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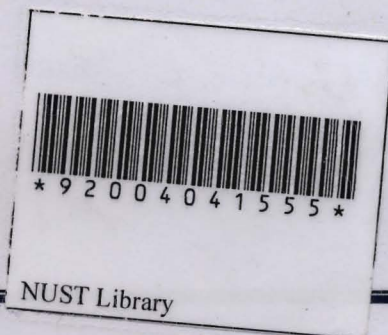
**INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES:
ENHANCING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND
PRODUCTIVITY IN THE TEXTILE COTTAGE INDUSTRIES OF
LUPANE AND MASENDU, ZIMBABWE**

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ABSTRACT

Women entrepreneurs in cottage textile industries are an important constituent of the economy of Zimbabwe, and provide the basis of women emancipation. Information and communication technologies offer incredible prospects for the productivity and growth potential in cottage textile industries. The primary research objective of the study was to determine how information and communication technology may enhance women entrepreneurship in the Lupane and Masendu textile cottage industry for their economic empowerment. This dissertation makes evaluations of the studies that accentuate the need to espouse information and communication technologies in textile cottage industries, benefits of information and communication technologies, identifies problems in adoption and offers suggestions for overcoming barriers to adoption at Lupane and Masendu in Bulilima. The research study used a case study approach, largely divided into three segments. The first segment comprised all representatives of women entrepreneurs of Lupane and Masendu in Bulilima who bore testimony on information and communication technology-lived experiences by the entrepreneurs. Focus group discussions were employed for data collection. Secondly, Permanent Secretaries of the Ministries of Information and Communication Technology, Women Affairs, Gender, and Community Development formed another segment. Finally, the Lupane Women Centre Administrator was the last and unique segment. Semi-structured interviewing techniques were adopted for these last two segments, the high profile respondents. Each Permanent Secretary constituted an independent unit of analysis for their ministries; as was the case for Lupane Women Centre Administrator. Themes generated from individual cases were recorded. Unit of analyses for Lupane and Masendu case studies were individual members who formed Focus Group Discussions. Data were aggregated to form Focus Group Discussion views and preserved in tabular form. Cross table analyses for Focus Group Discussions were made culminating in the ward views. Following were cross theme comparison of wards concluding in the generation of Lupane and Masendu case themes. Lupane and Masendu were integrated to form a unit case. Each Ministry and Lupane Women Centre formed independent unit cases. Both Computer Assisted Quantitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) NVIVO 2010 and manual systems were used for data analysis. Data analysis revealed thematic convergence for all groups. An information and communication technologies' framework for adoption by rural cottage industries was created. The research concluded by highlighting the summary, reflections and recommendations for further study. Findings of the study showed lack of strategy, adequate information and communication technology, energy systems, internet marketing tools, and product innovations; among others. A conceptual framework for information and communication technology adoption in textile rural areas was subsequently recommended as a possible solution to enhancing women entrepreneurship in the textile cottage industry.