

ADENIKE MERCY AJAYI

TEMILADE AFOLASADE OLATUNJI

12TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES

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PROMOTING ENTREPRENEURSHIP THROUGH COMMUNICATION AMONG WOMEN IN AMUWO ODOFIN, LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

Abstract

Entrepreneurial development has become one of the foci of Nigerian government in the diversification of the country's economy. This situation, perhaps, informs why the government has been financially committed to the growth and development of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). This paper, therefore, examines the growth and development of entrepreneurs in Amuwo Odofin Local Government in relations to how effective communication has been promoting this subsector of the economy. Quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection were adopted. In the quantitative approach, quasi-empirical method of focus group discussions (FGDs) was adopted. The participants/respondents were drawn from trade unions/associations to have a relative reliability of the information gathered during the focus group discussions. The data/information gathered revealed that communication also plays pivotal roles in the growth and development of entrepreneurial development in Amuwo Odofin Local Government and Nigeria in general. The play concludes that the government needs to be more committed to entrepreneurial development across the country.

Key words: Entrepreneurial development, Nigeria's mono-economy, the economy of Amuwo Odofin

Introduction

The present reality in Nigeria is that individuals strive to make both ends meet and to achieve a relative standard of living within their economic limits. The attainment of this lofty goal, however, has been affected by the outbreak of Coronavirus (code-named COVID-19). Towards the last quarter of 2019, the whole world was subdued by the novel COVID-19 which emanated from Wuhan, China. Nigeria, one of the victims of COVID-19 global pandemic, has been struggling to bounce back to economic prosperity.

The possibility of the country returning to normal economic life which holds promise for all irrespective of age and sex has been truncated by the current protests which have spread to all parts of the country. Thus, the economic misfortunes of the country have been affected by the two Ps of pandemic and pandemonium. In these two Ps, the most vulnerable are the women and the children. Of these two vulnerable groups, attention of this paper is on the economic prosperity of women through entrepreneurship. The paper's discussion focuses on women in Lagos State of Nigeria with specific reference to women in Amuwo Odofin local government.

Amuwo Odofin local government is in the Badagry Division of Lagos State. The location of the place suggests that it is properly situated in the heart of business and commerce considering its closeness to the shared boarder of Nigeria and Republic of Benin. Considering the large size of Amuwo Odofin, it is divided into Oriade Local Council Development Area and Amuwo Local Council Development Area. Amuwo Odofin also has sixty-seven (67) communities within the fourteen (14) wards. Based on the Census figure of 2006, Amuwo Odofin has one million and five hundred thousand (1, 500, 000) population n figure. The original inhabitants of the place are the Aworis.

The choice of Lagos is made because it was the erstwhile federal capital territory of the country and this has encouraged prosperous economic activities in the state with different multinational offices and government agencies. Today, Lagos state has a reliable internally generated revenue (IGR) to cater for all its economic and infrastructural needs. The choice of Amuwo is made because of its strategic location which has encouraged trade of various degrees – small scale, medium scale and international trade.

Conceptual Clarification

The two main concepts of this paper are clarified and contextualised. These two concepts are entrepreneurship and communication.

Entrepreneurship

A simple definition of entrepreneurship is the process of developing and managing a business with the primary motive of profit making. The genesis of the concept is traced to French economist, Richard Cantillon. Since its first use, entrepreneur has attracted interests from the academic disciplines of Economics and Business management. Though different scholars such as Putari (2006) and Pinson (2010) have defined entrepreneur from different economic and historical perspectives, the central idea in the meaning of entrepreneur is the ability to

establish, manage and sustain a business which ranges from small scale business to a chain of businesses. In entrepreneurial studies, scholars have identified different forms of entrepreneur as innovative, imitating, Fabian and drone. Each of these forms are named based on the behavioural patterns of each of the entrepreneur. The innovative entrepreneur brings new ideas and processes to the market (he is a sort of a game changer). The imitating comes into the market by re-modelling or re-packaging existing products and this is why such entrepreneur is nick-named copy-cats. The Fabian entrepreneur is reluctant to embrace innovations. The drone entrepreneur is antagonistic to change as such person holds much belief in the traditional knowledge that had been previously acquired. The drone entrepreneurs are also nick-named “old schools”. There are different types of businesses based on the size and financial commitments of the entrepreneurs and these are small scale business, medium scale business and large scale business (which can graduate to company/industry). The focus of this paper, therefore, is on small and medium scale businesses (SMEs) among Amuwo Odofin women.

Communication

It has not been easy to ascribe a single universal definition to communication. This, perhaps, is not unconnected to the multidisciplinary approaches to communication studies. It is a known fact that scholars in linguistics and languages, theatre and media studies as well as anthropology have shown interests in communication studies from different ideological and epistemological perspectives. The central idea in the cumulative views of scholars is that communication is the transfer of information/idea from one person (the sender) to another person/a group of people (the receiver) after taking care of all barriers to effective communication such as noise. The dynamism of our contemporary societies has encouraged a close consideration of different forms of media (social and electronic such as radio and television) of communication. Despite the understanding that there are different forms of media of communication, there is a need to focus attention on seven (7) C's for the attainment of effective communication. Zani, Ali and Samanol (2011) observe the seven C's of communication as completeness, conciseness, consideration, concreteness, clarity, courtesy and correctness. All these seven C's are mutually inclusive in the attainment of effective communication for individual and entrepreneurial development.

Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs)

The significant contributions of small and medium scale enterprises has been acknowledged by Nigerian government with the establishment of Small and Medium Enterprise Development of Nigeria (SMEDAN) was established by SMEDAN act of 2003 to promote and develop micro, small and medium enterprises in Nigeria. The simple description of SMEs is based on the size of the employees between 11-100 and the amount of money invested in the enterprise. In most urban centres and rural settings, SMEs have been thriving for business operations. Majority of the funding for SMEs come from personal savings, grants and loans from commercial and micro finance banks.

Methodology

The paper adopts qualitative and quantitative methods for data gathering. In the qualitative approach, existing literatures on SMEs in Nigeria, Lagos and Amuwo Odofin are reviewed. The reviewed literatures focus on the funding, problems and prospects of SMEs in Nigeria, Lagos and Amuwo Odofin. There is also review of literatures on the synergy between communication and the promotion of entrepreneur among Amuwo Odofin women. The qualitative method of data gathering also includes empirical review of literatures.

The quantitative method of data analysis involves the use of unstructured interviews, participant observation and focus-group discussions (FGDs) to elicit data/information from the respondents who are women entrepreneurs. For data collection, the sixty-seven (67) communities in Amuwo-Odofin are stratified before using simple random sampling. While using stratified sampling technique, there is consideration for Oriade and Amuwo local council development area (LCDA) with seven wards each. At Oriade, there are Abule-Oshun, Agboju, Ibeshe, Ijegun, Irede, Kirikiri and Kuje. At Amuwo, there are Ado-Soba, Ekoakete, Ifelodun, Ilado, Tamaro, Irepodun, Odofin and Orire. For simple random sampling, two communities are selected for data collection – one (Kirikiri) from Oriade and one (Ekoakete) from Amuwo are selected. The researcher is able to get participants for focus group discussions (FGDs) with the assistance of the trade unions/associations of the selected respondents. This approach is meant to validate the data and to ensure the reliability of the information given by the respondents.

Empirical Review of Literature

Bamidele (2012) argued that small and media scale enterprise is a panacea to economic development of Amuwo Odofin in particular and Lagos state in general. In his study, he reviewed the trend, prospects and problems of entrepreneur in Amuwo Odofin. The researcher's gender distribution of respondents revealed that that there are more male entrepreneurs at Amuwo Odofin. In his discussion of findings, the researcher submitted that:

The difference in the female-male representation is a reflection of the fact that fewer females than males are involved in small and medium scale enterprises, which may further be attributed to the ability of the males to be more courageous than females to take risks which is one of the characteristics of SMEs. Lack of access to education, women reproductive roles, cultural/social beliefs and the 'glass ceiling' barrier (sic). Thus, women participation in business activities remains quite low.

Considering the years of the research, there is a space of eight (8) years between 2012 and 2020. It is this gap which informed this study. Besides, a rough survey of Amuwo Odofin reveals that women have opened some business enterprises such as supermarkets, shopping malls and manufacturing companies in Amuwo Odofin.

Obasan, Shobayo and Amaghionyeodiwe (2016) investigated ownership structure and performance of small and medium enterprises in Nigeria. With the agency theory, the researchers explain what constitutes and upholds entrepreneurship. The theory explained that an entrepreneur is in charge of the finances, employees and overall management of the business. The summary of the theory, therefore, is that it caters for the ownership and structure and performance of any enterprise. The researchers conclude in their findings as follow:

This paper is focused on establishing whether a significant effect subsists between ownership structure and SME performance in Nigeria. The findings in this paper indicated that: (1) Insider ownership structure has a statistical significant effect on the performance of small and medium enterprise in Nigeria; and (2) Foreign ownership structure has a statistical significant effect on performance of small and medium enterprises in Nigeria. The findings further reveals that in general, ownership structure has a significant effect on Small and medium enterprises in Nigeria. This implies that the type of ownership whether one man business, partnership or limited liability company will affect the performance level of the business.

The researchers' focus does not cater for specific entrepreneur in Amuwo Odofin. They only do an overall assessment of the ownership and management of entrepreneur in Nigeria. It is

against this background knowledge that this paper attempts to investigate the state of entrepreneurship in Amuwo Odofin.

Similarly, Taiwo, Falohun and Agwu (2016) examined SMEs financing and its effects on Nigerian economic growth. While reviewing literature, the researchers aver that SMEs offer 70% of the employment opportunities in Nigeria and that they (SMEs) contribute 50% to the generated gross domestic product (GDP) of Nigeria. The researchers, in the course of their research, did a comparative analysis and discussion of the status of SMEs in Nigeria and Latin America as well as in other countries; and they observed that most economies are thriving as a result of the commitment to entrepreneurial development. In their conclusion, the researchers write that:

More attention is to be channelled towards the development of SMEs in Nigeria so as to aid there (sic) growth and expansion. SMES are very important to the development and growth of the country as they utilize local raw materials and technology thereby aiding the realization of the goal of self-reliance, there is a need therefore to rightly channel the concern of government towards small and medium sized enterprises because of the important roles that SME play in the process of industrialization and economic growth, SMEs immensely contributes (sic.) to employment generation, income generation, catalysing development in the country at large, more focus should be on the financing and performance of SMEs also because of the economic gains it brings. Government should formulate policies aimed at facilitating and empowering the growth and development and performance of the SMEs, assisting the SMEs to grow through soft loans at low interest rate and other fiscal incentives in order to enhance the socio-economic development of the economy like alleviating poverty, employment generation, enhance human development, and improve social welfare of the people. Small and medium scale enterprise is a sector that should be given full attention and not be ignored by the government.

The concluding remark of the researchers reveals that much still need to be done to assess the state of entrepreneurial development in Nigeria with specific reference to a target group or place. It is in the light of this understanding that this paper attempts an evaluation of entrepreneurial practice and activities in Amuwo Odofin local government.

In another study, Adebisi, Banjo and Oko-Oza (2017) examined performance of small and medium enterprises in Lagos state with its financial implications. Their research was carried out on two hundred and fifty (250) owners of small and medium enterprises in Lagos state.

Their research hypotheses attempted to see correlation between SMEs finances business management and the development of their respective businesses. In their findings and conclusion, the researchers aver that:

There is a positive and significant relationship between SME's access to credit facility and business performance. Financial management practices have significant impact on the performance of SMEs in Lagos. Thus, availability of funds can help SMEs acquire appropriate technology and also expand operations and scale of their businesses. By such expansion, the gain economies of scale and learning curve thereby increasing (sic) their profit margins. Since financial management practices are also capable of substantially influencing their performance, access to finance, not only debt of equities giving rise to the right mixture of debt and equity as cost of finance may weigh down the business and also limit investment opportunities the business can explore. Consequently, flexible arrangements should be put in place for SMEs in Lagos State to enable them access investable funds. Even though state governments and non-governmental organisations sometimes give non-institutionalized credits to small businesses particularly those who have undergone their skill acquisition trainings, such funds are usually too meagre to fund promotional expenses of starting a business.

The basic shortfall in their research is that the data cannot present the actuality of Lagos state entrepreneurship. There is no specific reference to a group of entrepreneurs or a particular location in Lagos. So, the findings of the hypotheses need to be re-examined. This paper, therefore, situates the research within the context of Amuwo Odofin local government area.

Data and Analysis

As stated earlier, this paper uses quasi-empirical approach for data collection through unstructured interview and focus group discussions (FGDs).

How do you get the business idea for your enterprise?

The aggregate of the views of the respondents points to two sources of information for their business ideas – formal, semi-formal and informal. The respondents' views underline the significance of formal communication through seminars and workshops in the growth and development of entrepreneurship in the local government. These seminars and workshops have been organised by Small and Medium Industries and Equity Investment Scheme (SMIEIS) and Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency (SMEDAN). The content

of the seminars and workshops was usually business plans, access to funds and sustainability of the business over a period of time. The semi-formal source of information for the development of entrepreneurship at Amuwo Odofin is the media. The media here, according to the respondents, cover the social media, print media and social media. A section of the respondents are of the view that they get information about entrepreneurship through various advertisements on radio and television stations. These pieces of information, according to them, cover the nature of a particular business, the source of funding (if there is availability of any agency or government parastatal that will sponsor the interested participants) and the prospects of the business if properly managed. Some of the radio and television stations that have provided information on entrepreneurship are Lagos Television (LTV), Radio Lagos, Orisun Television and Silverbird Television (STV). The social media which provide information are Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. The print media include billboards, handbills and posters. From these forms of informal source of information, it is deduced that electronic media (radios, televisions) and print media are levellers because they are very accessible to respondents at the urban centres and the less-city parts of the local government area. The informal source of the information is informal discussion, apprenticeship, learning-on-the job, and experimentation/risk T taking. Some of the respondents stated that they ventured into what they are currently doing without having any prior idea of the business. They only venture into the business to take the risk. These categories of the respondents have sustainable source of finance – their source of finance is not bank loan or loan from individual lenders or lending institutions.

What are the sources of funds for your enterprise?

The respondents submitted that they have formal and informal sources of finances for their respective finances. Among the informal sources of funds for entrepreneurial development is personal savings, borrowing from friends and relatives without formal arrangements/ terms and conditions, credit purchases and gifts/good wills from friends and relatives while the formal source of funds include loans from banks and other financial institutions as well as grants from the government. Example of such grants is the trade moni that the Federal Government of Nigeria introduced for the benefit of small scale business owners in the country. Unfortunately, some of these respondents claim that they find it difficult to access bank loans because of some administrative and financial bottlenecks such as (non-) availability of collateral and high interests rate.

Are you aware of the government's initiatives and programmes for entrepreneurial development?

Only few of the respondents are aware of the government's initiatives and programmes (financial assistance and empowerment) for entrepreneurial development. These respondents that have the awareness of the existing financial support claim the knowledge of Central Bank of Nigeria's (CBN) loan scheme for small and medium enterprise, Bank of Industry (BOI) loan to entrepreneurs, Graduate Employment Loan Scheme (GELS) administered by National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and National Economic Reconstruction Fund (NERFUND) among others. Those of the respondents who are not aware of all these programmes acquire the information for the use in the nearest future. The deduction from this is that the information about the sources of finances for SME has not been properly disseminated among the expected beneficiaries.

Do you advertise your products or services?

Patronage is very essential to the sustenance of any business or enterprise. This is because of the fact that it is the patronage which will promote rate of returns of the business. It is in the light of this that advertisement and other promotional activities are required for the development and sustainability of any entrepreneurial venture. Nearly all of the respondents are of the view that they do not use conventional electronic media outfits (radio and television) and print media (newspapers, magazines and billboards) because of their expensiveness. Their argument is that promoting their businesses in these media will increase their operational costs. These respondents, however, claim that they use the resources of social media such as Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram and Twitter to advertise and promote their businesses. Few of them also claim that they have verifiable Whatsapp group for their customers across the state and the country. They subsequently uphold the view that this form of communication has contributed to the sustainability of their respective businesses. All the respondents aver that they also use informal communication to promote and sustain their businesses. Among the forms of informal communication for promotional purpose is referral (one customer telling another person to patronise an enterprise after a pleasant service delivery).

How do you manage competition and business rivalry?

Since respondents are drawn from the same or related trade groups such as artisans, traders and manufacturers, there is a need to know the influence of rivalry on the survival of their respective enterprises. Rivalry is inevitable in the business. The respondents are of the collective view that their respective unions/associations put effective mechanism in place to reduce the negative impact of rivalry on their members. Among the issues that can create rivalry and tension among members are prices and charges. For this reason, the executives of these associations communicate the current rates and charges to members to avoid rivalry. There is adequate communication among the artisans and traders as there are relatively uniform prices and rates. This practice has helped to keep some entrepreneurs in business.

Findings

Level of education and exposure of individual entrepreneurs influence their access to information which may assist them in the source of funding for their respective businesses. Some of these respondents have certificates ranging from school leaving certificates to first post-graduate diploma/degree. This level of education makes some of them have access to quality information to the source of funds. This situation underlines the sense in the statement that information is power. Those who do not have access to information to source of financial support for their business became aware in the course of this research.

The findings also reveal that federal government of Nigeria has been showing dedicated interests in the promotion of small and medium enterprise in Nigeria. Taiwo, Falohun and Agwu (2016: 46) traced the genesis of government's interests in entrepreneurial development in Nigeria to 2001. In their submissions, they write as follow:

- i. The reconstruction of the former NIDB in the year 2001 to Bank of Industry (BOI) and the merger of Nigerian Bank for Commerce and Industry (NBCI) and the National Economic Reconstruction Fund (NERFUND) with the newly created Bank of Industry.
- ii. As part of government efforts at addressing the financing needs of micro entrepreneurs, a micro-finance policy was launched by the Federal Government in December, 2005.

The findings from the data also reveal that social media play significant role in the promotion and sustenance of entrepreneurial businesses. This is evident in the way the respondents use

social media to acquire information and to promote their businesses. The high cost of advertisement does not encourage the respondents to use electronic media.

The findings also reveal that unions and interest groups promote entrepreneurial development in Lagos state. The trade associations and unions regulate the activities of the members and they (these unions/associations) ensure that any trace of business rivalry that may be inimical to the growth and development of member's businesses. These associations/unions, apart from the relevant government agencies, offer a sort of checks and balances among the members.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the place of communication in the promotion of entrepreneurial development. In the contemporary Nigerian society, government has renewed interests in the promotion and development of entrepreneur in the country through some financial empowerment programmes. On the other hand, access to quality information on the availability and accessibility of these government funds/grants has been limiting the chances of the entrepreneurs to access these funds. Considering the range of businesses and enterprises in Amuwo Odofin local government, it is the view of this paper that the place is one of the business hubs in Lagos state. With the renewed interests of Nigerian government in the promotion and sustenance of entrepreneur/ small and medium enterprises (SMEs), this paper concludes that there is a bright future for SMEs in the country.

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