

IMPACT OF DIGITAL COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES ON THE NIGERIAN MASS MEDIA: IMPLICATIONS AND INSIGHTS INTO DISRUPTIONS

Ugo, Solomon Ugo

Department of Mass Communication
University of Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria
ugosolomon2@gmail.com
[Tel.: +234-7088516063](tel:+234-7088516063)

Odey, Boniface Erungworo

Department of Mass Communication
University of Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria.
odeyboniface@unical.edu.ng

Odey Helen Ochuole

Department of Mass Communication
University of Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria.
odeyhelenochuole@unical.edu.ng
Tel.: +234-7012820420

Abu, Patience Eyo

Department of Mass Communication
University of Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria.
patienceeyo@unical.edu.ng

Abstract

The Nigerian media has always required technology to broaden reach and expand influence on the audiences across Nigeria and the globe. The story of the media in Nigeria has been that of disruptions brought by technological improvements especially in printing, radio and television broadcasting. Each incremental progress comes with peculiar challenge. Therefore, this study focused on the specific trajectory of technological disruptions within the Nigerian media environment in order to provide a comprehensive overview that highlights the radical nature of these disruptions and their transformative effects on the media industry; implications of these changes on the Nigerian mass media to effectively

address the challenges they pose. Using Technological Determinism Theory and Technology Acceptance Model as theoretical underpinning and among other things, the study recommended robust collaboration between technology firms and traditional media industries. It also advocated creative ways of swimming with the tide in a more creative way.

Keywords: Digital Disruptions, Media Environment, technology firms, media industries,

Introduction

Advancement in digital communication technologies have placed the global media terrain and the Nigerian mass media at crossroads of a media revolution which is marked by a wide range of changes in media production, distribution and use. These changes are visibly technological, textual, conventional, cultural and characterised with essential qualities such as; digitisation, interactivity, hypertextuality, virtuality, networked and simulated environment. The rise of digital communication technologies accentuated media convergence as a technological consequence of advancement of communication technology.

Fundamentally, the impact of digital communication technologies on the Nigerian mass media in terms of implications and insights into technological disruptions explores the relationship between globalisation and the digital economy which are undeniably among the most potent forces shaping the terrain of modern information society on one hand and how digital economy capitalizes on the power of digital technologies on Nigerians on the other. Several genres of the media have been affected by disruptions, Olukotun (2018,p.139) explained the media be it radio, television, newspaper, magazine or advertising media are very crucial to globalisation and civilization from this new digital culture results in the widening spread of digital media platforms or internet enabled communication technologies.

For decades, technological innovations have created varying degrees of disruptions in the media across the globe with relevant consequences everywhere including the Nigerian media environment. For instance, Asadu (2012,p. 98) described the disruptions as such that have transformed human activity especially in newspaper production which have been revolutionalised in terms of page planning, design,printing,distribution and even consumption. In effect, with

advancement in digital media technologies, media messages are now flexible, convenient and provide opportunity to archive media content for future use. These technologies have encouraged multimedia communication which incorporates video, audio, still photographs and graphics. With the aid of web links, users can access information in different forms.

Therefore, this study focuses on the specific trajectory of technological disruptions within the Nigerian media environment in order to provide a comprehensive overview that highlights the radical nature of these disruptions and their transformative effects on the media industry; implications of these changes on the Nigerian mass media to effectively address the challenges they pose.

Conceptual Clarification

The following concepts were reviewed in the study: digitisation as a technological consequence in the mass media, digital economy as a socio-economic reality in Nigeria, the nexus between globalization and digital economy as powerful forces driving modern information society and differences between globalization and digital economy as powerful forces driving modern information society. Other concepts for clarification include; disruption as a theory of technological revolution, comprehensive picture of the trajectory of technological disruptions and radicalness in the Nigerian media scene and viability of mass communication as an economic and socio-cultural component of modern society in light of the effects of digitization.

Digitisation as a Technological Consequence in the Mass Media

Digitisation in the media focuses on the physical properties of input data, light and sound waves which are not converted into another object but into numbers and symbols rather than analogue objects and physical surfaces. Digitisation helps data to be compressed into very small spaces, accessed at very high speed, manipulated far more easily than analogue forms and encourage data storage, access and manipulation is such that has been experienced as a qualitative change in the production, form, reception and use of media. Thus, Ukonu (2022,p.149) explained that digital messages are coded in the exert image or message and the reproduction is also a faithful reproduction. Accordingly, he explained that in digital reproduction, the recording device or information generation devices deploys an internal

system to code received signals and interpreted in a format equivalent of what was received using a series of binary codes of zeros (0s) and (1s) in the transduction process.

Digitisation as a value added characteristic in the media industry is responsible for media convergence given that digitisation is responsible for in-communication between telecommunication facilities, digital devices and communication networks. Oso & Akani (2018, p.170) contend that digitisation links together three essentials; computers, processors and communication systems such as satellite and this results into the collapse of the boundaries between different networks or systems of communication in what is termed as convergence. Digitally induced convergence redefined the media world in terms of speed, distance, time, space, immediacy, management and control.

The global shift towards digitisation driven by technological advancement is something that people can not overlook. According to the Centre for Open and Distance Learning, Tezpur University India, positive consequences of digitisation manifest in the following ways:

- (i) Digitisation enables linking the world through a shared virtual space for interaction and this is made possible by digital technologies; creating many internet based platforms such as Twitter, Youtube, Facebook, LinkedIn and other digital platforms that facilitate news production, dissemination and consumption across the world.
- (ii) Digitisation provides an opportunity for a two-way communication and feedback process or interactive programming for audio-visual and aural broadcasting platforms.
- (iii) It has bridged the gap between old and new media for journalists to converge in terms of production, dissemination and consumption of media messages. Digitisation of Newspaper, radio, television and the convergence of new media have made it easy to reach large market worldwide by creating a distribution network and expansion opportunities.
- (iv) Digitisation has encouraged multimedia communication which incorporates video, audio, still photographs and graphics. With the aid of web links, users can access information in different forms.

- (v) It is responsible for fidelity and greater variety and fast pace of data as well as quality images and sounds.

However, amidst positives manifestations emanating from digitisation, what is the fate of the traditional media and what are the implications or consequences of digitisation on them? One of such is information disorder described by Valentina & Niccolo (2020) as misinformation which includes false connection headlines, visuals or captions not supporting the content deliberately inputted as click baits, disinformation arising from false context or genuine content shared with false contextual information and malinformation which is publication of private emails to the public as a consequence of privacy concerns about digitisation. Other negative effects or consequences of digitisation include shrinking media revenue, regulatory challenges and media proliferation by quacks; job losses in the media as well as online version of media firms becoming business centers.

Digital economy as a socio-economic reality in Nigeria

Since making huge entry into the world at the turn of the 19th century, digitisation has provided a plethora of information which has become a commodity with direct influence on people's knowledge, awareness and power. It has also provided a useful tool for advertising, marketing and public relations, E-governance, E-advocacy, E-business and activism. The technological turf has been used for promoting products and services capable of reaching large number of target audience and potential customers without solely depending on the conventional mass media such as television, radio, newspaper, etc.

Knitting digital economy as a web driven economy which is basically intensified by revolutions where different users are maximising it for economic purposes, Ukonu (2022,151) asserted that "digital economy refers to an aggregate of the influences of digital media adoption on the social, cultural, political and economic realities of the individual and the human society in general". The basis for this scholarly presentation of an ideal digital economy is embedded in one of the characteristics of digital media such as virtual environment or 'virtual reality' as readily and frequently used with respect to our experience of new digital world. It is an environment constructed with computer graphics and digital video with which the online user has some degree of interaction. The virtual nature of

digital economy gives rise to virtual community which emerged after the immense uses of the cyberspace for communication to establish a networked society. People in a virtual community share their ideas, services and opinion for collective goals as a new economic hub across the globe.

Practically, digital economy as a socio-economic reality is enamoured by the concept of information society. Centre for Open and Distance Learning, Tezpur University India, described information society as the increasing influence of information in our daily life and also commercialisation of information in an Information and Communication Technology (ICT) driven global market. Information society emerged because of the advancement of information and communication technologies. In other words, information society can be considered to be the application of computers, information technology and telecommunication which facilitates communication in a much faster pace across the world.

The advent of information age has brought about changes in the socio-economic lives of people in terms of information, dissemination and content creation; responsible for new forms of digitalised products and services. Irrespective of the downside of digital technology in developing economies such as Nigeria and other third world countries, there is still widespread influence of digital economy in the domestic, work and recreational aspects of the daily routine of individuals. The imperative of a digital economy prompted the Buhari's administration operating under a national development plan tagged; Economic and Recovery Growth Plan (ERGP) to establish The Federal Ministry of Communication and Digital Economy in 2019 with Dr. Isa Patami as pioneer minister. It was established with the aim of promoting a knowledge driven economy and a strong digital economy that is targeted at improved security, transparency in governance and business operations and economic diversification. Agencies such as digital Nigeria, E-governance and social media retreat that cater for digital media platforms are all contributing to opening up the economy to a global audience (<https://www.edu.web.ng>).

The Nexus Between globalization and digital economy as powerful forces driving modern information society

The global backdrop which links the world through a shared virtual space for interaction was long predicted by the Canadian Scholar, Marshall McLuhan that “the world is a global village “and the strong connection between globalisation and digital economy as powerful forces driving a modern information society where digital revolution is being experienced on a global scale. To understand the nexus between globalisation and digital economy, it is imperative to understand these concepts individually before delving into the nexus that exist between them.

Globalisation is viewed as an intensive interaction enhanced by a cultural process where people of different backgrounds interact with each other for different endeavours. According to Dey (2007, p.75), the increasing interconnected world through globalization facilitates changes around the world and responsible for global trends that fostered integration, collaboration and business integration. Globalisation is a situation which every aspect of any social, cultural and economic perspective finds global perspectives side by side with local issues spread through the world. In this light, the centrality of the media as a pivotal influencer of globalisation has even become more important especially through revolutionary trends in technology which has opened up the media to global audiences as a vehicle of globalisation (Javad, 2021, p.2).

Corroborating globalisation in contemporary society, Ukonu (2022) maintained that globalisation have intensified digital technology penetration specifically in the area of competitiveness, productivity and innovation. It is further contended that globalisation is fundamental to digital technology transfer. This aligns with the perspective of the McBride commission which sought to ensure that the media leverages on globalisation to bridge international digital divide and domestic digital divide.

As described by Nguyen (2023), digital economy refers to the powerful use of information communication technology to create, adapt, market and consume goods and services that are based on Information Communication Technology (ICT). This description highlights digital economy as a form of exchanges or collaborations in areas such as virtual banking, education, media advocacy, social and behaviour change interventions, governance, media technologies and others used for digital

economy. Digital economy is essential for all organisations and institutions across the world.

Therefore, globalisation and digital economy are powerful driving forces in modern information society because their relationship has transformed society in terms of borderless communication that connects people around the world. Globalisation and digital economy have altered traditional economic process by supplanting them with digital sectors for global reach. Digital economy has driven market expansion on a global scale, data and information flow as well as cultural exchanges has accentuated streaming of services and appreciation of content across the world. The interdependence between globalisation and digital economy has created a dynamic and interconnected world in line with the “global village” postulation.

Differences between globalisation and digital economy as powerful forces driving modern information society

The following are differences between globalisation and digital economy

- (i) Globalisation focus on interconnectedness through exchange of ideas and other mutually beneficial ventures while digital economy is transaction oriented and enabled by digital technologies and the internet.
- (ii) Globalisation includes a wide range of economic, social and cultural interactions such as exchange of ideas, bilateral agreements, migration and trades. Digital economy dwells on economic activities that occur on a virtual space through relevant technologies.
- (iii) Globalisation is primarily facilitated by factors such as liberalization, multinational corporations and movement of people across territorial boundaries. Digital economy is driven by utilisation and adoption of digital technologies in an international or national scale.
- (iv) Globalisation has impact on traditional industries, supply chains and ideas generation through international organisations, continental and regional bodies such as Economic Community of West Africa or SADEC in Southern Africa. However, digital economy has

disrupted the traditional supply chain by creating e-commerce and other models for businesses.

- (v) It took globalisation several years to evolve but digital technologies are spreading fast across the globe to enhance digital economy.

Disruption as a theory of technological revolution

The theory of disruptive technology is a new technology's attempt to destroy the viability of an existing technology within the same area of utility and offering prospects of higher performance by making incursion into an otherwise dominant market by an existing technology. Gradually, the new technology renders an existing technology obsolete as Chandra, Anjali & Pavithra (2007) expressed that disruptive technology is a powerful means for enlarging and broadening markets and providing new functionalities through technological innovations. It replaces lower performance with value added characteristics and possibilities of competitive advantage with motivating factors such as enabling technology, consumer mindset, platform engagement, economic environment and public policy regulations.

Major implications of historical evolution of media technologies and their characteristic implication on media technologies are the disruptive tendency of each innovation on the process and effect of public communication. Disruption is a theory that tries to explain dominance or success of particular technologies or solutions and services they provide as against pre-existing products and major players in the industry (Raynor, cited in Ukonu 2022, p.63). In an evolving industry where products and services remain a top priority, media technologies had experienced several innovations that have come with vagaries of disruptions in sourcing, creation, dissemination of information to different audiences.

Accordingly, (Ukonu 2022) averred that an innovation can be significant in the business of a media firm without being necessarily disruptive and there is a subtle distinction in the literature about radical innovations and disruptive technologies. It occurs in how users perceive the products in terms of ease, affordability or compatible with their needs as compared to others that exist previously in the market. Radicalness is technology based and not necessarily targeted at disrupting the market. For instance, the advent of new media technologies have disrupted traditional print media, broadcasting and advertising because disruptive theory emphasises that technological revolution has a very high propensity of

shaping how audiences access media messages or engage in any feedback loop. Therefore, new media technologies altered how messages are packaged, consumed and the level of instant feedback. In this regard, the radicalness is in the ease of use and not overtly disruptive.

Comprehensive picture of the trajectory of technological disruptions and radicalness in the Nigerian media scene

The Nigerian media has always required technology to broaden reach and expand influence on the audiences across Nigeria and the globe. The story of the media in Nigeria has been that of disruptions brought by technological improvements especially in printing, radio and television broadcasting. Each incremental progress in technology whether printing of newspapers and magazines, telecommunication of wireless, photography, broadcasting, advertising or public relations practice as additional boosts in the media sector. Advancement in technology have often shown new ways of doing things as part of a disruptive trajectory and a key watershed relationship between technology and mass communication has been in existence since the evolution of printing over 500 years ago Agba (2017.p,202).

The Nigerian mass media was replete with the postal system where correspondents had to file news through NIPOST and the slow pace of postal system was supplanted by the Telgraph which became a companion for newspapers as sources of news and syndicated pictures from news agencies like Reuters, Associated Press, Agence France Presse and others. The Radio and Television came into existence after the telegraph as competition for newspaper as the oldest media that made early impact in Nigeria's political, social and economic history where "Iwe Irohin" established in 1859 and The Nigeria Gazette Magazines established in 1900 as forerunners. In spite of the disruption caused by the novelty of Radio broadcasting in Nigeria which began in 1932 when the British colonial government established a Rediffusion center in Lagos for the reception of programmes. Subsequently, the Western Nigeria Radio Vision established an indigenous television station in 1959 in Ibadan.

However, Ukonu (2022) emphasized that newspapers remained dominant by shifting focus to interpretative, in-depth and investigative reporting to wade off disruptive onslaught occasioned by radio and television in Nigeria. The scholar also highlighted that technological

disruptions which is also a global phenomenon has accentuated changes or disruptions in the following ways in Nigeria;

- (i) Wired telegraph to wireless Telegraph
- (ii) Telegraph to telephone
- (iii) Telephone to radio
- (iv) Radio to television
- (v) Television to cable
- (vi) Cable to satellite
- (vii) Satellite to the internet (the “mother of all disruptions,” but also bringing them all together in complementary and competitive ways).

Ukonu further advanced that the most debilitating disruption is the Newspapers which have been disrupted through incursion of mobile devices, pervasive of social media, availability of hardware and software for digital content creation, digital platforms for content aggregation and distribution, participatory culture, crowdsourcing content production, collapsing industry boundaries and globalisation. All of these contributed to sagging hardcopy newspaper readership, low subscription and shrinking revenue sources for newspapers. Traditional advertising models in which newspapers had relied on for years for survival is now centralised through google adsense dominance. In spite of creative innovations to grapple with the new trend, newspapers in Nigeria have found it difficult to cope and some are folding up their printing presses to swim with the new tide of online copies. Alternative measures such as; paywalls, dedicated apps, content plus experience, digital assets production, read- now- pay- later model, video news, digital teams and sponsorships are alternative revenue models. However, the converged model is invariably swimming with the tide of technology and these disruptions could lead newspapers to run like organisations or foundation in the nearest future.

Way forward for the media to confront disruptive tendencies of digital technologies

Aleesha (2010) highlighted models that can be utilised by traditional media as ways of harnessing disruptive tendencies of digital technologies which has now become a reality not just in Nigeria but also across the globe.

Utilising hybride models: Allowing media users to subscribe to customised handles that address specific needs of audience by creating digital platforms to provide audiences with different choices and utilising data analysis towards specific demographics that would help in a two-way audiences understanding.

Producing more of digital news: The pervassive nature of new technologies requires an urgent need to embrace more of digital news content. This would help to integrate e-commerce on news platforms to allow users purchase product online through traditional media platforms as a way of stemming disruptions.

Optimising unique content creation: Through audience research, media firms, be it broadcast or traditional newspapers, this would help to tailor unique content to specific audiences. This would help in providing personalized relevant content that meets evolving demands of consumers which would cushion the effect of information overload on media audiences.

Offering vertical news: Traditional media outfits should attempt to offer vertical news on all areas of human endeavour by bringing in specialists who may not necessarily be journalists to engage with the audiences on a wide range of issues.

Collaboration with technology firms: Media organisations should actively adopt and integrate new technologies to enhance content creation, distribution and audience engagement.

Encourage Diversification of Revenue Streams: Media firms should seek alternative revenue sources beyond traditional advertising, including subscriptions, events and partnerships to augment shrinking revenue occassioned by technological disruptions in the media industry.

Traditional media organisations should maintain greater level of transparency in editorial decisions and be accountable for content and actions to earn and keep public trust so as to focus on long term sustainability for survival.

Media organisations can be manned like a foundation by taking the shape of public media which would survive based on partonage, donation from readers, viewers and listerners.

Viability of mass communication as an economic and socio-cultural component of modern society in light of the effects of digitization

The viability of mass communication in the light of digitisation can only be positive if new technologies as new forms of mass communication are embraced by different genres of mass communication. Rather than seeing digital technologies as threats, more creative content can be leveraged upon for increased economic benefits, better message reception and picture vitality especially with newspapers. This would create opportunities in other areas like deploying semiotics, which is the study of signs and symbols for media messages to be interpreted to specific audiences for inclusion in happenings in the society. If embraced, digitisation would help the media to incorporate more realistic mode of creating audience driven cognition to enhance a knowledge based economy because mass communication is critical to enhancing a knowledge based economy in Nigeria and beyond the shores of the country. It would be used to create more entertaining programmes especially through useful cartoons and illustrations using new forms of digitally produced informative caricatures.

Digitisation as an economic resource in mass communication ensures different medium of mass communication like radio, television, newspapers or public relations and advertising firms to latch in on digitisation for new revenue streams which have birthed great business models such as subscription, live streaming from traditional mass communication channels, crowd funding for worthy causes and sponsorships. Within these economic prospects through digitisation, mass communication platforms can cast their net even wider to a global audience. For instance, community newspapers can have digital versions for subscription by members of a particular community in the diaspora. It is another way of propelling global reach at a much reduced cost.

Digitisation has democratised information dissemination through eye-witness accounts for more insights and perspectives to issues. It gets the audience involved in the gathering of information. Once the audience is involved, it creates a sense of belonging and creates online community forums. It makes the feedback process of mass communication to be seamless. Aside this, radio stations can now be wholly digital with video contents streamed online, other forms of radio podcasting are heavily being utilised for better programme forming and cultural exchange. In this vein, one can safely say that proper utilisation of digitisation could be the

answer to several socio-economic questions in Nigeria and across several developing countries Simon, Abimaku & Moven (2022, p.69).

Theoretical Framework

In order to add depth into the conceptual study under review, it is imperative to underpin the study to two theories; Technological Determinism Theory and Technology Acceptance Models.

Technological Determinism Theory

This theory was propounded by Everest Rogers in the year 1986, the theory involves using communication to transfer technological innovations from development agencies to their clients so as to create an avenue for change through a wave of modernization among members of the public. Anaeto, Osifeso and Onabanjo (2008), averred that there are critical role of technology in mass communication efforts towards reaching the audience. These technologies in form of digital media applications are channels of messages as well as messages of innovations. It sees technology as value free that can be harnessed by users positively or negatively in a disruptive way. Accordingly, four assumptions were advanced;

- (i) Development and application of technology can resolve all varied problems of mankind.
- (ii) That technology is the source of much that is evil in the society.
- (iii) Technology is a proponent factor in development.
- (iv) Technology is an inexorable, irresistible and an overwhelming force which is a message in its own right.

In the light of the assumptions above that, “technology is the source of much that is evil in the society,” it implies therefore that if not adequately managed, it can lead to negative outcome such as wide scale disruption in the media industry. In spite of this, the theory still affirms that irrespective of disruptions, digital technology remains irresistible to many users even though it is susceptible in some instances; it is still utilised by different media of mass communication.

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The technology acceptance model (TAM) proposed by Fred Davis (1989) can be used as a theoretical underpinning in this study because of its peculiar assumptions predicated on perceived ease of use, ease of

acceptance and behavioural intentions of audience in a digital era. Qingxiong (2004) asserted that TAM's usefulness predict the acceptance of information technology. Since its inception, the model has been tested with various digital media applications to become the most widely applied model of user acceptance and usage. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), is one of the most widely used models to explain user acceptance behaviour especially as it relates to new forms of information production and dissemination. Qingxiong believes the theory is grounded in social psychology which digital technologies capture in the 21st century. It asserts that beliefs and preconceived ideas have influence on perceived usefulness (PU), perceived ease of use (PEOU), attitude and behavioural intention to use. Among the constructs, PU and PEOU form an end-user's beliefs on a technology and therefore predict media consumer's attitude to technology based news and acceptance.

Conclusion

Indeed, the traditional mass media has filled several information voids for years; the incursion of new technologies that have opened up the media ecosystem should not be viewed negatively in order to adopt more creative insights on how to flow with the tide without losing relevance should be evolved to enhance a digitally driven economy.

Recommendations

- (i) Traditional media platform should embrace the reality of digitisation in order to foster more robust collaborations.
- (ii) The pervasive nature of new technologies requires embracing more of digital news content as a way of integrating e-commerce on news platforms to allow users purchase product online through traditional media platforms.
- (iii) The Nigerian mass media should open up and embrace other models of ideas rather than confining themselves to information dissemination alone.
- (iv) Nigeria's digital economy initiative should be propelled by mainstream media alongside digital media.

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