Synergy between Conventional Television Broadcasting in Nigeria and the New Media in the Era of Digitization

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Abstract

 Digitization in broadcasting has become a major agenda for broadcast industries world over. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) recommending the need for this innovation in broadcasting in order to foster development in the face of an evolving information technology era. Although ITU set a 2015 timeline, the year 2020 has been proposed as the feasible date for the digitization of her broadcast industry. With reference to television broadcasting, this paper presents an overview of the concept of digitization in broadcasting. It discusses the developmental benefits for broadcasting in an era where the new media has become the number one media space for broadcast audiences.

Keywords: *Digitization, New Media, Television Broadcasting, Conventional media, Broadcast audience*

I. INTRODUCTION

 The mass media executes a crucial role in connecting the world with its ability to reach wide audiences with strong and insightful messages that impact the society. This fact has been established in the various societies that make up the entity Nigeria. Innovations in technology have given rise to an expansion of channels of communication – for conventional media of radio, newspaper, television to establish platforms for which a vast majority of their target audiences can be reached via the new media which is fast becoming the preferred media in the present digital era in which the media operates.

 Digitization is a broad term spanning the media industry including the prints and the electronic media. Over the past decade, the world has witnessed a tremendous transition from the conventional media age to the era of digitization. Digitization is defined as a process through which information, whether relayed or through sound, text, voice or image is converted into digital, binary language for computer use (Okorie 2008). New media arises, in part, out of the process of digitization. Many scholars have described the internet as a whole as the new media whereas others have created the term 'new media' for certain group of tools

or technologies available on the internet. New media therefore, refers to the content available on demand through the internet, accessible on any digital device, usually containing interactive user feedback and creative participation. It generally encompasses all that is related to the internet and the interplay between technology, images and sound.

 Conventional television media from the on-set have succeeded in bringing the outside world into various homes; the broadcast time of programmes affect the daily routines of the audience; the contents provide information and give the audience something to converse about. However, the new media since its emergence has been perceived to pose a threat to the continued existence of the traditional media. Although the traditional media has served as a companion for the audience, the new media has been more successful in linking the audience with an even wider audience thereby creating an interactive platform for them. With the use of social media, communication has become even more personal and intimate. Social media websites such as Facebook for instance, have over a billion users who are diverse geographically, culturally and demographically. This way messages can be passed on a wider scale and to a more diverse audience.

 The nature of the relationship between the broadcaster and the audience is changing. Many television stations in Nigeria, have adopted the use of social media to interact with the audience. Channels Television for instance, developed a strategy of involving the audience in the development of news stories by engaging them to upload news worthy videos to their website. In conventional media; the broadcaster is oblivious of the identity of the audience. However, with the advent of the internet, a broadcaster is able to identify a specific listener from the audience. News communication to the masses has really benefited from the social media explosion because prior to its existence, news delivery was limited to certain hours of the day in broadcast media and once a day in print media. The internet is instant and faster in its delivery and update of news; one no longer has to dig through a pile of newspapers in order to get to information. The

new media also eliminates the transient feature of mass communication. The internet can be used anytime and anywhere; old information can be accessed at any point in time.

The new media, digital broadcasting and the internet are swiftly sweeping away the limitations of the analogue world of conventional media. It provides an immediate, intimate, informative and interactive platform for discussion and debate. With the help of search engines such as Google and Yahoo, many broadcast media practitioners of major broadcasting stations around the world have been able to gather news and send such news to their stations via the internet, from the comfort of their homes or offices (Matthew, Ogedebe, and Olatunji, 2013).

The benefits of digitization have been experienced in various countries all over the world. Kombol (2008), posits that the capacity of communication channels are greatly expanded, providing more scope and varied media for media audiences to choose from, and more possibilities for interactive system through digitization. Although the evolution from analog to digital has been set in motion in Nigeria, the country has failed to meet the June 2015 deadline for digital migration set by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). Even with the newly extended deadline of 2020, certain strategies have to be put in place to tackle the existing challenges in order for it to be met.

This paper however, does not seek to isolate traditional media but to enhance and improve on it by integrating with the new media. The objectives include to: examine the benefits of digital television broadcasting in Nigeria, and identify the factors challenging the transition from traditional media to new media in Nigeria.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The migration of television broadcasting from conventional to digital media lends credence to the tenets of the modernization theory. The theory explains the process of transformation that a nation goes through as it transitions from a traditional society to a modern one. Max Weber in this theory holds that the modernity process through the institutionalization of rationality results in social specialization. Change is thus a very necessary element in modernization. According to Lerner (1958), for economic and social institutions to change, change is required in individual knowledge, attitudes and aspiration. This means that change is very necessary for development as well as modernization. For a country to be seen as modern, modernization theorists say that it has to undergo an evolutionary

advance in science and technology which in turn would lead to an increased standard of living for all.

The relevance of this theory to this study is that the transition from traditional media to new media is inevitable. It is a process that goes on and on because what we refer to today as traditional media (analog system) was once referred to as new media. It is only normal for the new to replace the old. Therefore the transition from traditional media to new media is a dynamic, cyclical and ever changing process.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Television broadcasting in Nigeria began in 1959 at Ibadan when the Western Nigerian Television (WNTV) was established by the western regional government. Subsequently, other regional television stations emerged; like the Eastern Nigerian Television (ENTV) which was an arm of the Eastern Broadcasting Corporation (ENBC) and the Radio Television Kaduna (RTK) which was an arm of the Broadcast Corporation of Northern Nigeria (BCNN). Soon, the federal government, embraced by the success of the regional television stations established the National Television Station (NTS) which was under agreement with an American network called NBC-International. Initially, Television in the 1950's was viewed as a luxury and not a necessity but eventually with its development and prominence in other countries, it gradually piqued the interest of Nigerians.

The advent of television broadcasting in Nigeria brought about a new dimension in broadcasting in Africa. Within a decade of its arrival, no fewer than 22 African countries established their own television stations. Eventually, the era of private television soon emerged in Nigeria between the years 1992 till present. This brought about the creation of African Independent Television (AIT), Galaxy Television, Channels Television, Silverbird Television and many more to come.

A. The Global Interactive Age of the New Media

New media are web based technologies in which can be interactive and networkable such as the internet, websites and so on. Logan (2010) sees new media as a term that generally refers to those digital media that are interactive, incorporate two way communication and involve some form of computing as opposed to "old media" such as telephone, radio and television. The internet is in many ways according to Siaspera (2012) the prototypical new medium. Most technologies described as 'new media' are digital and have characteristics of being networkable, dense, compressible and interactive. Internet blogs, news

portals, social media, podcasts, webcasts are all forms of new media. New media is essentially a cyber-culture with modern computer technology digitally controlled by software and the latest fast developing communication technology.

The advent of the new media has brought about a switch up in the conventional structure of broadcasting; audiences who have been at the receiving end of mass communication are now increasingly likely to become producers and broadcasters even from the comfort of their homes. The long-term picture of new media or mass media information flow is not easily predictable. Mass media news outlets are struggling with changing gate-keeping standards due to demands for interactive content produced by audiences themselves. Ordinary citizens are empowered to report on their experiences while being held to high standards of information quality and community values. In the long run, these tendencies may be the most revolutionary aspects of the new media environment. In exploring the distinctions and complementarities between the new media and mainstream mass media one must understand the technical distinctions between these various media forms (Brydon, 2011).

According to Banerjee, 2008, Mainstream mass media are highly centralized, require significant investment and resources and can be heavily influenced by governments through various mechanisms and forms of control. The new media, on the other hand have radically different characteristics. The Internet for instance can be used as a medium for mass communication as well as message distribution. They are also extremely de-centralized, require very low investment, provide greater interactivity and public participation and are much more difficult to control (Banerjee, 2008). Therefore, it is not surprising for the new media to gain popularity and acceptance in civil society because people are now free, and have the opportunity to create their own news.

B. The Concept of Digitization

Digitization is defined as a process through which information, whether relayed or through sound, text, voice or image is converted into digital, binary language for computer use (Okorie, 2008). Digitization considerably improves the quality of voice and video transmission and, economic efficiency is enhanced because conversion to digital forms of storage, retrieval and editing save time and labour. Therefore, Digital compression techniques in television offer important role in economic advantages for satellite broadcasting, and the use of digital language facilitates the coverage of computer, telecommunication, office technologies and assorted audio visual consumer electronics.

According to Kambol (2008), digitization will greatly expand the capacity of communication channels, enabling a wider scope for consumer choice and generating more avenues for an interactive system. Some definitions of digitization lean towards enhancing viewer's experience. Nancy hicks Maynard described digitization as a 'mega media' whereby the much about the ways we define, gather and produce news will have to change'. With digitization, television sets would be capable of performing the tasks of computers and telephones. There is a set-top box that receives a digital signal from a satellite or cable, the box then converts that signal to an analogue signal and sends it to an analogue TV.

In summary, the principle characteristic of digital technologies is its pervasiveness. They are everywhere, at home from kitchen to living room, in the office from electronic badge to computers among other places.

C. Digital Migration in Nigeria

Digitization has been adopted in many countries and has been proven to be beneficial. Nigeria is also in the process of adopting a digital mode of production in broadcasting media. The digitization program in Nigeria commenced on the 3rd of June, 2008, a meeting of stakeholders in the broadcast industry highlighted the need for the country to embrace the new technology so that It would not be used as a dumping ground for obsolete analog equipment. The international telecommunication union (ITU) held a summit in 2006, setting a deadline for a total switchover of all broadcast channels from analog to digital. Following this, Nigeria set June 17, 2012 as its switch over date, a date three years earlier than the ITU deadline. According to the ITU, the transition from analogue to digital is based on the following premise:

- Improving coverage of digital television transmission

- Ensuring that bandwidth are available for wireless broadband services

- Enhancing sound and picture quality

- Enabling more channels (additional content)

- Giving unfettered access to digital radio transmission.

Digital television is a technology that offers viewers sharper picture and enhanced sound quality compared to existing analogy television by transmitting large quantities of data in compact form, just like in personal computers, compact disc and the internet

(Kombol, 2008). Digital television uses technology that records, transmits and decodes a signal in digital form- that is, as a series of ones and zeros. This process produces much clearer picture and sound quality than analog systems similar to the difference between a compact disc recording (using digital technology) and an audiotape or long-playing record. It also permits additional features to be embedded in signals including program and consumer information as well as interactivities.

According to the Telecommunications Act of 1996, digitization will afford broadcasters will be develop a diverse range of new digital television programming and services while continuing to transmit conventional analog television programming on their existing allotments of spectrum, as required. A digital standard is superior to analog because of its greater accuracy, versatility, efficiency, and interoperability with other electronic media. Digital signals also have the advantage of being more resistant to signal interference.

Those affected by this transition are consumers who receive files-to-air television signals through a television set that are equipped with analogue turners. What to do to be connected is to have a CTV set-top box or purchase a television set with a built in digital turner. A digital "set-top box" is a digital to analogue signal converted device that easily plays into television to allow audience to continue to get programmes (Sennette, 2008 p. 13). The set-top box receives a digital signal from the satellite or cable; the box then converts that signal to an analogue signal and sends it to your analogue TV. The converter options is not free for everyone, some people have television set already connected to cable, if the cable service producer carries terrestrial signals, set-top boxes will not be needed for this people.

In a study which analyzed the efforts of the Nigerian government through the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) towards achieving digital migration of television broadcasting, Samaila (2013), opined that Nigeria is a major stakeholder in the global movement towards digitization. This is because of her position as the largest African continent with over 187 radio stations and 143 television stations. Unfortunately, Nigeria has not measured up to expectation as the pace of implementation of digitization has been less than inspiring. It deduced that the information and communication penetration in Nigeria is still very low. Prior to the 2020 deadline for the digitization of the broadcast industry, an initial date of 2012 was set with a vision to beating the 2015 global deadline. It concluded that despite the effort of Nigeria

to put in place the National ICT policy that spells a roadmap towards meeting the International Telecommunications union (ITU) standards, so that it can benefit more from the fortunes of globalization, it could be said that a lot of work needs to be done especially in ensuring digital television broadcasting.

D. Benefits of Digitization

Digital broadcasting carries many benefits over the analogue system. The digital revolution presents enormous benefits that can be rendered to both the audience and the broadcaster. These benefits could be in the direction of programme content, media convergence, quality signals and multiple channels. The advantages and benefits of digitization are highlighted below:

- Ekeh (2009 p.2) asserts that "the migration of television from the traditional TV-set to the mobile device will present a whole new world of opportunity to advertisers wishing to reach customers, prospects, and to the entire advertising industry itself". In other words, digitization will bring about a good avenue for advertisers to market their services because many channels will be provided to reach the consumers.
- Audience will get clearer pictures of programs, and quality sound, because digital broadcasting has high receptivity, vast coverage and also efficient unlike the traditional media. Also, it afford viewers to receive multiple channels from a station; audience can also use the smart television set in conjunction with other communication devices e.g. computer and telephone.
- Digitization will provide broadcast of theater quality sound and picture via cable, antenna or satellite. It also enables multicasting which encourages transmission of multiple programs within one digital sound.
- Digitization will increase the demand for program because existing broadcast stations will start increasing the number of channels to serve the interest of the audience.
- Broadcasters are going to enjoy an era of cost effectiveness with digital broadcasting as a Radio/TV station can telecast/broadcast more programs on different channels but on the same frequency. Money spent on salaries, maintenance, and infrastructure will reduce because digital technology doesn't require bulky equipment and few people i.e. manpower is require for the manipulation of these equipment.
- Digitization will protect regulator's interest i.e. NBC will be acquiring increased revenue that will be accruing from additional licenses and what this implies is that specialized areas of broadcasting

will be encouraged thereby addressing areas that are often neglected by commercial broadcasters.

IV.   CONCLUSION

Although Nigeria has embarked on a movement from analog to digital, the country has failed to meet the June 2015 deadline for digital migration set by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). The paper has highlighted the various constraints preventing the country from this transition. It can be concluded that in order for the country to meet up with the newly extended deadline of 2020, certain strategies have to be put in place so that the country can enjoy the enormous benefits that come with digitization. Below are the recommendations suggested for averting or reducing the impact of these challenges and further achieving a successful transition:

• Nigerians that do not want to be left behind in the new technological development have two options. The first is for them to buy a digital –compliant television set to enable them enjoy the benefits of the new technology. The second is that even with the analog system, one can set "set-top-box" which is a digital analog signal converter. It is like the ordinary decoder that easily plugs into a television set which will allow you to continue to get your programme signals

• All broadcasters can assert themselves as part of a community of interest in all things digital, and help ensure that digital migration is not something imposed on them and their audiences, but evolved in relation to real needs and capacities.

• In developing policy, governments should be sure to involve all stakeholder groups in meaningful ways.

• Government should aid the media practitioners with proper funding as this will pave a good platform to digitization process.

• The major challenge to the actualization of digitization process in Nigeria is the issue of epileptic power supply so it is advised that government should try its best to provide steady power supply for people to enjoy the benefit of the digital era.

• A relentless consumer awareness campaign as well as consumer protection including controls and distribution of consumer equipment should be ensured

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