

NEW MEDIA PLATFORMS, WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES FOR SUSTAINABILITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract: *The study examined how New Media platforms with its full emergence in the 21st century have been able to promote and facilitate women's active participation in socio-economic development processes in Nigeria. In addition, the study aims at providing base for the low level of participation of women in socio-economic development and empowerment programmes; examined efforts been made in the past or present to solve women empowerment challenges through new media, as well as to describe the nature, workings and operation of new media as a relevant platform for women's participation in socio-economic programmes for economic sustainability. Furthermore, the study also aims at establishing a connection between active usage of New Media platforms and women's participation towards economic sustainability. The data for this study were collected through primary and secondary sources. The primary data were collected through the: Interview with Key Informants (KIIs), Focused Group Discussion (FGD), participant observation, women presenters, digital journalists, new media journalists, general managers of media industries, female programmes anchor on social media platforms among others were interviewed. The secondary sources include archives, books, media journal articles, magazines, and other publications relevant to the study. The data were analyzed using qualitative approach. Study adopts Media Development theory. Study concludes that there is a solid linkage between the women's usage of new media and the level of their participation in development programmes and economic sustainability. The new media should be effectively use to enlighten and create awareness of the women in new developmental policies made or in the process of making, the focus of the awareness should centre on opening the eyes of women's on the content of these developmental policies. It is imperative to notes that for women to accomplish their economic and political awareness and interest, they need to develop a new media platform that will serve as a strong interest group.*

Keywords: New Media, Women, Empowerment, Economy, Sustainable, Development

INTRODUCTION

The new invention and internet technological devices changed the information world with consideration to sharing, high speed, storage and retrieval of data and information in whatever form, irrespective of the person's environment and location.

Through the use of internet, numerous new network technologies emerged while recent technology that is making waves with regard to information sharing and communication are encapsulate the new media platforms and sites. The new media has become one of the most vital communication means across the world.

New media networking exist as a result of new trends of providing information and communication among individuals regardless of the location, environment and distance, making it open to individuals easily share information, files, send messages and pictures and videos, create blogs, and conduct real-time conversations.

More fascinatingly, the development of new media platforms and sites appears to have cut across all facets of life and society accompanied by positive and negative implications. The New media transformed and impacted on communication, learning, research and socioeconomic development in of the people across the world. In this regard, Aghazamani (2010) a variety of online tools are available for communicative purposes including SNS. In

addition, the SNS has evolved in to modern and attractive tools for; connecting people throughout the world.

The increase proliferation of new media platforms in recent times has significantly changed to some extent the way information is created, processed, disseminated and distributed. In an age when information connects to power, a diversity of opinion can actually lead to more resourceful and innovative problem solving and more equitable outcomes in a society. According to Boy and Hillison (2015), New Media networking sites are web-based services that allow people to read: a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. These sites are used to connect and interact with people, friends, peers and others. The distribution of information ranges from news, documentations, debates, gossips, feelings or statement of mind, opinions, research, etc.

Accordingly, Davis (2012) refers to New Media Tools (NMT) as web-based and mobile applications that allow peoples and group of individuals to generate, produce, engage, and share new user-generated or existing content, in digital environments through multi-way communication. Through the new media platform, individuals, group of peoples, and institutions create profiles, share and swap information on various activities, programmes and interests. An interesting aspect of new media platforms includes but is not limited to tablets, desktop or laptop computers but could be accessed through mobile applications and smart phones making it very accessible and easy to use. Examples of these new media platforms include but are not limited to the internet, computer and mobile application, Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter, YouTube, wechat, palm chat, Instagram, blogs, Google chat, and so on.

In advancing socio-economic engagement in modern society, New Media offers exceptional and ample opportunities to the citizens through the use of text, graphics, multicolor images, motion, and audio for the development of their creative talents in economic, social, political development and engagement.

New and Digital media contains a lot of wherewithal that citizens (women's) can access and use to advance their socio-economic

participation and involvement in the developing world. These range from sites specifically designed for citizens to sites from national and international newspapers, museums, galleries and so on. New Media platforms bring the 'real world' together into one village and gives the citizens an opportunity to explore the world and development programmes in a different way.

A number of studies have been conducted to find out the impact of social and digital media on different development issues and segment of the society. Ito (2012) opine that the use of these technologies for a numbers of positive activities include exploring deeper into interest-driven communities and participating in various activities. Ahn (2011) averred that New Network Sites (NNS) provide a platform for the people to participate in communities that help them lo learn, and practice skills within a particular knowledge area. Similarly, a study by Fishman (2015) also indicate that students produce tremendous volume of writing through various social media tools such as blogs, emails and other social media environments.

New Media Networking Sites (NMNS) are accepted and prominent among the young generation across the world. New media networking platforms are an online platform where individuals can create their own profile and interact with the people globally. According to Alassiri (2014), a new media networking site provides interactive platforms that enables users communicate with other members to enhance the communicative and socio-linguistic acumens of individuals in real life situations. New media networking sites offer a constructive and positive platform for individuals to express themselves, establish new relationships, and maintain old relationships” (Gremu&Halse, 2012).

People can now access vital information and In line with the views of Faloye, Adeoluwa and Adeosun, (2021), digital tools encapsulated trendy online practices geared towards learning about discreet things. These discreet things involve new values and symbols (Quader, 2014). The trendy online customs, to learn about things that were un-known to them before, as well as new values and symbols for communication developed for learning in an online environment that gives rise to new cultural cues (Quader, 2014). According to Asad (2012) refers people can share their thoughts, knowledge with each other that also

help them to increase their knowledge about the world and life. Asad (2012) further say new media networking platforms have become gradually more integrated into the way many people act, think, and relate to each other all over the world.

In today's settings, networking system has influenced people all over the world to cooperate with each other on the tasks of knowledge. People are constantly experimenting with new media technologies hoping to encourage critical thinking skills, collaboration, and knowledge construction (James, 2015). Nevertheless, the fact that these media are generally open to the world implies a need to carefully consider its' merits, impacts, benefits and risks of openness as well as impact on women's socio-economic participation and involvement in Nigeria.

Women Empowerment are the numerous ways in which women's viewpoints is accepted or making an attempt to seek them, raising and boosting the status of women through literacy, orientation, education, training and awareness creation (Lopez, 2013). In the same vein, women empowerment equips and allows women to make life-determining decisions through the different problems in the world. Moreover, women's empowerment is the ability to make women's to make strategic life choices which had been previously denied them (Innovation for Women's empowerment and Gender Equality, 2021).

Women empowerment facilitates the redistribution of social and economic powers and control of resources in favor of women. Women empowerment can be in form of participation in community development programmes, political awareness, social engagement, educational activities, economic involvement and strengthen, intellectual development, and psychological enhancement.

Increasing the empowerment of women is a major development goal, but progress in women's empowerment is lacking behind in particularly in sub-saharan Africa and most especially in Nigeria (United Nations, 2015). Meaningful indicators are necessary to identify and understand patterns and trends in women's empowerment to guide and evaluate policy and other intervention efforts. Unfortunately, detailed spatial and temporal data on indicators of women empowerment are generally lacking in Nigeria, Africa and at global level (UN Women 2016).

The process of attaining a remarkable level of development in the third world states had faced and to some extent still facing some major challenges which in turn render socio-economic development and its sustainability unproductive. One of the many challenges is the lopsided gender participation in the development process as it has been noted that the female population are not as participative in the process of development as their male counterpart.

Therefore, the study aims at examined how New Media platforms especially with its full emergence in the 21st century have been able to promote and facilitate women's active participation in socio-economic development processes in Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Clarification

Media

Media are the communication channels or instruments used to store and deliver information or data. The terms refers to apparatus of the mass media communications industry, such as digital media, print media, electronic media, social media, publishing the news media, photography, cinema, broadcasting (television and radio) and advertising (Dunston, 2002).

Media (devices and products) can be typified as patterns, which are readable as signs. These patterns are able to avail cognitive systems the opportunities for creating meaning and producing information and awareness. Media are inscribed in technology or materiality; on the other hand, media can be presented, saved, broadcasted or manipulated with technological support (Herzig, 2012)

Media are integrated in everyday life of the people. Individuals are growing up in different environments, which offer different learning opportunities. Media play a special role in the formal and informal educational contexts of people because media are an essential part of their culture (Livingstone & Bovill, 2001).

New Media

New Media is digital and multimedia forms of communication occurring via desktop and laptop computers, as well as phones, tablets and other devices. It highlights various forms of media

comprising computational derivative. This assertion, perhaps, indicates that through digital and analogue mediums of communication such as newspapers articles and blogs to music and podcasts. From a website or email to mobile phones and streaming apps, any internet-related form of communication can be considered new media. The New media configuration for used on a computer system (laptop and desktop), ipad or other similar device and technology (Jason, 2014). New media gives permission for the exchange of information in a wide range of forms. The information can be for purposes such as educating, communication, enlightenment, illustration or entertainment.

New media is the invention of social media data and information processed electronically, stored as a file, and transmitted within computer systems, gadgets and across networks. This could be done via email attachment, Bluetooth, over Wifi or using a phones cellular network and other new media platforms (Jason, 2014). Some examples of new media are computer animations, computer games, human-computer interfaces, interactive computer installations, websites and virtual worlds. New media are often contrasted to “old media”, such as television, radio, and print media, although scholars in communication and media studies have criticized inflexible distinctions based on oldness and novelty. New media does not include analog broadcast television programs, feature films, magazines, or book unless they contain technologies that enable digital generative or interactive processes. (Manovich, 2013).

The United State Agency for International Development (USAID) also offered a broad conception of the New Media as methods of communication that reach large groups of people quickly and effectively. Such methods of communication can include Social Networking (Facebook, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Google and so on), Microblogging (Twitter, Tumblr), Photo Sharing (Instagram, Snapchat, Pinterest) and Video Sharing (YouTube, Facebook Live, Periscope).

Sustainable Economy

Sustainable economy is the practice that supports long-term economic growth without negatively affecting social, cultural and environmental aspects of the society. This assertion, perhaps, indicates that economic growth is built into

sustainability and the ability for future generations to perform well economically too (Hannah, 2021). Sustainable economy is an approach to economic planning that attempts to foster economic growth while preserving the quality of the environment for future generation.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development as a concept is a victim of definitional pluralism. It is a difficult word to define. However, attempts have been made by scholars to conceptualize sustainable development. Gboyega, 2003 (cited in Familugba et al., 2020) defines sustainable development as an idea that embodies all attempts to improve the conditions of human existence in all ramifications. It implies improvement in material well-being of all citizens, not the most powerful and rich alone, in a sustainable way such that today’s consumption does not jeopardize the future. Naomi (1995) (cited in Adedayo et al., 2020) opined that sustainable development is usually taken to involve economic growth, provision of health care, education, housing and other essential services all with a view to improving the individual and collective quality of life. Chrisman (2004) views sustainable development as a process of societal advancement, where improvements in the wellbeing of people are generated through strong partnerships between all sectors, corporate bodies and other groups in the society. Sustainable development is critical and essential to the sustenance and growth of any nation. A country is classified as developed when she is able to provide qualitative life for her citizenry.

Sustainable development is that which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). Sustainable development requires an institutional framework that will be able to promote strong central guidance, intergovernmental and interagency coordination, combined with participation from the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) (Treurnicht, 1997).

Women Empowerment

Women empowerment is the process of involving, engaging and empowering women in several ways which include accepting women’s viewpoints or making an effort to seek them,

raising the status of women through awareness, training and literacy and education (Kabeer, 2005) Women's empowerment equips and allows women to make life determining decisions through the different problems in society. Women empowerment has become a significant discourse in economic development (Mosedale, 2005).

Women Empowerment is not only essential but also critical for all-round development of society and the world at large. The issue of 'women empowerment' has become a fundamental point in the programs and activities of the United Nations and other Government, Civil Society Organizations and Non-Government Organizations. Subsequently, it has also become a foremost concern of the economists, human activists, social scientists, politicians, bureaucrats and academic researchers. The term empowerment has different meanings in different socio-cultural, economic and political contexts. An examination of local terms associated with empowerment around the world always includes a wide variety of definitions. These terms include self-strength, self-control, self-power, self-reliance, personal choice, capability of fighting for one's rights, independence, own decision making power, freedom etc. These definitions are entrenched in local value systems and beliefs. (Bhadra, 2001).

Economic empowerment is the necessity in the 21st century. "Wage employment means economic power" (Elliott, 2008, p.22). Through employment women earn money and it enables women and girls to become 'bread earners', contributing members of households with a strong sense of their own economic independence. "Economic empowerment is a controlling tool against poverty" (Biswas, 2010, p.22). The Djakarta Declaration (1994, p.4) opine that, "empowerment of women is not only equal consideration; it was a necessary precondition for sustainable economic and social development and advancement."

Overview of New Media

Since 1950, connections between computing and radical art began to grow stronger, it was not until the 1980's. In the late 1980's and early 1990's, however, we seem to ingress a different kind of parallel relationship between social changes and computer design. Although causally unrelated, conceptually, the design of the web took place at exactly the same time.

Writers and philosophers such as Marshall McLuhan were instrumental in the development of media theory during this period. Accordingly, Man (1964) aver that "the medium is the message drew attention to the often ignored influence media and technology themselves, rather than their context has in human experience of the world and on society broadly.

Until the 1980,s media relied primarily upon print and analog broadcast models, such as those of television and radio, the last twenty-five years have seen the rapid transformation and evolution of media which are predicated upon the use of new and digital media technologies, such as the internet and other computer applications. The use of new and digital media has transformed the remaining "old" media, as suggested by the advent of digital television, and online publications (Bergstrom, 2018). Even traditional media such as the printing press have been transformed through the application of technologies such as images manipulation software like Adobe photoshop and desktop publishing tools.

Accordingly, Andrew L. Shapiro (2009) argues that the "emergency of new digital technologies signals a potentially radical shift of who is in control of information, experience and resources". Nweman (2010) suggest that whilst the "new media" have technical capabilities to pull in one direction". That the world is ingress the evolution of s universal connected network of audio, videos and electronic text communications that will blur the distinction between interpersonal and mass communication and between public and private communication.

Consequently, it has been the contextual premise of scholars such as Douglas Kellner and James Bolman that new media provide the potential for a democratic post-modern public sphere. In which citizens can participate in well informed, non-hierarchical debate pertaining to their social structures. Contradictory these positive appraisals of the potential and impact of new media are scholars such as Edward. S Herman who have suggested that the transition to new media has seen a handful of power transnational telecommunication corporations who a level of global influence which was hitherto unimaginable.

Hister et al (2013) have highlighted both the positive and negative potential and actual

implications of new media technologies, suggesting that some of the early work into new media studies was greatly of technological determinism- whereby the effect of media were determined by the technology themselves rather than through tracing the complex social networks which greened the development, finding, implementation and future development of any technology. Therefore the introduction of new media reduces the amount of time individuals would spend on existing “old” media, which could ultimately led to the end of traditional media.

Women and Economic Empowerment

There are accord opinion that Nigerian women constitute about half of the population of the country and therefore should play a vital role in socio-economic development of their various community (Innovation for Women’s empowerment and Gender Equality, 2021). Agbalajobi (2010) postulated that women’s political and socio-economic participation in Nigeria, found out that despite the major roles of women and their population, the society has not given recognition to these and to the fact that they are discriminated against. This is due to some cultural stereotype, abuse of religion, lack of technological know-how and advancement, lack of information through use of new, social and digital media, traditional practices and patriarchal societal structures. He further explained that Nigerian women have therefore over the years become target of marginalization and deprivation of diverse forms based on their positions in promoting transformative economy.

Women’s attitude towards their socio-economic empowerment and participation debunked the argument that women do not like to be empowered or that only the educated supports women empowerment. Many women desire economic empowerment and sustainability but not appreciate the labour that attends such empowerment; enduring the tortuous path to empowerment is a daunting challenge for them.

Accordingly, Agbalajobi (2010) contended that women’s aspiration to participate in socio-economic activities is premised on the following ground; first, that women in Nigeria represent half of the population and hence should be allowed a fair share in decision-making and economic activities of the country. Secondly, based on natural justice and the fact that all human beings

are equal and women possess the same rights as men to participate in economic activities and public life is an entitlement conferred upon all citizens by law. The right to economic activities seems to have brought to the fore many other areas of concern, especially in the 21st century that witnessed the emergence of the issue of gender mainstreaming. Presently, the challenges of the new millennium coupled with new innovation in communication technology through use of new, social and digital media compel everyone to be concerned about the many women who have been deprived, marginalized and discriminated against over the years, and as a result of which many have not been able to participate actively and effectively in the socio-economic activities terrain, which in effect leads to social injustice (Akande 2016).

Arguably, the present empowerment agenda seems incapable of addressing the ever increasing challenges confronting women folk. It is important to note that the provision of conducive environment capable of reawakening women’s consciousness to contribute meaningfully to the social, political and economic development may not be realized through empowerment alone (Nwanegbo & Odigbo, 2012).

Subsequently, Luka (2011) elucidated that the under-participation and underrepresentation of women on the socioeconomic activities and development and scene can be reversed by empowering them economically, indeed; increasing the economic involvement of women gives them self-confidence. The link between economic empowerment and quality of lives of women come to the fore as women tend to become more vocal when empowered in making decision on the number of kids they want to have, quality of education for their children, matters of hygiene and the environment to mention a few. Women are also better stewards of economic capital as research has show that they are more likely than men to plough profit of economic activities into human capital development of children and they are more likely to educate daughters. The implication of this is that more educated women are better suited to participate in decision making process in the society. Women who are empowered economically have less difficulty in playing active roles in social, economic, and political development as they can assert themselves.

Nature, Workings and Operation of New Media

It's important to know that the new media are networked, digital, interactive, virtual, hypertextual and sometimes based on simulation. With the growth of digital technology in the 1990s, the vast majority of information is now converted, stored and transmitted as binary code. Qualitative information has become digitalized in recent times. New media is much more of a two way affairs and it allows peoples and users to get more involved. It is much more of a two way form of communication than old media (Karl Thompson, 2018). New media seem to have fostered a more participatory culture, with more people involved and the roles between consumer

and producer of media content becoming ever more blurred.

New media has also facilitated cultural globalization via virtual networks of people rather than locally. These networks allow for collective intelligence to increase. It allows people to pool our resources much more easily and to draw on a wider range of talents and sources of information than ever before. (Karl, 2018). New media present to people a very different reality from face to face to 'lived reality' this means a very fast paced flow of information dissemination with numerous products and people screaming for our attention. However, this situation has only existed since the mid 2000s, and it must be remembered that new media reality is virtual reality.

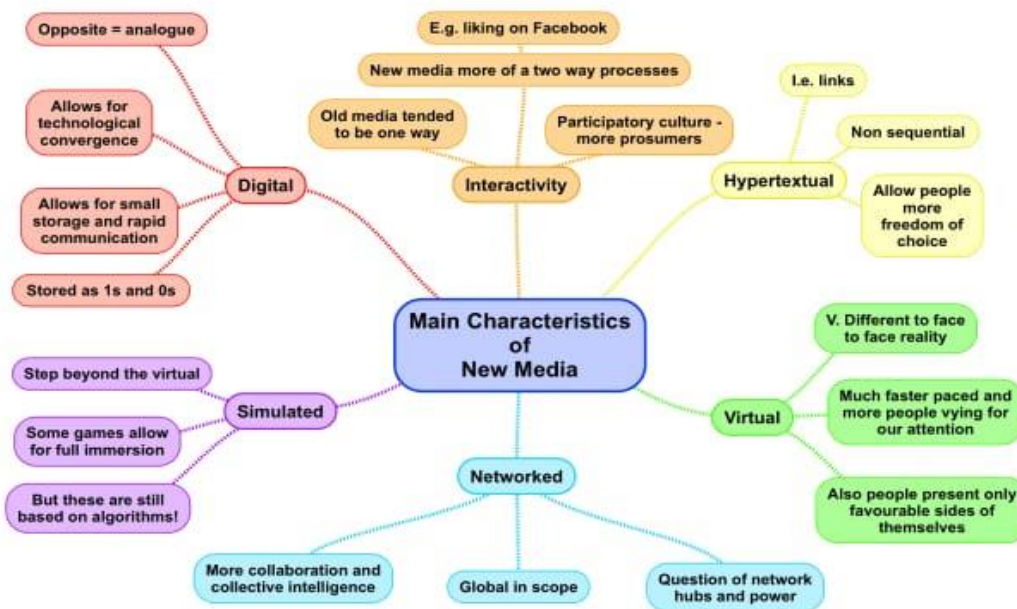


Fig. 1: Operation of New Media

The Roles of New Media Platforms in Enhancing Economic Empowerment of Women

The new media uses different channels which include graphics, animation, audio, video, web design and other facilities to pass information to the modern society. As noted by Fasola (2011), myriads of difficulties are faced by women in third world and developing countries in getting access to information and communication. In addition to support women economic empowerment programmes, the new media performs the functions of socialization, information, education, programs, etc.

The role of the new media is to provide information to the society. Information remains a very fundamental commodity for any person or group of people and its use in making decisions has been distinguished. According to Fasola (2011), access to information for women is restricted due to background, cultural, religious, political and sociological factors.

Theoretical Framework

This aspect of the study discusses the theory that forms the framework with which the research works is built. For the purpose of this study, the theory used is Media Development theory.

Development media theory was propounded by Dennis McQuail (1987). The theory was put forward as a means of paying for the disproportion in development and information flow in the underdeveloped Countries, most especially the third world states and a solution to the technological problems facing them. By application, the new media platforms are seen as a form of development in media operation. The new media platforms are saddle to carry out positive and special development tasks of national integration, open the socio-economic modernization, orientation and aspiration, promotion of literacy, cultural inventiveness and resourcefulness and development needs among the women and the society at large. The new media platforms enhanced news and information on conventional functions of information, education and entertainment of the public in Nigeria. According to Folarin (2002), the development media theory has already provided comportsment for the concepts of development communication and development journalism.

METHODOLOGY

The data for this study were collected through primary and secondary sources. The primary data were collected through the: Interview with Key Informants (KIIs), Focused Group Discussion (FGD), participant observation, women presenters, digital journalists, new media journalists, general managers of media industries, female progammes anchor on social media platforms among others were interviewed. The respondents have good knowledge of the new media, social media, digital media and its operations. Purposive sampling technique was employed to select the respondents who were knowledgeable in the study

The secondary sources include archives, books, media journal articles, magazines, and other publications relevant to the study. The secondary data were used to complement primary data to strengthen the findings of the study. The data were analyzed using qualitative approach. The data was analysed using excerpts, paraphrasing and direct quotation.

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs): 10 bloggers, 10 Female Journalists, 10 Freelance Presenters/Writers, 10 New/Social Media Presenters, 5 Radio Show Presenters, 5 Television Show Presenters.

In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) include selected members of the Mass Communicators, Communication Experts, Digital Journalists, and Media Industry.

Participant Observation: The researcher visited progress FM and Broadcasting Service of Ekiti State (BSES). The researcher carried out 3 Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) with members of New Media Journalists, Female Programmes Achor on Radio, Television and social or new media platforms.

The Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Fifty (50), questionnaires were administered to various representatives Digital Journalists, New Media Journalists, Mass Communicators, Communication Experts, Media Agencies/organizations, Captains of media industry, Journalists, Female Programmes Anchor on Social Media Platforms in Nigeria. However, the entire questionnaires were recovered. The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) via Frequency and Percentage table.

Table 1: Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents

S/N	RESPONDENTS BIO DATA	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
1	SEX:		
	Male	8	16
	Female	42	84
	Total	50	100
2	AGE DISTRIBUTION:		
	18-25	11	22
	26-40	21	42
	41- 55	16	32
	55years and above	2	4
	Total	50	100

3	EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION:		
	Primary Education		
	Secondary Education	0	0
	Tertiary Education	3	6
	No Formal Education	47	94
		0	0
	Total	50	100
4	OCCUPATION:		
	Bloggers	10	20
	Freelance Presenters/Writers	10	20
	Radio Show Presenters	5	10
	Television Show Anchors	5	10
	Social Media Platform Presenters	10	20
	Female Journalists	10	20
	Total	50	100
5	RELIGIOUS AFFLIATION:		
	Christianity	48	96
	Islam	2	4
	Traditionalist	0	0
	Total	50	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings of Objective 1: Connection between Active Usage of New Media Platforms and Women's Participation towards Economic Sustainability in Nigeria

Respondents postulated that the increase rate of new media platforms and sites in recent times has raised communication between people all over the world. They agreed that new media platforms have allowed people to articulate and express themselves through blogs, websites, online videos and pictures and other user-generated media. A blogger opined that the new media provides multiple platforms which make social networking sites a great means for women's participation in socioeconomic development and mobilization. Another respondent, who happen to be social media platform presenters said that new media platforms have facilitated a more active role for the women's in political discourse and engagement as well as play into the idea of the attention economy. It is found that news use leads to political, social, economic and community engagement

A freelance presenter averred that the new media platforms has been encouraging the active support of the women in government development policies, it is only when policies is been supported that the overall efforts could be meaningful. He agreed that the new media serves as monitoring eyes for the various developmental programmes

and projects. In addition, the respondent is of the opinion that the new media platforms has create an avenue where the women's could be updating the government vie the media of the extent at which economic policies have effective in their respective localities. He conclude that through the new media platform, the women's offer valuable information to the government on how best to implement the policies for economic stability.

In the same vein, one of the respondents asserted that the use of new media platforms has increased collaboration among women. For women to developed, advanced and empowered economically, new media has engaged the women in government, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) programs and bridge the gap between the governments, development stakeholders with women in the society. For the government, new media were used to engage women economic participation and collaboration, the new media platform were used to sensitized the women of their strengthen in public relations. Corroborating, the assertion, the deputy head of news and current affairs in Broadcasting Service of Ekiti State, (BSES), said that the women engagement through new media platforms includes interaction, organization meeting, socio-economic forum and participation, and among others. Hllison, (2015) averred that there are various women organizations and groups who make used the new media platform to engage the government, developmental partners, organizations, citizens, and community at large. These are as follows;

- a. *The use of New Media and Women Awareness:* Without the new media, the women folks would have been thrown into darkness of information. New media provide women with more opportunities to become responsible and productive for themselves, society and the country at large. It enables women's to participate in monitoring, supervision, and decision-making and covers all stages of their implementation. For instance, the awareness created by the new media regarding the various policies of government which either promote or forestall development, women's could now know how to react, act either in support of development policies or kicking off against those which is anti-development.
- b. *The use of New Media and Women Involvement/Participation in Socio-economic Openness:* It provides opportunities for women to use various channels or tools in raising complaints and informing their recommendations. The new media platforms has facilitated local content development and non-governmental organizations activities channeling towards rural area and community development
- c. The new media platform has impacted the women positively at a higher degree and women are more receptive to the information provided by new media platforms. It would be that new media content such as reviews, enlightenment programs and others has impacted women's economic activity and planning decisions

The respondents all agreed that the new media platforms have become the instrument of social change which has assisted and supported women economic empowerment in various aspects such as mobilizing attention of global community towards women's economic development, women economic productivity and challenges of discrimination and stereotype against women across the world and most especially in Nigeria. It was gathered that various economic sustainability plans for women by federal government of Nigeria were been possibly implemented with the use of new media platforms to spread the information.

A female journalist is of the opinion that the invention and explosion of new technologies and surfacing of new media platform in recent times have provided numerous sources of access to gender related information and awareness while inequalities and gender discriminations exist in social structure and the minds of the people, new media have the potential for disseminate and perpetuate new order towards executing economic sustainability for women. Government at all levels in Nigeria, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and other stakeholders have been using the new media platforms and sites to play an important role in opening up various economic innovative and creativity for women across all states in Nigeria. For instance, the information on series of Central Bank of Nigeria loans policies for women's in Micro, Small Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) has been spreading through the helps of new media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp and so on. Since 2015, The Federal Government of Nigeria initiated Conditional Cash Transfer Programme for women through the new media platforms, in which about 1.078million women are beneficiaries (Vanguard Newspaper, 2021).

The new media platforms is becoming a women information guide and empowering tools. Awareness sensitization, orientation and re-orientation on series economic, social, and political programmes is one of the impact, women are getting more information and awareness and understanding about their economic, social and political rights and powers, that every women in the society holds, with equal power and rights as men in every aspects. All these affirmative changes are now triggered to only increase their development and advancement with the activities of new media platforms.

Subsequently, looking down from the ladder, new media assists women to reach large audience; have a direct connection with larger population of the society and women were able to create content; advertise their products, goods and services; publicize and promote their various influence and natural endowment; build their various association, brands and organizations; and also evaluate their various performance.

Findings of Objective 2: Factors Precipitating against Low Participation of Women in Socio-

*Economic and Empowerment Programmes in Nigeria.***Table 2: Low Participation of Women in Socio-Economic and Empowerment Programmes in Nigeria**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Economic Factors	5	10%
Political Instability	0	0%
Socio-Cultural or Ethnic Factors,	2	4%
Restrictive Environment	3	6%
Poor Attitudes towards New Media Platform,	18	36%
Illiteracy	10	20%
Poverty	12	24%
Total	50	100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2021.

The Table above revealed the distribution of respondents based on their opinion of factors precipitating against low participation of women's in development and empowerment programmes in Nigeria. The data showed that 18(36%) respondents indicated that Poor Attitudes towards New Media Platform is one of the major factors that is responsible for low participation of women's in development and empowerment programmes in Nigeria. 12(24%) respondents indicated poverty, 10(20%) respondents indicated Illiteracy, 5(10%) respondents indicated economic factors, 3(6%) respondents indicated restrictive environment while only 2(4%) respondents indicated that low participation of women's in development and empowerment programmes in Nigeria is as a result of Socio-Cultural or Ethnic Factors.

Accordingly, respondents also postulated during interview session that factors precipitating against low participation of women's in socio-economic and empowerment programmes in Nigeria are as follows;

- a) *Economic and Political Instability*: The respondent said that as a result of the economic doldrums and the instability affecting our political and economic system, the women have long lost interest in the government any of its policies as a result of failure of previous policies to bring effective changes, development and economic stability.

- b) *Socio-Cultural or Ethnic Factors*: The respondents all agreed that in a country like Nigeria with diverse of ethnic with varying degree of literacy among the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. The Igbo and Yoruba are believed to be the most learned compared to their Hausa counterpart. This, as a result of the response to be given to the usage of new media platforms in the north will be relatively low to the southerners.
- c) *Restrictive Environment in which the media operates*: Other respondents agreed that the media could not operate freely as a result of threats and restrictive laws and rules, thus this has deepened the fear, apathy on the side of the citizens to use the media, a recent case of sanction of Channels Television and the banning of Twitter in Nigeria.

Other factors mentioned by respondents include; unfavorable government policies, lack of technological know-how of the rural women, discrimination against rural women, lack of resources, information and education, lack of government incentives, Women are regularly exposed to various forms of physical, psychological, political, and economic violence and abuse. This can be traced to the lopsided and imbalanced power relations between men and women in the society and the infusing patriarchal norms that support the inequality.

Findings of Objective 3

Challenges Confronting Women's on Active Usage of New Media Platforms in Nigeria

The respondents itemized the challenges confronting women's in Nigeria on the use of new media platforms are enormous, which includes;

- a. *Illiteracy*: The respondents opined that the old women generation who could neither read nor write find it so difficult to appropriately use the new media for their own good and promote their active participation in socio-economic programmes. The implication of this is that the uneducated women or the old women may be left out in the whole developmental process aided by the means of new media platforms.
- b. *Poverty*: The respondents agreed that most homes could not afford the money to purchase a good smart phones, tablets, laptop or desktop and other gadgets which will make them stay tuned with the latest development, most women, especially those are literate but living beyond poverty line or who are average, may not have access to smart phones, tablets, laptops and others which are all tools of the new media.
- c. *Poor usage of new media platforms*: The respondents also said that the young folk generation preferred using their media gadget for something else than using it follows developmental process in their localities. Social media chatting, video game, internet fraud have militated against active usage of new media in Nigeria

Others challenges mentioned by respondents includes; the challenges of non-professionalism to manage new media or digital media interaction for effective and efficient communication; Poor funding of programmes on new media platforms; Skepticism of government about the effect of usage of new media; Lack of skill and capacity to initiate interaction and engagement of new and digital media which requires technological development and professional media skill development; Time and space availability (The use of new media platforms requires time availability, space and skill); The use of new media platforms by women to project feminism and women development also serves as one of the main challenges.

CONCLUSION

The use of new media platforms is one of the primary needs of women towards their advancement, development and empowerment in the society. With invention of new media platforms has bridged the barrier of communication and women's empowerment. The different challenges posed by the new order have forced people all over the world to provide a tangible, actual and developmental aspect alternative in lieu of empowerment of women through the possible accessible new media.

The study concludes that there is a solid linkage between the women's usage of new media and the level of their participation in development programmes and economic sustainability. The study suggests that all the stakeholders in Nigeria economic project and those involved in the developmental process on the needs to intensify effort on usage of new media platforms to propagate development programmes for women and to integrate women actively in the process of working towards economic development and recovery. There is a need for more action towards oriented programmes and policies that we inculcate the understanding on the various technicalities and prospects of new media platforms for women's empowerment in Nigeria.

The new media should be effectively use to enlighten and create awareness of the women in new developmental policies made or in the process of making, the focus of the awareness should centre on opening the eyes of women's on the content of these developmental policies. Thus in order to convey the opinion of the women's which in turn serves as a veritable tools for aiding socio-economic and developmental policies, the new media must ready to conduct opinion poll, which will be made ready for the government for it uses. The new media platforms handlers must always provide information on socio-economic activities, which must be accurate and timely, on what the women can do in the implementation of policies, how to go about it and when to render valuable assistance to government for a sustainable development. To this end, in order to make development meaningful and sustained, the new media platforms must put in place empowerment programmes for the women's, the modalities of delivering this will be left to the professional handlers of the new media.

It is imperative to notes that for women to accomplish their economic and political awareness and interest, they need to develop a new media platform that will serve as a strong interest group that is capable of influencing government economic policies in their favour and resist the temptation of being boxed into one position. There is no contradicting the fact that women empowerment campaigners have engaged issues that border on cultural, economic, social and political suppression over the years without much progress. As a result, there is need for a paradigm shift; eccentricity and independence would be jettisoned for collectivism. The use of new and social media for economic development and advancement should be encouraged by women in Nigeria.

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