



Media Convergence or Dominance: Interrogating the Nexus between Technology and Culture in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the complex relationship between technology and culture within the framework of media convergence. Employing the integrative literature review method, the study found that what was initially perceived as media convergence is, in reality, media dominance thereby widening the gap between developed and developing nations, such as Nigeria, in terms of information production, distribution, and consumption. This development has polarised the world into information-rich and information-poor regions, with technology-rich countries determining the volume and nature of information consumed by technology-poor countries like Nigeria. This situation raises concerns about the impact of technology on Nigeria's culture, particularly in terms of cultural homogenisation, the erosion and replacement of indigenous culture with pop culture, and the concentration of power within major media technology corporations. The study, therefore, concludes that there is a growing erosion and commodification of culture in Nigeria, as local subtleties are frequently overshadowed by global appeal. Based on the findings, the study recommends the formulation of a comprehensive, multi-stakeholder societal framework that integrates media literacy into national education curricula, public policy, and community-based programmes. This framework should aim to equip citizens, particularly the youth, with the critical media competencies necessary to navigate the increasingly complex digital information environment. Furthermore, deliberate efforts should be made to promote local content creation and the preservation of indigenous cultural expressions through digital platforms, thereby ensuring a balanced negotiation between global media influences and Nigeria's unique cultural identity.

Keywords: Media convergence, culture, dominance, nexus, technology, Nigeria

Introduction

The development in information communication technology and the internet has revolutionised and redefined media operations globally. This development has ushered the media into the era known as media convergence. According to Balbi and Magaudda (2018), media convergence is a process of change in which many media platforms, technologies, and forms combine to form a single system. This means that the distinctiveness which previously defined the media such as analogue or digital, audio or audio-visual, newspaper or magazine, radio or television has now been merged into a single computerised device, a process simply referred to as multimedia. Hence, information distribution and consumption have changed as a result of this

transformation, making it difficult to distinguish between print, broadcast, and digital media. Interestingly, media convergence extends beyond basic technical integration to include the ways in which material (information) is generated, disseminated, and consumed (Farmer, 2019; Huhtamo, 2013).

Doctorow (2019) asserts that the convergence of media has revolutionised the communication environment by combining media forms that were previously distinct. A new information paradigm marked by internet affordances such as “multimediality”, “hypertextuality”, and interactivity has emerged through media convergence (Jenkins, 2006). Information is now transmitted via the internet spectrum in the convergent media environment. According to Mazzini (2014), Turner (2006) claimed that the origins of current cyberculture can be traced to the World Wide Web (WWW), as it was through this network that the internet began to operate in the 1960s. In the early 1990s, computer-mediated communication gained popularity due to the adoption of electronic devices in the 1980s. With access to the exchange of vast mass communication content online, convergent internet platforms have created a thriving ecosystem. As O'Sullivan and Fortunati (2021) observe, the development of information technology and the increasing usage of the internet have altered the logic of media activity through the phenomenon of media convergence. In reality, a wide range of technologies falls under the expansive domain of digital space. According to Pathak (2016), new or emerging technologies for mediated public communication include digital television, satellite radio, wireless and mobile media, and other similar platforms.

Although media convergence presents numerous opportunities for both the media industries and society at large, it also raises several concerns chief among them being the issue of media dominance, which refers to the consolidation of power and influence within large platforms or corporations. This phenomenon alters the media landscape and frequently prompts fears of monopolistic behaviour and content uniformity. Additionally, concerns arise over the diversity of voices and opinions in the media ecosystem due to the dominance of major players such as Google, Amazon, Facebook, and Apple (Coyle, 2018; Schmidt & de Kloet, 2017). The implication of this trend is significant: since the media functions as both a purveyor of information and a transmitter of cultural heritage, technologically and information-rich countries can exert influence over those that are technologically and informationally disadvantaged. Based on the foregoing, it can be deduced that there is a significant relationship between media, technology, and culture.

Therefore, understanding the relationship between media, technology, and culture is essential for grasping the implications of media dominance and convergence. Hall (2006) highlights how technological innovations become embedded in cultural practices through the encoding and decoding of information within cultural contexts. The relationship between technology and culture is reciprocal technology influences culture, and culture, in turn, shapes technological evolution (Fuchs, 2014; Newman & Fletcher, 2018). This interaction is critical. The rise of digital media has accelerated these processes, as illustrated by the digital news environment described in Newman et al.'s (2018) “Digital News Report.” This digital revolution not only changes how information is distributed but also reshapes audience behaviour and social expectations. According to Fuchs (2014), social media plays a central role in shaping cultural behaviour by offering a platform where these behaviours are not merely reflected but actively constructed. Consequently, cultural expressions and societal norms are deeply influenced by media dominance and convergence an influence that extends beyond economics. The power wielded by dominant platforms shapes the narratives that gain prominence, thereby altering the cultural landscape (Stenport, Westerståhl & Crain, 2014). Schmidt and de Kloet's (2017) study on

bricolage underscores how media shape cultural practices and how dominant platforms play a crucial role in constructing and disseminating cultural meaning. Hence, this research aims to investigate the effects of media convergence (the merging of platforms such as television, print, and cinema into interconnected digital ecosystems) on Nigerian culture, while also interrogating the nexus between culture and technology.

Statement of the Problem

In the past few decades, technology has advanced rapidly, leading to a significant shift in the way media is consumed (Kitabi, 2019). This phenomenon, known as media convergence, involves the blending of previously separate platforms such as television, print, and cinema into interconnected digital ecosystems (Latzer, 2013; Laxmi, 2021). On one hand, scholars like Jenkins (2008) argue that media convergence has the potential to empower individuals by dismantling traditional gatekeepers and providing platforms for diverse voices to be heard. Similarly, social media platforms and blogs have amplified the voices of previously marginalised populations, contributing to a more pluralistic cultural landscape (Morah & Omojola, 2014). According to Castells (2009), the horizontal flow of information facilitated by the internet holds the potential to challenge power structures and promote democratisation. However, other scholars present a more critical perspective on the intersection of media, technology, and culture. Zuboff (2019) warns of "surveillance capitalism" enabled by tech giants such as Google and Facebook, whose dominance over platforms and data grants them unprecedented power to influence user behaviour and shape access to information. Boyd and Kate (2012) argue that algorithms function as invisible gatekeepers, curating online discourse in ways that can reinforce echo chambers and restrict diversity. Moreover, the economic power of media conglomerates like Disney and ViacomCBS casts a long shadow, as their control over production and distribution allows them to shape narratives and homogenise cultural expressions (McChesney, 2013).

While the potential of media convergence to empower individuals and promote cultural diversity is evident, increasing concerns exist regarding the concentration of power among tech giants and media corporations. The key question is: Does media convergence foster a more vibrant and inclusive cultural landscape in Nigeria, or has it led instead to dominance and control by powerful tech conglomerates? This constitutes the central problem that this research seeks to explore.

Theoretical Framework

This study is hinged on the media convergence theory as conceptualised by Henry Jenkins in 1992. The theory explores the integration of different media forms and technologies and offers important insights into the dynamics of dominance within the convergent media environment. Jenkins (2006) asserts that media convergence generates new forms of cultural creation and consumption by blurring the boundaries between various media. Bagdikian (2014) raised concerns about the homogeneity of media content and the suppression of diverse perspectives due to the dominance of media conglomerates. This viewpoint is supported by media convergence theory, which highlights how media consumers become *prosumers* individuals who both create and consume information. Curran and Seaton (2018) have observed that the concentration of media ownership raises concerns about the control of information and its impact on public opinion.

Be that as it may, media convergence theory provides a relevant theoretical framework for understanding the intricate relationship between technology and culture within the context of media convergence. The theory underscores the integration and interoperability of technology in the creation, distribution, and consumption of information, offering valuable insights into how technological advancements shape cultural dynamics. In exploring the relationship between

technology and culture, this theory is of particular importance because it emphasises the transformative impact of digital technologies on societal practices and cultural values. As individuals transition from conventional modes of communication to digital platforms, the theory posits that the convergence of different media forms facilitated by technology leads to new modes of cultural creation and consumption. This perspective is essential for understanding how technological advancements, as integral components of media convergence, influence the ways in which individuals engage with and contribute to cultural expressions.

Conceptual Review

Media Convergence

Convergence is the process of cross-promoting and sharing content from multiple media platforms some of which are interactive through newsroom collaboration and partnerships (Brooks, Kennedy, Moen, & Ranly, 2004). The democratisation of media use enabled by media convergence, according to Jenkins and Deuze (2008, p. 71), signals “a widening of opportunities for individuals and grassroots communities to tell stories and access stories others are telling; to present arguments and listen to arguments made elsewhere; to share information and learn more about the world from a variety of other perspectives.” Additional examples may be cited to support Jenkins and Deuze’s claim and to illustrate emerging patterns of convergence. For instance, the Continuous News Desk (CND) was introduced in 2005 by several American newspapers including *The New York Times*, *The Chicago Tribune*, and *USA Today* to deliver breaking news on their websites as events unfolded. In addition to real-time updates, the CND also enhances written stories by incorporating multimedia content such as audio and video (Zhang, 2008).

Similarly, Latzer (2013, p. 2) defines media convergence as the blurring of boundaries between media, specifically the traditional distinction between telecommunications (point-to-point) and mass media. He aptly summarises the concept as follows:

Convergence is an ambiguous term used by various disciplines to describe and analyse processes of change towards uniformity or union. Its application in the communications sector often referred to as media convergence also encompasses valuable approaches and insights to describe, characterise, and understand the digital creative economy. A certain amount of fuzziness, combined with the broad, multipurpose character of convergence, leads both to a general and a wide range of very specific understandings of the convergent communications sector.

Murdock (2000, p. 36) identifies three levels of convergence: technological (e.g. satellite communication), content-related (cultural forms), and economic (linked to businesses, employers, and the media market). Media convergence is therefore seen as part of a convergence culture the blending of new and traditional media (Jenkins, 2001; 2006). As such, the media product is perceived as constantly evolving, and convergence as a continuous process. Herkman (2012), examining convergence from the standpoint of cross-media relations, argues that the flow of cross-media products is a key outcome of economic convergence.

From the foregoing, the following may be outlined as key features or characteristics of media convergence:

1. Multimedia interactions
2. Presence of technology
3. Combination of different media forms
4. Use of the internet
5. Ability to reach a multiplicity of audiences

6. Blending of conventional media with new media

Media Dominance

Media dominance refers to the concentration of power and influence within the media landscape, often attributed to large platforms or conglomerates. This consolidation of power raises concerns about monopolistic practices, content homogeneity, and the potential suppression of diverse voices and opinions within the media ecosystem (Coyle, 2018). Schmidt and de Kloet's (2017) research on *bricolage* highlights how dominant platforms are essential to the creation and distribution of cultural meaning, emphasising the significant role of media in shaping cultural practices. Media dominance is not a recent development, but it has gained momentum with the growth of digital media, raising concerns about the impact of major players such as Google, Amazon, Facebook, and Apple on content uniformity and diversity within the media space (O'Sullivan & Fortunati, 2021).

Furthermore, the impact of media dominance has become more pronounced in the digital age, with social media platforms emerging as influential gatekeepers of information. The algorithmic curation of content on platforms like Facebook and Twitter raises questions about the role of artificial intelligence in shaping the information landscape (Tufekci, 2018). Tufekci suggests that algorithms can inadvertently amplify certain viewpoints while suppressing others, thereby exacerbating concerns over the manipulation of public discourse. Supporting this, Gillespie (2014) asserts that algorithms are not neutral but are designed with embedded values and goals, influencing the content users are exposed to on digital platforms.

When examining media dominance from a cultural perspective, Jenkins (2006) observes that media dominance is intricately linked to the construction of cultural meaning. The narratives presented by dominant media entities play a pivotal role in shaping societal norms, values, and perceptions. Fiske (1989) supports this view, noting that media messages contribute to the formation of cultural myths and ideologies, reinforcing the dominant social order. Consequently, the interplay between media dominance and cultural production is complex, with dominance often determining the boundaries within which cultural expressions are legitimised and disseminated.

Technology

Technology broadly refers to the application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes, particularly in the development and use of tools, machinery, and systems to solve problems or achieve specific goals (Grace, Salvatier, Dafoe, Zhang, & Evans, 2018). Within the context of media convergence and dominance, technology is conceptualised as the integration and interoperability of technological advancements in the creation, distribution, and consumption of media content. Jenkins (1992) highlights the technological dimension of media convergence theory, emphasising the adaptability and transmission of electronic information through intelligent platforms, applications, and devices. The impact of digital media on cultural behaviours and societal expectations particularly through social media underscores the reciprocal relationship between technology and culture, each shaping and being shaped by the other (Fuchs, 2014; Newman et al., 2018). Furthermore, the development of information technology and the growing usage of the internet have transformed the logic of media operations, giving rise to the phenomenon of media convergence (O'Sullivan & Fortunati, 2021). This convergence has blurred traditional distinctions between different media forms, eroding the once-clear lines between print, broadcast, and digital media.

Consequently, the influence of digital media on cultural behaviour and societal expectations especially through the widespread use of social media platforms highlights the dynamic feedback loop between technology and culture. Fuchs (2014) and Newman et al. (2018)

stress the transformative role of technology in shaping cultural norms and practices. Social media platforms have become powerful agents in this process, both influencing and being influenced by cultural standards. The intertwining of technology and culture means that advancements in technology drive cultural changes, which in turn influence the trajectory of technological innovation. Similarly, the widespread use of the internet has significantly restructured the media logic, contributing to the rise of media convergence. This convergence represents a paradigm shift, dissolving the clear boundaries between traditional and digital media forms. The integration of technology has not only changed the way content is produced and consumed but also introduced new models of audience engagement and participation.

Culture

Culture refers to the inherited achievements of human groups, passed down across generations. This encompasses tangible elements such as tools and artefacts, as well as intangible aspects like customs, traditions, and values (Tylor, 1871; Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952). At its core, culture is embedded in the subtle ideas and practices shared within a group, shaped by historical context and deep-rooted meaning (Diamond, 2019). Central to culture are the explicit and implicit behavioural patterns acquired by humans (Kottak, 2018). These behaviours are communicated and sustained through symbols, forming the distinctive accomplishments of human social groups (Malinowski, 2016). This continuous transmission of cultural knowledge and practices ensures societal cohesion and adaptation over time (Hall, 2018). Culture manifests in numerous forms, from art, music, and literature that express human creativity and emotion (Langer, 2017), to architecture and technology that reflect innovation and problem-solving (Boas, 2015). Every dimension of human life bears the imprint of culture.

Nonetheless, understanding the relationship between technology and culture is essential for grasping the implications of media dominance and convergence. Hall (2006) underscores how technological innovations become embedded in cultural practices through the encoding and decoding of information within specific cultural settings. This reciprocal relationship between technology and culture highlighted by Fuchs (2014) and Newman et al. (2018) demonstrates the profound impact technology has on cultural expression and societal values. Moreover, the effects of media dominance and convergence extend beyond economic concerns to deeply influence cultural forms and social norms (Stenport et al., 2014). The merging of media formats has led to the emergence of new modes of cultural production and consumption. However, this shift raises critical concerns about media ownership concentration, content homogenisation, and the marginalisation of diverse perspectives (Jenkins, 2006; McChesney, 2008). This dominance can curtail the plurality of voices and perspectives in the media, thereby affecting democratic discourse and civic engagement (McChesney, 2008).

Methodology

This research adopts the integrative literature review method to rigorously explore the subject matter under investigation. According to Christmals and Gross (2017, p. 7), “an integrative literature review method is a non-experimental method in which researchers objectively critique, summarise, and draw conclusions about a subject matter through systematic search, categorisation, and thematic analysis of past qualitative and quantitative research studies on the subject matter under investigation.” From the foregoing, it is evident that this method enables the researcher to objectively analyse, synthesise, and conclude based on data derived from existing literature on media convergence and its impact on Nigerian culture. However, due to the subjective nature of this method, the findings of this study cannot be generalised to a wider population.

Discussion

This section discusses the body of literature relevant to the study, integrating diverse scholarly perspectives to critically examine the themes of media convergence, dominance, technology, and cultural transformation.

Exploring Dominance in Media Convergence

Understanding the power dynamics at play when various media forms converge is essential to examining dominance in media convergence. In the era of digital media, the concept of media convergence has grown in significance. Media convergence refers to the combination of various media forms, technologies, and platforms into one cohesive system (Stenport et al., 2014; Balbi, 2017; Balbi & Magaouda, 2018). This phenomenon has transformed the way information is shared, consumed, and distributed, erasing the once-clear boundaries between print, broadcast, and digital media. However, concerns have arisen regarding media dominance, whereby a small number of powerful entities exert considerable influence over the media landscape. According to Coyle (2018), media dominance involves the accumulation of authority and influence within significant corporations or platforms. Although this phenomenon has long existed, it has escalated with the rise of tech giants such as Google, Amazon, Facebook, and Apple. This development has raised concerns about content homogenisation and potential monopolistic practices. As Jenkins (2006) notes, the blurring of boundaries between media forms has given rise to new forms of cultural production and consumption.

McChesney (2008) observes that convergence in the media landscape has led to a consolidation of media ownership, with major conglomerates assuming dominant roles. Bagdikian (2014) raises concerns over media content homogenisation and the silencing of diverse voices due to this dominance. Furthermore, Curran and Seaton (2018) argue that the concentration of media ownership has implications for information control and public opinion formation. This dominance can limit media plurality, potentially undermining democratic discourse and civic engagement. Gillespie (2018) adds that the overwhelming power of digital platforms, such as social media companies and streaming services, poses challenges to cultural creation and dissemination. These platforms influence cultural environments by controlling content access, amplifying particular voices, and shaping trends (Couldry & Mejias, 2019).

Media Dominance or Convergence: Analysing a Shift towards Concentrated Power in Information Dissemination

Tan, Guo, and Wang (2019) argue that the appearance of a democratised media environment is often a facade for deeper forms of dominance hidden beneath the surface. These forces shape cultural narratives and influence access to information through control over platforms, algorithms, and economic power (Emwinromwankhoe, 2020; Laxmi, 2021). Dominance through media convergence can be understood in the following ways:

1. **Control over Platforms and Devices – Gatekeepers of the Digital Realm:** Tech giants and media conglomerates dominate the platforms and devices through which people access information and culture (Ate & Onuwaikwu, 2019; Zuboff, 2019). For example, Google prioritises certain content via its search engine and Android systems, while Facebook influences discourse through its algorithms and editorial policies (Pariser, 2011). Benkler (2022) argues that this control extends to content moderation, including "deplatforming" and "shadowbanning," thus marginalising dissenting voices. McChesney

(2013) highlights how production studios and distribution channels are controlled by media conglomerates, restricting access for independent creators.

2. **Algorithmic Governance – The Invisible Hand Shaping Discourse:** Boyd and Kate (2012) note that sophisticated algorithms curate online content and personalise user experience. While beneficial, Zuboff (2019) cautions that these algorithms can perpetuate biases and create echo chambers. Siapera (2018) adds that algorithmic manipulation, such as targeted advertising, can influence behaviour and erode individual autonomy.
3. **Economic Power and Cultural Production – Shaping Narratives with Money:** Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2013) explain that large media budgets allow dominant players to reach wider audiences, marginalising alternative voices. Advertising revenue furthers this imbalance, with corporations influencing editorial decisions (McChesney, 2013; Peil & Sparviero, 2017). Holt (2011) warns that these powers are not neutral and shape access to information and cultural expression.

Media convergence has thus resulted in a concentration of power within the media ecosystem (Miljan, 2008). The emergence of digital platforms and the consolidation of media ownership raise concerns over monopolistic practices (Newman & Fletcher, 2018). This trend affects democratic discourse and limits diversity (Nwanne, 2016; Schmidt & de Kloet, 2017).

The Interplay between Technology and Culture

Technology and culture have a reciprocal relationship that evolves over time. Babu and Kachari (2023) note that technological adoption affects communication, work, and social patterns. The internet and mobile phones have revolutionised communication (Coyle, 2018), and social media has enabled intercultural connections, forming new communities and subcultures (Fortunati et al., 2015). However, digital media raises concerns about the commodification and homogenisation of culture (Ajani & Fakunle, 2021). Technological access often reflects socioeconomic disparities, influencing cultural experiences (Donner & Gitau, 2009). Jenkins (2006) observes that digital media has transformed cultural production, facilitating the rise of convergence culture.

Technology also enables the democratisation of content creation. With smartphones and low-cost tools, individuals can bypass traditional gatekeepers and create content for global audiences (Schlesinger & Doyle, 2015; Jenkins et al., 2013). Platforms like YouTube and TikTok have disrupted traditional media distribution (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). Emerging models, such as blockchain-based platforms like Ujo Music, give creators greater control (Niestroj, 2022). Streaming services and mobile technology have also increased media consumption.

The Impact of Technology on Nigeria's Culture

In Nigeria, technology has had both positive and negative impacts on culture. Positively, it has enabled global cultural exchange and the preservation of heritage through digital platforms (Adomi & Solomon-Uwakwe, 2019; Oyero et al., 2020). Social media facilitates cultural expression and documentation. On the downside, Western-centric content risks overshadowing indigenous cultures (Tan, Guo & Wang, 2019). Younger generations may lose touch with traditional practices due to digital immersion (Adomi & Solomon-Uwakwe, 2019). Global platforms may erode local media industries and suppress indigenous narratives (Emwinromwankhoe, 2020; Laxmi, 2021). Hence, a balanced approach is needed to ensure cultural diversity and autonomy are not compromised.

Power Dynamics and Cultural Transformations in the Age of Media Convergence

Media convergence has long influenced the intersection of culture and technology (Bruns & Burgess, 2016). From the printing press to digital networks, each technological leap has

reshaped power dynamics and cultural narratives (Chyi & Chadha, 2012; Schlesinger & Doyle, 2015). Historically, power was centralized as with the printing press, telegraph, and radio allowing dominant institutions to control knowledge dissemination (Marvin, 1988; Stephen, 2003).

The digital age has decentralised some of this power. The internet enables individuals and communities to challenge mainstream media dominance (Jenkins, 2008). However, tech giants now wield significant influence, raising concerns about algorithmic control and data exploitation (Zuboff, 2019). Grant (2009) asserts that while the internet allows for cultural diversity, global narratives may overshadow local traditions. Appadurai (2001) highlights the emergence of hybrid cultures shaped by global and local interactions. Nonetheless, this convergence brings challenges. Misinformation and algorithmic bias threaten democratic discourse. Hence, media literacy is essential to navigate the digital space critically (Boyd & Kate, 2012).

Media convergence has transformed the media landscape, enhancing global connectivity and facilitating cultural exchange (Fortunati et al., 2017; Balbi & Magaouda, 2018). This interconnectedness creates a shared narrative while challenging traditional cultural norms. Indigenous cultures face pressures to adapt while preserving their values (O'Sullivan et al., 2017; Hay & Kanafani, 2017). Moreover, convergence blends commerce with culture. Digital cultural products risk homogenisation as global markets favour universal appeal (Balbi, 2017; Friedman & Forde, 2015). This commodification challenges the preservation of cultural diversity, prompting societies to balance economic interests with cultural authenticity.

Conclusion

Media convergence has significantly transformed the creation, consumption, and dissemination of cultural content. The interaction between media, technology, and culture has given rise to new media platforms, disrupted traditional gatekeepers in the media industry, enabled immersive experiences, opened up new distribution channels, and made content creation more accessible to the general public. However, concerns have emerged regarding algorithmic gatekeeping, data-driven manipulation, and the potential for concentrated control and the suppression of cultural distinctiveness challenges largely driven by the rise of tech giants such as Google and Facebook. Additionally, cultural heritage is increasingly at risk due to the commodification of culture, as local nuances are often overshadowed by global appeal and cultural homogenisation. This trend poses a serious threat to the survival of less dominant cultures, particularly those in developing countries like Nigeria. If these issues are not addressed, the unchecked influence of technology may continue to erode local identities and traditions. Consequently, there is an urgent need for the development of a comprehensive, multi-stakeholder societal framework that integrates media literacy into national education curricula, public policy, and community-based initiatives. Such a framework would empower citizens especially young people with the critical competencies needed to engage thoughtfully with media. Furthermore, deliberate efforts to promote local content creation and preserve indigenous cultural expressions through digital platforms are imperative to achieving a more balanced relationship between global media influence and the protection of Nigeria's unique cultural heritage.

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