



The challenges and Prospects of Digital Broadcast Regulation In Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The paper meticulously examines the challenges and profound impact of the broadcasting system in Nigeria, conducting a comprehensive analysis of various broadcasting bodies. Employing a survey research method, the study embraces a sample size of 150, effectively representing the study's population. Out of the 150 questionnaires distributed, an impressive 93.3% response rate was achieved, with 140 questionnaires returned. The study underscores that major regulatory approaches, including licensing, sanctioning, arbitrating, and monitoring, play a pivotal role. The findings highlight the crucial role of regulation as a tool wielded by society to scrutinize media content and practices, with the political system shaping the trajectory of these regulations. In conclusion, the paper advocates for a review of the Nigerian Broadcasting Code, emphasizing the imperative of an independent regulatory body. Such a move is seen as essential for fostering pluralism and nurturing healthy competition within the industry.

INTRODUCTION

Broadcasting serves as the most efficient mode of communication, particularly in societies characterized by illiteracy and poverty. In such communities, the primary channels for accessing information and news are through word-of-mouth or, more recently, radio, which has gained significant authority. In more developed regions, television has supplanted radio as the predominant and trustworthy source of news. Beyond information dissemination, broadcasting fulfills the dual roles of education and entertainment.

In countries like Nigeria, individuals dedicate an average of 24.4 hours per week to watching television and 23.9 hours to listening to the radio. The study of broadcasting regulation is gradually finding its place in media studies curricula, offering insights into the influential forces shaping the communication landscape. While initial literature on media regulation was primarily produced by legal scholars, the evolving global landscape has prompted scholars from diverse fields to delve into the multifaceted aspects of media practices.

Against the backdrop of the ongoing global digitalization of the broadcasting industry, it is crucial to evaluate the regulatory statutes governing the Nigerian broadcast industry. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) set a deadline for all broadcast stations worldwide to transition from analogue to digital broadcasting by 2015. The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), Nigeria's regulatory body, aimed for a switchover by June 2012. However, this transition has sparked debates and concerns among scholars and stakeholders.

Digital television signals, known for their clarity and robust audio-visual output, hold the promise of transforming television sets into multifunctional devices that can access the internet and store data. This shift from analog to digital broadcasting signifies a move towards reducing the ephemeral nature of broadcast media, endowing it with catalogued value.

Digital broadcasting equipment enables broadcasters to simultaneously transmit a minimum of four programs and channels from a single station, a stark contrast to the limitations of analog transmission. Embracing digital technology is essential for broadcasters to navigate the complexities of digital broadcast operations. The global influence and advancements in communication technology pose challenges, particularly for broadcast organizations lagging in modernization. The absence of regulations in some broadcast houses exacerbates these challenges, presenting a threat to information and communication within society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Digital Broadcast

The concept of digital broadcasting refers to the transmission of audio, video, and data content through digital signals over the airwaves or through cable, satellite, and internet-based platforms. It represents a significant advancement over traditional analog broadcasting, offering several advantages in terms of signal quality, efficiency, and versatility. We should be working at

eg digital signals multi media services transmissions platform global research etc. Digital Signals: digital broadcasting employs discrete binary code (0s and 1s) to represent data. This allows for more accurate and reliable transmission, resulting in improved signal quality and resistance to interference. Improved Quality: Digital broadcasting offers higher resolution and clearer audio and video quality compared to analog signals. This is particularly important for high-definition (HD) and ultra-high-definition (UHD) content, where details are preserved even during transmission. Efficiency: Digital broadcasting uses compression techniques to reduce the amount of data needed to transmit content. This efficiency allows for more channels to be transmitted within the same frequency. Multimedia Services: Digital broadcasting enables the integration of various multimedia services, such as interactive features, electronic program guides (EPGs), subtitles, multiple audio tracks, and more. Viewers can access additional information.

Transmission Platforms: Digital broadcasting has various platforms such as terrestrial (over-the-air), cable, satellite, and internet-based technologies. This allows flexible distribution of content. Transition from Analog to Digital: This transition involves upgrading broadcasting infrastructure and encouraging consumers to acquire digital-capable devices (such as digital TVs or set-top boxes) to receive the new signals.

This has facilitated the rise of online streaming platforms and services, allowing users to access content on-demand from anywhere with an internet connection. Adaptability: Digital broadcasting is adaptable to technological advancements. As new compression algorithms and transmission methods emerge, digital broadcasting can evolve to accommodate these changes, ensuring continued improvements in quality and efficiency. Spectrum Efficiency: Digital broadcasting's ability to transmit more content in a given frequency spectrum contributes to efficient use of the radio frequency spectrum, which is a limited resource. Overall, the concept of digital broadcasting has transformed how audio, video, and data content are delivered to audiences, offering improved quality, interactivity, and efficiency compared to traditional analog broadcasting methods.

The Gains of Digital Broadcasting

In general, digital broadcasting brings forth numerous advantages for both audiences and broadcasters, spanning aspects such as program content, media convergence, signal quality, and the availability of multiple channels. When considering national interest, the global community stands to reap substantial benefits from the operation of digital broadcasting. This is attributed to the fact that digital transmission enhances "limited spectrum use" as required by technological advancements, allowing for the transmission of high-definition images. Failure to adopt digital broadcasting may result in a decline in audience share to competing platforms such as cable, the internet, and direct broadcast satellite (DBS), all of which provide multiple channels of programming and data.

From the perspective of viewers' interest, digital broadcasting assumes a pivotal role in information dissemination due to its high receptivity, extensive coverage, and operational efficiency. Viewers can anticipate receiving clearer pictures, as digital broadcasting pledges television images that are as sharp and vivid as those in a Cineplex feature. Optimal utilization is facilitated by the ability of viewers to receive multiple channels from a single station, enhancing the overall efficiency and satisfaction of broadcasting. Moreover, digital broadcasting fosters media convergence, enabling audiences to integrate television with telephone, computer, and other information and communication technologies. This convergence opens up possibilities for broadcasting theater-quality sound and images via cable, antenna, or satellite. It also includes multicasting, allowing the transmission of multiple programs within a single digital signal, and signals for data communications that could potentially bring web page capabilities and interactive compact discs to TV, as highlighted by Duke (2019).

Considering the interests of broadcasters, the advent of digital broadcasting ushers in an era of cost-effectiveness. This is because a single station can carry up to four channels on the same frequency. Digital program productions are noted for their flexibility and speed compared to analog methods. The financial outlay for salaries, maintenance, and infrastructure is reduced, given that digital technology eliminates the need for bulky equipment, and fewer personnel are required for equipment manipulation. For instance, in the master control unit, where approximately 12 individuals were once necessary, one person can effectively manage such a unit with the introduction of digital operations. Digital radio also presents additional business opportunities for radio stations.

Content Providers' Interest

As existing broadcasting stations progressively expand the number of channels through the digitization process, there will be a heightened demand for programs. Consequently, content providers will be actively involved in meeting the needs of numerous stations seeking diverse programming. This heightened demand is expected to foster competition, leading to the provision of high-quality content and enabling content providers to achieve reasonable profits.

The concept of regulation involves the state's intervention in economic, social, or cultural aspects based on the political norms characteristic of a nation-state. Regulations may be established through national constitutions, decrees, laws dictated by religious prescriptions, or legislative actions within a representative democracy. Governance can be direct from the government or through statutory agencies that possess a certain degree of independence from the government. The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) of Nigeria serves as an illustration of such an agency.

Fundamentally, broadcasting regulation entails the issuance of permissions, namely the granting of licenses to broadcasting organizations. In many countries, including Nigeria, acquiring licenses for private organizations

comes with a substantial cost. For instance, by 2006, the lowest license fee for private radio stations in Nigeria was set at 15 million Naira, contrasting with the lower fee for public stations, which was 10 million Naira (NBC; 2013).

Challenges of Conventional Broadcast Regulation

Traditional broadcasting relies on spectrum allocation, which is limited and valuable. Allocating spectrum to different broadcasters while ensuring fair competition and avoiding interference is a complex task. Content Control and Censorship: Regulating content for traditional broadcasting involves balancing freedom of expression with societal values and cultural norms.

Media Ownership is a challenge and it may dominate the broadcasting landscape limiting competition and viewpoints also broadcasters often have public interest obligation such as providing current news with educational content to the society advertisement, ensuring compliance at all times. We also have traditional broadcaster who can easily travel across neighboring countries which may be difficult to regulate their movement when they move from one jurisdiction to another. The shift to digital broadcasting necessitates substantial investments in technology upgrades and infrastructure. This transition often poses challenges for both regulatory bodies and broadcasters, with the financial burden typically addressed by the government or individual owners of the companies. The goal is to enhance facilities and enable a more widespread adoption of digital viewing in the country.

The rise of digital broadcasting blurs the lines between traditional broadcasting, online streaming, and social media. Regulators must address issues of platform neutrality and ensure fair competition in this converged landscape. Global Reach and Jurisdiction: Digital broadcasts have a global reach, making it challenging for regulators to enforce rules and regulations across different jurisdictions. Content Moderation and Misinformation: The rapid spread of misinformation and harmful content online poses challenges for digital broadcast regulation. Balancing freedom of expression with the need to prevent the dissemination of harmful content is an ongoing struggle. Traditional broadcasting, digital platforms often host user-generated content. Determining liability for such content and regulating user-generated content without stifling innovation and free expression is complex. Data Privacy and User Protection: Digital broadcasting platforms often collect and utilize user data for targeted advertising and content recommendations. Regulators need to ensure that user privacy and data protection are upheld. Technological Advancements: The fast-paced evolution of digital technologies, such as artificial intelligence and virtual reality, presents challenges in adapting regulations to address emerging forms of digital broadcasting. Licensing and Distribution: The ease of digital distribution can make it difficult to enforce licensing agreements and copyright also the shift to digital broadcasting can disrupt traditional revenue models, requiring regulators to find new ways to ensure the economic viability of content creators and broadcasters. Overall, both conventional and digital broadcast regulation require adaptable and forward-looking approaches to address the complex challenges presented by

technological advancements, changing consumer behaviors, and the globalization of media. Balancing innovation, freedom of expression, and societal values remains a central concern.

The concept has captured the attention of communication scholars, becoming a focal point of their studies, particularly in light of the significant technological advancements observed in the media industry. Diffusion, as defined, represents a process through which an innovation is disseminated over time among members of a social system through specific channels. It stands as a distinctive form of communication where messages revolve around novel ideas. On the other hand, innovation denotes the introduction of something new, whether it be a project, practice, or concept. It is crucial to recognize that proponents of digitization prioritize understanding and recognizing the utility of digital technology, given its status as a global innovation designed to enhance the functionality of broadcasting operations. Moreover, the success of digital technology relies on the familiarity and comprehension of its workings by those who embrace it, as emphasized by Rogers (2015).

- Awareness: This phase involves introducing an innovation to individuals who lack sufficient information or generating public awareness to acquaint people with a new media product.
- Adoption stage: In this stage, the choice to embrace an innovation is guided by the information accumulated during the interest and evaluation phases, along with the results of the trial stage. An adopter is a categorization of individuals within a social system based on their openness to innovations.

METHODOLOGY

This research employed survey research methods to obtain a sample size of 150, representative of the study population. A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed among the participants, resulting in the return of 140 (93.3%) completed surveys, while 10 (6.6%) questionnaires remained unreturned. The study findings unveiled that predominant regulatory approaches included licensing, sanctioning, arbitrating, and monitoring.

RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A survey was conducted using a questionnaire distributed to 140 participants. To ensure clarity in presenting the collected data, straightforward percentages, tables, and explanations were employed.

In the findings, 75 respondents, constituting 53.6%, expressed strong agreement, while 60 respondents, accounting for 43.3%, agreed that digital versatile disc (DVD) provides superior audio-visual transmission. Additionally, 70 respondents, making up 50%, strongly agreed, and 60 respondents, representing 42.8%, concurred that digital television offers higher image quality compared to analog. Furthermore, 60 respondents, comprising 42.8%, strongly agreed, and 70 respondents, making up 50%, agreed on the difference in sound quality between digital and analog televisions. These results indicate that digitization integrates computers and television to enhance service quality..

/N	Respondents Knowledge on Research Questions	Strong Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Do you agree that digital versatile disc (DVD) gives better audio visual transmission?	75	53.6	60	42.8	-	-	5	3.6	140	100
2	Does digital television give a higher image quality than analogue?	70	50	60	42.8	5	3.6	5	3.6	140	100
3	Is there any difference in sound quality between a digital television and analogue television?	60	42.8	70	50	5	3.6	5	3.6	140	100
4	Can digitization integrate the computer and television for improved service?	50	35.6	70	50	10	7.2	10	7.2	140	100
5	How would you rate the audio and visual quality of a digital television over analogue Television?	60	42.8	70	50	5	3.6	5	3.6	140	100

Regulation is one of the instruments used by the society to check media content and portrayal.

In countries such as Nigeria, the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) was established through Decree 38 of 1992 with the mandate to register, regulate, and control broadcasting in the nation. However, there is a prevalent perception that the commission functions more as a governmental agent, compromising its commitment to fostering pluralism in the broadcast sector.

Despite its regulatory approaches encompassing licensing, monitoring, sanctioning defaulters, intervention, arbitration in conflicts, and other control measures, the commission's actions often exhibit bias against private stations, rendering it an “irregular” regulator.

This perceived inability of the NBC to operate independently stems from the fact that the authority to issue licenses lies with the president, not the commission. Furthermore, legal provisions have erroneously endowed the commission with excessive powers, making it both a regulator and an arbitrator. This results in fundamental flaws that position the country significantly behind others in terms of effective regulation. The issuance of licenses by the supreme political authority of the country often leads the commission to bend rules to favor government-established stations, thereby aligning with principles reminiscent of the authoritarian theory.

To uphold democratic principles, especially during Nigeria's rebranding efforts, it becomes crucial to embrace the tenets of the libertarian theory. This involves a comprehensive review of the Nigerian Broadcasting Code and its application, with the aim of creating a level playing field that promotes equal competition for all entities in the broadcasting sector. The recognition of regulation as one of the instruments society employs to monitor media content and portrayal remains essential in this context.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The NBC faces significant challenges in its mission to promote pluralism in Nigeria's broadcasting sector. The commission's dependence on the president for licensing decisions, its perceived bias towards government-owned stations, and its dual role as a regulator and arbitrator all contribute to a lack of trust and confidence in its ability to regulate the sector effectively. By reviewing the Nigerian Broadcasting Code and adopting the principles of the libertarian theory, the NBC can take steps towards creating a more diverse and inclusive broadcasting landscape in Nigeria.

At the end of the study some recommendations were made to Strengthen Regulatory Framework of the broadcasting industry in Nigeria: the need to revise and update existing broadcasting laws and regulations to address current challenges and emerging technologies. Ensure that the regulatory framework is flexible enough to accommodate technological advancements while also maintaining ethical and content standards. Independent Regulatory Body: Establish an independent and autonomous regulatory body with the authority to oversee and enforce broadcast regulations. This body should be transparent, free from political influence, and adequately funded to carry out its responsibilities effectively. Content Standards and Guidelines: to also create an act that will be guiding broadcasting industry and government and private broadcast stations address issues such as hate speech, incitement to violence, misinformation, and inappropriate content. Broadcasters should be required to adhere to these standards to maintain their licenses. Set quotas for the inclusion of local programs, languages, and cultures to ensure a rich and varied media landscape that reflects the country's diversity culture.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

The broadcasting system in Nigeria faces numerous challenges that have a significant impact on the industry. This paper aims to evaluate these challenges and their effects, analyzing different broadcasting bodies and regulatory approaches. The research adopts survey research methods, with a sample size of 150 respondents representing the population of the study. The study findings reveal that the major regulatory approaches in Nigeria's broadcasting system are licensing, sanctioning, arbitrating, and monitoring. These approaches are used to check media content and practices. However, the political system of the country determines the direction its regulations follow. One of the key recommendations of this paper is to review the Nigerian Broadcasting Code to make the regulatory body independent. This would encourage pluralism and healthy competition in the industry. By doing so, the broadcasting system in Nigeria can overcome its challenges and have a positive impact on the media landscape.

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