

THE IMPLICATION OF DIGITIZATION ON BROADCAST MEDIA STATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract: *Digitization has enveloped media industry around the globe. Obviously, no country in the is left behind in thinking of embracing digitalization. Digitization holds immense prospects of technological revolution in which the ITU has set 2015 for the entire broadcasting stations in the world to go digital. While a good number of developed and developing societies have visibly accomplished their digital migration; this is 2023, most developing nations in Africa especially Nigeria are still struggling to meet up with this global digital revolution but with a huge successes. In view of this situation, it appears interesting to explore literature on digitization and examine the implications of digitization to Nigerian broadcast media. This paper conceptually assesses the strategies initiated by both the Nigerian government and other major actors of the broadcast media industry in Nigeria, in view of accomplishing the complex digitization scheme. It argues that Nigeria's march towards complete digitization is still on. A number of milestones have been recorded including the definition of a legal and operational framework for the digitization process, the introduction by multiple media houses of webcasting and the entrance in the country's broadcasting industry of cable and satellite pay TV operators. Despite these considerable efforts, there is still much to be done, especially in the domain of sensitization of Nigerian audiences about the technical and financial implications of digitization. The paper identifies a number of challenges to the process of digitization in Nigeria. These include the lack of fund, the lack of skilled manpower, knowledge gap (poor audience sensitization over the digitization process), the slow elaboration of a working legal framework for digitization process and the apparent lack of enthusiasm from the government among others. It concludes by recommending a number of strategic actions that may help surmount challenges being identified in the paper.*

Keyword: Digitization, Broadcast Media, Benefits, Challenges, Nigeria

Introduction

Digital television is an advanced broadcasting technology that has transformed our television viewing experience. Digital television has enable broadcasters to offer television with better picture and sound quality. It also offers multiple programming choices, called multicasting, and interactive capabilities. The switch from analog to digital broadcast television is referred to as the Digital TV (DTV) Transition. An important benefit of the switch to all-digital broadcasting is that it provide the room for liberalization of the broadcast industry in the sense that more channels and programmes will be competing for wider space. Consumers also benefited because digital broadcasting allows stations to offer improved picture and sound quality, and digital is much more efficient than analog. For example, rather than being limited to providing one analog program, a broadcaster is able to offer a super sharp High Definition (HD) digital program or multiple Standard Definition (SD) digital programs simultaneously through a process called "multicasting." Sennitt (2018) reveals that, the transition to digital terrestrial broadcasting will affect all segments in the broadcasting value chain, namely; content production, transmission and reception as all will require technical upgrading to support digital transmission. This is where the regulatory body have to very much vigilant in providing up to date guidelines on the contents the broadcast stations dish out to the public.

Because of the openness of digital broadcasting different variety of programmes, contents and transmission mechanism, regular regulation is very much necessary. Nigeria broadcast stations are currently migrating to digital broadcasting. Now the issue of regulation has to be contends with. According to Ihechu and Okugo (2013) NBC's monitoring strategy is not organized, neither is it comprehensive. He attributed it partly due to the absence of monitoring stations. Also, that the

commission depends on the complaints of individuals and organizations for it to act. This brings the discourse to another important issue. Now that digital broadcasting has added complexity to broadcasting, are the public stations regulating their digital broadcasting?

Conceptualization of Digitization

Digitization is a new communication technologies that combine the computers and telecommunication technologies and are used as channels for the dissemination of information to a heterogeneous audience regardless of time, space and distance. Hermes (2016) added that digitization refers to the conversion of analogue data (images, video and text) into digital form. Furthermore, Vogelsang (2010) pointed out that digitization produces information that can be expressed in many different ways, on many different types of materials and in many different systems.

Digitization is the mass adoption of connected digital services by consumers, enterprises, and governments. Vineet (2013) relates digitization to information communication technologies (icts) as the umbrella term that includes communication device or application through which information and communication can be made. Nwabueze and Ezebuenyi (2012) added that the term ICTs is used to refer to the (convergence) of audio-visual and telephone networks with computer networks through a single cabling or link system. While Ohiagu (2013) sees information and communication technologies as those scientific devices, inventions and innovations through which information and communication messages are transmitted.

Olagoke (2015) views digitization as a process through which information, whether relayed or through sound, text, voice or image is converted into digital binary language for computer use. The term “digitalization” according to Bandi, Angali & Shivarama (2014) is the process of making an electronic version of a “real word” object or event, enabling the object to be stored, displayed and manipulated on a computer, and disseminated over networks and/or World Wide Web. Dizard (2000) characterizes new media as the incorporation of the internet, computers, wireless cable systems, smartphones, and consumer computer networks. The media content that new media distributes are digital version of conventional media content. Unlike the one-way communication, audiences are included to participate in the progress of media production.

The Nigeria Broadcast Media

The Broadcasting industry in Nigeria has come a long way from a humble beginning in 1959 and has grown into a large industry, attracting investments running into billions of naira. Today the broadcast industry boasts of several radio and television stations allowing audiences a variety of programmers’. The television industry began with the establishment of the western Nigeria television WNTV by an act of the western Nigeria parliament. Ndolo (2006:82) recalled that the WNTV was primarily a commercial venture which reflected the political atmosphere of the country at that time. The atmosphere was the period when regional loyalties and commitment were stronger than those for the federation. The commitment for regional development and competition for resource development gave impetus to the western Nigeria government headed by chief Obafemi Awolowo to start the western Nigeria television. This step was copied by other regions and the federal government. With the division of Nigeria into states, more broadcast stations were

established. This is why Folarin (1991) states that the expansion of broadcast media in Nigeria has followed largely the political balkanizations of the country. However, on April 1, 1977, Ndolo (2006) observed that the federal government promulgated decree No24 establishing the NTA after it had taken over the existing broadcasting stations in Nigeria. Part of the reason for this Ndolo states, was the over dependence on foreign programmes, which tends to devalue the cultural norms and values of the people, the tendency by state governments to use broadcasting to fight perceived enemies and challenge the federal authority, among several other reasons, from this decree promulgated by the then Obasanjo military regime, broadcast stations were lumped into two central entities: the Nigeria television authority (NTA) and the federal radio corporation of Nigeria (FRCN). The decree formally made broadcasting the exclusive right of the federal and state government and the broadcast industry remained under strict government control until 1992 when the government established the National Broadcasting commission (NBC) through decree 38 of 1992. The industry was essentially crippled within the long period under strict government control. The broadcasting media were predominantly propaganda outfits without much investment in quality manpower, and technical facilities.

The 8th biennial conference of the African Broadcasters (Africast-2010) ended at the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, with the body urging members to see digitization as an opportunity for them to optimise their potentials in the industry. Africast was introduced in 1996 by the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), the broadcast regulator in Nigeria, as a new gateway to Africa's broadcast market and serves as a platform for thrashing broadcast-related issues relating to Africa. It holds biennially and usually have participants drawn from professionals, academics and policy makers as well as hosts broadcast equipment manufacturers who are targeting emerging African market. The theme for the conference was: "Africa in Digital Transition: Options and Perspectives" Nigeria's Minister for information and communication, Prof. Dora Akunyili also attended with other participants from 15 countries including the United Kingdom, USA, Japan, South Africa and Ghana, Sierra-Leone, Israel, Italy, China, Switzerland, Germany, Singapore, and France.

Digitisation has socio-cultural, political and economic implications for, especially, developing countries, citing an instance with the difficulties participants, especially some exhibitors faced in clearing their equipment for exhibition. The conference commended the Nigerian Government for providing a favourable policy environment and for taking appropriate actions on the implementation of the digitisation programme. Participants called on African broadcasters to partner with Africast to ensure that it grows to become Africa's answer to Japanese National Association of Commercial Broadcasters (NAB) and London-based International Broadcasting Conference (IBC) and the like. (ITRealms Online).

Star TV Network in collaboration with NTA and its Chinese partners StarTimes of China launched a new pay TV service in Nigeria with over 30 channels. Startimes uses Digital Video Broadcast on Terrestrial (DVB-T), a new technology which does not require a dish. It comes with just a decoder. The technology guarantees stable signal in bad weather conditions like gusty and rainy

days. It also eliminates the usual cost of installation as it does not require a satellite dish and only needs a TV antenna.

NTA Star TV Network plans to deploy StarTimes throughout Nigeria within five years of launch. For now StarTimes coverage is in Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt. NTA Startimes coverage is planned to expand to more cities soon.

Digitization of Nigeria Broadcast Media

Digital broadcasting is the current innovational technological advancement recorded in the field of mass media. This is a trend that has been recognized by respective global governments. It also informed the reason why International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the global body that is saddled with the responsibility of distributing frequencies to countries of the world set 2015 as the deadline for every country to switch over from analogue to digital broadcasting. Nigeria on its part, after several abortive attempts, recorded some level of success on 30th April, 2016, as the flag-off of the pilot phase for switch over to digital terrestrial broadcasting in Jos came to reality.

Digital broadcasting which Nigeria is also embracing is the transition to the technological evolution which has to do with the advancement from analogue terrestrial television to digital broadcasting. The purpose of digital terrestrial broadcasting (television/radio), similar to digital versus analogue in other platforms such as cable, satellite, telecoms, is characterized by reduced use of spectrum and more capacity than analogue, better-quality picture, lower operating costs for broadcast and transmission after the initial upgrade costs and access to more broadcast contents (Olalere, Oyeyinka, Lateef, Olakunle, Kenneth, Rauf, Omolayo and Nancy 2013). Thus, A terrestrial implementation of digital television technology uses aerial broadcasts to a conventional antenna instead of a satellite dish or cable connection.

Sennit (2008) states that digital television is a broadcasting technology that offers viewers sharper pictures and enhanced sound quality compared to the existing analog television by transmitting large quantities of data in compact form, just like in personal computers, compact disc and the internet. Also Lieberman and David (2008:55) said that digital Television is an innovation new type of broadcasting technology that will transform television viewing experience. It enables television stations to provide dramatically clearer pictures and better sound qualities. Digital television can also offer multiple programming choices, interactive capabilities and data services such as significantly enhanced closed captioning. Lieberman and David went further to explain that digital television allows stations to offer a number of new and better services as it also enables television stations to provide several channels of programming at once.

The National broadcasting commission recognized digitization, the convention of the broadcast and communication system from analogue to digital as an important global movement driven by the international telecommunications union (ITU), to revolutionize broadcasting as we know 'it' digitization to improve the quality of reception and ensure a more efficient use of the spectrum, which is a scarce and finite natural resource belonging to all Nigerians and held in trust by license.

Digital broadcasting no doubt has many benefits, but that does not mean it has not come with its own challenges. Olalere, Oyeyinka, Lateef, Olakunle, Kenneth, Rauf, Omolayo and Nancy (2013) concludes that for the new digital vogue to work here in Nigeria, users should be educated about the new technology and several segment operators should also see the opportunity of the

preparation time frame as a privilege to be equipped adequately against the challenges of transition from the analog to digital. Also, Idoko (2012) stress that Nigeria society is bound to encounter some of the following challenges in her journey to digital broadcasting. They include, lack of trained personnel, poverty, ignorance, corruption. Couple with these challenges, is the issue of exposing audience with multiple of media content even from outside the country. This can have a high implication on the country's socio-cultural cohesion.

Regulation of the Nigeria Digital broadcasting

Regulation is one of the instruments used by the society to check media content and portrayal. The political system of a country determines the direction its regulations follow. In Nigeria, the National Broadcasting Commission, NBC, was established by Decree 38 of 1992, to register, regulate and control broadcasting in Nigeria. its regulation approaches include, licensing, monitoring, sanctioning defaulters, intervening and arbitrating in conflicts and other control measures.

To regulate digital broadcasting is not the same with that of the analogue. Digital broadcasting has multiple dimensions unlike the analogue that is linear in operation. The NBC Code provides the regulatory guideline for the digital broadcasting. This is a new area that hasn't been researched well open. Most of the literature focus more on the benefits and challenges of digital broadcasting without focusing on the regulatory aspect of it.

Now the nature at which Nigerian media houses are regulating their digital broadcasting is an issue that need to be interrogated. Looking at the prevailing situation in the Nigerian society, where by the media system is faced with myriad of challenges as numerated earlier, can the Nigerian broadcast station regulate their digital broadcasting successfully? This is one of the possible questions this study post to clarify.

Benefits of Digitalization of Nigerian broadcasting

Recent research on new technologies and mainstream journalism practice has been divided between researchers who see new technologies as a 'goldmine' that presents African journalists with new opportunities for improved practice (Berger, 2005) and those who see new technologies as challenging and threatening traditional normative practices of journalism (Chari, 2009). This point to the fact that digitization has brought about significant changes in journalism practice.

The potential of technology, as a powerful tool, to enhance the operation and management of broadcast media is exemplified in the unique characteristics of its technological advancement such as digitization which differentiate it from analogue system of broadcasting as well as the development of online applications which enable some broadcast media in Nigeria to operate mobile broadcasting such as Channels TV mobile, Silverbird mobile app, AIT TV mobile app, NTA news 24 among others.

The development of mobile application has added value to the operation of broadcasting media as this applications has encouraged eyewitness account whereby anonymous members of the society could forward instant incident within their vicinity that has news potentials (Uwom, Ajaegbu, Oloyede, & Sowemimo-Cokers, 2014). There is increased public participation in the reporting of

events in the sense that news or information that ordinarily a local broadcast station or a nation's international broadcasting station would either have suppressed or not given adequate coverage are finding their way into the bulletins of foreign stations.

Haruna (2010) noted that digital media have led to the generation of more and well researched news and information. With the coming of mobile phones, a reporter can call news sources at anytime and get news and moreover well-balanced and researched news. William (2013) supported Haruna's view that when it comes to the internet, news and program backgrounders are always available. For instance, any topic a programme presenter is working on, from health, education, lifestyle, entertainment to environment, can be researched to get more information to help he/she enrich information especially with those hard to get facts on the internet. The internet as concluded by Williams has surely transformed journalism practice to greater heights.

Digitization has been changing the ways in which journalists gather and produce news. The internet for example, allows journalists to access background information for stories and search for or receive press releases with relative ease (Witschge and Nygren: 2009). New media technologies can be said to have fundamentally improved the speed at which news is gathered and processed. However, the accuracy of online information remains a contentious issue. The idea of Witschge and Nygren that new media technologies arguably have both positive and negative impact on news journalism corroborates with Pavlik's (2001) conclusion that new media technology has brought with it both "major benefits for journalistic organizations", and "unsettling changes in working practices and routines", challenging existing lines of demarcation in the journalistic workplace

Okeke (2010) noted that digitization has made the work of a journalist easier. Getting stories from different and distant area is now easy. She continued that it is easy to record several programmes on the computer and store them there for future use. For instance, if a presenter wants to travel, he/she can record on CD, DVD or flash drive to be presented at appropriate time. Live outside broadcasting has been made easy. All these are courtesy of digital technology.

While digitization helps individuals to break stories that traditional media may initially shy away from, traditional or mainstream media is instrumental in digging deeper into issues and ensuring they get the attention of those in authority and those involved in the information (Nyabuga & Booker, 2013).

The continued integration of digital technologies into traditional journalism has increased the speed and immediacy with which news is reported (Hermidia, 2012). Media practitioners are today required to disseminate information as fast as they can, even as they are still expected by their professional duties to verify the information they give out. Corroborating the idea are Uwom et al (2014) that the current technologies of new media make news gathering and production more efficient, faster and cost-effective. They added that "these technologies also enhance producer creativity and encourage new approaches to old tasks".

Uwom et al (2014) continued that digital media allows for localization of content, in that when stories break probably on the international scene, media practitioners find an angle to it that will be relevant to the audience they feed. News and programmes are available on computers, smartphones, and tablets. For instance, broadcast organizations like channels television, AIT, radio

Nigeria, NTA news 24 also create their own online version to distribute their contents and programmes. This is possible due to the availability of the internet.

There are various ways in which media practitioners use digital technologies. They include information gathering (from sources, verifying information and giving information), branding (promoting themselves and the organization they work for) and enlarge market share (seek to enlarge the numbers of audiences loyal to them and their media outlets) (Ayish and Mellor, 2015). The audience and media houses as indicated by Nwammuo (2011) enjoy the enormous advantage of instant feedback. The audience could send feedback immediately after consuming the content or while still consuming it. They do this through e-mail, live audio visual telephone conversation or media organization's online applications, tweeter or facebook. This can also be through the Digital Subscriber Line (DSL).

The biggest gain from digitization according to Dragomir & Thompson (2014) is the growing space for free expression by minority groups, marginalized groups have the opportunity to make their voices heard. Also, that digitization has boosted more than ever before, the space for political expression. Candidates in elections almost everywhere in the world use the internet and social media to reach voters. This has created more vibrant political debates and dialogues, but it has not often translated into an increased number of political actors. Ekwo (n.d.) added that digitization welcomes more participants to independently engage in public debate and discussion of public policy.

Xu (2015) established that digitalization has also allowed for an improved archiving system for many media organizations. Archiving online is relatively inexpensive and easy to accomplish. For instance, the "google drive", "cloud" application on internet connected computer, smart phones or tablet phones allows archiving of documents. The convergence of media and ICT has improved access to information and its fast retrieval. Moreover Talabi (2011) affirms that cable and satellite television channels, newspapers and radio channels provide more opportunities for people to timely access information and connect to the outside world through the internet.

Quinn (2005) maintained that multimedia journalism encourages the audience to consume news in different ways while also compelling journalists to present news in new ways and recognizing the centrality of data and information in the life of contemporary media organizations. This implies that information is the lifeblood of media organizations because it is the most prized commodity traded on the floor of media organizations.

An observation made by Obalanlege (2015) is that digitization has made communication process participatory. It is no longer only the journalist who is involved in this field, but the audience too. The citizens affected are also part and parcel of the communication process. With digital media, diffusion, two-step flow and extension approaches of communication no longer hold. Communication is bottom-up. Listeners are able to pick their phones and call in the radio stations immediately and inform communicators about anything happening in their area. Reporters later investigate on such issues. Obalanlege added that with the internet, there is a high level of interactivity and also feedback from audiences.

For Xu (2015), there are four major possible ways in literatures in which traditional journalism has been influenced by the internet which can be recognized as follows: 1) the shape of traditional journalism has changed; 2) the content of traditional journalism has changed; 3) the working route

of traditional journalism has changed; 4) the democratic function of traditional journalism has been precipitated. Lewis (2012) observed that for much of the 20th century, journalism were highly stable and successful enterprises because they took advantage of scarcity, exclusivity, and control. They dominated the means of media production, access to expert source material, and distribution to wide audiences. He continued that digitization, however, has challenged each of those elements; in a world of ones and zeros, information is no longer scarce, hard to produce, nor difficult to share. Atton (2009) added that this development challenges journalists' dual claims to material control and cultural authority in mediating public discourse.

The rise and continued growth of new media technologies has make journalists to be multi-skilled. That is, new technologies have resulted in journalists having the capability to participate in more of the technical functions of reporting than they have done in the past (Dugo: 2008). For example, with podcasting, journalists have to be able to edit audio and video and post it up the news site. New media technologies have generally resulted in the emergence of the video-journalist, broadcast journalists capable of both filming footage with portable digital cameras and editing their stories using desktop software (Dugo: 2008). Media practitioners take photographs, edit text, shoot video and record interviews for transmission to the audience simultaneously as event is taking place.

Challenges of digital broadcasting

The changes that digitization is bringing in the communication industry are already having serious implications for media operations because of changing modes of production and consumption of media products. Digital technologies allow easy manipulation of information using compression techniques. There are many software's that can be used ranging from word processors to Photoshop which allows users to alter information in variety of ways. In the light of the above, Aun (2013) discussed some of the challenges posed by internet on journalism profession. They include

- i. **Lack of gatekeepers:** there are gatekeepers in the mass media but social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Yahoo, Youtube have no gatekeepers. This has several implications, first is, the risk of overloading the system with unwanted, unrequested, trivial, irrelevant, worthless or inconsequential messages is increased tremendously. Gatekeepers also function as evaluators of information. Newspaper editors and television news directors consider the authenticity and credibility of potential news sources. If the system works properly, bogus news tips, unsubstantiated rumors, and false information are filtered out before they are published or broadcast. Information obtained on the internet, however, comes without a guarantee. Some of it might be accurate, some of it you must use at your own risk. Example, some social media pages containing profiles of prominent people in the society may be operated by a computer junky somewhere who may not have any relationship with the said prominent person. Information coming through this channel about the person may be false and thus, require verification before use. Having no gatekeeper means having no censorship. Haak, Parks & Castel (2012) argued that the culture and technology of the internet is constructed as a platform of freedom that makes it difficult for government and corporations to enforce censorship in the digital networked age. Castels, (2009) added that networked structure of the internet allows distribution of information that can be

- accessed through multiple platforms broadens the scope and diversity of sources of information.
- ii. **Lack of interpretation:** the internet may diminish the interpretation function of the media. Many computer bulletin boards and social media sites as we have seen exist for an impressive array of topics. Information from the internet is mostly raw, and has no interpretation; readers are left to make their own interpretation thereby, generating different opinions on an issue or event.
 - iii. **Privacy concern:** social media and internet also raises a number of privacy concerns. Maintaining a person's privacy in the electronic age is not a new problem, but before the advent of the internet, compiling a detailed dossier on someone required days or even weeks of searching through records scattered in dozens of places. Today, computerized database let a person accomplish the same thing with only a couple of clicks of a mouse.
 - iv. **Information Overload:** The internet represents an information retrieval tool that is unparalleled-Providing a person knows how to use and understand it. In the days before the internet, students doing research, columnists and commentators will have to look things up in the text, reference book or encyclopedia source that had some recognized authority. Today, students, journalists, and other researchers can post a request for information with the relevant news groups or use a search engine to look for the topic. In this sense, Welbrock (2016) argued that the credibility of response on the news group however, is open to debate when the web search indiscriminately displays a list of "sources" which may number in the thousands. Every source on the screen seems to have the same credibility, even though some may be from scientific documents and others from comic books.

Unfortunately, digitization has allowed the spread of "hatred speech" through the new media to an even larger audience (Ukweze & Uche (2015). Hate speech as defined by the United Nations is "any advocacy of national, racial, or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence shall be prohibited by law". Examples can be seen in the ethnicity and religious comments been promoted by different individual on the social networking sites.

Hate speech according to Ukweze and Uche involves attacks on a person or group on the basis of attributes such as gender, ethnicity, religion, race, disability or sexual orientation. In law, hate speech is any speech, gesture or conduct, writing or display which is forbidden because it may incite violence or prejudal action against or by protected individual or group, or because it disparages or intimidates protected individual or group. This was why Apostle Johnson Sulaiman of Omega Fire Ministries church was being invited to the Department of State Services (DSS) headquarters on the allegation ordering that Fulani herdsmen find near him or his church should be killed by his members (vanguardngr, 29/1/2017).

Ukweze and Uche averred that the rise of technological innovations have made it possible for most society to tap into the world wide web and other digital or online devices to aggregate, tell and producetheir own news or personal stories and other pertinent information. Recent example is the rumour about the health issue of President Muhammad Buhari. Different stories have been

emanating from the internet concerning the status of his health (<http://punchng.com/buharis-health-president-address-nigerians-says-nlc/> 27/1/2017).

Alum (2015) stated that professionally, journalists are losing their inventive ability. That is, most reporters now solely depend on the Information Communication and Technologies enhanced news products instead of going to the field to source for news, they relax and depend on the satellite equipment in the name of monitoring news for the day's news report. He goes further to say that many people has been misinformed through the use of ICT. This is due to the fact the information can be created and manipulated through the internet which gives room for believability of false information, most especially when it comes to picture or video.

However, digitization has created undue competition for news and programs from other media houses. With new communication technologies, audience is faced with lot of alternatives and those media houses that can offer better services are the ones with a lot of audience. This has led to collapse of some media houses especially following the unfair competition which involves transnational media houses situated in developed nations.

Agboola (2014) in his conclusion on the study of the influence of new media on conventional media in Nigeria submitted that with the new media models of information dissemination the balance between the supply and demand of news has been tilted, creating a situation where there is an oversupply of news. Nguyen, (2010) added that the pressure on newsrooms has also been increasing due to the new demands in terms of audience expectations. In fact, media organizations are quite aware of what the public wants, and immediacy is pointed out as a very important factor for online news consumers. Still, they also expect accuracy and depth which, altogether, have new implications in terms of journalists' professional practices.

Uwom, Ajaegbu, Oluyede's & Sowemimo-Coker (2014) observe that digitization makes conducting interview less stressful. Instead of going to where the potential interviewee is, the reporter and the person can connect online. However, the social implication of this is that the interviewee can deny whatever that is being said or on the other hand, the information given can be manipulated.

Also, digitization has given room to a new form of media freedom in information dissemination that has not been seen some years ago. Nigerians are able to post information faster than an average journalist could send an article for production. The recent crises between the Hausa Fulani and the Yoruba at Ile-Ife had many users of social media sharing pictures of dead bodies which attracted different discussions on the subject.

Conclusion

This paper has assessed the implications of digitization of Nigerian broadcast stations. It has argued that Nigeria's march towards complete digitization is still on with a huge success. A number of landmarks have been recorded. These include the definition of a legal and operational framework for the digitization process, the introduction by multiple media houses of webcasting and the entrance in the country's broadcasting industry of cable and satellite pay TV operators; the licensing of manufacturers for the production of Set-Top-Boxes (STB), transmission carriers, Signal Distributors, among others pre-requisites the digitization. Despite these considerable

efforts, there is still much to be done, especially in the domain of the sensitization of audiences over the technical and financial implications of digitization.

The paper has identified a series of challenges to the process of digitization in Nigeria including the lack of fund, the lack of skilled manpower, knowledge gap (poor audience sensitization on digitization process), the slow elaboration of a working legal framework for the digitization process and the apparent lack of enthusiasm from the government among others. Based on the numerous observations made in this paper, it may be recommended that:

- i) Government ensures enhanced delivery of digital broadcast equipments by removing all tariffs on these equipments and where possible, mandates their assemblage in the country. This will make the equipments generally affordable and easy to acquire.
- ii) Relevant training and educational programs in the use and management of digital technology be conceived and used as strategies to build the capacity of media personnel in the country. This will enable the presence of a skilled manpower to operate the digital equipments.
- iii) The Nigerian government should accept to make sufficient financial sacrifices to entirely support the process. Additionally, it should, together with other main actors of the digitization scheme, embark on well coordinated sensitization campaigns (particularly in the rural areas of the country) to make the audience be aware of the stages and implications of digitization. Such campaigns should involve the use of vernacular and vehicular to permit the greatest number of people to be effectively sensitized.

At barely three years after the global switchover deadline, it is still difficult to determine in a categorical way, to what extent the Nigerian broadcast media have gone digital. It is equally difficult to determine the exact strata of the Nigerian audience which is effectively sensitized and ready for the digital switchover. A number of efforts have been made to facilitate the process of digitization. However, more is still to be done. The digital migration is undoubtedly a gradual process. In Nigeria, this process has been – or is still – slow. The process will likely take ample time to be effective.

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