Role of Social Media Platforms in Economic Empowerment of Women in Ilaro, Ogun State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study spotlights the roles of Social Media Platforms in the economic development of women in Ogun State using the women in Ilaro; Yewa South Local Government as a study. Because the population used for this study is scattered all over Ilaro, cluster sampling technique was used in selecting them. The respondents who were selected randomly were used to study the role of social media platforms in the economic empowerment of women. The women were engaged in petty trading, fashion designing, salons and hairdressing, catering services, and operation of business centres. The study was premised on the framework of two theories - the Uses and Gratification Theory and the Media Dependency Theory. The study examined the effect of illiteracy on the use of ICT applications (social media); and the use of social media by women to improve their economic status. The descriptive research design was adopted for the study, and a structured questionnaire was used to elicit relevant information from the respondents. Data collected were subjected to statistical analysis (descriptive statistics and correlational analysis) using the SPSS and Microsoft Excel application packages. The results indicated that social media platforms could be used to raise the public's awareness of goods and services, boosting businesses, and could improve women's economic status. Facebook was used more frequently than four other platforms investigated. The order of decreasing use (frequency) of the social media platforms by the women was Facebook (41%), WhatsApp (27%), YouTube (13%), Instagram (12%), and LinkedIn (7%). The disparity in the use pattern of social media platforms might be connected with the characteristic features, capabilities, ease of use, complexities of the application commands, and user's knowledge of the application. It is therefore advocated that promotion of the use of other social media platforms other than Facebook may require educating the women on the benefits of using the applications for economic empowerment.

Keywords: Social media platform, Economic empowerment, Women, Ilaro, Ogun State.

1.   Introduction

Concern about the high rate of human deprivation and hunger in the poor countries of the World, the UN Millennium Summit of the World leaders and international organizations adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as a poverty alleviation strategy for such countries. The strategy, in the form of an action plan, was intended to reduce diseases and illiteracy in addition to eradicating poverty (UNDP, 2000). Specifically, the MDGs targeted the vulnerable groups (i.e. children, girl child, women and aged) in the poverty-ravaged countries for educational development, capacity building and economic emancipation. Consequently, the MDGs were a UN declaration, in the form of action plans to be implemented in the poor nations of the world as a recipe for economic empowerment (UNDP, 2015). It aptly addressed the plight of the female gender because the group appeared to be the worst hit by the human deprivation. At a young age, the girl child suffers discrimination against the boy counterpart and is denied education, while as a woman she lives in extreme poverty. Indeed, the 2000-2013 statistics of working age in the lowest wealth quintile of all households in most developing countries revealed that women

are at a greater risk of living in poverty. They remain perpetually disadvantaged in the labour market and have little or no access to paid employment. Household responsibilities and cultural constraints are a major barrier to employment. (MDG Report 2015).

Nigeria, as a UN member nation and as one of the poorest countries, adopted the MSGs for implementation. Consequently, several initiatives at all levels of governments (i.e. national, state and local) were taken to address such issues as eradication of poverty and hunger; achievement of universal primary and/or basic education; promotion of gender equality (in schools, employment, and political appointment); empowerment of women; and education of child mortality. However, not much success has been recorded in the economic empowerment of women and subsequently, eradication of poverty and hunger in the country. Unfortunately, a similar situation was reported in other poor nations of the world. For instance, the MDG Report (2015) indicated that women continue to face discrimination in access to work, economic assets and participation in private and public decision-making. Women are also more likely to live in poverty than men. Furthermore, big gaps exist between the poorest and richest households, and between rural and urban areas in the developing countries. It is unfortunate, therefore, that two decades after the UN summit on the MDG, the developing countries including Nigeria is yet to exit poverty. The countries still lack basic infrastructure and services, and that vast majority of the populace still live in human deprivation. It has become necessary to explore other unconventional methods for economic empowerment of women as a means of poverty eradication among women in Nigeria.

The World Bank (2008) advocated the need to empower women as a route to eradicating poverty in developing countries. Action Aid (2006) observed that women represented 70% of the disadvantaged in the world. They are impoverished, discriminated against in education, employment and public office appointment, and have limited access to resources and economy. They are undervalued and are almost confined to household work and parenting. On the other hand, if economically empowered and given access to quality education and employment opportunity, the womenfolk will contribute significantly to the economy of the nation.

This paper reports the outcome of the study of the role of social media platforms in economic empowerment of women in Ilaro, headquarters of Yewa South Local Government Area, as a case study of Ogun State, Nigeria. The advent of social media platforms in the ICT parlance is fast becoming a game-changer in commercial business operations. Virtual shopping malls and e-trading operating on the Internet is becoming increasingly popular in the world. It is becoming a global phenomenon. The low capital base requirement to start e-business is an added advantage. Also, it has a great capacity to transform society, the organization, and the individual. Besides, it can cause improvement in the economic and social status of people and thus alleviating poverty in society. Marcelle (2002) observed that women exchanged information better, accessed on-line education and engaged in e-commerce activities better with the use of ICT. Also, some workers had demonstrated the versatility of ICT in the economic emancipation of women. The access to information through ICT enriched and enhanced the women's quality of life, and participation in public life (Lennie, 2002; Mitchell & Gillis, 2007; & Prasad & Sreedevi, 2007).

This study is premised on a framework of 'Uses and needs gratification' and 'Media dependency' theories because they find a useful application in communication studies (Yang Lin; 2018). The uses and needs gratification theory proposed that the audience determined and chose the media, which met their need, and it answered the questions as to why and what does the audience use media for? (Katz et al., (1973-1974) cited in Egede & Eloka (2013); McQuail, (2010). Thus, the theory sides need for and choice of media with the audience. It recognizes the audience as active mass media users rather being passive receivers of information. In short, it concerns more about what the audience do with the media. It emphasizes motive and the self-perceived needs of the audience.

Katz et al (1973-1974) cited in Egede & Eloka (2013) surmised that a communication message implies different meaning and thus used by different people for different purposes. It all depends on the perception of the audience. In other words, particular media content satisfies the diverse needs of the audience. The individual's educational background, media awareness, experiences, social situations, interests and needs determine their choice of media. Indeed, the audience can state their motives and satisfactions for using different media. Succinctly, Katz, et. al., (1973- 1974) cited in Egede & Eloka (2013), classified into five groups, needs identified from the social and psychological functions of the mass media. That is cognitive, affective, personal integrative, social integrative, and tension release needs. Meanwhile, McQuail (2010) classified the justification for using media according to information, personal identity, integration and social interaction, and entertainment.

The dependency theory, on the other hand, applies a systematic approach in the evaluation of the effects of mass media on the audience and their interactions. That is interactions among the media, the audience, and the social system (Ball-Rakeach & De-Fleur; 1976). Also, both theories agreed that media dependency could result from the use of media. Indeed, evidence abounds on the use of media as being directed by satisfaction. Furthermore, the media dependency theory postulates that the more an individual depended on the media for needs fulfilment, the more important the media becomes to the individual. That is, dependency and needs satisfaction are directly related. Also, Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976), asserted that individuals have tendencies for dependency on the media their needs' satisfaction in the industrial and information-based society. The needs could be diverse, ranging from a need for information to a need for entertainment. Consequently, the authors surmised that dependency has a correlational relationship with the media content, the nature of society, and the behaviour of the audience. Furthermore, DeFleur & Rokeach (1989) opined that active use of the media for goal achievement would result in being dependent on the media. People will become more dependent on media that meet a number of their needs than on media that provides only a few ones. Littlejohn et al (2009) affirmed that people would be inclined to adhere to the use of media for a long time to come if only the media provides them with several functions key to their desire objectives.

From the foregoing, it may be inferred that the media's influence is related to the individual's and social systems' degree of dependence on the media. Consequently, Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur (1976) proclaimed two propositions. The first proposition is that the audience's dependency on the media increased with the number of social functions derived from the media. The second proposition was that the degree of instability in society is directly related to the audience's dependency on the media. That is, there is greater media dependency in the situation of social change, conflict and disorderliness. Furthermore, the authors predicted that cognitive, affective and behavioural effects could result from audiences' dependency on the media, and all of which might affect the social order, political stability and economic activities in the society.

2.   Methodology

2.1 Study Area
Ilaro, the administrative headquarters of Yewa   South Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria constituted the study area for investigation of the role of social media platforms on the economic empowerment of women in the State. Ilaro is located in the southwest of Nigeria. Its GPS coordinates are longitudes 3.0142 and latitude 6.8890 (or longitude 3º 00' 20.44" E; latitude 6º 53" 20.44" N). The climate is Tropical Savannah and is characterized by high temperature ranging between 29ºC in July and 37ºC in February. The population is 57,850. The predominant occupations are farming, petty trading, artisans, and civil servants.

2.2 Research Design
In this study, a structured questionnaire was used to elicit information from experimental subjects (i.e. respondents) in a descriptive research design method. The design allowed the researchers to collect data without manipulating any

of the variables of interest in the study. The questionnaire was structured into Sections A and B, where Section A captured the respondents' personal information, and Section B consisted of questions relating to the variables under investigation. The questions were structured in a way to elicit required information on the social media platforms under study.

2.3 Social Media Platforms Examined

The social media platforms tested in this study were YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and LinkedIn, and they are highlighted below:

YouTube: It is an online video application where the original video is shared. It is a search engine, as well. It provides a home for PSAs and educational videos; it has large accessibility and a good resource for schools and organizations. It is easy and convenient to use. And it can as well be linked or embedded across the Internet.

Facebook: it is a platform for linking up with friends, family members interested members of the local and international community. It allows sharing of posts and information, receiving comments and feedback on posts, personal messaging, make announcements and advertisements, share jokes and riddles, and questions. It allows online coverage and broadcast video of live performance or shows. Furthermore, it allows person, groups, or page-based accounts. It gives notification on the news feed.

Instagram: This social networking application is made for sharing videos and photos. It is similar to Twitter and Facebook. User or an account holder has a profile and will receive notification of news feed on the arrival of a new post of videos, photos and text message on the wall. It displays on the account holder's profile and other users Both the user and the followers can see their post in their respective feeds

WhatsApp: This is a version of the messenger application that allows posting of multimedia messages. It sends and receives a text and audio messages, images and video. It is an online social media application. It enables users to share their location in real-time messages, etc.

LinkedIn: This is a social media cum networking platform mostly used by academic and business communities. It allows registered members to establish and document networks of people they know and trust professionally. Also, it assists users to find jobs in their fields of specialization. Besides, job vacancies are posted on the platform.

2.4 Research Population

One hundred women engaged in various occupations in Ilaro, Yewa South Local Government area of Ogun State constituted the research respondents in the study. They were engaged in petty trading, fashion designing (or sewing mistresses), salon services and hairdressing, catering services, and operation of business centres. Because the research population was scattered all over Ilaro, the cluster sample technique was used in the selection of the population used in this study. Also, the respondents were selected randomly from the business/market areas within Ilaro Town Centre, Library Junction, Orita Pahayi, and the Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro community and its environs.

2.5 Statistical Analysis

Data collected through the retuned questionnaires were subjected to statistical analysis using the SPSS (2011) and Microsoft Excel applications on the HP personal computer. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlational analysis

3.   Results

The demography of the research respondents is presented in Table 1. The results showed that the majority of the respondents were above 3 years and were all had education to a varying degree. They had primary (15%), secondary (18%), polytechnic (53%) and university (14%) education. Also, all the women were gainfully employed in their private businesses, Government service and apprentices. However, the majority (70%) were engaged in personal businesses as owners or apprentices.

Table 1. Demographical data of the research respondents

Parameter	Percentage of women
All respondent	100
Age (years)	
18 – 25	15
26 – 33	17
34 – 41	30
42 – 49	20
>50	18
Educational qualification	
First School Leaving Certificate	15
West African School Certificate	18
National Diploma	25
Higher National Diploma	28
Bachelor's Degree	14
Type of job/work	
Personal business	55
Public / Civil servant	30
Apprentice	15

The responses of the respondents to the question as to whether or not the social media helped in creating awareness for their goods and services are presented in Table 2. The results showed that the majority (72%) of the women affirmed that social media was helpful in awareness creation for their businesses, while 28% of them believed it was not.

Table 2. Respondents' perceptions of social media platforms' usefulness for promoting sales of goods and services

Question	Responses (frequency)*		Total
	Yes	No	
Is social media helpful in creating awareness for your goods and services?	72 (72%)	28 (28%	100%

*Percent frequency in parenthesis

The conflicting views expressed by the women agreed with the assertion of Blumler & Katz (1973-1974) that a communication message implies different meaning and thus used by different people for different purposes. The use to which they put the communication message depends on their perception. Meanwhile, the results presented in Table 3 show that 90% of the women agreed or strongly agreed that social media could be used to improve their economic

status. Just a few about 4% only of the women disagree or strongly disagreed with the assertion that social media could improve their economic status. Furthermore, the majority (85%) of the women agreed that social media enhances the economic development of women. About 5% of them disagreed, and the remaining 10% were uncertain. None of them strongly disagreed with the capability of social media raising their economic status.

These results seem to suggest that majority of the women believed that the social media could be used to raise awareness of the public or their customers for their goods and services and that it could improve their economic status by promoting or boosting their businesses. Earlier, Hafele (2011) had averred that mass communication brought

Table 3 Responses to the effect of educational background on the use of social media platforms and their impact on economic development of respondents

Question	Responses (frequency)*					Total
	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
Do you agree that social media can be used to improve economic status?	55 (55%)	35 (35%)	6 (6%)	2 (2%)	2 (2%)	100%
Do you agree that the use of social media depends on one's educational level?	40 (40%)	30 (30%)	15 (15%)	10 (10%)	5 (5%)	100%
Do you agree that social media enhances the economic development of women?	62 (62%)	23 (23%)	10 (10%)	5 (5%)	0 (0%)	100%

*Percent frequency in parenthesis

about social marketing with unprecedented information dissemination and mass marketing. It encouraged users to spread advertisement messages to their contacts. Also, it offered a new advertisement approach and new tools for developing and increasing turns for their business. Other workers affirmed that social media platforms allowed transactions between sellers and buyers, that would typically require human contact (Watson et al., 2002; Sheth and Sharma 2005).

Results presented in Table 4 shows the frequency of use of the various social media platforms investigated in this study. The order of decreasing use of the social media platforms by the respondents is given as Facebook (41%), WhatsApp (27%), YouTube (13%), Instagram (12%), and LinkedIn (7%). The results showed that they were more familiar with the use of Facebook and WhatsApp platforms than the rest of them. The LinkedIn platform was the least used. The disparity in the pattern of use of the different social media platforms might be connected with the characteristic features, capabilities, ease of use, complexities of the application commands, and user's knowledge of the application. Indeed, about 70% agreed that the use of social media depended on the users' educational background (Table 4). 15% each disagreed and were uncertain, respectively. Of all the social media platforms investigated in this study, Facebook appeared to be the oldest inventions and as such has more users. Also, the users learned along as the application continued to improve or advanced hence users feel more comfortable with it. Also, a wider audience sees posts in the form of text messages, photos, video and advertisement from interconnected networks of friends and followers. LinkedIn, on the other hand, appear so serve the network of people that are linked. Facebook advertising had been perceived as the most effective tools to grow business. It uses images and videos to capture the interest of the target audience and as well promote sales of goods and services. It can be deduced from the preference of users that Facebook, in particular, is believed to stand out as well as being cheaper than most of the other social media for

advertising products and services. It is easier to set up. Facebook allows one to spend as little as possible money per day, to put adverts up for products and services and see significant results (Keevan, 2016).

The promotion of the use of other social media platforms other than Facebook may require educating the women on the use of the applications. Some of them did not have more than the first school leaving certificate (i.e. primary education) or at most senior school certificate (i.e. secondary education). Besides, most of them do not possess android mobile phones hence were not exposed to social media platform other than Facebook, WhatsApp and YouTube.

Table 4 Frequencies of use and preference for social media platform by the respondents

Question	Responses (frequency)*					Total
	Facebook	WhatsApp	Instagram	LinkedIn	YouTube	
What are the social media applications you use to promote your goods and services?	41 (41%)	27 (27%)	12 (12%)	7 (7%)	13 (13%)	100%

*Percent frequency in parenthesis.

4. Conclusion

From the foregoing, it may be concluded that social media platforms could be used to raise the public's awareness of goods and services provided by the women and that it could improve the women's economic status by promoting or boosting their businesses. Facebook was used more frequently than four other platforms investigated. The order of decreasing use (frequency) of the social media platforms by the women was Facebook (41%), WhatsApp (27%), YouTube (13%), Instagram (12%), and LinkedIn (7%). The disparity in the pattern of use of the different social media platforms might be connected with the characteristic features, capabilities, ease of use, complexities of the application commands, and user's knowledge of the application. It is recommended; therefore, that promotion of the use of other social media platforms other than Facebook may require educating the women on benefits of using the applications for economic empowerment.

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