

Redefining the Shelf of Women Entrepreneurship through Innovation, Leadership and Creativity in Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper redefined women entrepreneurship through innovation, leadership and creativity in Nigeria. Entrepreneurship remains a major driver of economic growth, innovation, and national development. Women's active participation in entrepreneurship is vital to achieving balanced progress and inclusive economic advancement. In the field of Library and Information Science (LIS), women entrepreneurs play a strategic role in harnessing information as a vital economic resource in the digital age. Technological advancement has redefined information as a marketable commodity, creating vast opportunities for women LIS professionals to transform knowledge into wealth. Women in LIS entrepreneurship require professional, managerial, technological, and innovative skills to thrive in today's information economy. Entrepreneurial openings in LIS include literature searching, abstracting, indexing, publishing, library establishment, and information brokerage. Despite these prospects, women entrepreneurs face challenges such as socio-cultural constraints, poor societal perceptions, and difficulty balancing business with family life. To overcome these barriers, it was suggested among others that LIS associations must promote awareness, training, and empowerment programmes. Ultimately, women LIS entrepreneurs who embrace creativity, ethical practice, and resilience will contribute significantly to national development and advance the global information economy through innovative information-based services.

Keywords: Women, Entrepreneurship, Library and Information Science, Innovation, Leadership, Creativity

Introduction

Entrepreneurship is the propelling house for growth in the economy. It is among man's most valuable possessions. People and nations that are the best at entrepreneurship are the most advanced. Entrepreneurial endeavors are essential to the expansion and advancement of civilization. Women must be given the opportunity to fully participate in entrepreneurship if it is to establish a legitimate role in society. Without the participation of female entrepreneurs, no country can further its entrepreneurial progress. It's interesting to note that women entrepreneurs are becoming more and more common around the world, drawing the interest of scholars. In reflection to the above Khan et al. (2021) opined that it has contributed to the nation in terms of job creation and economic growth and has also been recognised as a source of increasing entrepreneurial diversity in a range of economic contexts. The importance of entrepreneurship brought about the directive by the Federal Government of Nigeria in 2006, that all Institutions of Higher Learning should introduce Entrepreneurship Education as a compulsory course for all students irrespective of area of specialization of which library and information science is not an exemption.

In this digital age, teaching library and information science (LIS) is very important from an economic standpoint. If women librarians are to succeed in the twenty-first century, they must view information as a true economic resource. Today's continuous technology advancements have made it easier for women librarians to source, process, and disseminate information, which is a marketable good that all citizens require. In the modern world, there is a clear acknowledgement of the fact that information is the most valuable resource of our time. Therefore, women LIS entrepreneurs who approach and promote information services with this mindset would definitely make money. In keeping with the aforementioned, Okwu et al.(2024) averred that the strategic value of LIS professionals in the 21st century cannot be underrated due to advent of information economy. The new concept of information economy is seen as an economic system whereby knowledge, information and services are considered more valuable than manufacturing.

Women LIS professionals, should equip themselves with the values, attitudes, and abilities necessary for better library services in order to handle the growing number of entrepreneurship opportunities brought about by the information economy. These days, people like writers, researchers, experts, and corporate organizations want information because they know that it is necessary to carry out and complete their various tasks since it promotes development and advancement. Women entrepreneurs must therefore take use of this chance.

Entrepreneurship: The Modern View

At the beginning of any systematic discussion, one is expected to define terms. Thus, Aristotle cited in Obineche and Eluke (2016), averred that "*initio disputandum definitionis nominis*" (for discussion to be intelligent, it must begin with definition of terms). Hence, the need to define the terms related to this work. However, the term entrepreneurship has been defined differently by various schools of thought but the most interesting thing about the various definitions is that they are concerned with the ability of an individual or group to convert notions into reality for human satisfaction

and profit making. Ottih (2016) affirmed that entrepreneurship is the participation of an individual or group of individuals in innovation and risk bearing for the purpose of establishing a venture, managing it to fruition and reaping the resultant benefits. Yet to Robert Hisrich, entrepreneurship is the process of creating something different with value by devoting the necessary time and effort, assuming the financial, psychological and social risk, and receiving the resulting rewards of monetary and personal satisfaction. Okwu et al. (2024) expressed that it is the involvement of a person or group of people in creativity and risk taking in order to launch a business, see it through to completion, and profit from it.

The Promising Woman Entrepreneur

Women entrepreneurs are women who initiates, establishes and operates an enterprise. It could also be a self-confident and resourceful woman craving financial liberty and the creation of possible employment opportunity for mankind. A woman entrepreneur is simply a woman who is able to come up with a specific business idea, skills and finance to transform it into a viable business enterprise. This woman creates, organises and takes the risk of a business enterprise. Her aim is to create and drive a satisfying system that will transform not just her life but those around her as well.

Skill Sets of Women Entrepreneurs in Library and Information Science

Women entrepreneurs in LIS must possess professional, managerial, and technological skills to thrive in the evolving information landscape, where digital innovation and knowledge management demand a diverse and adaptable skill set. These skills are discussed thus;

1. **Information Management and Research Skills:** The capacity to efficiently collect, arrange, assess, and distribute information is at the heart of LIS entrepreneurship (Okwu & Oporum, 2021). A thorough understanding of categorizing, indexing, creating metadata, and digital archiving is essential for female entrepreneurs. These skills allow them to provide clients, organizations, or institutions with specific services including database management, information consulting, and research support.
2. **Technological and Digital Literacy Skill:** The LIS entrepreneur of today needs to be tech-savvy. Proficiency with open-source software, data analytics, digital library systems, and information retrieval tools are all part of this. Women entrepreneurs must learn how to use artificial intelligence, cloud storage, and digital repositories into creative business models that increase the accessibility and usability of knowledge in this period.
3. **Business and Financial Management Skill:** Being an entrepreneur requires having good business sense. LIS women need to know how to make business plans, handle money, make budgets, and come up with marketing strategy. Okwu et al. (2024) expressed that to guarantee sustainability, one needs to be proficient in pricing, income generating, and cost analysis. Furthermore, the capacity to assess performance measures and analyze financial accounts is essential for making well-informed business decisions.
4. **Communication and Interpersonal Skills:** Successful entrepreneurship is still largely dependent on effective communication. Women entrepreneurs need to be able to effectively communicate their ideas, create powerful networks, and sustain positive working relationships with partners, clients, and staff. Presentation, teamwork, and negotiation abilities improve their ability to lead, influence, and interact both inside and outside of the LIS context.

5. **Innovation and Creativity:** The core of entrepreneurship is innovation. To recognize new demands in the information sector and create services that address them, women in LIS must exercise creativity. This could entail creating online knowledge platforms, creating digital literacy initiatives, or curating specialized information offerings for clients in the commercial or academic sectors. They can also use creative thinking to transform obstacles, like scarce resources, into chances for development (Khan et al., 2021).
6. **Leadership and Decision-Making Skills:** Strong leadership and strategic decision-making skills are essential for female entrepreneurs. Motivating groups, establishing precise objectives, and upholding a vision-driven approach to corporate operations are all components of leadership abilities. Making decisions is equally important since maintaining the enterprise's competitiveness and relevance demands striking a balance between risk, opportunity, and innovation.
7. **Marketing and Networking Skills:** An effective businesswoman is able to market her services. Women in LIS need to master networking, branding, and promotion. This entails using academic conferences, professional associations, and social media sites to raise awareness. Creating networks with other experts, possible customers, and investors aids in growing a company's reach and keeping abreast of market developments.
8. **Problem-Solving and Adaptability Skills:** The information environment is ever-changing and frequently unpredictable. As a result, female entrepreneurs need to be proactive problem solvers who can assess circumstances, recognize obstacles, and put workable solutions in place (Elonye & Uzuegbu, 2013). Their capacity to adapt guarantees that businesses can keep up with evolving client demands, market conditions, and technological advancements without losing ground.
9. **Ethical and Professional Integrity:** Women entrepreneurs in LIS must follow ethical guidelines on data privacy, intellectual property, and information sharing since they are information custodians. Maintaining integrity builds trust and credibility, all of which are critical for creating a respectable company image and enduring client relationships.

Entrepreneurial Openings for Women Entrepreneurs in Library and Information Science

The entrepreneurial openings for women entrepreneurs in LIS include:

1. **Literature Searching:** This is one of the business openings that LIS offers to female entrepreneurs. Professionals, authors, or researchers that want specific information on a particular topic of interest are frequently served by this service. It is a service that, upon request from a group or an individual, selectively gathers information output or products on a certain topic or field of study. It comprises conducting a comprehensive search of the body of literature (books, journal articles, and official reports) to ascertain what is already known about a certain issue and making it accessible.
2. **Abstracting Service:** A service that offers succinct summaries of publications (books, journals), frequently on a topic or collection of related topics, is known as an abstracting service. To succeed as abstractors, women entrepreneurs in LIS need to have certain abilities. An abstract, according to Elonye and Uzuegbu (2013), is an information tool that aids in organizing the published

literature so that consultants may quickly find relevant materials. Therefore, a person with subject-matter experience, proficiency in a foreign language, and information capabilities should be the perfect abstractor.

3. **Library Establishment and Maintenance:** Libraries for people and organisations can be established and maintained by women LIS entrepreneurs. One of the fee-based LIS services that calls for professionalism and experience is the creation and upkeep of libraries. It comprises choosing, acquiring, and properly setting up library contents and equipment. When establishing a library for an organization, it is important to consider the users' information demands as well as the available budget.
4. **Publishing and Printing:** This is an activity or profession that involves the production and distribution of information products. It is the process of turning a manuscript into an electronic or printed book for the purpose of reading. It is an entrepreneurial venture that entails the creation, marketing, and distribution of printed and non-printed information resources for public consumption. Printing is an economic business venture that is capable of enriching women entrepreneurs in LIS if managed properly.
5. **Indexing Service:** An indexing service is a service that assigns descriptors and other kinds of access points to documents. It analyses the content of documents and provides a guide to the information contained in them. Indexing service is an entrepreneurial opportunity that LIS professionals can venture into as a business enterprise. Elonye and Uzuegbu (2013) affirmed that the job of the indexer is to analyse the text so that users can find information on a particular topic.
6. **Information Brokerage:** An information broker is a professional who is involved in information gathering and marketing services in order to satisfy the needs of customers. Obuezie and Ogedoihu (2020) suggests that she is an individual who gathers information for others as a professional business. She goes in search of available information on a specific topic and delivers such to a buyer. In reflection to the above, Obuezie and Ogedoihu (2020) stated that she does this by accessing information databases to selectively provide information on definite subject of interest to a specific individual or group. Information brokers depend on a variability of information sources (print and non-print) to help them accomplish their task. This business requires little or no capital for one to kick off. Clients will find this service useful especially researchers thus, will be willing to pay for it (Usuka et al., 2019 cited in Obuezie & Ogedoihu 2020).
7. **Information Organisation Service:** Information organisation is an intellectual discipline concerned with activities such as; document description, cataloguing and classification that serve to provide systems of representation and order for knowledge or information. Women entrepreneurs in LIS can carry out this service for already existing libraries as well as new libraries or individuals desiring to establish libraries or desiring to organise their collections.

Factors that Encumber Women Entrepreneurs in Library and Information Science

There are numerous factors militating against entrepreneurs in general but these are peculiar to women entrepreneurs in LIS, these include;

1. **Socio-Cultural Issues:** This refer to the challenge levied against women entrepreneurs by the culture they practice and the community they come from. The Nigerian society perceive domestic activities, care towards the husband and children as the core responsibilities of the woman. Ottih (2016) declared that social, cultural and religious factors can and do pose restrictions on female entry into entrepreneurship. If she finally becomes an entrepreneur, she is required to return home before the time the society considers “an unconsecrated hour”. This restriction is for women alone.
2. **Business-Family Interface:** One of the prominent factors that inhibit women entrepreneurs is the blend of business and family responsibilities. Remarkably, some women entrepreneurs have been able to adjust while some are still battling with this challenge they do not understand how to combine family and business.
3. **Societal Interpretation:** The society view men as strong and fit for any entrepreneurial venture. The women as seen as unqualified, a gender that cannot withstand or survive pressure emanating from business. The society also see woman entrepreneurs as those that are not innovative, optimistic, lack the ability to deal with failure and cannot take part in risk taking activities.

Conclusion

In contemporary days, women entrepreneurs are playing a very central role in business. Entrepreneurship is a craggy venture. If it flourishes, the entrepreneur has every reason to ride the crown to self-fulfillment and pleasure. If it flops, opportunities exist to try again. Women entrepreneurs in LIS can avoid failure by having a good knowledge of the success and failure factors in entrepreneurship. Previous knowledge of these factors is a decent way to circumvent the pains of failure and the subsequent loss of resources. Women entrepreneurs in LIS must understand that entrepreneurship does not depend upon man or woman. It is an attitude of mind and involves appropriate internal stimulus. Hence, there is a dare need for women entrepreneurs in LIS to motivate themselves owing to the fact that information is the paramount product of this age and those who market information services with this perspective will unquestionably sell.

Suggestions

The following suggestions were offered in order to maximize the benefits of entrepreneurship for women in LIS:

1. LIS professional associations like; Nigeria Library Association (NLA) as well as Nigerian Association of Library and Information Science Educators (NALISE) should endeavor to sensitize and re-sensitize LIS women entrepreneurs on the

entrepreneurial openings available for women in LIS and the advantages they tend to gain as entrepreneurs in LIS.

2. LIS women entrepreneurs should focus on their God-given abilities and not the view of the society over women entrepreneurship.
3. Family members should always encourage and support the female entrepreneurs to grow.
4. Women entrepreneurs should always take advantage of professional development programmes like; seminars, workshops and conferences as these programmes will make them keep up with current trends in the information market.

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