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Television Broadcast Media Adoption of Digital Platforms and Audience Engagement Within the Jalingo Metropolis

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Abstract

This study investigated mainstream television adoption of digital platforms and audience engagement to determine the level of audience engagement, motivation for engagement, and challenges associated with engagement with TV stations on their digital platforms. The study focuses on Channels TV and the Nigeria Television Authority (NTA). A mixed research method was adopted, and the population of the study was viewers of Channels TV and NTA in the Jalingo metropolis. Data were collected from a valid sample of 331 respondents through a questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistical tools. The study found a moderate level of audience engagement on the digital platforms of the TV outlets. The study further revealed that the audience is motivated to engage with the stations via digital platforms based on their desire to stay updated and the convenience and interactivity offered by digital platforms. However, the study revealed that issues of slow loading times, low video streaming quality, high data consumption, and outdated content were the major challenges impeding audience engagement with Television outlets via the digital platform. The study recommends that TV stations should prioritize the production of high-quality content on their digital platforms and ensure regular updates of information and interactivity on their platforms

Keywords: Television adoption, Digital platforms, Audience engagement, Channels TV, Jalingo metropolis

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INTRODUCTION

Television broadcasting has evolved significantly over the years, transitioning from analog to digital platforms. The advent of digital television broadcasting has revolutionized the way content is delivered, received, and interacted with by viewers. This transformation has not only influenced the technological aspects of television but has also significantly impacted audience behavior, preferences, and engagement patterns (Prakash, 2023). According to Baran (2010), with digital television broadcasting, information can be carried over phone wires and stored on different platforms. Corroborating, Ocholi (2009) states that digital television offers a variety of added services, such as multimedia. Writing on digital TV broadcasting, Hanna (2023) states that using digital TV means using more advanced video and audio coding methods, digital communication methods that are less likely to be hacked, and packetized transmission so that the digital TV system can deliver other data that works with new developments in computer and multimedia formats.

The introduction of digital broadcasting has had a significant impact on several television broadcasting areas. According to Livingstone and Lunt (2014), the transition to digital television broadcasting has resulted in a plethora of changes in the media environment, leading to increased channel choices and diverse content options for viewers. Digital broadcasting technologies offer superior audio-visual quality, interactive features, and multiple channels, thereby presenting both opportunities and challenges for broadcasters in engaging their audiences effectively. Many scholars argue that digitization changes the role of audiences in the television broadcasting ecology (Carpentier & De Cleen 2008). Corroborating, Deuze (2009) maintains that we live in a new media ecology where participation, interactivity, and co-creation move toward the center of media production, enabling audiences to be visible.

In a related development, Shin, An, and Kim (2015) opined that the current TV audience has an aptitude for using phones, laptops, and tablets during the viewing of a program. Media multitasking enables users to engage in multimedia activities using multiple screens on a single media platform or with multiple media devices while watching television. Therefore, the audience's media consumption patterns and expectations are dynamic (Hampton et al, 2011). According to Deery (2003), digital television broadcasting provides opportunities for television broadcasters to develop innovative ways of amplifying the reception of their programs, as well as increasing the opportunities for audience feedback

and engagement with programs. Today, many television outlets in both developed and developing countries are integrating the possibilities offered by digital technologies into their programming. Aside from their communities, in addition to having active social media platforms for different programs where audiences interact with themselves, other television stations have created channels for viewers to provide reports from their communities.

Channels Television in Nigeria, for example, developed a strategy of involving the audience in the development of news stories by inviting them to upload newsworthy videos to their website (Olaide et al, 2016). There is no denying that audience engagement is a key component of broadcast business models today (Nelson & Webster, 2016), and newsroom practices are becoming more and more influenced by the analysis of audience metrics to produce news that will engage the audience (Molyneux & Zamith, 2020). The growing importance of audience engagement in digital television broadcasting has led to the emergence of the concept of social TV as part of the media lexicon (Jenkins, 2006). Social TV allows viewers to interact with television content, gradually developing new forms of participation and interaction. The use of other devices known as second screens (such as tablets, computers, and smartphones) to access traditional television content makes social TV possible (Rainie et al., 2012).

Channels Television (Channels TV) and the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) are two prominent TV outlets in Nigeria. Both stations have a significant online presence through their mobile applications, special media handles and pages, as well as official websites where stories shared on mainstream TV can also be accessible and where audiences can provide feedback through their comments, likes, and shares. Despite the stations' adoption of digital platforms, there is a gap in the literature regarding an in-depth understanding of the extent to which the audience engages with the stations, their motivations for engagement, and the challenges they face. Against this backdrop, the current study was carried out.

Statement of the Problem

The adoption of digital platforms by mainstream media, including television, has surged. In Nigeria, several TV outlets, particularly Channels TV and NTA, can be accessed through various platforms created by the stations. Digital platforms have features such as interactivity and speed, among others, which can undoubtedly enhance audience engagement. Audience engagement is an important issue in media operations because it

determines the audience's followership and, by extension, the degree to which the station will attract advertisers' patronage. Therefore, understanding audience engagement has been an important research subject.

In recent times, there have been numerous studies that have attempted to understand this phenomenon (e.g., Prakash, 2023; Nee & Dozier, 2017). A strand of such research examined how social media is employed in modern TV broadcasting (e.g., Bureš et al., 2017; Alejandro, 2010). Other studies have focused on examining the ethical issues associated with the adoption of digital platforms by mainstream media (Apuke & Omar, 2021; Royakkers et al., 2018). Despite the growing interest in the subject, the patterns and challenges of audience engagement with the digital platforms of mainstream TV stations in Nigeria have not been adequately established. As a result, the current study investigated Channels TV and NTA's adoption of digital platforms, as well as their audience engagement.

Research Questions

The following research questions serve as a guide for the study:

1. To what extent do television viewers in Jalingo interact on digital platforms with Channels TV and the Nigeria Television Authority (NTA)?
2. What motivates television viewers in Jalingo to engage with Channels TV and the Nigeria Television Authority (NTA) on digital platforms?
3. To what extent have digital platforms, e.g., social media integration, enhanced audience engagement with digital television programs of Channels TV and the Nigeria Television Authority (NTA)?
4. What are the challenges that television viewers face when using digital platforms with Channels TV and the Nigeria Television Authority (NTA)?

Review of Concepts

Digital platforms and Audience Engagement

Digital platforms are defined in various ways in academic literature. Parker et al. (2016) describe them as comprehensive systems of digital resources that facilitate value creation and interactions among external partners, producers, and customers. Similarly, Visconti (2020) notes that these platforms enable exchanges between disparate groups, such as end-users and producers, who may not otherwise connect. Researchers like De Reuven et al.

(2018), Gawer and Cusumano (2014), and Gawer (2014) emphasize that digital platforms are complex combinations of software, hardware, operations, and networks, providing shared techniques, technologies, and interfaces to a wide array of users.

Scholars have raised concerns about the lack of concrete definitions of engagement, with many defining it as the cognitive, emotional, or affective experiences users have with media content or brands (Broersma 2019). Hill (2019) views engagement as encompassing how audiences experience media across different contexts, while Nelson (2019) distinguishes between reception-orientated and production-orientated engagement, highlighting the complex interplay between audience metrics and news production. Political conceptualizations of audience engagement often focus on participation in the public sphere and editorial input, yet empirical studies show that audiences may be invisible or not involved in editorial decisions (Walvaart et al. 2019). This study adopts a broader, non-political definition of engagement based on Evans (2016), which includes immersive, interactive, and para-active forms of engagement. Immersive engagement involves intense focus on content; interactive engagement includes direct responses to content; and para-active engagement pertains to activities related to content but not directly engaging with it. By acknowledging the diverse ways audiences engage, this study aims to capture the broad range of interactions that contribute to a loyal and engaged viewership or listenership.

Review of Empirical Studies

Several studies examined media adoption of digital platforms and audience engagement levels. García-Avilés (2012) studied Spanish television channels and their websites, identifying multiple forms of audience engagement and various strategies for cross-media participation. Walvaart, Dhoest, and Bulck (2019) explored audience engagement practices within Flemish public service media, highlighting immersive, interactive, and para-active engagement strategies. Their research revealed how media producers integrate various roles to foster audience communities, aiming to reduce polarization and include diverse perspectives. Corroborating, Chadha, Kwon, and Tsai (2022) analyzed the news content posted on Facebook by three television news channels in three different communities in the US to determine the extent to which these posts fulfilled the critical information needs (CIN) of audiences. Results showed the channels posted CIN content and that audience engagement with CIN posts differed across communities, with some categories increasing engagement. Additionally, Fossen and Bleier (2021) explored how television engagement in

social media conversations about television programs relates to audience size during ads in those rams. Findings show that increases in OPE volume and positive deviations from the episode's average level of OPE before an ad relates to higher ad audience size.

It can be deduced from the above that there is a paucity of studies on the subject of television adoption of digital platforms and audience engagement from a Nigerian perspective. Despite Channels TV and NTA's popularity in Nigeria, as well as their online visibility, studies have not documented the extent to which the stations' audiences engaged with them via their digital platforms or their level of satisfaction with challenges. This observed gap in knowledge was the impetus for conducting the current study.

Theoretical Framework

This study is premised on the Social Media Engagement (SME) Theory. The theory explains how individuals actively interact with content on digital platforms, fostering a sense of community and trust through likes, comments, shares, and other forms of engagement. It also sheds light on the motivations behind user behavior on digital platforms. Thus, the central idea of the theory is that social media platforms are viable platforms for user engagement with diverse entities, leading to the formation of a virtual community (Di Gangi & Wasko, 2016). The theory originated from multiple disciplines, including communication, marketing, psychology, and sociology, and several scholars like Natalie Bazarova and Joseph Walther have contributed to its development (Di Gangi & Wasko, 2016).

The SME theory applies to the current study on TV stations' digital platform adoption and audience engagement. By strategically utilizing digital platforms, Channels TV and NTA can encourage audience engagement. This dynamic interaction not only connects viewers with content but also increases their loyalty to the station. SME Theory therefore provides a valuable framework for understanding how Channels TV and NTA leverage digital platforms to foster meaningful interactions and maintain audience engagement in today's media landscape.

METHODS

The study employed a quantitative survey research design. A quantitative survey was conducted to collect data on opinions, attitudes, and behaviors from a representative sample of viewers of Channels TV and NTA in the Jalingo metropolis. The sample size for this survey was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's table, resulting in 384 respondents. Data collection involved administering a self-designed questionnaire. The reliability and validity of the instruments were confirmed through expert reviews and pilot testing, with high Cronbach's alpha coefficients indicating acceptable reliability. Data analysis was carried out using descriptive statistical tools using SPSS.

RESULTS

Table 1: Demographic Information of the Survey Respondents

Variables	Frequency (n=331)	Percentage (100%)
Age:		
Under 18	11	339
18-24	101	30.5
25-34	112	33.8
35-44	98	29.6
45-54	9	2.7
55-64	0	0
65 and above		
Gender:		
Male	226	68.3
Female	105	31.7
Highest Edu. Attainment:		
No formal education	0	0
Primary education	0	0
Secondary education	72	21.8
Tertiary education	259	78.2
Occupation:		
Student	199	36
Civil service	69	20.8
Self-employed	41	12.4
Unemployed	22	6.6
Retired	0	0
Marital Status:		
Married	81	24.5
Single	201	60.7
Others	49	14.8

Source: Survey, 2024

Table 1 details the demographic profile of the survey respondents, showing a predominance of younger individuals aged 18–34, with a majority being male (68.3%) and holding tertiary education (78.2%). Most respondents are students (36%), followed by those in the civil service (20.8%), and self-employed (12.4%), with no retired individuals. The majority are single (60.7%), suggesting that digital TV content should cater to a younger, tech-savvy, and flexible audience, focusing on convenience and diverse interests.

Table 2: *Respondents' opinion on the extent they engage with Channels TV and NTA content on digital platforms*

Stations	Very often	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	Freq.	Total
Channels	41 (12.4%)	87 (26.3%)	196 (59.2%)	7 (2.1%)	0 (0%)	331	100
NTA	0 (0%)	11 (3.3%)	307(92.7%)	13 (3.9%)	0 (0%)	331	100

Source: Survey, 2024

Table 2 above shows that 59.2% of respondents engage with Channels TV's content on digital platforms occasionally, with 26.3% engaging often and 12.4% engaging very often. No respondents reported ever engaging with Channel TV. In contrast, 92.7% engage with NTA's content occasionally, 3.3% often, and none very often, with 3.9% engaging rarely, and similarly, no respondents reported never engaging with NTA's content.

Table 3: Respondents' opinions on the factors motivating their engagement with Channels TV on digital platforms

Responses	**Channels TV**		**NTA**	
	Freq.	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**
Stay updated with news	298	90	68	20.5
Interact with journalists/anchors	21	6.3	0	0
Participate in discussions or polls	121	36.6	0	0
Access exclusive content	18	5.4	0	0
Convenience	311	94	298	90
Accessibility to On-Demand Content	0	0	0	0
Access to provide feedback to TV station	189	57	34	10.3
Accessibility to past or archived content	301	90.9	11	3.3
Others	0	0	0	0

Source: Survey, 2024

Table 3 reveals that the primary motivation for engaging with Channels TV on digital platforms is staying updated with news (90%), followed by participating in discussions or polls (36.6%). Convenience is a major factor in engagement with both Channels TV (94%) and NTA (90%). However, Channels TV shows stronger appeal in terms of feedback opportunities and accessing archived content compared to NTA, suggesting a higher overall engagement with Channels TV's digital offerings.

Table 4: Respondents' opinion on the extent digital platforms encouraged their engagement with TV stations

Stations	Very Low Extent	Low Extent	Moderate Extent	High Extent	Very High extent	Total	%
Channels TV	12 (3.6%)	28(8.5%)	29 (8.8%)	132 (39.9%)	130 (39.3)	331	100
NTA	198 (59.8%)	105 (31.7%)	17 (5.1%)	11 (3.3%)	0 (0%)	331	100

Source: Survey, 2024

Table 4 shows that 39.9% of respondents feel online platforms encourage engagement with Channels TV to a "High Extent," and 39.3% to a "Very High Extent," indicating a strong positive impact of digital channels on engagement with Channels TV. In contrast, 59.8% of respondents feel online platforms encourage engagement with NTA to a "Very Low Extent," and only 3.3% report a "High Extent," reflecting a significant gap in online engagement effectiveness between the two TV stations.

Table 5: Respondents' opinion on the specific challenge they encountered while engaging with Channels TV and NTA on digital platforms

Responses	**Channels TV**		**NTA**	
	Freq.	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**
Slow loading times	221	66.8	309	93.3
Poor video streaming quality	12	3.6	321	97
Difficulty navigating the website or app	4	1.2	13	3.9
Lack of updates or outdated content	12	3.6	311	94
Technical glitches or errors	291	87.9	301	90.9
Security or privacy concerns	6	1.8	9	2.7
Difficulty finding specific programs or information	198	59.8	201	60.7
Limited accessibility features	55	16.6	89	26.9
Compatibility issues with devices or browsers	98	29.6	56	16.9
Data Consumption	232	70.1	329	99.4
Others	0	0	0	0

Table 5 highlights several challenges viewers face when engaging with Channels TV and NTA on digital platforms. "Slow loading times" is the most common issue for both channels, with NTA experiencing a notably higher proportion (93.3%) of respondents reporting this problem. Additionally, "Poor video streaming quality" is a major concern for NTA (97%), while it is less of an issue for Channels TV (3.6%). Both channels also face challenges with "Technical glitches" and "Compatibility issues," but data consumption concerns are particularly acute for NTA (99.4%). Despite shared challenges, NTA also reports more issues with "Lack of updates or outdated content" compared to Channels TV.

DISCUSSION

This study examined audience engagement with television content on digital platforms, focusing specifically on Channels TV and NTA. Firstly, engagement with Channels TV on digital platforms was found to be moderate, which disagrees with prior research by García-Avilés (2012), which highlighted significant audience participation on Spanish television channels and their websites. Similarly, Tsai and Lin (2022) previously demonstrated that social media has intensified audience engagement with traditional media, such as television. Secondly, the study identified various motivations for engaging with Channels TV and NTA on digital platforms. The most common motivation reported by respondents was the desire to "stay updated with news," coupled with the convenience of platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and mobile apps, easily accessible via smart devices like smartphones and tablets. This finding aligns with the Walvaart, Dhoest, and Bulck (2019) study, which found that a sense of community encourages many television audiences to engage with TV stations through digital platforms. Also, Tong and Chan (2023) revealed that interactivity is a primary motivation for engagement on digital platforms across various content types, including television stations and their programs.

Thirdly, the study found that digital platforms significantly promote engagement with television stations. This finding is supported by Alejandro (2010), who established that digital platforms have opened up vistas of opportunities for mainstream media to engage more with their audience as well as gain more visibility. The study also unveiled several challenges hindering audience engagement with television via digital platforms. These challenges include slow loading times, poor video streaming quality, high data consumption, and outdated content. This is consistent with Kumar et al. (2024), who

highlighted challenges faced by online streaming platforms for both traditional and non-traditional media, including issues with network neutrality, data privacy, and content moderation.

CONCLUSION

The integration of digital platforms into traditional TV broadcasting has substantially impacted audience engagement. However, the level of audience engagement with Channels TV and NTA via digital platforms was minimal, despite motivations such as the desire to stay updated with news and the convenience and interactivity common on digital platforms. The low audience engagement on the digital platforms of Channels TV and NTA is linked to problems of slow loading times, poor video streaming quality, high data consumption, and outdated content that hinder optimal audience engagement via digital platforms. Overcoming these challenges is key to improving audience engagement and the audience-based nature of the stations, which can have economic and sustainability implications.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends:

1. The stations should improve the quality of their digital content to make it more appealing or tailored to an online audience. They should also ensure regular updates on their online content. This may necessitate the creation of an independent unit or department to manage the television outlet's online platforms.
2. The stations need to address technical issues like slow loading and poor streaming; this will require more investment in the provision of digital technological devices and manpower training for optimal utilization.
3. The TV stations should improve their online platforms, like mobile applications, to make them more user-friendly and ensure compatibility across devices.

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