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THE DIGITAL AGE AND ITS IMPACT ON THE FORMATION OF A NEW INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION ORDER

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Abstract: This study examined the decrypt in prospects of a new international information order in the digital age. The theoretical framework of the study was drawn from the technological determinism theory and development communication theory. The study made use of survey design and the instrument used for data collection was interview guide. The data collected were analysed using Explanation Building Techniques (EBT), which were presented and analysed entirely in themes. Findings from the study revealed that, digital age has encouraged private investments in the communication industry of Nigeria. People have private investors such as Raypower FM, Africa Independent Television, Minaj systems, Cool FM, Rhythm, Channel Television etc. The way digital age has encourage private investments were through the new technology rapid growth, deregulation and cost, infrastructural deficit and the wave of digitalization amongst others. The study recommended among others that, there should be commitment on the part of Nigeria government towards investing in media infrastructures. There should be an inside look approach or a minimal cut-off from dependence on international communication. Finally, the Nigeria government should ensure adequate universal service by revisiting the regulatory frameworks; improve infrastructure and manpower in communication development.

Keywords: Decrypting, Prospects, New International Information Order, Digital Age

Introduction

Communication is fundamentally a process of sharing meaning. It, thus, involves meaning exchange any act could be communication in so far as some messages are conscientiously encoded and passed on or unwittingly conveyed. Communication makes human co-existence both possible and worthwhile it gives expression to ideas thoughts, feelings and desires. There is an emerging thrive to make the flow of communication truly equal and neutrally beneficial. This is based on the realization that information is an important factor for national sovereignty and as well as a power tool for the promotion of international peace and security. It has been stressed

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by McBride *et al* that a new world information and communication order is as important as a new world economic order.

In view of this, Nwosu (1999) pointed out that, in this era of political, economic and other uncertainties the people of the world need understanding which comes through effectual fair and equitable communication in order to keep living and interacting together as member of the international comity of nation. This view revolved around the potency of information in the area of mutual understanding and peace. The general opinion in the Third World circles is that the new world information and communication order will protect national cultures, serve national sovereignty and ensure equal access to communication by all nations.

However, digital age is continuously changing every facet of the world of communication and the society at large at a breath-taking speed. We are bombarded at the tick of the clock with innovative communication technologies which introduced novel ways of connecting and communicating with one another, even globally. Today the technological ability to produce and store any form of data in digits of ones and zeros, a process known as the digitalization of data, has significant consequences. Very voluminous data can be stored in a very minute form in miniaturized devices such as flash drives, MP3s, CDs, DVDs, etc. the many changes resulting from these technological inventions call for a revisit of how we conceptualize every aspect of the international communication process.

The Internet, for example, with its potential to reach a large audience simultaneously, such as in social media post, has turned the computer into a mass medium of communication. With today's huge on-line audience, and the internet sharing the characteristics of interpersonal and mass communication, the distinction between the new world information and communication order and digital age should comprise obligations by state to ensure a situation in which their national mass media would aid in the preservation and strengthening of the universal peace. This no doubt, will eliminate all forms of oppression and in equality in the promotion of better relation among the nation. The main technological advancement that makes digital age possible is that today's electronic systems can now transform all texts, audio and video communication into digital information, that is, a series of Is and Os that are computer readable. So the computer technology is the major discovery that has made digital communication possible.

Digital technology drives or controls a lot of communication such as satellite communication which enables users to pull live broadcast programmes direct from satellite, cell phone mobile communication and online communication (communication over the Internet). All these forms of communication involve the compressing of voluminous data into tiny information bits in digits of zeros and ones readable by a computer. The most important result or outcome of the whole debate on new world information and communication order is the wider recognition of the implicit flaws in the 'free flow' ideology. Added to this is the recognition of the fact that in present day world, preconditions have to be created for the implementation of a real free flow of information, if a general principle is not to continue as an advantage for the few and a detriment for many at both national and international levels.

Added to this, is the recognition of the fact that every nation wants to exercise her sovereignty over its information and communication system, to solve its internal information problems, especially by enriching information and correcting the imbalance that exists in its territory, establishing channels of reaching effectively its people. However, that appears too tall in this era of digital age where many nations cannot control information flow in their territories. The information flow under the digital age has been more of unidirectional and dominated by

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Western nations. Nigeria is not yet in the league of these information societies, and need to be, but very quickly too.

In the digital age, the prospects of establishing a new international information order have gained significant attention, driven by the rapid evolution of technology, the global interconnectedness of societies, and the increasing influence of information on political, economic, and cultural landscapes. The traditional information order, characterised by a predominance of Western media and information flows, is being challenged by the rise of digital platforms, non-western media outlets, and the democratisation of information dissemination. This shift has sparked debates on the need for a more equitable and inclusive global information order that reflects the diverse voices and perspectives of the international community (Nordenstreng, 2013).

The concept of a new international information order is not new, it has its roots in the 1970s and 1980s when developing countries, through the Non-Aligned Movement and UNESCO, advocated for a reformation of global information flows to address the imbalances and disparities in access to information (McPhail, 2009). In the current digital era, the implications of digital platforms, data sovereignty, cyber-security, and the role of algorithms and artificial intelligence in shaping public opinion and information dissemination (Mansell, 2012). The emergence of these issues has underscored the necessity for international cooperation and regulatory frameworks to ensure that the benefits of digital information are distributed fairly and that the risks are mitigated. In the context, the prospects of a new international information order hinge on the ability of nations and international organisations to address these challenges collectively. The digital age offers unprecedented opportunities to bridge information gaps and foster a more balanced global dialogue, but it also present significant risks, including the potential for digital divides, information manipulation, and the erosion of privacy. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, the need for new information order that is just, equitable, and inclusive is more pressing than ever.

Statement of the problem

Digitalisation has caused so much information communication technology at the finger-tips of the broadcast journalist. Nigerian broadcast journalists who adopt to some existent new technologies, have been able to revolutionize broadcasting and change the audience appreciation of the mass media. Every nation worth its salt; protects its national interest, not only militarily and economically but communication wise. Nigeria has been making efforts to change the present communication order by coming up with an order that protect their interest. As a result of this Nigeria setup News of Agency Nigeria, Voice of Nigeria etc, it also has a Nigerian Broadcasting commission codes regulation, that broadcast stations should have 70% local content and 30% foreign content. This and many efforts have been put in place by Nigeria to safeguard its information and communication gap, the idea to have new information and communication order there is a need to protect the national/interest based on our communication policies. But are there a lot of difficulty? the thrust of the work is how has the digital age affected the world information order in terms of the important issues raised as efforts in correcting news imbalance in Nigeria as regards to agenda of the North-South dialogue.

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has significantly transformed the global information landscape, leading to an unprecedented flow of information across borders. However, this transformation has also exacerbated existing inequalities in access to information and has created new challenges related to data privacy, information sovereignty, and the influence of digital platforms on public opinion. Despite the potential for digital technologies to democratise information and empower diverse voices, there is growing concern that the current

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global information order remains imbalanced, with a few dominant entities controlling the majority of digital content and platforms.

The concentration of power raises questions about the fairness, inclusivity, and transparency of the global information ecosystem. Additionally, the rise of misinformation, fake news, and digital manipulation has further complicated the situation, threatening the integrity of information and the ability of individuals and societies to make informed decisions. The study seeks to address these issues by exploring the prospects of establishing a new international order that is more equitable, inclusive, and reflective of the diverse needs and perspectives of the global community. The problem lies in the current inadequacies of the global information structure to adapt to the rapidly changing digital environment and to ensure that the benefits of digital information are distributed fairly while minimising the associated risks.

Nigeria is making efforts, many developing countries are doing their best with digital age, the issues of new world information and communication order is it still on ground? Has it been addressed or are some issues been addressed? This work is undertaken to decrypt the prospects of a new international information order in the digital age. However, the study embraced professionals and experts in field of communication and ICT of five tertiary institutions in Rivers State. Namely: University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State University, Ignatius Ajuru of Education, Ken Saro-Wiwa Polytechnic and Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic. The aim of this research is to decrypt the prospects of a new international information order in the digital age. More specifically, the work is guided by the following objectives: to find out the ways digital age encourages private investments in communication industry in Nigeria; to ascertain the effects of digital age in promoting competition in mass media programming in Nigeria and evaluate the major constraints in digital age affecting creation of flexible regulatory frameworks to keep pace with rapid technological changes in Nigeria.

Literature Review Theoretical framework Media Technological Determinism Theory

The media technological determinism theory and development media theory underpinned this work. The theoretical basis for this work is media technological determinism. This theory is a reductionist theory that presumes that a society's technology derives the development of its social structure and cultural values. Technological determinism has been defined as an approach that identifies technology, or technological advances, as the central casual element in processes of social change (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003). The term is believed to have been coined by Thorstein Veblen (1857-1929), an American sociologist. The most radical technological determinist in America in the twentieth century was most likely Clarence Ayres who was a follower of Veblen and John Dewey. But also William Ogburn was known for his radical technological determinism.

Most interpretations of technological determinism share two general ideas: that the development of technology itself follows a predictable, traceable path largely beyond cultural or political influence, and that technology in turn has "effects" on societies that are inherent, rather than socially conditioned or produced because that society organizes itself to support and further develop a technology once it has been introduced.

This idea of progress or 'doctrine of progress; is centralized around the idea that social problems can be solved by technological advancement, and this is the way that society moves forward. Technological determinists believe that "you can't stop progress", implying that we are unable to control technology. This suggests that we are somewhat powerless and society allows technology to drive social changes because societies fail to be aware of the alternatives to the values embedded in it (technology).

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This theory aimed at drawing attention to the portent strength of communication technologies. This theory regards the wider dimension of information craze in the society, as a result of the information explosion fostered by digital are. It is therefore safe to assume that the social, historical, economic and cultural changes occurring in human society today, could be linked to the invention and development of new technologies. The medium, which he theory emphasizes, has gone ahead to prove that communication technologies are turning the world into an interactive forum (Odoemelam & Adibe, 2011). The physical planet earth, it is a system which, using basic telephony and broadcasting principles, allows messages, sounds, film picture and text to be transmitted simultaneously or simply from one computer anywhere in the world to another.

The development media theory is very relevant to a discourse on the economic, social and political development of Africa and other Third World countries like Nigeria. This theory was one of the outcomes of the call for a new world information and communication order (NWICO) that preoccupied communication scholars in the early 1980s and is presently assuming greater relevance among African communication and economic scholars because of the growing threat of media imperialism and economic neo-colonialism.

In the main, this theory argues that under-development is characterized by wars and conflict over scarce means lack of educational and social facilities and basic infrastructures essential to self-actualization. Trues, communication practice and its content should therefore be geared towards the development needs of these counties.

Ukonu (2010) also acquiesced and writes that it is an effort to orient communication towards national economic, social and political goals in developing countries. “The aim is to use the instruments of communication to help Africans in various skills that lead to self improvement” (p. 36). He notes further that communication can become an instrument of increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and means of achieving material well-being. Thus, the media can be at the vanguard of the creation of opportunities, through purposeful media content for realizing human potential to achieve development. When applied to the focus of this study, the transmission of ideas, information and culture by the media should reflect the development needs of the society.

The theory is highly relevant as it suggests that the evolution of media technologies, particularly digital platforms and the Internet, has a profound impact on how information is produced, distributed, and consumed globally. In the context of a new international information order, technological determinism underscores the idea that the digital age is reshaping the global information landscape in ways that were previously unimaginable. The relevance lies in its ability to explain how technological innovations in communication can lead to shifts in power dynamics, influence international relations, and alter the traditional flow of information. As digital technologies become more pervasive, they enable new actors, including non-Western media, citizen journalists, and social media influencers, to play a more significant role in the global information order. This shift challenges the historical dominance of Western media and creates opportunities for a more balanced and inclusive global dialogue.

Also, the theory highlights the potential for technology to either bridge or widens the global digital divide. As new technologies emerge, they have the power to either democratise information access or exacerbate existing inequalities, depending on how they are adopted and regulated. This theory, therefore, provides a critical framework for understanding the opportunities and challenges of establishing a new international information

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order that leverages digital technologies to promote equity, inclusivity, and transparency in the global dissemination of information.

Digital Technology and the Nigeria Broadcast Media

No doubt, the high technologies adorning this present information age are extremely beneficial to the broadcast media as well. However, Itule and Anderson (2008) note that one of the basic items in a check list for effective broadcast journalism is the need to understand this technology. They pointed out that broadcast journalist need to understand the production techniques, capabilities and limitations in equipment used in broadcasting. In radio for example, the modern reporter is expected to be able to record and edit audio tape because digital technology, has made this very easy and less cumbersome than it used to be.

The application of advanced digital technologies in the area of broadcasting is very visible and they come in different forms from the use of GSM (cellphones) to digital cameras. Digitalization has caused so much information communication technology at the finger-tips of the broadcast journalist. Nigeria broadcast journalists who employed to some extent new technologies have been able to revolutionize broadcasting and change the audience appreciation of the mass media. This highly sophisticated broadcasting has now nurtured many television viewers to full scale addiction.

Understanding Communication Devices and Application of the Digital Age

According to Asak and Ohiagu (2013) the new media of communication change not only our media consumption pattern, our individual lives and the society around us, but also our approach to the study of communication and media studies. They impose on us an obligation to update our media skills and knowledge since each medium of communication has its own features and usage pattern. Therefore, they stipulated that a communication scholar of 21st century ought to be at home with digital technologies, having good perception of the devices and applications that are central in processing communication in modern society. It was a shock when in 2013 a communication. Student using a Samsung iPad recently argued that iPad is a manufacturer's name just as Nokia or LG. This technological devices of the digital age are gadgets, machines, equipment, tools or appliances such as computers, iPod, iPad, iPhones, MP3, kindle, laptops, notebooks, netbooks, all tablet computers, etc. used in the communication process. Simply put, they are communication tools. These electronic instruments are channels with which messages are produced, sent and received digitally. Others include flash drives, CDs, diskettes, memory cards, modems, external hard drives, etc.

New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO)

Udoakah (1998) the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) primarily seeks a restructured media and telecommunications system to make room for a more just and equitable balance in the flow and content of international level to reflect more accurately the aspirations and activities of the less developed countries.

The agitation started in 1970 and engaged the attention of UNESCO under an African Director-General, Amadou Mahtar M'Bow, throughout the decade. Momentum started gathering in 1976 when a meeting of Latin American Governments convened at Costa Rica by UNESCO, endorsed the principle of state involvement in national communications policies to integrate mass communications media with national planning. According to Windlesham (1998), a month later, August, 1976, the Non-Aligned Summit meeting in Colombo called for a new

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order for information, proclaiming that the emancipation and development of national information media was integrate part of the overall struggle for political, economic and social independence.

Following soviet support, a draft declaration on the use of the mass media was tabled at the General Conference of UNESCO at Nairobi in November, 1976. The controversy which the documents generated split UNESCO, leading to the formation of an international commission for the study of communication problems, under the chairmanship of Sean MacBride. What emerged from the international commission was same approach as earlier versions. Behind the draft lay the firm belief that it was for governments to rule what was true and what was erroneous, and that controls on the press justified as a means of achieving political, economic or social objectives. Britain, the United States and other Western countries found this unacceptable. So a lot of watering down has to be done at the 1978 Paris conference before the declaration was adopted by acclamation (see appendix for the declaration) However, it has been observed that the declaration was compromise in which no party compromised its principles. No wonder the United States were not entirely satisfied and had to withdraw from UNESCO in 1981, three years after the declaration was adopted. Britain later followed suit.

From the debate, the fear of the opponents of the call for the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) is that, it will bring increased interference with freedom of the press. On their part, the proponents argue that the current world information and communication system is an outgrowth of former colonial patterns and systems, and that information about the Less Developed Countries (LDC) is distorted in order to support political, social and economic expediency in the west.

It was also posited by McBride *et al* (1980) that, only if the mass media put more stress on what joins people together rather than on what divides them, then will the people of the world be able to help on another through peaceful exchange and mutual understanding. Okon (2004) posits that, in some respects, development and communication go hand in hand. Perhaps, this stems from the conviction that information and communication are essential factors of international relations in all fields and particularly in the establishment of a new system founded on the principle of equality of rights and the inflammatory rhetoric.

The debate has in fact become an emotional one, as reported by the New York Times of December 21st 1983, cited in Okon (2004) that; UNESCO is a thoroughly politicized institution dedicated to attacking fundamental Western values, interests and institutions. It attacks and seeks to circumscribe the free Western press. It characterizes Western culture as an “imperialist” threat to the identity of other peoples. It attacks the force market economy and multinational corporations. It seeks to down grade individual human rights in favour of nebulous and proliferating “rights of peoples” thus helping tyrannical states to impose their orthodoxies on their subjects (p. 156).

Such question as the one below has also been put forward by the western media in countering the call for NWICO: what efforts are being made to discourage the governments of the Third World Countries from owing, operating and controlling the mass communication system?

Perhaps, it is based on the foregoing that Okon (2004) describes the NWICO as “a dialogue of the deaf.” (p. 157). On a pragmatic note, the call for a NWICO seems an elusive ideal whose impracticability falls within the framework of the Knowledge Gap Theory. The basic assumption, in connection with this theory, is that the increase in media output, rather than evening out differences between the information-rich and the information-poor, actually accentuates those differences.

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Still on a pessimistic note, Okon (2004) notes that, “unevenness of flow is a basic characteristic of news and not only of news flow but of water flow, oil flow, money flow, population flow and flood flow” (pp. 157-158). The foregoing has undoubtedly engendered a subtle resignation to the existing inequalities as an inescapable evil. Indeed some nations are simply doomed to domination by other nations in the sphere of communication. To say based on the foregoing, that the debate for a new world information and communication order is a parallel one is indeed stating the obvious (Okon, 2004).

Not too long ago, a more embracing model was propounded by Nwosu Ikechukwu in 1990 – The minimal disintegration and interdependence model. The emphasis by the model is on a radical “inside look” approach or a “minimal cut-off from dependence on the international communication flow pattern. This could only be achieved, based on the realization that the destiny of Third World countries lies, mostly in their hands and not in the hands of big power nations who can sometimes help but naturally have their national interests and ideologies influence what help they can render (Okon, 2004).

Efforts at Correcting the News Imbalance

Agba (2002) efforts made so far to correct the imbalance in news and information flow are associated with the movements of North-south Dialogue and south-south co-operation and Group 15. The North-South Dialogue is used to describe the agitation by the Third World, which is calling for reparation for its exploitation, and the response of the industrial nations. As Emenyonu as cited in Agba (2002) writes, “the third world nations through the instrumentality of North-South dialogue and other international for a have argued ceaselessly for easier terms of loans and outright grant of money like the sum that rebuilt war-torn Europe.” The South is equally calling for the democratization of major world financial bodies such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, maintaining that if this is done, the south will be able to make input in critical policy formulation.

The issues of imbalance and inequalities in international communication which are the thrust and important items on the agenda of the North-South dialogue; The distribution of power and wealth in the international system, which favour the Western world, has created its undue influence on communication flow, making information an exchange between unequal partners such that the more powerful, richer and better equipped partners continuously dominate the information arena.

As a correction measure, heads of state of the Non-Aligned countries at their fifth conference in Colombo agreed that independent development of information sources is as important as self-sufficiency in technological development because dependence in the field of information is an obstacle to political and economic progress.” At the Telecommunications Development Conference in Buenos Aires in March 1994, the former American vice-president, All Gore addressed what he considered the pertinent issues to free and unrestricted global information flow. They include: encouraging private investments (in communication industry); promoting flexible regulatory frameworks to keep pace with rapid technological and market changes; providing open access to the information networks; ensuring universal services.

Hence; the declarations of the establishment of the NIEO and NWICO in 1974, and 1976, respectively. The dialogue on the issue has been spear headed by the Non-Aligned Movement, regional groupings, organizations of Asian and pacific countries, the OAU and other bodies, through professional meetings and various international conferences as well as literature on the issue. The North is so opposed to the new order that the United States and Britain pulled out of UNESCO, which is actively involved in bridging the yawning communication gap between the North and south.

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What about the efforts made in respect of the south-south co-operation and Group 15? To start with, the south-south co-operation and Group 15 is described as strategy for consultation, co-operation and solidarity among countries of the south, aimed at reducing their economic dependence on the North. Hence it is a movement, a kind of pressure group. As a movement, it is conceived as a veritable means of championing the crusade for some economic autonomy and a collective response to the changing global geo-political balance. It is expected that through the movement, the developing countries will be able to extract themselves from the age-long economic quagmire and redress the dis-proportionate economic relationship with the North and form a formidable common front against and counter-force to the neo-colonialist exploitation of the natural endowment and economic potentials of the south.

Methodology

This study adopted the survey design method. Research design used was a survey, using personal interview design. This design provides an added value the research, which helps to make the findings of a research richer and more reliable. The population of this study comprised male and female communication scholars at the two universities in Port Harcourt metropolis. The choice of the category of respondents was informed by the nature of this study, which required knowledge of New World Information and Communication Order in digital age as those outside this communication field may not have knowledge about the information. Therefore, 10 (ten) lecturers were used from department of mass communication in Rivers State University of Science and Technology and Communication Studies in University of Port Harcourt.

Primary data for the study was gathered through the use of in-depth interview. This enabled the study to collate first hand data and information on the phenomenon under study directly from the target population. The method for primary data collection was pre-determined to minimize confusion and save time. To this end, the researcher first established rapport with respondents before engaging them based on individual schedule for interview. This is in keeping with the sampling procedure adopted. As a result, only population elements that were willing to participate in the study were incorporated. This was also intended to achieve a high response rate. The secondary sources of data were the bulk of data used in the literature and analysed qualitatively to argument the interview in the next chapter. Data collected were analysed using qualitative method which were presented and analysed entirely in verbal terms, and conclusions were drawn from there. This method of analysis was chosen to ensure easy comprehensibility.

Discussion of Findings Digital Revolution encouraging Private Investments in Nigeria

As responded by the interviewee, when we talk of digital revolution, one thinks of the advent of internet communication and cybernetics as well as the contemporary place of modern communication networks. Digital revolution is something peculiar to the 20th and 21st century, first with the Western world and advanced economics, before the Third World and nations like Nigeria. In respond to the reference to private investments in Nigeria's communication landscape captures the various organizations that run media networks. They concurred that digital revolution has encouraged private investments in communication industry of this country.

From the time, private broadcasting began in Nigeria in 1992 for instance, corporate organizations like Minaj Systems, Rhythm, Cool FM, Daar communications etc owned radio and televisions stations which were particularly monitored by the regulating bodies. More organizations have enlisted into because of prospects of the digital experience established by international communication agencies. Accordingly, to them, the presumption is that it afforded wider prospects in investment. Because digital communication maximizes

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opportunities, more audience members are reached and this is a market that satisfies greater investment. Account in support of the foregoing are some of the private investments such as MTN, GLO, ZAIN, UTube, G-mail etc, which came as a result of digital revolution. They allow for global resources and information sharing since the dawn of the new millennium.

The interviewees also elicited that the digital revolution in Nigeria has significantly transformed the economic landscape, creating a fertile ground for private investments across various sectors. As one of Africa's largest and most dynamic markets, Nigeria has witnessed a rapid increase in Internet penetration, mobile connectivity, and digital literacy, all of which have contributed to the growth of the digital economy. This transformation has opened up numerous opportunities for private investors, both local and international, to tap into the burgeoning digital market. One of the primary drivers of private investment in Nigeria is the expansion of the telecommunications sector, which has provided the necessary infrastructure for digital services to flourish. With over 100 million active Internet users, Nigeria's digital landscape presents a vast market for tech start-ups, e-commerce platforms, fintech solutions, and digital content creators. The proliferation of smartphones and affordable data plans has further fueled the demand for digital products and services, making Nigeria an attractive destination for investors seeking to capitalise on the digital boom.

They also posited that the Nigerian government's push for digital inclusion and its efforts to create a favourable business environment have also played a crucial role in attracting private investments. Initiatives such as the National Broadband Plan, the establishment of technology hubs, and policies aimed at enhancing digital skills have fostered innovation and entrepreneurship. These initiatives have encouraged private sector participation in the digital economy, with significant investments pouring into sector such as fintech, e-commerce, and digital media. They added that, the digital revolution has facilitated the emergence of a vibrant startup ecosystem in Nigeria, particularly in major cities like Lagos, Abuja and Port Harcourt. These start-ups, often supported by private investors and venture capitalists, are leveraging technology to solve local problems and scale their businesses regionally and globally. The success stories of Nigerian tech companies such as Flutterwave, Paystack, and Jumia have further highlighted the potential of the digital economy, inspiring more private investments into the sector.

In addition, they stated that the growing youth populace, with its strong affinity for technology, presents a significant demographic advantage for Nigeria. Young entrepreneurs are driving innovation in various digital sectors, and their tech-savvy nature is attracting investments from international firms looking to tap into the talent pool and consumer market. The digital revolution has also led to the development of new industries, such as digital advertising, online education, and telemedicine, creating more opportunities for private investment. The digital revolution in Nigeria is not only transforming the way business operates but is also reshaping the investment landscape. By providing new avenues for growth and innovation, it is encouraging private investors to explore the untapped potential of Nigeria's digital economy, ultimately contributing to the country's economic development and global competitiveness.

Ways Digital Age encourages Private Investments in Nigeria

As juxtaposed by the respondents the ways digital age encourage private investments are as new technology evolves as a result of digital era, more private investors come into Nigeria to invest and to improve what was already on ground. The rapid growth in technology, deregulation is not as much as before and cost also encouraged more investors. Also, there is an increase in demand for information and technologies. If there is a need in demand,

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supply will increase. Since there is infrastructural deficit, private investors come in to bridge the gap. Meanwhile the wave of digitalization has become the song of the modern age and has its weight in Nigeria too. Books, newspapers, magazines, CDs and DVDs that are physically distributed is going way to the bits world, open websites, blogs to pass or share information and courtesy of the online channels.

The interviewees averred that, the digital age has fostered private investments in Nigeria through several investments key mechanisms. Improved access to information: The Internet provides real-time access to global markets, trends, and data, enabling investors to make informed decisions. This transparency reduces the risks associated with investments and attracts more private capital. E-commerce and Fintech Boom: The rise of an e-commerce platforms and fintech companies in Nigeria has opened new avenues for investment. These sectors offer high returns and scalable opportunities, drawing substantial private investments both locally and internationally. Increase connectivity: widespread Internet and mobile penetrations have connected more Nigerians to the global economy. This connectivity has created a larger consumer base and new markets, encouraging private investment in various industries like telecommunications, technology and retail.

They opined that Government Digital Initiatives: Nigeria's government has launched several digital initiatives and policies aimed at creating a favourable environment for private investments. These include incentives for tech start-ups, improved digital infrastructure, and streamlined regulations, which boost investor confidence. Startup Ecosystem Growth: The digital age has facilitated the growth of a vibrant startup ecosystem in Nigeria, particularly in tech hubs like Lagos. Venture capital firms and private investors are increasingly funding innovative startups, leading to economic diversification and job creation. Access to Global capital: Digital platforms have made it easier for Nigerian businesses to access global investors. Crowd funding, venture capital, and international partnerships are more accessible, allowing local businesses to scale quickly with foreign investment.

They also added that, Enhanced Financial Inclusion: The digital age has significantly improved financial inclusion in Nigeria through mobile banking and digital payment systems. This has led to a more robust economy and a broader range of investment opportunities, attracting private investors. Emergence of Digital Infrastructure: Investments in digital infrastructure such as data centres, broadband, and mobile networks have surged, supported by private investments. This infrastructure is critical for the digital economy and provides long-term investment opportunities. Innovation and Tech-Driven Solutions: The digital age has sparked innovation in various sectors, from agriculture to healthcare, driven by technology. This investment as businesses seeks to capitalise on new, tech-driven solutions to traditional challenges. Regulatory Support for Digital Finance: Nigeria's regulatory bodies have shown support for digital finance, including crypto-assets and digital payments. This regulatory environment has made it easier for private investors to enter the market and support innovative financial services.

Effects of Digital Age in Promoting Competition in Mass Media Programming in Nigeria

As stipulated by the interviewees, the effects in promoting competition are improve style, each medium struggling to make the picture resolutions more captivating through crystal signals, audios are now live and distinct than previous experience, news from organizations are becoming more instantaneous as they all struggle to be "the largest network," "all about entertainment," "sharing the Africa experience" etc. some media organization even try to offer 24 hours service, in the broadcasting sector. More so, digital age opens access to U-tube, blogs, i-witness etc, therefore everybody is a producer and a journalist. There is increase in content but all of these have its advantage and disadvantage, information is not undergoing gate keeping process.

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They also stated that the digital age has democratised access to information, enabling a wider range of content creators to reach audiences. This has increase competition as traditional media outlets now compete with online platforms, blogs, and social media channels for viewership and engagement. Digital platforms have allowed for a broader array of content, catering to niche audiences. This has led to a more competitive environment where traditional mass media must adapt by diversifying to different tastes and preferences. The Internet has lowered the barriers to entry for content creation. Individuals and small organisations can now produce and distribute content without the need for significant capital investment, challenging established media houses and creating a more competitive landscape.

Additionally, they elicited that digital platform provides immediate feedback through comments, likes and shares, allowing media producers to gauge audience reactions and adjust their programming accordingly. This real-time engagement has intensified competition as media outlets strive to maintain relevance and viewer loyalty. With the rise of digital platforms, advertisers have more options to reach their target audiences, often at a lower cost than traditional media. This shift has increased competition for advertising revenue forcing traditional media to innovate and offer more competitive rates and packages. To remain competitive, mass media outlets in Nigeria are compelled to improve the quality of their content and adopt innovative formats. The availability of high-quality content from international digital platforms has set new standards, pushing local media to elevate their production values.

The interviewees also illustrated that the digital age has led to the convergence of different media forms (print, broadcast, and online), creating an environment where media companies must compete across multiple platforms. This has encouraged traditional media to embrace digital transformation, integrating online content with their existing services. Traditional mass media in Nigeria faces challenges to their business models due to the proliferation of free or low-cost digital alternatives. This has led to increased competition, pushing these outlets to explore new revenue streams, such as subscription services and digital advertising. The digital age has made it easier for Nigerian audiences to access global content, increasing competition from international media companies. This globalisation has pressured local media to produce more culturally relevant and high-quality content to retain their audience. Digital tools allow for precise audience targeting, enabling media outlets to tailor their content and advertising more effectively. This has led to more competition among media companies to capture specific demographic segments. In all, the digital age has significantly heightened competition in the Nigerian mass media industry, driving innovation, improving content quality and transforming traditional business models.

Major Constraints in Digital Age towards Flexible Regulatory Frameworks in Nigeria

The interviewees illustratively answered that often times, regulations sterner the pace of development. It has also been observed that stringent regulations steal away the right to expression. However, a free state does not either serve as the best option because any and everything goes. It then implies that there is need to have a synchronization of regulation and flexibility else the country will lose pace of the digital age. For instance, china has lavy in place for its social media platforms. They don't allow things that are against cultural heritage to sell on the social media.

But in Nigeria, any attempt to regulate will end up deny people's right because of mode of application. This was part of the reason the recent bill on social media regulation was widely rejected. Meanwhile, Nigeria has regulatory frameworks, no adequate technology to beef up information because information is not controlled.

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Nigeria is unable to detect whoever post online. Therefore, we really need to work on the regulatory body to have planned objectives, maintenance culture of existing systems and research on new equipment or gadget.

The interviewees outlined Rapid technological Advancements: The pace of technological innovation often outstrips the ability of regulatory bodies to keep up. Emerging technologies like blockchain, AI, and fintech are evolving faster than the regulatory frameworks designed to govern them, making it difficult to create adaptable rules that can stay relevant over time. Lack of technical Expertise: regulatory agencies in Nigeria often lack the necessary technical complex digital technologies effectively. This gap in knowledge can lead to either overly stringent regulations that stifle innovation or insufficient regulation that leaves gaps in oversight. Bureaucratic Inertia: the Nigerian regulatory environment is often characterised by slow decision-making processes. Bureaucratic inertia can delay the adoption of new regulations or the updating of existing ones, making it challenging to respond quickly to changes in the digital landscape.

They buttressed Fragmented regulatory Environment: Nigeria's regulatory environment is fragmented, with multiple agencies having overlapping jurisdictions over digital technologies. This can lead to inconsistent policies and regulatory conflicts, making it difficult to implement cohesive and flexible frameworks. Political and Economic Pressure: regulatory decisions in Nigeria are often influenced by political and economic pressures, which can result in regulations that favour certain interests group or re driven by short-term digital transformation strategies. Limited Infrastructure: the lack of robust digital infrastructure in many parts of Nigeria constrains the effectiveness of regulatory frameworks. For instance, poor Internet connectivity and limited access to digital tools make it difficult to enforce regulations or ensure compliance across the country. Cyber-security concerns: As Nigeria becomes more digitalised, the threat of cyber-attacks increases. The challenge of ensuring cyber-security while fostering innovation can create a tension between regulation and flexibility. Strict cyber-security regulations might hinder technological innovations, while too much flexibility might expose the country to greater risks. They posited Digital Literacy and Inclusion: A significant portion of the Nigerian population lacks digital literacy, which poses a challenge for regulators. Ensuring that regulations are inclusive and protect vulnerable populations without balance that is hard to achieve in a diverse and rapidly changing digital landscape. Global Regulatory Trends: Nigeria must consider global regulatory trends and standards, especially, in areas like data protection, cyber-security and digital finance. Balancing the need to align with international best practices while tailoring regulations to local needs is a complex task that adds to the difficulty of creating flexible frameworks. Enforcement Challenges: Even when flexible regulations are established, enforcing them can be a major constraint due to limited resources, corruption, and the sheer scale of the country, inconsistent enforcement undermines the effectiveness of regulations and can create loopholes that are exploited by bad actors.

Ways Digital Age encourages Private Investments in Communication Industry in Nigeria

Responding to this, in Nigeria, "digital revolution has encouraged private investments in the communication industry of this country. It is obvious to note such communication potentialities of the broadcast media that operate in terms of their expanding technological capacities for disseminating oriented programmes. Raypower FM radio station, Africa Independent Television (AIT), Minaj System television (MST), Minaj Radio (MSR), Degue Broadcasting Network (DBN), Cool FM, Rhythm 94.7 FM, The spectre of pirate stations, Channel Television, SilverBird Television etc. All these are the private broadcast investments which digital age encouraged in Nigeria's broadcast theatre. A very intriguing ways in which digital age encourages private investments are through the new technology rapid growth, deregulation and cost. More so, the infrastructural deficit encourages

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private investors to bridge the gap. The wave of digitalization has become the song of the modern age and has its weight in Nigeria.

The digital age has significantly influenced the communication industry in Nigeria, creating an environment that encourages private investments in various ways. These developments are not only transforming how communication services are delivered but also enhancing the business landscape for investors. They articulated: **Expansion of Market Opportunities:** The digital age has expanded market opportunities in the communication industry by increasing demand for digital services such as broadband, mobile data, and digital communication platforms. The growing use of smartphones, social media, and e-commerce has created new revenue streams and business models, attracting private investors to tap into these emerging markets. **Improvement in Infrastructure:** The digital revolution has led to significant investments in communication infrastructure, such as fibre optic networks, satellite communication, and mobile broadband. These improvements make it more attractive for private companies to invest, as they can rely on better infrastructure to deliver services efficiently and reach a larger customer base.

They also, outlined **Government Policies and Incentives:** The Nigerian government, recognising the importance of the communication industry in the digital economy, has introduced policies and incentives to attract private investments. Initiatives such as the Nigerian National Broadband Plan and tax incentives for tech companies create a favourable environment for private investors, encouraging them to invest in the sector. **Growth of the Fintech Sector:** The rise of fintech in Nigeria has driven demand for reliable and efficient communication for reliable and efficient communication networks. Financial services delivered through digital platforms require robust communication infrastructure, prompting private investors to invest in telecoms and related service to support this growing sector. **Increase in Digital Literacy and Connectivity:** As digital literacy and Internet connectivity improve across Nigeria, the communication industry sees an increase in potential customers. This growing user base encourages private investors to develop and offer new communication products and services tailored to the Nigerian market, knowing that there is a receptive audience. **Technological Innovation:** the digital age brings continuous technological advancements such as 4G and 5G networks, cloud computing, and artificial intelligence. These innovations create new business opportunities within the communication industry, encouraging private investors to invest in cutting-edge technologies that can give them a competitive advantage in the market.

They added **Public-Private partnerships:** The Nigerian government openness to publicprivate partnerships (PPPs) in the communication sector has encouraged private investments. Collaborations between the government and private entities in projects like expanding broadband access and improving rural connectivity lower investment risks and make the sector more appealing to private investors. **Access to Global Markets:** The digital age allows Nigerian communication companies to connect with global markets, attracting foreign direct investment (FDI). International companies are more willing to invest in the Nigerian communication sector, seeing the potential for cross-border business opportunities and the ability to scale operations beyond the domestic market. **E-commerce and Digital Platforms:** The rise of e-commerce and digital platforms in Nigeria has created a need for reliable communication networks to support these activities. This demand has spurred private investments in the communication industry, as businesses seek to provide the necessary infrastructure to support the growing digital economy. **Venture capital and Start-up Ecosystem:** The digital age has fostered a vibrant start-up ecosystem in

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Nigeria, particularly in tech and communication. Venture capitalists and angel investors are increasingly investing in innovative communication start-ups, driven by the potential for high returns in a rapidly growing market.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the work established the following which will be the bases for scholars that Nigeria has all what it takes to protect its communication system by increasing capacities gear toward mainstreaming digital consciousness in redeployment of media infrastructure. The willingness to spend money in technology, expand capacity, news agency of Nigeria competing digitally with other media agencies and having many foreign correspondents when all these structures are put in place, Nigeria can protect its communication system. The best paradigm for encouraging private investments and foster universal service in Nigeria is Ikechukwu Nwosu's model on minimal disintegration and interdependent, which is a challenge to communication professionals and journalists. The emphasis by the model is on radical "inside look" approach or a minimal cut-off from dependence on the international communication flow pattern. Nigeria needs to put up communication technology and communication development. In terms of economy, Nigeria media are seen as leisure (luxury) rather than necessity.

Also, the study established both opportunities and challenges for global communication and governance. The digital revolution has transformed the way information is produced, distributed, and consumed, leading to a more interconnected world where information flows across borders with unprecedented speed and scale. This transformation offers the potential for a more equitable and inclusive global information landscape, where diverse voices can be heard, and access to information is democratised. To harness the benefits of the digital age while mitigating its risks, there is a need for international cooperation, inclusive dialogue, and the development of global norms that respect cultural diversity, promote transparency and protect human rights. The prospects of a new international information order will depend on the collective will of nations, international organisations, and civil society to create a balanced and just information ecosystem that serves the interests of all people in an increasingly digital world.

Recommendations

In view of the findings from the work, the following recommendations have been made.

- 1) There should be commitment on the part of Nigeria government towards investing in media infrastructures.
- 2) The destiny of the Third World countries lies mostly in our hands; there should be reorientation of the journalistic workforce in Nigeria.
- 3) Nigerian needs to invest in capacity building, streamline regulatory processes, and foster greater collaboration between stakeholders to create a more adaptable and resilient regulatory environment.
- 4) There should be an inside look approach or a minimal cut-off from dependence on the international communication flow pattern to educate our agencies such as NAN, NBC and NCC.
- 5) The Nigeria government should have development in human capacity, technology and invest more in research technology.

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