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# Media Convergence and the Change in Media Content Production and Distribution in Nigeria

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**Abstract:** *The production, distribution, access, and reuse of information, knowledge, and entertainment by users have change as a result of media convergence. This has led to increased involvement, autonomy, and diversity. The growth of user-generated content and people's transition from audience to participants is a significant change brought on by media convergence. Content that was formerly exclusive to particular communication media, such as print and broadcast, particularly newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and cinema, is now accessible to billions of people. This paradigm shift, brought about by technological advancement, has affected how individuals in society think, feel, act, and even how the society operates as a whole. This study thus identifies the key points of transition observed in the contemporary media. Anchored on technological determinism theory, the study argues that breaking news has now become instantaneous as a result of convergence. Although newspapers still go to sleep, their social media handles never do. Similarly, radio and television stations no longer wait for the news schedule to break the news. The challenge posed by media convergence has prompted conventional media to switch to a multimedia approach to content production and distribution. The major conventional media organizations now have social media handles where they break news as well as source news. The study, however, recommends that the same professionalism displayed on conventional media platforms should be extended to their social media posts in the age of media convergence.*

**Keywords:** *Media Convergence, Content Production, Content Distribution, Technological Determinism*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The term convergence is used generally to describe the process of integration of information and communication technology devices. More precisely, convergence is identified as a flow or merging of multiple media platforms which has facilitated access to information via



multiple technology devices (Jenkins, 2008). This has undoubtedly allowed individuals to take advantage of the technology at their disposal to produce mass media and make their voices known through vocal, nonverbal, visual, and other means.

New media patterns have evolved, and academics and researchers are disputing whether convergence is good and inevitable. For instance, researchers and academics admit that convergence has quickly evolved into a corporate-driven process from the top down as well as a consumer-driven one from the bottom up. It has been noted that media convergence, particularly as it relates to technological determinism, is undoubtedly a dynamic process that will ultimately determine whether or not the media sector continues to advance. As evidenced by its polysemy and multifaceted connotations, the discussion about the change of the media landscape is where media convergence is most prominent (John & Shaw, 2017). Media convergence ushers in a new era of media without limits as well as cultural output on a genuinely global scale during this time of accelerated globalization processes.

However, for some people, the digital divide has left African nations with little to be applauded in the wake of convergence. Developed country cultural patterns swiftly take over on a worldwide scale, while others are repressed. Sub-Saharan Africa is home to the majority of nations that have lagged behind in the field of media convergence.

### **The Concept of Media Convergence**

According to Borgman (2007), the integration and interoperability of computer networks and digital information formats that are naturally adopted and supplied by intelligent platforms, applications, and devices is known as media convergence. “Media convergence is a trend in the communication revolution encapsulated in the utilization of digital technologies in the production and dissemination of media content. It involves the admixture of interconnection of information and communication technologies with media content” (Sule & Ridwanullah, 2021, p. 3). In the same vein, Kennedy, Moen, and Ranly (2004) cited in (Zhang, 2008) submit that a journalist's definition of media convergence is the dissemination and cross-promotion of material across various media, some digital, through newsroom collaboration and partnerships. In summary, media convergence is an amalgam of 3C's: Computer, Communication and Content. The alliance between these hitherto independent entities makes the convergence a reality.

Based on the assertion by Kennedy et al. (2004), it could be stated that convergence of the media is a phenomenon that has taken over the whole media sector in the modern day. We might infer that media convergence is unavoidable since it sets the stage for the development of quality journalism, economic synergy, and competitive advantage.

Additionally, utilizing finite resources effectively, converging media outlets have the potential to reach a larger audience with entertainment and news. The same digital material may now be saved, accessed, filtered, shared, and aggregated across a variety of devices and apps thanks to convergence. It can also be reproduced in other ways, such as printing, as a collection of connected web pages, or as spoken speech on a screen. And you can do all of this with a mouse click.



Buttressing the above arguments, Blackman (1998) notes that this is possible because digital technology permits the transmission of all content over all types of networks, as well as the ability to make the difference between various media types disappear. Montgomery (2009) posits that media convergence simply involves bringing forth many shifts such as participatory culture, user-generated content, connected community of interest, destruction of media industry, hegemony, and fluidity across platforms.

The foregoing definition implies that convergence is a process that, for eons, has the potential to fundamentally alter not just the media communication system but also a number of related industries, most notably the scale of global cultural creation.

Koloozy (2006) believes that industries and firms that produce and distribute news must be consolidated in order for the news sectors to merge. Doyle and Koloozy's claim is consistent with Menon's (2006) argument that convergence is often seen as a three-dimensional phenomenon including elements in the technical, organizational, market, and regulatory spheres.

According to Doyle (2002), media convergence and globalization (defined as the expansion of economies of scale internationally) have provided more opportunities and incentives to repackage media information into as many diverse formats as are technically and financially viable. Doyle (2002) specifically mentions that media material may be "repurposed" to advertise a product to as many paying customers in as many different geographic areas and through as many different distribution channels as feasible.

Jenkins and Deus (2008, p. 6) further found that "democratisation of media use facilitated the broadcasting of opportunities for individuals and grassroots communities to tell stories and access stories, others are telling to present an argument made elsewhere, to share information and learn more about the world from a multitude of other perspectives". The media corporation, on the other hand, aims to broaden its audience by combining, appropriating, convergent, and synergizing its brand and intellectual property across all of these channels.

There is an ample interrelated line of thinking to support the observations made by Jenkins and Deus and to buttress the new trend of media convergence. First, many conventional media organizations in Nigeria aside being a radio and television station, newspaper and magazine publishing companies, also operate multiple social media platforms to augment and at the same time to address the issue of breaking news first. Such platforms include Twitter, Facebook, YouTube channels, among others. In addition, a number of local radio stations are equally enjoying online visibility with more than two-thirds operating online for easy interaction with their teeming audience.

Thus, the implication of convergence to these respective media houses is not restricted to facilitating the breaking of news as it is happening but also takes care of enriching their contents and matching them with text or even convergent media platforms such as slide photo shows and videos.



### **The Concept of Technological Determinism**

There is a general belief on the influence of technological innovation, which is a view of the world that places more emphasis on the development of information and communication systems than how they interact and are governed by the society that created them. Such a view is known as technical determinism and it is said to impose on the evolution of cultural values and norms in society.

A society's cultural values, social structure, and history are said to be determined by its technology, according to the notion of technological determinism. The thesis contends that technology advancement drives social growth, which is a natural process. Two key ideas underlie technological determinism: the idea that technology develops along a predictable, traceable path independent of cultural or political influences, and the idea that technology in turn organizes society in a way that allows technology to evolve independently (Negroponte, 1996). The assertion that "the medium is the message" by communications theorist and media researcher Marshall McLuhan is a well-known illustration of technological determinism. Technical determinism has various aspects, but in many respects this rejection of "content" in favour of the technological medium as a key factor in media studies is the traditional one.

The social construction of technology hypothesis, which contends that society itself affects the effects of technology, is in opposition to the doctrine of technical determinism. Although technological determinism has lost most of its appeal in academics, it is nevertheless a widely held belief in popular culture.

However, Hess (2015) notes that such influence or changes, particularly those occasioned by media convergence, have brought about less genuine human interaction and the decline of face-to-face conversation. This is to say that technology brought changes in many ways by bringing people closer and at the same time unintentionally isolating them.

It is important to recognize that technology in and of itself does not determine a society's character or has a dominant influence on how human activities are formed and scaled up. Nor does it necessarily have total control over how values and norms are established. Instead, technology may provide a variety of results that are shaped by social constructs. Technology progress, according to those who believe in technological determinism, has an impact on and shapes society.

Toffler (1980) talks about the "shock of the future" and contends that society's transformation has a significant influence on people's psyches. In addition, according to proponents of technological determinism, media, communications technology, and technology are in charge of any societal change. However, according to radicals, the development of computers, networks, and the Internet has fundamentally altered many facets of not just human communication but also the way of life in our whole society. The character and behavior of our society and each individual has altered as a result of the increasing usage of new media, including how we buy, hire people, pay taxes, utilize libraries, earn degrees, and enlighten ourselves (Castells, 1996).



The second branch of thought just sees technology as a vital aspect that may or may not result in a change, whereas the radical version views technology as a must for altering society. The decision to employ technology in a particular way is ultimately made by man, who also creates the technology. This supports Andrew's (2009) argument that the idea that technology is a society's driving force arises from the fragility of its social structure or culture (Hauer, 2017).

The notion is that technology is a force or social structure whose impact cannot be ignored or lessened. Most debates around this have centered on the type and extent of social creation of technology.

### **Media Convergence: Implication on Media Content Creation and Distribution**

No doubt, with the convergence of various aspects of the media, the industry has been revolutionized. This revolution is not only limited to the media sector but also includes all other subfields interacting with the mass media sector. For instance, the concept of media relations — a subset of public relations — has drastically changed courtesy of media convergence. Sule and Ridwanullah (2021) observe that public relations professionals are now more creative than ever because of media convergence. The style of public relations copywriting is changing as a result of the multimodal nature of material brought about by convergence. Media material is increasingly intended for a wide range of media channels. Press releases are written with supplementary material including links to further information, audio, video, and photographs. Social media has created platforms where content can be produced and distributed without going through the conventional media. Content aimed at a particular medium is packaged into indifferent formats for their consumption in convergent systems. Public relations officials are now publishers. There is now a direct link between the audience and the organization. In essence, the contents are now created for the audience directly without much recourse to journalist pandering. However, according to communications experts, the content, not the medium, is what really matters. When a small number of media businesses have the majority of the market, media convergence may enable a potential media monopoly. Social networking websites only make it much easier for the public to engage with the media.

The arrival of new media and increase ownership of mobile phones has aided media access. People now tend to listen/read news online. A Gallup study 2012 indicates that 87.0% of Nigerians own mobile phones surpassed ownership rates for both radio (83.4%) and television (74.6%) at the household level. By January 2021, 187.9 million mobile connections were reported in Nigeria while radio listenership is now at 83% in the same year. It is also instructive to note that most of the radio listeners do so on their mobile phones, some of which are online radios. This new trend necessitated the surge in media convergence and migration of audiences towards online platforms. The impact on content creators is to try and satisfy the ever change audience interest and information needs. This sometimes results in the high rate of proliferation of publication of unverified information.

The gatekeeping power of the media has also been eroded by media convergence and the rise of citizen journalism. Modern technical advancements have made it possible for the general





population to produce and distribute independent media productions. The rise of "citizen journalism" has been made possible by technology advancements and the emergence of an interactive media environment in which people are not just passive news consumers and/or sources, but also news producers and distributors.

The convergence of media has brought about high speed and nonstop flow of content. However, it also brought about the challenges of reliability and verifiability. Many countries of the world are currently battling the scourge of fake news, misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech (Msughter, Usman & Ridwanullah, 2022). One of the biggest enablers of hate news is the digital media platforms (Ridwanullah, 2021).

In terms of content distribution, media convergence has forced media practitioners to adjust to multiplatform distribution, which has changed and impacted how the audience consumes media material (Chyi & Chadha, 2012; Schlesinger & Doyle, 2015). Adoption of multiplatform distribution has also forced media professionals to adjust to multimedia content production. Contents are no longer produced for one single genre of media but multimedia platforms. A television station news now comes in both text and video, while newspapers now release videos on their internet pages and social media handles to complement the text of news stories.

Similarly, the operational hours of the conventional media platforms have changed from a 1-day print cycle to having journalists write more frequently to keep the site updated. Most times 'Breaking News' with just a fraction of the information is all that is left until further clarification is received. This is a fundamental shift in production culture and the culture of news production (Schlesinger & Doyle, 2015).

In terms of regulation, the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) regulates the broadcast sector while the Nigerian Press Council (NPC) regulates the print and newspaper industry. As a result of these regulatory agencies, a modicum of sanity is witnessed in the conventional media sector. However, as a result of media convergence, reputable media organizations now print and post content that they cannot naturally publish or broadcast on their platforms. On several occasions, news platforms have been called out for publishing fake news on their handles. The maximum they did is to take down the story and, in some cases, apologize. In most cases, this fake news doesn't get published on the pages of their newspaper or daily news broadcast because of the consequences and punishment the regulatory agencies might hand out to them.

### **Technological Determinism of Media Convergence**

Synthesizing the above argument, it would be understood that the cultural logic of media convergence and its implication on technological determinism could be seen as thus:

Whether or not these recent advances are advantageous to society and the industry itself should be the first question that is addressed in this context. To put it another way, this refers to the question whether or not media convergence offers media consumers and producers more possibilities than obstacles. Critically analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of media



convergence and media ownership is one of the topics of significant interest (Erauyi, 2016). Jenkins (2006) claims that there are both good and bad effects to this tendency. It might, however, also lead to a decrease in the variety of available content and a propensity for the voices of people without significant financial means to be ignored.

In this instance, Grant (2009) observes that it is argued that market-driven media owned and controlled by large media corporations can actually enhance the value of the service, the flexibility of the topics, and the competence of the contributors in addition to enabling technological development, changing the elitism of media professionals, and generating new general awareness.

Analog media is another area that deserves our attention. This is simply because, at first, each form was distinct and independent from the others due to the requirement for using various materials, qualities, and apparatus. However, the situation quickly altered and new opportunities for media production and convergence emerged with the advent or invention of digital code, for instance, new kinds of contact between producers and consumers (Erauyi, 2016).

It is interesting to note that social networking apps for smartphones enable users to easily remain in touch with their friends and coworkers at all times. Social networking is a way for even those who live thousands of miles apart to always keep in touch with one another. The connection between traditional and new media is one way to think about media convergence. Using the television business as an example and its growth through the years, this idea may be articulated more precisely. At the center of the discussion of media convergence is the notion of moving from analog to digital media.

There is no denying the benefits of media convergence, but there is also a dark side to this technical development that has had a significant influence on our culture and nearly every other nation that has adopted digitalization. Because of their continuous access to information, media, and the internet, modern Nigerians and people all around the world have developed an addicted behavior (John & Shaw, 2017).

The proliferation of ICTs sparked the development of technological convergence. It is an idea that practically every member of society must adopt, but we should try to avoid being overly dependent on it given how dependent we currently are on keypads on devices like smart phones, iPads, and other electronic devices (Erauyi, 2016).

By shattering long-standing barriers between what constitutes journalism and what does not (citizen journalism), between deadlines and other constraints, between reporters and editors, and between content platforms, these advancements have revolutionized the field. According to American journalism professor Jane Singer, a once-closed newspaper story is now an open text with a continuous presence in journalism (Erauyi, 2016).

Regarding privacy rules, both businesses and individuals are unsure as a result of the convergence of digital media. There have been instances where privacy rules were broken,



although there was uncertainty (John & Shaw, 2017).

## **2. CONCLUSION**

Not only does the topic of media convergence create the economic and technological reality, but it also creates an ideological model of the global rule of capital, which controls the conomy of high technology and culture. The core of theories about media convergence is the idea of the ideal communication system, new media as the information superhighway, which permits the integration of audio, video, and text data with the possibility of storing them in enormous libraries and enables interactive mechanisms for controlling multimedia information flow from a single center.

The expansion of the service sector, globalization of markets, and a general liberalization of social interactions. Usability, which includes ease of use in the home and workplace, the capacity to communicate, access to information resources, speed, and variety of data, is the desired characteristic of all information services. It is vital to acknowledge the creation of a completely new cultural output in this instance. Conglomeration has presently expanded to the cultural industry.

Powerful digital capabilities give society more affordable and practical methods to receive news and information. This in turn puts pressure on established media companies to provide their clients additional options. In the modern world, media convergence is growing more sophisticated.

The difficulties, most if not all, newspapers, television networks, and magazine publishers confront in managing production process adaptation and in obtaining degrees of integration between content creation and digital experts favorable to fostering innovation stand out among them. According to Schlesinger and Doyle (2015), the adoption of two-way connectivity on digital delivery platforms is crucial for future growth. However, there are still many challenges to overcome, such as determining how to effectively use the "tidal wave" of return path data that may soon be available to guide management decision-making.

The belief that adopting a multiplatform strategy will have positive economic effects is what is driving the movement. The belief that more comprehensive and efficient exploitation of content assets is currently possible or will be in the near future is a primary motivator for investment in multiplatform adaptation for many media suppliers.

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