

Digitalizing Television Programming in Bauchi State Television (Baty): An Appraisal of its Impacts and Challenges

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Abstract

The coming of digitalization has marked a watershed in human's capacity for invention. Until the 1980s, media relied upon print and analog (electronic) broadcast models such as those of television and radio. The media has experienced a rapid transformation in the last twenty-five years which was manifested through the use of digital computers. The use of digital computers has transformed the old media, giving it some more advanced and qualitative products as revealed by the advent of digital television. The survey method of research was employed, through the distribution of questionnaires to 100 respondents to examine the impact of digitalizing on television programming in BATB. This research work has succeeded in bringing to lime light, the effectiveness and extend of impact digitalization has brought in programming particularly in BATV. The findings also revealed that digitalization has positively impacted on television programming in BATB.

Introduction

Some decades ago, media expert, Marshal McLuhan predicted that Mass Communication would turn the world into a global village. Thanks to modern

communication technology his prophecy seems to be coming true, as international personal communication has been greatly improved through the emergence and use of fax machines, communication satellite, email, cellular phones and the internet. These days everybody is within the reach of everybody else.

However, with the rise in globalization and digitalization, the advanced media technology is witnessing unprecedented attention by the media all over the world (especially in developed nations) digitalization is a 21st century concept which summarizes the advancement in media technology. Reporters are increasingly becoming aware of the place and need for the advanced media technology as electronic tools enable them to do their essential work more efficiently, effectively and economically. Among the benefits, Pizza (2002) notes that, they speed man's work, give him more accurate data to work with, and allow him to make better decisions and recommendations on the basis of information, rather than instinct.

Lorenz and John (1996) in their joined work, note that the dynamism in the development technology is having a great impact on mass communication in many areas. It has given birth to what is called computer assisted reporting (CAR). With the computer, reporters and public relations people now have a powerful tool for gathering, organizing, analyzing and disseminating information.

According to Dominick (2001:281) he says the television pictures on our T.V sets in the late 1990's use the same basic technology development during the 1930's. It is called the analog method.

But on around the year 1997, in Nigeria, the future of television was changed when federal communications commission (NCC) adopted rules introducing digital television, a system that, from that moment moves T.V sets into the information age.

With digital T.V, the image is still scanned but the signal is the binary one, assigning bits of code to each pixel on a T.V screen that define the color and brightness of the pixel and recreate its original image. Digital television has more potential than old analog system.

Bauchi state Television started as a branch of the Nigerian broadcasting corporation (NBC) by edit 4 of 1978. The Bauchi state branch of the NBC

became known as Bauchi Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), ownership having been transferred from the federal to the state government in the same year of 1978. The BBC then comprise of both Radio and Television Television as BATV was separated from Radio around 1982 by the former military government of that time and was given sole autonomy of its programmes same year.

It can be remembered that in 1976, the Obasanjo regime took over all television stations in Nigeria, so they became part of the Nigerian television network known as N.T.A Jos. With the coming of the second republic, a new constitution was adopted which allow for state ownership of television station in 1982, and BATV assumed its rebirth. This was considered as a lift forward and development because of its capacity to provide for the citizens more local contents highlighting local issues of impressive interest to the citizens. The rebirth of BATV was supported by the provision of edit No. 8 of 1978.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the fact that the advancement in media technology has its advantages, it also exhibits a number of liabilities, ranging from the nature of equipment, which is technically complex, lack of professionally trained individuals to handle the equipment, and the cost of the equipment. (Thomas and Kobayashi 1987:6, 7)

According to Boyd (2001), when lamenting on the essentiality as well as the availability of digital infrastructure in broadcast media organizations in Nigeria, he emphasized that it is very obvious that most developing counties have not measured up to the standard of the advanced media technology and if nothing positive is done to change the situation other countries will keep on advancing and developing nations will continue to remain technologically back ward.

Odunlami (2007) stated that the claim put by almost all broadcasting media establishments in Nigeria that they have been fully digitalized in this face of the digital era, as far as their programmes and programming are concerned, as well as their claim of provision of efficient digital infrastructure in their production of contents, have become a source of worry to many people that have interest in media. Many occasions have proved this claim as otherwise. He further argued that researches need to be conducted to appraise this claim time after

time in order to bring to the public notice the state of the matter for appropriate actions to be taken from the angle of those concerned.

In this direction also Ojobor (2002), stated that majority of the television stations in Nigeria are recording insignificant development in digitalization in their production processes. Most of their equipments are outdated and analogue in nature and their production procedures are most a time primitive and cumbersome that does not allow for smooth and easier content formation, distribution and transmission. He further lamented that when one visits the places even after some years one still notice the same thing repeatedly activated without changes even when the changes are essential. This limited, to greater extent, their capacity to produce reach media contents that the situation will acknowledge and appreciate.

It is out of this background that this research work would seek to investigate the level of digitalization in relation to gathering and dissemination of information and programming in general in BATV Bauchi.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To determine the level of digitization in BATV
- To determine the impacts of digitization on programming in BATV
- To determine the challenges facing digitization advancement in BATV.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What is the level of digitization in BATV?
- What is the impact of digitization on programming in BATV?
- What are the challenges facing digitization advancement in BATV?

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The concept of digital programming is a global topic that encompasses almost all television media organizations. Due to inconveniences, this study cannot be carried out to encompass all of the media organizations in Bauchi state. Hence, the research would strictly base this study on Bauchi state television (BATV), Bauchi in perspective. However, even in the television not all aspects will be looked at, but only programming in relation to digitalization. The researcher is not looking at the equipment, management, skills but how digital revolution

affects television programming. The whole work will be in four (4) chapters only.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

LITERATURE REVIEW

The digital age presages an overwhelming influence of information which scholars sees as “sounding the death of knell” of the traditional media such as a swan song hard been sung about the mass media in the late 1970’s when video text services became available. The digital age represents the mythical age when communication or information is shown in the form of numbers or digits which change. In this scene, information is recorded as a series of numbers, zero and on before it is used. It also represents the information in which information can be processed by computers.

Today, as Fiddler (1997:89) observed, all forms of electronic communications are converging through digital formats and computer mediated communication now applies to newspaper, telephone systems, broadcasting, film production as well as the internet. It is for its pervasiveness that many have asks the technologically relevant but socially in appropriate question as to whether indigenous communication can survive the digital age. There is nothing in these assertions to point to a social denudation or diminution of influence in areas of greater effect by the two firms of communication.

Many scholars believed that digitalization is loaded with significant problems for which it may make the communication process almost effortless. Fiddler (1997:89) points out that this is achieved at a price; “high subscription tariffs, smartcards and digital conversion boxes”.

In addition, all other components of the technology are obtainable at a high cost, including the higher cost of electricity consumption, marginalization of the information poor, leading to increase in information gap between the information rich and the information poor.

In highlighting these problems, however, the intention is not to portray the digital age as a negative unprofitable window into our media and communication suffused society. The point being made here is that, digitization is good, but we must beware of its shortcomings.

Without digitalization globalization will become relatively difficult, if not impossible. It is thus, impossible for any activity (economic or political); to transverse national and regional boundaries without the use of information technologies which today is developed and made more effective by digitization. The advent of digital video and of new, more powerful small computers have brought about what is called non-linear edition. Digital methods are not only used for producing and storing audio information, but also for distribution. This could be between studios and transmitters or even directly to the end-user, such as in the DAB (digital Audio broadcasting) system. The digital revolution has made audio and video systems increasingly digital, rather than analog. The trend towards all digital installations broadcasting, recording and post-production requires that not only is the equipment digital, but that the inter-connections between devices are digital, since this is the only way to ensure that quality is maintained is maintained when signals are copied or transferred. The digital revolution through the advanced production software is used for music, drama, jingles and commercial production. It has advanced editing and should sound processing features of television programmes. Digital techniques can be applied in the production and processing of programmes in television plants and studios, the distribution of programmes to other broadcasters and the radiation of a digitalized programme signal to the home receivers. For now, the question of access to these resources of digital revolution limits the euphoria that one may want to build around it. This, of course, means that only a very limited portion of the human race can claim exploitation of these benefits for quite a long time.

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

The theory that applies to the study is the technological determination theory (TD), propounded by Marshal McLuhan. Simply put, this theory is the idea that technology has important effects on our lives. This idea popular imagination and political rhetoric, for example in the idea that the internet is revolutionizing economy and society, Chandler, (1995). McLuhan was convinced that the lifestyles people live rely heavily on the way they process information. Each communication invention throughout the history changed the way people thought about themselves and the world around them. Whether it is oral, written

or electronic, the communication channel changes the way we perceive the world (the medium is the message). Bijker, (1987). McLuhan predicted that advancement of electronic technology and media will change collective cognitive process of society at large people, would move from a predominantly individualistic lifestyle instigated by the industrial age into a new wave of social experience coined by him as the global village where people are connected worldwide through participation in smaller communities. Electronic technology would, to an extent, facilitate a return to the oral-tactile “tribal” mentality thereby determining the mode of interaction interacting between individuals, Chandler, (1995).

RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Akuezuilo (1993:37) “Research design is a plan for a research project”. It is an outline that guides the researcher in observing the content of his study.

The research design chosen for this study is the survey method. Survey as defined by Ohaja (2003:11) “is a study of the characteristics of a sample through questioning that enables a researcher to make generalizations concerning his population of interest”. Survey was chosen as a method of analysis because the researcher is interested in sampling the view of the media executives, engineers and Journalist in Bauchi state Television (BATV) Bauchi; being the case study and some members of the public who watch BATV about the impact of digital revolution on their television programming.

It’s in this line that Ohaja (2003:74) holds that “whenever the source of primary data for a study would be the views of members of the public or any particular group a survey would be called for”

RESEARCH POPULATION

“A population in research is the target group which a researcher is interested in studying and about which he intends to obtain information and draw conclusion Awotunde et al, (1997:88).

The population chosen for this research work was based on relevance to the study. Hence, all levels of management were used i.e top management, middle management from the various departments in the corporation as they are all

relevant and important for the success of this great establishment and also a few members of the public who watch BATV.

SAMPLING PROCEDURE

“The quality of people needed for a research work is much more than unproductive number (Cuimmer and Dominick, 1987). That was why the population chosen for this research work was based on relevance to the study”. Based on the above, the sampling technique the research is using is purposive sampling because the researcher is interested in those that have a broader knowledge about the case study (PRTV, Jos).

SAMPLE SIZE

The research would sample the views of 100 people as main size for this study.

DISCUSSION ON FINDINGS

This study sets out to answer three research questions which were set in chapter one. This provided a direction for the study and shaped the choice of data obtained for analysis.

1. What is the level of digitalization in BATV?
2. What is the impact of digitalization in BATV?
3. What are the challenges facing digitalization advancement in BATV?

In response to research question one; the research discovered that digitalization has improved the quality of television programming in BATV. The strongly worded statements proved that analogue has been replaced with digital programming which helped in expanding the level of media coverage which table 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 have clearly illustrated.

In table 7 and 8, the researcher opined that, digitalization does not only help expanding the level of the media coverage but also improve the level of patronage to the television station.

In response to the second research question, based on the responses from the strongly worded statements, it revealed in table 9, 10, 12 and 13 that digitization has brought so much speed and has brought ease in television programming, unlike during the reign of analog method of which it takes time and follows

some series of steps. The findings further show that digitization has made available the materials for programming and has also improved the competency of staff.

In line with the above, the researcher concluded that digitalization has positive impact on television programming in BATV. However, the study found out that the advent of digitalization has not in any way made practitioner to be lazy which table 11 has clearly illustrated.

In a nutshell, the implication of these is that digitalization has a positive impact on Television Programming in BATV.

Based on the last research question, the researcher concluded that digitalization is very expensive for the mean time which table 14 clearly illustrated.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the fact that the concept of digitalization has brought with it some problems, it is evident that it offers more profitable channels through its bandwidth. It is market oriented as it cares for a larger number. Thus, it is suitable in today's world of advertising and commercialization of media wares. These info-tech revolution or new technologies provide us with the opportunity of obtaining accurate, timely, relevant, appropriate and adequate information for decision making in personal and corporate spheres. The speed, efficiency and reliability of these devices make them pillars upon which economic and political system in the international system rests.

From the study being conducted, the researcher feels that the following recommendations are crucial:

- i. Government should always provide subsidies to the television stations to enable them invest more in the new technologies for more efficiency in programming delivery.
- ii. Customer patronage should be encouraged through the introduction of high quality programmes.
- iii. Wide coverage should also be the watch word so as to allow the common man in the village (those in the rural areas) has access to some of these new technologies.

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