



Challenges of Migration from Analogue to Digital Broadcasting among Television Stations in Asaba, Delta State

Bieni Victor Emenike
Department of Mass Communication
Crown University Int'l, USA
victorbieni@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examined the preparedness and challenges faced by television stations in Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria, toward the migration from analogue to digital broadcasting. A descriptive survey design was adopted, with data collected through structured questionnaire administered to 160 staff members of selected television stations in Asaba. The findings revealed a moderate level of preparedness among the stations, with efforts made in staff training and communication about the migration process. However, gaps were observed, particularly in public awareness campaigns. The study further identified key challenges, including financial constraints, inadequate technical expertise, insufficient digital equipment, poor infrastructure, regulatory delays, staff resistance, and high maintenance costs for digital equipment. These challenges were found to have a high intensity, significantly hindering the progress of the digital migration process. The study contributes to the growing body of literature on digital transition in Nigeria by focusing on the unique context of Asaba, Delta State. The study recommends that stakeholders, including policymakers, media organizations, and regulatory bodies, need to invest in infrastructure, secure funding, enhance technical expertise, and improve public awareness to ensure a successful digital transition for television stations in Asaba and beyond.

Keywords: Analogue, Broadcasting, Digital migration, digital transition, television,

Introduction

Technology is the driving force of the modern world, shaping every sector of human life. This phenomenon is particularly evident in the mass media industry. One of the major changes technology is introducing into the mass media landscape is digital broadcasting. The International Telecommunication Union's (ITU) Regional Radio-communication Conference (RRC-06) in Geneva, Switzerland, held in June 2006, made a case for switching from analogue to digital broadcasting. Since then, issues concerning digital broadcasting have continued to attract the attention of mass media stakeholders. Scholars have established that the advent of digital broadcasting has revolutionized the production, distribution, and consumption of media content globally. It also represents a major technological shift, bringing improvements in signal quality, expanded media offerings, and the introduction of interactive services. As a result, the transition from analogue broadcasting to digital has remained a top agenda for many governments and media owners worldwide, including in Nigeria. However, this transition has also presented significant challenges, including infrastructure demands, regulatory adjustments, and the persistence of the digital divide across different socio-economic groups.

In line with global mandates from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the Nigerian government has committed to a full transition to digital broadcasting. The ITU highlights the benefits of digital broadcasting, including enhanced transmission quality and more efficient use of bandwidth. Through digital terrestrial television (DTT), broadcasters can transmit multiple channels simultaneously within the same frequency spectrum that previously accommodated a single analogue channel (Kanazawa, 2012). Moreover, digital broadcasting supports various revenue-generating opportunities, such as pay-per-view services, targeted advertising, and interactive content, thereby enhancing the sustainability of the media industry (Suzuki & Yamada, 2017).

Despite these advantages, the digital transition in Nigeria faces numerous challenges. Prominent among these are the high costs of acquiring digital transmission equipment, the need for widespread consumer awareness campaigns, and disparities in access to digital services between urban and rural communities (Mitomo, 2020). Furthermore, concerns persist regarding the affordability of set-top boxes required for digital reception, along with the need for a robust regulatory framework to facilitate a smooth and inclusive transition (Suleiman, 2018). Addressing these challenges is essential for realizing the full benefits of digital broadcasting, particularly among terrestrial television stations in Asaba, Delta State.

Statement of the Problem

The global shift from analogue to digital broadcasting has been marked by significant technological advancements, offering improved signal quality, expanded media services, and more efficient use of the frequency spectrum. Since the Geneva conference of 2006, Nigeria has made efforts to migrate to digital broadcasting. For example, in 2007, a year after the conference, the then Nigerian President, Umaru Yar'Adua (now late), approved the initiation of the digitization of the broadcast industry in Nigeria (Ocholi, 2009). This led to the inauguration of a high-power, multi-sectoral team of communication experts into the Presidential Advisory Committee (PAC) on the transition from analogue to digital broadcasting on 31st October 2008, with the task of creating a blueprint for achieving digital broadcasting in Nigeria (Olalere et al., 2013). Despite these efforts, Nigeria failed to meet the June 2012 deadline. In December 2012, under the administration of Goodluck Jonathan, the federal government inaugurated a 14-man team called "Digiteam Nigeria" to drive the process of digital migration (Olalere *et al.*, 2013). However, this team also failed to meet its goal (Okonji, 2017). Similarly, the 17th June 2015 deadline was missed, and as a result, the ITU set a final deadline of June 2017 for Nigeria to switch off analogue broadcasting (Okonji, 2017). The administration of President Muhammadu Buhari has since commenced the digitization process in phases, but as of the time of this study, Nigerian broadcast stations have not fully migrated to digital broadcasting.

The migration process in Nigeria has been fraught with several challenges, particularly for terrestrial television stations operating in various parts of the country. Key among these challenges are the high costs of digital transmission equipment, limited technical expertise, and inadequate infrastructure to support effective digital migration. Additionally, consumer-related barriers, such as low awareness levels, the affordability of set-top boxes, and uneven access to digital services, further complicate the transition. Regulatory inconsistencies and the absence of sustained government support have also exacerbated the difficulties faced by broadcasters. While several researchers (e.g., Alalibo, 2017; Eze, Orekyeh & Ezeanwu, 2017; Obot & Inwang, 2017) have examined digital broadcasting in Nigeria, few studies have combined issues related to the challenges, progress, and readiness for adoption among television stations in Asaba, Delta State. This lack of localized studies limits a comprehensive understanding of the situation and the development of context-specific solutions. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the specific challenges confronting terrestrial television stations in Asaba, Delta State.