

# **USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE BY HOUSEWIVES IN PORT HARCOURT**

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## **Abstract**

In many parts of the world, the use of social media for economic independence by housewives is increasing speedily. Women especially housewives are expending huge time and resources on social media sites to keep track of job or business opportunities than for social activities. It is against this backdrop that this study assesses the use of social media for economic independence amongst Port Harcourt housewives. The discourse centered on the extent Port Harcourt housewives applies social media to emancipate themselves financially. The broad objective of the study is to assess the use of social media for economic independence by Port Harcourt housewives. Other objectives are to; ascertain the level of exposure of Port Harcourt housewives to social media, find out what they use it for, the level of usage for economic purposes, and factors inhibiting their use. The survey design was used with the questionnaire as the instrument of data collection. The theory adopted for the study is the uses and gratification theory. The total projected population was 1,005,904, and a sample size of 400 responses was drawn from 10 cluster areas out of which 392 copies of the questionnaire were returned and used for analysis. The sampling technique utilized is the cluster and purposive sampling techniques. Data were analyzed using simple percentages and presented in tables. The study found among others that social media has been very instrumental in Port Harcourt housewife's training on financial independence, it also found that the use of social media for socio-economic gain and financial independence amongst Port Harcourt housewives is very high. However, the paper recommends that housewives especially Port Harcourt housewives should be better enlightened on the possibilities and economic opportunities the use of social media can offer.

**Keywords:** Social media, Economic independence, and Housewives

## **Introduction**

The concept of being a housewife or a stay-at-home mum is not new. It dates back to the creation story at the Garden of Eden. Where Adam the husband goes out to hunt and gather food for the well-being of his wife Eve (Genesis 3). The term housewife according to the Merian Webster dictionary, means a married woman in charge of the household. The Oxford English Dictionary defines it as a woman whose main occupation is caring for her family, managing household affairs, and doing housework, while her husband or partner goes out to work.

The twisted design of the society divides it into two parts, the employed and the unemployed. Employed, simply means that you are earning money, whereas unemployed means you are not. The former definition fits perfectly with the crux of this article. A housewife is a female caregiver whose main preoccupation is making sure that every other person is well taken care of even sometimes to the detriment of herself.

The roles of the husband and wife in a home from time immemorial have been drawn out. Men primarily are seen to be major providers, they go out to work and are expected to meet every financial

and material need of the household, the woman on the other hand is a homemaker, expected to bare children, train them and make sure everybody is good and fine.

In recent times, the rise of feminist theories and castigations against gender and stereotyped-based roles started being kicked against. According to Britannica, Feminists believe in full social economic, and political equality for women. With the realization of the concept of feminism, many women became aware of their abilities to work and earn, this means that they can be financially independent which is a means to self-actualization.

The road to self-actualization and economic independence was not a small feat as it would take many adjustments/readjustments as it relates to the stereotypical role play in the home, like leaving the home in the morning, returning in the evening, and neglecting the home front. The peculiarity of this problem is what has brought the use of social media amongst housewives to the front burner. Because the use of social media eliminates this problem. This article will therefore seek to analyze the use of social media for financial independence amongst Port Harcourt housewives.

### **Statement of the problem**

Over the years, social media have grown in usage across the economic world and have become vital tools for communicating financial opportunities. Since the emergence of social media, the means and methods available for people most especially housewives to make a living have not only increased but also have greatly improved.

However, despite the growing popularity and usefulness of social media especially in creating a platform to earn income, It is not certain if they are using it for economic purposes or not hence the need for the study. Therefore, the study determines if social media are used for financial independence amongst Port Harcourt housewives or not.

### **Research Questions**

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How are social media facilitating financial independence amongst Port Harcourt housewives?
2. What is the level of a social media application in the communication of economic opportunities to Port Harcourt housewives?
3. Which social media platform has the highest engagement in the socio-economic activities amongst housewives in Port Harcourt?
4. What critical factors inhibit the effective use of social media for socio-economic independence amongst Port Harcourt housewives?
5. What is the need to evaluate the use of social media to gain financial independence amongst Port Harcourt housewives?

### **Literature Review**

#### **Conceptual Review**

Internet was invented according to Britannica by two individuals from Duke University in 1979 – these individuals Tom Truscott and Jim Ellis invention allowed users to have global interaction through the posing of messages publicly. But before them, social media were perhaps invented earlier by Bruce and Abelson in the year 1998, who developed an online network that helped to assemble online diary writers. It was during that time that the term ‘weblog’ was created.

Originally, according to Wikipedia, the term ‘weblog’ was ‘weblog’ but ‘we blog’ gained popularity after a blogger numerously converted the noun into a sentence. The increased accessibility of the internet served as a major boost to the concept. As a result, sites such as MySpace and Facebook were created in 2003 and 2004 respectively and this led to the creation of the name ‘social media as we have in contemporary times (Wikipedia, 2008).

Social media are online communications that use special techniques that involve participation, conversation, sharing, collaboration, and linkage (Dominick, 2011, p.25). They are online networks used to create friends, generated new friends, and share experiences, information, and insights (Lenhart & Madden, 2007). Social media “focus on building and reflection of social relations among people who share interest and activities” (Wikipedia, 2008).

### **Empirical Review**

IAMAI (Internet and Mobile Association of India) 2015 report reveals that there is a swift increase in the number of women subscribing to unlimited internet plans, out of that, 260 are housewives working hard to change the narrative of the financial incapacitated role they have played for many years. Gadhija (2016) reveals that housewives expose themselves to social media channels that will enhance and improve their self-empowerment through financial independence. Divatia and Patel (2017) buttress this opinion by saying that many housewives are spending their time between Facebook and Pinterest. Most housewives blog, some run couponing sites, and some run small businesses using social media as their marketing tactics.

Cesaroni, Demortini & Paoloni (2017) In a study titled women in management and organization, concluded that social media can open up new opportunities for female entrepreneurs. Generally, it can be inferred from existing literature that social media are having a tremendous impact on housewives and their quest for financial independence. However, the level of impact varies from place to place depending on the extent of social media awareness and application.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This paper anchors its theoretical perspective on Uses and Gratification theory.

#### **Uses and Gratification Theory**

This theory was first introduced in the early 1970s by Elihu Katz and his two colleagues, Jay Blumer and Michael Gurevitch. They opine that people usually have a wide range of media needs and interests. Oftentimes, they always seek information and communication channels that can satisfy these desires. The uses and gratification theory opine that consumers of social media messages are naturally discriminatory in their approach to media. Selection and application, in that they select and use only the medium that can guarantee the satisfaction of their pertinent communication needs.

In this work, the uses and gratification theory was used to analyze whether or not Port Harcourt housewives are taking advantage of all the channels available on social media platforms to actualize their financial independence.

### **Research Methodology**

This study adopted a survey research method. Due to its usefulness in measuring public attitudes and opinions, it is also useful in gathering data from a representative sample of a larger population. The questionnaire was used as the instrument of data collection. The target population of the study comprised all housewives living in Port Harcourt. In other words, stay-at-home wives, and not working mums.

The study utilized the Taro Yamane model to derive its sample size of 400 after calculating based on the National population commission census of 2006 which confirmed the Port Harcourt metropolis as having a population of 1,005,904. This figure was prorated and our sample size of 400 was arrived at. The study adopted the cluster sampling technique. Port Harcourt metropolis consists of 13 zones (Survey Department Port Harcourt 2007) as cited in Akukwe & Ogbodo (2013). These zones were divided into three groups for spatial variability. Purposive sampling was then employed to select three zones each from groups one and three respectively, while four zones were selected from group two. Making a total of ten zones from the divided cluster areas. A purposive sampling technique was used at this stage to allow the study to focus on respondents who are housewives with social media knowledge residents in these cluster areas. Therefore, 40 respondents were allocated to each of the 10

selected zones, making a total of 400 respondents. Data collected were analyzed through frequency and simple percentages.

### **Data Presentation, Analysis, and Discussion of Findings**

#### **Research Question 1**

##### **How are social media facilitating financial independence amongst Port Harcourt housewives?**

To answer this research question, responses to questions 11, 12, and 17 of the questionnaire were analyzed. Question 11 of the questionnaire: Do you think the introduction of social media has improved financial independence amongst Port Harcourt housewives?

**Table 1: Respondent's view as to whether social media have improved financial independence amongst Port Harcourt housewives or Not.**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	324	82.7
No	68	17.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>392</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1 above shows that most of the correspondents believe that social media have improved the financial independence of Port Harcourt Housewives. 82.7% answered in the affirmative that the introduction of social media has improved financial independence amongst port Harcourt housewives.

The respondents stated that housewives, and stay-at-home mums, have created social media accounts, which enable them to reach out and interact with their various customers or clients. Some other respondents observed that social media have brought finesse, hope, and a sense of self-worth to various aspects of these housewives' lives, according to this group of respondents, social media have made it possible for these housewives to immediately access, business opportunities that they can execute from the comfort of their homes without neglecting the family front.

Question 17 of the questionnaire: what roles can social media play in actualizing financial independence for Port Harcourt Housewives?

In answering this question, some of the respondents said that social media are an intermediary between the housewives who are mainly the sellers of the product or the service providers of the service, and the public or customers or clients.

From the data presented above, it is found that social media are daily facilitating the quest for self-actualization through financial independence of Port Harcourt housewives. Their responses are reminiscent of this.

##### **Research question 2: What is the level of a social media application in the communication of socio-economic opportunities to Port Harcourt housewives?**

Question 10 of the questionnaire: To what extent do you think social media applications have been adopted for socio-economic purposes amongst Port Harcourt housewives?

**Table 2: Respondents' views as to the extent social media applications are used for socio-economic communication of economic opportunities amongst Port Harcourt housewives.**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Very high	36	9.1
High	304	77.5
Moderate/Average	32	8.4
Low	10	2.5
Very low	10	2.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>392</b>	<b>100%</b>

The data presented in table 2 above indicates that thirty-six (36) respondents representing 9.1 percent (9.1%) of the respondents were of the view that the use of social media applications for socio-economic activities and financial independence amongst Port Harcourt housewives is very high. From the information presented in Table 2, It can be deduced that according to the study groups, those social media are widely used for socio-economic activities in Port Harcourt. The fact that 36 respondents representing 9.1% and 304 respondents representing 77.1% of the respondents indicated very high and high respectively shows that social media applications for socio-economic activities that will aid financial independence amongst Port Harcourt housewives are after all high. This development according to the respondents is attributed to the quest for self-actualization through financial independence of Port Harcourt housewives.

**Research Question 3: Which social media platform has the highest engagement in the socio-economic activities amongst housewives in Port Harcourt?**

Questions 8 and 9 of the questionnaire sought answers to these research questions.

Question 8 of the questionnaire: Which social media platform do you think is mostly used for socio-economic activities amongst Port Harcourt housewives?

Table 3: Respondents' views as to the most engaged social media platform in the socio-economic activities among Port Harcourt housewives.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Facebook	198	50
Instagram	132	33
Whatsapp	57	15
Linkedin	5	2
Twitter	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>392</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 3 shows that one hundred and ninety-eight (198) respondents out of the three hundred and ninety (392) respondents identified Facebook as the most engaged social media platform followed closely by Instagram with a total of one hundred and thirty-two (132) respondents.

Question 9 of the questionnaire: why do you think so?

This question sought to ascertain the reasons why the respondents think a particular social media channel is the most engaged in the socio-economic activities amongst Port Harcourt housewives.

From the survey, those respondents that identified Facebook as the most commonly used channel amongst Port Harcourt housewives said their view is based on the premise that Facebook has larger followers and by implication is flooded with more socio-economic activities. Those that ticked Instagram maintained that although Facebook may be more popular, Instagram is at the forefront of socio-economic exchanges and activities.

From the preceding data, it is obvious that Facebook and Instagram are the two most engaged social media channels in the socio-economic activities of Port Harcourt housewives. However, Facebook seems to be more popular, especially with its recent acquisition of WhatsApp and its recent name change to META.

**Research question 4: What critical factors inhibit the use of social media for socio-economic communication amongst Port Harcourt housewives?**

This research question was planned to find out the challenges that hinder the effective use of social media for socio-economic independence amongst Port Harcourt housewives.

Question 13 of the questionnaire: which factors do you think hinder effective use of social media for socio-economic communication amongst Port Harcourt housewives?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Ignorance	124	31
Poor social media infrastructure	15	4
Illiteracy	110	30
Lack of time	56	14
Poverty	82	20
Others	5	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>392</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 4 shows that one hundred and twenty-four (124) respondents or thirty-one (31%) of the respondents thought that ignorance is the major impediment to the effective use of social media platforms for economic independence amongst Port Harcourt housewives. This was closely followed by illiteracy with a total of one hundred and ten (110) respondents or thirty (30%) of the respondents agreeing with this fact.

From the data above in table 4, it can be deduced that ignorance and illiteracy hinders the use of social media applications by the housewives.

#### **Research question 5: What is the need to evaluate the use of social media to gain financial independence amongst Port Harcourt Housewives?**

Question 15 of the questionnaire provided answers to this research question.

Question 15 of the questionnaire: what is the need for the use of social media to gain financial independence amongst Port Harcourt housewives?

Table 5: respondents' assessment of the use of social media to gain financial independence amongst Port Harcourt housewives.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	10	3
Very good	15	4
Good	208	53
Poor	152	39
Very poor	7	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>392</b>	<b>100%</b>

Research question 5 was intended to ascertain respondents' assessment of the use of social media for socio-economic gain to encourage financial independence among Port Harcourt housewives above, fifty-three (53%) of the respondents said the use is good, this was closely followed by thirty-nine (39%) saying its poor, this infers that there is so much work that still has to be done in this regards.

#### **Summary of findings**

This study assessed the use of social media for economic independence by housewives in communication to foster financial independence amongst Port Harcourt housewives. It particularly sought to ascertain the level of application of social media and how they are facilitating financial independence amongst port Harcourt housewives.

The findings also reveal that social media has been very instrumental in Port Harcourt housewife's training in financial independence.

The study also found that the use of social media for socio-economic gain and financial independence amongst Port Harcourt housewives is very high.

Also, Facebook was adjudged as the most commonly used social media channel amongst Port Harcourt housewives. It was also deduced from the work that ignorance and illiteracy about the use of social media applications was the major factor inhibiting these socio-economic activities.

Again, the work revealed that the use of social media for financial independence among Port Harcourt houses wives increasing gradually, but still has a long way.

The findings reveal that the use of social media for financial independence is increasing gradually amongst Port Harcourt housewives but still has a long way to go due to the high level of ignorance on how to use the social media application due to illiteracy.

### Conclusion

Despite the several factors that hinder the use of social media for socio-economic communication that will aid financial independence amongst Port Harcourt housewives the application stands a very good chance if there is adequate sensitization and channeling. It is hoped that the use of social media to aid financial independence amongst Port Harcourt housewives will blossom.

### Recommendations

The study recommends the following in line with its findings:

1. There should be increased enlightenment and sensitization of Port Harcourt housewives on the advantages of social media for financial independence.
2. There should be adequate social media infrastructure and affordable service charges by providers.
3. Online communities should be developed especially for Port Harcourt housewives that can aid their financial independence.
4. Port Harcourt housewives who use social media applications should show more interest in using them for activities that will aid their financial independence

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