



WOMEN IN BUSINESS >>

Techbiz: Women turn to phone repairers

By Simon Echewofun Sunday, Latifat Opoola & Mercy Nuhu Abe

The latest trend for women venturing into business is now on mobile phone repairs. The belief that technological venture was to be restricted to the male folks is fast changing as more women break grounds in this business.

Daily Trust surveyed some of the businesses around Abuja city centre with services ranging from sales to repairs. Visiting some 20 shops located at the Banex Plaza in the city, the GSM Village and other areas including Nyanya, our reporters found that women now command attention when it comes to mobile phone sales and services.

At Nyanya Plaza, some 15 minutes' drive from the main city, Mrs Kemi Yekeen who runs a mobile phone shop said she has spent over six years on the business and now provides considerable advice to buyers and users of various phone brands now dominated by the smartphones.

"Because of the relative time I have spent selling mobile phones, I now do some aspects of servicing and repairs. I could replace broken smartphone screens, worn out cases and do general cleaning and services for faulty phones".

"This is at an affordable cost to my customer base that has grown with time from buying phones from my shop," Kemi told our reporter.

At the GSM Village in Abuja, Ms Joy Odaudu works with some male folks to fix phones. While she does some aspects of the repairs, she could refer cases to nearby shops at the block of shops dedicated to mobile phone sales and repairs in the nation's capital.

"I have some of the basic tools including the meter rating device, soldering tools among others which I use to fix faults," she said.

In this era of increasing use of smartphones, Joy said

customers bring more faulty smartphones to repair.

A forecast by statista.com on the smartphone users in Nigeria from 2014 to 2019 shows the figure would rise to 23.3 million by next year. For 2018, the number is expected to be at 20.5m, rising steeply from 18m users last year.

She also noted that the major faults they bring to her to fix include cracked touch screen, damaged case sbeing the hardware aspect, and some software issues like password lock and GSM power fault.

Female phone repairers growing

In 2015, a report highlighted the success of the first female mobile phone repairer in Saudi Arabia after she repaired a record 48,000 mobile phones.

Mariam Al Subaei, provides mobile phone repair and maintenance services only for women, the emirates247.com reported citing the 'Sabq', local newspaper.

In an interview, she confirmed repairing nearly 48,000 mobile phones in one year following the launching of maintenance services as the first women-only phone repair centre in the oil-rich Gulf Kingdom.

Mariam said she provides mobile phone repair and maintenance services at her centre in the capital Riyadh only for women and that she receives between 90 and 120 handsets for servicing every day.

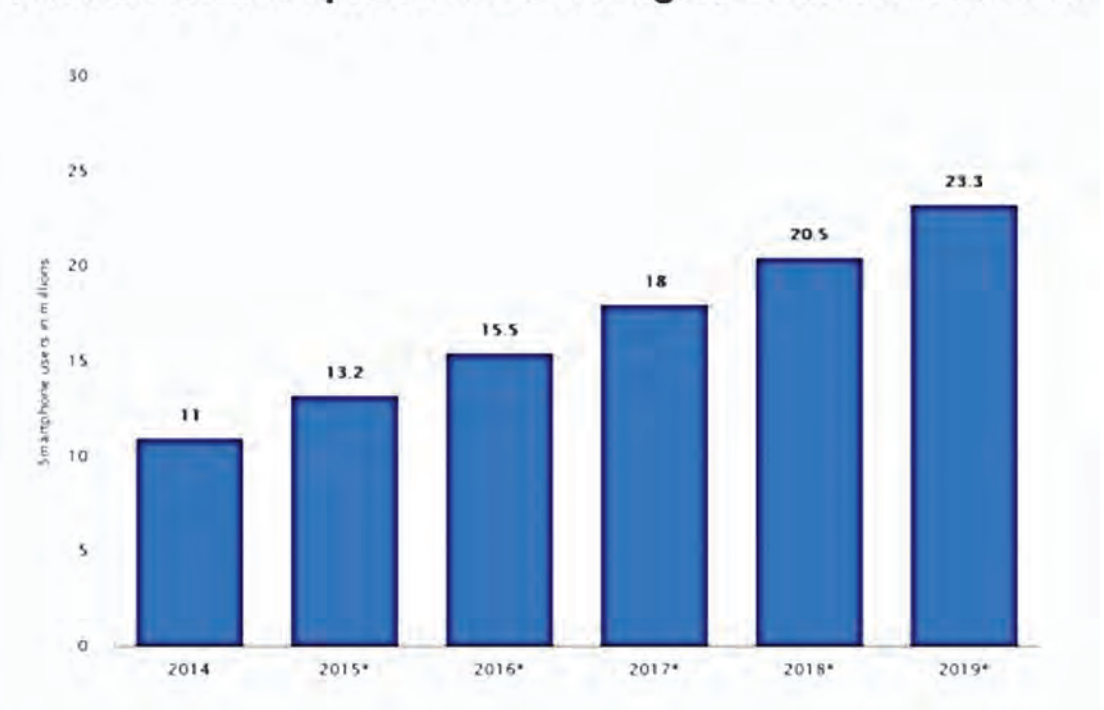
She said "I began personally nine years ago and trained myself on such services. I wanted to help our women and prevent the others from blackmailing them".

"I now have a centre for servicing all types of mobiles and laptops," she told 'Sabq' newspaper.

"My family encouraged and supported me and all my female customers were very helpful and encouraging. That is why I expanded and succeeded in this career."

The technician has also become an employer of labour as she employs female

Number of smartphone users in Nigeria from 2014 to 2019



technicians with whom she serviced the 48,000 mobile phones in 2014.

"My dream now is to launch a national project for the maintenance and repairing of electronic devices that will serve women through the country," she spoke about her expansion plans.

The country also seems to support this feat for women as over 10,000 Saudi women received mobile phone repairing training to improve the employment chances of females, the Al Riyadh newspaper reported in February 2017.

More female repairs emerge At the Banex Plaza in Abuja city, Ifeyinwa Okonkwo works as a hardware mobile phone engineer. She told our reporter that handset repair is a very big market with huge potentials because of the enormity of the market.

The graduate of Agriculture Economics from University of Abuja said the trade is lucrative because it is difficult to see anybody without at least one or two phones in today's world.

She started repairing

phones in 2005, with the then popular phone brands like Nokia and Samsung and has progressed to more recent brands.

She said "But as time went on, I began to fix other new brands like Iphones, android phones, Ipads and tablets. I also fix desktops and laptops."

"It is not just limited to hardware repairs; there is also software so opportunities abound here, because just like computers, some phones which are sold have minor software glitches, even with the trusted names of brands. It happens everywhere and that's where our expertise is required," she said.

At her workshop, Ify said she could fix at least 10 phone faults in a day. Although the business is time consuming, the mother of one told our reporters she manages business well as she ensures it doesn't interfere with her family time.

"I ensure I don't take my work back home. I do all I need to do at the shop and don't work from home," she added.

At GrandPa, another workshop owned by a female technician at the Banex Plaza, our reporters saw apprentices in the mobile phone repair business busy around fixing one fault or the other.

Mrs Doris Oyong highlighted prospects in the phone repair business, as she challenged more women particularly, young girls to learn the art which she said takes between three to six months to begin some minor fault fixing.

"As internet penetration continues to rise in Nigeria, it is expected that more people will be using phones especially the smartphone. So it makes more business gateway for Nigerians.

"I urge women to follow the trend and move away from the sales of recharge cards and phone accessories to phone fixing. It is believed that female customers tend to feel comfortable giving their phones to other female technicians who would not deceive them, but the female technicians are quite few now," Rose said.

Job creation: FG's new initiative to benefit 3m women, youth

By Simon Echewofun Sunday

Three million women and youth nationwide will benefit from an agro-business programme of the Livelihood Improvement Family Enterprises (LIFE) scheme of the Federal Government, the ministry of agriculture and rural development has said.

An Assistant Director at the Ministry, Dr Chinyere Ikechukwu-Eneh who

announced this when she visited the Enugu State Ministry of Agriculture on Tuesday said 24 states would be captured under the pilot phase of the programme

She said the beneficiaries would be between age 18 and 40 and that the "overall objective of this programme is to contribute to the attainment of food security and economic growth of Nigeria through job creation, value addition, business

enterprises and improved livelihood.

The official said beneficiaries will consist largely of young people selected across several agriculture disciplines in a gender-balanced manner with a minimum of 50 per cent women.

Ikechukwu-Eneh, who is the Team Leader for the LIFE in Enugu, stated that the programme would be implemented at the ward level

through the establishment of 'LIFE clusters'.

She explained that the clusters would receive agricultural inputs for sustainable production, agro-processing and packaging facilities and a marketing system designed to connect rural food surplus to urban cities.

The official added that two communities from two local government areas in each of

the three senatorial districts benefit.

She said that the selected communities would form five cooperative societies that would be empowered in their chosen areas of enterprise.

The Permanent Secretary in the ministry, Mr Samuel Onyiaji, described the programme as bold, and advised that prospective beneficiaries be given adequate information on the programme.