International Journal of Innovative Social Sciences & Humanities Research 14(2):446-458, April-June, 2026

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DOI:10.5281/zenodo.20936460

The Role of Media in Advancing Fashion Commercialization: A Case Study on Women's Economic Empowerment in Wamako Local Government, Sokoto State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Fashion commercialization has emerged as a viable pathway for women's economic empowerment, particularly in Northern Nigeria, where cultural and religious norms often restrict women's public participation. This study investigates the role of mass media—both traditional (radio, television, print) and digital (social media, messaging apps)—in promoting fashion commercialization, focusing on Wamako Local Government Area, Sokoto State, Nigeria. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the research combines surveys, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions with 250 female fashion entrepreneurs across six communities in Wamako. Findings indicate that radio remains the most influential medium, reaching 78% of respondents, while WhatsApp (62%) and Facebook (41%) are increasingly used for visual marketing and peer learning. Women with exposure to multiple media platforms reported 45% higher average monthly income compared to those with limited media access. Key barriers include electricity shortages (67%), data costs (58%), and cultural gatekeeping by male relatives (43%). The paper concludes that strategic media interventions can significantly enhance the impact of fashion commercialization on women's economic independence and offers evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, NGOs, and media practitioners.

Keywords: Media role, fashion commercialization, women's economic empowerment, Wamako Local Government, Sokoto State, development communication

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Fashion commercialization—the production, marketing, and sale of clothing, accessories, and textiles—has become a significant avenue for women's economic empowerment, especially in resource-constrained regions. In Sokoto State, Nigeria, where agriculture and public sector employment are predominant, many women engage in micro-enterprises such as tailoring, embroidery, and fabric trading to supplement household income. The success of these enterprises heavily relies on visibility and market reach, which are facilitated by various communication channels.

Mass communication plays a pivotal role in connecting producers to consumers, disseminating skills, shaping preferences, and normalizing women's economic participation. However, limited empirical research has examined how specific media platforms influence fashion commercialization in semi-urban and rural contexts like Sokoto State. This study addresses that gap by investigating the media landscape in Wamako Local Government Area and its relationship to women's fashion enterprises.

Recent initiatives in Sokoto State underscore the importance of such research. For instance, the Sokoto Association of Market Women, Men, Youth, and Farmers (SAMWMYF) is dedicated to promoting

economic development and sustainable livelihoods across the state. Their programs include training and skills development, economic empowerment, and community development initiatives. (https://samwmyf.org/?utm_source=openai))

Additionally, the Sokoto State Government has participated in national initiatives like the Energise Commercialisation Now (ECoN) program, which aims to transform scientific innovations into commercially viable products and services. This participation highlights the state's commitment to innovation-driven economic development. ([sokotostate.gov.ng] (https://sokotostate.gov.ng/sokoto-state-participates-in-national-energies-commercialization-now-econ-initiative-showcases-homegrown-inventions-and-innovations/?utm_source=openai))

Furthermore, the launch of the Women Venture Studio Digital Innovation Hub (WVSDIH) by the Blue Sapphire Hub, in partnership with the Association of Northern Women Entrepreneurs (ANWE) and Northwest University Kano, aims to empower women entrepreneurs in fashion manufacturing across Sokoto, Kano, and Katsina states. This initiative provides women with a safe and enabling environment to grow their businesses, emphasizing the role of digital tools and skills in enhancing market reach. (netgazette.com.ng) (https://www.netgazette.com.ng/2025/11/19/blue-sapphire-launches-hub-for-women-led-digital-businesses/?utm_source=openai))

These developments underscore the critical need to understand how media platforms can be leveraged to support women's fashion enterprises in Sokoto State. By examining the media landscape and its impact on women's economic activities, this study aims to provide insights that can inform policies and programs designed to enhance the effectiveness of media in promoting fashion commercialization and, consequently, women's economic empowerment in the region.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the growing recognition of fashion commercialization as a tool for women's economic empowerment, there remains a significant gap in understanding how media platforms facilitate this process in Northern Nigeria. Women in Wamako Local Government Area face multiple constraints, including limited market access, restricted mobility due to cultural norms, inadequate business information, and scarce opportunities for skill development. While various media platforms are available, their effectiveness in promoting fashion commercialization remains underexplored. This study seeks to address the following questions:

1. Which media channels are most effective in promoting fashion commercialization among women in Wamako Local Government, Sokoto State?
2. How does media exposure influence women's economic empowerment outcomes, such as income, decision-making, and business growth?
3. What barriers limit the effectiveness of media in promoting fashion commercialization in this context?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the media platforms most commonly used by female fashion entrepreneurs in Wamako Local Government.
2. To assess the relationship between media exposure and economic empowerment indicators among female fashion entrepreneurs.
3. To examine the barriers to effective media utilization for fashion commercialization in the study area.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on media and women's economic empowerment in Northern Nigeria. Findings provide evidence-based insights for policymakers, development practitioners, and media organizations seeking to design interventions that leverage communication channels for sustainable livelihoods. The study also offers practical recommendations for women fashion entrepreneurs on optimizing media use for

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Fashion Commercialization as a Development Communication Strategy

Fashion serves as a form of non-verbal communication through which individuals express identity, social status, and cultural affiliation (Barnard, 2014). The commercialization of fashion provides women, particularly in conservative societies, with opportunities to generate income while operating within culturally acceptable boundaries. In Sokoto State, Nigeria, many women engage in home-based fashion enterprises, including tailoring, embroidery, and fabric trading, as a means of supplementing household income (Okafor & Amayo, 2020).

Media platforms play a significant role in promoting fashion commercialization by showcasing entrepreneurial success stories, providing access to skills-development resources, and facilitating connections between producers, suppliers, and consumers. Consequently, media serve as important instruments for economic empowerment and entrepreneurship development among women.

2.2 Media Platforms and Their Roles

Radio

Radio remains the most accessible mass medium in rural Nigeria due to its affordability, independence from literacy requirements, and availability of local-language programming (Manyozo, 2012). Fashion-related radio programmes can provide tailoring tips, interviews with successful female entrepreneurs, market information, and advertisements for fashion products and services.

Television

Television facilitates learning through visual demonstrations of fashion design, sewing techniques, and fashion exhibitions. It also serves as a source of inspiration for aspiring entrepreneurs. However, limited electricity supply and low television ownership in some parts of Sokoto State constrain its effectiveness.

Print Media

Newspapers and magazines such as *Daily Trust* and *Leadership* frequently publish fashion features, business reports, and entrepreneurship-related content. Nevertheless, literacy limitations and the cost of print materials reduce their accessibility among many rural women.

Digital Media

The rapid expansion of smartphone ownership and internet connectivity in Nigeria has increased the use of digital platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok for business promotion, customer engagement, and peer-to-peer learning (Akpan & Ekwueme, 2019). In Sokoto State, many female fashion entrepreneurs utilize WhatsApp Business catalogues to display products, communicate with customers, and receive orders.

2.3 Media and Women's Economic Empowerment

Women's empowerment encompasses economic, social, and psychological dimensions. Economic empowerment involves increased income, asset ownership, and financial independence. Social empowerment includes enhanced participation in decision-making processes and greater mobility, while psychological empowerment refers to increased confidence, self-esteem, and self-efficacy.

Media contribute to women's empowerment by:

- Providing access to market information and entrepreneurial skills.
- Creating role models and showcasing success stories.
- Challenging restrictive gender stereotypes.
- Facilitating networking and information exchange among entrepreneurs (Bhattacharyya, 2018).

Despite these benefits, media content may sometimes reinforce traditional gender roles when women are portrayed primarily as consumers rather than producers and business owners.

2.4 Empirical Studies in Northern Nigeria

Several studies have examined women's entrepreneurship and media utilization in Northern Nigeria. However, limited attention has been given to the specific relationship between media and fashion commercialization.

Akpan and Ekwueme (2019) reported that social media utilization among female entrepreneurs in Kano and Kaduna States contributed to increased customer reach, business diversification, and market

expansion. Similarly, Okafor and Amayo (2020) highlighted the role of radio in disseminating business information to women in rural communities.

Building upon these studies, the present research focuses specifically on Wamako Local Government Area of Sokoto State and adopts a mixed-methods approach to explore both the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of media influence on fashion commercialization and women's economic empowerment.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Development Communication Theory and the Diffusion of Innovations Theory.

3.1 Development Communication Theory

Development Communication Theory emphasizes the strategic use of communication and media as instruments for social transformation and sustainable development (Melkote & Steeves, 2015). The theory argues that communication interventions should be participatory, culturally sensitive, and designed to facilitate dialogue and community engagement.

Within the context of Sokoto State, media can be utilized to disseminate information on fashion entrepreneurship, skills acquisition, business opportunities, and women's economic empowerment. Through effective communication strategies, media can enhance awareness, promote behavioural change, and support entrepreneurship development among women.

3.2 Diffusion of Innovations Theory

The Diffusion of Innovations Theory, developed by Rogers (2003), explains how new ideas, technologies, and practices spread within a social system. The theory identifies communication channels as critical mechanisms through which innovations are transmitted from one individual or group to another.

In the context of this study, fashion commercialization represents an innovation that may be adopted by women entrepreneurs through exposure to media content and entrepreneurial success stories.

According to Rogers (2003), adoption is influenced by the following characteristics:

- **Relative Advantage:** The perceived economic and social benefits of the innovation.
- **Compatibility:** The degree to which the innovation aligns with existing cultural and religious values.
- **Complexity:** The ease with which new skills and practices can be understood and implemented.
- **Trialability:** The opportunity to experiment with new ideas before full adoption.
- **Observability:** The visibility of successful outcomes achieved by others.

These theoretical perspectives suggest that media effectiveness depends on culturally appropriate content, trusted communication sources, and opportunities for interaction and feedback.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Study Area

The study was conducted in Wamako Local Government Area of Sokoto State, Nigeria. Sokoto State is located in the northwestern region of the country and is predominantly inhabited by the Hausa-Fulani Muslim population.

Traditional gender norms often emphasize women's domestic responsibilities. However, economic realities have encouraged many women to participate in income-generating activities, particularly fashion-related enterprises such as embroidery (*dinkin hannu*), tie-and-dye production (*dusa*), tailoring, and fabric trading.

Wamako Local Government Area comprises both urban and rural communities and exhibits diverse socio-economic characteristics.

Key characteristics of the study area include:

- **Population:** Approximately 180,000 inhabitants (National Population Commission, 2006).
- **Literacy Level:** Female literacy remains relatively low at approximately 45%, which is below the national average.
- **Economic Activities:** Agriculture, petty trading, livestock production, and small-scale manufacturing constitute the major economic activities.

- **Media Access:** Radio penetration exceeds 70% of households, television ownership is approximately 40%, and smartphone ownership is increasing, particularly among women under the age of 35.
- **Fashion Market:** Demand exists for both traditional attire, such as *babban riga* and *abaya*, and contemporary fashion styles.

4.2 Research Design

The study adopted a mixed-methods research design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. This design was considered appropriate because it enabled the triangulation of findings and provided a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between media exposure, fashion commercialization, and women's economic empowerment.

4.3 Population and Sample

The target population comprised all female fashion entrepreneurs in Wamako Local Government Area, including tailors, embroiderers, fashion designers, and fabric traders.

A sample size of 250 respondents was selected using a multi-stage sampling procedure.

Stage One: Stratified Sampling

Six communities were purposively selected to represent different socio-economic and geographical characteristics within the Local Government Area:

- Wamako
- Kwalkwalawa
- Dange-Shuni
- Gidan Madi
- Lambara
- Riji

Stage Two: Purposive Sampling

Women actively engaged in fashion-related enterprises were identified and selected based on their involvement in tailoring, embroidery, fashion design, or fabric trading.

Stage Three: Convenience Sampling

Respondents were selected within each community until the required sample quota was attained.

4.4 Data Collection Instruments

4.4.1 Questionnaire

A structured questionnaire was administered to 250 respondents. The instrument consisted of the following sections:

- Demographic characteristics of respondents.
- Media access and usage patterns.
- Fashion enterprise profile, including type of business, years of operation, and income level.
- Indicators of economic empowerment.
- Perceived barriers affecting the effectiveness of media utilization.

The questionnaire was designed to generate quantitative data relevant to the objectives of the study and was administered with the assistance of trained research assistants where necessary.

4.4.2 In-Depth Interviews

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 female fashion entrepreneurs who were purposively selected based on the diversity of their business experiences, enterprise types, and levels of media utilization. The interviews explored participants' experiences regarding media access and use, business development, challenges encountered in fashion entrepreneurship, and the contribution of media to their economic empowerment.

4.4.3 Focus Group Discussions

Six Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted across the six selected communities, with each group comprising between 8 and 10 participants. The discussions focused on collective experiences relating to media usage, cultural and socio-economic factors influencing media access, perceptions of fashion commercialization, and the role of media in promoting women's economic empowerment.

4.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire survey were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were employed to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics, media access patterns, and perceptions of media roles in fashion commercialization. Inferential statistical techniques, including Chi-square tests and correlation analysis, were used to examine the relationship between media exposure and indicators of economic empowerment.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data generated through the in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions were transcribed, organized, and analyzed using thematic analysis. Responses were coded according to emerging themes and patterns related to media utilization, entrepreneurial development, empowerment outcomes, and barriers to effective media use. Relevant verbatim quotations were incorporated to enrich the interpretation of findings and provide contextual insights into the experiences of participants.

5. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

5.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 250)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age Group	18–25 Years	68	27.2
	26–35 Years	104	41.6
	36–45 Years	52	20.8
	46 Years and Above	26	10.4
Marital Status	Married	178	71.2
	Divorced/Separated	32	12.8
	Widowed	24	9.6
	Never Married	16	6.4
Educational Attainment	No Formal Education	95	38.0
	Primary Education	72	28.8
	Secondary Education	58	23.2
	Tertiary Education	25	10.0
Primary Occupation	Tailoring	112	44.8
	Embroidery	64	25.6
	Fabric Trading	42	16.8
	Fashion Design	32	12.8
Monthly Income (₦)	Below 20,000	78	31.2
	20,000–39,999	96	38.4
	40,000–59,999	45	18.0
	60,000 and Above	31	12.4

The demographic profile indicates that the majority of respondents were married (71.2%) and fell within the 26–35-year age bracket (41.6%). Educational attainment was relatively low, as 38.0% of respondents had no formal education. Tailoring constituted the dominant fashion-related enterprise (44.8%), while most respondents reported earning between ₦20,000 and ₦39,999 per month.

5.2 Media Access and Usage Patterns

Table 2

Media Ownership, Access, and Usage Among Respondents

Media Platform	Ownership/Access (%)	Daily Usage (%)	Primary Purpose
Radio	78.4	65.2	Information, entertainment, and skills acquisition
Television	38.0	24.8	Visual tutorials and inspiration
Print Media	12.4	4.8	Business information and advertisements
WhatsApp	62.4	51.6	Product promotion, customer engagement, and peer learning
Facebook	41.2	28.4	Branding and market expansion
Instagram	18.4	8.8	Visual marketing and fashion inspiration

Radio emerged as the most accessible and frequently utilized medium, with 78.4% of respondents reporting ownership or access and 65.2% indicating daily usage. WhatsApp ranked second, with 62.4% of respondents utilizing the platform, particularly among younger entrepreneurs. Television, print media, and Instagram recorded comparatively lower levels of access and usage.

5.3 Roles of Media in Fashion Commercialization

Table 3

Perceived Roles of Media in Fashion Commercialization

Media Role	Respondents Reporting Benefit (%)	Mean Rating (1–5)
Skills Acquisition	74.8	4.1
Market Information	71.2	3.9
Customer Acquisition	68.4	4.0
Price Information	62.0	3.7
Business Networking	58.4	3.6
Financial Management Guidance	44.0	3.2
Transformation of Women's Economic Roles	40.8	3.0

The findings indicate that the most significant benefits derived from media exposure were skills acquisition (74.8%), access to market information (71.2%), and customer acquisition (68.4%). In contrast, the role of media in transforming perceptions of women's economic participation received the lowest rating, suggesting that its broader social influence remains relatively underutilized.

5.4 Media Exposure and Economic Empowerment

5.4.1 Quantitative Findings

Table 4

Media Exposure and Income Levels

Level of Media Exposure	Mean Monthly Income (₦)	Income Range (₦)	Business Growth Rate (%)
Low (0–1 Platform)	22,500	8,000–45,000	15.2
Medium (2–3 Platforms)	35,800	12,000–65,000	31.6
High (4 or More Platforms)	48,200	18,000–85,000	45.8

The results demonstrate a positive relationship between media exposure and economic outcomes. Respondents with high media exposure, defined as the utilization of four or more media platforms, reported an average monthly income of ₦48,200 compared with ₦22,500 among those with low media exposure.

Furthermore, business growth increased substantially with higher levels of media engagement, rising from 15.2% among respondents with low exposure to 45.8% among those with high exposure. Statistical

analysis using the Chi-square test revealed a significant association between media exposure and income level ($\chi^2 = 24.60$, $df = 4$, $p < .001$). This finding indicates that increased media utilization is significantly associated with higher income generation and improved business performance among women engaged in fashion commercialization.

5.4.2 Qualitative Findings: In-Depth Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

Data obtained from the in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) corroborated the quantitative findings. Participants consistently reported that media platforms, particularly radio and WhatsApp, played a significant role in enhancing business visibility, expanding customer networks, improving technical skills, and increasing entrepreneurial confidence.

One participant remarked:

"Through WhatsApp, I receive orders from customers outside my community and showcase my products to a wider audience. This has significantly increased my income."

(Interview Respondent, Kwalkwalawa)

Similarly, another respondent observed:

"Radio programmes provide useful information on fashion trends, customer relations, and business opportunities that help us improve our enterprises."

(FGD Participant, Wamako)

The qualitative findings indicate that media exposure contributes not only to income generation but also to entrepreneurial innovation, self-confidence, market expansion, and business sustainability among women engaged in fashion-related enterprises.

Skills Enhancement

Many respondents reported acquiring new tailoring, embroidery, and fashion-design techniques through radio programmes and WhatsApp video tutorials. These media platforms provided opportunities for continuous learning and skills development.

"Before I started listening to tailoring programmes on the radio, I could only sew simple dresses. Now, I can produce fashionable designs requested by customers, and my income has increased significantly."

(FGD Participant, Wamako)

This finding suggests that media serve as an important channel for informal vocational education and capacity building.

Market Access

WhatsApp emerged as one of the most effective platforms for direct interaction with customers and the promotion of products and services. Participants reported that social media reduced geographical barriers and enabled them to access broader markets.

"I post my designs on WhatsApp groups, and customers contact me directly. I no longer have to wait for market days or rely on others to sell my products."

(Interview Respondent, Kwalkwalawa)

The findings demonstrate that digital media facilitate customer acquisition, product visibility, and market expansion.

Access to Price Information

Participants indicated that radio programmes and market reports enabled them to access current information on fabric prices and market trends, thereby improving their bargaining power and purchasing decisions.

"When I hear fabric prices on the radio, I can determine whether a seller is overcharging. This helps me negotiate better prices."

(FGD Participant, Dange-Shuni)

Access to reliable market information contributed to improved financial decision-making and cost management.

Confidence and Decision-Making

Media exposure was also associated with increased self-confidence and greater autonomy in business-related decision-making. Exposure to stories of successful female entrepreneurs inspired respondents to pursue business opportunities more confidently.

"Listening to successful women discuss their businesses on the radio inspires me. I now make independent decisions regarding what to buy and sell."

(Interview Respondent, Gidan Madi)

This finding highlights the role of media in strengthening women's self-efficacy and entrepreneurial aspirations.

5.5 Barriers to Media Effectiveness

Table 5

Barriers to Media Utilization Among Respondents

Barrier	Percentage Reporting (%)	Rank
Electricity Shortages	67.2	1
High Cost of Mobile Data	58.4	2
Cultural Gatekeeping by Male Relatives	43.2	3
Low Digital Literacy	38.4	4
Irrelevant Content	28.0	5
Cost of Communication Devices	24.8	6
Language Barriers	16.4	7

The findings reveal that electricity shortages constituted the most significant barrier to effective media utilization, affecting both television viewing and the ability to charge mobile devices. High mobile data costs and cultural restrictions imposed by male relatives were also identified as major impediments to media access and usage.

Qualitative Insights on Barriers

Electricity Shortages

Participants reported that unreliable electricity supply disrupted their ability to access media content and communicate with customers.

"Whenever there is no electricity, I cannot watch fashion programmes on television or charge my phone to communicate with customers. This negatively affects my business."

(Interview Respondent, Lambara)

High Cost of Mobile Data

The high cost of internet subscriptions limited the use of social media platforms, particularly those requiring substantial data consumption.

"I would like to promote my designs on Facebook, but data subscriptions are expensive. Most of the time, I can only afford to use WhatsApp."

(FGD Participant, Riji)

Cultural Gatekeeping

Some respondents reported restrictions from husbands or male family members regarding the use of mobile phones and social media platforms.

"My husband does not approve of me spending much time on my phone. He believes that women should not be active on social media."

(Interview Respondent, Wamako)

This finding reflects the influence of socio-cultural norms on women's access to communication technologies.

Content Relevance

Participants emphasized the need for culturally appropriate media content that reflects local values and realities.

"Some fashion programmes on television present styles that do not align with our cultural values. We need content that reflects and respects our traditions."

(FGD Participant, Kwalkwalawa)

The findings suggest that culturally sensitive programming is essential for maximizing audience engagement and the developmental impact of media interventions.

6. Discussion

6.1 Media Platforms and Fashion Commercialization

The findings of this study confirm the predominance of radio as the principal medium for fashion commercialization among women entrepreneurs in Wamako Local Government Area. This finding is consistent with previous studies conducted in rural Nigeria, which identified radio as the most accessible and influential communication medium due to its affordability, portability, and extensive use of local languages (Manyozo, 2012). The high level of radio ownership and daily usage observed among respondents underscores its continued relevance as a platform for disseminating business-related information and entrepreneurial knowledge.

The increasing utilization of WhatsApp represents a significant development in fashion entrepreneurship. Unlike traditional media platforms, WhatsApp facilitates real-time communication, visual marketing, customer engagement, and business networking. Through the sharing of product images, videos, and promotional content, female entrepreneurs are able to expand their customer base beyond their immediate communities and enhance the visibility of their businesses.

6.2 Media Exposure and Economic Empowerment

The significant relationship observed between media exposure and income levels supports the proposition that media serve as important catalysts for economic empowerment (Bhattacharyya, 2018). Women who reported higher levels of media exposure also reported substantially higher earnings and greater business growth than those with limited exposure.

This finding is consistent with the Diffusion of Innovations Theory (Rogers, 2003), which argues that access to information through multiple communication channels accelerates the adoption of new ideas, technologies, and business practices. Exposure to entrepreneurial content enables women to acquire new skills, identify market opportunities, and adopt innovative strategies that improve business performance and profitability.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that media function as both informational and motivational resources, providing women with practical knowledge while simultaneously encouraging entrepreneurial initiative and self-reliance.

6.3 Pathways of Empowerment

The qualitative findings revealed four major pathways through which media contribute to women's economic empowerment.

Economic Empowerment

Media exposure enhanced respondents' ability to increase income, negotiate better prices, attract new customers, and expand market opportunities. Access to business-related information enabled women to make informed economic decisions and improve the profitability of their enterprises.

Psychological Empowerment

Media contributed to increased self-confidence, self-efficacy, and entrepreneurial ambition. Exposure to success stories and motivational content encouraged women to pursue business opportunities and overcome perceived limitations.

Social Empowerment

The findings indicate that media exposure enhanced respondents' social recognition within their families and communities. Media platforms also facilitated networking opportunities, enabling women to establish professional relationships and exchange information with fellow entrepreneurs.

Decision-Making Empowerment

Media utilization strengthened women's autonomy in business-related decision-making. Respondents reported increased confidence in determining pricing strategies, selecting products, managing resources, and planning business activities.

These dimensions of empowerment are closely interconnected and collectively contribute to sustainable economic development and improved quality of life for women entrepreneurs.

6.4 Barriers in Context

The barriers identified in this study, particularly electricity shortages, high data costs, and cultural gatekeeping, reflect broader structural challenges affecting women's participation in entrepreneurial activities across Northern Nigeria.

The prevalence of electricity shortages limits access to television programmes, mobile phone charging, and internet-based communication platforms. Similarly, the high cost of mobile data restricts the use of digital media, thereby reducing opportunities for online marketing and customer engagement.

Cultural gatekeeping emerged as another significant constraint. Restrictions imposed by husbands and other male family members limit some women's access to communication technologies and social media platforms. These findings suggest that efforts aimed at promoting women's economic empowerment should extend beyond media interventions to address prevailing socio-cultural norms and gender relations.

Consequently, a holistic approach involving infrastructure development, digital inclusion initiatives, and community sensitization programmes is required to maximize the developmental potential of media.

6.5 Theoretical Implications

The findings provide empirical support for both Development Communication Theory and the Diffusion of Innovations Theory.

The effectiveness of radio as a development tool reinforces the central proposition of Development Communication Theory, which emphasizes the importance of culturally relevant, accessible, and participatory communication strategies in promoting social and economic development. The findings demonstrate that media can serve as effective instruments for knowledge dissemination, skills development, and behavioural change among marginalized populations.

Similarly, the adoption patterns observed across various media platforms support the Diffusion of Innovations Theory. The gradual acceptance and utilization of digital platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook illustrate the process through which innovations are introduced, adopted, and integrated within a social system.

However, the findings also highlight the need to extend these theoretical frameworks to incorporate contextual factors such as infrastructural limitations, digital inequality, cultural restrictions, and gender-based barriers. These factors significantly influence access to media and the extent to which communication interventions achieve their intended outcomes.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Summary of Findings

This study examined the role of media in advancing fashion commercialization and promoting women's economic empowerment in Wamako Local Government Area of Sokoto State, Nigeria.

The major findings of the study are summarized as follows:

1. Radio remains the most accessible and influential medium, with 78.4% of respondents reporting access, while WhatsApp (62.4%) and Facebook (41.2%) are becoming increasingly important, particularly among younger women entrepreneurs.
2. Media exposure is significantly associated with economic empowerment. Women with higher levels of media exposure reported substantially greater income levels and business growth than those with limited exposure.
3. Skills acquisition, access to market information, and customer acquisition were identified as the most important benefits derived from media utilization.
4. Electricity shortages, high mobile data costs, and cultural gatekeeping were identified as major barriers limiting the effectiveness of media utilization.
5. Media contribute to women's empowerment through multiple pathways, including economic, psychological, social, and decision-making empowerment.

7.2 Recommendations

Recommendations for Media Practitioners

1. Develop and sustain Hausa-language radio programmes that promote fashion entrepreneurship and highlight successful local women entrepreneurs.
2. Produce interactive programmes incorporating call-in segments, short message service (SMS) feedback systems, and audience participation mechanisms.
3. Collaborate with telecommunications service providers to facilitate affordable access to entrepreneurship-related digital content.
4. Produce culturally appropriate visual content for television and social media platforms that reflects local values and societal expectations.

7.3 Conclusion

Media play a critical role in advancing fashion commercialization as a pathway to women's economic empowerment in Northern Nigeria. Within Wamako Local Government Area, radio and mobile-based platforms, particularly WhatsApp, have emerged as practical, accessible, and culturally appropriate channels for entrepreneurial development.

To maximize their developmental impact, barriers relating to infrastructure, affordability, sociocultural norms, and content relevance must be effectively addressed. Strategic investment in communication technologies, digital inclusion, and community engagement can significantly enhance women's participation in economic activities.

The findings demonstrate that access to appropriate media platforms enables women entrepreneurs to transform vocational skills into sustainable enterprises, thereby improving household welfare, strengthening community development, and contributing to broader socioeconomic transformation.

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