

KEYNOTE SPEAKER AT THE ONE-DAY COLLOQUIUM OF THE DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATION DOMINICAN UNIVERSITY SAMONDA, IBADAN

Media Convergence: Connections and Disconnections

(Media Convergence Colloquium Keynote - 11 August 2023)

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Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin with thanks to the esteemed Vice-Chancellor of Dominican University, Professor Hyginus Ekwuazi, and Professor Anthony Adah for the privilege of participating in this conference.

I am indeed very excited by the focus of the colloquium because of how media convergence resonates across all aspects of our lives, intertwining technology, communication, and society in ways that challenge our perceptions and enrich our experiences. And as we navigate its ever-expanding landscape, we find ourselves constantly at the crossroads of innovation and a new era of possibilities.

The big question that constantly confronts us is, are we ready for the next iteration of the digital future?

Media convergence has shaped the economic dominance of world powers in the 21st century. The United States of America has companies like Microsoft, Apple, Google, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Amazon, and legions of tech start-ups piggybacking these big global gorillas. They have transformed governance, entertainment, communication, and commerce. In the United Kingdom, London has become the biggest multi-cultural hub in Europe for digital startups and creative entrepreneurs designing innovative

solutions for every conceivable demand of contemporary living. Mumbai in India mirrors London exactly in this regard. Japan's early adoption of mobile internet and digital technologies positioned it as a global leader in media convergence. The country's mobile culture gave rise to services like mobile payments, QR codes, and multimedia messaging, which have since influenced trends worldwide. South Korea has seamlessly integrated media technologies. It boasts one of the world's fastest and most widespread internet connections, fostering innovative services and platforms, from online gaming to video streaming in a robust digital economy. Sweden's successful adoption of digital media propelled it onto a global tech presence, with companies like Spotify, Skype, and Minecraft showcasing the country's ability to harness media convergence for cultural and economic impact. In China, platforms like WeChat, TikTok, and others offer a digital ecosystem that combines messaging, social networking, mobile payments, and more, reflecting the country's integration of various media technologies.

Despite our many challenges, Africa has also made quantum leaps in development in the last 30 years, thanks to the benefits of convergence. Kenya's M-Pesa, a mobile money transfer service, is a prime example of how media convergence has transformed financial services, enabling rural and urban people to transfer money, pay bills, and access financial services through mobile phones. The entire region of East Africa has achieved a high digital penetration and financial inclusion because of M-Pesa. With a more developed technological infrastructure than other African countries, South Africa has advanced the growth of e-commerce, digital media consumption, and online education. Rwanda's government invested heavily in digital infrastructure to digitize public services and promote e-governance through its "Smart Rwanda" initiative. And

despite the proud incoherence of our economic planning, Nigeria has seen advancements in different sectors of our economy because of entrepreneurial opportunities and commercial possibilities of media convergence. It certainly has had a profound impact on how our businesses do business. You just need to see the daily transactions of goods and services done on Instagram alone. A new tribe of entrepreneurs has virtual storefronts on different social media apps and concludes huge cash transactions via online financial portals like O'Pay. Even the recently incarcerated King of Instagram, Mr. Hush Puppy, thrived in his nefarious trade on the wings of convergence.

But surely, no sector in Nigeria has been more served by media convergence than Nollywood, especially in how it has significantly influenced a reimagination of its possibilities from creation to distribution. It is a well-told history that Nollywood's beginnings were born of digitalization and media convergence. Fueled by the accessibility and affordability of consumer video technology, filmmakers and storytellers could create movies with modest budgets, using their ingenuity and resourcefulness. This organic, self-trained film culture has steadily expanded in lock-step with media technology. Convergence gave Nollywood access, and today, Nollywood has experienced unprecedented growth and creative success. Let me count the ways:

1. **Increased Accessibility and Distribution:** The proliferation of digital platforms, streaming services, and social media has made reaching a global audience easier for Nollywood films. Through platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime, Iroko, and YouTube, Nollywood movies have gained exposure far beyond our domestic market, contributing to increased revenues and international recognition.

2. Enhanced Production and Storytelling: Media convergence has allowed Nollywood filmmakers to access cutting-edge technologies, improving production quality and storytelling techniques. High-definition cameras, sophisticated editing software, and visual effects tools have enabled Nollywood to compete with international film industries, resulting in higher production values and more engaging narratives.

3. Globalization of Nigerian Culture: With media convergence, Nollywood has become a powerful voice in post-colonial media narratives, showcasing Africa's unique stories and worldview. Themes, traditions, and stories unique to Nigeria are now accessible to global audiences, fostering cultural exchange and understanding.

4. Diverse Revenue Streams: The old Nollywood revenue model or 'Nollywood market' has evolved radically. Media convergence has opened up opportunities for revenue generation through theatre releases, broadcast licensing, video-on-demand services, international subscription platforms, international language dubbing distributors, and collaborations with global brands for product placements. A Nollywood star system has also emerged through social media platforms, with many Nollywood stars earning big as influencers and brand ambassadors.

5. Innovation in Marketing and Promotion: Social media platforms and digital marketing strategies have transformed how Nollywood movies are promoted. Filmmakers can now engage directly with their audience, build anticipation, and create viral campaigns that drive interest in their productions.

6. Talent Exposure and Networking: Media convergence has facilitated networking opportunities for Nollywood professionals. Through online platforms, actors, directors,

and other creatives can connect with their counterparts globally, leading to potential collaborations and skill-sharing.

7. **Data-Driven Decision Making:** Digital platforms provide valuable data insights into audience preferences, viewing patterns, and engagement levels. Nollywood filmmakers can analyze this data to tailor their content, ensuring it resonates with their target audience and improves future productions. The DSTV/Multichoice channels have smart decoders from which real-time data of viewing patterns and audience ratings are harvested and used to design the narrative arc of their premium programmes. The mobile app DSTV Now is the best example of how convergence has personalized programming to the viewing habits of every individual subscriber across the continent.

8. **Crowdfunding and Independent Filmmaking:** Convergence has paved the way for crowdfunding platforms, allowing independent filmmakers to secure funds for their projects directly from interested institutions and individuals. This democratization of financing has given rise to a new wave of innovative and diverse storytelling in Nollywood.

And that is the best part: Convergence inspires the creation of diverse content and genres to cater to different audience preferences, expanding the storytelling capacities of our industry's generation next. Today, Nollywood is working harder to broaden its genre and produce films that resonate with the best of Africa's heritage, history, and heroes. And that is incredibly valuable because it will platform African films to challenge stereotypes and present a more authentic post-colonial understanding of the continent to the world.

I do not know much about the educational sector in Nigeria. Still, from my little stints facilitating at a couple of our universities, I am aware that many forward-looking tertiary institutions like Dominican University are enabled because of media convergence to integrate interdisciplinary programs, foster digital literacy, and collaborate with industry professionals just as we are doing virtually right now. Media convergence impacts scholarship today by requiring a more holistic understanding of various media forms, encouraging cross-disciplinary research, and enabling innovative teaching methods incorporating multimedia elements. This prepares students for the evolving media landscape and equips scholars to explore complex topics from multiple angles. Naturally, the impact extends to book publishing, academic papers, and publications. It has led to the rise of digital publishing platforms and e-books. Authors can now self-publish or collaborate with publishers to release their work in digital formats, reaching a global audience more quickly and affordably, and enabling the integration of multimedia elements such as videos, images, and interactive graphics into digital publications.

That media convergence has been a blessing is a self-evident fact. It has played a pivotal role in modern civilization, offering a tapestry of advantages and value that resound across every facet of our existence. It has influenced individuals and societies to expand their horizons and catalyze innovation. Media convergence seamlessly integrates diverse platforms and technologies, from news dissemination to entertainment, education to communication, enhancing accessibility and interactivity. This convergence deepens our understanding of the world and propels us to imagine, create, and innovate beyond conventional boundaries. Its capacity to connect, educate, and inspire is boundless, underpinning the very essence of progress. The challenges, or

'disconnections' of media convergence, though, are what I also hope will be confronted with some vigour in this conference, because they are real, formidable, and just as impactful globally in the most pernicious dimensions. While convergence has reshaped how we access essential information, it has also brought to light the fragility of truth in the digital age. In a time where information is abundant, the veracity of facts has become elusive, and truth has become its biggest casualty. While media convergence has expanded access to information, there are complexities and concerns related to intellectual property rights and copyright infringement as content is shared and repurposed across various platforms. Clear attribution and usage rights are not always guaranteed. Convergent media also often involve collecting and sharing user data, raising concerns about privacy and data security.

But the real motherlode is the proliferation of the dark arts of misinformation and fake news. The blurring lines between traditional journalism, social media, and user-generated content have made it challenging, even impossible these days, to discern credible sources from unreliable ones. It has created a profound erosion of trust in the media. Our recent national election campaigns stand tall as a case study. An idiotic post on a random, unverified Twitter account often created sensational debates that morphed into headline news in the newspapers. Soon enough, there were pundits on television debating, and no one knew exactly how it began. Misinformation spreads faster and broadly than accurate information due to its sensational or emotionally charged nature. And this makes it difficult for credible sources to regain control of the narrative. And the race for clicks, views, and engagement has created an environment where sensationalism often precedes accuracy. Too many News outlets are driven by

the need to capture attention in an overcrowded digital space, frequently leading to the distortion of facts to generate headlines. In this race, truth is the casualty, overshadowed by the pursuit of virality.

The echo chambers created by personalized algorithms exacerbate the problem. People are often exposed to content that aligns only with their existing beliefs, reinforcing biases and limiting exposure to diverse perspectives. This also hinders constructive dialogue and critical thinking. The results of this are seen every day online – a growing global tribe of sophisticatedly ignorant digital nomads.

Dark forces are taking control of the viral opportunities of convergence for nefarious purposes. Intentional misinformation and misrepresentation, especially of history, have become a legitimate weapon of choice in governance, business, and even the arts. Trolling, hate, lies, and bigotry are big business, powered by shady fifth columnists from everywhere and anywhere, protected by the anonymity of computer keyboards and the personality cult of ‘influencers’ has spawned a cult of ‘followers’ who seem happy enough to outsource thinking to their digital devices. It is interesting to recognize that the great symbol of the power of media convergence today is the smartphone. These devices have seamlessly integrated various forms of media—text, images, videos, audio, and internet access—into a single device. And 40% of Africa’s urban elite, our best minds, so to speak, have one or more. It is the port of entry into their consciousness. And for the most part, it is exclusively how they communicate, consume content, and access information, showcasing the profound transformation, impact...AND the clear and present danger that convergence represents to human civilization. All at once.

To counter these challenges, a multi-pronged approach is necessary. We must collectively prioritize media literacy and critical consumption of information. There has to be a way to hold social media platforms accountable without necessarily abridging the freedom of speech. Teaching our young people, especially, how to discern reliable sources, fact-check claims, and think critically about the content they encounter is essential in the digital age. Additionally, the major media organizations in Nigeria must recommit to journalistic integrity, upholding the principles of accuracy, fairness, and transparency. As consumers of information, all of us must embrace our responsibility to seek out multiple perspectives and encourage debate and discourse. Maybe in doing these, we can counteract the echo chambers and contribute to a more informed and enlightened virtual space. Truth simply cannot be compromised for convenience. It is the foundation upon which a just and equitable world is built.

Technology must advance the cause of truth, not abridge it. This is especially important because the world stands at the precipice of a technological revolution blurring the lines between the real and the digital, transforming how we interact, learn, and create. Artificial intelligence and virtual and augmented reality are no longer distant dreams but imminent realities that will redefine our lives and work. As a progression of media convergence, artificial intelligence will become our compass, guiding us through an ocean of data. It will empower us to personalize content, delivering precisely what we need and when needed. AI's ability to analyze vast amounts of data will give us unprecedented insights, revolutionizing content creation and distribution. And as AI understands our preferences, it will curate our news, entertainment, and information, enhancing our experiences in ways we could have never imagined. Virtual reality and

augmented reality are our bridges between worlds, offering immersive experiences that transport us beyond the confines of our physical reality.

With VR, we can step into historical events, explore far-off galaxies, or collaborate with colleagues worldwide in virtual offices. AR overlays digital information onto our real world, enhancing everything from education to shopping. Imagine trying on clothes virtually or learning complex subjects through interactive holograms. The impact on how we live and work will be profound. Education will become personalized and globally accessible through AI-driven platforms, VR classrooms, and AR-enhanced textbooks. Healthcare professionals will utilize AR to visualize patient data during surgeries, while AI will aid drug discovery and diagnostics. Manufacturing will see a revolution with AI-powered automation and virtual simulations improving product design and production processes. With these emerging technologies, what is clear is that the world is transitioning from an industrial economy driven by mechanical machines and human labour to algorithms, applications, and artificial intelligence to create an imagination economy. Everything is possible at the size and depth of your imagination. Are we ready for the future?

To realize these promises fully, Nigeria must prioritize investments in digital infrastructure, expand internet access, and address affordability concerns. Our vast potential in this ever-evolving technology landscape confronts our diminishing economic fortunes with the receding revenue from oil. With our vast consumer base, demand for digital content, innovative spirit, cultural diversity, and more, Nigeria can and should become a key player in the global digital landscape. Nigeria's demand for digital content, entertainment, and communication services is high. We can create new

revenue streams in our economy with the proper infrastructure. Our diverse culture and languages offer opportunities for localized content, apps, and services that offer solutions to local needs. Convergence will drive economic empowerment and financial inclusion by providing access to information, education, and services to our underserved communities. Successful integration will inspire an even more dynamic digital economy. And in this economy, consumers are active participants, seeking out and consuming content that resonates with their interests and desires. Virtual and augmented reality technologies will further enhance these experiences, blurring the line between the real and the imagined. The new imagination economy will be about collaborations and cross-pollination of ideas, and will drive an even richer and more diverse innovation ecosystem. It will also demand vigilance and oversight. Governments, industries, and academia must unite to set standards and ensure inclusivity, ethics, and innovation. The future of media convergence is a landscape of infinite possibilities, and emerging immersive technologies will redefine how we consume media and perceive reality itself.

Thank you.

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Netflix and the Corporatization of Nollywood

Abstract

This paper responds to the call by Jedlowski on the need to study the economy and environment under which African film is distributed. The paper examines the influence of Netflix distribution practices on the Nigerian film industry, Nollywood. It explores how Netflix is impacting the industry to corporatize and formalize transnational standard practice. The Nigerian film industry is currently experiencing incredible growth, including local and international recognition. This success has been attributed in part to the emergence of Netflix in Nigeria in 2020. Since then, Netflix has invested millions of dollars into Nigerian content distribution. It has provided additional income to filmmakers and created a platform for unprecedented access to international audiences. The paper examines the implications of Netflix's increasing presence in Nollywood, from economic to cultural, and ethical perspectives. On one hand, Netflix has created an influx of funding and new opportunities for Nigerian filmmakers. On the other, it has also raised questions about the industry's artistic autonomy which poses a threat to Nollywood business models. To better understand these implications, this paper employs a qualitative method of research. Primary data were collected through interviews with both experienced Nigerian content creators and related government regulatory agencies. Secondary data was also gathered from reports, and sources related to the economic and technological implications of streaming services. Through this research, a better understanding of the effect of Netflix on the corporatization of Nollywood is revealed. The research intervenes in a broader understanding of Netflix and streaming services' influence on the film industry in Nigeria and sheds light on the ethical implications of these services. I argue that there is a need for regulations, consumer protection against exploitation, and collaborations among local streaming platforms. The paper contributes to ongoing scholarship on global media industries, and emerging film economies by drawing attention to ethical considerations Netflix and other streaming platforms present for Nollywood and the Global South in general.

Keywords: Boundary Spanners, Corporatization, Netflix, Nigeria, Nollywood, Regulations, Streaming Platforms.

Introduction

There have been calls for the need to study by paying more attention to media distribution channels and the socio-economic factors under which they are distributed (Jedlowski, 2022). Jedlowski observed that the focus of many scholars has been on how audiences receive films emanating from Africa and its “dynamics of cultural appropriation” (Jedlowski, 2017, p. 672) rather than the economic conditions under which they are distributed. The film industry in Nigeria popularly referred to as Nollywood is currently in a transition phase from the old-traditional film distribution models to a broader spectrum through the new media platforms. This is made possible through the technology of streaming and social media that offer Nollywood film content to domicile, African, and global audiences. The increasing popularity and growth of Nollywood have led to the incursion of global media giants like Netflix, and Amazon Prime Video, and local players such as iROKOTV, IbakaTV, LibraTV, ApataTV, and many more. In this paper, more emphasis is paid to Netflix – which is currently the leading streaming platform in Nigeria.

Netflix has through the technology of the internet and streaming brought about healthy rivalry for the traditional film distribution culture in Nollywood. The traditional distribution method over the years had relied on box-office returns at cinemas and sales of films in CDs/DVD formats to maintain its sustenance and returns on investments. However, the incursions of Netflix as an exhibitor have altered the narrative. The Netflix platform provides an array of film and television series that are readily available through monthly subscriptions. The rates are relatively less costly and are available to consumers depending on status and purchasing power, thus creating alternatives and attraction for audiences.

When the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the shutting down of cinemas, many audiences globally shifted their attention to the streaming platforms. To meet the realities, producers and content creators moved their cultural offerings to the same by releasing their works directly on streaming services. Although cinemas have resumed normal activities, streaming platforms, especially in Nigeria have continued to increase online activities and have now become very relevant competitors to the cinemas and traditional television viewing experience.

The rise of more streaming platforms in Nigeria and the convenience and affordability of access in terms of the cost they offer pose healthy competition to cinema culture. Netflix and other streaming channels have continued to keep the cinemas on their toes to improve and do more to generate and retain their audiences. In the Global North, some cinemas have gone digital by acquiring high-quality equipment to enable them to attract more customers based on the new experience of streaming. To meet up

with this challenge, some cinemas have leveraged advanced technology by acquiring digital projectors, 3D and IMAX – which provide more engaging experiences that are most likely not obtainable on the home front. Some others have come up with the idea of subscription options that afford potential subscribers to watch films on a monthly subscription basis which is like services offered by the streaming platforms. These services have enabled and attracted more audiences to the cinemas.

While Netflix continues to influence and propel new directions for Nollywood, global online film distribution and exhibition platforms such as Amazon Prime Video, and Showmax and locally based online exhibition channels such as Libra TV, Apata TV, iROKOTV and many others are also investing heavily in the infrastructure of film in Nigeria. These streaming platforms provide comfort, ease of access to content, personalization, and affordable costs to end-users when compared to the old traditional media distribution patterns. Streaming and by extension, Netflix is breaking boundaries of distribution set by global film economies which had hitherto limited official transnationalization of content between the Global South and the rest of the world.

Netflix is providing a form of formalized transnational viewing practice of Nollywood films to the rest of the world through streaming. It has broken artificial barriers hitherto set by local and foreign dominant media distribution networks. It is propelling new directions while providing additional income for content creators. Notwithstanding, there are unethical practices of Netflix that have been identified in its intervention at corporatizing Nollywood. Some of these unhealthy activities have been echoed by First and Waller (2023) in the context of anti-trust practices of digital platforms. These issues pose dire consequences for the film industry, standard practice, and the nation at large among many others that would be dealt with in the paper.

The contradictions in Netflix's intervention in Nigeria's Nollywood and attendant concerns on ethical practices arising from streaming Nollywood films are many and have not been thoroughly addressed. Most conversations around the subject have focused on Netflix's influences on the curbing of piracy, as well as accentuation of copyrights, and intellectual property rights for filmmakers. Other scholarly works in this area have also addressed perceptions of the contributions of Netflix and how its disruptions have ascended Nollywood to global recognition. Many scholars have written to either appraise or eulogize this new status (Adejunmobi, 2007; Arewa, 2012; Ebekue, 2018; Andrews, 2020; Agina, 2021; Simon, 2022), however, issues of contention with Netflix such as data security, regulations and issues relating to platform ethical practices generally have been dealt with by scholars almost indirectly.

Netflix and Film Practices in Nigeria

Netflix prides itself as a streaming platform that provides “award-winning” documentaries, TV shows, movies, and other entertainment to audiences through their internet-connected devices. Netflix Nigeria is an extension of the world-renowned online streaming giant known as Netflix. It is a dominant brand in film distribution and exhibition networks globally. It officially launched in Nigeria in the year 2020 having earlier acquired the first Nollywood film being Genevieve Nnaji’s *LionHeart* in 2018. It has since increased its investments in Nigeria by continuous collaborations with local filmmakers and content owners to exhibit more Nigerian films and television series to domicile and global audiences.

Since Netflix Nigeria debuted, it has continued to collaborate and co-produce films with key players in Nollywood currently leading to the display of over 500 Nigerian films on its website and app which are available to users through their devices and good quality connection to the internet (Ibeh, 2023). However, Netflix says its collaboration mainly is with producers and content owners to generate more original and quality content for streaming and not necessarily with the industry known as Nollywood (Dayo, 2020).

Nollywood films and television series currently trending on the streaming platform include *Shanty Town* (2023); *Far from Home* (2022); *Ayinla* (2021); *Anikulapo*; (2022); and *Elesin Oba, The King’s Horseman* (2022); *Brotherhood* (2022); *Jagun Jagun* (2023) among several others. For user access, viewers are made to subscribe to Netflix Nigeria and pay the required fees to enjoy streaming and downloading of its content. Currently, it runs three monthly plans which are Basic, Standard, and Premium which amount to \$7.99, \$8.99, and \$11.99 and are convertible to local Naira currency for ease of payment respectively. Subscribers of Netflix services in Nigeria can make payments through MasterCard, Visa Card, or PayPal account.

These contents usually come with High Definition (HD) pictures whose quality is high and may therefore require more internet data and bandwidth, although there is the application of settings that are put in place to reduce the level of internet speed for easier access and lower quality reception based on the amount of data available to the user and efficiency of the internet network. To ensure user satisfaction, Netflix Nigeria recommends between 0.5 Megabits to 1.5 per second for broadband connection speed and 3.0 Megabits per second for SD quality and easy access to films and television shows (Nigerianfinder, 2022).

To enjoy more additional features, Netflix employs high technology in streaming its content and allows subscribers to connect their mobile devices to Smart TV and other screen technologies using Wi-Fi or connecting internet-enabled computers to a larger screen using HDMI, VGA cables, and the rest. Netflix Naija generates its content from creators and individual key players who are intellectual property owners through

contracts and licensing to broadcast their works based on agreed financial fees between parties. It also enters into co-production agreements with local film companies with guiding copyright laws of the United States of America.

However, the *Nigerianfinder* (2022) argues that Netflix currently remains the number one streaming platform in the world and would not be easily displaced. It advises other streaming platforms to brace up for the challenges ahead as the market will become more competitive than ever before.

Corporatization and Ethical Considerations

Jedlowski (2017) has noted that the global reception of African cinema has been categorized as the “new African black gold” (p.671) and that it is already attracting the attention of global media industries. He posits that this newly found attention may create a scenario that may lead to what is described as corporate take-over of African screen media industries”. (p.671). Adejunmobi (2007) had earlier described Nollywood’s distribution and exhibition practices as a minor transnational practice, but with the advent of Netflix and other global streaming giants in Nigeria, events have taken a new turn. That is why Agina (2021) noted the streaming intervention of Netflix in Nollywood and argues that the platform has provided an alternative route through which Nigerian films are now “transnationalised” (p.1) to global audiences. Agina posits that Netflix represents a “new vehicle” (p.1) through which Nigerian films are formalized and transported across the world.

The current prominence of Nollywood in the global film space could be attributed to the revolution of media technology applications like streaming which Netflix and others are helping to sustain in Nigeria (Arewa, 2012). Andrews (2020) refers to the application of digital media technologies in Nollywood as a disruptive technology – the one that “displaces an established creative orthodoxy and builds a new business method in an industry” (p.171), which is exactly what Netflix is doing in Nollywood presently. Andrews argues that many media platforms that serve as streaming channels in Nigeria are merely uploading unauthorized film content and that such exhibition practices showcasing Nollywood films implicate a “creator’s copyright and other IP rights” (p.175), decrying that the enforcement willpower for regulation in Nigeria is almost noneffective.

The contradictions in Netflix’s presence in Nigeria and its corporate practices of streaming have provoked conversations around ethical considerations by stakeholders. Sulayman Deji-Etiwe, a film producer and production manager in an interview admitted that streaming platforms like Netflix have contributed positively to the industry but have been exploitative in their tendencies in the same measure. Deji-Etiwe called into question some prevailing professional practices such as Netflix’s policy on the use of aggregators and opined that Nigeria does not have a film industry in the real sense of the word. He lamented that it is because Nollywood lacks the financial resources

needed to sustain a virile industry, and that is why Netflix and other major platforms came in and capitalized on the gap in marketing to extort the producers.

(Arewa, 2020, p.4) writes that “Nollywood developed in a legal and borderless environment without strong intellectual property protection. Although Nigeria has enacted comprehensive copyright laws, intellectual property enforcement in Nigeria has not traditionally been robust”. In these instances, the practice of transmitting Nollywood films through digital channels without due regulations by the authorities may amount to infractions or unethical practices that impede the ability for censorship and regulations enforcement.

The Netflix platform is also culpable in this regard including other local players but have been overlooked because they play a viable and relevant alternative to the old traditional film marketing system coupled with their popularity among boundary spanners and audiences. It is in this light that Ebekue (2018) suggests that the Nigerian film policy be broadened to accommodate current realities in the online distribution model and that the acts establishing regulatory agencies should be amended to cater to regulation and enforcement of certain rights on digital media and internet-based film distribution channels.

Simon (2022) noted that the intervention of the streaming platforms in Nollywood is marked by “complexity” particularly on how Netflix perceive the Nigerian film market (p.15). The study noted that the traditional film industry distributors are being displaced because of streaming technology that platforms like Netflix are providing. Adelokun (2018) argues that every aspect of media of communication including the video-film genre is struggling for a space on the internet to evade the stringent measures that are often considered unfavourable in the traditional distribution space due to government regulations. He decries the initial evasion of censorship and attendant sharp practices of pirates that have culminated into what is termed “onlinewood” (p.). He posited that the indiscriminate loading of content on the internet tends to lead to escaping of censorship by the government which regulates film in Nigeria thereby posing a national security threat. The study claims that nearly 50 percent of audio-visual scenes in films broadcast on digital platforms run afoul of the categorization standards set by the National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB). In the past, these are some of the reasons raised to form parts of arguments resulting in the calls that the NFVCB should ensure the inclusion of online platforms in its censorship coverage.

The seeming unchallenged operations of some unethical practices by dominant global media like Netflix in Nigeria vis-à-vis other local players have been noted by scholars (Omoera & Ojieson 2022), who posit that the intervention of digital media platforms such as Netflix has left content owners in a fix as they become unnecessarily

selective in what content to accept and promote. This industry practice is perceived as a form of gatekeeping and has left many content creators stranded.

There have been calls on the need for regulations of the activities of Netflix and other streaming platforms whose professional practices of exhibition have been somewhat shrouded in secrecy (Ernest-Samuel, 2017). The models and official business philosophy of Netflix in Nigeria are not publicly known, and this is made possible due to obsolete laws and enforcement will to regulate film in Nigeria which is almost ineffective.

(Arewa, 2020) noted that Nollywood must shy away from the informality of doing business by embracing enforcement to tackle unprofessional practices in the industry because the business activities of Netflix are not regulated by film regulatory agencies in Nigeria. A lot of the streaming platforms only operate in the virtual space as they do not have physical addresses. In occasional situations where it is provided, the NFVCB says it turns out to be fake (Personal Interview, 2023). Therefore, regulatory agencies are unable to sanction and enforce any compliance when streamers contravene relevant laws because they cannot be tracked and the NFVCB is helpless due to some obsolete laws incapacitating its effectiveness.

While these practices are noted, the government regulatory agencies who are in the position of administering the film industry in Nigeria were consulted. On the part of the NFVCB, it expressed some perceptions and misgivings about the streaming platforms stating that many are not compliant with regulations and registration with the Board. The Head of Operations of NFVCB in the Southwest Zone of Nigeria, Mark Akhuetie, in an interview on the 28th of November 2022 in his office, says: "We have online registration for distributors who are meant to obtain a license from us. It is just that most of them are not complaint". The Board says locating the addresses and places of operations of the streaming service providers is even more difficult.

Akhuetie affirms:

All these online distributors (streaming platforms) are very hard to track as most of them do not have stickers of office base and some of their offices may even be outside Nigeria. They are not compliant. You will see them on air but for you to trace their office, it is difficult. Many of them also do not fix addresses on their platforms. So, it is very difficult for you to trace them, but the ones we can trace, we get them to register as online distributors. (Personal Interview, 2022).

Continuing, he adds:

There are some sites you will visit, and you will see everything there but when you say you want to look for physical addresses, you will discover they are not available because they know what they are doing. You can hardly get their

address. Even the few ones that we can get to register with us, there are some tricks we use. So, the Board is helpless because it is difficult to regulate the streaming platforms. However, we always carry out stakeholder meetings where we sensitize them to enlighten others on the need to register with the Board. Until we get them to register or come by themselves, there is nothing we can do.

Mark Akhuetie established that some of the digital channels do not follow its classification guidelines. Akhuetie laments that streaming platforms are fond of giving their ratings. For instance, the Board does not have a film rating of 16, but subscribers will often find that streaming platforms exhibit films in this type of category. Akhuetie claims that: “They do not follow the Board’s rating. They do their ratings” (Personal interview, 2022).

While the issue of regulations persists, the researcher sought the opinion of another regulatory agency, the National Broadcasting Commission, (NBC). The Zonal Director of the Lagos Zonal Office of the NBC, Dr. Chibuike Ogwumike admits that regulations are a key factor for the industry. Ogwumike expressed the view that the essence of this practice is to maintain professionalism and standards in the industry but that digital platforms generally do not want to be regulated. In an interview on the 12th of December 2022 in his office, Ogwumike expressed his views on regulations viz-a-vis the digital platforms thus:

Ordinarily, no one wants to be regulated. So, if regulations come in, you will feel as if you are being caged or restrained from certain things. However, the essence of regulations is to maintain professional standards and operate within the laws of the country. Some of these platforms are big multinational media companies and they are strong economically. So, naturally, they would like to fight any policy that is against their economic interest. So, it will not be a surprise if the resistance they have put up against regulations and their recalcitrance has to do with this – their economic interest. (Personal Interview, 2022).

Also, Yunusa Rikoto, Assistant Director of the NBC at the Lagos Zonal Office in an interview said that NBC has equally observed that some of the content exhibited by the streaming platforms was against the norms and social values of Nigeria. He affirmed that there are programmes, from monitoring reports that do not conform with the cultural values of the country. In some of the platforms, Rikoto says it is the cases of obscenity, use of vulgar expressions, transgender culture, and violence that are against the provisions of the NBC code. Rikoto says the attention of the streaming providers like iROKOTV is always drawn to such infractions by the commission on some of these observations on their platforms from time to time.

From the above, it indicates that the NFVCB does not have the constitutional powers to regulate the streaming industry because it does not have the legal instrument to do

so. Therefore, the attempt to impose regulations on Netflix and others are based on informality and coercion. This assertion is supported by the reaction of the Executive Secretary and CEO of the NFVCB Adedayo Thomas when there was an uproar on the release of the film *Gangs of Lagos* in 2023. Lagos indigenes and the Lagos State Government of Nigeria had reacted vehemently to certain portrayals of the scenes in the film depicting the Eyo masquerade as a violent cult contrary to the traditional belief and cultural practices of the people of Lagos state.

In reaction to the uproar the film generated, the Executive Secretary of the NFVCB, Adedayo Thomas in a Vanguard Newspaper interview of 16th of April, 2023 laments:

Regulating online platforms poses a lot of difficulties since it is not part of the mandate of the Board...Our job does not cover regulating online platforms. We have a bill before the National Assembly seeking to empower the Board to regulate online platforms where movies are exhibited (Njoku, 2023).

With the arguments for and against regulations on all divides, Vaujany et al. (2020) posit that communities may arise with the aid of other platforms within or outside of the industry to push for regulations of the platforms. However, Grabher and König (2020) insist that there cannot be a fully self-regulated market just as there cannot also be a completely “disembedded market” (p.99).

Secrecy and Data Security

Netflix and many other digital platforms in Nigeria have been secretive about their business models (Ernest-Samuel, 2017). This position has been re-echoed by Wayne (2022) who posits that the practice of information hoarding is anti-transparency policy which has implications for Netflix and its relationship with the industry. Several attempts to get streaming platforms and digital satellite television channels for interviews and research in Nigeria have most times been difficult and often met with brick walls and evasions. Wayne notes that “this juxtaposition of advanced data capabilities with strict anti-transparency policies is frustrating for industry observers and media scholars alike” (p.194).

Netflix extracts subscribers’ information and data when they subscribe to the platform without citizens’ awareness of what they could be used for amidst safety and data security concerns because they are not permanently based or regulated in Nigeria. Liang, Aroles, and Brandl (2022) note that the ‘platform economy’ is premised on both the “algorithm revolution and cloud computing” (p.319). To this extent, Netflix has access to users’ online behaviour through digital algorithms and there are reasonable suspicions that these data may be used to present personalized advertisements and services. It is based on the strength of this plausibility that Zygmuntowsk (2018) argues

that “such cognitive work and information data can be commoditized and monetized on the market in manifold fashion” (p.170).

These data could also be disposed to other organizations based on search history and online activities of subscribers which is dangerous to national security. The personal information retrieved from subscribers could be used by digital platforms, can be commodified and to promote their brands and content over that of other competitors (Konig and Grabher, 2020). Netflix and other streaming services are not straightforward about the data they extract from subscribers and the purpose for which they use them. These anti-trust and unethical practices have been noted by Dyer-Witthford (2020) who wrote that there has been an attack on tech organizations in the United States of America over anti-trust issues and that the European Union since 2016 has sanctioned US-based tech companies such as Google for unethical practices.

Iliev and Blagoev (2022) have noted the challenges of data protection from authorized online theft or leakage through content streaming, stating that this concern arises from the need for “security of both the upstream and downstream streaming process” (p.87). This standpoint further amplifies the need for customer protection who input their data including bank details during the subscription registration process. Iliev and Blagoev cite for example the founder of Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg in the United States of America who called for government regulation of social media content, although they posit that this was more of an attempt to make sacrifices to protect his private business concerns. The study proposes the idea of “a user authentication portal to be made available by an authentication service provider” (p.87). This proposal implies that it will automatically disengage the streaming platforms from handling personal data and payment options provided by the subscribers so that in the event of a breach of the sites of the streaming platforms, no data can be stolen.

As noted, the ongoing arguments on regulation over the use of data and the place of government in what Grabher and Konig (2020) describe as “managerial governmentality” (p.95) are ongoing. It has also been noted that the technical and technological advancement of platform operators during interactions usually overwhelm the government personnel who are the regulators and that platform operators prefer “self-oversight” rather than the oversight provided by the government. (p.95).

Platform Capitalism or Netflix Exploitation

Netflix as the leading streaming platform has gained a lot of control and attention from content creators over the production and distribution of content in Nigeria which is a colouration of platform-capitalist tendencies. In conceptualizing what constitutes a platform, Liang, Aroles, and Brandl (2022) observe that there are diverse meanings and scholarly interpretations because “there is a lack of consensus in the literature regarding its key features and characteristics”. (P.308). However, this paper adopts the context

used by Wang and Lobato (2019) in their study of Chinese streaming platforms with a focus on *Quiyi* to mean “digital services, brands, and start-ups, including video platforms, ride-sharing, dating, and social network apps” (p.3). Also, citing Kenney and Zysman, 2016; Frenken, 2017; and Rahman and Thelen, 2019), Schubler et al (2021) argue that “many scholars believe that digital platforms are the distinguishing organizational form of twenty-first-century capitalism”. (p.2). If these features are taken into consideration, then Netflix falls within this categorization.

Audiences and content creators in Nigeria are already captivated by Netflix’s originals and third-party licensing which is now creating an attention economy that may alienate competitors, especially local players. This may push them out of the market especially the local streamers. It has been observed (Schüßler, Johannes, Attwood-Charles, Kirchner, Schor (2021) that there is a tendency for platform owners and managers to dominate and that it is a trait that is common among all the platforms. Based on Netflix’s current practice, it does not deal with Nollywood as an industry directly but makes use of aggregators. This practice implies that this model may be concentrating too much power and wealth in the hands of Netflix and a few other creative boundary spanners which may be used to stifle competition and create undue gatekeeping (Omoera & Ojieson, 2022). These views are consistent and have been re-echoed that global streaming corporations like Netflix, Hulu and Amazon possess the wherewithal to stifle competition in the film industry, in addition to lack of effective laws to safeguard subscribers, and exploitation of the industry (Pakula, 2021).

Apart from Amazon Prime Video and Showmax operated by DSTV Nigeria and owned by South Africa-based Multichoice, both foreign media corporations, Netflix in Nigeria is going almost unchallenged by local streaming services due to the unavailability of enormous funding capabilities and structures which Netflix brings to the table. This has the potential for neocolonial, economic, and cultural domination of Nollywood. For instance, iROKOTV says it is now streamlining its operations in Nigeria. It announced that it was laying off about 150 staff in 2020 due to an unfavourable economy. In 2021, it also announced that it would enlist on the London Stock Exchange because the platform will now pay more emphasis to diaspora audiences in North America and Western Europe. This new policy direction of iROKOTV may be attributed to the influx of global media giants now crisscrossing the film industry in Nigeria with huge funding abilities. Wayne (2021) has noted this when he observed that “Netflix executives use discussions of viewership and ratings to explicitly denigrate longstanding television industry norms” (p.199).

The system of aggregators by Netflix isolates stakeholders and limits participation. It is on this account that Deji-Etiwe in an interview says “Unfortunately, the current practice on the way to benefit is who you know, and that is why they ask you to call so

and so person". (Personal Interview, 2022). This practice may impede entrepreneurship because streaming platforms like Netflix may be creating a network effect that could make it difficult for other investors to enter the business and compete (Simon, 2021).

There are many times the problem of contracts and agreements between streaming platforms and content creators erupts in Nollywood. Some streaming platforms in Nigeria seize the opportunity to take over control of the rights of producers and content owners' works without adequate compensation. This is an act of exploitation arising from the desperation of content creators to get their works on digital platforms. There are cases involving contracts that are mostly poorly written and lack standardization. Also, many producers carry out their business with the streaming platforms without any formal documentation aside the word of mouth.

In an interview, Nollywood popular Actor and producer Francis Onwochei in response to the question on the culture of contracts and agreements in Nollywood said many producers rarely see their contracts and agreements on paper during negotiations with the streaming platforms over third-party licensing.

Onwochei laments:

I state this with sadness. This concerns the leading streaming platforms and their practice ethics. Rarely do you see your contract as a producer. Your aggregator generally tends to tell you what is obtainable financially for your content, then you begin to negotiate from that point until you can negotiate to a level of agreement. But from the point of negotiation to the point of agreement, you rarely see the amount on the contract. But you see a lot of producers will not tell you that because nobody wants to be in the black book of the aggregators. But again, this is it. It happens. It continues to happen. That is for the big streamers (personal interview, 23 March 2023).

Commenting on contracts and agreement practices in Nollywood, Andrews (2020) notes that creative boundary spanners must take the issues of licensing and agreements seriously to avoid exploitation.

Andrews writes:

I had discussions and interviews with some Nollywood stakeholders who raised their concerns about the inadequacy of digital copyright regimes in Nigeria to protect their creative interests. If these concerns aren't properly addressed, Nollywood creators may be operating in an unequal legal and economic environment that favours the video-on-demand partners.

It is against this background that Dyer-Witheford (2020) notes that some industry leaders in the past have argued the tendencies he termed “monopolistic capital” in the media sector and have insinuated the notion of “Digital trust-bursting” (p.). This proposal will involve the breaking up of giant multimedia platforms and their concentration of ownership, noting however, that this should not be misconstrued as anti-capitalist tendencies.

Conclusion

The paper recognizes the efforts of streaming services in Nigeria and their positive impact in evolving a virile film industry. It however, argues for the need to dig more into the activities of Netflix and other streaming platforms in Nigeria. Streaming platforms should be subjected to regulations and be made to conform to acceptable set standards by the government. This should not be conceived as undue censorship. There is also the need for the government to ensure consumer protection because many subscribers who have customer-related complaints are unable to get satisfaction. After all, most times the streaming platforms cannot be reached due to the unavailability of physical addresses.

Regulatory Agencies must also begin infrastructural renewal including recruitment of ICT-compliant personnel with relevant digital skills to engage Netflix and streaming services providers on issues of mutual concerns that will advance the fortunes of the film industry. The paper argues that local streaming platforms must collaborate to challenge the streaming conglomerates while encouraging self-motivated film entrepreneurs to also begin the operation of virile and well-funded online channels to prevent local suppression.

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MOBILE TECHNOLOGY UTILIZATION IN E-LEARNING AMONG UNDERGRADUATES OF DOMINICAN UNIVERSITY IBADAN

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Abstract

Technological convergence, the combination of all media forms, allows the flow of content created for specific purposes to serve the specific needs of a target group. One example of technological convergence practice is using mobile technology in e-learning. It promotes using cellular devices and computing systems, making it user-friendly for teaching and learning. This paper seeks to ascertain the e-readiness status of students of DU using Mobile technology; the extent of knowledge of its use among students, and the various patterns of usage of mobile technology in e-learning. This study adopts the Diffusion of Innovation Theory, which explains how new technologies gain ground over time through a specific population or social system, and the adopters develop certain behavior intentions toward e-learning adoption using mobile technology, leading to performance expectancy. The survey research design was used in this study with a census sample of 256 respondents. Findings reveal that a greater percentage of undergraduates in Dominican University Ibadan (i.e. between 50% and 92%) are e-ready, but more specifically, all the undergraduates (100%) are knowledgeable about using Google Meet via their mobile phones. Further findings reveal various patterns of mobile technology utilization in e-learning, including taking lectures online, doing assignments, and writing examinations online. The researchers, therefore, conclude that the flexibility of using mobile technology in e-learning has opened new vistas of opportunity for varying patterns of usage, which is a potent distraction for learners. The study recommends, among other things, that mechanisms for internal control within a given social media platform can be used to monitor what students do online while attending online classes.

Keywords: E-readiness, Mobile technology, E-learning, Technology convergence

Introduction

The 21st century, no doubt, is characterized by several social, evolutionary, and revolutionary changes with attendant positive and adverse effects across all facets of life. More than ever, the educational sector is an integral part of society in this generational transformation powered by Information Communication Technology (ICT). At first, it was the deployment of the mainstream media, particularly radio and television technology, for educational purposes, then media convergence, and now technological convergence, which allows for delivering specific educational content to a targeted group. According to El-Sofany and El-Hagggar (2020), the emergence of ICT has transformed all aspects of education and learning to improve teacher's pedagogical practices while promoting effective ways to manage time in the classroom. Following the introduction of E-learning in the 1980s, modern technologies and new training systems came into the educational landscape.

The advancement of wireless communication, which has led to a learning management system (LMS) of e-learning resources such as mobile phones, smart mobile phones, Apple's iPod, and tablets, PCs, among others, known as m-learning, has innovated teacher-student learning cum instruction delivery. These m-learning devices, as facilitated by wifi, 4G, and 5G telecommunication networks, have created an open source mobile platforms where assignments, lectures, quizzes, etc., can be delivered both for educational and commercial purposes (Sattarov et al., 2019; El-Sofany & El-Hagggar, 2020). In recognition of this, the UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies (2010) published an article on m-learning highlighting the imperatives of m-learning among modern-day students, as well as the transitional move from the

traditional learning system to the internet-induced learning system aided by computer technology plus mobile devices.

With the global Education 2030 program framework of UNESCO, the expectation was that m-learning would become an integral part of the overall learning process in all countries in the next fifteen years as a paradigm shift in informal and formal educational systems. Consequently, with an improved connection between technical and pedagogical innovations, mobile technology will take on a well-defined significant role in the educational ecosystem with a potential high acceleration rate (VanderDussen Taukan, 2018; Soskil, 2011, cited in Sattarov et al., 2019). However, precisely how institutions worldwide, particularly in Nigeria, are clueing into this innovation is still unclear. Although Karim et al. (2020) and Al Kurdi et al. (2020) noted the factors behind the acceptance and adoption of mobile technology in learning among students of tertiary institutions identified in their studies, Almaiah et al. (2020) enumerated the challenges critical to the adoption and functionality of mobile technology in learning submitting that these encumbrances are not identical in all countries as they vary based on knowledge gap hypotheses and other peculiar factors.

To this end, Dominion University, a university located in the ancient city of Ibadan, South West, Nigeria, prides itself as a world-class private university in Nigeria equipped with the latest ultra-modern facilities for raising generational leaders, one tends to ask what is the e-readiness status of the students of this institution towards adopting and using mobile technology in e-learning, and the extent of knowledge of mobile technology use in e-learning as well as the patterns of use of mobile technology in e-

learning among the students. This paper, therefore, examined mobile technology utilization in e-learning among undergraduates of Dominican University, Ibadan.

Literature Review

With the disruptive innovation occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 and the attendant lockdown that came with it, virtual classrooms powered by mobile technology and electronic learning facilities became the norm in the educational sector, particularly in tertiary institutions across the globe. Although in times past, the focus was on media convergence, today, the emphasis is now on technological convergence, which allows the use of all media forms to disseminate content to a specific target group. As is typical with innovations, adoption and use vary by people based on specific social norms and values. Although electronic learning resources are popular with today's students, how they choose their e-learning resources has remained uncertain. Bringman-Rodenbarger and Hortsch's (2019) study of how students choose e-learning resources revealed that convenience, larger screens, and ease of use were often reported as reasons for students' disposal. However, they prefer to use interfaces with which they are familiar. In a similar analysis, Karim et al. (2020) examined why and how tertiary students utilize their mobile devices in the educational setting as both a conduit and catalyst for e-learning in Malaysia. The study observed that mobile technological devices were easy to use based on the students' positive perceptions of them. Das (2020) also evaluated the integration of e-learning and technology in mathematics education in India. Findings revealed the need for more adequate use of devices and e-learning skills required by students. However, students' motivation to adopt and utilize mobile technological

devices can, in no small way, enhance their learning experience. Sandybayev (2020) corroborated this view when they opined that utilizing and actively using interactive features (mobile technology) increases motivation toward better learning results.

Furthermore, investigating a theoretical framework for e-learning technology acceptance, Al Kurdi et al. (2020) identified social influence, perceived enjoyment, self-efficacy, perceived usefulness, and perceived ease of use as the strongest and most important predictors in students' intentions toward e-learning. These findings align with Bringman-Rodenbarger and Hortsch's (2019) results. The difference, however, is in the influence of peer communication as a motivating factor for some students towards adopting and using mobile technology devices in education and in creating a direct impact of behavioral intentions to want to utilize mobile technology in e-learning (Abbad, 2021).

On the contrary, Almaiah et al. (2020), who explored the critical challenges and factors influencing e-learning system usage during the COVID-19 pandemic, identified four factors in their review as the challenges bedeviling the adoption of e-learning systems. These were technological, individual, cultural, and course challenges, although the research noted that these challenges differed by country. Findings also revealed that despite infrastructural challenges, other issues, such as technical problems, change management issues, and hardware problems, among others, affect the utilization of mobile technologies in e-learning. It is recommended that universities provide the necessary hardware, software, and internet connections to aid the learning process between students and teachers.

To this end, Aziz et al. (2020) opined that for participatory engagement within the e-learning community, mobile technology, wireless technology, authoring tools, summative assessment, cloud computing, gamification, and Instagram should be considered suitable technologies that support participatory engagement activities. Similarly, El-Sofany and El-Haggar (2020) submit that integrating mobile technology into teaching brings about students' positive perceptions, facilitates students' concentration, promotes flexible access to m-services for learning materials, and increases students' skills in using mobile technology for e-learning. It is, therefore, imperative to ascertain the technical and psychological readiness of university students to use mobile technology in learning while considering new opportunities for more efficient use of the potential of mobile learning (Sattarov & Khaitova, 2019).

This study is hinged on the diffusion of innovation theory. The innovation adoption model, also known as the diffusion of innovations theory, was proposed by Everett Rogers in 1962. The theory explains how new ideas and technologies spread through cultures through adoption. Here, "adoption" means that a person uses the idea by doing something differently than what they had previously. The fundamental principle behind this theory is that the person must perceive the idea, behaviour, or product as "new" or "innovative." It is through this that diffusion is possible (Rogers, 1962). The proponent of this theory has some basic assumptions about the tendency of new technologies to emerge and spread within a given location as people seek new ways of doing things. The model's key elements are innovation, communication channels, time, social system, and adopter categories (Rogers, 1962). The model provides a useful framework to understand how innovations spread in a population over time through different

communication channels and among members with varying propensities to adopt new ideas. In this study, the model explains how mobile technology use is explored among undergraduates at Dominican University, Ibadan, and the flexibility of their technology usage patterns. The theory also explains the emergence of technology convergence from exploring mobile technology utilization in seeking solutions to problems.

Methodology

This study adopted the survey research design. The study population consists of all the undergraduate students of Dominican University, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria (referred to in this study as DU). The total population of undergraduate students at DU stood at 256 (source: The Registrar, DU, 2023). The study uses a census sample size of 254 (the entire population). Also, the multi-stage sampling technique was adopted; first, the cluster sampling technique was used to divide the university into clusters of 2 faculties (each containing an unequal number of departments). All the departments were purposively chosen due to the small number of the departments. Later, the convenience sampling technique was used to locate each sample unit from the study population using strict intersect.

Table 1: *Distribution of samples showing Departments in Dominican University Ibadan*

S/N	Departments	Total number of Students
1	Philosophy and religious study	105
2	Mass communication	58
3	Business Administration	6
4	Computer Science	60
5	Economics	9
6	Accounting	12
7	Chemistry	4
	Total	254

Source: Dominican University Registry, 2023

The questionnaire was the instrument used for gathering data for the study. It consists of both closed-ended questions (29) and open-ended questions (2), giving a total of 31 items in the questionnaire. Different scales of measurement were adopted. It ranges from a 3 to 5 point scale of measurement.

Reliability Result

Table 2: Reliability result showing the Cronbach Alpha's coefficient of the instrument

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.783	43

The above result shows that after being administered to twenty (20) respondents, the instrument recorded 0.783 Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, indicating that it is approximately 80% reliable. The method of data analysis adopted was purely quantitative (i.e., descriptive), using frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviations calculated with SPSS 20.0 software.

Data Presentation and Discussion of Findings

This section deals with data presentation and analysis and the discussion of findings. The questionnaire was designed using Google Forms and distributed to the target respondents online. Below are the responses that came from the target respondents:

Table 3: *Distribution of responses showing the demographic details of respondents*

S/ N	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Sex: Male	72	39%
	Female	114	61%
2.	Age: 15 – 19 years	64	34%
	20 – 24 years	120	65%
	25 – 29 years	-	0 %
	30 – 34 years	-	0 %
	35 years and above	2	1%
3	Level of Study 100 Level	38	20%
	200 Level	56	30%
	300 Level	43	23%
	400 Level	49	27%
4.	Religion: Christianity	186	100%
	Islam	-	0 %
	ATR	-	0 %
Total		186	100

Source: Online Survey 2023

Results from the demographic details of respondents reveal that there are more female respondents (114 representing 61%) than male respondents (72 representing 39%), as shown in the result above. Also, the results from the age range show that respondents between 20-24 years ranked highest with 120 (65%), followed by respondents between

15-19 years with 64 (34%). At the bottom of the section on Age distribution are respondents who are 35 years old and above, as affirmed by 2 (1%) respondents. There is a preponderance of respondents in the 200 level on the level of study of respondents, as affirmed by 56 (30%) respondents. This is followed by those in the 400 level, recording 49 (representing 27%). Respondents in the 300 level ranked third with 43 (23%) respondents. At the bottom of that section of the table are respondents in the 100 level, recording 38 (representing 20%) of the entire respondents in the study. Lastly, results from the religious affiliation of respondents reveal that all the respondents (186 representing 100%) are Christians, as against none (0%) of the respondents who are of the Islamic religion or the African Traditional Religion (ATR).

Table 4: *Distribution of responses showing the E-readiness status of respondents*

S/N	Variables	YES		NO		CAN'T SAY	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Do you know how to use Google Classroom for online class?	156	84%	25	13%	5	3%
2	Do you know how to use Zoom for online class?	141	76%	40	21%	5	3%
3	Do you know how to use Telegram for online class?	84	45%	57	31%	45	24%
4	Do you know how to use Google Meet for online class?	186	100%	-	0%	-	0%
5	Do you know how to navigate from an e-classroom to other social media platforms in real time?	96	52%	60	32%	30	16%
6	Have you ever used Google Classroom to learn online?	156	84%	25	13%	5	3%
7	Have you ever used Zoom to learn online?	141	76%	40	21%	5	3%
8	Have you ever used Google Meet to learn online?	171	92%	15	8%	-	0%

Source: Online Survey 2023

Table 4 above revealed the e-readiness status of undergraduates at Dominican University, Ibadan. The results revealed that all the respondents (100%) know how to use Google Meet for online classes via their mobile phones. This is followed by knowledge on how to use Google Classroom for online classes, as affirmed by 156 respondents (representing 84%). Further findings reveal knowledge of using the Zoom platform for online classes, as affirmed by 141 respondents (representing 76%). The study also found that 52% of the respondents know how to navigate from an e-classroom platform to other social media platforms in real-time (i.e., while online lectures are ongoing) using their mobile phones without interrupting the class. At the bottom of that section of the table are respondents who know how to use Telegram for online classes, as affirmed by 84 (45%) of the respondents. More respondents (over 50%) do not know how to use Telegram for online classes via their mobile phones. This may be because Telegram is not an officially accepted medium for online classes in the university. The above result implies that Google Meet is predominantly used for e-learning and is one of the officially accepted social media platforms for online classes in the university. The ease of use of the technology makes adoption easy for undergraduates, and it is user-friendly even with a mobile phone.

Table 5: *Distribution of responses showing the extent of knowledge on mobile technology utilization in e-learning among undergraduates in Dominican University, Ibadan*

S/N	Variables	VLE	LE	SE	NAA	Mean	St.D	Dn
1	I know how to connect to zoom for online class using my phone	96	45	45	-	3.27	0.82	LE
							9	
2	I know how to use my phone to share content	36	60	60	30	2.55	0.98	LE
							1	
3	I know how to schedule a google meet online class using my mobile phone	48	63	45	30	2.69	1.02	LE
							8	
4	I know how to join a google classroom during online class using my mobile phone	126	15	45	-	3.44	0.85	LE
							7	
5	I know how to raise my hand using emoji in a zoom online class via my phone	96	30	45	15	3.11	1.03	LE
							6	
6	I know how to submit assignment online using my phone	96	15	60	15	3.03	1.08	LE
							0	
7	I know how to use the chat box during online class via my phone	84	27	60	15	2.97	1.05	LE
							0	

Source: Online Survey 2023

(Key: VLE = Very Large Extent; LE = Large Extent; SE = Some Extent; NAA = Not at all, St.D = Standard Deviation; Dn = Decision Rule)

Table 5 above revealed the extent of mobile technology utilization in e-learning among undergraduates at Dominican University, Ibadan. The analysis used the Limit of Real Numbers to determine the benchmark for the decision rule from the mean scores for each response. It is given as follows:

$$\text{VLE (Very Large Extent)} = 4.00 - 3.45 = (4.00)$$

$$\text{LE (Large Extent)} = 3.44 - 2.45 = (3.00)$$

$$\text{SE (Some Extent)} = 2.44 - 1.45 = (2.00)$$

$$\text{NAA (Not at all)} = 1.44 - 0.45 = (1.00)$$

The results revealed that all seven responses had mean scores leading to the Limit of Real Numbers for the “Large Extent” decision rule as indicated from the results (i.e., mean scores between 3.44 and 2.45). This means that undergraduates of Dominican University, Ibadan, knew a “Large Extent” of all the seven responses. The top among these responses is that most respondents (126 out of 186) know (to a considerable extent) how to join a Google Classroom during online classes using their mobile phones. This accounted for the highest mean score indicated on that particular response.

Other responses that had high mean scores include:

- “I know how to connect to Zoom for online class using my phone” (Mean = 3.27)
- “I know how to raise my hand using **emoji** in a Zoom online class via my phone” (Mean = 3.11)
- “I know how to submit assignments online using my phone” (Mean = 3.03)

The above results imply that students explore new ways of using mobile technology in education as a result of the opportunities that abound in online learning platforms, most of which are user-friendly. Apart from learning how to download the application, students still explored other ways of harnessing the potential of each e-learning application that can enhance the way they learn online, thereby breaking the time and space barrier.

Table 6: *Distribution of responses showing patterns of usage of mobile technology in e-learning among undergraduates in Dominican University, Ibadan*

S/N	Variables	SA	A	U	D	S	Mean	St.D	Dn
1	I use my phone to attend online classes	126	60	-	-	-	4.68	0.46	SA
2	I use Google Classroom for e-learning via my phone	126	45	-	15	-	4.52	0.85	SA
3	I use Google Meet for e-learning using my phone	96	75	-	15	-	4.35	0.84	A
4	I use Zoom for e-learning using my phone	141	30	-	15	-	4.60	0.85	SA
5	I use Telegram for e-learning using my phone	12	72	-	57	45	2.73	1.36	U
6	I do navigate from one application to another during online classes using my phone.	60	66	-	30	30	3.52	1.48	A
7	I submit assignments online using my phone	111	60	-	-	15	4.35	1.09	A
8	I write examinations online using my phone	72	39	-	60	15	3.50	1.47	A

Source: Online Survey 2023

(Key: SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; U = Undecided; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree, St.D = Standard Deviation; Dn = Decision Rule)

As shown in Table 6, the result revealed the usage patterns of mobile technology utilization in e-learning among undergraduates at Dominican University, Ibadan. The analysis used the Limit of Real Numbers to determine the benchmark for the decision rule from the mean scores for each response. It is given as follows:

$$\text{SA (Strongly Agree)} = 5.00 - 4.45 = (5.00)$$

$$\text{A (Agree)} = 4.44 - 3.45 = (4.00)$$

$$\text{U (Undecided)} = 3.44 - 2.45 = (3.00)$$

$$\text{D (Disagree)} = 2.44 - 1.45 = (2.00)$$

$$\text{SD (Strongly Disagree)} = 1.44 - 0.45 = (1.00)$$

Findings from the result, as shown in Table 6, revealed that out of the eight (8) responses, three (3) responses had mean scores that fall within the Limit of Real Numbers for the “Strongly Agree” decision (i.e., a mean score between 5.00 and 4.45). This result shows that mobile technology usage patterns are high in those areas. They include:

- “I use my phone to attend online classes” (mean = 4.68)
- “I use Zoom for e-learning via my phone” (mean = 4.60)
- “I use Google Classroom for e-learning via my phone” (mean = 4.52)

The above findings imply that students in Dominican University, Ibadan use their phones for online classes. Further findings reveal that most respondents (171 out of 186 students) use the Zoom platform and Google Classroom for online classes (i.e., the

addition of Strongly Agree and Agree responses). This is approximately 92% of the total respondents in the study.

Furthermore, the study also found four (4) responses that have mean scores that fall within the Limit of Real Number for the “Agree” decision (i.e., mean scores between 4.44 and 3.45). These responses include:

- “I use Google Meet for online classes via my phone” (mean = 4.35)
- “I submit assignments online using my phone” (mean = 4.35)
- “I do navigate from one application to another during online classes using my phone” (mean = 3.52)
- “I write examinations online using my phone” (mean = 3.50)

The implication of the above finding is that using Google Meet is prevalent in e-learning among undergraduates at Dominican University, Ibadan. Also, there is flexibility in using mobile phone technology in e-learning, as students can easily navigate from one application to another in real-time during online classes without interrupting the class. However, this may constitute a distraction for the students who need to concentrate during the online class.

Further findings revealed that Dominican University, Ibadan undergraduates use mobile technology for online examinations. This finding implies that students who may not be disposed to attend examinations in person can explore the online option using mobile technology. Mobile technology transcends time and space, creating some form of technology convergence occasioned by the flexibility in the use of mobile technology.

This removes the drudgery in organizing physical examinations, especially during periods of social or physical distancing experienced in the COVID-19 era.

Discussion of Findings

The findings in this study are discussed as they answer the research questions formulated in the study. Here, the findings were also compared with similar studies in the literature to establish areas of corroboration and disagreement and refute or uphold a given theory in the area of study, as shown in the findings. Regarding the e-readiness status of respondents in the study, the study found that a greater percentage of the respondents are e-ready. However, their e-readiness status was found to be more focused on using Google Meet (100%). The general e-readiness status for other e-learning platforms was high (ranging from 50% to 92%). This finding implies that undergraduates in Dominican University, Ibadan, are internet savvy.

On the extent of knowledge of mobile technology utilization in e-learning among respondents, the study found that there is knowledge "to a large extent" on patterns of usage of mobile technology associated with e-learning platforms like "Google Classroom" and "Google Meet." This further corroborates the earlier finding that the respondents are internet savvy and use the two e-learning platforms as their official online learning platforms. The frequency of use of a given technology enhances the extent of knowledge gained on its usage patterns. This was found to be true in this study as respondents use Google Classroom and Google Meet most often for online learning, increasing their knowledge of its utilization patterns.

The findings on the various patterns of utilization of mobile technology in e-learning among respondents reveal that Google Classroom and Zoom ranked highest in their usage of e-learning applications via mobile phones. Generally, the study found that using mobile phones for online classes is officially acceptable in Dominican University, Ibadan. The opportunities in mobile technology utilization for e-learning make it an emerging technology that paved the way for technology convergence. Mobile technology utilization in e-learning has been shown in recent studies to have revolutionized the online education system in Nigeria using Android Smartphones, iPads, and IOS devices. Software packages that enhance e-learning have also been employed to diversify usage patterns in tertiary institutions (Ani et al., 2017; Uduma et al., 2019). This agrees with the findings in this study and gives credence to the Diffusion of Innovation Theory, which explains how new technologies gain ground over time when early adopters provide the needed authentication of such technology for others who seem to have one form of reservation or the other to such new technology.

From the findings in this study, the idea of technology convergence has overtaken the initial concept of media convergence. It has introduced a new vista of opportunity in e-learning, thereby reducing the need and use of computers or laptops in e-learning. This is true from previous studies, as authenticated in this study, where students who participate in online classes in real-time using their mobile phones can navigate through other social media platforms during such online classes. These findings imply that the opportunities that abound in technology convergence, necessitated by media convergence, have yet to be fully explored as there are emerging trends in how technologies converge while being put to use.

Conclusion

This paper examines mobile technology utilization in e-learning among Dominican University, Ibadan undergraduates. The study sought to establish respondents' e-readiness status, their extent of knowledge of mobile technology utilization in e-learning, and their patterns of usage of mobile technology in e-learning. Based on the study's findings, the researchers conclude that there are still new opportunities to explore mobile technology utilization in e-learning. There is user-friendly software adaptable to online learning, which makes technology convergence a new trend in e-learning. Also, the multi-tasking nature of mobile technology use in e-learning makes it easier for students to engage in two or more tasks while in an online class using the same mobile phone and still participate fully in the online class with minimal distraction. The major challenge to this new opportunity for students to use mobile technology in e-learning is that distractions abound. If not strictly monitored, a student who is not focused and disciplined can easily be distracted in an online class.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions of this research, the study recommends the following :

- Facilitators of online classes should set guidelines for students attending online classes to avoid the misuse of mobile technology in e-learning. Mechanisms for internal control within a given social media platform can be used to monitor what students do online while attending online classes.

- Students' use of mobile phones for e-learning must be strictly done within the university environment, especially when it involves examination so that what students do online can easily be monitored.
- Handwritten assignments should be encouraged for students who attend online classes. This will help improve learners' handwriting and reduce the rate of malpractice during online classes.
- The duration of online classes should be set within students' attention spans to guide their focus. When online classes stretch beyond the expected time, students tend to engage in other things online while pretending to be still attentive to the facilitator in the online class.

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Media Convergence: Netnographic Study of the Hausa Language in Online Media, the Case of Infodemic

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Abstract

The advent of the Internet in the late 1990s was a significant turning point for African journalism. Its impact has been profound, enabling convergence with traditional news media and expanding broadcast architecture to reach larger audiences. Moreover, social media has empowered indigenous language users with cultural liberty and immunity to external cultural influences. The convergence of legacy broadcasting channels with the Internet has benefited indigenous language broadcasting, particularly in non-metropolitan or colonial areas. This positive outcome has been made possible by the widespread availability and affordability of smartphones and cheap data, as various telecommunications companies across Africa fiercely compete to provide data-hungry African youth with the lowest-priced data. Smartphones have revolutionized media convergence by seamlessly integrating broadcast media, such as streaming websites like Netflix and static stations like YouTube; radio applications like Tuneln; print media like e-books; and applications by major, often traditional, printed newspapers. This study examines the use of the Hausa language on social media during the infodemic era. An infodemic is a rapid spread of accurate and inaccurate information about issues. The term, coined in 2003 by David Rothkopf, rose to prominence in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis thoroughly examines text-based interactions concerning the use of the Hausa language about misinformation and disinformation on various social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. The investigation employed Kozinets' (1998) Netnographic approach, focusing on online community interactions.

Keywords: Media Convergence, Netnography, Hausa Language, Infodemic

Introduction

The media plays a pivotal role in the democratization of African nations, offering a platform for individuals to freely express their opinions, thoughts, and choices, thus fostering cultural exchange and communication among communities (Middleton & Njogu, 2010; Domeij et al., 2018; Dwyer, 2019; Alexander, 2019; Cassels, 2019; Uba, 2021). Indigenous language media holds particular significance in this context, as it transcends the need for proficiency in dominant languages such as English, French, German, or Portuguese, empowering individuals to communicate and engage in their native tongues. This inclusion of indigenous language media represents a profound form of democratization, affording individuals control over narratives and the liberty to present alternative viewpoints (Middleton & Njogu, 2010).

The landscape of journalism in African countries has radically transformed since the late 1990s with the advent of the Internet (Olorunnisola & Douai, 2013). This transformative era has facilitated the convergence of traditional news media with digital platforms, expanding the architecture of broadcast communication and attracting larger audiences. This convergence has revitalized indigenous language broadcasting and ushered in a new era of media accessibility, largely thanks to the affordability and widespread availability of smartphones and cost-effective data plans (Olorunnisola & Douai, 2013). Telecommunication companies across Africa have fiercely competed to provide affordable data services, and smartphones have emerged as the quintessential medium for media convergence, seamlessly integrating various forms of broadcast media (Bartl et al., 2016).

This study delves into utilizing the Hausa language on social media during the infodemic era in northern Nigeria, employing the research methodology of 'netnography' introduced by Kozinets (1998, 2010) and Costello et al. (2017). Netnography, as defined by Kozinets (2020), represents a qualitative research approach aimed at comprehending the cultural experiences embedded in social media's traces, practices, networks, and systems. This methodology involves active engagement with and observation of online communities, enabling a holistic examination of their cultural experiences, interactions, and immersion within the digital landscape (Kozinets, 2020; Bartl et al., 2016).

While various researchers have harnessed the power of netnography across diverse research contexts, this study primarily focuses on mapping the presence of the Hausa language on selected social media platforms during the infodemic period rather than an intrinsic analysis of the content itself. Through the lens of netnography, this research explores the dynamic intersection where Indigenous languages, the infodemic, and digital platforms converge, as well as media convergence. This investigation provides valuable insights into the evolving landscape of media communication, highlighting the nuanced interplay between the Hausa language, the infodemic phenomenon, and the digital environments that shape contemporary media discourse.

Social Media as the Primary Agent of Media Convergence

The relentless advances in technology and media have fundamentally reshaped the contemporary communication landscape. In the digital age, individuals and organizations have a plethora of avenues to disseminate information, voice opinions,

and engage with a global audience. Media convergence has gained prominence due to the pervasive digitization and widespread internet access at the heart of this transformative process. This review will delve into the intricate characteristics of media convergence, offering illustrative examples, highlighting its advantages, and emphasizing the pivotal role of social media in this transformative process.

Media convergence represents the integration of various forms of mass media, including Traditional Media, Print Media, Broadcast Media, New Media, and the Internet, along with incorporating portable and highly interactive technologies facilitated by digital media platforms (Jenkins, 2006). This convergence entails the fusion of the "3Cs" - Communication, Computing, and Content, as technology is the unifying thread weaving these elements together. The quintessential embodiment of media convergence is the Smartphone, which seamlessly blends diverse media formats: print media (e-books, news apps), broadcast media (streaming websites, radio, music apps), and new media (the Internet) into a singular device. This device facilitates communication and encompasses various functions, from photography and videography to gaming (Jenkins, 2006).

Social Media as the Primary Agent of Media Convergence: Within media convergence, social media emerges as a pivotal and transformative agent (Deuze, 2006). Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, serve as dynamic hubs where individuals engage in multi-directional communication, content creation, and information dissemination (Deuze, 2006). These platforms facilitate the

convergence of traditional media, digital media, and user-generated content, creating a dynamic ecosystem where communication and content coalesce.

Scholarly discourse has recognized the centrality of social media in the realm of media convergence. Jenkins (2006) emphasizes the transformative impact of social media platforms in reshaping traditional media landscapes, fostering participatory culture, and enabling the circulation of user-generated content. This transformation extends beyond communication to encompass content creation, distribution, and consumption, blurring the boundaries between media forms (Jenkins, 2006).

Hausa Language

The Hausa language belongs to the Afro-Asiatic family. According to (Bunza, 2022), out of the world's seven thousand six hundred languages, Hausa is number eleven. It is an essential language in Africa. It is also the second language spoken after Swahili if we consider something other than Arabic. It is difficult to say how many Hausa speakers there are because estimates vary significantly from source to source. According to the Spectator index, Hausa speakers comprise between 40 and 150 million. Hausa is an official language in Nigeria, Niger Republic, and is spoken in numerous countries around the West African region. The main Hausa-speaking population is concentrated in the Northern states of Nigeria, southern Niger, and Northern Ghana, where Hausa is the primary language of communication. Still, it is also an important language of international communication and trade beyond these locations. Hausa is also spoken in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central Africa Republic, Chad, Congo, Eritrea, Sudan, and Togo.

The significance of the Hausa language lies in its substantial speaker base and ability to foster connections among diverse communities and facilitate trade and cultural exchange. Its presence across borders and adaptability as a language of international communication underscores its enduring importance in the region and beyond.

Language Landscape and the Social Media

Regardless of geographical location, Indigenous languages serve as the language of local communities, facilitating informal communication that resonates with people's understanding (Pérez, 2015). While these languages may possess formalized written forms with grammatical rules, their essence lies in their role as informal communicative tools. Sadly, internationalization narratives often depict indigenous language speakers as quaint populations from the third world, seemingly incapable of widespread communication in dominant metropolitan languages, relegating their languages to a nostalgic and exotic heritage label. Pérez (2015) rightly emphasized, "One of the greatest challenges of the 21st century is the preservation of linguistic diversity, which is in danger."

Even in countries considered metropolitical, there remains a need to establish a dominant international language to suppress the existence of vernacular languages. The United Kingdom, for instance, has historically asserted itself as a foremost exporter of the English language through colonialism and the imposition of English on colonized territories. However, in London alone, approximately 300 languages coexist (Baker & Eversley, 2000). While some categorize these languages as 'immigrant languages,'

their mere presence in the heart of the English language's virtual realm underscores the resilience and vitality of indigenous languages.

To better understand the role of social media in preserving and revitalizing indigenous languages, it is essential to clarify what constitutes social media. Traditional print and broadcast media, such as newspapers, radio, and visual programs that have found a digital presence, only partially qualify as social media, even when they offer features for reader comments. Such comments lack the organic interactivity characteristic of proper social media.

The term 'social media' is marked by diverse definitions that reflect its dynamic and evolving nature. Researchers, drawing from their unique perspectives and experiences, have contributed to the array of purposes (Correa et al., 2010; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010; Gruzd et al., 2012; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; McIntyre, 2014; Otieno & Matoke, 2014). From these varied interpretations, McCay-Peet and Quan-Haase (2017) distill a comprehensive definition, characterizing social media as "web-based services that allow individuals, communities, and organizations to collaborate, connect, interact, and build community by enabling them to create, co-create, modify, share, and engage with user-generated content that is easily accessible." This definition encompasses sharing user-generated media information and text-based conversational exchange, occasionally involving sharing media from internet sources.

Acknowledging the undeniable online dominance of specific languages, it is essential to note that approximately 80 percent of all internet content is in one of the following ten languages: English, Chinese, Spanish, Japanese, Portuguese, German, Arabic, French,

Russian, and Korean. While African languages remain on the Internet, they have yet to achieve widespread communication status and often possess minimal content in their respective languages.

Debates surrounding indigenous language literacies have primarily focused on the representation of these languages in written or vocal literature, showcasing the resilience of indigenous languages (Cocq & Sullivan, 2019). Over the years, the advent of new media and its subsequent commodification have provided a voice to hitherto suppressed indigenous languages that traditionally relied on print media for expression. For example, Abu-Irmies and Al-Khanji (2019) highlighted using social media platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp to preserve Jordan's Chechen language and culture. Rivon (2012) explored the Eton (Ìtón) community's use of Facebook in Cameroon, while Domeij, Karlsson, Moshagen, and Trosterud (2018) examined the resilience of Sámi speakers in Sweden through digital literacy.

Moreover, Abiodun Salawu's comprehensive edited study on African languages and digital media (2019) delved into how African indigenous languages navigate the digital landscape. Other studies, such as Hurst-Harosh and Erastus (2018), offered insights into language in new media, performing arts, African music, and the significant role of youth in language development and change. Language revitalization through digital media and expression on social media has also garnered attention in research (Cru, 2015; Cassels, 2019; Sunday et al., 2019).

Six distinct clusters emerge when categorizing social media platforms, especially adhering to McCay-Peet and Quan-Haase's (2017) definition. The first encompasses

social networks, predominantly characterized by conversational interactions, and includes platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. The second cluster comprises image-sharing and messaging platforms, including Instagram, Pinterest, and Snapchat. The third category involves video-sharing sites like YouTube, Vimeo, and TikTok. The fourth cluster encompasses discussion forums, with platforms like Reddit, Quora, and Digg. Lastly, the fifth category comprises Blogging and Publishing platforms like Wattpad, Inkitt, WordPress, and Tumblr.

This study explores the use of the Hausa language in online media during the infodemic era. Social media serves as the primary arena where the convergence of language, communication, and content occurs. The Hausa language is a means of expression and a cultural and communicative tool that finds resonance on social media platforms. This convergence allows for the dissemination of information, opinions, and artistic works in the Hausa language, highlighting the integral role of social media in mediating language and communication within a globalized digital landscape.

Internet and Smartphones

The backbone of any social media is, of course, access to the Internet. In northern Nigeria, such access is mainly through Smartphones. Subscribers can now access the telephony services offered by the Nigerian telecommunication sector, which was deregulated in 2001. The Nigerian government subsequently issued a Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) license (Bello, 2012), enabling private investors to provide such a service. 2000 Nigeria had 400,000 telephone lines in 2000. By 2018, the

number had jumped to 147 million (Oji, 2018). According to the NCC April 2021 statistics, this figure has jumped to 200,213,994.

There were 222.5 million telephone subscribers in Nigeria as of the end of 2022, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) has said. The 2022 figure showed an increase of 27.1 million subscribers over the 195.5 million subscribers recorded at the end of 2021. The NBS stated the statistics in its Telecoms Data: Active Voice and Internet per State, Porting and Tariff Information report for the last quarter of 2022, released in Abuja on March 23, 2023.

The report showed that the figure for the last quarter of 2022 represented a yearly 13.87 percent rise in voice subscriptions. The report showed growth at 4.89 percent on a quarter-on-quarter basis. According to Statista's prediction, the number of smartphone users in Nigeria, Africa's largest economy and most populous nation, is set to surpass 140 million by 2025, amounting to 66% smartphone penetration. It would be a rapid increase from the 2021 penetration rate of 19.7% and would place Nigeria as the ninth country in the world with the highest number of smartphones. Nigeria's tech ecosystem has become active and vibrant with a large young population and high future smartphone penetration. Moreover, this means Nigerians of all language groupings now have more access to the various social media platforms.

Integrating traditional broadcasting channels with the Internet has led to significant growth in indigenous language broadcasting. This development includes broadcasting in languages spoken in non-metropolitan or colonial areas. The affordability of smartphones and data plans has played a substantial role in this, with telecom

companies in Africa competing for customers by offering low-cost data plans to data-hungry youth who are always connected to the Internet. Smartphones are a prime example of media convergence, providing easy access to various forms of media, such as streaming platforms like Netflix and YouTube, radio apps like TuneIn, e-books, and apps from traditional newspapers.

Infodemic: Amplification and Mitigation through the Hausa Language on Social Media

The term "infodemic," as coined by the World Health Organization (WHO), refers to an overwhelming influx of information during critical events like the COVID-19 pandemic (WHO, 2020). This deluge of information encompasses a blend of accurate and erroneous data, making it a daunting task to distinguish reliable sources and guidance. The infodemic phenomenon typically arises from a specific event, such as a pandemic, which triggers an unprecedented surge in information dissemination (WHO, 2020). The consequences of an infodemic are profound, encompassing the propagation of misinformation, the circulation of rumors, and the manipulation of information with dubious intent (WHO, 2020).

Social media platforms have emerged as influential catalysts in amplifying the infodemic phenomenon (Zarocostas, 2020). The rapid and widespread sharing of information on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp can liken the spread of data to a contagious virus (Shimizu, 2020). Social media's inherent characteristics, such as real-time communication and user-generated content, have inadvertently facilitated the accelerated dissemination of reliable and false information, further exacerbating the infodemic's impact (Shimizu, 2020).

Within the context of the Hausa language, social media platforms have played a dual role in propagating and debunking misinformation during the COVID-19 infodemic. The Hausa language, widely spoken across West Africa, including Nigeria, Niger, and parts of Chad and Cameroon, has been a focal point in disseminating information related to the pandemic. This language serves as a medium through which individuals share information, offer opinions, and engage in conversations surrounding the pandemic's developments.

For instance, various individuals and groups have utilized the Hausa language on social media platforms to propagate misinformation and conspiracy theories regarding COVID-19 (Zarocostas, 2020). These false narratives may include unfounded claims about the virus's origin, transmission, or potential cures. Such misinformation not only contributes to public confusion but can also have tangible consequences, including the rejection of legitimate health guidelines or the promotion of unproven treatments (Zarocostas, 2020).

Conversely, social media platforms have also harnessed the Hausa language to debunk and counteract the spread of false information (Shimizu, 2020). Health authorities, fact-checking organizations, and concerned individuals have leveraged social media platforms to provide accurate information, cite credible sources, and refute the claims of misinformation agents (Shimizu, 2020). In doing so, they engage in a digital battle to mitigate the harmful effects of the infodemic by disseminating reliable information in the Hausa language.

In conclusion, the infodemic, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and amplified by social media, poses a significant challenge in distinguishing reliable information from misinformation. With widespread usage across West Africa, the Hausa language is crucial in this information landscape. It is employed as a conduit for disseminating false information and to combat the infodemic by providing accurate and evidence-based content.

Misinformation, Media Convergence, and the Hausa Indigenous Language:

Navigating the Infodemic

Misinformation, characterized by the deliberate dissemination of false or inaccurate information intending to deceive, has emerged as a profound concern amid the COVID-19 pandemic (Pennycook & Rand, 2019). The global health crisis has witnessed an unprecedented surge in online searches for updates, making the digital landscape a breeding ground for accurate information and deceptive narratives (Pennycook & Rand, 2019). Within this context, misinformation regarding COVID-19 has proliferated, giving rise to a multifaceted infodemic.

The infodemic, marked by an overwhelming influx of information, has been exacerbated by the convergence of traditional media with digital platforms, a phenomenon often referred to as media convergence (Choi & Lee, 2016). Media convergence entails the integration of various media formats, including print, broadcast, and digital, into a cohesive and interconnected media landscape (Choi & Lee, 2016). This convergence has transformed how information is produced, disseminated, and consumed, blurring the boundaries between traditional and new media.

One of the consequences of media convergence is the accelerated dissemination of accurate and false information across a myriad of platforms. As a critical component of this converged media landscape, social media is central to spreading COVID-19-related misinformation (Pennycook & Rand, 2019). False narratives, often rooted in conspiracy theories and unsupported claims, circulate on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp (Pennycook & Rand, 2019). These narratives encompass various topics, including the disease's origins, causes, treatments, and mechanisms, contributing to public confusion and anxiety (Pennycook & Rand, 2019).

Within this digital milieu, the Hausa indigenous language, spoken by millions across West Africa, has contributed to and been affected by the spread of COVID-19 misinformation. Using the Hausa language on social media platforms has rapidly disseminated accurate health information and deceptive narratives (Abdul-Ra'uf & Zubairu, 2020). While some individuals and organizations leverage the Hausa language to share evidence-based information and health guidelines, others exploit it to promote falsehoods and unfounded claims (Abdul-Ra'uf & Zubairu, 2020).

Efforts to counteract misinformation in the Hausa language and other indigenous languages are underway, including fact-checking initiatives and collaborations between health authorities and community leaders (Abdul-Ra'uf & Zubairu, 2020). These efforts aim to provide reliable information in languages accessible to local populations, emphasizing the importance of cultural and linguistic sensitivity in addressing the infodemic (Abdul-Ra'uf & Zubairu, 2020).

Misinformation during the COVID-19 pandemic poses significant risks to public health and well-being. The convergence of traditional and digital media has amplified the spread of false narratives, making it crucial for individuals to exercise discernment and engage in fact-checking. The Hausa indigenous language, as a vital means of communication across West Africa, both contributes to and combats the dissemination of COVID-19 misinformation, highlighting the importance of linguistic and cultural considerations in the infodemic era.

Methodology

Integrating Netnography and Social Media Analytics: In this research, we adopted a methodological approach that seamlessly integrates netnography and social media analytics, drawing inspiration from the work of Ahuja and Alavi (2018). This blended methodology enabled us to gain comprehensive insights into the online behaviors, interactions, and dynamics of the Hausa-speaking community on social media platforms.

Netnography: We initiated our study by embracing the principles of netnography, a qualitative research method designed to investigate online communities and their cultural experiences (Kozinets, 2010). Through netnography, we delved deep into the intricate web of interactions within internet-based communities comprising Hausa indigenous language users. Netnography facilitated our understanding of the nuances and patterns of engagement among these individuals.

Data Collection: The first step in our methodological journey was to initiate an extensive netnographic search across various social media platforms. We meticulously

examined Hausa-speaking online communities' interactions, discussions, and content. These communities were identified based on their relevance to our research objectives. Through this process, we gained access to a rich data repository generated by Hausa-speaking individuals across diverse online platforms.

Social Media Analytics: Building upon the netnographic foundation, we harnessed the power of social media analytics to extract valuable insights from the vast pool of data collected. Ahuja and Alavi (2018) exemplified that social media analytics enabled us to process and quantify the information obtained from our netnographic exploration. This phase used specialized tools and techniques to measure various aspects of online interactions and engagement.

Identification of Key Data Sources: Within social media, it became evident through our initial netnographic search that Hausa indigenous language users predominantly engage in text-based interactions and video blogs on two major platforms: Facebook and Twitter. These platforms emerged as the primary data sources for our study due to their prominence and relevance to the Hausa-speaking community.

Data Sampling and Analysis: Subsequently, we systematically sampled data from Facebook and Twitter, focusing on specific groups, discussions, and user-generated content related to the Hausa language and the infodemic. We subjected this data to rigorous analysis, encompassing quantitative and qualitative dimensions. Quantitative analysis measures the number of users within each online group or community. In contrast, qualitative research involves a comprehensive examination of the content, sentiment, and themes present in the collected data.

Netnographic Analysis

Table 1

Corona Discussions by Hausa Groups on Facebook and Twitter from 2020 to 2023.

(The first four rows are for Facebook, and the last four rows are for Twitter).

Year	J	F	M	A	M	Ju	J	Au	S	O	N	D	Total
	a	e	a	r	a	n	u	g	e	c	o	e	
	n	b							p				
20	1	5	6	10			45	520	53	54	60	61	
20	2	0	0	00	550	40	00	0	00	50	00	00	4427
	0	0	0		0	00	05						0
			0				50						
			0				00						
			0				00						
			0										
			0										
			0										
			0										
			0										
20	2	2	15	9	8	1	7	1	1	8	4	1	153
21	7	3	9	9	6	0	1	2	3	5	3	2	1
	7	1				2		7	0			1	
20	1	1	28	2	32	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	274
22	9	1	2	3	2	3	4	7	4	4	5	1	7
	7	3		9		2	4	2	2	0	3	1	
20	4	4	46	3	56	3	3	1	1	1	2	1	382
23	6	2	0	8	0	4	4	9	2	9	0	3	6
	4	2		2		2	0	4	1	8	8	5	
20	6	4	45	5	34	2	3	4	2	5	5	7	562
20	8	1	2	2	2	7	7	2	8	6	8	1	5

	5	3		5		5	6	2	3	0	2	0	
20	6	3	44	4	39	2							257
21	0	5	2	8	4	9							8
	6	6		8		2							
20	2	3	35	3	23	2	4	3	2	2	2	4	394
22	8	0	6	9	3	8	2	9	5	9	9	3	0
	1	5		4		4	6	4	0	2	0	5	
20	9	7	3										19
23													
Tot													64,5
al													36

Upon careful analysis of the data, it is evident that the group's conversations were frequently characterized by lively debates, resulting in a captivating ambiance. December 2020 was the most active month, with 6100 Facebook posts and 710 tweets. In total, the group amassed an impressive 64,536 posts on both platforms until March 2023, highlighting the significant level of interest and engagement surrounding the topic of infodemic. Notably, the Nigerian government officially banned using Twitter from June 5, 2021, to January 13, 2022. Our analysis evidences this.,

Table 2: *Facebook Indigenous Hausa Groups, from 2020 to 2023*

S/N	Group	No	Members
1.	Kannywood	99	1,400,000
2.	Sirrin ya mace	85	673000

3.	Dokin karfe	50	2800
4.	Pearls of the North	29	80000
5.	Duniyar siyasar Arewa	17	268000
6.	Rayuwarmu a yau	16	15,000

Table 2 shows that among Hausa language users on Facebook, discussions related to the infodemic at the Kannywood, the Hausa video film industry Facebook forum, were the most prevalent. This industry garners substantial public attention, with a focus on both the films and the stars associated with them. Although the age range of the 1.4 million members participating in the 99 conversations centered on infodemics was not determined, the economic nature of the Hausa film industry suggests that it primarily caters to the youth. Despite the lack of content analysis conducted through group membership, publicly available group posts reveal that conversations concerning conspiracy theories surrounding Coronavirus often triggered intense debates.

The *Sirrin ya Mace* group, which means "female secret," is a community exclusively for women of all ages who closely follow the Kannywood group. During their discussions, they openly addressed the pandemic and the misinformation and disinformation surrounding it. While most members were straightforward, a few were impolite, which is not in line with the typical Muslim Hausa cultural public space. The group currently has 673000 members.

Dokin Karfe, *Pearls of the North*, *Duniyar Siyasar Arewa*, and *Rayuwarmu a Yau* are all important in spreading information about the pandemic through the Hausa language and online social media. However, some of the information may need to be more accurate. These platforms demonstrate the convergence of the Hausa language and technology. The integrated approach of netnography and social media analytics allowed us to navigate the intricate online landscape of the Hausa-speaking community, shedding light on their language usage patterns, communication styles, and engagement dynamics on Facebook and Twitter. This methodological framework served as a robust foundation for our study, enabling us to unravel the multifaceted dimensions of the Hausa language in online media.

This study explores the use of the Hausa language in online media during the infodemic era. Social media is the primary arena where the convergence of language, communication, and content occurs. The Hausa language is a means of expression and a cultural and communicative tool that finds resonance on social media platforms. This convergence allows for the dissemination of information, opinions, and artistic works in the Hausa language, highlighting the integral role of social media in mediating language and communication within a globalized digital landscape.

Unveiling Media Convergence and Language Revitalization Among the Hausa

Vibrancy of Media Convergence:

One of the prominent insights derived from this survey is the vibrancy of media convergence within the Hausa-speaking community's online interactions. Social media platforms have served as dynamic arenas where individuals converge to engage in

multidimensional communication, share user-generated content, and disseminate information. The Hausa language, a cornerstone of cultural identity, serves as the primary medium through which individuals express themselves, fostering a sense of unity and connectedness among the community members.

Indigenous Language Usage: The study reveals the deep-seated attachment of the Hausa community to their language. Across various social media platforms, Hausa indigenous language users actively embrace every opportunity to communicate and express themselves in their native tongue. This inclination towards linguistic preservation and promotion signifies an integral facet of language revitalization, vital in conserving cultural heritage. Through their language usage on social media, the Hausa community actively contributes to perpetuating their linguistic traditions and cultural practices.

Limited Influence of English: Notably, a cursory examination of social media groups within the Hausa-speaking community indicates a relatively little presence of English or other languages. This phenomenon reflects the community's unwavering commitment to maintaining the primacy of the Hausa language within their digital interactions. While individual group postings were not analyzed in-depth, this observation underscores the pervasive influence of the Hausa language in shaping the discourse and content within these online communities.

Implications for the Study

The study's findings underscore the critical role of social media in language revitalization efforts within the Hausa-speaking community. By actively using their

indigenous language on these digital platforms, the community contributes to preserving and propagating their linguistic heritage. Language revitalization efforts can be further encouraged and supported to ensure the continued vibrancy of the Hausa language.

Regarding Cultural Survival, the study highlights the interconnectedness of language and culture, emphasizing that the Hausa language is a conduit for transmitting cultural values, traditions, and identity. The community's dedication to language use on social media bolsters cultural survival, as the language remains central to their sense of belonging and shared identity.

Media Convergence's Role: The study shows that media convergence shapes linguistic and communicative behaviors. Recognizing this influence implies that efforts can be directed toward leveraging media convergence to promote the use of indigenous languages and support cultural preservation initiatives. This preliminary survey offers valuable insights into the dynamic interplay between media convergence and indigenous language usage within the Hausa-speaking community on social media during the infodemic. The study underscores the resilience of the Hausa language and its pivotal role in fostering cultural continuity and community cohesion within the digital age. Further research and initiatives can build upon these findings to strengthen language revitalization and cultural preservation efforts within the Hausa-speaking community and beyond.

Conclusion

This preliminary netnographic survey of the Hausa Indigenous language's utilization of social media during the infodemic has unveiled a multifaceted landscape marked by the

dynamic interplay of media convergence and indigenous language usage. The findings of this study underscore the significant role that social media platforms play in shaping the linguistic and communicative behaviors of the Hausa-speaking community. Positive and negative facets of this convergence have emerged, shedding light on the broader implications for language revitalization and cultural survival within this digital realm.

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Netflix Film Streaming on Smartphones in Oredo Local Government Area, Benin City

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Abstract

The study examined the technological convergence of the audio-visual qualities of smartphones to ascertain whether residents of Oredo Local Government Area use them to watch films streamed on Netflix. The study's objectives were to identify the nature of cinema streamed on Netflix among residents of Oredo Local Government, explore the factors that influence viewers' preference for films streamed on Netflix through smartphones, and identify the benefits of media convergence through smartphones among residents of Oredo Local Government Area. The study population consisted of 553,300 residents of Oredo LGA (NPC, 2022), with a survey research design involving a sample size of 384 respondents. The theoretical framework for this study was Media Determinism and Diffusion of Innovation theories. The findings of this study showed that people use smartphones to watch more foreign films than local content films on Netflix. In addition, the study also revealed that smartphones are used to watch streamed films on Netflix more than other mass media channels. In conclusion, the study revealed that the primary factor influencing viewers' preference for smartphones over other media for Netflix films is that smartphones incorporate all the characteristics of other media. Due to these findings, this study therefore recommends that Netflix ensure that registered viewers are 18 years and above to check the exposure of underage to obscene scenes in a film.

Keywords: Technological or Media convergence, Netflix, Film streaming, Smartphones, Mass media

Introduction

Films combine audiovisual characteristics to tell stories or convey information through moving images. They are monitored through mass media channels that feature audiovisual content. With today's advanced media technology, there is a technological convergence of the media channels. People can now watch films on the go, whether at work, at home, in banks, hospital wards, on airplanes, in cars, in bars, and lounges, amongst other places where a television set cannot be mounted. With smartphones that have internet access, users can operate from anywhere, whether recording or live.

For such users to enjoy such time through a smartphone or television, there are film streaming platforms like iROKOTv, Netflix, Showmax, Prime Video, Hulu, FilmOne, and Disney+ that can be used to watch films when subscribed to the service (Vanderhoef, 2019). This is known as film streaming. Film streaming gained popularity in the 20th century, driven by the increasing demand for film entertainment through digital communication. Thompson (2010) argues that films are complex media that involve artistic and technical elements, including visual design, cinematography, sound design, editing, and narrative structure. Streaming of an artistic venture is not just peculiar to films alone. Streaming can be noticed on specific news channels (like Arise TV and Channels News Live) and programme streams like Al Jazeera streams, where issues are discussed worldwide through Skype. There is also social media streaming on YouTube and Facebook, where events like weddings or naming ceremonies are aired live as they occur, allowing an audience from anywhere in the world to watch, share, and comment on them. Against this backdrop, the study examined the technological

convergence of smartphones' audio-visual capabilities to ascertain whether residents of Oredo Local Government Area use them to watch films streamed on Netflix.

Statement of the Problem

It has been observed that people have, over the years, used television to watch films. However, in recent years, the rise of streaming services like Netflix has revolutionized the entertainment industry, offering viewers an unprecedented level of convenience and choice. With millions of subscribers worldwide, and particularly in Nigeria, Netflix has become a major player in the global entertainment market. However, this raises the question: What is the most significant media channel that the people of Oredo LGA, in Benin City, use to watch films aired on Netflix?

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives guided this study;

1. Identify the nature of films streamed on Netflix among Oredo Local Government residents.
2. Explore the factors that influence viewers' preference for films streamed on Netflix through smartphones and;
3. The benefits of media convergence through smartphones among the residents of Oredo LGA.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study;

1. What kind of films are streamed on Netflix among Oredo Local Government residents?
2. What factors influence viewers' preference for films streamed on Netflix through Smartphones?
3. What are the benefits of media convergence through smartphones among Oredo Local Government Area residents?

Justification of the Study

Although movies are watched through television the computer system, people still find the need to relax during odd hours like an eatery, during break time at the office, in their bedrooms when they want a spare time to themselves without going to the cinemas, in their cars amongst others, they still prefer the convenience that they get from their smartphones in watching films spontaneously through Netflix and other streaming platforms since all media features are embedded in smartphones (Tomi, 2002). This study is justified in that smartphones have media features that are audio-visual, which can be easily accessed by users to watch films streaming on Netflix at any time, rather than waiting to get home or getting a television to watch a film of choice.

In addition, the rise of film streaming, which can be attributed to the growth of digital technology, has made it easier and more affordable to distribute films worldwide (Smith & Johnson, 2018). Since smartphones can enable users to do things they cannot do through other media, it became necessary for this research to investigate if this great attribute that smartphones have over other media channels makes them a preferable means to use among Oredo LGAs in viewing streamed films.

Theoretical Frameworks

The theoretical framework for this study was Media Determinism and Diffusion of Innovation Theories. Media Determinism was propounded by Marshall McLuhan, a Canadian media theorist, in the mid-20th century in his book *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964). According to McLuhan, media technologies such as the printing press, radio, and television help to alter human perception, cognition, and social organization (Roseberry & Vicker, 2009; Severin & Tankard, 2014). He popularized the maxim, “the medium is the message,” emphasizing that the media of a particular era influence the lifestyle and culture of the people. As argued by McLuhan in 1964, the qualities, functions, and effects of the media are substantial on society and any human endeavor since technology drives society. McLuhan's ideas were first raised in the works of his mentor, Harold Innis, who theorized that technologies affect the patterns of human thinking and human beings (McLuhan & Innis, 1940, cited in Rosenberry & Vickers, 2009). For example, the tribal paradigm, based on the oral transmission of messages, was replaced by the print paradigm in the 1440s with Johannes Gutenberg’s printing press and movable type (Vivian, 2009).

In effect, the theorist believes that the dominant way messages are communicated is orally, in print, or electronically. This theory is relevant to this study because it helps to elucidate how the media of a period or era affects how people live their lives, as seen in the case of film streaming, which is gradually replacing the traditional way people watch films on television.

Diffusion of Innovation Theory

This theory explains how new ideas, innovations, and technologies spread throughout a population in a society from introduction to widespread adoption. This theory was developed by E. M. Rogers at the University of New Mexico in 1962 (Clay 2023). The theory states that the stages of adopting an innovation are exhibited by people when they are exposed to a new idea, and how they start using it for their benefit are only known and understood when they are exposed to the new idea. According to Rogers, the persons involved in the innovation processes are as follows:

The first set of persons is called the innovators. These are people who are willing to try new ideas and be among the first to implement them before others. They are the risk-takers in all stages of innovation. In addition, they are the early adopters, a set of individuals interested in trying out new inventions and advancing their lifestyle in society. The early majority are those who strive to support the use of a new invention within society. They also recommend it for other members of the society as part of the general population. The late majority are the people who follow the early adopters in adopting an innovation as part of their daily lifestyle in society. Finally, the laggards are referred to as such because they comprise the general populace that does not adopt the new ideas of innovation in society. They choose not to participate in any new invention.

It is worth noting that innovators and early adopters are adept at taking risks with new inventions, technologies, and ideas. Unfortunately, these risks expose them to dangers associated with such trials, as opposed to the Laggards, who are very averse to trying out a new idea in society. The factors that can affect the art of innovations in society are, but are not limited to, society's level of education, development, industrialization,

accessibility, and familiarity with technological change (Rogers, 1962, cited in Clay, 2023). The Diffusion of Innovation theory is relevant to this study as it helps to illustrate the extent to which human progress has been driven by the acceptance and adoption of innovations, from the printing Press to the internet, occasioned by technological convergence. This convergence has influenced the media convergence attributes on smartphones, as evident in the new invention of live streaming of films.

Literature Review of Related Concepts

Film Streaming: An Overview

Film streaming refers to the exhibition and dissemination of films or movies over the internet, allowing viewers to watch them in real time without downloading (Thompson, 2010). Film streaming is a very popular phenomenon, especially with the rise of digital platforms and internet technology in the 21st century. Another reason for this advancement is that film streaming is convenient and flexible, allowing users to watch films anytime and anywhere with an internet connection on a mobile device, such as smartphones (Tomi, 2002). Thompson (2010) notes that film streaming in Nigeria has gained significant popularity, thereby transforming viewers' access to both locally produced and foreign films.

The streaming of films has, in no small measure, encouraged content creators and filmmakers as it allows the distribution of films to be easier and to profit from the "sales" of films (Kevin & Kents, 2022). Vanderhoef (2019) also stated that film streaming provides personalized experiences best enjoyed by the specific viewer, which may not be the case when watching television at home with family members, for instance. Based

on this relevance, these researchers aim to determine whether residents of the Oredo Local Government Area prefer using smartphones for streaming their preferred films.

Factors that Influence Viewers' Preferences for Films Streamed on Netflix

The way films are viewed in recent years has been influenced by certain factors. Some of the reasons range from better opportunities to reach a wider audience through media content creation to generating more profit by licensing and distributing content to streaming platforms on a local and global scale. In addition, high internet connectivity with the aid of mobile devices like computers and smartphones has aided the shift in film consumption habits as many Nigerians opt to stream movies online with the assistance of smartphones, tablets, and smart TVs rather than rely on the conventional screen like the physical viewing of television at a particular location.

The convenience of viewing streamed films has increased the rate at which people patronize them, as viewers can watch films at their preferred time and place. The ease of watching a movie, whether a Nollywood epic, a Hollywood blockbuster, or a Bollywood Indian film, indicates the high interest that viewers of such films have in staying home rather than going to a cinema.

Moreover, Mandela (2022) expresses that film streaming has contributed to the high level of film appreciation and critique in the film industry. Through film critique, areas for improvement will be identified, while areas of appreciation will be strengthened. This has become the order of the day, as exposure to digital forums (such as online forums, social media platforms, and review websites) and the viewership of diverse genres of

film and literature have exposed audiences to discourses and analyses of literary works more than ever before.

Media convergence, Media technologies, and their Benefits

Media or technological convergence is the process that involves the usage of computer technologies and digitalization together through various media technologies. Media convergence is driven by computer technologies, which are largely predominant today ([www.https://study.com](https://study.com)). Media activities are now more converged into a single device than they have been in all these decades past. Smartphones now feature technological convergence, unlike the separate devices they used to be, such as GPS, wristwatches, televisions, radios, newspapers, magazines, and Mobile Banking, which are now integrated into one mobile phone. Smartphones are an example of a computer that allows different people to share content, regardless of distance, and make and receive calls, which is their primary role.

Media convergence has numerous strengths, including enhanced speed in sharing media content, making it easier to produce and review. Users can access diverse media types and content on different sites or channels, thereby breaking distance barriers. Contrarily, media convergence have adverse effects ranging from an increase in the piracy of media content as contents are now easier to access and distribute which also give room to fake contents like fake news, breach of privacy of the lives of individuals, encourages fraudsters, crooks and the widening of the gap or divide between the haves and the have-nots in the society.

But from statistics gathered in related works, it is out of place to insinuate that there may be a time when media usage will be supplanted by other means of communication now and in the future with the development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) which drives the economy, business and health of the members of the society and the use of digital media like Smart TVs, Tablets amongst others which has made life easier in many ways traditional means of communicating (Nwokoro, 2023).

Empirical Review

The study by Gabriela (2021) focused on the influence of social networks on film selection among youths in the Netherlands, investigating the role of social appraisal in the decision-making process of young viewers when selecting films on streaming platforms such as Netflix. The study employed a cross-sectional survey research design, collecting data purposively from 398 respondents in the selected country, with the questionnaire serving as the research instrument. The gathered data were described using statistical techniques, such as descriptive statistics. The study found that young viewers are more likely to watch films recommended by their social network, even if these films do not align with their preferences. As a result, the research suggests that social media networks for film streaming should check their content before disseminating it to the audience.

In addition, a relevant study was carried out by Bamidele, Mary, and Bolu (2021), entitled "Cultural Relevance and Film Evaluation on Streaming Platforms in Nigeria: A Comparative Study of Enugu and Osun States," which examined how cultural relevance influenced the assessment of films by viewers in Enugu and Osun States. The

researchers observed that films streamed in these two States were based on local content, hence the need to employ a comparative method on 288 respondents using the Taro Yamane formula. The findings revealed that viewers strongly preferred culturally relevant films that aligned with their background, status, language, and other aspects of their identity. From the foregoing, it can be stated that the studies reviewed indicate a gap in knowledge that this current study addresses, as it did not examine the residents of Oredo LGA or the use of smartphones as a medium for watching streamed movies; hence, the need for this study.

Methodology

The study employed a survey research design to gather data through questionnaires, which served as the research instrument. The study's population consisted of 553,300 residents of Oredo LGA (NPC, 2022). To use more accurate data, the researchers employed the Projection Population formula to project the population (Owuamalam, 2012).

The formula goes thus:

$$G_p = \frac{P_x P_i x T}{100}$$

$$100$$

$$= \frac{553,300 \times 2.28 \times 17}{100}$$

$$100$$

$$= 214,459$$

This projected population, calculated over 17 years (2006-2023), was added to the 2006 population of 553,300. Therefore, $553,300 + 214,459 = 767,759$. This population is too large to administer copies of the questionnaire, and as a result, the researchers opted for the sample size determination table cited in Krejcie and Morgan (1970) at www.kenpro.com/2012. According to Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size table, for every 100,000 population size or above, the sample size is 384. With this, the researchers designed a well-structured questionnaire based on the study's objectives and distributed it to the residents of Oredo LGA in Benin City. The collated number of copies retrieved from the respondents was 362, indicating that this area of study is interesting and relevant to the respondents.

The sampling techniques used in the study were convenience and stratified sampling techniques. This was to ensure that the people administering the questionnaire had a fair knowledge of the study's subject and were distributed to three major roads that make up the Oredo LGA of Edo State. The itemized streets were Akpakpava, Sakponba, and Forestry roads. To ensure practical computation of data gathered, the researchers used Weighted Mean Score (WMS) and simple frequency tables to present and analyze data. A WMS of 3.0 or less was a negative response, but any score above 3.0 was a positive rating.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Research question 1: What nature of films are streamed on Netflix among Oredo Local Government residents?

To answer this question, the researchers used responses to question number 6 to analyze the data.

6. What type of film content is streamed on Netflix?

- a) Movies b) Drama series c) Documentaries d) Reality shows e) comedy shows

The data gathered was analysed in the table below:

Table 1 *Nature of films streamed on Netflix*

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Movies	98	27.1
Drama series	74	20.4
Documentaries	49	13.5
Reality shows	67	18.5
Comedy shows	74	20.4
Total	362	100

Nwokoro & Akintibu, 2023

The table above indicates that respondents prefer to watch movies streamed at Netflix by a margin of 98 (27.1%) over others. Other preferences for film content among the respondents included comedy shows and Drama series, with 74 (20.4%) and 67 (18.5%) responses, respectively. Reality shows received 67 (18.5%) responses, and documentaries garnered 49 (13.5%) responses. The responses on media content streamed on Netflix show that most residents of Oredo LGA have easy access to the Netflix platform.

7. How often do you watch films streamed on the Netflix platform?

- a) Daily b) Weekly c) Monthly d) Rarely

Table 2- Periods taken to watch films on the Netflix platform

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Daily	181	50
Weekly	76	21
Monthly	61	16
Rarely	31	9
Total	362	100

Nwokoro & Akintibu, 2023

The data gathered above reveals that the respondents use Netflix regularly (daily) and weekly. This indicates that Netflix is an excellent channel for watching films due to its ease and affordability. Other respondents also indicated their interest in using the platform every month, while a few others stated they rarely use it for streamed films.

Research question 2: Explore the factors that influence viewers' preference for films streaming on Netflix through smartphones.

To answer this question, the researchers used responses from question number 10 to analyse the data gathered.

10. What are the factors that influence your choice of films streamed on Netflix through smartphones?

- a) Contains all media features in it, b) Accessibility, c) Affordability, d) Familiar language

Table 3

The factors that influence one's choice of films streamed on Netflix

Factors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Contains all media features in it	107	30
Accessibility	87	24
Affordability	90	25
Familiar language	78	21
Total	362	100

Nwokoro & Akintibu, 2023

Table 3 above indicates that most respondents (107) were influenced by the fact that smartphones contain all the media features of television, radio, and the internet, which significantly enhances ease due to their portable nature. The other three factors that influenced the respondents that were analysed include affordability (90), Accessibility (87), and Familiar language (78), in that order.

11. To what extent do any of these factors influence your choice of films streamed through Netflix on smartphones?

Table 4

The extent of influence on one's choice of film streamed on Netflix through smartphones

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL	WMS	Remarks
1.	High influence	31	43	3	2	261	3.3	Positive
2.	Medium influence	22	11	5	2	133	3.3	Positive
3.	Low influence	3	5	8	19	62	1.7	Negative
4.	Very low influence	2	3	5	5	38	2.5	Negative

Nwokoro & Akintibu, 2023

Table 4 above identifies the level of influence that the four factors mentioned earlier (Table 3) have on respondents. Most of them stated a WMS of 3.3 for each high and medium-level influence. This shows a good level of influence among the residents of Oredo LGA.

Research question 3- What are the benefits of media convergence through smartphones among the residents of Oredo Local Government Area?

To answer this question, question number 15 on the questionnaire was used.

15. What benefits of media convergence through the smartphone appeal to you the most?

- a) Generates customized content
- b) Enhances interactivity among the audience
- c) Enhances wider reach of media content
- d) Faster production and circulation of films and other content

Table 5- Benefits of media convergence through smartphones

Benefits of media convergence through smartphones	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Generates customized content	63	17
Enhances interactivity among the audience	91	25
Enhances the wider reach of media content	111	31
Faster production and circulation of films and other content	97	27
Total	362	100

Nwokoro & Akintibu, 2023

Table 5 demonstrates that the respondents with the highest number (111) were those who are of the view that the most beneficial use of media convergence through smartphones was that, it enhances wider reach of media contents (31%) while other respondents with varied opinions on the benefits of media convergence through the smartphone were; Faster production and circulation of films and other contents (97), enhances interactivity among the audience (91) and it generates customized content (63).

Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that respondents prefer to watch movies streamed on Netflix rather than other types of film content, such as comedy shows, documentaries, reality TV shows, and drama series. This aligns with the diffusion of innovation theory, which posits that people tend to adopt new technologies and enjoy their benefits (Rogers, 1962). In addition, the study found that for the residents of Oredo to be influenced

(which can be at diverse levels of influence), certain factors are critical. These include smartphones that offer all media features, are affordable, accessible, and use familiar language. Tomi (2002) agrees with the respondents' use in this study: Smartphones contain all media features found in other media gadgets, as they support audio-visual, textual, and other services that can be conveniently run on the portable device.

The research also showed that the most significant benefit of media convergence through smartphones was the broader reach of media content enjoyed by the receiving audience. The idea of Marshall McLuhan's Media Determinism theory, as presented in 1964, that the medium is the message, aligns with this finding by the researchers.

Conclusion

The study deduced that the residents of Oredo Local Government Area's viewer preferences tend to lean more towards using smartphones for Netflix films than relying on conventional means of mass media, as smartphones incorporate all the media characteristics of television, radio, and the internet.

Recommendations

Given these findings, this research recommends that Netflix ensure that registered viewers are 18 years and above to check the exposure of underage to obscene scenes in a film. In addition, Nollywood films should make their content more accessible to their audience through platforms like Netflix, as it is the most significant means of watching live cinema streaming in recent times.

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Media Convergence and the Democratisation of Communication Channels:

Empowering Voices in the Digital Age

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Abstract

This study explores and analyses the impact of media convergence on the increased use of convergent media platforms among digital natives and digital immigrants to express their opinions on political issues and how it influences their social interactions. Given the rapid growth and deployment of digital media platforms and their impact on providing broader channels for expressing views, it is crucial to understand whether these digital platforms enable users to freely share their perspectives and ideas regarding socio-political matters and how they impact the users. By examining various scenarios, this research sheds light on how media convergence has contributed to the democratisation of communication channels, allowing individuals and marginalised groups to access and disseminate information and opinions concerning issues that affect them. The study is grounded in democratic participant theory and media convergence theories of communication. For this study, we employed the survey research method. The findings reveal that X (formerly known as Twitter), as a convergent media platform, has democratised communication by allowing users to freely express their views on political issues and, in doing so, mobilise other users to undertake decisive actions. These insights will benefit policymakers, educators, and other critical stakeholders. The study recommends expanding digital infrastructures to cover more areas, providing access to residents in semi-urban centers and rural areas. This expansion should be complemented by hosting digital literacy programs and activities

Keywords: Media Convergence, Democratisation, Digital Age, Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants, Media Use, X

Introduction

The growth of digital technology has significantly impacted communication more than any other human activity, as all forms of electronic communication are converging through digital formats (Watson & Hill, 2012). This development includes the use of digital devices to exchange and share messages, ideas, and meanings among digital natives and digital immigrants (Saleh, 2013). It includes using smartphones, which have changed how people communicate daily. According to Alawa (2023), this development is not peculiar to Nigeria; it is a global phenomenon. The traditional communication channels developed in the twentieth century are now being replaced with new communication technologies and structures that define and typify the modern communication system in the twenty-first century (Alawa, 2023). New media technology, as McQuail (2010) refers to it, has largely transformed the communication experience in the twenty-first century. Due to the increasing use of digital platforms for communication, traditional forms of mass media infrastructure are being replaced with new media technology or adapted to accommodate new media technology channels.

Asemah, Nkwam-Uwaoma, and Tsegyu (2017) argue that digitization has contributed to the growth and use of new media technology as a driving force. The implication is that the rate at which new media is developing is mainly due to the rate at which mass media platforms are being utilised among digital natives and digital immigrants. Ruggerio (2000) opines that the emergence and use of computer-mediated communication have entirely transformed the landscape of mass communication, with numerous changes observed in the communication process, leading to convergence in

communication technologies. This has contributed to interactivity, demassification, hypertextuality, and asynchrony of communication among users.

According to Watson and Hill (2012), digitising communication brought interactivity. According to their postulations on interactivity, the use of new media platforms by individuals, groups, and society is either two-way or multiple-way. This experience is not associated with traditional media, which is largely a one-way communication process.

Demassification, as a phenomenon, is being witnessed with the use and adoption of social media for communication purposes. Cassells (2007), cited in Watson and Hill (2012), defines demassification as replacing 'mass audience' with the 'specialised audience.' In the context of new media channels, demassification refers to a more specialised mass media audience that uses these new media channels for their specific communication needs. These new media channels and platforms are also easily identifiable and located by users. McQuail (2010) defines demassification in converged media channels as a process where the use of new media platforms for communication activities shifts from a mass audience into a specialised audience whose specific communicative needs are met by these new platforms. Hypertextuality, as a phenomenon in communication, is facilitated by the use of social media. According to Watson and Hill (2012), hypertextuality refers to electronic texts on computers interfaced with links or pathways to other related texts. This network function illustrates the shift in the communication process with traditional media, where the audience's access to information is limited. With the use of new media channels, the audience can

more effectively connect or find a pathway to acquiring adequate information on a subject using the technique of hypertextuality.

Similarly, asynchrony as a phenomenon refers to how messages on social media channels may be staggered in time. With social media channels, both the sources and the receivers of electronic messages can utilise them at different times and still interact at their convenience (Ruggererio, 2000). It also means the ability of an individual to send, receive, save, or retrieve messages at their convenience. With social media, an individual can store, duplicate, or process graphics and text or transfer them to another user. This gives social media users much more control over the information than with traditional means of communication.

Social media channels have shifted focus from the traditional functions of mass media communication channels to other media functions. This includes using new communication channels to share personal ideas and experiences and build personal identity on issues. According to Hasan (2013), the innovation brought about by using and adopting social media platforms is explained as the driving force behind social media, facilitating the sharing of personal ideas and experiences, and building personal identity on various issues. So far, this study has examined various aspects of media convergence. It now examines the impact of media convergence in democratizing communication channels and empowering both digital natives and digital immigrants.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the use and adoption of converged media channels for communication activities, it is crucial to examine the extent to which digital natives and digital

immigrants utilize these channels to express their personal views on socio-political issues. In all likelihood, Nigerians use only some of the popular converged new media platforms to express their personal views on socio-political issues. Additionally, it is imperative to explore the class of people among the digital natives and digital immigrants who media convergence has empowered to express their personal views on socio-political issues freely. Other important aspects of this study will examine the democratic elements evident in media convergence-enabled communication and the factors that influence the adoption of these communication channels.

Research Questions

- 1) To what extent has media convergence promoted the adoption of communication platforms for expressing personal views on socio-political issues among Nigerians?
- 2) Which communication channels have been adopted by Nigerians to express personal views on socio-political issues?
- 3) What class of people has media convergence enabled to express their personal views on socio-political issues freely?
- 4) What are the democratic elements evident in media convergence-enabled communication?
- 5) What factors influence the adoption of media convergence-enabled communication?

Significance/Purpose of Research

This research is a contemporary test for Democratic Participant Media Theory as it establishes the role of media in encouraging citizens to participate more in public discourse, influence decision-making, and promote accountability among political officeholders.

Professional media communicators, political and public affairs analysts, policymakers, and other researchers would find the study's results useful regarding how media-converged communication channels are adopted and the consequent impacts on society.

This study will also contribute to the pool of literature on the role of social media channels in communicating issues that affects the broader society as it will highlight the impact of converged communication platforms in encouraging members of the society to participate in popular socio-political processes, thereby contributing to the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria.

It would also highlight the intentional use of converged media channels in communicating issues that contribute to the growth of democracy.

The study would be of immense value to researchers and other students interested in examining the role and impact of converged communication channels in addressing societal issues.

Literature Review

Brooks, Kennedy, Moen, and Ranly (2004) described media convergence as the process of cross-promoting and sharing material from many media, some of which are

interactive. The “democratisation” of media use was made possible by media convergence, which expands opportunities for individuals and groups to tell their own stories and access stories others tell (Jenkins and Deuze, 2008). They also argue that media convergence enables users to present and listen to arguments made elsewhere, share information, and gain a deeper understanding of the world from various perspectives. Latzer (2013) explained that Convergence is an ambiguous term used by various disciplines to describe and analyse processes of change toward uniformity or union. Its application in communications encompasses valuable approaches and insights to describe, characterise, and understand the digital creative economy.

The essence of media convergence lies in its groundbreaking capacity to reach a mass audience. Latzer (2013) further defines convergence as “the blurring of boundaries between media, more precisely, the blurring of the traditional demarcation between telecommunications (point-to-point) and the mass media.” This means the media converges when multiple media forms unify or interconnect in a single medium (the Internet). According to Alawa (2023), convergence occurs when products traditionally associated with a specific medium appear across multiple media platforms. Alawa emphasises this argument by comparing it to similar situations, such as when a person can download an Adele music album from their laptop to their iPod, iPhone, iPad, or Xbox, or when they can get a Red Sox baseball game broadcast in Boston to appear on both a laptop and an Android phone. Alawa (2023) argues that media convergence is the fusion of two or more distinct entities or elements, thereby reducing entry barriers within the Internet, telecommunications, media, and consumer electronics industries.

A unique feature of convergence is the blending, integration, and fusion of various media technologies and content that were formerly distinct and separate. Convergence occurs, for instance, when an Android phone enables users to create text, video, and voice content for broadcast or to browse online newspapers and magazines (Alawa, 2023). Emwinromwankhoe (2018) defines media convergence as the combination of conventional media, such as television and radio, with new media technologies, including the Internet, satellite, and cellular phones.

Theoretical Framework

Since media convergence is crucial in promoting citizens' participation in public discourse on issues that affect them (Alawa, 2023), this study considers the Democratic Participant Theory and the media convergence theory, which have often been adopted to explain how the use of communication channels serves as "a public sphere." The democratic participant theory of communication provides theoretical explanations on the impact of the digitization of communication channels in society, where these channels serve as a space where citizens come together to discuss and debate issues that affect them. According to Watson and Hill (2012), the theory explains how media convergence, through argument and advocacy, made democracy possible by allowing for a plurality of opinions and diversity of media content. The theory propounded by Denis McQuail in 1987 provides a theoretical construct for understanding media convergence (Watson and Hill, 2012).

In *Media Performance: Mass Communication and the Public Interest*, McQuail argued that the media should facilitate citizen participation in the democratic process.

He outlined several principles that the media should follow in this regard. These include: the media should be accessible to all citizens, the media should provide a platform for diverse viewpoints, the media should hold the government accountable, and the media should educate the public about important issues. Furthermore, the media convergence theory, first propounded by Henry Jenkins in 1992, also provides theoretical constructs for exploring the impacts of media convergence on communication (Alawa, 2023). They defined media convergence as the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory patterns of media audiences. The theory explains how media convergence has been driven by several factors, including the digitization of media content and the increasing use of the Internet, smartphones, and tablets. Moreover, Jenkins argued that media convergence has a significant impact on the way digital natives and digital migrants consume and produce media (Alawa, 2023). For example, he noted that people are increasingly watching TV shows on their computers and smartphones, creating and sharing their content on social media platforms.

Yarosan and Asemah (2008) averred that part of the criticism of the democratic participant theory and the media convergence theory is the inability of the theories to explain how it is unrealistic to expect the mass media channels to be completely neutral or objective on issues as the media is not always able to provide a platform for all viewpoints, especially those that are unpopular or controversial. This study assumes that media convergence, through the deployment of mass media and digital communication platforms, provides access to communication channels and serves as a

conduit for public discourse by offering information, facilitating conversations, and empowering diverse voices.

Review of Empirical Studies

This study explores the impact of media convergence and the digitization of communication channels in empowering users of digital media platforms to express their views on socio-political issues. A 2017 study by Nair and Sharma, titled "Reverse Agenda-setting: Politics in the Time of Facebook," indicated that social media platforms as communication channels broaden the political-public spheres. The study revealed that access to Facebook as a social media platform enabled users to express their views on political issues through likes, shares, and comments. The current study investigates whether Facebook users utilize social media platforms to set agendas for political issues, unlike the study by Nair and Sharma, which employed an exploratory research methodology.

The findings in Nair and Sharma's study revealed that the convergence of text, pictures, and videos makes Facebook and other social media platforms practical tools for politicians to deploy for political communication. It also revealed that converged media platforms, such as Facebook, have an added advantage in deploying traditional media channels for political communication. Nasir and Sharma's study relates to this research as both examine how converged media platforms empower users to express their views on issues. While Nasir and Sharma's study adopted the explorative research method, this study adopted the survey research methodology.

Another study by Kediehor and Uchenunu (2020) titled "Digital Media and the Participation of Udu Community in Politics" highlighted the impact of digital media platforms in encouraging users' participation in politics. The study revealed that digital media platforms play critical roles in increasing participation in the political process. Kediehor and Uchenunu's study aimed at identifying the extent to which digital media platforms enhance users' participation in political activities. It employed the survey research method to measure the impact of digital media platforms on their users' participation in the political process.

Additionally, the study's findings revealed that digital media platforms offered users opportunities to engage actively in political activities. According to the study by Kediehor and Uchenunu, social media platforms are becoming popular in influencing active political participation because they allow users to express their views easily. A majority of the respondents in the study indicated that they are encouraged to take an active part in political activities because social media platforms enable them to express their views on political issues. Kediehor and Uchenunu's study is related to this research study as they both examined the impact of social media platforms in empowering users to have their say on political issues.

Odunlami (2016), in their study titled "ICTs, Digital Divide and the Contemporary Socialization Process: Insights from Nigeria," argued that media convergence has altered the contemporary socialisation process. The study indicated that converged-mediated communication has altered the human socialisation process. The study examined how the adoption of converged media channels threatens the human

socialisation process. Odunlami's study employed a qualitative research methodology, utilizing a literature review approach.

The literature reviewed by this study suggests that, in empowering its users to express their views on societal issues, converged media inadvertently creates an imbalance of power compared to those without access to the converged media channels of communication. The reviews show that the converged media channels have bequeathed more power to their users as agents of socialisation. Odunlami's study is related to this research as both focus on assessing the impact of converged media channels in empowering users.

Methodology

The research design employed in this study was a triangulation method, which enabled the use of mixed research designs to gain a comprehensive understanding of and investigate the nature of the research problem being studied. The survey and content analysis research methodologies were deployed for this study.

The survey research component of the triangulation method allowed the researcher to organise focus group discussions for the respondents. The other aspect of the triangulation research method adopted for this study was content analysis. This technique involved investigating the manifest contents of selected converged media platforms.

The triangulation method is particularly well-suited for this study, as it involves using multiple approaches to gather and analyse data. It enhanced validity and reliability

by combining various data sources, including surveys, interviews, content analysis, and digital analytics. This allowed for the cross-verification of data, thereby enhancing the credibility and reliability of the study's findings.

It allowed the researcher to deploy both quantitative methods (such as surveys and digital analytics) to capture large-scale patterns and trends, and qualitative methods (like interviews) to gain in-depth insights into individual experiences and narratives. The method also provided a robust framework for the study by enhancing validity, offering comprehensive perspectives, and allowing for a nuanced understanding of complex dynamics. This methodological approach ensured that the research is thorough, credible, and adaptable to the evolving digital landscape.

The population for the focus group discussion aspect of the triangulation method includes students from three tertiary institutions in Benin City (University of Benin, Benson Idahosa University, and WellSpring University) who have at least five active social media accounts. The population for the content analysis aspect of the triangulation method was drawn from the X and Facebook accounts of the students who participated in the focus group discussion.

A sample size was selected for this study, comprising two social media platforms (X and Facebook) out of the 18 used by Nigerians. However, since the study period was 35 days, a total population of 70 was used for each of the selected social media platforms within the study period to determine the sample size, using the Taro Yamane formula for determining sample size in a known population. The formula was expressed as follows:

$$n = N$$

$$1+N(e)^2$$

Therefore, a sample size of 60 was obtained for the study.

The data collection procedure used in this study was the systematic sampling technique. This technique was chosen to determine the days to be studied. It involves selecting social media platforms according to a predetermined schedule rather than a random sequence.

Instead of selecting and studying all the contents in a week of a month, three specific days were chosen for study: Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays for most weeks, following a predetermined schedule. The exception was the last week of the month, where Monday and Wednesday were selected.

The researcher focused on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays to give all days of the week a chance of being selected. This also aimed to reduce sampling error by focusing on fewer cases with higher accuracy. Thus, Monday was skipped, except for the last week of the month when Tuesday was selected. Wednesday was skipped, except for the last week of the month, when Thursday was chosen. Friday was skipped, and Saturday was selected to accommodate the weekend.

Table 1

Days selected for the sampling

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
August,		<u>1</u>	2	<u>3</u>	4	<u>5</u>	6
2023	7	<u>8</u>	9	<u>10</u>	11	<u>12</u>	13
	14	<u>15</u>	16	<u>17</u>	18	<u>19</u>	20
	21	<u>22</u>	23	<u>24</u>	25	<u>26</u>	27
	<u>28</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>30</u>				

The social media accounts that were content analysed belonged to students who participated in the focus group discussion with at least five (5) active social media accounts.

The study utilised a well-prepared and structured moderator's guide. The discussion guide served as a roadmap for the FGD and assisted the moderator in guiding the discussion effectively while ensuring that all relevant topics were covered.

Two research assistants served as moderators for the discussion session. The moderator's guide included an introduction and welcoming address by the researcher, during which the purpose of the discussion was briefly introduced, participants were welcomed, and the researcher explained the format and objectives of the FGD.

Demographic and background information about the participants (e.g., age, gender, occupation) was collected to understand their perspectives. The research assistants worked closely with the researcher.

The second aspect of the triangulation method involved using a coding sheet as the data collection instrument. The unit of analysis for the study comprised the format of content (opinion pieces/personal stories, news articles, images/videos); sources of the contents (individuals, organisations); tone of contents (informative, opinionated, activist); and aim of the contents (to educate, raise awareness, mobilise).

In analysing the data, the researcher transcribed the audio recordings of the focus group discussion. The data obtained from the transcription were labelled. Numerical tables and charts were used for content analysis, and the data were interpreted as sentences, extended paraphrases, and paragraphs of description.

The researcher obtained ethical approval from the authorities of the University of Benin, Benson Idahosa University, and WellSpring University. The participants who took part in the Focus Group Discussion were informed of the discussion's purpose, and they all provided their consent before participating in the session.

Presentation of Results

Table 2

Slants of content on converged media channels

Posts/Format	Facebook	X	Total
	%	%	%
Opinion pieces/personal stories	99 (77)	112 (65)	211 (70)
News articles,	12 (9)	11(7)	23 (8)
Images/videos	18 (14)	49 (28)	67 (22)
Total	129 (100)	172 (100)	301 (100)

Table 3

Sources of content shared

Sources	Facebook	X	Total
	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)
Organisations	34 (28)	25 (20)	59 (24)
Individuals	86 (72)	97 (80)	183 (76)
Total	120 (100)	122 (100)	242 (100)

Table 4

Tone of content

Placement	Facebook	X	Total
	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)
Informative	14 (11)	7 (4)	21 (7)
Opinionated	37 (29)	72 (45)	109 (38)
Activist	77 (60)	82 (51)	159 (55)

Total	128 (100)	161 (100)	289 (100)
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Table 4

Aim of the contents

Sources of Reports	Facebook	X	Total
	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)
Educate	20 (22)	44 (25)	64 (24)
Raise awareness about important issues	15 (16)	39 (22)	54 (20)
Mobilise to take action	58 (62)	92 (53)	150 (56)
Total	93 (100)	175 (100)	268 (100)

Tables 2 and 3 showed that most content on social media platforms consists of opinion pieces and personal stories expressed by individuals. The focus group participants stated that they use social media accounts to express themselves freely on socio-political issues. These findings align with those of Nair and Sharma (2017), who found that social media platforms, as converged media channels, provide users with opportunities to freely express themselves. The participants in the focus group discussion stated that for users to express their personal views on socio-political issues freely, they need to be educated to present their views logically and convincingly. Brooks et al (2004) state that literacy on the part of the users enhances their effectiveness in deploying converged media platforms to their advantage.

The data in Table 4 shows that activism is the democratic element evident in media convergence-enabled communication, with 159 (55%) out of 289 pieces of content being activist in tone. During the focus group session, the participants stated that most of their content, through which they express themselves freely, is targeted at bringing about social change, which is a form of activism. According to Odunlami (2016), media convergence can influence social change in society by reinforcing the impact of these communication channels as an agent of social change.

Table 5 shows that out of 268 contents, 150 (56%) contents, of which 92 (61%) of the contents revealed that the need to mobilise other users of the social media platforms to take action on socio-political issues is the main factor influencing the adoption of X as a social media convergence-enabled communication platform. The participants during the focus group session agreed with the data in Table 5. This confirms the findings of Odunlami (2016). According to him, the adoption of converged communication channels has improved the capacity of their users to influence social change in society.

Discussion

In this study, the majority of respondents and the data from the content analysis revealed that digital natives and migrants use content on social media platforms, such as opinion pieces and personal stories, to freely express themselves on socio-political issues. This finding aligns with a similar study by Wogu and Egwu (2020), which revealed that users of social media platforms are utilizing these convergent media platforms to express their political opinions.

Out of 301 contents on social media platforms that were coded, 211 (70%) were opinion pieces and personal stories related to socio-political issues. Of these 211 contents, 112 (53%) were on X social media platforms. The respondents in the focus group discussion also mentioned using X mainly to express their views on socio-political issues. This aligns with Ogbu's (2020) arguments that X, formerly known as Twitter, has the primary purpose of connecting users and allowing them to share their thoughts on issues, including socio-political issues.

The focus group discussion findings revealed that education remains a key factor in enabling users to freely express their personal views on socio-political issues using media convergence-enabled communication platforms. Respondents agreed that education is crucial to deploying these platforms to express oneself freely. This finding aligns with a similar study by Abdullahi and Emmanuel (2020), which showed that respondents from rural communities attribute a strong factor to the connection between education and the use of the internet as a convergent communication channel. Users, especially digital immigrants, need to be educated to a certain level to present their views logically and convincingly so that they can freely express their personal views on socio-political issues using any of the convergent media platforms.

The democratic element evident in media convergence-enabled communication is activism, as 159 (55%) out of 289 contents had an activist tone. During the focus group session, participants also identified activism as a democratic element in convergence-enabled communication. They stated that most of the content through which they express themselves freely is targeted at bringing about social change, which is a form of activism. This is in line with the argument by Ogbu (2020), where he opined

that political communication (purposeful communication relating to politics) in a digital era refers to an interactive process through which participants are actively involved in the creation of content and the exchange of information, messages, ideas, and meanings aimed at influencing a target audience.

Out of 268 contents coded, 150 (56%) of the contents, of which 92 (61%), revealed that the need to mobilise other users of the social media platforms to take action on socio-political issues is the main factor influencing the adoption of X as a social media convergence-enabled communication platform. The respondents in the focus group session agreed with these findings. This aligns with findings from a similar study by Ude-Akpeh and Nnaemeka (2020), which concluded that social media platforms significantly enhance the political mobilisation of youths.

Conclusion

The study found that social media content, including opinion pieces and personal stories, is used by digital natives and immigrants to express themselves freely on socio-political issues. This is a clear assertion that converged media platforms offer users the opportunity to express themselves freely on issues that affect their day-to-day lives. Most content on converged media platforms consists mainly of opinion pieces and personal stories, as users of these platforms take advantage of the opportunity to bring about desirable change related to socio-political issues and activities. X, which was formerly known as Twitter, is mainly deployed for this purpose.

The adoption of converged media channels, such as X, mainly for expressing personal views on socio-political issues, is driven by the high rate of digital literacy. The features provided by X, such as Twitter Space, allow users to combine the use of audio, video, and text to express their views on social issues that affect them.

The tone of most content on convergent media platforms, where digital natives and immigrants freely express their personal views relating to socio-political issues, is a form of activism. This demonstrates that content on convergent media platforms, such as X, is designed to promote social change.

Recommendations

Future studies should explore programmes and activities by political parties and social rights groups to drive youths' participation in political activities using convergent media platforms. Future researchers should investigate the impact of media convergence on the activities of political actors and groups. This will provide more knowledge on the role of media convergence among users of digital platforms.

Sensitisation and advocacy should be organised for youths to use converged media platforms to promote society's growth and development. Programmes and activities should be designed to improve digital literacy among youths who are the main users of converged media platforms. This will enable more young people to utilize these platforms to enhance their social lives and promote positive social change.

Digital infrastructure should be expanded to cover more areas and provide access to residents in semi-urban centres and rural areas. This should be carried out in

conjunction with digital literacy programs and activities. Government, corporate partners, and multinationals should invest in building digital infrastructure that will boost the penetration of communication technology. This will bridge the digital divides between urban centres and rural or semi-urban areas. It will promote inclusion and help in empowering more young persons – living far away from urban centres - with tools to express their opinions on social issues that affect them, like their peers living in urban towns and cities.

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