

Entrepreneurship and Female Fashion Designers in Nigeria: Thematic Study

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.62154/40h5zs89>

Abstract

This study delves into the entrepreneurial journey of female fashion designers in Nigeria, exploring the unique challenges and opportunities they encounter within the context of a dynamic and evolving fashion industry. It examines the impact of business orientation and skills on fashion designers in Nigeria. This study adopts qualitative research methods, including in-depth interviews and thematic analysis, identifying key themes that encapsulate the experiences of these women as they navigate the intricacies of entrepreneurship in the fashion sector. The discussion highlights the critical role of creativity, skills, and business factors in shaping their entrepreneurial endeavors. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of female entrepreneurship in the Nigerian fashion industry, offering insights for policymakers, stakeholders, and aspiring entrepreneurs. This study not only amplifies the voices of female fashion designers in Nigeria but also sheds light on the broader implications for female entrepreneurs, gender equality, and economic empowerment in the African context. The study recommends that women fashion designers need to have a formal business plan on how to make profit. The women entrepreneurs need to expand their business for continuity of its activities.

Keywords: Business Expansion, Business Orientation, Business Profitability, Business Skills, Entrepreneurship, Female Fashion Designers.

Introduction

Many women ply their trade in bakeries, poultry farming and restaurants business, simple textile, and jewelry ventures. Women have limited access to possessions such as property, recognition, instruction, knowledge, systems, material, and marketplaces (Quiñones, 2016). Daily, women entrepreneurs in the North are underrated since their inability to exploit professional prospect acknowledgement to defend their scheme in any generous of operative technique since others. It is possible that this is because of their inability to own a property because majority of them are maintained by their husband and relatives. The main purpose of business opportunities of economic development is very crucial for the decision makers of entrepreneurship, as the general awareness of women entrepreneurs in

less developing economy which has expanded significantly in recent years (Rani, & Rao, 2017).

Women entrepreneurs contribute to economic development through professional positioning, who take the steps in investing on opportunities in an exceptional platform of business alignment recognized instantaneous setting by creation of value. In the United States, women capability in attaining business expansion and attracting business investment has now developed so vital, it is an area for organized study. Women entrepreneurs have consequential bases for progress that can improve the economy, however, they are faced with great encounters (Iliya, Abdullahi, Adama, & Audu, 2017).

Women entrepreneurs are introduced to informal sector as unqualified since they have less access to formal educational training; and the hinderances to access contributions with regards to credit, materials, novel expertise and are separated from a structured marketplace, in mixture with a low community place, all central to vital adverse possessions on the prospect of the stable to endure. Majority of the women entrepreneurs are confronted with different business challenges; however, they can overcome and be an employer of labour. through extensive strong progress. This is the scenario that women entrepreneurship is facing in Nigeria and some of the African nations. A recent report by PWC Nigeria shows that women account for 41% ownership of micro-businesses in Nigeria, with 23 million female entrepreneurs operating within this segment (Brownson, 2021).

Statement of the Problem

Women entrepreneurs in Nigeria frequently find it difficult to operate profitable firms due to their weak business orientation and little platforms for formal training and skill. The main purpose of business orientation of economic development is very crucial for the decision makers of entrepreneurship, as the general awareness of women entrepreneurs less developing economy which have expanded significantly in recent years (Rani, & Rao, 2017). This restricts their access to the many support services. Women have not been able to fully establish their own businesses despite several obstacles and limitations, especially in nations where the male head of the household would typically make economic decisions. Women are given the bulk of the household maintenance duties since they are seen as being inseparable from the family.

Women-owned businesses are among the entrepreneurial demographics that are expanding quickly worldwide. However, they haven't been able to significantly improve innovation, employment, and wealth creation across all economies in Nigeria. Women entrepreneurs in Nigeria encounter difficulties such as time management, a lack of marketing expertise, problems with their families, a lack of financial flow, or a lack of working capital. Women's expressions are now being heard pleading for acknowledgement of their enormous contributions to national progress and an improvement in their socioeconomic condition (Amah, 2015)

It is impossible to overstate how significantly women have contributed to economic progress and development on a global and national level. As a result, women's

empowerment and development have attracted a lot of attention from individuals, governments, and business entities all over the world. Because business innovation is now regarded as a barometer of success for any nation, social scientists, economists, policymakers, reformers, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) attach great emphasis to the business sustainability of women. Given the foregoing, the current study is necessary to determine how much women's entrepreneurship contributes to socioeconomic growth in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

- i. To explore the impact of business orientation on business profitability of fashion design business in North-East Nigeria.
- ii. To evaluate the effect of business skills on business expansion of fashion design business in North-East Nigeria.

Significance of the Study

It is impossible to overstate how significantly women have contributed to economic progress and development on a global and national level. As a result, women's empowerment and development have attracted a lot of attention from individuals, governments, and business entities all over the world. Because business innovation is now regarded as a barometer of success for any nation, social scientists, economists, policymakers, reformers, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) attach great emphasis to the business sustainability of women. Given the foregoing, the current study is necessary to determine how much women's entrepreneurship contributes to socioeconomic growth in Nigeria.

Study's Limitation

The scope of the study includes female fashion entrepreneurs in the selected North-Eastern States which is delimited to Yobe, Bauchi, Gombe and Borno State, because these states have the highest number of fashion female entrepreneurs. But the study covered only registered female entrepreneurs in selected states, the time frame was from 2019 to 2023, this period has a tremendous growth in the fashion industry.

Literature Review

Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurs are opportunists who must constantly be aware of their surroundings and their environment's constant change. Entrepreneurship is widely acknowledged to be a key driver of productivity, innovation, economic growth, and employment (Roy, Tripathy, & Tripathy, 2017). It is also seen as a key component of economic vitality. Entrepreneurship development is necessary due to the role it plays in economic growth and development and the fact that it offers a long-term solution to the terrible hunger and poverty that unemployment causes. According to Aladejebi (2020), entrepreneurship is a topic that has

drawn the attention of many academics, researchers, government officials, and private citizens. The quality, quantity, and variety of employment possibilities for the poor must be improved, and entrepreneurship has been a key driver of economic growth and wealth creation. Entrepreneurs encourage creativity and innovation, raise exports, decrease imports, start new enterprises, and build the economy every day (Shmailan, 2016). According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), over 187 million women participate in activities that are categorized as entrepreneurship globally (Tuyishime, Shukla, & Bajpai, 2015).

Business Orientation

Understanding the dynamism business orientation on women entrepreneurial development is particularly important for policy making. In technical management review, the procedure of technical know-how to novel enterprises is seen as business orientation (Mthanti & Ojah, 2017). Business orientation has been recognized as most potentially beneficial, i.e., it is acknowledged as having the highest potential benefits; it entails a propensity to start small businesses. Business orientation is the skill of accumulating information via the exploration of profitable ideas. More specifically, because many women entrepreneurs are risk-averse and have little financial resources, their integration into everyday business operations is severely hampered by the excessive cost of ICTs, lack of business orientation, and lack of technical skills.

Business Skills

The development of business skills has significantly increased the economic influence of women. In both situations, women frequently lack the business knowledge and expertise necessary to recognize chances for entrepreneurship with a high chance of success. Business skills are about spotting opportunities and using entrepreneurship to take advantage of them (Langowitz & Minniti, 2017). People will only start their own businesses if they think they have the business acumen to take advantage of the chance. Across the world, there are more companies that are held by women. The globe has paid considerable attention to women entrepreneurs and a sizable body of literature has emerged (Martinez & Marlow, 2017). However, small businesses in poor nations suffer because of inadequate ICT infrastructure, as well as the knowledge and abilities required to effectively use ICT tools into regular business activities.

Expectation of Fashion Designers

Business Profitability

An entrepreneur is viewed as someone who is brave, independent, willing to take risks, and capable of pooling resources to start a successful business. Women-owned/run businesses fall under the umbrella phrase "women entrepreneurs. Business profit increases performance which improves economic growth for the benefit of the society, business is beyond making money. They also empower and serve as role models by using their

potential to create a better world (Steege & Stanum, 2014). These insights that can be used to make money stem from this information that was gained via personal experience. Everyone in society will gain if entrepreneurship is valued and there are plenty of chances. As a result, there are more entrepreneurs overall (the relative share increases). Entrepreneurship between men and women may, from a short-term viewpoint, not change. To support women's entrepreneurship, the profitability index of business is essential.

Business Expansion

Incomes from survivalist businesses have been shown to be below minimum wage levels, and financial limitations limit chances for potential business expansion. According to Cesaroni and Paoloni (2016), women entrepreneurs have a significant role in the development of small firms, which are vital contributors to economic growth. Access to microcredit did not result in the establishment of new firms, but rather an increase in the size of already existing ones. A significant issue that has put the growth and location of women entrepreneurs at peril. The business location might also be in a rural area, which could limit chances for women entrepreneurs, impede business growth, and undermine the enterprise's credibility in the eyes of creditors and customers. It could also restrict access to external resources.

Fashion Designers

Fashion designers' initiatives new business orientation to break new grounds and make business profitability. Therefore, having business orientation always enable one to make a genuine business prospect. Improving the efficiency of business processes and is the key to reducing business uncertainty and reducing business challenges, (Popoola & Ajayi 2016). Marketing orientation and customer needs are important variables for fashion design business profitability.

Female Entrepreneurs in Nigeria

Women are free to focus on businesses that are acceptable to their communities, such as food and confectioneries, weaving and embroidery, pottery, fashion design, and beauty and health spars, cultural constraints that are common in some/most communities and a powerful force in "destroying the entrepreneurial spirit" can be the "initiator" of entrepreneurship (Motilewa, Onakoya & Oke, 2015). Many women are increasingly functioning as de facto heads of households in many situations, and many of these women are engaged in entrepreneurship and company management to support their families and maintain their homes. In comparison to their male colleagues, women are starting businesses at a quicker pace globally (Pofeldt quoted the Global Entrepreneurship Women's Report 2014 in Forbes, 2015).

Female Entrepreneurs establish new firms, new commercial activity, and economic sectors. They generate jobs for others; they produce commodities and services for society; they introduce modern technology and reduced cost outputs; and they gain foreign exchange

through export expansion or the substitution of imports. In developing countries, governments, scholars, and other stakeholders are starting to take greater interest in issues relating to women entrepreneurs (Etim & Iwu, 2018), ostensibly due to the recognition that a thriving economy requires contributions from all facets of society. Many Nigerians have relied heavily on their entrepreneurial talents to help them gain semi-skilled and skilled employment experience. It serves as a foundation for the creation of appropriate technologies and offers skilled, unskilled, and semi-skilled workers a true working environment (Ikeije & Onuba, 2015).

Empirical Review

Adesua-Lincoln (2011) conducted a study on Nigerian female entrepreneurs based on a survey of 132 female-owned businesses and examined the availability of financing when starting or expanding a business venture. The study was titled *Assessing Nigerian Female Entrepreneur's Access to Finance for Business Start-Up and Growth*. The results demonstrated that the weak financial foundation and lack of collateral are particularly limiting factors for female entrepreneurs in Nigeria.

In a study by Bimha, Dlanuni, Ndwandwe, Sridhar, Mhlanga, Nkambule, and Sbisi (2018) titled "Challenges Faced by Women Entrepreneurs in Small and Medium Enterprises in Swaziland," it was found that women face significant challenges in business, including cultural issues, funding issues, and a lack of information. The study also revealed that there is insufficient government support. It then ranks the factors affecting the Swaziland entrepreneurial success using an analytical hierarchical process of sustaining development of Wes's persuasive tactics. The development of Swaziland is substantially impacted by entrepreneurship concepts that promote gender-oriented methods of thinking.

Gap in Literature

In line with the challenges and gaps of other literatures (Adesua-Lincoln (2011, Bimha, Dlanuni, Ndwandwe, Sridhar, Mhlanga, Nkambule, and Sbisi (2018))) on women entrepreneur it was also noted that woman in entrepreneurship is crucial but whether they are maintained to finish their professional development and economically is questionable. There is need to make investigations of women entrepreneur to see the level of the performance of their small-scale enterprises. Many reviewed literatures have focused on managing their families alongside their businesses also to have an overview of people orientation of them been an entrepreneur. This paucity of research into establishing small-scale businesses run by women entrepreneurs is a serious oversight from the understanding of women entrepreneurship. Therefore, there is a need for a study that can explore issues related to fashion designers from the North-Eastern Nigeria to get a clearer picture of women entrepreneurship. This study was designed to 'closing the gap' in relationships of our thoughtful of the impact of entrepreneurship and Female Fashion Designers in Nigeria.

Methodology

Thematic study was adopted for the qualitative data through NVivo as the research Design. An in-depth face to face interview was conducted for 10 candidates from the various respondents. An in-depth interview was conducted using proportional random sampling selecting candidates of the women entrepreneurs who are fashion designers. Respondents are proportionally selected from Yobe - 2, Adamawa - 2, Borno – 2, Bauchi 2 and Gombe State - 2 making 10 candidates, according to their population. The final transcript became raw data input in NVivo software to cypher and focus descriptions that would support the understanding (Zamawe, 2015). The unbiased of data analysis in qualitative research is to support the understanding of the subject matter under study. According to Bayo and Kayii (2020), to increase the value of key informant responses and reduce common process modification, the academic should assurance respondents' anonymity and confidentiality in the study and reporting of outcomes are vital to eliminate bias.

Thematic Analysis

Study Question One

The first study question looked at what extent does business orientation affect the business profitability of female fashion designers in North-Eastern Nigeria? The motivating factors for women entrepreneurs include, customer's needs, willingness to be innovative and creative, opportunity to create marketable services. This is apparent from the responses coded as Respondent 1 and Respondent 2.

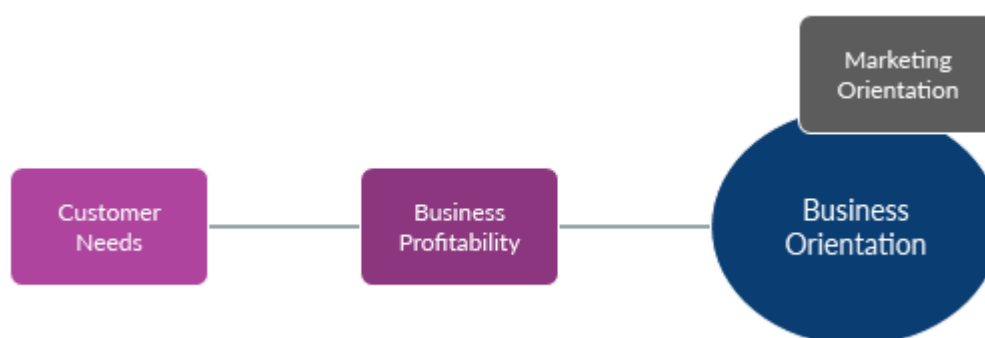


Figure 1: Sub-Theme on Business Orientation on Performance of Fashion Design Businesses

Source: NVivo Output (2023)

From the responses of Respondent 1, he reveals that;

The business orientation of fashion designing has to do with customer needs of clients. This will enable us to generate business profits and create a lasting relationship with customers. Majority of our clients prefers to have a taste of the cloths before paying for the services.

From the responses of Respondent 2, he discloses that;

Our business profitability lies with identifying the target market, which helped us in identifying opportunities through constant environmental scanning. We always try as much as possible to meet the customer request to make profits.

Study Question Two

The second research question states that; to what extent does business skills influence the business expansion of female fashion designers in North- Eastern Nigeria?

With adequate business skills fashion designers in North-Eastern Nigeria may set up their own fashion business (i.e., small-scale enterprises) and be self-employed and self-reliant as well as expanding their business. Therefore, contributing to the development of the fashion industry in Nigeria. The entrepreneurial business skills are a multifaceted network working together to achieve firm business objectives, (Ardito & Dangelico, 2018). These objectives typically are operational and strategic, and business skills adopt it based on their role in the competitive environment in the fashion design market. Accordingly, these links and connections are crucial to create knowledge and exchange information to identify potential opportunities and threats and serve benefits (Sawang, Parker & Hine, 2016). This is in line with the reports of Respondents 3, Respondents 4, and Respondents 5.

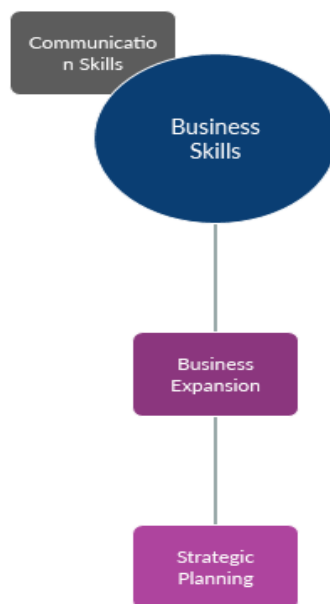


Figure 2: Sub-Theme on Business Skills on Performance of Fashion Design Businesses

Source: NVivo Output (2023)

From the responses of Respondent 3, he discloses that;

Though the economic instability has not given us many opportunities to meet up with the fashion business skills but with our determination we were able to train ourselves with business

professionals who assisted us. With business training, and the desire for collective support, I have experienced steady business expansion.

From the responses of Respondent 4, he reveals that;
Business skills strategy should be a significant aspect of the fashion design business. But there are not enough business skills support to women entrepreneurs. Business skills can be achieved through business strategic planning.

From the responses of Respondent 5, he reported that;
The fashion industry in the North involves self-determination with the support of the established fashion entrepreneurs, this will enhance our desire to expand the business. However, much emphasis needs to be placed on business skills through entrepreneurial policies.

Discussion of Findings

From question one, to which extent does business orientation affect business profitability of fashion businesses. The impact of formal business coordination, risk involved, meeting demands, and learning from others influences business profitability of fashion designers. This is in line with the study of Ingalagi, Nishad, Habeeb, Hariharasudan, and Vanishree (2021), the net working capital position of a firm is crucial in valuing a business as it indicates the efficiency of business processes, aids in assessing profitability, and the ability to meet financial obligations as they arise. However, the stakeholders will need to create an environment where women entrepreneurs can be business oriented.

Results from the second study question disclosed that there is a significant impact of business skills on business expansion of small-scale businesses of fashion designers. This implies that initiating new ideas, marketing techniques, increasing the number of customers have positive effects on business expansion. This is in line with the findings of Oluseyi, Caleb and Ilesanmi, (2019), An entrepreneurial business network is the socioeconomic business activity and a platform by which business executives and entrepreneurs meet with each other to discuss available business network opportunities. This is also in line with Salau, Issa and Mustapha, (2020) findings which states that the adoption of the conceptualization of youth entrepreneurship within this evolving policy network shapes culturally specific understandings of young entrepreneurs (universal concept) in policy terms. However, there should be more of seminars/workshop for business skills of women entrepreneurs. They also need to be enlightenment programme to encourage them to work from home to save cost and experience business expansion.

Conclusion

Entrepreneurial initiatives must prepare fashion designers for new venture opportunities by transferring knowledge and developing relevant skills. Women entrepreneurs need a creative business orientation, where they can initiate new ideas/styles to make profits. They

have a formal business plan on how to make profit this year and their monthly expenses are always more than your monthly income.

The fashion design business has been able to equip few of them with skill to be an employer of labour. Their business skills should have the capacity to employ more staff because of their acquired business knowledge. The women entrepreneurs are having difficulty in entering another segment of fashion business in future because of in availability of resources.

Recommendations

- Women entrepreneurs needs a formal business formation. The entrepreneurs also need to allow customers to share their opinions on a particular business discussion. Women fashion designers need to have a formal business plan on how to make profit. They need to reduce their monthly expenses for it to be more than the monthly income. The entrepreneurs need to have business that have a sustainable financial resource for continuity of its activities.
- They need to have a database of customers to reach out to them through social media. The fashion design business should be able to equip their skill to be an employer of labour. To compete successfully with other fashion industry, they need to be the first to initiate a new idea/style in the market. The fashion stakeholders in Nigeria need to organize more of the seminars/workshop for improving business skills organized by leaders in the fashion industry. The fashion designers need to have a lot of business marketing techniques. Because of conveniency and workload the entrepreneurs need to start working from their house or having more than one tailoring shop to experience business expansion. The fashion designers need to have plans to go into another segment of fashion business in future.

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