



ACHIEVING MEDIA VIABILITY THROUGH DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN NIGERIA'S DEPRESSED ECONOMY: A STUDY OF SELECT GOVERNMENT OWNED TELEVISION STATIONS IN SOUTHEAST NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study was on the effect digital transformation has on the viability of Television stations in Nigeria. The objectives were to: ascertain effects of digital media platforms on TV stations; determine the implications of digital transformation on viability of television stations; identify the impediments to TV stations digital transformation in southeast Nigeria and ways it could be self-sustaining, as they face stiff competition with the digital media platforms and irregular subvention from government. The study was anchored on the Disruptive Innovation theory and adopted survey design. A sample size of 315 was drawn using the Taro Yamane method. Findings showed that digital media platforms have adverse effect on viability of television stations; digital transformation boosts viability of television stations; lack of funding is a major impediment to television stations digital transformation in southeast Nigeria; and complementing traditional advertising with digital media advertising helps make television stations self-sustaining. Recommendations were that television stations should show visibility in the internet; Government should encourage TV stations to embrace digitalisation and digital transformation; Government should adequately fund the procurement of modern technological equipment needed for digitalization of their operations; and TV stations should engage be a multi-channel advertising as well as enhancing their broadcast value chain, especially rich contents that can attract and sustain viewership.

Keywords: Digital transformation, Digital media, media viability, revenue generation, depressed economy

Introduction

The technological growth has rapidly enhanced globalisation, bringing the world to us. The digital transformation - a product of digitization and digitalization - is a technological advancement which uses digital technologies to create new or restructure existing business models, and clients' experiences to meet evolving industry necessities. This re-engineering of business in the digital era is digital transformation (Sengupta, 2022). The digital technology has accelerated almost everything in the world, and broadcasting industry is not left out. The necessity to comprehend the audience's or customer's perspectives and engage with them is the thrust of digital transformation and this has made far-reaching changes in the broadcasting industry.

In recent times, there has been heightened attention for media viability within the media sector. Media viability has been a lingering concern and discourse for media establishments in a depressed

economy such as Nigeria. Suffice it to say that media viability has also become an ongoing dilemma for media institutions in the relatively free and developed economies of the world. The reason being that nowadays media everywhere struggle to survive, majorly as a result of digital transformation (kq.freepressunlimited.org., 2022).

The digital transformation has hugely affected the information sphere over the last decade. Greater number of audiences is turning to online to serve their information needs. Conventional media in the form of newspapers, television and radio, have rapidly replicated the move and have migrated into the digital environment. Television broadcasting is impacted by the digital transformation. Broadcasting firms are facing tough contest for audience attention by streaming services and new multimedia platforms (Hirschmeier et al., 2019).

The expansion in the over-the-top television (OTT) delivery system (a media service offered directly to viewers through the television which includes television shows, movies, and other short and long-form content) is gaining significant acceptance (Globe Newswire, 2021) and is affecting the viability of traditional television stations. Instead of the media being the only avenue for advertisement, the internet has opened up communication space as an opportunity to advertise. Leading tech platforms have taken advantage of this opportunity, making Facebook and Google the biggest competitors of media in terms of advertisement revenue (kq.freepressunlimited.org.,2022).

It is noteworthy to say that digital media poses a threat to Television stations. There is ongoing migration of people to digital media, and this has invariably reduced the number that tune to conventional media. Advertisers and producers for want of visibility go where the audience/market is now, and that appears to be the digital media. There is no longer captive audience segment, waiting to consume any sort of content produced by the television stations. There is now a strong rivalry between the online platforms and the mainstream television stations. The digital platforms are eating deep into the market sphere hitherto controlled by the television stations.

As desirable as digital transformation maybe, it is a technological innovation that requires much funding on human and material resources. Television stations in the Southeast Nigeria are majorly owned either by the federal and state governments that are battling with a depressed and unstable economy.

The Nigeria's economy is bedeviled with challenges such as "wobbly economic growth, tumbling revenues, unsustainable subsidies, unmatched fiscal mechanisms, redundant monetary policies, and faulty trade policies among many other thrusts" (Iyatse, 2022). Government media stations in Nigeria are largely funded through monthly subventions.

The economic meltdown has made it increasingly difficult for both federal and state government to be timely in fulfilling their statutory obligations. This has made it difficult for television stations management to pay staff salaries, run overhead costs and maintenance, as well as procuring modern digital equipment that could enable them compete favourably in this digital era. The question now is in view of the precarious economic situation, and in the absence of the government subvention, how would the television stations be viable and sustain themselves, as they face stiff competition and battle for survival with the digital media platforms?

There is need for the television stations to start thinking out of box with a view to mitigating the onslaught by the digital media platforms, otherwise they will suffer revenue drop and if not controlled may be pushed out of the market. The sustainability of the television stations in the face of the rampaging digital media platforms has become a thing of concern for the television stations managements.

The danger presented by the online media platforms driven by the internet has compelled the television administrators to begin to seek existential answers if we could change our processes in a way that will engender better decision-making, evolutionary improvements, or improved customer satisfaction, with greater customization (Salesforce, 2022).

The way out this online media offensive is for television stations to adopt digital transformation, especially now we are deeply rooted in the digital era. Media firms are under pressure as consumers shift their attention to digital channels and in response, they are turning to digital transformation to save costs,

increase revenues and improve customers' engagement (Phung, 2022). This study therefore, sought to x-ray digital transformation as a means for the viability and sustainability of media stations in Nigeria, using the select government television stations in Southeast Nigeria as point of study.

Statement of the Problem

The traditional media stations are scrambling for the market dominance with the digital media platforms, and the latter seem to be having an edge. This is as a result of the massive migration of people to digital media platforms, which has brought low the number that tune to conventional media. The move to online means a world of difference for most media. Advertisement, sales and subscriptions which are the main revenue generation streams for the conventional media are not very profitable anymore. Instead of conventional media being the only prominent platform for advertising, the internet has opened up multiple platforms as opportunities to advertise and accrue revenue.

Invariably this scenario has affected the television stations' viability and sustainability, and if nothing is done to stem this, would lead to shut down of television stations and possible loss of jobs. The government subvention to their media stations is no longer regular due to our depressed economy. The government owned television stations are cash-starved and are finding it difficult to compete favourably with the internet-based platforms.

This has reduced the number of audience and by extension customers that could be doing business with them. The inability of the government owned television stations to embrace digital transformation has put them at a disadvantaged position in the struggle for audience and market dominance. They now find it difficult to viable and sustain themselves.

Therefore, the objectives of this study are to: ascertain effects of digital media platforms on television stations; determine the implications of lack of digital transformation on viability of TV stations; and identify two greatest impediments to TV stations digital transformation in Southeast Nigeria and possible solutions.

Conceptual Review

A brief insight into Digital Transformation

The integration of digital technology into every facet of an organization which results in notable alteration in how organisations perform and offer value to consumers, is referred to as digital transformation (Advendio, 2022). The Enterprisers project goes on to describe digital transformation thus:

Because digital transformation will look different for every company, it can be hard to pinpoint a definition that applies to all. However, in general terms, we define digital transformation as the integration of digital technology into all areas of a business resulting in fundamental changes to how businesses operate and how they deliver value to customers. Beyond that, it's a cultural change that requires organisations to continually challenge the status quo, experiment often, and get comfortable with failure. This sometimes means walking away from long-standing business processes that companies were built upon in favor of relatively new practices that are still being defined (The Enterprisers project, 2022).

Digital transformation is the "fundamental shift in how we live, work and relate to one another, to a social, mobile, cloud-powered world" (Phung, 2022). It is an online adjustment made to enhance company operations. Digital transformation is also "a cultural change within an organisation and can often pose different challenges in the beginning" (Advendio, 2022).

Digital transformation is actually a business transformation made possible by digitalization; It helps in communication process and makes it easier to understand your audience's perspectives (Sengupta, 2022).

Digital transformation goes beyond common roles such as sales, marketing, and customer service. However, it commences and terminates with how you perceive, and relates with customers or audience; it gives value to any audience interaction. Digital transformation is altering how business is carried out and in certain situations creates completely new ranges of businesses.

With digital transformation organisations are pausing and reviewing their entire *modus operandi*, from internal systems to customer engagements virtually and face-to-face (Salesforce, 2022). Digital transformation starts with “a problem statement, a clear opportunity, or an aspirational goal, which may include improving customer experience, reducing friction, increasing productivity, or elevating profitability; and if it is an aspirational statement, it might revolve around becoming the absolute best to do business with, utilizing enabling digital technologies that were unavailable years ago” (The Enterprisers project, 2022).

Digital transformation does not flourish on its own. There are ingredients that propel it in the media industry as organisations scramble to meet the evolving demands of their customers. These include “changes in demographics; new consumer behaviors and expectations; ecosystem challenges; and technology trends” (Phung, 2022). An organization launches digital transformation for several reasons; however, the chief motive is majorly for survival or sustainability. Hence, consumer behavioural changes and customer experience have to be put into consideration as drivers to digital transformation (Hinchcliffe, 2022).

Digital transformation impact on the media industry

Digital transformation matters in organisation’s operations, growth and sustainability. The digital transformation of industries represents a tremendous prospect to create value for both industry and the public. It provides media industry with incomparable possibilities for value generation. “Digital technologies are creating new profit pools by transforming customer expectations and how companies can address them” (World Economic Forum, 2022).

Media industry is caught in the revolutionary cross-fire and their alignment of influence is affecting almost every media organisation (James, 2018). The industry is moving from mass media to personalized media, and focus on prime time is no longer the paramount, as audience now can view anything at their discretion. Digital transformation is indispensable for all businesses, from a micro-enterprise to a large corporation (The Enterprisers project, 2022). Phung (2022) posits:

Digital transformation is affecting every industry, and the media industry is no exception. With the advent of digital transformation in media, consumers have more opportunities than ever to access the content. Also, they expect to be able to do so wherever they are, on whatever device they happen to be using. To keep up with these changing consumer habits, traditional media companies are embracing digital transformation initiatives, adapting their businesses to a digital world (Phung, 2022).

Phung (2022) further gave the benefits of digital transformation in media to include: “Real-time booking for advertisers; collaboration; personalisation; replacement of manual tasks with automation; access to real-time data and analytics; and cross-channel advertising”. Lieberman (2019), in a bid to prove that digital transformation might be the next technological revolution, shared a 24-point data from research sources to buttress his assertion that organisations should begin to think differently about how to execute their marketing, advertising, sales and customer service, as the audience shift from conventional media to digital media.

Digital transformation and media viability in a depressed economy

Media organisation's managers must adjust to the technological modifications to stay relevant in the industry. Identifying the major changes and evolving trends in broadcasting will help industry players determine how to adjust their media strategies, what strategy probably contribute to success and how to better prepare for the future (IBM, 2020).

Digital transformation may vary depending on organisation's peculiar difficulties and demands; however, there are some unvarying components that should be considered as media firms embark on digital transformation. These digital transformation elements include "customer experience, operational agility, culture and leadership, workforce enablement, and digital technology integration" (The Enterprisers project, 2022). With the rapid audience migration from conventional television to the net, staying relevant in broadcast media is challenging but necessary for long-term viability. There is a need to transform to avoid becoming irrelevant.

According to the Leichtman Research Group (2018), "traditional TV viewing has dropped dramatically since 2012, particularly among 18–24-year-olds, and in the next few years, we would witness a decline of TV viewing, with it, a steep drop-off of traditional TV advertising in favor of using digital media as the preferred advertising platform".

Years ago, TV was the only form of media you could use to reach a massive market during prime hours, but now, people are no longer watching as much. There is the need to look at the way of digital transformation as it affects revenue generation. Digital advertising is a means of media viability in the face of digital transformation. There has been a decrease in the number of young viewers of national TV stations; 750,000 of them "migrated" mostly to the Internet in the expense of television (www.iupitermedia.com). Migrating to online advertising is a phenomenon observed since from the last quarter of 2003 in the USA (Dina, 2012).

With digital strategies more important than ever before, understanding the shifting landscape can be a key to getting ahead of the competition and increasing advertising revenues. In the current hyper-competitive environment, media companies need to innovate, staying ahead of the digitization curve to reach new audiences and monetize impressions (Advendio, 2022).

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on the Theory of Disruptive Innovation, propounded by Clayton Christensen in 1995. According to Christensen, (2006) "disruptive innovation is the process in which a smaller company, usually with fewer resources, is able to challenge an established business by entering at the bottom of the market and continuing to move up-market". According to this theory, it is not the technology itself that disrupts the operations of an established firm, but the fact that the new innovation phases out the business strategies of an old technology. Thus, this explains why an innovation can be disruptive for certain firms and sustaining for others.

Although the disruptive innovations may not exceed the prior technology, the performance of a disruptive innovation improves in due course and becomes adequate in a given segment of the market (Christensen, 2006). Dominick et al. (2009), argues that "a new medium survives, grows, competes and prospers by providing gratification to consumers thus providing new solutions to old or contemporary needs".

A new medium will compete with established media for consumer satisfaction, time and advertising revenue. If the competition exists, the consequence for the older media consists of exclusion or replacement, wherein the new medium takes over some of the roles played by the older medium. Banholzer et al. (2023) argues that organizations with innovation cultures realize more value from strategic technology investments than their peers do, our latest digital survey finds.

The theory of disruptive innovation is highly relevant this study because it provides a framework to understand how new digital technologies can fundamentally change media organisations by introducing

products or services that initially target underserved markets, eventually disrupting established players and forcing them to adapt or risk becoming obsolete; essentially, it helps organisations identify potential threats and opportunities arising from emerging digital trends and develop strategies to either capitalize on disruption or mitigate its impact.

Methodology

The survey method was adopted for this study. The population of Study consists of 1,480 people. Four hundred and thirty people out of this number were drawn from staff of five Federal-owned TV stations in Southeast Nigeria namely: NTA Owerri (74), NTA Aba (94), NTA Enugu (126), NTA Awka (70), and NTA Abakaliki (63). The rest 1050 people were drawn from staff of five State-owned TV stations in Southeast Nigeria namely: IBC Owerri (256), BCA Umuahia (248), ESBS Enugu (196), ABS Awka (180), and EBBC Abakaliki (170).

A sample size of 315 was selected using the Taro Yamane formula. The Stratified sampling technique was used to get adequate representation of the subsample of the population. Through this technique, Federal Government-owned TV Stations strata had 91 people while State Government-owned TV Stations strata had 224 people. Three hundred and two returned their questionnaire.

Questionnaire was used as the instrument of data collection. The validity of the questionnaire was done using face validity technique. In checking for the reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted in Port- Harcourt, Rivers State among staff of NTA Channel 10, and the Rivers State Television. 10 copies of questionnaire were administered to 10 respondents. The reason was to determine whether the responses would be in line with the result expected from the instrument. To ascertain the reliability of instrument of data collection, the Spearman-Brown formula was used.

The study was delimited to the role digital transformation could play on sustainability of the government TV stations in Southeast Nigeria. Analysis was done using the 4point likert scale with the decision point of 2.5.

Presentation of Data and Discussion of Findings

1. Effects of digital media platforms on television stations.

Q1: Digital media platforms allow access to an enormous flow of information.					Q2: Doubts the information they receive through mainstream media.				
Table 1:					Table 2:				
Response	F	X	FX	%	Response	F	X	FX	%
Strongly agreed	74	4	296	24.5	Strongly agreed	134	4	536	44.37
Agreed	96	3	537	31.8	Agreed	141	3	423	46.69
Disagreed	92	2	184	30.5	Disagreed	26	2	52	8.61
Strongly disagreed	40	1	40	13.2	Strongly disagreed	1	1	1	0.33
Total	302		808	100	Total	302		1012	100
808 ÷ 302 = 2.6					1012 ÷ 302 = 3.35				

Q3: Allows viewer engagement					Q4: Frequency of news breaking				
Table 3:					Table 4:				
Response	F	X	FX	%	Response	F	X	FX	%
Strongly agreed	141	4	564	46.69	Strongly agreed	63	4	252	20.86
Agreed	134	3	402	44.34	Agreed	159	3	477	52.65
Disagreed	1	2	48	5.3	Disagreed	64	2	128	21.19
Strongly disagreed	11	1	11	3.64	Strongly disagreed	16	1	16	5.3
Total	302		1025	100	Total	302		873	100
1025 ÷ 302 = 3.4					873 ÷ 302 = 2.9				
					Grand mean = 3.1				

The first objective was to ascertain the effects of digital media platforms on television stations. From the result, the entire variables were accepted since their mean values are greater than the decision point (2.5), hence positive. From the analysis of responses, we could deduce that digital media platforms allow audience to have an enormous flow of information; the audiences usually do not distrust the information they receive through mainstream media; there is greater viewer engagement; and frequency of news breaking is greater on digital platforms.

These findings are supported by Mahanti (2022) who asserted that social media revolution has changed and is still changing the TV news programming, as viewers can actively participate while watching a TV program by posting comments online; by Nicoleta and Taseñte (2012), Glen and Royston (2008) who said that the Social media have an important role in changing the behavior of traditional TV viewers, directing them more and more to online environment and to selective consumption of content; and by Stănescu (2023), Healey (2011) who pointed out that the public is increasingly turning to online media and consuming less content from traditional media outlets, and broadcasters have increasingly had to adapt to this trend.

The findings are also supported by Ivy Panda (2020), Healey (2011) that reported that the growth of digital media has resulted in a reduction in the amount of time people spend on viewing television, making more people prefer to interact through social networking websites to share different stories, jokes, pictures, videos and other interesting multimedia content with their friends; by Hutchins and Rowe (2012) who averred that online news portals also rely on social networking sites to break news stories regarding different events that are taking places.

2. Implications of lack of digital transformation on viability of television stations.

Q5: Digital media platforms would disrupt the existing market for the broadcast TV stations					Q6: Digital transformation will affect all segments in the broadcast value chain				
Table 5:					Table 6:				
Response	F	X	FX	%	Response	F	X	FX	%
Strongly agreed	60	4	240	19.97	Strongly agreed	53	4	212	44.37

Agreed	185	3	555	61.26	Agreed	234	3	702	46.69
Disagreed	57	2	114	18.87	Disagreed	15	2	30	8.61
Strongly disagreed	0	1	0	0	Strongly disagreed	0	1	0	0.33
Total	302		909	100	Total	302		944	100
909 ÷ 302 = 3					944 ÷ 302 = 3.13				

Q7: Lack of digital transformation by your broadcast organisations would negatively affect its operations Table 7:					Q8: Lack of digital transformation have adverse effect on revenue generation Table 8:				
Response	F	X	FX	%	Response	F	X	FX	%
Strongly agreed	23	4	92	7.62	Strongly agreed	53	4	212	17.55
Agreed	172	3	516	56.95	Agreed	229	3	687	75.83
Disagreed	101	2	202	33.44	Disagreed	15	2	30	4.97
Strongly disagreed	6	1	6	1.99	Strongly disagreed	5	1	5	1.65
Total	302		816	100	Total	302		934	100
816 ÷ 302 = 2.7					934 ÷ 302 = 3.1				
					Grand mean = 3				

The second objective of the study was to ascertain what effect lack of digital transformation have on viability of TV stations in Southeast Nigeria. From the result, the entire variables were accepted since their mean values are greater than the decision point (2.5), hence positive. From the analysis of responses, digital media platforms would disrupt the existing market for the broadcast TV stations will negatively affect all segments in the broadcast value chain and its operations, and have adverse effect on revenue generation.

These finding are supported by Ngwu (2016) when he said digital advertising is a form of disruptive advertising which is displaces an established framework or structures, thereby affecting adversely the revenue generation from the traditional media advertising; by Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) and PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC US) who revealed that Internet advertising revenues rose 23.2 percent to a record \$14.9 billion in the first half of 2011.

The findings are also supported by Ahmed (2019) who asserted that the channels of digital media advertising have a positive and significant influence on the effectiveness of online digital media that creates brand sustainability for fast moving consumer goods (FMCG); by Confos and Davis(2016) who said that with the expansion of new channels of digital media the traditional print and electronic media are facing real threats and major crises; and by Hanley (2014) who said that social and digital media impact a local television station and their influence will continue to grow at a local television news station in the future.

However, the rise of new media, particularly social media, has put a danger to the survival of some traditional media outlets and reduced their readership and viewership, however traditional media, which is no longer as dominant as it once was, is still a relevant source of information for society and a wide audience who are looking for the credibility and reliability of the news that is circulated on social media(Al-Quran, 2022).

3. The impediments to TV stations digital transformation in Southeast Nigeria

Table 9: Options	Fed. TV	State TV	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of adequate funding	34	70	104	34.44
Lack of adequate manpower	5	10	15	4.97
Unavailability of technology	20	55	75	24.83
Lack of awareness	12	28	40	13.25
Poor power supply	8	22	30	9.93
Lack of political will	10	28	38	12.58
Total	89	213	302	100

The third objective was to identify the impediments to television stations digital transformation in Southeast Nigeria and possible solutions. Table 9 shows that option of Lack of adequate funding and unavailability of technology were the two greatest impediments.

This finding is supported by Jabil (2023), who listed the biggest barriers to digital transformation as employee pushback, lack of expertise to lead digitization initiatives, organisational structure, lack of overall digitization strategy, and limited budget; Melendez (2021), who included not understanding the problem, conflicting definitions; managing change, lack of resources; and trying to boil the ocean; Parsons (2022) gave seven barriers as including outdated data, strategy and execution aren't connected, trouble working across silos, inability to experiment quickly, manual portfolio analysis, legacy systems, and internal culture; and Fatcher (2023) who gave barriers as strategy and leadership, customer experience, delivery and execution, technology and competitive landscape, and people and culture.

Conclusion

Findings showed that digital media platforms have adverse effect on viability of television stations; that digital transformation boosts visibility and viability of television stations; that lack of funding is a major impediment to TV stations digital transformation in southeast Nigeria; and that complementing traditional advertising with digital media advertising is a means to make television stations self-sustaining.

The migration of customers and consumers of products from traditional media to digital media has become a thing of concern to the managers of TV stations, who are yet to join the digital revolution. This is worsened by the slow pace of the Television digitization in Nigeria. We therefore conclude that digitization of TV would have enabled TV stations compete favourably with the rampaging digital and social media.

Digital transformation is a double-edged sword. It enhances the viability and sustainability of media organisations that cued into it; same time it drives those yet to cue in out of the market. We conclude that media firms yet to join the digital transformation train would be adversely affected.

The new technologies to target people online are making it easier to reach your target audience and collect data to optimize campaigns in order to increase traffic and engagement. We therefore conclude that digital transformation enhances interaction and make a consumer experience a personal connection to your offerings.

Recommendations

We recommend that media firms should show visibility and presence in the internet and social media. As people increasingly turn to new media as a source for communication, knowledge and business, television stations need to device strategies and tactics in creative and innovative ways to meet the needs of the new generation.

This can be done through multi-channel advertising; Government should assist the media organisations to be digitized so as to engage in digital broadcasting, as this will enhance their broadcast value chain, especially with rich contents that can attract and sustain viewership; TV stations in Southeast Nigeria should key into digital advertising in order to retain the audience patronage and to measure up in the competitive environment digital media has created.

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