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**ASSESSMENT OF BROADCAST MEDIA USAGE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY ON  
THE COVERAGE OF ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION OF ELECTION RESULTS IN  
NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

There is an urge by most developing nations to shift from the traditional voting processes to the use of digital technology in their various political systems. Today's, digital electronics technology have open more access to the use of electronic Voting Systems in several national electoral processes due to its high accuracy, precision, flexibility and support for technology integration. In a situation of this nature, broadcast media as part of the fourth estate of the realm are expected to disseminate objective, accurate, verified and authoritative information about the whole process and also to demonstrate the ideal of building a sustainable democracy. This study is examined broadcast media usage of digital technology in the coverage of electronic transmission of election results in Nigeria. This study adopted descriptive survey and structured interview. Questionnaire and interview guide were utilized for data gathering. This paper was anchored on the social responsibility and Agenda-setting theories of the media. Qualitatively, professionals such as media practitioners, Independent National Election Commission (INEC) officers, public analysts, selected electorates and political parties' representative. Data collected was analysed using descriptive statistic while the qualitative data was recorded, transcribed and process qualitatively. From the findings, it is clear that the usage of digital technology helps the broadcast media to effectively inform, educate, entertain and sensitize the public about election erring and transmission of the results electronically. The study revealed Digital technology usage affected the selected broadcast positively in the areas of creating new contents, translation of sound and picture into digital data, increase in capacity of transmission, improvement of picture quality, clear and quality signal and simultaneous news dissemination.

This study found out that the selected broadcast media still maintaining their principles of agenda-setting, gate-keeping, surveillance and watchdog in the discharge of duties to the society. This study established that finance, death of manpower, poor power supply, high import rate and inconsistency of regulatory system are the challenges confronted by the selected broadcast media. From the findings, this study recommends the following; The broadcast media should take advantage of its audio-visual digital technology to disseminate election results in Nigeria. Government should help in reducing high import rate and also provide loans for the acquisition of digital technology capable of bettering their operations. Government and media proprietors should partner to provide enabling environment in terms of policy implementation, manpower training and poor power supply.

**Keywords:** Broadcast Media, Assessment, Digital technology, Electronic transmission of elections.

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## **Introduction**

Marshal McLuhan prediction about global village has come to reality with the emergence of some different Information and Communication Technology that have turned the entire landscape of information dissemination into spectacle among audiences irrespective of distance, location and time. These technologies have enhanced internet connectivity in a bid to bridge the advent of digital divide. Presently, the broadcast media are depending on digital technology to improve their performance and productivity (Nwokedi, 2020). Broadcast media role can never be overlooked in any political system because as the fourth estate of the realm, they make known the various activities of government to the public. In addition, it is a channel through which the activities and policies of government are revealed to citizens and through which opinions are brought to the attention of the policy makers (Uche, 2006). Undoubtedly, digital technology has encouraged broadcast media to gatekeeping principles and verification process via news verification, objectivity, accuracy and balanced reporting.

Overtime, broadcast media organizations have developed journalistic standards for verifying information in Nigerian democracy (Fakuyama, 2020). Advancement in digital technology have also led to changes in broadcasting. The broadcast industry has tremendously changed and at the heart of these changes are the new technologies. The invention of digital technology serves as a lifeblood

for change and breaking of barrier of time and space in the broadcast industry. However, digital broadcasting remained the improved way of transmitting signals which usually works in translating sound and pictures into digital data (Nyekwere, 2009). Plum (2014), corroborates that digital broadcasting offers an increase in the capacity of broadcast transmission networks by improving spectrum efficiency, provision of better signal quality, non-interference and better programme contents. Kombol (2008), notes that through digitalization, the capacity of communication channels are greatly expanded, improve consumer choice and possibilities for interactive system.

Digital broadcasting has gone a long way in impacting Nigerian democracy. Elections are democratic ways of choosing leaders who represent their electorates 2004, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019 elections in Nigeria have been enmeshed with innumerable kinds of challenges including election rigging, corruption, political thuggery election manipulations, inconclusive of elections and others. Since credible elections are a salient indicator of democratic consolidation and institutionalized means of forming and changing democratic government, many scholars (Adeshina, Ismaila and Ojo, 2017) have attempted introducing technological solutions with specific aim of getting rid of the challenges associated with Nigerian elections procedures. These scholars suggested Electronic voting solution and transmission of results as obtainable in other advanced nations. In spite of this laudable proposals, desperate political gladiators mobilized the National assembly to suspend the proposed E-voting and Electronic transmission of results. Coincidentally, the concept was unanimously approved and assembled by President Mohammad Buhari. Olumide (2015), avers that the ruling party moved to undermine the new policy but Independent National Electoral Commission resisted the attempt. In preparing for the 2011 election, INEC introduced Direct Data Captive Machine (DDCM) to address the challenges encountered during the 2007 elections. In 2015 and 2019, INEC introduced Smart Card Readers as a new template in Nigeria (Idowu, 2015). For 2023 general elections, INEC decided to use full implementation of E-voting coupled with the transmission of election results electronically. The concept is an electronic system which uses electronic channels to transmit election results electronically to be viewed or heard on television and radio broadcast (Mojeed, M. 2006). Olaniyi (2011) and Kuye et al (2013), contend that the integrity of the election process is fundamental to the integrity of democracy, therefore, the electoral process of a country must be transparent and comprehensible enough

to enable voters and candidates accept the results. Though, the test running was carried out on the Ekiti and Osun states gubernatorial elections, the experiences showed that it was not very successful because it was marred by poor logistics in terms of collation and transmission of results electronically (Sabo, Siti, Abdullah and Rozita, 2015). This paper is out to do an assessment of broadcast media usage of digital technology on the coverage of electronic transmission of election results in Nigeria.

### **Objectives**

1. To examine the extent at which digital technology usage helped the selected broadcast media in facilitating adequate flow of transmission of election results.
2. To ascertain the role of the mass media in propagating ideal democratic system.
3. To investigate the challenges confronted by the selected broadcast media in the process of transmitting election results electronically.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Digital Technology: An Emerging trend in the Broadcasting Industry**

Digital technology is a concept that is revolving around the media landscape especially the broadcast media. Okorie (2008), notes that digitization is a process through which information whether relayed or through voice, text, sound or image is converted into digital, binary language for computer use. According to Robinson (2004), digital is a process that operates by transforming data and information that is supplied or stored in the form of a series of binary digits. The 21<sup>st</sup> century witnessed advancement in technology because new technologies are being developed daily. Coincidentally, the advancements in technology had propelled agitation for migration from analogue to digital broadcasting. This is in line with the International Telecommunication (ITU) who championed digitization at its Regional Radio Communication Union (RRCU) held in 2006 in Geneva, Switzerland set a deadline for a total switchover of all broadcast channels from analogue to digital. The conference set June 17, 2015 for all UHF channels to have gone digital (Kombol, 2013). In Nigeria, the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), the regulatory agency responsible for driving the digitization insisted that so much has been achieved in the digital processes (Limmeer, 2017).

Today, the media landscape is currently experiencing digital technology revolution enabled by internet facilities. The revolution is evidenced by the way that information is transmitted in media environment. Television and radio stations have developed facebook pages, blogs and webcasting. In the broadcast media, two distinct digital process are noticed namely the High-definition television (HDTV) and the Standard Definition Television. The HDTV featuring ultra-clear and high resolution sound and pictures while Standard Definition Television images are not very clear and sharp. For instance, digital broadcasting signals are capable to be transmitted via cable, satellite, digital terrestrial television and telephone connection (DSL). Digital technology is strong enough to facilitate the transmission of over 200 digital television channels to different home viewers (Nworgu and Ifeanyi, 2011). In an effort to be fully digitalized, considerable number of television and radio stations have key into outline and web broadcasting. These stations introduced digital contents such as webcast in news and programmes. Brillafm, Cool fm, Radio Nigeria, Channel television, Nigerian Television Authority, and Ekofm are some of channels that keenly embraced digital broadcasting. The broadcast online on websites with [www.nta.org](http://www.nta.org), [www.radiolagosekofm.com](http://www.radiolagosekofm.com), [www.channelstv.com](http://www.channelstv.com), [www.voiceofnigeria.org](http://www.voiceofnigeria.org), [gamji.com](http://gamji.com), [nigeriaworld.com](http://nigeriaworld.com) and others (Berger, 2010). The inception of cable and satellite pay TV stations such as Startimes, DSTV, GOTV, Multichoice, HITV and others enhanced digitalization that permits subscribers to have plethora of channel options (Endong, 2015).

Through digital technology, the capacity of communication channels are greatly expanded. It allows wider scope for consumers' choice and consistent possibilities of interactions. In addition, it fine-tunes voice and video show, with less efforts on editing which later facilitate economic gains. With the advent of these magic technology, the terrain and institution of journalism and communication at large has been enhanced tremendously. It is now known that there is a paradigm shift in the process and manner of news dissemination and journalism practice as a result of the availability of the mass media technologies. The emerging trends have shrunk the universe into a global village in the context of mass mediated messages (Dominic, 2002). According to Uwaye (2004), Information has been made relatively more accessible because of the digital technology which have revolutionized information processing, information gathering, storage, retrieval and distribution. Flew (2009), notes that the trends of citizen journalism was made possible by the development of easy to use digital

technology including cell phone video cameras via the high speed internet access. Internet energises digital technology which empowered citizens to become news reporters through citizen journalism (Baran, 2002).

### **Broadcast media and the promotion for Nigerian Sustainable Democracy**

Broadcast media here refers basically to television and radio using other digital technological channels in an organised fashion to communicate or disseminate information to groups of people simultaneously as a service to the public. It is a known fact that nations in the world have realised that the broadcast media are more feasible in playing the key roles for attaining sustaining democracy in terms of campaigning for free and fair elections as well as transforming society for a better place for all and Sundry (Anaeto and Anaeto, 2010). According to Azeez (2005), states that there are seven statutory functions of the broadcast media- News, information, entertainment, persuasion and surveillance-respectively. Apparently, broadcast media hinged more on persuasion and surveillance by carrying members of different community along in the implementation of government policies by informing them happenings within and outside their home. In playing these functions, broadcast media are seen to be setting agenda for the public on various prevailing issues in the society. They act as inevitable agents of keeping a peaceful society by persuading members of the society to accept certain developmental programmes capable of bettering the people lives. Broadcast media had played prominence roles in Nigerian general elections – 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019 and the forth coming 2023 elections creditably before, during and after. They have come a long way in giving total account of events unfolding irrespective of the nature of violence or conflict. The media also sensitize public on significant civil role by encouraging the people to exercise their franchise by casting their votes (Ugande, 2010) Okoro (2013), contends that since political development is the concept of citizens' motivation which forms the platform for national development ethnic unity, the broadcast media as potent channels has the capability to educate the electorates against political manipulations. Television according to the scholar has the visual and audio scientific power to encourage active political citizenship and healthy debate on critical issues in governance. In public governance, broadcast media play a watchdog roles in the electoral process by drawing attention to deficiencies such as rigging, political thuggery, ballot boxes snatching and other negative occurrences that might mar the electoral process integrity and plans.

They provide information on candidates, issues and political parties thereby sensitizing the electorates with numerous information on how to cast their votes (Ovwasa, 2015).

What the above portends is that in democracy, electioneering, policy implementation and government programmes are at the instance of the activities of the broadcast media who are the key to the running of the society. Broadcast media as an audio-visual mass channel has been at the epicentre in elections. They always bring happenings on the political front especially during campaigns. They become the major link between the candidates and voters. Broadcast media substantially shapes political attitudes, learning and enhances turnout propensities and public knowledge of candidates (Baran, 2004). Pate (2011), argues that the broadcast media are expected in democracy to be a vigilant watchdog of public interest and under no circumstances should it condescend itself into acting as lapdogs but must be answerable to different constituencies that depend on it for information education, and direction on the functioning of the democratic system.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study was anchored on Technological Determinism theory and Social Responsibility Theory. This involves using technology to transfer innovations via news dissemination to members of the public. Technological determinism encompasses both the idea that technological development proceeds through an autonomous and internal logic and that technology has a great impact on the operations and constitution of a society (Castells, 2000). Thus, the context of social communication mode is changing due to technology. The theory established that technology shows unprecedented rapid change and a widespread effect on society including government, economy and culture because broadcast media emerged as a technologically synthetic response to a set of newly emergent-social, political and economic-needs. Everret Rogers, the propounder of the theory also assumed that technology can transform any environment, and in a communication sense, technology has revolutionize electronic media globally.

### **Social Responsibility Theory**

The major premise of the theory is that the media is obliged to be responsible to society for carrying out certain essential functions of mass communication.

Through professional standards of informativeness truth, accuracy, objectivity and balance, the media has the social responsibility to serve the political system and inform the public to protect their right and act as watchdog over the government. The media are to set agenda and gate keep activities of government. The theory rests on a concept of positive freedom which calls for the presence of the necessary implements for attainment of desired goals. The theory advocates that freedom is tied to responsibility.

These theories are relevant to this study because it shows how the digital technology enhances the operations of the broadcast media. It also indicates the media social responsibility with a view to carrying out the transmission of election results in Nigeria. Being an agent of socialization, there is dire need for the media to bring about social change needed to influence the world positively. These roles makes the broadcast media a significant democratic institution that must continually play their constitutionally assigned roles. With regard to dissemination of election results, the broadcast media have performed brilliantly well in the recently conducted elections of Osun and Ekiti states respectively

### **Methodology**

This study employed descriptive survey and structured interview methods. Descriptive survey is designed to scientifically describe phenomena and their relationships in their immediate environment (Tejumaiye, 2003). Structured interview is a one-on-one interactions between the interviewer and interviewees (Johnson, 2012). Simple random sampling technique was adopted to select the samples for the study. Sample size of 140 was selected using the sampling method. Questionnaire and interview guide were utilized for data gathering. African Independent Television (AIT), Television Continental (TVC), Broadcasting Corporation of Oyo State (BCOS Tv and Radio) and premier radio (a subsidiary of Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria FRCN) were selected for this study structured interviews were conducted on the selected broadcasters, ICT experts academicians, INEC officials, political analysts and political gladiators across four major popular political parties – APC, PDP, Labour party and NNPP – respectively. Data collected through the questionnaire was analysed using descriptive statistic Tejumaiye (2003), states that the descriptive statistics provides the mathematical method for organizing, summarising and analysing data that have been collected and measured. In addition, responses obtained from the questionnaire were coded using the Statistical Product and Service



Solutions (SPSS) version 21. Responses obtained from the structured interviews conducted were transcribed from the recorded tape and qualitative analysis carried out in line with the research questions.

### Data Analysis

This section of the paper presents the analysis and interpretation of data as well as discussion of findings generated in this study. A total of 150 questionnaire were distributed while 125 copies were returned and validated for final analysis. Also, a total of 12 interviewees were involved in the structure interview as the qualitative aspect of the study.

### Question One: To what extent is the digital technology usage positively affected the selected broadcast media in facilitating adequate flow of transmission of election result?

Table 1

S/N	TABLE VALUE	VALUE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
a.	Highly Positive	1	95	76.0%
b.	Positive	2	20	16.0%
c.	Average	3	7	6.0%
d.	Low	4	3	2.4%
TOTAL			125	100%

The above table 1 shows that 95 respondents with 76.0% unanimously agreed that the usage of digital technology in the broadcast media operations has tremendously affected positively across broad 20(16%) concurred with the statement that digital technology has enhanced the selected broadcast media activities 7(6.0%) picked average while 3(2.4%) choose low respectively.

Table 2: If positive, how?

S/N	TABLE VALUE	VALUE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
a.	Creation of new contents	1	35	28.0%
b.	Translation of sound and picture into digital data	2	27	22.0%
c.	Increase in capacity of transmission	3	31	25.0%
d.	Improvement of picture quality	4	15	12.0%

e.	Improvement of Signal			
f.	Clearer simultaneous news dissemination	5	17	14.0%
TOTAL			125	100%

Table 2 indicates that 35(28.0%) established that digital technology facilitates the creation of new contents, 27(22.0%) said that it helps the translation of sound and picture into digital data, 31(25.0%) indicated that digital technology increases transmission capacity, 15(12.0%) choose improvement of picture quality and 17(14.0%) said that it enhanced clearer simultaneous dissemination of news.

**Research Question 2: What are the roles of the broadcast media propagating ideal democratic system?**

S/N	TABLE VALUE	VALUE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
a.	Objective political news dissemination	1	47	38.0%
b.	Agenda setting role	2	33	26.4%
c.	Watchdog and gatekeeping	3	25	20.0%
d.	Surveillance of the society role	4	20	16.0%
TOTAL			125	100%

Table 3 establishes that 47 (38.0%) submitted that the broadcast media disseminate accurate and objective political news, 33(26.4%) said the broadcast media often play their agenda-setting role, 25(20.0%) said that the broadcast media are well breast of their watchdog and gatekeeping role while 20(16.0%), agreed that the broadcast media maintained their surveillance role for the society.

**Research Question Three: What are the challenges confronted by the selected broadcast media in the process of transmitting election results electronically.**

S/N	TABLE VALUE	VALUE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
a.	Finance	1	32	26.0%
b.	Manpower	2	21	17.0%
c.	Poor power supply	3	34	27.2%

d.	High import rate	4	30	24.0%
e.	Inconsistency of regulatory system	5	8	6.4%
TOTAL			125	100%

Table 4 shows that 30 respondents with 26.0% said that finance is a major challenge confronting the selected broadcast media especially in finding digital equipment, 21(17.0%) established that the Manpower particularly the experts that can handle the digital technology effectively are difficult to find 34(27.2%) pointed at the menace of poor power supply, 30(24.0%) selected high import rate as an impediment while 8(6.4%) agreed that the inconsistency of policy via the regulatory system.

### Discussion of Findings

This study did the assessment of broadcast media usage of digital technology on the coverage of electronic transmission of election results in Nigeria. The result revealed that the usage digital technology by the selected broadcast media positively affected their actions in facilitating adequate flow of transmission of election results. Table 1 indicates that 95(76.0%) respondents unanimously agreed that digital technology enhances broadcast media operations especially in terms content creation, translation of sound and picture into digital data, increase in capacity of transmission, improvement of signal quality and clearer simultaneous news dissemination. This is in line with the interviewees opinions. Theoretically, Technological Determinism theory established that digital technology transfer innovation through the dissemination of news to members of the public. Kambol (2008), corroborates with this fact by stating that through digitization, the capacity of communication channels are greatly expanded, there is a wider scope for consumer choice and more possibilities for interactive system. Idemile and Sambe (2007), submit that virtually every segment of society including the mass media has been impacted by digital technology in information dissemination, revolutionise the conduct, method and quality of media practices generally.

The result of this study showed that Nigerian broadcast media have been able to see that democracy is entrenched. Table 3 indicates that 47(38.0%) said that the broadcast media uphold the dissemination of objective political news, 33(26.4%) established that the broadcast media maintain their agenda-setting principle,

25(20.0%) maintained that they play the watchdog and gate-keeping role, while 20(16.0%) noted that they play the surveillance role to the society. Ochanoger (2008), states that broadcast media play significant role in championing any social and political course. He said the basic responsibility of the broadcast media include information, education and entertainment function. Theoretically, social responsibility theory assumes that the media foster productive and creative society via their functions of reporting news with the principles of fairness, balance and objectivity which are the foundational functions of media practice. Egbuna (2012), contends that the media should provide enough information on political parties and their candidates during elections through editorials and news coverage, the scholar noted that the public often rely on the media for information on the ideologies and manifestoes of political parties as well as on the competence of the candidates contesting for elections.

The findings also showed that the selected broadcast media have different kinds of digital channels utilizing to enhance their operations. Table 4 indicates that 35(28.0%) established that the selected broadcast media are using digital context through webcasts into news and programmes 26(21.0%) chose online/web broadcasting, 20(16.0%) said the broadcast media usage of digital technology encourage citizen journalism through websites, 22(18.0%) submitted that digital technology helped the broadcast media to setup digital terrestrial television system that encourages myriad of channel options, 14(11.2%) noted that the advert of internet facilities helped broadcast media to facilitate transfer of news and programmes via android and I-phones, 8(6.4%) indicated that the acquisition of digital cameras enhances picture quality on screen. Rosen (2006), expresses that blog is one important source of news provided by the internet technology which serves as additional outlet for reporters to explain why reported a story the way they did, blogs have also made it possible for everybody to be a news person and have also opened the way for what is being labelled as citizen journalism. Flew (2009), submitted that the trends of citizen journalism was made possible by the development of easy to use digital and cellphones, video cameras and high speed internet access. Edong (2015), posits that a number of milestones have been recorded by the Nigerian media sector in its March towards complete digitization. In effect, a considerable number of radio and television channels have embraced online/web broadcasting. Such stations have introduced digital contents such as webcasts into their respective news and programmes. These stations also broadcast online on websites.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

From the findings, it is clear that the usage of digital technology helps the broadcast media to effectively inform, educate, entertain and sensitize the public about election erring and transmission of the results electronically. These roles make the broadcast media a significant democratic institution that must continually play their constitutionally assigned roles. With regards to dissemination of election results, the broadcast media for instance, have performed brilliantly well in the recently conducted elections of Osun and Ekiti states respectively.

From the findings, this study recommends the following;

1. The broadcast media should take advantage of its audio-visual digital technology to disseminate election results in Nigeria.
2. Government should help in reducing high import rate and also provide loans for the acquisition of digital technology capable of bettering their operations.
3. Government and media proprietors should partner to provide enabling environment in terms of policy implementation, manpower training and poor power supply.

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