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Women Entrepreneurs in Nigeria: Where Is the Mass Media?

Tolulope Kayode-Adedeji
Covenant University, Nigeria

Oyinkansola Ige
Lagos Business School, Nigeria

Thelma Ekanem
Covenant University, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

For ages, the African culture has limited the activities of women and conditioned, to a large extent, the mentality of most African countries about the place and positioning of women in the society. The mass media have been used as a tool in this. Promoting the abilities and achievements of women in the society is one of the important roles of the media in reducing the rate of gender discrimination. These achievements are becoming noticeable in politics and entrepreneurship; thus, setting a standard for other women in the society to build on. This chapter will explore the role of the media in promoting the woman entrepreneur in Nigeria. The study employed the survey research method for data gathering. Findings showed that women have equal opportunity to grow their businesses. Data shows that this growth is slow as there are no significant differences between respondents who agree or disagree with the availability of enabling environment for women to grow their business as compared to their male counterpart. The study recommends that the mass media need to give more voice to their businesses and activities to pave way and encourage the younger women in the society.

INTRODUCTION

Reeve and Baden (2000) describes gender discrimination as the systematic, unfavourable treatment of individuals on the basis of their gender, which denies them their rights, opportunities or resources.” Despite the stand of the Nigerian constitution on equality amongst male and female, some Nigerian cultures have constituted a barrier to realising this constitutional provision for gender equality. Explaining further, Anaeme, (2012, p. 1) affirms that “gender discrimination is as old as human history”. Socially, “sexual differences have been used to justify cultures in which one sex or the other has been restricted to considerably inferior and secondary roles.” Gender equality when discussed by researchers usually draws attention to the African and Asian continent. Gender issues most times have always been about the women: “Female characters devote their primary energy to improving their appearance and taking care of homes and people” (Wood, 1994, p. 32, Sarkar, 2015). Many researchers have supported this argument. (Anaeme, 2012; Kufin & Sinha, 2013). However, in many countries, domestic roles and roles concerning child care remains highly gender specific.

However, the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria (42) stresses that there should be “freedom from discrimination on the grounds of ethnic group, origin, religion, circumstance of birth, disability or political opinion.” Despite the constitutional provision, gender discrimination is still identified in Nigeria with both sexes but it is more prominent among women. According to the Nigeria Master Web Citizen News (2012), records show that of the 134 countries in the Equality index, Nigeria ranks 118. While stressing that women need to perform equal roles in the society to aid development, the Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-Moon, (2014), during the International women’s day titled “equality for women is progress for all” argued that “countries with more gender equality have better economic growth. Companies with more women leaders perform better. Peace agreements that include women are more durable. Parliaments with more women enact more legislation on key social issues such as health, education, anti-discrimination and child support.” Analysing the situation further, the World Bank (2005) believes that “Nigeria is a highly patriarchal society, where men dominate all spheres of women’s lives.

Furthermore, Moemeka (2000) describes the media as the “reality media of mass information”, because, according to him, “they are second to none in the ability to disseminate information far and fast- to reach millions of people in different parts of the world at virtually “no time”. This is how effective media messages can be, in Nigeria and across the globe. In recent times, the mass media have been used to promote women achievements in Nigeria especially in the area of politics.

As the participation of women continue to increase in Nigeria politics, most studies (Adenle & Oso, 2014; Ajaji, 2014; Mojaye, 2011) on gender discrimination have focused on women in politics and the role of different forms of mass media in promoting the activities of these women. To determine and compare media coverage of both genders in Nigeria by the various media, a research was carried out by the Institute for Media and Society, titled ‘Media Coverage of Women Politicians in the 2011 Elections in Nigeria’. The research compared the level of coverage of both genders in Nigerian television, radio and newspapers during election campaign. Result shows that male participants in the elections were more visible in the media than the female participants. The visibility of male aspirants in the media during the campaigns was not just higher than that of female aspirants; it was extremely higher (Institute for Media and Society, 2011). This study through survey, takes a step further to know the audience’s view on the promotion of women entrepreneurs in the Nigerian mass media.

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