

Emergence of Podcast in Nigeria: Acceptability, Regulation and Current State.

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Abstract

The communication process is the perfect guide toward achieving effective communication. The Components of communication process is as important as the word communication itself; because they further help to understand the word and the things/process involved. The channel through which communication takes place usually determines the nature of the engagements. The closest thing to a portable mass medium was reading a book or paper on a commute to and from work. New media, however, are more personal and more social than old media. So, what makes “new media” new media? The use of technology; Today, old media are almost always paired with new media – newspapers and magazines have online versions, as well as their own blogs, television networks produce a great deal of online content related to their programming, etc. Broadcasters of the traditional media especially radio now take advantage of the emergence of podcasting by making available programs for better coverage and relevance; knowing that the medium avails the opportunity to upload these programs episodically and be listened to multiple times, hence apart from just relevance it gives an avenue to encourage the culture and bring about the much-adorned social change among the teaming Nigeria youths. The media ecology theory posits that, it’s not technological abnormality that demands our attention since it’s hard not to notice the new and different. Instead, we need to focus on our everyday experience of technology, invariably it means that the human inventions enhance communication Podcasting seems to be an alternative to owning a radio station where one would have to go through the hassle of getting a license to air, cost of purchasing and supply of broadcast equipment and getting monitored. It is important that there are certain regulations

to safeguard content while upholding our national heritage and security.

Keywords: Podcast, Digital media, New media, Technology, Regulations

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Introduction

The communication process is the perfect guide toward achieving effective communication. The Components of communication process is as important as the word communication itself; because they further help to understand the word and the things/process involved. The components which are source, message, channel, receiver, feedback, environment, context, and interference serve as an integral function in the overall process. All the components in the process as stated above, are mutually dependent on one another for the communication process to be said to be complete. Certain engagements ensue at every stage of the process, the channel through which communication takes place usually determines the nature of the engagements.

The source in a communication process is the creator of a message, the person of gives a speech, writer, Initiator of ideas, speaker who also conveys a message through his or her tone of voice, body language, and choice of clothing, and copy writer as the case maybe; The channel is the means used to convey the message which in most cases determine also the mood, nature and texture of the message delivered. The channel or medium used to communicate a message affects how the audience will receive the message. Communication channels can refer to the methods we use to communicate as well as the specific tools we use in the communication process. The three principal communication channels can be used “in the flesh” and in digital formats. Digital channels extend from face-to-face to video conferencing, from written

memos to emails, and from speaking in person to using telephones. The digital channels retain many of the characteristics of the principal channels but influence different aspects of each channel in new ways. The choice between analog and digital can affect the environment, context, and interference factors in the communication process.

A communication channel is the medium, means, manner or method through which a message is sent to its intended receiver. The basic channels are written (hard copy print or digital formats), oral or spoken, and electronic and multimedia. The channel richness refers to the amount and immediacy of information that can be transmitted besides acceptability and tone. Most channels are either oral or written, but currently visual channels are becoming more common as technology expands. There has been proliferation of new channels of communication which if not used appropriately can affect the mood, tone, acceptability, or the entire intended message; for the reasons, it is pertinent to consider the channels available because of technology advancement, the channels are invariably referred to as the “medium”.

Various types of Mass Media such as television, radio and press have always been an integral part of modern society since the time it has revolutionized the way we used to communicate and disseminate information. Globalization became the catalyst which speed this revolutionization and gave way to what is known as the New Media. In other words, Information technology has paved the way for the New Media as well as creating so many opportunities both in skill acquisition and career development. The new and traditional media are two different spectrums of the current methods of communication. Although both have the same primary function of sharing information, the biggest difference lies in the medium (Channel) used by the two types of media. Which is why this study will be considering one of the types of the new media, its emergence in Nigeria and how it has fared so far.

The new media has had various explanations on the various elements that constitute it been called “new” for the purpose of this study we will be having an entire elaboration on one the newest media which is podcast(ing); it’s emergence in Nigeria and to also check out for regulations on it or on New media as whole as well as checking if such exist in addition to podcast(ing) acceptability in Nigeria.

The New Media

The New Media by a common definition could simply be said to be the transition of the medium of communication with the use of technology or the advancement of the old/traditional media, or an improvement on the old/traditional media to give way to more elaborate and sophisticated dissemination. When we consider “old media,” which are mainly print, radio, and television/movies, it is seen that their presence in our lives and our societies was limited to a few places. For example, television and radio have long been key technological features in the home. Movies were primarily enjoyed in theaters until VCRs and DVD players brought them into our homes. The closest thing to a portable mass medium was reading a book or paper on a commute to and from work. New media, however, are more personal and more social than old media. So, what makes “new media” *new media*? The use of technology; Today, old media are almost always paired with new media – newspapers and magazines have online versions, as well as their own blogs, television networks produce a great deal of online content related to their programming, etc. Some of this evolution has been due to the concern that the new media is growing at the expense of the old media, and old media must evolve to survive. Putting the new media with old media counterparts by describing the “newness” of the new media in terms of changes in production due to convergence of technology and media, storage (digitization and indexing), presentation (in a video display of sorts), and distribution over telecommunication networks.

The past few years have brought wholesale transformations of established and existing media -e.g., photography, animation, television, film, newspaper. Computer-mediated communication and collaboration - e.g., email, chat room, IM, discussion forums, teleconferencing, avatar-based virtual worlds, VOIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol), mobile telephony, blogs, wikis – have changed our organizations in profound ways. Even consumption is different in the age of new media; we are seeing more active post-purchase behavior – in the form of, e.g., mashups, media sharing, and the modding of digital media. The table below shows a representation of these advancement and convergence of the old media and the new.

THE OLD VS. THE NEW

Books→ eBooks, wikis

Journalism → blogs

Music → pandora

Newspapers, Magazines → ezines

Radio → podcasts

Television → Full episodes on the web

Telephone → VOIP

Film → Amateur videos on the web

Photography → Flickr, Picasa

Art → Museums on the web

Digital media, also called by many as “New Media,” is the use of computers and mobile devices (blogs, e-book, and video games) which are aided by internet to create and disseminate content as well as other physical embodiment such as flash memory sticks, hard drive among others. Some scholars prefer to define digital media in contrast to “analog”, “mass media” in relation to “new media” and so on. The history of digital media documents the move of computers from glorified calculators to devices that are transforming human communications, entertainment, and creative production, linking digital media to earlier interactive machines and media. The digital media has

brought a lot of transformation to the industry such that it has shaped and influenced the perception of scholars and students alike; and apart from that, it has also brought about exponential growth which has opened up and eliminated barriers in information dissemination.

Opportunities and Challenges of Digital/New Media

This exponential growth has been experienced in all facets of the media industry from film to cinema, books, Newspaper, magazines and so on. The new media has offered people of the world the opportunity to have instant communication regardless of the distance. A lot of new media, both broadcast and print, have over some time invested a lot of resources in digital media and have mobilized a very significant number of audiences online. Every credible news medium in recent years has built and created digital audiences than what the print media used to do years back.

In today's hyper-connected world, digital media has transformed the way we communicate, consume information, and conduct business. From social networking sites to online streaming platforms and e-commerce websites, the digital realm offers a plethora of opportunities for individuals and businesses alike. However, with these opportunities also come challenges that require astute navigation. A lot of media organizations have made substantial investments in the development of online news media. This activity by media organizations is geared towards attracting a significant number of audiences and businesses. Many of these Media organizations have enjoyed market power and control until the 1990s; where advertisers and audiences at this period had little or no alternatives in accessing media services, but between 2000 and 2010, this monopoly enjoyed by the print and television stations reduced drastically because of the proliferation of many digital media alternatives.

The era between 2000 and 2010 saw enormous disruptions in the media space to the aspect of revenue, so it became clear that information sharing could be more lucrative than it used to be because of technological advancement. Some scholars believe that social media is used by some extremist groups to mobilize and recruit people to carry out their agenda. The group of society that is so much affected by digital media is young adults and children due to their lack of stable social support networks; around that time as well, some social media platforms reviewed their terms of service to forbid activities such as, “terrorist activity”, “gory content”, “threat of violence” among others.

The New media given its different levels of expressions, allow for increased participation and assists individuals to express their creativity and share unique perspectives through various content formats. From blog posts to videos, podcasts, and visual art, digital media empowers creators to find their voice and engage with like-minded communities.

Emergence of Podcast in Nigeria

Stemming from wide research and consultations, podcast has been observed to have more similarities to the traditional media – Radio than the differences thereof; while they both serve as a channel of communication to inform, educate, and entertain their audiences.

"Podcast" is a portmanteau of "iPod" and "broadcast". The earliest use of "podcasting" was traced to The Guardian columnist and BBC journalist Ben Hammersley, who coined it in early February 2004 while writing an article for The Guardian newspaper. The term was first used in the audio blogging community in September 2004, when Danny Gregoire introduced it in a message to the iPodder-dev mailing list, from where it was adopted by podcaster and former MTV video jockey Adam Curry. Despite the etymology, the content can be accessed using any computer or similar device that can play media files. The term "podcast" predates Apple's addition of podcasting features to the iPod

and the iTunes software. Some sources have suggested the backronym "portable on demand" or "play on demand" for POD to avoid the loose reference to the iPod.¹ Various sources and dictionaries define the term podcast differently but share the idea of being an audio media product, released mostly episodically as part of a series, being available online for on-demand streaming on different platforms or the direct download on the consumer's device. This indicates that podcast was born because of putting technology to various use for communication. Soon after in 2005, 'podcast' was crowned as "the New Oxford American Dictionary's Word of the Year" and defined as a digital audio file that can be taken from the internet and played on a computer or a device that you can carry with you.

Apple manufacturers by 2004 were the sole tech hub with the platform to house such broadcast; in all, with the various definitions some words are used to explain the word – Audio, media, recorded, episodes and so on. A digital media file, or a series of such files, that is distributed over the Internet using syndication feeds for playback on portable media players and personal computers.

Podcast unlike the traditional radio, is a one-time production, a serial production and new episodes with a focus on specific theme or topic are produced daily, weekly, or monthly downloaded automatically when new content is uploaded by the author or Podcaster which can be listened to whenever and wherever. Given the fact that podcast is referred to a recorded audio uploaded to the internet via various platform does not limit the kinds of potentials or exploration of same medium for better listenership, user and to specifically attract advertisers who also serve as core source of revenue for podcasters; there have been said to be types of podcasts suit the points mentioned. Basic podcast - audio only which is created using voice recorder or Audacity (typical format is .mp3) Enhanced podcast - audio with slides & pictures its presentations with narration and chapters (typical formats

are .mp4a, .mp4b, but can also be .mov files and even PDF) and Vodcast – video, created using digital camcorder and video editing software such as iMovie (typical formats are .mp4 or mov.). Podcast sometimes called “audio blog” can be said to have experienced boom in terms of listenership in the western world. Internationally, it has also created for itself a multi-billion-dollar industry with topics ranging from entertainment to sociopolitical commentary to media reviews to science and technology, amongst others.

An attempt to examine the act of podcast reveals another level to the understanding of the word. Podcasting is the preparation and distribution of audio files using RSS feeds to the computers of subscribed users. These files may then be uploaded to streaming services, which users can listen to on their smartphones or digital music and multimedia players, like an iPod. A podcast can easily be created from a digital audio file. In addition to RSS, podcasts may be hosted on or embedded in websites that enable the podcast to be streamed or downloaded.

As of September 2023, there are currently 3.02 million podcasts; exact figures can vary significantly depending on several factors, most notably the inclusion of inactive podcasts in Nigeria. The emergence of podcasting in Nigeria can't be placed on a particular year, however, early 2010s, the Nigerian podcasting subculture has evolved tremendously in the early 2010s. What began as an obscure medium with few early adopters has today become one of the mainstream formats for storytelling, news, and entertainment in Nigeria. It is not an overstatement to say that podcasting is reshaping the Nigeria's cultural and societal landscape. Podcasts as a broadcast medium were relatively unknown. This was due in part to limited internet access and the continued dominance of the FM radio. Many of the podcasters were tech-savvy individuals who were already active in global online communities and were familiar with digital content creation. Others

were bloggers and journalists looking for new ways to distribute their content. Today, listeners have access to over 2.9 million podcast titles through Spotify. This trend will only intensify with the increasing availability of high-speed internet and the proliferation of smartphones. According to a report by Statista, Nigeria had nearly 84 million internet users as of 2022, and this figure is projected to grow to 117 million internet users by 2027. The market potential for podcasts is clearly expanding and shows that it's well accepted in Nigeria especially by youths. The industry is evolving and will continue to gather steam in the coming months.

With such a great medium used to attract audience with diverse topics of interest shared as opinion and swelling from past experiences and pains; it is expected that such activities will be regulated, although most podcasters are not trained broadcaster hence the need for monitoring and regulations.

Regulation

In Nigeria, the regulation of broadcast media organizations is carried out by the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), which is an independent regulatory body established by the Nigerian government in 1992. The NBC is responsible for granting licenses to broadcast media organizations, monitoring their operations, and enforcing regulatory standards to ensure that they comply with the provisions of the Nigerian Broadcasting Code. The commission is also tasked with the responsibility of imposing sanctions on media organizations that violate its regulations.

The Nigerian Broadcasting Code is a set of rules and regulations that govern the operations of broadcast media organizations in Nigeria. The code covers issues such as content standards, advertising, ownership, and control of media organizations, among others. Under the Nigerian Broadcasting Code, media organizations are required to uphold ethical

standards and ensure that their content is not offensive or harmful to the public and national interest. They are also required to ensure that their programming reflects the cultural and social values of the Nigerian people.

Regulations may be administered directly by government, as it was in Nigeria before 1992. It could also be through statutory agencies that enjoy some degree of independence from government. This is exemplified by National Broadcasting Commission, NBC, of Nigeria; the Federal Communications Commission, FCC, of USA; and Independent Television Commission, ITC, of Britain.

The NBC code has been edited/reviewed 6 times since the establishment of the commission, the last as seen in the online copy of the 6th edition draft was in 2016; this edition however aroused lots of concerns and controversies amongst content creators or creatives alike and advertisers as it sought to gag their freedom and operations. The draft extended the powers of the commission to the social media and digital media alike; apart from just highlighting words like “blogs” which was mentioned once, “VOIP” and “digital”; “social Media” was mentioned 3 times in the whole of the draft as seen below.

Section 1.2.6 & 7 Broadcasters using social media sources or any emerging technologies for coverage of disasters and emergencies shall ensure the veracity and credibility of originating material and content. Broadcasters in using social media sources or any emerging technologies shall ensure due caution and professionalism in the coverage of disasters and emergencies.

Apart from the above stated, the draft(code) did not spell out regulations about blogs, podcasting, and the likes, However the commission presented an amendment of the 6th edition in July 2020 to cater to the reservations of media practitioners and industry players; these

amendment, was explicit about Web/Online Broadcasting, Sporting rights, unpaid advertising rates, and anti-competition and sub licensing; for the purpose of the subject under review, according to the Amendment, all operators, web and online broadcasters are now required to register with the NBC. The owners of the platform shall be responsible for their content and must comply with all laws and regulations including those relating to fake news and hate speech. In effect, online platforms like Netflix and IrokoTV are now required to be registered with NBC.

There has been consultations and engagement on the part of the National Broadcasting Commission to justify its reason for the amendment as touching the sensitive aspects of the broadcast industry; recently during the visit of the Honorable Minister of Information and National Orientation, Mohammed Idris to tour the facilities of the commission, Balarabe Ilesah, the Director General raised the issue of social media regulation bill.

“We want to tell you that a bill for an act to repeal and amend the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) act, CAP L11 laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004, to accommodate the transition from analogue to digital broadcasting service, also to promote quality audio and video, efficient management of the spectrum, Nigeria Broadcast Institute, social media regulation and related matters has been read for the first time on the floor of the national assembly. All these that are mentioned are not captured in the present act of the commission. We have already submitted a bill to amend the act. One of our major problems now is social media. Unless there is a law that allows NBC to act on social media issues, the issue will continue to be a monster in our daily lives in this country. We only apply sanctions when there is no way out of it. We don't want the stations or the stakeholders to see NBC as an enemy. If you mention NBC anywhere, the first impression is

sanctions. In 2023, a total of 1,238 warnings were given, while during the same year, six different stations were penalized.”

Theoretical Review

The Marshall McLuhan's theory called Media ecology theory best fits and relates to the subject in view. It posits that media act as extensions of the human senses in each era, and communication technology is the primary cause of social change. Media ecology theory is best captured in his famous aphorism: "The medium is the message." This pithy statement is meant to upset our expectations because we are used to thinking of the message as separate from the medium itself. The medium delivers the message. The metaphorical statement "The medium is the message" has disrupted the traditional understanding of what the medium is and to extensively consider it as an environment; this brings in the need to explain further on the concept of media ecology.

Media ecology is the study of different personal and social environments created using different communication technologies. According to McLuhan, it's not technological abnormality that demands our attention since it's hard not to notice the new and different. Instead, we need to focus on our everyday experience of technology, invariably it means that the human inventions enhance communication. A medium shape us because we partake of it over and over until it becomes an extension of ourselves. Because every medium emphasizes different senses and encourages different habits, engaging a medium day after day conditions the senses to take in some stimuli and not register others. A medium that emphasizes the ear over the eye alters the ratios of sense perception. Like a blind man who begins to develop a heightened sense of hearing, society is shaped in accordance with the dominant medium of the day.

Just like the emergence of podcasting in Nigeria, it is not difficult to notice that there are increasingly scary numbers that indicate that this medium of communication has its “users” “Listeners” and are without fail being satisfied; conversely the transformation it is bringing to the culture is worthy of being studied. Media ecology investigates the matter of how media of communication affects human perception, understanding, feeling, and value; and how our interaction with media facilitates or impedes our chances of survival. The word ecology implies the study of environments: their structure, content, and impact on people. An environment is, after all, a complex message system which imposes on human beings’ certain ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving. It structures what we can see and say and, therefore, do. It assigns roles to us and insists on our playing them. It specifies what we are permitted to do and what we are not. Sometimes, as in the case of a courtroom, or classroom, or business office, the specifications are explicit and formal. In the case of media environments (e.g., books, radio, film, television, etc.), the specifications are more often implicit and informal, half concealed by our assumption that what we are dealing with is not an environment but merely a machine. Media ecology tries to make these specifications explicit. It tries to find out what roles media force us to play, how media structure what we are seeing, why media make us feel and act as we do. Media ecology is the study of media as environments.

There however exist some criticism as well as concerns regarding the theory, one of which is if we were yielding too easily to the “authority” of computation and the values of efficiency and quantification, whether the quest for technological progress was becoming increasingly more important than being humane. He wondered if information was an acceptable substitute for wisdom. While Postman was primarily concerned with the ecology of television, his work set a precedent for considering the moral consequences of all symbolic environments.

Conclusion

It is evident now that podcasting is becoming a convenient medium for youths especially in Nigeria to rely on for information, entertainment, and other issues of personal interest; invariably podcasting is well-accepted in the country. “*The Conversation Africa*”, an online Journalism forum puts it this way that; Nigeria has the largest population of youth in the world and a median age of 18.1 years. About 70% of the population is under 30, and 42% are under the age of 15 as at 2022. These age range quietly feast on the medium as it appeals to them while the growth becomes exponentially high.

It is worth noting that, broadcasters of the traditional media especially radio now take advantage of the emergence of podcasting by making available programmes for better coverage and relevance; knowing that the medium avails the opportunity to upload these programmes episodically and be listened to multiple times, hence apart from just relevance it gives an avenue to encourage the culture and bring about the much-adorned social change among the teeming Nigeria youths.

The provisions of the existing NBC code on the regulation of digital media are not explicitly stated, therefore it is safe to say that there are no regulations of the podcast space for now; bearing in mind there is an ongoing issue regarding the amendment of the 6th edition of the NBC code which border of social media regulation.

Suggestions

- I. Boundaries of technology keep expanding every day and then sends a signal that frontiers of communication will keep expanding too; It cannot be said for sure the limits since the mind or human capabilities seem to be endless; hence there is urgent need to be prepared for some disruptions especially regarding the old traditional media.

- II. Podcasting seems to be an alternative to owning a radio station where one would have to go through the hassle of getting license to air, cost of purchasing and supply of broadcast equipment and getting monitored. It is important that there are certain regulations to safeguard content while upholding our national heritage and security.
- III. The podcasting platforms should be explored for broadcast educational purposes given the fact that one of the functions of the media is to educate. This is to assist students of communication and media studies to get familiar with it and possibly research better on the medium for more insights and recommendations.

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