

**A Study of Women Small-Scale Enterprise in Nsukka,
Enugu State, Nigeria: The case of the tailoring business**

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship is essential to economic growth and job creation. It is capable of promoting self employment. Entrepreneurship can also be seen as gender neutral since a man or a woman can be an entrepreneur. What is important is that the individual entrepreneur should be able to perform functions which are basic to entrepreneurial position. These include, being able to undertake risk and uncertainties, being innovative and able to utilize resources for production. The ability to source or raise capital is also very important. This study investigates the potentials and viabilities of small-scale tailoring enterprise as valued and accepted by the female gender in Nsukka metropolis. Since little can be achieved in entrepreneurship without the basic skills, this paper focuses on the developmental process of the entrepreneur in terms of special training, motivation and experiences of the female tailors. One hundred and twenty small-scale tailoring enterprises owned by the female were selected by random sampling. Sixteen structured questionnaire was delivered and administered by the researchers. The data of the study were analyzed using simple statistics. Result showed that the female tailors demonstrated high level of creativity and independence in their tailoring business. It also revealed that most of the tailors acquired their tailoring skills partly through formal education and the apprentice system.

Introduction

The world of women's entrepreneurship is becoming large, diverse and of great economic significance. Ezedum, Agbo and Odigbo (2011) observed that it is an ideal way to juggle the competing demands of career and family. Women entrepreneurs are female who take up challenging roles by interacting and adjusting themselves with the social resources and support spheres in the society. According to Natividad (1998), "Global markets and women are not often used in the same sentence, but increasingly, statistics

show that women have economic clout – most visibly as entrepreneurs and most powerfully as consumers.” This is in agreement with Jalbert (2002:9) who argues that “worldwide, many women are entrepreneurs and women are bringing commitment and integrity to bear on their business operations because they care about economic empowerment, entrepreneurial development and innovation. Female entrepreneurs seek the professional and personal support that is found in business associations.” It is a fact that economic globalization has helped to encourage the expansion of female business ownership and that women entrepreneurs are influencing the shape and outlook of most businesses in the global marketplace.

Tailoring business is one of the businesses that have attracted the interest of the female gender of the society and they are lured into it. Tailoring as an entrepreneurial venture have presented great opportunities for women empowerment through which their capacity and potentials are enhanced, making them self reliant and highly productive. This has been made possible by the explosion of fashion industries which have increased the demand for highly stylized clothing. The growth of small-scale tailoring business have also helped to resolve some of the issues that border around women such as reconciling private and professional life. As an entrepreneurial venture, it can help the women realize their dreams and make them more flexible when it comes to reconciling private and business life. According to Nnodim (2011), a person that wants to start a tailoring business can decide to work from home or find a separate storefront location. Since tailoring business has no specific rule on the location of business, it is easier for the female tailors to operate from where it is most convenient to them in terms of running their home, which are their primary duties.

Tailoring is one of the skills acquired in textile art and can be obtained through apprenticeship training or through formal education. It can also be regarded as fashion design in modern textile art domain. According to Dyson (1988) in Diogu (2006), design is the ability to imagine and bring about desired changes through our senses of sight, hearing, touch and taste. A tailor is one who makes new dress or repairs torn clothing, professionally for people in the society. Skill acquisition and development are necessary tools in tailoring design. Nnodim (2011) stated that tailoring business guarantees stable returns to the entrepreneur, provided the tailor has adequate skill and has his business outlet strategically located. Eisner (2005) views skill development as the ability to solve problem in the way of qualitative intelligence, because it deals with the visualization of qualities expressed in images. These images in tailoring could be the Fabric or materials and the personnel involved. Nnodim further notes that tailoring entrepreneur requires a good knowledge of the process, contacts and marketing skills. Orji in Nnodim (2011) pointed out that “acquiring tailoring skill is the first thing that should engage the attention of a person who is to be involved in tailoring business”. A tailor with creative skill will be found competent when she/he interacts with his/her clients on styles and other creative aspects of his/her work. Glueck (1981) in his view listed the following management skills for entrepreneurs:

- (a) Human Resources Skills
- (b) Communication skills
- (c) Technical skills

- (d) Organizing skills and
- (e) Skills in managerial functions.

Tailoring business require the above skills in other to flourish. A tailor who manages both material and human resources should be responsible for the satisfaction of both.

This paper addresses the potentialities and viabilities of small tailoring business as undertaken by the female gender in Nsukka metropolis.

Statement of Problem

Most women suffer job opportunity constraints as a result of the roles they play in the families as mothers and sometimes bread winners. There is a global problem of unemployment and so most women who have acquired one skill or the other in different areas of art are not employed. There are also many women including young girls who as a result of one reason or another could not complete either primary or secondary school education. Most women are seeking for alternative means of livelihood in absence of regular jobs in the ministry or industry.

Some of the common issues which some women often raise are; what kind of jobs would allow a woman to combine her roles as mother as well as being engaged in an enterprise? What job opportunities are available that would make individuals particularly women self reliant? A study that would address these issues is actually needed in order to guide the women on vocational opportunities available to them. Awareness on the benefits of small-scale tailoring business will go a long way to address the questions above.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine some small scale tailoring enterprises that are owned and operated by women in the Nsukka Metropolis to determine their developmental process, entrepreneurship requirements and potentials as viable business enterprise. Specifically, this study will try to find out: the requirement for the establishment of tailoring enterprise, in terms of training, financial requirement, design, marketing opportunity and operational challenges.

Significance of the study

This study will motivate women who have the desire to establish a business to see tailoring as a good enterprise. It will help to create more awareness that entrepreneurship through tailoring will help to empower women in the society. It may try to expose some of the constraints of tailoring business and produce solutions which can be utilized by other female tailors in other localities. It will also inform both the government and the philanthropists on ways they can come in to minimize the problems of the small-scale business entrepreneurs such as the tailors.

Population sample and sampling technique

The sample for the study is 120 female tailors in Nsukka metropolis. Twenty (20) female tailors were chosen from Ogige market road of Nsukka; twenty (20) from Onuiyi zone; twenty (20) from the Cold-room zone; twenty (20) from the main market

and twenty (20) other female tailors were randomly selected from Oba-Nsukka link road, making a total of one hundred and twenty (120) female tailors.

Research Questions

- (1) What are the requirements for the establishment of a viable tailoring business in terms of training, finance, marketing opportunity and management of operational challenges?
- (2) What abilities or potentialities should a tailoring entrepreneur possess to do his or her job?

Design of the study

The descriptive survey design was used in conducting the study. This is because a survey reveals current conditions and shows need for improvement.

Instrument

A questionnaire was the main instrument used for the study. It was built on a four- point rating scale of Strongly Agree (4 points), Agree (3 points), Disagree (2 points) and Strongly Disagree (1 point). The items on the questionnaire were arranged in two sections guiding the study.

Data Collection and Analysis

The researchers administered 120 questionnaires on the respondents and collected some without any loss. The tables consist of 18 items grouped into two Clusters. The first Cluster has 9 responses to obtain information on the viability of tailoring enterprise in terms of requirements for the establishment.

The second Cluster consists of 10 items on potentiality development of tailoring business through abilities. The data for the study was analyzed using mean score.

Cluster I: Total Mean score results of the female tailors on requirements for viable tailoring enterprise.

S/N	Items on the requirement for viable tailoring business	Total score	\bar{X}	Remark
1.	Acquisition of basic skills are required by a tailor to be able to establish a viable tailoring business	4120	4.00	Agree
2.	I developed tailoring interest/business without any form of training	10	0.33	Disagree
3.	I obtained my tailoring skill through apprenticeship	100	3.33	Agree
4.	I obtained mine through both formal education and apprenticeship	80	2.7	Agree
5.	I was able to acquire the basic equipment which are sewing machines, thread of all colours only to start the business	100	3.33	Agree
6.	I bought both the basic and other sophisticated equipment before starting the business.	100	3.33	Agree

7.	I have many clients skillfully and I give them what they want.	112	3.73	Agree
8.	I prosper in my business because the clients are my people	10	0.33	Disagree

Overall = 2.64

Criterion = 2.50

The data analysis result of Mean score requirement for viable tailoring business represented in table 1 shows scores for items 1, 2, 3 and 4, to be higher than the criterion mean value of 2.50. This indicates that acquisition of basic skills is very necessary for the establishment of viable tailoring business. It also shows that tailoring skills can be acquired through apprenticeship training and through formal education. Numbers 5 and 6 shows that another requirement for the establishment of tailoring business are mainly the basic equipment which according to the tailors include sewing machine, thread of all colours, sewing needles, good cutting table, pairs of scissors, pressing iron and tapes. The number that disagreed in number 6 indicates that sophisticated equipments are not very necessary for a beginner. The scores in numbers 7 and 8 confirm that without the required skills, the viability of tailoring business will not be harnessed.

Table II. Total Mean score results of the potentiality of a tailoring business being fully developed through various abilities of the tailoring entrepreneur and what these abilities are.

S/N	Items on potentiality of a tailoring business being developed through various abilities of the entrepreneur.	Total score	\bar{X}	Remark
1.	The courage to start my tailoring business was prompted by: my desire to be empowered and be self-reliant.	100	3.33	Agree
2.	Because I could not further my education because of lack of finance	80	2.7	Agree
3.	Because I could not get employment	80	2.7	Agree
4.	My tailoring skills and business have improved because of regular involvement in sewing and handling of the challenges involved.	100	3.33	Agree
5.	The above abilities have earned me high popularity and more customers.	100	3.33	Agree
6.	These potentials acquired through my tailoring business have contributed immensely in the alleviation of poverty in my family.	120	4	Agree
7.	Tailoring business is a lucrative business if the tailor is able to understand the clients and the worker; (b) able to supervise the activities of the establishment, (c) able to render professional advice to the workers	80	2.7	Agree

	during the design process and able to control the workers.			
8.	The set-back in tailoring business include: irregular power supply, high cost of tailoring equipments, and materials, high cost of workshops, poor environment, careless of some apprentice or employees, and stress.	100	3.33	Agree
9	I have succeeded in my business even without these abilities	10	0.33	Disagree

Overall = 2.58

Criteria = 2.50

The data on table 2 shows that potentialities required of a tailoring business. The table shows scores for items 1, 2, and 3 are higher than the criterion mean value of 2.50. This shows that motivation is one of the essential abilities that can develop potentials in tailoring business. The element of motivations is diversified in the opinions.

Items 4, 5 and 6 with the mean scores of 3.33, 3.33 and 4.00 indicate that abilities developed through the tailoring skills did not only develop the potentialities of the tailoring businesses but also earned the entrepreneurs popularity, more customers and alleviation of poverty in their families. These confirm that development of tailoring ability is very essential for the development of tailoring potentials.

The mean score of number 7 agrees with the enumerated abilities as abilities needed for the development of potentiality in tailoring business. The mean score of item 9 reveals that one cannot succeed in tailoring business without the abilities.

Discussion

The research findings from research question I (one) reveals that tailoring skill acquisition is very essential in the establishment of tailoring business. In line with this view, Orji in Nnodim (2011) comments that acquiring the skill is the first thing that should engage the attention of a person who wants to be involved as a tailor in business. Tailoring business is an employment and as such, one has to undergo training for the acquisition of the required stock of knowledge, skills and competence. The result confirms that the ability to render desired services to customers in tailoring will lead to the success and viability of the business.

The results also reveal that starting tailoring business may not be very expensive since it requires only the basic equipments and materials to start. These include sewing machine, threads of different colours, pairs' of scissors, sewing needles, good cutting table and pressing iron. These are relatively not on the high side in terms of cost. This may be the reason why most of the women studied were able to start the business in spite of their low income level. This finding stands as encouragement to most women out there who want to be empowered to think about acquiring this skill and going into the business.

The findings from research question II reveals that certain abilities are required for the development of the potentiality of a tailoring business. These abilities include

diverse motivational elements, such as desire to be empowered and being self-reliant, goal setting and perseverance, self confidence and determination, taking initiative and seeking personal responsibilities. These corroborate the findings of Sunder and Madhavan (2013) in a related study. Eisner (2003), also comments that the primary motivation for skill mastery has to come from the inside with reference to thinking ability and technical knowledge. From the above it could be seen that women small business tailoring enterprise in Nsukka , Enugu State is receiving a boost due to motivation. A person serious about skill development must be internally motivated to perfect the skill. The above mentioned motivational elements are powerful enough to trigger interest that can be pursued and developed. The desire to be empowered and self-reliant can lead to discoveries and commitment.

Through the tailoring business, poverty level of the female tailors examined has improved greatly, proving that tailoring enterprise is a viable business. From the study, it has been discovered that despite the viability of tailoring business, it also suffer some constraints that slow down the progress of the business. Among these constraints are, irregular supply of light, high cost of workshops and poor work environment.

Recommendation

The researchers recommend that the government, banks and NGOs should invest in the development of small and medium scale tailoring enterprises in Nigeria especially in the rural areas. It has been discovered that private sector is strategic to the development of any economy and this is one of the reasons to encourage the growth of tailoring business. Many developed countries of the world such as China and North Korea have attained meaningful progress economically and technologically as a result of the development of the textile sector.

Girls and women who have developed skills in tailoring should be encouraged by government and non-governmental organizations by giving them soft and interest free loans. It is also necessary to organize seminars and workshops in the rural communities to sensitize women about the entrepreneurial opportunities in tailoring. Government should also try and provide stable power supply in this country since it is very essential for the establishment and operation of small-scale tailoring enterprises.

Conclusion

This paper presents women in the practice of tailoring art and their progress. It also probed into the viability and potentials of tailoring business in the Nsukka Metropolis of Enugu State. It also highlighted the challenges in the business. It tried to find out the reasons why women are particularly involved in the tailoring business and suggested ways more women would be helped by the government and NGOs to be self-employed through tailoring business. The study discovered that tailoring business is a viable one and a weapon for fighting poverty especially among women.

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