



### Information and Communication Technology for Female Entrepreneurs: Librarians' Perspective

**Omosor Ufuoma Abigail**

Ufuo75@gmail.com

Delta State Polytechnic Library  
Ozoro, Delta State, Nigeria

**Musa Bello Naomi**

naomibmusa@gmail.com.

Jibril Aminu, Federal  
Polytechnic Library Mubi,  
Adamawa State, Nigeria

#### **Abstract**

*The article is an information and communication technology for female entrepreneurs. Economic development plays a significant role in the development and growth of any society. The importance of promoting female gender participation in economic activities has become a major goal in most developing countries in recent times including Nigeria*

*This paper examines the ICT (information and communication technology); who is an entrepreneur, ICT revolution, relevance of ICT entrepreneurship skills, ICT for female entrepreneur and finally a step by step guide to gender sensitive and ICT development for women entrepreneurs/ enterprises. The paper concludes with recommendation that Librarians and Information Scientist should play vital role in educating women entrepreneurs in the area of ICT and entrepreneurial skill acquisition.*

**Keywords:** female entrepreneur, ICT Skills, Librarians

#### **1.1 Introduction**

The economic success of every nation worldwide is the result of encouraging and rewarding the entrepreneurship instincts. Also the information revelation and the extraordinary increase in the spread of knowledge have given birth to a new era of knowledge and information which affects directly the economic, social, cultural and political activities of all regions of the world including Africa.

According to Ajayi (2002), the revolution taking place in ICT has been the central and driving force for the globalization process. Both developed and less developed countries cannot afford to miss out on the opportunities these technologies are creating more especially in their effort to realize the millennium development goals (MDGs) of eradicating poverty, hunger and promoting

gender quality and empowering women.

#### **1.2 Concept of an Entrepreneur**

Entrepreneur is a term used broadly in connection with innovation and modern industrial leaders. It is also assumed to be an owner of business. Oshagbemi (1983) conceptualise an entrepreneur as the man or woman who perceives business opportunities and takes advantage of the scarce resource to use them. The single function which constitutes entrepreneurship is innovation whilst the business director or owner is mostly engage in managerial activities which are non-entrepreneurial and involves the ability to gain command at and combine resources in a new way which will be profitable.

Rea (2005) describes an entrepreneur as an agent either individual or collective who campaigns a novel combination or productive

resources as the means of achieving an economic end. He suggests that the entrepreneur has no clear boundaries nevertheless, he re-allocate and re-combines factors of production that articulate the commercial goals of the project, identifies and solicits the necessary resources, coordinate their use and assumes responsibility for the ultimate success of the project

## 2.1 Review of Related Literature

### 2.2 ICT Revolution

The term information and communication technology (ICT) springs from the convergence of competing and broadcasting through the use of digital information. It cover any product that can store, retrieve, manufacture transmit and receive information electronically in a digital form. According to Seya (2010) says that in recent years, the ICTs revelation has been sweeping across the world. There have dazzling news developments- digital cameras, email, the Internet that has improved sectors of the economy. The new knowledge networks that is in the process of being created represent a major importance of promoting female gender participation in economic activities that has become a major realization in most developing countries, resulting in a passion to promote gender quality and empowering the women.

The objective of this paper therefore is to highlight some ICT for female entrepreneur, the relevance of ICT entrepreneur skills and step by step guide for women entrepreneur ICT toolkits

### 2.3 Relevance of ICT Entrepreneurship Skills

The concept of ICT skills is especially used in the application of the entrepreneurial process as it represents the ability to use knowledge effectively in performance of action.

It is believe that in continuing turbulence of the business environment, the changing nature of work, opportunities afforded by electronic integration, and the changing competitive climate have all combined to present female entrepreneurs with compelling reasons to rethink, structure their roles and mission. The manner in which they go about their businesses, studies have highlighted the strategic disadvantages that nations and individual entrepreneurs including females would face if they do not position themselves to harness and use ICT.

Entrepreneurial Opportunities for female entrepreneurs according to Adomi (2009) are endless. Nearly every human endeavour uses information. Entrepreneurial opportunity exists where there is a need, want, problem or challenge that can be addressed, solved and/or satisfied in an innovative way which is about recognition or discovery of new ways of provision.

Thus in this era of explosions of intellectual outputs, coupled with fast and emerging information literacy competencies, especially female entrepreneurs should be in possession of the following soft skills:

- Time management skills;
- Digital literacy skills;
- Knowledge of business information sources;
- Knowledge of financial literacy;
- Knowledge of characteristics of successful business practitioners;
- Knowledge of strategies for starting successful profitable business;
- Ability to identify and or create viable business opportunities in an environment;
- Knowledge of avenues for raising capital financial business;
- Knowledge of legal issues associated with business and
- Knowledge of skills for managing business establishments and the possible challenges invested in business operation.

## 2.4 ICT for Female Entrepreneurs

According to Choudhey (2014) opined that 21st century began with a boom in all the fields whether it is technology or academia. Technology remains flourishing till now and new researches keep on inventing every single day in our information and communications technologies driven world, the e-generation entrepreneur encourages female entrepreneur to invest in the following new industries such as:

- ❖ Personal computers,
- ❖ PC software,
- ❖ Wireless communications/hand held devices.
- ❖ Healthy living products
- ❖ Cell phone services
- ❖ CD-Rom
- ❖ Internet shopping and
- ❖ Virtual imaging

Information technology for female entrepreneur enable women to live a meaningful and fulfilled life and also allows them contribute to national development. ICT for female entrepreneur has to do with a universal current trends in entrepreneurship which includes some available self-employ business; soft skills needed to create wealth/employment or small business opportunities for female entrepreneur in Nigeria

ICT for female entrepreneur is useful for national development by creating opportunities as identified by Okekeani (2008).

- Agriculture crop production
- Animal husbandry
- Beauty care
- Coal production and sales
- Cloths dyeing and tie
- Money collection (Daily/Monthly)
- Poultry
- Soap and detergent production

Petty trading

Information management technology

In addition to the entrepreneurial opportunities identified by the foregoing, female entrepreneurs can engage in work as:

Day care centres

Establishing of nursery schools for children

Operating stores and supermarkets or fast food joint

Indoor and outdoor catering services

Cake banking

Wedding designer

Water factories for packing and repackaging (Commonly called pure-water)

## 3.1 Step-By-Step Guide for Women Entrepreneurs

ICT Toolkit (2017) outlined five steps which is strongly recommend to governments or NGOs who are interested in making ICTs work for women entrepreneurs especially in a deliberate bid to a millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as it relates to the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger; and the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women.

**Stage 1: A Depository of Information:** the first stage involves building a depository, information on differences in the ways men and women would run their enterprises. Considerations in this stage include:

- (a) Gathering information on the role of women in financial management and local business practice and their role in decision-making and relation to their economic earnings, responsibilities, and ambitions;
- (b) Determining the existing system of financial and business management that women already access, the kinds of business associations and service centers that women already tap, and their needs that are not currently being met.

(c) Involving business women and their representative organizations in discussing the role that ICTs can play and learn more about their needs and objectives.

**Stage II: Setting Objectives:** This stage involves processing the information gathered and setting objective based on the outlined goals. When setting objectives the following need to be considered:

Identify those women-run enterprises that are viable businesses and not just income-for-survival initiatives; design and conduct training “outreach” workshops that provide an “applied tanning” environment to enable business women to understand the ICTs needs in business; Work with regulatory bodies to determine what policies need to be implemented to ensure that women and men have equal access of ICTs.

Identify the range of support services that would prove helpful to women to ensure that they participate in literacy, skill training, and decision-making, determine the feasibility to the World Bank or the other organizations supporting some of these client-specific service; and

Determine strategies to ensure that women's perspectives and input are incorporated into the decision making processes in initiatives taken by the World Bank and other organizations.

**Stage III: Implementation:** the implementation state brings together the predetermined lives and strategy. Outreach and access are two important features. There is need to ensure business women are encourage to become not only end-users of ICTs but also designers of applications. A community based approach to reach out to business and their network provide the best means for including women from the start. Tele-centers are a good example. Tele-centers may operate many names: community technology centers “women empowerment

centers” etc. A tele-center may serve a specific community. In rural areas, the target community may be a set of village. In large cities, the tele-center may serve particular neighborhood within the city, such as low income areas. In developed countries, there are a number of tele center initiatives that ensure that their outreaches include women or are exclusively geared toward women. Ours can build on these models to allocate time and space exclusively for e-market place activities that target business women by:

(a) Conducting outreaches, advertising, and sponsoring training events (this is to ensure that initial training and sensitization for business women is nominal in cost, therefore, reaching out to the small business owner in low-income urban and rural communities.

(b) Ensuring physical accessibility: This includes not only reasonable and safe distances for women, but also extending opening hours to reach women whose preferred times may be early morning or late evening. Some tele-centers may also consider offering other services such as childcare facilities.

(c) Ensuring relevance of services to businesswomen who must make choices among competing demand for their time. If women are to use tele-centers, they must clearly perceive the ways in which it can serve their needs. Tele-centers can ensure relevance by providing training and services directly linked to women's needs, particularly those driven by economic pressures and family responsibilities.

(d) Counting participation strategies: Tele-centers can only serve women needs if they understand the particular barriers women faces, and such a true understanding will emerge only with the direct involvement of women in decisions about operations and management involving them. Women clients may identify needs and obstacles that are invisible to tele-center staff. They may also be



able to help develop effective, efficient ways to meet those needs. This can be done by developing alliance with women business education institution, chamber commerce and other intermediary business associations that already have a strong business membership base.

**Stage IV: Evaluation:** The following key data should be collected and considered in this phase:

- (a) On a monthly basis how many women participants came to training events, how many drop out and why, and how many returns to future training events,
- (b) What are the main market research sites that women entrepreneurs frequent, what software/software training, and support service do they prefer?
- (c) Which groups of women have or have not been reached with the services?

**Stage V: Maintaining Fluidity and Flexibility in Program Design:** The final stage is a feedback mechanism that translate the lessons learned from the previous stage into management decisions. Staff and clients should collaborate to determine if and how the program design should be changed to improve results.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

In Nigeria and the whole world at large entrepreneurship is being seen as a key to economic and developmental process. When people especially women are exposed to entrepreneurship, it is evident that they would be opened to opportunities that will enable them to become creative and productive. This will enhance job creation and improve the standard of living of women in the society. This paper discussed issues related to information communication technology for female entrepreneur. Without doubt it must be realized that the potential contribution of women entrepreneur in the informal and small

scale industrial section to the developing countries have to be fully harnessed.

Also we should realize that the entire world is going on-line, thus making it a small global village with heavy emphasis on the development of ICT. Since technology is the major driver of development, the centre of preparedness for ensuring that the potent contribution of women entrepreneurs are fully explored, must be a focus on making ICT work for them through a deliberate and well thought out scheme propelled by both government and the private sector. It is recommended that librarians and information scientists should be well equipped in order to play their expected roles in entrepreneurial women's digital and economic empowerment for development.

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