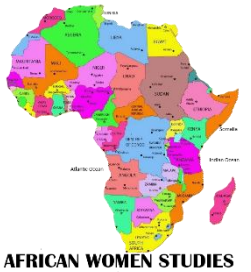
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Impact of Digitised Platforms on Entrepreneurs: Best Practices and Lessons Learnt for African Women's Economic Empowerment

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Abstract

Digital platforms offer significant opportunities for enterprises, yet women entrepreneurs face persistent challenges in fully benefiting from the digital economy. Limited access to affordable, reliable internet, low digital literacy, and unfamiliarity with online tools hinder engagement. Without targeted interventions, these barriers risk deepening inequities in entrepreneurial success. This article examines the impact of online platforms on entrepreneurship, focusing on best practices and lessons learned for African women's economic empowerment. It enhances understanding of digital opportunities and challenges faced by African women entrepreneurs and critically reviews existing literature to offer globally and regionally relevant strategies. The study also addresses a conceptual gap in African Feminist Epistemological methodologies, emphasizing women's knowledge and lived experiences in digital entrepreneurship and bridging gaps in feminist research frameworks. Guided by opportunity creation theory, a systematic literature review was conducted, drawing on global, regional, and local studies to assess how women use online platforms for income generation and business development. Studies from Africa, Europe, and Australia were analysed to identify trends, methodologies, and documentation gaps. Key themes include barriers to access, lessons from best practices, and the effectiveness of digital tools in enhancing women's enterprises. Data analysis was conducted using Microsoft Excel for categorization and interpretation. Findings show that digital platforms significantly enhance financial inclusion, business growth, and independence for women entrepreneurs. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn offer spaces for learning and experience-sharing, informing global best practice frameworks. Social media also helps overcome socio-cultural barriers, boost entrepreneurial participation, and provide essential education and tools for empowerment. To bridge the digital gender divide, governments must improve infrastructure such as internet access. Collaboration among governments and organisations is vital for skill development, networking, and market diversification, addressing socio-economic barriers and fostering inclusive digital entrepreneurship.

Key words: *best practices, digital platforms, entrepreneurs, lessons, women's economic empowerment*

1.0 Introduction

Entrepreneurship has been in existence from the time it was coined by Richard Canilliton, an economist, who described it as a term used to describe a person who willingly carries out forms of arbitrage involving the financial risk of a new venture. Almahry and Serea (2018) illustrate the link between entrepreneurial education and skill, which, they argue, should entail personal, technical, and business management competencies. This implies that an entrepreneur should not only acquire entrepreneurial education, but also be equipped with specific skill sets, establish networks, claim a niche on a specific business idea, look for and have a sound understanding of market for service or product, craft a business idea, acquire some finances and establish a business.

The last two centuries have witnessed a paradigm shift in entrepreneurship, with significant advancements made possible by the democratisation of knowledge, communication, market access and individual freedoms, largely due to the internet (Song, Yang & Li, 2024). The transformation has enabled individuals to easily start and scale businesses (Tan & Li, 2022). The development and evolution of entrepreneurship as a distinct field were well examined in social science literature during the 1990s, as researchers began to examine the dynamics of business formation and growth (Filip, Sanja & Ljiljana, 2024). The growth of entrepreneurial research gained momentum in the US, UK, and Canada in the 2000s, where it became a dominant area of study (Li, 2022). Entrepreneurship, once largely confined to male-dominated sectors, has since expanded to include a more diverse range of industries, including those led by women (Yao, Lu & Zheng, 2024).

Women entrepreneurs have increasingly gained recognition, contributing significantly to the development of new businesses in sectors where traditional business models have been challenging (Wang, Hu & Xiong, 2024). The rise of women in business presents challenges and opportunities unique to women entrepreneurs, marking an essential evolution in entrepreneurship (Shukla, Kushwah, Jain & Sharma, 2021). Nair (2023) notes the tremendous transformation the digitisation of women's enterprises has presented, yielding great potential for upcoming markets. Accordingly, women entrepreneurs are proven backbones for economic growth and development, enhanced by advancement in technology, pervasiveness, and multiple information sources (Nair, 2023). Women entrepreneurs, therefore, need to rise to the occasion and exploit the opportunities presented to invest in varied enterprises, taking advantage of the flexible operations that come with it to grow their economic capacities (Wang et al., 2024). Thirty three percent of women who participate in business lack skills, 26% and 33% face socio-cultural restraints and capital (Mwajirani & Situma, 2023). Consequently, the government should support these businesses to help alleviate poverty and help address gender inequalities, discrimination, and violence especially among women entrepreneurs in informal settlements in urban cities.

Globally, the participation of women entrepreneurs in digital platforms has been on the rise. Chakraborty and Biswal (2023) revealed that social media engagement boosts digital entrepreneurship intentions and psychological empowerment for female entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia, despite challenges like limited digital access and gender biases. Ajide and Osinubi (2023) demonstrated that individual and business usage of digital technology, including social media, enhances entrepreneurial development in Nigeria. Female entrepreneurs in South Africa face challenges like limited AI access and the digital gender divide. However, they use digital platforms for business opportunities, driven by personal values, impatience with change, and prior corporate experience (Swartz et al., 2022). However, these entrepreneurs encounter challenges related to gender biases and limited access to risk capital investment.

In Kenya, digital platforms have facilitated the growth of women-led businesses. Internet and social media are transforming economic, social, and political landscapes, impacting how people live, work, and conduct business (Maroko, 2022). The use of these technologies in business could empower entrepreneurs economically, socially and contribute to environmental conservation and protection (Shukla et al., 2021). Women entrepreneurs face challenges in the digital economy due to limited access to affordable internet, creating a digital gap that hinders their online engagement opportunities (Klapper et al., 2019). Additionally, a lack of digital literacy (Hasan, Ashfaq, Parveen & Gunardi, 2023) and familiarity with online tools (Swartz et al., 2022) prevents many women from leveraging e-commerce opportunities. Safety concerns, including online harassment and privacy issues, further prevent women from fully participating in digital entrepreneurship (Bajeja, 2025). Failure to address these challenges will exacerbate inequitable access and success for women in online platforms. This article, therefore, examines the effect of digital platforms on entrepreneurs, with a focus on best practices and lessons learned for African women's economic empowerment.

2.0 Background and Context

Previous studies have shown the significance of supportive entrepreneurial environments for women who own businesses. Considering various factors like investing in social capital, human capital, alternative development, capital funding methods, accessing local and international markets, and using digital technology can offer transformative opportunities and outcomes for women entrepreneurs. Mamabolo and Lekoko (2021) suggest that women entrepreneurs in resource-constrained developing countries should

leverage social connections and partnerships, while governments must develop tailored programs and promote public-private partnerships for women's economic empowerment. Private institutions must collaborate to support women-led entrepreneurial initiatives effectively.

Previous studies indicate that entrepreneurs can benefit from utilising social media platforms, highlighting the importance of understanding and effectively using them for success. Discussions that have been advanced reveal the significance of social media platforms, which are considered essential in entrepreneurship practice. The rising digital landscape formed by social media platforms is drawing women entrepreneurs in Africa to build online customer bases, enabling them to take advantage of the business prospects available in these realms. Park et al. (2017), for example, investigate their impact on entrepreneurial opportunities with findings of their potential for business expansion and branding. The authors noted that previous online media experience and awareness present opportunities for entrepreneurs, thus it is possible that social media space can enhance entrepreneurial opportunities for all genders.

Park et al. (2017) demonstrate that social media entrepreneurial spaces have transformatory impact on women, providing many opportunities for economic growth. Kamberidou (2020) identifies persistent barriers to women's entrepreneurship in the digital economy, including multitasking, financial constraints, male dominance, limited knowledge, family responsibilities, career challenges, marketing difficulties, leadership and networking gaps, skill shortages, technology access issues, digital market limitations, and inadequate support services. Without targeted interventions, women will continue to face barriers that hinder their participation and success in the digital economy, exacerbating existing inequities. This justifies this article, which examines the effect of digital platforms on entrepreneurs, with a specific focus on identifying best practices and lessons learned for enhancing African women's economic empowerment.

2.1 Objectives

The study analysed the impact of online platforms on women-owned businesses, focusing on best practices for African women entrepreneurs, challenges they face, and lessons learned for women's economic empowerment. An extensive review of global, regional, and national literature on women's participation in digital entrepreneurship gave an analysis of these platforms. Key findings include best practices and opportunities for women to start or advance their enterprises in digital spaces, contributing to a better understanding of their entrepreneurial potential. This study thus answers the questions: (i) how do women entrepreneurs benefit from accessing and using digital platforms? (ii) What are the lessons learnt from best practices in the literature review for African women entrepreneurs?

2.2 Contribution to Research

Our research contributes to women's digital entrepreneurship in the following ways. First, this research increases the comprehension of entrepreneurial opportunities and challenges of African women entrepreneurs by various digital platforms. Second, it enables a critical review of existing literature on women entrepreneurs on digital platforms, by providing important best practices and lessons learnt on what works for women entrepreneurs globally and regionally, and which could be replicated by African women entrepreneurs using or aspiring to use digital platforms for their enterprises. Third, this study fills a conceptual gap of documented African Feminist Epistemological methodologies on African women's knowledge and lived experiences on digital entrepreneurship, thus best practices and lessons learnt from existing literature could help bridge the gap on feminist methodology (Kabira & Maloiy, 2018).

2.3 Opportunity Creation Theory

The opportunity creation theory was introduced in 1911 by Joseph Schumpeter. The theory posits that entrepreneurship entails recognizing, exploiting, evaluating, and reimagining opportunities. The study uses the opportunity creation theory to explain how the surge in digital platforms and digital spaces has opened up entrepreneurship opportunities for women to start, expand and upscale their businesses. Makama et al (2018), argue that entrepreneurship opportunities enable self-employment among individuals and are critical to improved livelihoods, capacity building through training to gain necessary skills and economic empowerment. The theory expounds on opportunity creation as involving knowledge, access, and use of

varied online platforms to explore existing and new entrepreneurial ventures in sale of products and services, access to independent financial income, proactivity, risk-taking creativity, especially for women, away from the traditional media for conducting business.

The digital platform era significantly enhances entrepreneurial theory, offering unprecedented opportunities for women entrepreneurs, whose economic activities have historically been informal and overlooked. This theory elucidates how these often-invisible women have embraced the chance to launch or scale online businesses with innovative ideas. Madhobi and Mayeesha (2018) highlight this surge in female entrepreneurs using digital platforms over the past decade and their positive economic influence. They contend that these digital spaces have improved product quality, marketing, and sales while reducing operational costs and fostering collaboration. Consequently, this theory demonstrates how online platforms have empowered women's enterprises, transforming their roles within families and communities.

3.0 Methodology

A systematic literature review was adopted to understand the effect of digital platforms on African women entrepreneurs from selected global, regional, and local research findings. This review was important in identifying published literature on use of digital platforms by women entrepreneurs globally and regionally, and to identify trends, patterns and gaps in the methodologies used to document their experience. The literature reviews cover Australia, Kosovo, Serbia, Spain, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, India, Bangladesh, Singapore, Indonesia, and Africa.

This literature focuses on women entrepreneurs leveraging digital platforms to generate income and enhance their livelihoods. Key themes identified include challenges and barriers faced, lessons learned from global and regional best practices and the impact of these platforms. The analysis evaluates how online tools affect African women entrepreneurs, exploring the obstacles they meet and effective strategies for using these resources. The literature review synthesises essential issues and arguments, highlighting lessons from successful global and regional practices in promoting African women's enterprises through online platforms.

Online databases like Cochrane Library, Mendeley and Google Scholar were used to identify relevant peer-reviewed articles using search terms such as digital platforms, women entrepreneurs, internet, and women's economic empowerment. Data analysis was conducted in Microsoft Excel for organized categorization and interpretation. Articles were evaluated by publication year, country, objectives, methodologies, findings, and recommendations, categorising empirical studies by methodologies, geographical region, and themes.

4.0 Literature Review

4.1 Global use of Online Platforms by Women Entrepreneurs

The increasing use of digital platforms by women entrepreneurs worldwide is evident in literature. Muxlisa (2022) studied the digital economy's influence on women entrepreneurs, highlighting the connection between digital access and entrepreneurship levels. It identified challenges with digital platform accessibility. Recommendations include government actions to enhance internet speed and support women entrepreneurs. Additionally, the author suggests maintaining detailed data on women in business to facilitate diverse research perspectives on entrepreneurship in Uzbekistan.

The gender gap in digital entrepreneurship is a concern that continues to arise in this era of online entrepreneurship. In Spain contemporary times have seen growing consensus among multi-disciplinary scholars on investigation of women's entrepreneurship career choice and its growing significant growth. An analysis of bibliographic indicators and over two thousand peer-reviewed articles from 1950 to 2019 reveals that promoting entrepreneurship education, social entrepreneurship, and socio-cultural factors, including family and institutional support, is important for bridging the gender gap and advancing women entrepreneurs in developing countries (Cardella et al., 2020).

Elshantaly and Moussa (2022) investigate the consequences of digitised platform use in an in – depth discussion with fourteen business women to help understand how they have benefitted. Evidence from the findings indicate that access to these spaces has helped them overcome challenges that

businesswomen encounter and helped them to facilitate the establishment of startup businesses and companies. Other specific benefits cited by the authors include women increasingly setting up independent enterprises, as well as reframing and positioning their traditional roles. Therefore, it can be inferred that the utilisation of social media platforms by women entrepreneurs in Asia has brought about significant changes in them and has, to a great degree, tackled the social, cultural, and financial hurdles that have historically held them back.

Furthermore, research indicates that rural women entrepreneurs are utilising digitalisation more frequently and at a faster pace. The uniqueness of the research is in offering a methodical, thorough, and detailed review of literature that outlines a holistic assessment, leading to insights into sustainability. Alka et al. (2024) reveal in a systematic review that the digital age in Singapore has opened up avenues for rural women entrepreneurs, allowing them to market products, sell online, access information and feedback, and receive suggestions for improvement, despite challenges in technology access in remote areas.

Evidence from existing literature unveils the importance of social media in the growth of women entrepreneurs in Kosovo, acknowledging the rapid and consistent increase in their population. The utilisation of social media resulted in higher sales, better communication, and limited expenditure, exploring marketing chances and elevating businesses. For example, Nworgu (2020) analyses the emerging challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in accessing, using, and maximizing the efficacy and efficiency of social media, moving away from traditional business models, and exploring the resulting impacts. The author assessed how women-owned micro businesses grow using social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (X), Instagram, Snap Chat, YouTube, LinkedIn, and websites, showing a rise in women entrepreneurs. Her recommendation is to develop a model of successful strategies for implementation by women e-entrepreneurs.

A study by Chatterjee and Banerjee (2023) expounds on contemporary digitised knowledge which spreads quickly through online social networks. This, they argue, has revolutionised these spaces and made them highly attractive and competitive for establishing and conducting a client base, as well as promoting, marketing products, and offering services. Additionally, they find significant benefits ranging from social networking, decision-making quality relations with clients, and access to diversified markets, and business boom of culinary and handloom enterprises, with Facebook emerging as the most preferred space. Even with challenges such as cyberbullying of women entrepreneurs, the authors find that the positive outcomes of using digitised platforms outweighed the negative ones.

In contemporary times, the acquisition, ownership, and use of gadgets such as smartphones have gained momentum. Yunus et al. (2022) reveals that smartphones are the most convenient device for maximizing benefits in e-commerce. The study further indicated need for more access and use of digitised platforms. This included capacity building and training programs that would enhance the adoption of online entrepreneurial spaces, enable increased sales and earnings, and profits, embrace use of ICT to realise the full impact by women entrepreneurs. Such trainings, we argue are essential for empowering them with skills and tools of engagement and better understanding on the rules of online businesses, enabling individualised responsibility, productivity, and confidence.

A study by Gangadhar et al. (2023) on E-commerce has provided women with bountiful job creation opportunities and socio-economic growth has improved their self-confidence, and enabled them to earn an income, despite the challenges. Currently, the presence of affordable e-commerce platforms and minimal entry barriers are motivating women to participate in online business. It is suggested that government assistance, financial aid, educational workshops, market outreach, and skill enhancement programs be provided to support these women. Studies show that women in business still struggle with utilising digital tools to promote their merchandise, stemming from obstacles like limited education and opportunities, as well as a lack of familiarity with online platforms, financial resources, and societal biases related to gender and culture.

Melissa et al. (2015) in an Indonesian Study notes the growing significance of the use of the internet and social media on Indonesian women entrepreneurs, resulting into their empowerment, despite the barriers projected by family and career, and recommends the need to expand the use beyond marketing for better outcomes. Sarlab et al. (2024), in a qualitative study, describes the digital technology

as a disentangling force for women entrepreneurs. In their assessment, they find the transformative power of online platforms through equipping Iranian women with tools for overcoming socio cultural and economic barriers and that all stakeholders should foster digital technology to ensure equity, capacity building, information sharing, policy, business growth, and sustainable development of women.

4.2 Digital Platform Use in Africa by Women Entrepreneurs

There is a lack of theoretical emphasis on literature on African women entrepreneurship, with studies being fragmented and focusing mostly on description and prescription (Woldesenbet, Mwila & Ogunmokun, 2024). Research on women in entrepreneurship spans various disciplines, is largely quantitative, and remains in early development stages (Swartz, Scheepers & Toefy, 2022). African studies often overlook the complexities of women's entrepreneurship in familial and institutional contexts, focusing predominantly on development and enterprise performance. Muzanenhamo and Rankhumise (2022) stress the significance of the Fourth Industrial Revolution's impact on women's digital entrepreneurship and sustainability in South Africa. A library search of current literature reveals limited tech proficiency and a small mobile user base as barriers to growth, emphasizing the need for better comprehension of human capital's role in digital entrepreneurship. Similarly, Surangi (2020) analysed 192 articles, observing shifts in definitions and research trends from demographics to cultural and social impacts on women entrepreneurs. These findings are useful for this article as they highlight the need for tailored policies to support women entrepreneurs in Africa.

In the last two decades, online transactions and use of its platforms to engage in entrepreneurship have made remarkable impact. Ongo and Song (2023) observe that there has been a significant rise in digital advancements in Africa in the last twenty years, which has led to a rich body of literature. In this study, we investigate how they affect and spread among women entrepreneurs in a survey of over fifty countries on the African Continent. Findings demonstrated a marked decrease in women entrepreneurship in Africa due to issues like energy, education for women, the internet, mobile phones, migration, and marriage. Our recommendation is to enhance the digital framework to support the development of women's entrepreneurship in Africa.

Digital platforms have continued to present insurmountable opportunities for young female entrepreneurs in Africa. Eneh et al. (2022), for example, investigate how the digital business ecosystem can enhance women entrepreneurship in developing countries. Eneh et al. (2022) examined how digital business ecosystems enhance female entrepreneurship in developing countries and identified financial, technological, infrastructural, socio-cultural, and work-life balance as enablers for female entrepreneurs to innovate and thrive. Thus, supportive online ecosystems and policies should address socio-cultural and infrastructural barriers to empower African women entrepreneurs.

Although digital spaces have positively revolutionized women's engagement in businesses for their economic empowerment, existing literature reveals some of the challenges they encounter (Bajeja, 2025; Chakraborty & Biswal, 2023; Shukla et al., 2021). Mhlanga (2024) examines the impact of Industry 4.0 on African women, highlighting both challenges and opportunities. Key issues include gender disparities in digital skills, socio-cultural barriers, and limited leadership opportunities, suggesting that these factors negatively affect women's entrepreneurial prospects in digital spaces. Abubakre et al. (2021) investigate the influence of traditional values, notably 'Ubuntu,' on digital entrepreneurship and its legacy. Similarly, Adeola (2024) explores the positive yet challenging landscape of digital entrepreneurship in Africa, facing obstacles such as access to technology, supportive networks, and financial constraints. This further deepens the discussion on sustainable entrepreneurship, emphasizing capacity building and education for youth and women (Song, Yang & Li, 2024; Tan & Li, 2022). Filip et al. (2024) note the under-researched nature of digital platform access. Nkwei et al. (2023) identify issues in creativity and risk-taking among South African entrepreneurs, advocating for government support in enterprise development initiatives to improve outcomes.

Women's Economic Empowerment is realized when they have opportunity to engage in income generating activities. Despite the positive contribution of the digital revolution, research reveals that women still face challenges and experience business pitfalls. Azudin et al. (2021) examine Women's Economic Empowerment in the advent of digital revolution, and the opportunities and barriers it presents for women entrepreneurs. They specify the use of social media platforms as an influential tool in

business enterprises that have been used to successfully promote women owned businesses. Thus, women can be empowered through revolutionised online platforms where they have opportunity to be visible, showcase and market their products and services to potential clients and enhance their incomes.

In assessing the impact of online technology in Abuja, Nigeria on the performance of over one hundred women owned enterprises, with Shamaki et al (2022) finding that embracing digitised spaces enabled creation of value addition according to client's needs, but awareness alone did not influence business performance. The authors recommend a reflection on the strategic use of digitised platforms and ICT technology to enhance business growth, competition, and full economic advancement. Ngoasong (2023) uses women's personal stories to investigate the links between entrepreneurship, gender, and development, suggesting further exploration of small and medium-sized businesses for economic empowerment (Swid et al., 2023). Research focuses heavily on small- to medium-sized business entrepreneurs in developing countries like Tanzania who are taking advantage of opportunities outside traditional corporate environments. Women entrepreneurs make up a substantial proportion in the Sub-Saharan region. Entrepreneurs around the world encounter specific challenges that may impact the future of their companies.

Ojo (2023) raises key questions on digitisation and gender in South Africa, presenting primary data, indicating glaring gender inequalities in terms of access and use, urban gender constraints and inequalities and socio-spatial barriers affecting mainly women entrepreneurs. They recommend greater government involvement, policy review and investment in digital technology to support marginalised urban women entrepreneurs to build on theory of acceptance and technology use.

Ongare (2022) examined the role of the internet and social media in promoting sustainable development for women entrepreneurs in small businesses in Siaya. Findings indicated that platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram (X) help extend market reach and enhance sustainability, but face challenges such as low digital literacy, poor internet access, and financial limitations. The proposed model emphasises the integration of these platforms and suggests further research on improving digital skills, infrastructure and addressing gender-specific issues to empower rural women entrepreneurs.

Thus, we argue that online gender entrepreneurship disparities have the potential to relegate women because of exploitation, limited capital, exclusion from beneficial networks as well as entrenched prejudices and stereotypes that have traditionally clamped on women's progressive entrepreneurship. It might, therefore, be helpful to ensure increased access and use of online platforms and tools to bridge the gap and enhance opportunities of women and their online businesses. Some of the best practices for empowering women in online entrepreneurship include improving internet connectivity, providing digital literacy training, enabling supportive networks, and creating inclusive policies that address gender biases and financial exclusion. Affordable internet infrastructure and tailored digital entrepreneurship training and mentorship programs could enhance online platforms access. Governments and private sector actors must collaborate to create a more equitable digital ecosystem that removes barriers to access, ensures financial inclusion, and promotes gender equality in online business spaces. There is the need for systemic collaboration to build an inclusive digital environment where women can thrive as entrepreneurs.

5.0 Lessons Learnt from Best Practices for African Women

5.1 Access and Use of Online Media Platforms

Research reveals that digital platforms that include E-commerce, social media and freelancing platforms provide opportunities for women entrepreneurs globally and regionally and further provide insights on informed decision making and development strategies for client behaviour preferences and trends (Ojo, 2023; Muxlisa, 2022). With access and use come other advantages like cost efficiency and flexibility that enable women entrepreneurs valuable time use and quick adaptability, which are important in the digital era. Access to varied digitised media platforms globally, regionally, and nationally is a best practice from which African women could learn to start and upscale their enterprises and increase women's entrepreneurial growth rates, with government support on policies on infra structure on internet speed and stability.

5.2 Digital Platforms as Opportunities for Women's Economic Empowerment

An important lesson gleaned from the literature review indicates that digitised platforms provide economic empowerment opportunities for women entrepreneurs in contemporary times, enabling them access to incomes, flexible time schedules, personal growth, and value addition creativity despite the challenges they experience. African women could enhance their skills development, training, and knowledge, raise confidence, take risks, and experience socio-economic growth through reduced costs of E-platforms and the use of various social media tools. These opportunities allow them to successfully start and grow enterprises, balance between work and business, and sustain their enterprises (Mhlanga, 2024; Nair, 2023; Shamaki et al., 2022; Hazudin et al., 2021). Furthermore, African women entrepreneurs using digital platforms could draw from best practices on opportunities they provide in helping them establish independent enterprises and reframe and position their traditional roles alongside women-run enterprises, thus addressing socio-cultural and traditional barriers that have continuously relegated them from financial independence (Elshantaly & Moussa, 2022).

5.3 Capacity Building as Key to Use of Online Spaces

One of the key barriers revealed by the literature review to lack of access and use of digital platforms by women is limited education (Almahry et al., 2018). Therefore, African women entrepreneurs could be aided to bridge this digital competency gap and create conducive and sustainable and successful digital entrepreneurial ecosystem infra structure and institutional barriers through adequate stakeholder education on digital economy for sustainable Women's Economic Empowerment (Adeola, 2024). This includes awareness of the existing digital tools, capacity-building opportunities, increased sales and earnings, awareness of financial empowerment, and recognition of socio-cultural barriers and gender biases to enable Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) and address socio-cultural and financial barriers limiting women's social enfranchisement and increasing self-worth and value. This is further corroborated by Ongo and Song (2023), Muzanenhamo and Rankhumise (2022), Yunus et al. (2022) and Elshantaly and Moussa (2022).

5.4 Digital Platforms as Marketing Tools

With digitisation increasing significantly in this era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, opportunities have arisen for women entrepreneurs to market and sell their services and products, despite challenges posed by network accessibility and connectivity in rural and urban set ups (Alka et al., 2023). A significant best practice for the utilisation of online platforms to encourage women's enterprises and empowerment presents invaluable lessons on the landscape of digital marketing as a transformative strategy from which that resonates well with modern day clients. The unique opportunities have enabled economic empowerment of women entrepreneurs and helped them establish important critical linkages and networks. Therefore, digital spaces are critical, effective communication and marketing tool for their services and products. They are particularly useful in large established capital cities of Africa, where a majority of the populace are digit savvy. Thus, these are potential best practices and lessons from which perspective and existing women entrepreneurs can draw for Women's Economic Empowerment.

6.0 Conclusion

The literature reviewed on use of digitised platforms by women entrepreneurs reveal tremendous positive outcomes in terms of access and use, effectiveness, efficiency for financial inclusion, growth, and independence, and changing models of businesses to digitised ones. The spaces provided by Facebook, Twitter (X), Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube and LinkedIn have thus enabled women entrepreneurs to use and explore countless prospects drawing from challenges, experiences, and best practices, requiring the development of a best practice framework that can be replicated, not only by African women but women entrepreneurs across the world.

Thus the social media has presented digital business ecosystems from which lessons learnt can be derived from best practices, all aimed at enabling the inclusion and participation of African women in varied entrepreneurial activities and addressing socio-cultural barriers that hinder women's entrepreneurial prospects and restrain their access to capital and financial independence and promoting

women's enterprises, providing education and knowledge on access and use and enhancing women's entrepreneurship for Women's Economic Empowerment

7.0 Policy Implications

The literature review reveals the numerous and varied online entrepreneurship opportunities presented to women to enable them grow financially and earn an income. These opportunities have further ushered women into minimal risk taking and low cost of running businesses while engaging in varied enterprises. Thus, governments in developing countries could enhance capacity building institutional and financial support for women entrepreneurs on digitised platforms to help further unlock the gender gap in digital entrepreneurship, address barriers that limit women from access and use of digitised platforms for greater opportunities and their socio-economic empowerment. African governments should focus on creating policies that address challenges such as unreliable power connectivity, limited access to technology, information, and interconnectivity. This would facilitate the development of women-friendly online platforms and tools, creating an efficient ecosystem that supports female digital entrepreneurs in starting, scaling, and sustaining their businesses.

8.0 Recommendations

Recommendations on digitised platforms used by women entrepreneurs could be enhanced to provide lifelines for women affected by natural calamities and agriculture reliant and women's enterprises that are dependent on farm income enterprises, including exploring online spaces and opportunities to supply, sell, market, and distribute. Thus, support by governments in providing infra structure such as dependable internet connectivity could go a long way towards supporting women's economic empowerment.

Although the access to and use of digitised platforms by women entrepreneurs has steadily been on the rise in contemporary times, there is evidence that those in the interior rural areas continue to face challenges with power, connectivity, access to information, knowledge of use thus they are likely to be relegated from transformative opportunities and financial gain from digital entrepreneurship. There could be more involvement by government and women –supported organisations towards aiding women to harness the transformative opportunities provided by online platforms in sale, marketing, and competitive entrepreneurship through enabling environments for use and access, decision making, capacity building to enable networking , establishment of client base, diversified markets and value addition to services and products.

Government involvement is crucial for reviewing policies and investing in support of African women in online entrepreneurship, as they can create sustainable businesses that enhance their livelihoods. This support would help tackle systemic barriers such as poverty, financial inaccessibility, socio-cultural limitations, and inadequate digital skills, which restrict women's participation in the digitised economy. Learning from global best practices, governments in developing nations should leverage digital platforms to promote women entrepreneurs, address gender inequalities, bridge the digital gender gap, and enhance women's access to resources. Moreover, confronting unprogressive societal norms is essential for fostering women's economic empowerment in this Fourth Industrial Revolution era.

Governments and women's organisations can organise outreach programs, workshops, and awareness campaigns to explain how digital platforms can expand business reach, provide access to global markets and open new sources of income. These will encourage more women, mostly in rural and underserved areas, to engage with digital entrepreneurship. Additionally, mentorship programs, peer support networks and established platforms can congregate women entrepreneurs to share experiences, resources, and opportunities.

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