Gender and Cyber Technology: The Impact of Online Marketing on Urban Market Women

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Abstract

Nigerian markets are spaces of economic activity as well as of extensive social interactions, relationships that sometimes transcend the simple exchange of goods and services. Ideas are transacted, and perspectives also get exchanged. The market place offers a meeting point for people of diverse social, religious and ethnic affiliations to interact; it is a place where customers and sellers operate in mutual care practices as their wellbeing are not neglected. Market women cannot be downplayed as they are intermediaries between the market and development of urban space. Their relevance is appreciated when women leaders of various market locations across the city are usually given the title of Iyaloja while their male counterparts are Baba loja to manage the affairs of markets. The transformations in local market place economics, such as the rise of online markets with the use of computers or the state's preference for ultra-modern shopping malls or the use of robotic machines, continue to threaten the longstanding indigenous markets in urban cities and, by extension, the ecosystem of support, it has offered to women. This paper examines the impact of these transformations for market women who are often not formally educated and hardly savvy with online technology. It was concluded that the repercussion of these transformations exceed economics; the alienation of buyers and sellers threaten an important domain of social and cultural interactions on daily basis.

Keywords: Markets, Alienation, Ultra-Modern and Social Enterprises

Introduction

The fundamental contributions of women in their households and national economies are increasingly acknowledged by the international community and within Africa mainly because of their energetic efforts to organize, articulate their concerns and make their voices heard (Fapohunda, 2012). Their mode of marketing goods and services is traditionally unique, acceptable and convenient to all and sundry regardless of status and class in the urban centers such as Lagos where women are usually adorned with the title Iya Loja or Iya Oja, Iya Laje of their various markets in the cities. They are into small businesses across urban cities in various indigenous markets and locations. Their mode of marketing goods and services is traditionally unique, acceptable and convenient to all and sundry regardless of status and class in the urban centers. Among the majority of rural and low-income urban dwellers, women farm and trade, they are responsible for 70% of food production, 50% of domestic food storage, 100% of food processing, 50% of animal husbandry and 60% of agricultural marketing (Adeyi, 2015).

In Africa generally and Nigeria specifically,traditionally, women are known to be great traders and marketers conveying their products to consumers in open market structures situated across the city, through hawking of their merchandise to prospective buyers or displaying them in proportion outside their homes, etc. These patterns of trading and marketing goods and services provides women with the opportunity to have social relationships with buyers/consumers directly. Women have also taken advantage of new opportunities to produce vegetables for urban markets on marginalland using highly labour-intensive practices. Traditional society's style of trading refers to those patterns of marketing as indigenous and often ancient cultural practices (Adeyi, 2015). There are lots of emerging development through this type of marketing such as personal closeness between sellers and buyers to the extent that they are concerned about each other's welfare and economic benefits; these interactions might occasionally lead to marital relationships between their customers and buyers or among their children, thus expanding their social capital. However, online marketing came on board with technological innovations which also has its own specific clients and provides them with comfort, conveniences and periodic discounted rates while shopping online.

Online marketing is a set of tools and methodologies used for promoting products and services through the internet. It includes a wider range of marketing elements than traditional business marketing due to the extra channels and marketing mechanisms available on the internet. Online marketing has the following advantages such as listed: Growth in potential; Reduced expenses; Elegant communications; Better control; Improved customer service; Competitive advantage; Online marketing is also known as internet marketing, web marketing, digital marketing and search engine marketing (SEM). There are more than 35 online markets situated in the urban centers in Nigeria, they are JUMIA, KONGA, JIJI, PAYPORTE, YUDALA, OLX, DEALDEY MOBOFREE,GIDIMALL etc (Nwaeze, nd) and are not configured to reflect this type of social relationships.

Issues

The 21st-century technologies, however, is altering these patterns of marketing or trading as civilization and technological innovation took urban marketing to online space whereby sellers and buyers can no longer physically meet to interact and establish relationships. Hence, are alienated from each other.In 1995, the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development (UNCSTD) recognized the growing influence of ICTs in development and the importance of women participation in discussions regarding its integration globally (Zaiour, 2009). The advancement of ICTs has brought new opportunities for both knowledge sharing and knowledge gathering for both gender. To the extent that the global community can reach unconnected individuals, families, and populations to better understand their needs and challenges in which online marketing if part of. ICTs provide unlimited opportunities for economic development and social engagement through new innovative thinking and tools (Samia and Nidhi, 2009). This new invention of marketing goods and services is strange and alien to our

traders in Nigeria society.

This new invention of marketing goods and services is strange and alien to indigenous market women who are probably in the majority of our uneducated population in urban society.More online markets are emerging in our urban society without considering its implication on the existing female traders whose style of marketing differs completely from online marketing. The majority of these women lack the wherewithal to be integrated into this pattern of marketing as they lack formal education let alone going online to market their goods and services. They are not computer and IT savvy hence cannot trade in online space. The challenge now is how will Nigerian urban women have a level playing field with these new ways of marketing goods and services?
Meanwhile, online shopping has been widely accepted as a way of purchasing products and services in modern times. It has become a more popular means in the Internet world ((Bourlakis et al., 2008). It also provides consumers more information and choices to compare product and price, more choice, convenience, easier to find anything online ((Butler and Peppard, 1998)). Online shopping has been shown to provide more satisfaction to modern consumers seeking convenience and speed ((Yu and Wu, 2007). This new invention of marketing goods and services is strange and alien to indigenous urban market women who are probably in the majority of our uneducated population in urban society. More online markets are emerging in our urban society without considering its implication on the existing female traders whose style of marketing differs completely from online marketing.
The majority of these women lack the wherewithal to be integrated into this pattern of marketing as they lack formal education let alone going online to market their goods and services. They are not computer and IT savvy hence cannot trade in online space. The challenge is how will Nigerian urban women have a level playing field with these new ways of marketing goods and services?

Socio-Economic Implications of Online Marketing on Urban Women's Businesses
Socio-economic environment differs from men to women and also from place to place within the same city and it may also change over time. Socio-economic environment differs from people to people and also from place to place within the same city and it may also change over time. Changes in Social Values and Attitudes: The changing role of women in their relationship with consumers which was previously mutual, cordial, interconnected is strained and has changed to alienation of consumers from sellers. The market place is no more their meeting point. Cause reduction in goods and services patronage of urban women traders.

Emphasis on quality of goods instead of quantity of goods contributes to the changing nature of marketing. The nature of the formal work of urban consumers makes online business attractive and convenient and at times cheaper. Globalization, civilization and technological inventions play crucial roles in altering the pattern of marketing by women in our urban centers because our cultural marketing practices have been eroded. Growing Consumerism: It is exposing consumer dissatisfaction on a large scale against unfair trade practices such as wrong measurement, insulting and cursing customers during product cost bargaining.

Brazil
Like Nigeria, online retailing is taking its root in Brazil urban areas. Findings show that there is an increasing rate of online shopping in the urban areas of Brazil while people in the rural areas are gradually getting involved (Cunha, Abida, Woods, Sonneveld & Carrera, 2015). However, a very large number of internet users in Brazil do not shop online rather they use the internet to check prices of goods to make comparison (OECD, 2018). So, online retail market is significantly small in Brazil due to limitations in internet access, reduced online shopping culture and logistics problem in delivery. To encourage online shopping and to deal with delivery logistics problem, a few retail stores have been trying to combine online and offline shopping whereby consumers would purchase goods online and go to the nearest retail store of the retail outlet to pick up the goods (OECD, 2018). The problems faced by online retail in Brazil and other Latin American countries like Argentina and Mexico which contributes to the slow rate of online shopping include, lack of trust by consumers in terms of security and privacy; and many consumers have no credit cards and bank account (Gabriel, 2017).

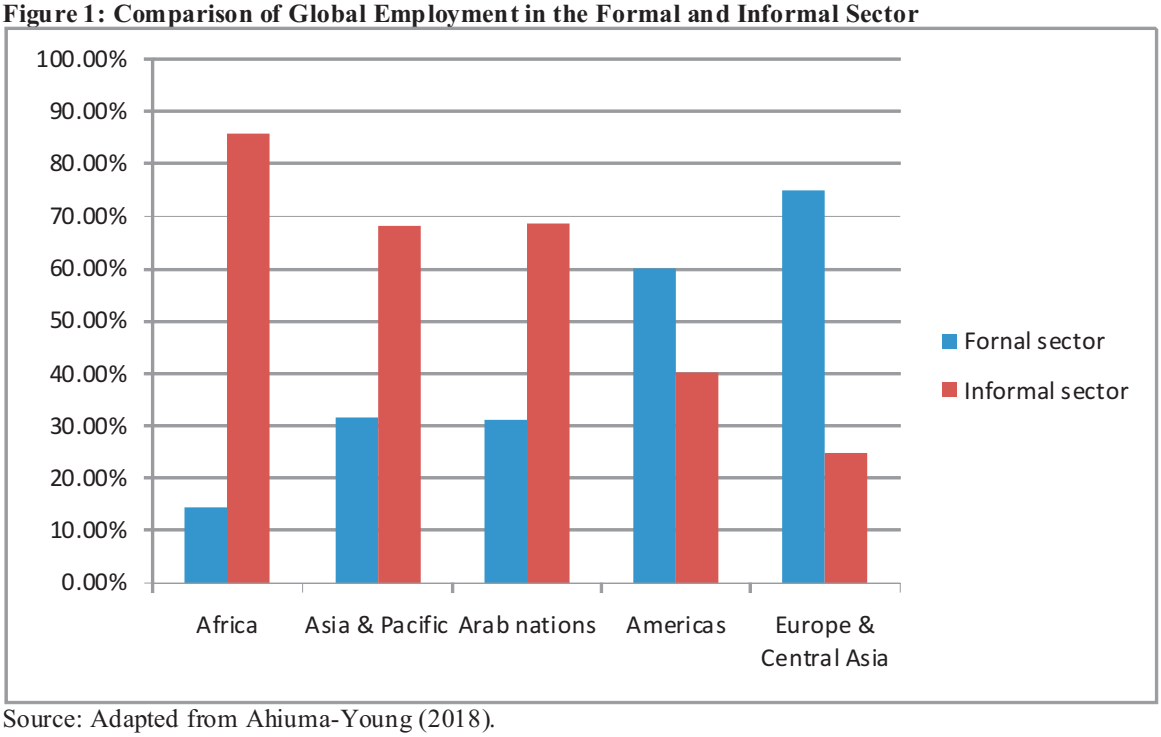
Pakistan
Most women in Pakistan are not involved in economic activities due to discrimination they are subjected to in all aspects of life. A few of them engaged in economic activities are found in the informal sector. 93% of women in Pakistan are employed in the informal sector, especially agriculture (Farhan & Abdus, 2013).Online shopping in Pakistan is greeted with suspicion and distrust due to high rate of victimization to cybercrime in the country. This makes the public to be reluctant to embrace the innovation but the youth have shown more interest in recent time. Nevertheless, the growth of online retail has been very slow in Pakistan compared to Nigeria (Dost, Illyas & AbdulRehman, 2015). Unlike in Nigeria, social media in Pakistan has played no active role in promoting online shopping (Sattar & Ameer, 2014).

Ghana
A Research conducted in Kumasi Ghana by Baah-Ennumh and Adom-Asamoah (2012). reveals that women dominate retail trade specifically the sales of foodstuffs which helped in the movement of farm produce from the farms to the consumers (the general public).Ghana competes with Nigeria and South Africa in the use of the internet and the social media but this does not result in growth in online shopping as a greater number of internet users do not explore online retail stores (Eunice, 2015).

Retail Market in Nigeria
For decades, the Nigerian economy has been driven by the oil and gas sector which contributes about 14% of the country's GDP and 95% of the country's foreign exchange earnings. Wholesale and retail trade constitutes the third-largest contributor to the economy after Telecommunication and banking, due to increasing growth in the consumer economy.This is mostly from the informal sector (Fiorini, Hattingh, MClaren, Russo & Sun-Balogun,

2013).According to the ILO report 61% of the world's employed population work in the informal sector (Ahiuma-Young, 2018). Comparing employment in the formal and informal economy in the world, the table below shows the differences in different parts of the globe.

Figure 1: Comparison of Global Employment in the Formal and Informal Sector



Source: Adapted from Ahiuma-Young (2018).

Figure 1 above shows that 14.2% of Africans were employed in the formal sector while 85.8% were employed in the informal sector. In Asia and the Pacific, 31.8% had formal employment while 68.2% had informal employment. For the Arabs countries, 31,4% worked in the formal sector while 68.6% worked in the informal sector. In the Americas, 60.0% had formal employment while 40.0% had informal employment. Finally in Europe and Central Asia, 74.9% of the working population had formal employment while 25.1% worked in the informal sector. This means that African informal sector is very large compared to other parts of the world. To affirm the important role of the informal sector in the economy of developing countries like Nigeria, some scholars stated that the informal sector enhances the growth of the market economy, productive activities, flexible labour market, absorbs retrenched and retired labour from the formal sector and fosters the global agenda of privatization and liberalization (Onwe, 2013).

In Nigeria wholesale and retail constituted 49% of the informal sector as of 2001 (Onyebueke & Gayer, 2011). Retail business were initially restricted to traditional open market and a few small local stores, constituting the informal sector but there has been a considerable growth of the retail market in the past few years at both formal and informal levels with big investors investing in organized retail outlets operating simultaneously with the informal retail businesses found everywhere particularly in Lagos state (NRSR, 2014/2015). Increasing population with its attendant rise in demand for food and other consumables as well as non-consumable items has been a major contributor to the expansion of the retail market in the past few years. Fiorini et.al (2013) estimated a $40 billion growth opportunities in food and consumer goods in Nigeria between 2008 and 2020. In Lagos alone, consumption is 134% greater than the national average consumption.Despite the economic recession in the country in the past few years, the Global Retail Development Index shows that Nigeria retail market sold #38 trillion ($125 billion) worth of goods in 2016 alone, the highest retail sales in Sub-sahara Africa (Smart, 2017). Another factor responsible for the expansion of the retail market in the country especially in Lagos is the expansion of the middle class which necessitated the resurgence of organized retail outlets like Shoprite, Supersaver, Adidde, Grocery Bazaar, Justright and so on (NRSR, 2014/2015).The high rate of unemployment and the continuous campaign for the establishment of small and medium scale enterprises by the government and non-governmental bodies as a way of salvaging poverty has played a significant role in encouraging the growth of the informal retail sector in the country. The informal retail sector constitutes 95% of the total retail market with about #1billion worth of homeware and giftware items sold each day (Smart, 2017). The retail market in Nigeria has become so fascinating that foreign producers are beginning to liaise with local retail outlets for the sale of their products. For instance, Black &Decker launched about 20 household machines into the Nigerian market; BlackUp Paris introduced four beauty products in conjunction with Montaigne, a Lagos-based retail outlet; and Maybelline New York introduced its personal care products to the retail market in the past few years (NRSR, 2014/2015). Traditional open retail market accounts for 98% of retail transactions in Nigeria while the formal retail market accounts for only 2% of retail transactions (Ogbo, Ugwu, Enemuo & Ukpere, 2019). Despite the increase in the organized retail outlets in the country, traditional open retail business still constitute about 70%

of the retail structure in the country (NRSR, 2014/2015). The traditional open retail business is still very much in operation and being well patronized by people but there is an increasing shift towards the organized retail outlets in the past few years for various reasons, one of which is the expansion of the middle-class.

The Role of Women in the Retail Market

The informal sector tends to employ men(63.0%) more than women(58.1%) worldwide but women in low-income and lower-middle-income countries are more exposed to the informal sector and are more found in most vulnerable situations (Ahiuma-Young, 2018). The retail market in Nigeria involves both males and females of different ages and women tend to play a significant role in the functioning of the market both formally and informally. The majority of women in the retail sector in urban areas like Lagos and other state capitals operate in the informal sector with some carrying out their trade-in shops or stalls build by either government or private individuals while the majority who cannot afford to rent shops engage in street trading(Otekhile & Matthew, 2017).

Street trading has continued to grow especially among women despite its prohibition by most state governments and consistent disturbances from local governments' officers and social miscreants who collect illegal money from them (Onyebueke & Geyer, 2011). This can be attributed to factors like unemployment, loweducational level, low capital requirement, economic condition/poverty and continuous influx of population into the urban areas especially Lagos among others (Amoo, Ola-David, Olurinola & Fadayomi, 2016; Otekhile & Matthew, 2017). Street trading represents a desperate means of survival for so many women as a result of the scourge of poverty and non-availability of paid employment in the country (Gani, 2016). Retail trade, especially at the informal level, is crucial to the survival of women in most urban areas in the country as it is used as a means of supporting their families. Though the population of women in the informal sector is far higher than men, women's participation are often underestimated and excluded from the National Census of Productive Survey because the calculation of the Gross National Product does not account for them (Soetan, 1995).

Generally, women in the informal sector engage in home-based production, retail trading,and services outside the home. Women's work as producers, salespersons and service providers are not often given recognition by the government and are therefore treated with contempt (Kalpagam, 1987). Home-based production carried out by women contributes to the availability of goods at affordable prices to the public and their involvement in retailing helps to complete the chain of production especially in getting the goods produced in the formal sector of the economy to the final consumers. The involvement of women in large number in the informal retail sector shrinks the level of unemployment that formerly prevailed among women, helping to cushion the effect of unemployment in the country. More importantly, market women contribute massively to revenue generation especially in Lagos state and therefore should be catered for in the scheme of things in the state. This fact is expressed by Heinrich (2017) in the following words:

> Market women and informal traders in Lagos contribute massively to the urban economy of the city; through payment of various taxes and levies but also through sustaining transport, construction, food, and other sectors, even in times of deep recession. They contribute their share to the internally generated revenue and therefore should expect in return social services in the form of local infrastructure, access to low-interest credits etc (pg. 24)

Online Retail Market in Nigeria

Contemporary society is increasingly driven by technology especially Information and Communication technology with widespread use of the internet bringing about the emergence of e-commerce, e-banking, e-marketing and online shopping. Online shopping, especially in the retail economy, allows consumers to visit e-stores, assess, compare and select products which they can pay for via credit cards, debit cards, smartcards, money transfer or cash on delivery without going to the market physically (Aminu, 2013). E-commerce enables large businesses as well as small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) to operate in the global market place and at the same time encourage businesses and communities to participate seamlessly in the social, economic and cultural networks across the globe (Kareem, Owomoyela & Oyebamiji, 2014). Online retail trading became localized in Nigeria over a decade ago. Prior to the development of online retailing in the country, most people buy from the open market, small stores, super-markets and later switched to the large multiple shops or malls most of which are foreign-owned. Today, there is an increasing shift towards online shopping by the populace as more online retail ventures enter into the market. By 2014, the number of online retail outlets in Nigeria had increased to sixty with JUMIA making waves among the bigger outlets (NRSR, 2014/2015). Most of the goods purchased online are books, electronics, phones, clothing, grocery, food items, and some other small commodities. The major factors contributing to the rapid growth of online retailing in Nigeria include improved internet literacy, expansion of the middle-class, convenience of transaction, improved internet banking, and so on (NRSR, 2014/2015). Online retail stores offer consumers a variety of benefits such as freedom of choice of products from varieties, service information, shopping convenience, 24/7 shopping, time-saving, competitive pricing and privacy (Aminu, 2013).

Effect of Online Retail Market on Conventional Retail Market in Nigeria

Online retailing is a subset of e-commerce or e-marketing and it involves the purchase and sales of goods between sellers and consumers through the internet. The increasing rate of online shopping among consumers in Nigeria has a great impact on the conventional retail market and also signifies a change in economic culture due to advancement in technology (Egele, Ikechi & Ozo, 2017). Astudy carried out by Saha (2015) in India on the impact of online retailing on traditional retailing shows various areas of impact which are visibly seen in Nigeria.

1. Reduction in the retailers' turnover in terms of volume of sale.

2. Online retailing has brought in a price war which forced the retailers to reduce the price of their goods resulting in a drastic reduction in their profit margin.
3. Retailers are more willing to give discounts on demand by customers in order to maintain sales and the customers.
4. Online stores maintain a large variety of stock which is very difficult for retailers as keeping a variety of stocks may lead to loss because many goods will get spoilt.
5. Retailers are now being forced to carry out home delivery of goods rather than losing their customers.
6. Retailers are now being compelled to do more adverts of their goods.
7. Increase in window shopping which makes retailers to have more prospective buyers rather than the actual buyers(Saha, 2015).

All the listed above are not relevant to the urban market women as customers' needs to be a good bargainer to be able to have fair dealings or else he/she can purchase product at exorbitant prices. Possibility of buying sub-standard product is rampart in the open market is a common trend unlike quality products customers can get online because most online stores have products return policy. However, the traditional open retail market offers customers immediate access to goods, aesthetic appeal from immediate surroundings, ability to see and touch the products, face-to-face interaction and negotiation between buyers and sellers, and serves as a leisure activity for many people (Ogbo, Ugwu, Enemuo & Ukpere, 2019). These benefits are not offered by online retailing to consumers. The traditional retailing system performs an important role in African life and serves as an economic necessity for the population that cannot afford the organized retail experience and a cultural phenomenon that help to shape the sense of belonging to the community (Ogbo, Ugwu, Enemuo & Ukpere, 2019). Urban market does not have product return facilities.

Theories

Two theories are used to explain this phenomenon they are theories relationship marketing theory dualist school of thought. The relationship marketing theory seeks to build customer loyalty. The interactive and personalized communications in digital marketing help in relationship marketing efforts. These characteristics, coupled with the possibility of having regular and frequent communications, improve customer loyalty (Alfred, Nd). online marketing allows for convenience of internet marketing, reach of the internet, cheaper products, personalization of offers, relationships with customers and the growing importance of social media (Seidel, 2019). These features allow the customer to receive information based on her needs, improve service quality perceptions and increase loyalty.However, online markets do not care even if it is a Robot that they are chatting with, they just want to sell. While traditional marketing builds cordial social relationships between seller and the buyer. Relationship that leads to facial contacts and personal interactions which could lead to social wellbeing of both. This relationship on its own supersede financial benefits, as it creates sense of belonging towards each other with care undertone for each other.

The Dualistscholars see the informal sector of the economy as comprising marginal activities distinct from and not related to the formal sector but provide income for the poor such as urban market women and a safety net in times of crisis (Hart 1973; ILO 1972; Sethuraman 1976; Tokman 1978). They argued that informal operators like urban women are excluded from modern economic opportunities due to imbalances between the growth rates of the population and of modern industrial employment, and a mismatch between people's skills and the structure of modern economic opportunities. Urban market women are in a position to provide employment opportunities for those at the at lower rung of economic ladder such as "Alabaru, Mai barrow, cart pushers", the uneducated in the society etc. People that online marketing cannot absorbed into their employment space. Majority of urban market women are not literate enough to be able to embrace modern technology, such as internet related services, therefore they are comfortable with direct bargaining.

Conclusion

It is pertinent to note that there is a great difference between online markets and urban market space. Online market can only be accessed by the educated and those with computer knowledge applications. While most of the women in urban markets are not educated let alone being IT savvy. Even the few educated among this category of traders are entrenched indirect contacts and maintenance of social relationships with buyers. They are all used to the indigenous pattern of trading through bargaining and negotiations of the cost of their products to consumers. The fact remains that these two types of marketing has come to stay globally and Nigeria cannot be exempted, as none of the two can be relegated for the other.

Recommendations

Policy framework can be adopted to sensitize and regulate the marketing style of urban market women without necessarily altering their established closeness with buyers. Also, cheating should be discouraged for those buyers that are not good at cost bargaining. This is so as some are now obtaining POS from their banks. Urban women contribute so much to the State IGR through payment of taxes and levies and also the survival of their families supporting husbands through this informal trading pattern, hence, they should not be allowed to go into extinction because of the wave of online marketing.

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