 592.93 watts
   Average Power required
   \( P = (2 \times \text{pie} \times 120 \times 14.32)/60 \)
   = 179.95 watts

**Considering 20% loss in power transmission**

Maximum Power required,
\( P = 592.93+ 20\% \times 592.93=711.51 \text{ watts} \)
Considering 20% loss in power transmission
Average Power required,
\( P = 179.95+ 20\% \times 179.95 \)
= 215.94 watts

**Findings**

Maximum power required = 712 watts
Average power required = 216 watts
Maximum torque required= 57 nm

(Considering 20% loss)

Average torque required=17 nm
R.P.M required for rickshaw = 120

B. Battery Bank-sizing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Battery Bank Sizing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Days of Autonomy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Battery Bank Voltage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum Storage Needed (Ah)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Battery Voltage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Battery Size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Batteries (of Bank Voltage)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Batteries (Actual)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battery Bank Capacity at Bank Voltage(Ah)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battery C-Rating</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paths in parallel (should be 5 or less)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Max current discharge (A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max power output (KW)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
For a 48 volts system, 4 batteries each of 65 Ah are connected in series to power the 800 watt PMDC motor. These batteries can operate continuously for 6 hours at full load with daily charging requirement of 7-8 hours.

C. Speed controller

The accelerator works as a potentiometer for supplying variable voltage to the micro controller so as to generate PWM signal to control the speed of motor. The power supply to the motor is supplied from the battery through 4 parallel connected IGBT in order to increase the current rating of the controller. The controller will also have a protection system to cut the power off if the battery reaches below its prescribed charge limit. The display will show the speed and voltage level of the battery.

D. Mechanical Design

The weight of the rickshaw is around 60 kg with tyre to tyre width of 42 inch at rear and total length of 93 inch. The diameter of tyre is 27 inch giving the ground clearance of 27 inch.
6. Result analysis

Speed of the tricycle is controlled smoothly with the newly developed controller which also indicates the speed and voltage level of the motor and the battery. The warning is also given to the driver when the battery is in need of charging. From the analysis we found the information as described below.

Testing of a PMDC motor:
Blocked rotor test was performed in the lab by coupling a PMDC motor with electromagnetic braking system. The experimental setup and results are shown below.
Figure 12  Armature Current Vs Torque characteristic
(X-axis: Torque Nm & Y-axis: Armature Current)

Figure 13 PWM signal waveform

Figure 14 Controller circuit

Figure 15 Mechanical assemble of modified Rickshaw

Table 3 Main findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specification</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mileage</td>
<td>70KM per charging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Load</td>
<td>350-400 Kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charging time</td>
<td>6-7 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor</td>
<td>48Volt, 800 watt PMDC motor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battery bank</td>
<td>80-100Ah , 48 Volt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speed Controller</td>
<td>80A, 48 Volt DC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charger</td>
<td>220Volt, 50 Hz/ 20A, 48 Volt DC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top Speed</td>
<td>15 km/h</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
7. Conclusion
The designed e-rickshaw increase the comfortness and reduce human effort and decreases the working hours for travelling particular distance and thus uplifting the socio-economic condition of the rickshaw pullers hence eliminating the problem of drunk and drive too. This cheapest e-rickshaw which cost around 1500$ will encourage women and economically weak families for driving thereby empowering the involvement of women and financially backward people in employment.

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9. References