NEW MEDIA AND GENDER EMPOWERMENT: A STUDY OF ANAMBRA STATE WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS AND THE USE OF INTERNET

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Abstract

New media is a term meant to encompass the emergence of digital computerized or networked information and communication technologies. Most technologies described as new media are digital, often having characteristics of being manipulated, networkable, dense, compressible, interactive and impartial. The new media is communication technologies that enable or facilitate user to user interactivity and interactivity between user and information. A division of gender roles is deeply rooted in the social archetypes. In the past the patriarchy was a dominant family model. Through the ages men have been considered to be financial providers, career focused, assertive and independent, whereas women have been shown as low position workers, loving wives and mothers, responsible for raising children and doing housework. New media has proven potential for mobilizing attention and accountability to women's rights and challenging discrimination and stereotypes. This paper attempts to analyze the efforts of the new media which has proved to be a powerful vehicle for bringing women's right issues to the attention of a wider public, galvanizing action on the streets, of cities around the world and encouraging policy makers to step up commitments to gender equalities. The paper discusses strategies to enhance new media potentials for women's empowerment.

Keywords: New Media, Gender Empowerment, Stereotype, Gender Equality, Anambra State.

Introduction

Gender equality, women's empowerment and the realization of women's rights in achieving sustainable development has been increasingly recognized in recent decades. This recognition is evident in a number of international norms and agreements, including principle 20 of the R10 Declaration on environment and development adopted in 1992, in its statement regarding the full participation of women being essential to achieving sustainable development. In the Beijing declaration and platform for action adopted member states in 1995, governments were called upon to integrate gender concerns and perspectives into policies and programmes for sustainable development.

In 2012, the United Nations conference on sustainable development, entitled "the future we want" came up with a document which included recognition of the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment across the three pillars of sustainable development economic, social and environmental and resolve to promote gender equality and women's full

participation in sustainable development policies, programmes and decision-making at all levels. The country's overall development depends greatly on the inclusion of women in its development process. The importance of gender equality is well recognized and well accepted for development. Men and women can neither reach excellence with the cooperation of each other. Women, because of their biological and social roles are generally more rooted than men in the confines of their locality. They are therefore more aware than men of the social, economic and environmental needs of their own communities (Miller, 2000, p.503).

Women play an important role in the development of the society and the nation. In this century in various developmental processes, in scientific and technological era the status of women is changing at a fast pace but at the same time, women are still marginalized, discriminated and oppressed because of different gender divide issues. Empowerment of women has emerged as an important, development will remain incomplete without the active participation of women. Women are transmitters of culture in all the societies. The status of women in a society shows its social, religious cultural and economics state.

Information and communication issue technologies (ICTs) have dramatically reshaped and transformed global socio-structural patterns. They have changed the ways people organize their lives and participate in various spheres in the society. Oso (2005) noted that information and communication technologies have raised hopes for fundamental changes and even renewal in many areas of our lives and at all societal strata.
ICTs such as the internet have emerged as indispensable tools in the 21stcentury. Agba (2001, p.56) refers to the internet as a worldwide assemblage of interconnected computer networks. It connects all manner of private, commercial, government and academic networks including a growing number of home computers.

Agba (2001, p. 57) asserts that the internet provides access to vast web information on almost everything medicine, sciences, technology, agriculture, politics, economics advertising etc. Simply put, the internet is a large set of computer networks that communicate with each other often over telephone lines; it enables companies, organizations, individuals, schools and government to share information across the world.

New media plays an imported role in women's empowerment and its development. New media most commonly refers to content available on demand through the internet, accessible on any digital devices usually containing interactive user feedback and creative and creative participation. (Wikipedia, 2015) most technologies described as "new media" are digital, often having characteristics of being manipulated networkable, device, compressible and interactive.

Statement of Problem
Internet has served as a vehicle or a channel to convey information in a useful and easy to understand manner. It has drastically changed information and knowledge sharing process globally. Internet is a widely accepted medium for transportation andempowerment. Individuals, groups, communities and nations, including women in their quest for gender sensitive society have adopted the internet as a viable tool. The internet has been promoted as

an important tool in ensuring that marginalized groups including women are important participants in the global information sphere.

However, despite the countless benefits of this important tool of communication, research entertainment, publishing and business, there are challenges that affect internet access and use amongst women in Nigeria. This study, therefore examines internet access and use amongst women Entrepreneurs Anambra State.

Objectives of the Study
This study has the objectives:
1. To ascertain if women entrepreneurs in Anambra State use the internet.
2. To determine the extent to which the use of internet enhances the business of women in Anambra State.
3. To find out challenges women entrepreneurs encounter in using internet for their business.

Research Questions
This study has the following research Questions:
1. Do women entrepreneurs in Anambra State use internet?
2. To what extent do the uses of internet enhance the business of women in Anambra State?
3. What are the challenges which women entrepreneurs in Anambra State encounter in the use of internet for their business?

Theoretical Framework
This study was anchored on the feminist muted group theory. The continued gender inequality in the Nigerian media is perhaps a consequence of the failure of traditional institutions such as schools churches and families to dismantle the patriarchal structures and embrace modernity and its attendant wave of changes that are sweeping across the globe Shirley and Edwin Ardener (1998, p.26) in an attempt to challenge this gender imbalance, found explanations to the paradigm and in 1968 propounded the feminist muted group theory, which explains why certain groups in the society are muted, silent or not heard. They suggest that in every society a social hierarchy exists, that privileged some groups over others. These groups that function at the top of the social hierarchy determine to a great extent the communication system of the entire society and the muteness occurs because of the lack of power that is given to any group that occupies the low end of the pole. In 1981 Cheris Kramarae in her work "Women and Men speaking: frame work for analysis" used the muted group theory to find answers to the experiences of women. Her key assumptions include:

- That because men are the dominant group in the society, the male perception is also dominant women's perceptions and systems of perceiving are seen as less competent.
- That in-order to become participating members in the society, women must transform their perceptions and models of perceiving into terms of the dominant group.

The muted group theory explains why women have difficulty being accepted in and becoming part of an organization whose rules have been constructed primarily by a male dominated world. In this theory men are the cause of women's muteness because they do not

want to understand any language but the one created and constructed by them. They do not want to acknowledge that there is a women's language as they would be compelled to close some of their power to women.

Kramarae (1981, p.62) says "this world taught women nothing skillful and they said her work was valueless, it permitted her no opinion and said she did not know how to think, it forbade her to speak in public and said the sex has no orators"

The muted group theory essentially challenges traditionally accepted paradigmatic assumptions and explains why some societies have found it difficult to embrace the shifts in paradigms which are sweeping across the rest of the world. It validates and explains the experiences and perceptions of women and helps us to understand power and its structure and how it is used against people (Kramarae, 1981, p.60). It explains why women are marginalized in every aspect of life. New media has huge potential for the empowerment of women.

Literature Review
The status of women in Nigeria
Geographically men and women share the same space, they live in different worlds. Gender equality advocates have labored tirelessly to ensure that obligations and commitments under convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. Women CEDAW and Beijingworld conference on women are fulfilled and the results are now evident globally, in form of gender sensitive laws constitutional provisions, judicial decisions, policies government structures and resource allocations.

However, after several conferences on women, Nigeria women continues to experience marginalization in every sphere of human endeavour in spite of the general belief, that an estimated 45%of Nigeria's population is made up of women and girls (UNSN, 2015, p.5) the gender disparity in their access to education, health care, physical and financial resources, and opportunities in the political economic, social and cultural sphere. The impact of in equality is reflected is reflected in the status of women in Nigeria. This disparity which dates back to the pre-colonial era finds its roots and has remained in the African traditional culture, Christianity and Islamic religion both stipulated clearly different roles for men and women. Both sexes grow up knowing exactly what the society expects from them. This division of labour finds expression in a division of labour finds expressions in a definition of masculine and feminine qualities transmitted, reinforced and rearticulated by the different instructions of society (Matterlart, 1986, p.78). As boys herded their flock, hunted and went fishing girls fetched water, firewood, cooked, nursed the sick and took care of the young and aged. The boys would certainly become husbands performing the functions expected of them by the society while the girls would become wives both performing functions according to the norms of society but not necessarily to suit their individual aspirations. While the society places the women in the home, specifically at the kitchen, it places the man in the work places and farms. In Africa women are victims of injustice, not because of what society did to them but what it did not do to them. Boys grew up knowing that they had to be strong, hardworking and wise so that they can take care of their wives, children and society. Also girls grew up knowing that they had to be hardworking and submissive so that they could find good husbands who

would take care of them. In other words, girls are not meant to make their lives successful but it is their future husbands and this motion robbed them of the initiative, ambition and creativity to make a choice which would make a difference.

Haskell (1996) says how ironic that it was in the security of this enlarged image of himself, an image provided by wives, or more often mothers, that men went forth to fight, conquer, legislate, create and women stayed home without so much as a room of her own, her only fulfillment, the hope of bearing a son to whom she could pass on the notion of male superiority.

Gender inequality keeps women at a disadvantage all their lives and stifles development prospects of their societies. This perhaps justifies the situating of gender equality issue by the Beijing platform for actions, at the core of the achievement of the MDG's. From improving health, fighting diseases and lowering infant Mortality to reducing poverty and mitigating hunger to expanding education, the MDG's hold a firm promise of empowering women as unhealthy, illiterate and poorly educated women are less able to care for their children. When a country educated its women economic productivity tends to raise, material and infant mortality rates usually fall, fertility rates declare and the health and education prospects of the next generation improve.

New Media
New media is a term meant to encompass the emergence of digital, computerized or networked information and communication technologies in the later part of the 20th century. Most technologies declared as 'new media' are digital, often having characteristics of being manipulated, networkable, dense, compressible interactive and impartial. New media refers to on-demand access to content anytime, anywhere, on any digital device, as well as interactive feedback, and creative participation. Some examples may be the internet, websites, computer multimedia, computer games CDROMS and DVDS. New media is not television programs feature films, magazine, books or paper based applications.

Connections between computing and radical art grew in the 1960's. In the 1980's Alan Kay and his co-workers at Xerox PARC began to give the power of a personal computer to the individual, rather than have a big organization be in charge of this. The late 1980's and 1990'2 witnessed different kind of parallel relationship between social changes and computer design. Until the 1980's media relied primarily upon print and art analog broadcast models, such as those of television and radio. The last twenty-five years have witnessed the rapid transformation into media which are predicated upon the use of digital computers, such as the internet and computer games, these examples are only a small representation of new media. The use of digital computers has transformed the remaining old media as suggested by the advent of digital television and online publication. Even traditional media forms such as the printing press have been transformed through the application of technologies image manipulation software like Abode Photoshop and desktop publishing tools Shapiro (1999) argues that the "emergence of new digital technologies signals a potentially radical shift of who is in control of information, experience and resources"(Shapiro cited in Croteau and Hoynes, 2003, p. 322). Neuman (1991) suggests that whilst the "new media" have technical capabilities to pull in one direction, economic and social forces pull back in the opposite

direction. According to Neuman, "we are witnessing the evolution of a universal interconnected network of audio, video and electronic text communications that will blur the distinction between interpersonal and mass communication and between public and private communication" (Neuman cited in Croteau and Hoynes, 2003 p. 322) Neuman argues that New Media will alter the meaning of geographic distance, allow for a huge increase in the volume of communication, provide the possibility of increasing the speed of communication, provide opportunities for interactive communication and allows forms of communication that were previously separate to overlap and interconnect.

In the same vein it has been the contentions of scholars as Douglas, Keller, Cullum Rymer and James Holliman that new media and particularly the internet, provide the potential for a democratic post modem public sphere in which citizens can participate in well informed non-hierarchical debate pertaining to their social structures. Contradicting these positive appraisals of the potential social impacts of new media are scholars such as Ed Herman and Robert Mc Chesney who have suggested that the transition to new media has seen a handful of powerful transnational telecommunications corporations who achieve a level of global influence which was unimaginable.

Contributions of Rymer (2009) on Wikipedia, Lister (2003) and Friedman (2005) have highlighted both the positive and negative potential and actual implication of new media technologies, suggesting that some of the early work into new media studies was guilty of technological determinism whereby the effects of media were determined by the technology themselves, rather than through tracing the complex social networks which governed the development, finding, implementation and future development of any technology.

New Media: A Tool for Women Empowerment

Gender researchers and feminist scholars have also become interested in new media as a development which has the potential to break down social hierarchies (Friedman, 2005, p.124) in more general terms. Williamson (2009) suggest that digital media have already begun to challenge socio cultural and political norms in Britain. New media differs from traditional media in that its structures of ownership and participation are new and directly challenge the monopoly on mass communication possessed by traditional media producers. The internet has fragmented and decentralized the context in which communication occurs (Ibid, 2009).

Blogs are used as public diaries where women discuss public and personal issues in their life and development. Story telling use by women in blogs to introduce their thoughts has been proven to have its major effect (Ayish, 2009).

Gemiets (2010) affirms that new media provides break with old social hierarchies, new technologies give individual producers of media content more freedom, and empower them to expose, interact with and reveal backstage behavior related information about themselves as well as others to a mass media audience. However, while new media is identified as an agent for social change, its effects are not gender neutral.

New media help people to connect, it easily collaborates with other people and create new content, services, communities and channels of communication that help people to deliver information and services. People of all ages and backgrounds are online and using new media tools for a variety of reasons such as searching of information and connecting with others. The terms new media may be defined as an interactive forms of communication that use the internet including podcasts, RSS feeds, social networks, text messaging, blogs, wikis, virtual worlds and more. Wikipedia defines New Media as on-demand access to content anytime, anywhere, on any digital device, as well as interactive user feedback, creative participation. New Media has increased communication between people all over the world and through internet it has allowed people to express themselves through blogs, websites, pictures and other user generated media. New Media makes it possible for anyone to create, modify and share content with others, using relatively simple tools that are often free or inexpensive. New media requires a computer or mobile device with internet access.

In New Media the product is called website. Every website has an address. To see a website one needs a computer. On the computer there is an icon called internet explorer. When clicked on, a screen opens up after typing the address of the website it opens up.

Recently, innovations on the creation of different websites that focus on women empowerment on terms of education, literacy health, knowledge lifestyle and many more areas have been proliferated.
The characteristics of new media are:
- Connect people with information and services
- Collaborate with other people including those within your organization or community
- Create new content services, communities and channels of communication that help you deliver information and services.
- Interactivity new media is known for its ability to involve the audience. This is known as interactivity. In comparison to other media forms, new media has the most evolved feedback system in place.
- Narrative – New media uses a narrative style of writing. Another special feature of new media is the use of multimedia.

The Internet
The internet is a global system of interconnected computer networks that use the standard internet protocol suite to serve billions of users worldwide (Agba, 2001, p.55) It is a network of networks that consists of millions of private, public, academic, business and government networks of local to global scope that are linked by a broad array of electronic and optical networking technologies. The internet carries a vast array of information resources and services, most notably the inter-linked hypertext documents of the World Wide Web (www) and the infrastructure to support electronic mail.

Tracing its origin Scott (1995) records that the internet dates back to the 1960's when the United State funded research projects of its military agencies to build robust, fault tolerant, and distributed computer networks. The internet therefore developed from software called the ARPANET which was restricted project funded by the US department of Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA). ARPA also funded research projects that

produced two satellite networks. In the 1970's ARPA was faced with a dilemma. Each of its networks had advantages for some situations, but each network was incompatible with others. ARPA focused research on ways that networks could be interconnected and the internet was envisioned and created to be an interconnection of networks that use internet protocol suit. In the early 1980s a group of academic computer scientists formed the computer science network which used TCP/IP protocols. Other government agencies extended the role of TCP/IP by applying it to their networks the department of energy's Magnetic Fusion Energy Network (MFENET), the High Energy Physics Network (HEPNET) and the National Sciences Foundation Network (NSFNET).

In the 1980's as Comer (2009) records large commercial companies began to use TCP/IP to build internets, ARPA investigated transmission of multimedia – audio, video and graphics across the internet, in 1989, many of these technologies were combined to create the World Wide Web. Initially designed to aid communication among physicists who worked in widely separated locations, the web became immensely popular and eventually replaced other tools. Also during the late 1980's the US government began to lift restrictions on who could use the internet and commercialization of the internet began. In the early 1990's with users no longer restricted to the scientific or military communities, the internet quickly expanded to include universities companies of all sizes libraries public and private schools, local and state governments, individuals and families.

McQuail (2005) adds that the internet began primarily as a non-commercial means of inter communication and data exchange between professionals but a period of civilian funding of a new US backbone by the National Science Foundation stationed worldwide participation in the development of new networking technologies and led to the commercialization of an international network in the mid 1990's and resulted in the popularization of countless applications in virtually every aspect of modern human life. As of 2009, an estimated quarter of the earth's population uses the services of the internet.

Describing the internet, McQuail notes that it has a distinctive technology, manner of use range of content and services and a distinct image of its own. The internet is not owned controlled or organized by any single body but is simply a network of internationally interconnected computers operating according to agreed protocols. Numerous organizations especially service providers contribute to its operation. The internet as such does not exist anywhere as a legal entity and is not subject to any single set of national law or regulations. However, those who use the internet can be accountable to the laws and regulations of the country in which they reside as well as to international law. The internet is not a medium of indiscriminate mass distribution but is directed to specific users. It is the so called common carries that generally escape control over its content.

Unlike traditional broadcast media such as radio and television the internet does not have a centralized distribution system. Instead an individual who has internet access can communicate directly with anyone else on the internet, post information for general consumption, retrieve information, uses distant applications and services, buy and sell products. The use of the internet has grown tremendously since its inception. The internet is success arises from its flexibility. Instead of restricting component networks to a particular

manufacturer or particular type, internet technology allows interconnection of any kind of computer network. No network is too large or too small, too fast or too slow to be interconnected. Thus, the internet includes inexpensive networks that can only connect a few computers within a single room as well as expensive networks that can span content and connect thousands of computers. The internet is a very good information search medium viewed as a library and data source of unprecedented size, actuality and accessibility. McQuail (2013) observes that students can have access to libraries around the world.

Methodology
The study employed the survey method with questionnaire as research instrument. According to Ohaja (2003, p.74) whenever the major source of primary data for a study is the views of members of the public or any particular group, a survey would be called for.

The study covered the three senatorial zones in Anambra State consisting of Anambra North senatorial zone, Anambra central senatorial zone and Anambra South senatorial zone.
A sample size of three hundred (300) respondents was selected and used for the study. This sample size is based on the population of the study area, which is determined by applying Taro Yamane's formula for selecting sample size.

Purposive sampling method was adopted. Purposive sampling method was used in choosing the elements from the population. The choice of purposive technique was informed by the need to get elements from the population that would make responses in line with the research goals, 30 businesses were selected and 10 people were selected from each business.

Data Presentations
The results of the questions posed to respondents are presented in tabular format as follows:

Table1
Respondents view on ownership of computer (PC) internet assisted device

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	220	73
No	80	27
Total	300	100

The information in table 1 shows that 220 respondents representing73% have access internet while 80 or 26% of the respondents don't have. The shows that a good number of respondents owns a computer (PC)

Table 2: Respondents' Views on Ownership of website

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	90	30
No	210	70
Total	300	100

Table 2 shows that respondent's ownership to website is 90(30%) while 210(70%) don't have any website. Their businesses don't have any website.

Table 3: Respondents views on advertising on the internet

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	65	22
No	235	78
Total	300	100

Table 3. The result on tables 3 shows that 65(22%) of the respondents advertise on the internet while 235(78%) of the respondents don't advertise on the internet.

Table 4
Respondents view on extent of the use of internet to enhance businesses of women to Anambra State.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Large extent	180	60
Low extent	120	40
Total	300	100

In measuring the extent of use of the internet to enhance businesses of women in Anambra State the study observed that 60% of the respondents were of the view that internet helps businesses to a larger extent.

Table 5
Respondents view on the challenges encountered by women entrepreneurs in Anambra State. Time limitation between managing the business and family is a major constraint facing women entrepreneurs.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	210	70
Disagree	80	27
Don't know	10	3
Total	300	100

The result in table 5 shows that 210(70%) of respondents agree that managing the business and family is a major constraint facing women entrepreneurs. This shows that the role the society left on women is burdensome and hardly allows them to engage in a work.

Table 6

Competition from Male Counterparts Promoting Similar Products is a Constraint.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	200	67
Disagree	80	27
Don't know	20	7
Total	300	100

The result in table 7 shows that 200(67%) of the respondents agrees that competition with male counterparts promoting similar products is a constraint while 27% disagrees.

Table 8

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	240	80
Disagree	60	20
Don't know	-	-
Total	300	100

Table 8 shows that 240 (80%) of the respondents agrees that financial constraints and illiteracy is the major challenges faced by women entrepreneurs while 60 (20%) disagrees.

Discussion of Findings
From the analysis it is observed that 73% of the respondents have access to the internet which means that majority of them are internet savvy. But 30% percent of the respondents own a business website, while majority 70% of the respondents doesn't have. More so 78% percent of the respondents don't advertise on the internet.

The result shows that a good number of women in Anambra State have access to the internet but very few of the women create websites for their businesses, also very few women entrepreneurs adverts on the internet.

To find out the challenges encountered by women entrepreneurs in Anambra State 70% of the respondents agree that managing the business and family is a major constraint facing women entrepreneurs. Majority of the respondents (67%) agrees that competition from male counterparts promoting similar products is a problem and 80% of the respondents agree that lack of finance and illiteracy are the challenges that women entrepreneurs face.

Conclusion
New media have positive impacts in boasting women entrepreneurship, which leads to women empowerment.
The result of this study has shown that majority of women entrepreneurs in Anambra State have access to the internet but a negligible number of women entrepreneurs advertise on the internet and own websites.

However, those that use internet believe that it enhances their businesses; those that have websites also believe that it attracts customers to them. Perhaps due to time limitation between managing the business and family, competition from male counterparts, financial constraints and illiteracy, the women entrepreneurs in Anambra State are not making use of it when compared with their male counterparts.

Recommendations

Based on the above findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. To encourage and promote the use of new media (internet) amongst the women entrepreneur in Anambra State.
2. General improvement in the education of the girl child and women should be encouraged by the government.
3. The government should encourage Women entrepreneurs by giving loans to them in order to enhance their businesses.
4. The male counterparts should accept the women and stop marginalizing them.
5. Women entrepreneurs should be encouraged to advertise on the internet and also own a website.

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