



## Social Science & Humanities International

(An International Multidisciplinary Journal)

Homepage: [www.sshi.in](http://www.sshi.in)



### Digitalization and the Nigerian Media Environment

Agbele, Damilare Joshua

*Department of Mass Communication, Nasarawa State University, Keffi*

#### KEYWORDS

Digitalization, Mass Media,  
Media Audience, Technology,  
Nigerian Society.

#### ARTICLE INFO

**Received:** 05-03-2019

**Revised:** 26-03-2019

**Accepted:** 27-03-2019

#### CORRESPONDING AUTHOR

**Agbele, Damilare Joshua**

*Department of Mass Communication,  
Nasarawa State University, Keffi*

#### ABSTRACT

Technological developments have broaden the way of communication and at the same time put forward some modern challenges in different societies across the globe. Present study discusses the digitalization and digital technologies as key components of modern mass communication, bringing to the fore, their benefits to the Nigerian media environment; benefits such as high-level production, multimedia possibilities, cost efficiency and seamless accessibility with reference to the Nigerian society. Further on, the challenges such as power supply, finance, manpower, privacy invasion and illiteracy were discussed. The study concludes that efforts should be made by the Nigerian government to tackle the issue of power supply and literacy in Nigeria while media practitioners and citizen journalists should respect the ethics of privacy of the common citizen so that digitalization in Nigeria can be truly successful.

#### ABBREVIATIONS

**WNTV:** Western Nigerian Television

**ADC:** Analogue-to-digital

## **Introduction:**

Technological innovations have brought about an expansion in channels of communication; this motion began with innovation of the newspaper, radio and the analogue television, which served as the communication media for reaching the mass audience. These platforms were analogue in nature as they used signals represented by a continuous variable in physical quantity. With the passage of time, these analogue driven platforms were improved upon due to advancements in technology, culminating into digital media innovations. This transformation process is called digitalization.

Digitalization is a process through which information, whether relayed or through sound, text, voice or image is converted into digital binary language for computer use (Okorie, 2008:38 in Ajayi, Patricia, Evboren, Falana & Lawal, 2016). As a technological process, digitalization avails the opportunity to convert and store information without fear of loss or distortion, into a machine language or computer readable form. This form is represented by either a 1 or 0, called bit (a shortening of 'binary digit'). In Nigeria, digitalization is more synonymous with the broadcast media but these days, all media of mass communication such as; telegraphic, photography, motion pictures, recorded music and the print media are converting and transiting from analogue to digital forms for easier access, storage and future utilities.

Digitalization of Nigerian broadcasting began following the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) meeting in Geneva, Switzerland in 2006 where it was agreed upon that countries of the world switch over from analogue to digital transmission in their respective broadcast operations. Nigeria, after initial failed attempts in 2012, finally made the switch on 30th April 2016. The switch from analogue technologies to digital technologies in Nigerian media operations has changed the process of producing and transferring information dynamically, this has systematically availed undeniable benefits to media owners, regulators and users. Alongside this good, there are also quite a number of challenges that faces digitalization in Nigeria.

## **Conceptual Framework**

Digitalization is the process of transforming data and information that is supplied and storing in the form of series of binary digits (Robinson 2004). To Porter (2011), It is the conversion of analogue items into digital format for the purpose of extending access and appropriate to assist with preservation. According to the Kambol et al., (2008) digitalization is about expanding the capacities of communication channels, enabling a wider scope for consumer choice and getting more avenues for an interactive system.

Digitalization is a technological process that improves the quality information transmission. This capacity off digitalization

supports the view of Ajayi et al., (2016) who said that digitalization improves the quality of voice and video transmission and, economic efficiency is enhanced because conversion to digital forms of storage, retrieval and editing saves time and labor. Digitalization ensures that images, audio and video files are represented as a series of integers (i.e. digital file size) without any loss of the primary information.

Also, Pavlik & McIntosh (2004) simply defined digitalization as the process in which media contents are made into computer-readable form. In the opinion of McIntosh, digitalization is all about transforming media contents (sounds, texts and pictures) into forms that the computer can identify with i.e. read and decode. In digitalization, there is no distinction between a video clip and text document, the differing factor is the amount of memory (byte, kilobyte, megabyte, gigabyte and terabyte) each amounts to in storage. Digitalization borders on the management of materials created in digital formats. Maynard (2010) describes digitalization to be a 'mega media' whereby the much about the ways we define, gather and produce news will have to change.

These days, we have electronic gadgets digitalized from production, as such, they operate digitally. Examples of digital media devices are the digital camera, digital video camera, digital television, laptops, desktop computers and smartphones. In the event that contents are recorded/produced in the analogue format and there is a wish to

convert them into the digital format, the analogue-to-digital (ADC) is used. The ADC is a device that electronically changes the continuously variable analogue signal into a multilevel signal without changing its content, e.g. converting a video cassette into a video compact disc. Other digital technologies that have changed the media landscape are; podcasts, digital audio recorders, mobile apps, social media platforms, online newspaper archives, USB drives, iPad, iPod, smart watches, digital copiers, Bluetooth speakers, photo printers, internet dongles, satellite dishes, digital transmitters, digital libraries (e.g. kindle and sci-hub), hi-fi radio, e-readers, and so on.

### **Digitalization and the Nigerian Media Environment**

Digitalization is synonymous with broadcasting, and from its inception in Nigeria, starting with the Radio Diffusion Service in 1933 as well as the Western Nigerian Television (WNTV) in October 1959 till the year 2016; broadcasting was mainly a matter of transferring sound or video streams through the airwaves/cables by means of analogue signals. The issue of digitalization of the broadcast media came to limelight following the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) conference in Senegal in 2004 and Geneva in 2006 where it was unanimously agreed upon that 2015 will be the deadline for transition from the analogue to digital broadcasting the world over (Dunu & Ukwueze, 2009). An Additional five years to 2020 was allowed many African

countries, Nigeria inclusive, to affect this switch-over. The Geneva agreement was premised on the following:

- To improve coverage of digital television transmission
- To ensure that bandwidth is available for wireless broadband services
- To enhance sound and picture quality, in particular high definition (HD) television
- To enable more channels (additional media content)
- To give unfettered access to digital radio transmission

On 15th of July 2009, the Federal Executive Council of Nigeria approved the release of funds to the Nigeria Television Authority (NTA) to upgrade its equipment and facilities digitally, with a mandate that other broadcast stations follow suite (Dunu & Ukwueze, 2009). The 17th of June 2012 was optimistically chosen as a switch-over date for Nigeria (Ajayi, et al) but that target never materialized owing to a lot of issues. The 30th of April 2016 marked the official launch of the Digital Switch Over (DSO) in Nigeria, beginning from Jos, Plateau State and by December of the same year, the President M. Buhari-led government ensured that Nigeria reached a point of no return when the Abuja phase of the project (transition from analogue to digital broadcasting) was successfully launched at Mpape Hills, Abuja (Tella, 2017).

Digitalization benefits virtually all aspects of the Nigerian economy. This study shall focus on the benefits directly proportional to the Nigerian media environment; these benefits are listed and explained below:

#### **High Level of Production:**

Digitalization gives a higher audio and video quality. Some authors like, Olalere, Oyeyinka, Odegbenle, Owolabi, Rauf, Jegede & Nwalikpe (2013:93) believe that digitalization gives a quantum leap in the production and distribution of tools used by the media and its attendant value to the media user, viewers and listeners. There is no signal interference and the electrical energy consumed is on the lower side (Tella, 2017). Further buttressing on this point, Ajayi et al (2013) says that the quality of production enabled by digitalization makes possible clearer pictures of programs, quality sound, vast coverage and efficiency, unlike the traditional media.

#### **Protection of Media Regulators Interest:**

Digitalization provided protection of the media regulators interest, especially broadcast regulators. Regulators such as the National Broadcast Commission (NBC) acquire increased revenue from companies that intend to float broadcast stations or run signal distribution firms in Nigeria. To Olagoke (2016), the long-term effect of this is that specialized areas of broadcasting will be encouraged thereby addressing areas that are often neglected by commercial broadcasters. In Nigeria today, Channels TV runs an exclusive news station, Silverbird

TV is known for entertainment while Wazobia is a local-pidgin Radio/TV station and they all transmit digitally.

**Multimedia Possibility:** Starting with the storage of media contents in bits, digitalization makes it easy to juxtapose various types of media to coexist (Pavlik& McIntosh, 2004), this luxury is what we call 'Multimedia'. Digitalization allows for the combination of a text transcript beside a video, rolling of the lyrics of a song as the audio plays. Streaming on news stories could also be incorporated while a programme is on the television. Also, in this wise, Tella (2017) believes that digitalization allows for the possibility of user-friendly interfaces and brilliant personalization like subtitling (in videos media contents).

#### **Interactivity on Programme:**

Digitalization facilitates interactivity on media platforms. It makes possible dialogue between humans and computer programs simultaneously. The media user can input a command through the clicking of the mouse to get a response on the computer e.g. display of images, typing of texts, printouts, live-editing of audio/video contents (Pavlik& McIntosh, 2004). Interactivity is an aspect of digitalization that allows the media user have control over the media user to have control over media contents, in terms of what they want to see and how they want to see them. Olagoke (2015) further posits that the interactive nature of digitalization gives broadcast consumers the opportunity to use SMS (Short Message

Services) to participate in programmes that interest them

#### **Space Provision and Accessibility:**

In the area of storage, digitalization allows for the storage of media contents (be it books, audio and videos) in bits, as such, space is freed up in libraries of media organizations. To this end, media contents can be created and accessed conveniently. According to Clements (2007), digital files can be duplicated endlessly with exactness by many people at the same time because digitalization has enabled no limits for storage.

**Cost Efficiency:** Broadcasters benefit immensely from digitalization as they save cost on equipment purchase and maintenance, salary and other human overhead cost (Tella, 2017). Broadcast stations are now also able to carry up to four or six channels on the same frequency as we have it with NTA on StarTimes, and digital programs can now be syndicated

#### **Job Opportunities for Content Producers:**

The creative and digital industry is one of the fastest growing sectors in the world as it creates jobs and wealth simultaneously. The potentials of job opportunities for independent media content producers for both radio and television is extremely huge (Tella, 2017). Specialized digital expertise will also be needed, as such, private people who are skilled in this area (Video shooting, editing etc.) will be engaged heavily on productions.

### **Digitalization, Digital Technologies and other Media Adjuncts**

Ekeh (2009:2) is of the opinion that the digitalization of broadcasting in Nigeria presents a new world of opportunities to advertisers. This in that they can now easily reach customers, prospects and to the entire advertising industry. Olalere (2013) believes that digitalization has enabled innovations of handheld TV broadband devices (e.g the DSTV Walka) which converges digital broadcasting of television and audio feeds to a mobile gadget avails advertiser the opportunity to reach their audience anytime and anywhere. This brings about a greater return on investment (ROI). Digitalization offers consumers the luxury of wider choice of programmes and services, high definition experience, fast data and little or no signal interference plus picture quality (Tella, 2017). Media contents consumers also have what Tella calls 'The convenience of DDT' i.e. one can order 'Video-on-demand'. This service allows one to watch a program at a time of one's choosing. Parents can also lock channels for the safety of their children. This facility is prominent on satellite television.

Digital technologies are the devices that make digital processing of media contents possible, and they have equally advanced the trade of photography in Nigeria. Compared to times past, getting a camera, taking photos and getting them printed was expensive (Kraven, 2014). Even at that, it took a long time to take delivery of ones' photographs. With digital technologies,

better pictures can be taken anywhere and anytime (thanks to amazing HD cameras and smartphones), sent via smartphones, online and e-mails to other people. They can also be saved on hard-drives, USBs and memory cards. The progress of digital technology also affords the luxury of editing photographs through software on computers. To the reporter and citizen journalists, pictures can be taken and posted immediately to improve the reporting of news and allow the society to be involved as the action takes place (Kraven, 2014). Digital technologies have equally made camera lighter but more compact with high-tech features. This, alongside the aforementioned benefits helps the production stage of film production in Nigeria. Now, we have movies with super quality images, well casted, subtitled, even animations. This is an advantage made possible by digitalization. Also, on platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and YouTube, we see live and recorded programmes, events and comedy skits.

### **Challenges of Digitalization in Nigeria**

There are quite a number of challenges associated with digitalization in Nigeria; this study shall examine prominent ones.

**Power Supply:** Digital technologies, being electronic gadgets, are powered by electricity but the power supply status in Nigeria is very poor. Most Nigeria media outfits and media-related practitioners run on generators. This, in the long run impacts the cost of producing and rendering of services that are media related.

### **Economic Impact:**

This is even more related to photography aspect of communication. With the availability of image processing devices like scanners, mini photo printers, smartphones and colored copiers, there isn't a consolidated profit for professional photographers. Everyone is now a 'photographer' and softcopy of images are transferred to owners on demand (which rarely obtained in traditional times of negative films) and photo sessions and videography services are also now relatively cheap to attract clients, owing to stiff competition.

### **Financial Problems:**

The full transition process from analogue to digital broadcasting requires considerable investment, same goes for the acquisition of digital technologies needed to run media-inclined outfits like a modern advert agency, new media organization and photography studio. This challenge is a threat to intending media entrepreneurs.

### **Privacy:**

The continued integration of digitalization and the proliferation of digital technologies also breed the possibility of privacy invasion which is very much against the dictates of true journalism and the constitutional provision of Nigeria. Pictures, videos, written communication and private information of people can now be taken, hacked and extracted through digital technologies such as secret cameras,

biometric detectors, smartphones, voice recorders, social media pages and so on

### **Manpower Inadequacy:**

There still also exists, even if few, media personnel in Nigeria that cannot cope with the demands of digital technologies despite the acclaimed transition from analogue to digital broadcasting in the country. There is also an obvious need for up-to-speed media personnel who can fill the existing positions in Nigerian media houses that are fully digital. One cannot also turn a blind eye to the knowledge gap between those who are aware of the digital transition process and those who do not, especially those broadcast stations in rural areas.

### **Conclusion**

Quite a handful of benefits are inherent in digitalization and they are obviously undeniable to the Nigerian society. For one thing, it makes multi-media possible on mass communication platforms as well as interactivity and automation. There are other benefits in the mound of clearer picture and quality audio, high media production level, more employment opportunity and internet expansion, alongside the obvious values it adds to education and general business. There are also numbers of problems that poses a threat to the enjoyment of the full potentials of digitalization by the Nigerian society. Some of them are constraint of poor power supply in the country, the relatively low exposure of Nigerians to new media devices and financial challenge for transition by some media organizations and inadequate

manpower. To this end, this paper recommends the following, in a bid to address these challenges so that Nigeria can fully enjoy the possibilities available on digital transmission and the use of digital technologies for mass communication

The government should prioritize the provision of constant power supply so that people can enjoy the dividends of the digital era. Photography entrepreneurs should embark on professional training for the better productivity and turn-out of quality product and services for which they can justifiably get commensurate fees despite the stiff competition in the business. This will also set camera-enabled digital devices apart from professional camera users. Schools (starting from the primary level) should incorporate e-learning into their curriculum so that students, from tender ages, can have access to unlimited source of information and promote critical thinking and innovativeness.

The government should strive to ensure an enabling environment for existing and prospective investors (especially indigenous media-inclined entrepreneurs) through the provision of an enabling environment in terms of funding and favorable political climate. Existing media organizations should train their personnel and also give room to creativity so that media contents that gratify digitalization will be the contents that media consumers in Nigeria will enjoy.

#### References:

1. Ajayi, O., Patricia, C., Evboren, B., Falana, O., Lawal, A. (2016). Synergy between  
**Social Science & Humanities International**

- conventional television broadcasting in Nigeria and the new media in the era of digitalization. *International Journal of Communication and Media Science*.3 (1), 1-5
2. Clements, J. (2007). Advantages of digitalization. Retrieved June 15th, 2017, from <http://www.managedoutsource.com/blog/2007/10/advantages-of-digitization.html>
  3. Ekeh, D. (2009). Nigerian Television at 50: Challenges of Digitalization Retrieved June 12th, 2017 from <http://www.bizcommunity.com/Article/157/66/40113.html>
  4. Dunu, I. &Ukwueze, C. (2009). Students awareness and knowledge of digitalization of broadcasting in Nigeria. Implications for journalism curriculum. A Paper Presentation at Pan-African University Conference, Lagos. August Edition. The Directorate of Engineering and Technology
  5. Kambol, M. A (2008). Digital consideration in television production. Makurdi: Switches & Plugz
  6. Klein, M. (2016). Unlocking The benefits of digitization for governments. Retrieved June 16th, 2017, from <http://www.digitalistmag.com/digital-economy/2016/06/22/unlocking-benefits-of-digitization-for-governments-04273561>
  7. Kraven, (Nov 18, 2014). The Impact of Digital Technology on Photography. Retrieved from <https://verkanworld.worldpress.com/2014/11/18/the-impact-of-digital-tecnology-on-photography/>
  8. Olalere, A. Q., Oyeyinka, O.O., Odegbenle, L., Olakunle, O.R, Tsebee, A.K., Rauf, G., Omolayo, J., Nwaolikpe, O.N. (2013). The challenges of digitalization on the broadcasting media in Nigeria. *Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review*.3 (5), 90-98
  9. Olagoke, O. O (2015). Digital broadcasting and its impact on Nigeria. *Int'l Journal of March-April 2019 | Volume 1 | Issue 1*



- Modern Sciences and Engineering  
Technology, 2 (3), 79-83
10. Okorie, M.N. (2008). Information and Communication Technology. Enugu: Bezeleel Computers Ltd
  11. Pavlik, J. & McIntosh, S. (2004). Convergence media: an introduction to mass communication. Ally & Bacon, Boston: Pearson Publishers
  12. Porter, D. (2011). Understanding the benefits of digitalization. Retrieved June 15th, 2017, from <http://oerworkshop.pbworks.com/w/page/34267745/Understanding%20the%20benefits%20of%20digitization>
  13. Robinson, M. (2004). Chambers 21st century dictionary; (rev. Ed.). Edinburgh: Chambers Harap Publishers
  14. Strategy& (2012). Maximizing the benefits of digitalization: job creation in Innovation and economic growth. Retrieved June 16th, 2017, from [https://www.strategyand.pwc.com/me/home/press\\_media/management\\_consulting\\_press\\_releases/article/50815438](https://www.strategyand.pwc.com/me/home/press_media/management_consulting_press_releases/article/50815438)
  15. Tella, A. A. (2017). The benefits of digitalization. Retrieved June 15th 2017, from, <http://www.managedoutsource.com/blog/2007/10/advantages-of-digitization.html>
- 



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-Share Alike 4.0 International License.

© Copyright 2016-2019 Dar Publishers. All rights reserved.