

## **Nigerian Broadcast Media Alternative Funding Sources and Performance in the Digital Age**

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### **Abstract**

This study examined Nigerian broadcast media funding and performance in the digital age. The study was premised on the propositions of Media Ownership Theory, Media Dependency System Theory, and Organisational Performance Model. The study used a mixed research approach: in-depth interviews and survey. The study used a multi-stage sampling technique to select the sample. A total of 27 in-depth interviews were conducted while 235 questionnaires were administered. The study used descriptive statistics to analyse the data. The study found streaming, video on demand, subscription, social media advertising, and promotion as some of the alternative online funding sources in the stations. It was also established that the stations attract more users on their platform through quality content and maintaining good relationships with stakeholders. The study concluded that the advent of the internet and online platforms have opened opportunities for broadcast media to harness economic benefits by leveraging their websites and social media platforms to share and stream content and to also engage in other activities such as podcasting. The study recommended that broadcast media should invest increasingly in digital technologies and also harness social media platforms to enable them explore effective alternative sources for generating funding from the digital platforms; and to also collaborate with giant global technology firms such as Google, Amazon, Microsoft and Facebook in areas such as software, content creation and distribution to explore ways of generating returns from the online content and to enhance their performance.

**Keywords:** Commercialisation, public-funded media, online platforms, emerging technologies

### **Introduction**

Broadcast media, particularly terrestrial-based organisations, require adequate funding for their establishment, operation and optimal performance to deliver the desired content to the audience (Gainaka, Alsagoff & Ghazali, 2020). Thus, adequate funding can address issues of poor staff remuneration and welfare, lack of facilities, obsolete equipment and other production logistics that have direct bearing on the general performance of the broadcast media

organisations. Observably, the nature of media funding in a given country generally reflects the country's economic performance. In a circumstance where the funding and economy of a country within which the broadcast media operates dwindle, the stations face a lot of challenges, ranging from inability to purchase and maintain equipment to poor remuneration of staff. This is, perhaps, part of the reasons scholars such as Picard (2008); Chukwuma and Maduka (2018) are of the view that media executives seem to focus attention on how the media can explore alternative sources of funding, which is now a discourse in media economics. Several studies, for example Olube (2013), Dogari, Shem and Opuke (2018), Azubuike and Ikiriko (2019) have noted that funding is a major challenge to the survival of broadcast media. This becomes more critical as emerging digital technologies such as the online platforms are gaining more popularity, thereby influencing audiences to migrate to digital platforms. Previous research such as Twenge, Martin and Spitzberg (2019) found that audiences are migrating from legacy media to social or online media platforms, particularly young adults who are active digital media users. Thus, this emerging market structure is compelling changes in audience, advertisement and content production with implications for media profitability. The broadcast media, whether private, public or community-owned media, is now experiencing a continued dwindling of revenues that are traditionally generated from advertising, sponsored programmes and perhaps government grants that are only given to public-funded organisations. These traditional sources of funding, which are largely dependent on by broadcast media, are now inadequate to sustain the operation and performance of the broadcast media to meet the expectations of the audience in Nigeria. Thus, the objective of this study is to examine the alternative funding sources and performance of Nigerian broadcast media in the digital age.

### **Broadcast Media Ownership and Funding Sources**

Funding is a critical resource that supports the operation as well as optimises the performance of broadcast media. This is in line with the view of Gainaka, Alsagoff and Ghazali

(2020) that broadcast media is highly capital-intensive venture, perhaps more capital intensive than the print media. Inadequate funding in broadcast media can affect production, content, performance sustainability and staff productivity irrespective of ownership structure (e.g public-funded, private or community-owned media). Several studies (Njegovan & Radenković, 2010; Schweizer et al., 2014; Herzog & Karppinen, 2014; Ramsey, 2018) have shown that there are policies and initiatives towards reforming even public service media funding strategy in Europe, particularly in countries such as Germany, Finland and Ireland. These efforts were all geared towards building a robust broadcasting industry that could be relevant in a competitive environment. Dogari, Shem and Opuke (2018), studied ownership and funding of government owned media, focusing on journalists from Taraba State Broadcasting Service (TSBS) and Taraba Television (TTV) and found that 33 respondents which constituted 55% of their sample size concurred that their media outfits are not adequately financed by government. This outcome is consistent with the findings of Olube (2013), whose study revealed that government owned media faced financial challenges. This happens despite the fact that the public-owned media are largely supported by government as they derive their funds directly from government treasury in form of subvention or allocation. Moreover, their funding is complemented with revenues generated through advertising, sponsored programmes and other commercial activities as approved by government since the commercialisation policy began in the early 90s (Hyacinth, Chukwuma & Maduka, 2018).

A related study by Azubuike and Ikiriko (2019) observed that private broadcast media organisations are not also devoid of challenges, which funding is identified among their numerous other challenges. Their study shows that 142 out of 163 respondents agreed that funding is one of the major challenges of their media outfits. The authors further observe that inadequate funding is capable of rendering the broadcast firms to be technologically backward and unable to take care of staff welfare and wages. Drawing from an article in Nigerian

Guardian (28 June, 2004), Azubuike and Ikiriko (2019, p.95) note that “Salaries are not paid regularly and indispensable empowerment programmes are recklessly abandoned.” Thus, the authors further confirmed that inadequate funding, expensive equipment and debt accruing from advertising agents constitute the major challenges in the private broadcast firms. This is consistent with the findings of Judith and Ogeji (2019) that funding is one of the major challenges of broadcast media in their effort to migrate to digital switch-over as expressed by majority of the respondents in the study. As in every other sector in Nigeria, funding is a challenge that also limits community broadcasting in Nigeria. One of the challenges is the fact that even to pay license fee or renewal fee tends to be difficult for broadcasting media organisations especially in the dwindling economic period. This becomes difficult for community broadcast media to be commercially viable, thereby compelling them to engage in commercial activities that are often deemed detrimental to their performance and integrity as community broadcasting media.

### **Broadcast Media and Alternative Funding Sources**

In view of the financial constraints, the broadcast media are required to explore alternative sources of funding in the digital broadcast market to sustain their operation and performance. This is because the traditional sources of funding (advertising, sponsored programmes and live coverage) seem to be relatively declining in the face of economic challenge and emerging digital technologies, and most media organisations depend largely and primarily on advert revenues. Aja et al. (2019) investigated the available sources of revenue to NTA Abuja, FRCN Enugu, Plateau Radio/ Television Station and Channels Television station and their analysis revealed that 365 respondents representing (86%) of the sampled population agreed that the four stations depend heavily on advertising for their revenue. The findings further indicated that lack of advert affected their revenue base negatively. This is in line with

the findings of Chinenye, Ephraim and Chinwe (2012) that the major source of media revenue in Nigeria is advertising.

There are new business models that were experimented by media organisations in some parts of the world. This is perhaps to find effective alternative sources of funding that can guarantee sustainability of broadcast media performance. Degeler (2013) found that across different online media, business models are not adopted or practiced in similar ways like others. In his interview with three different editors of online news media, the interviewees stated that news sites are funded mostly by different sources through different strategies which include advertising on websites and other minor additional revenue streams. Business models such as *paywall* which means that users have to pay to reach a website's content or some of its parts are found to be only more useful to “viral” content producers. This position is consistent with the outcome of a study by Vara-Miguel, Sanjurjo and Díaz-espina (2014), that paywall is more useful when applied to media products such as contents focusing on issues such as deals, mergers and acquisitions; the earnings, profits and losses of companies; trials and managers; and content about health, media and auto companies are more likely to have been behind a paywall than other contents that deal with more general issues. Thus, charging for content is more linked to the nature of the content which most times must be a specialized content.

### **Gaps in the literature**

Hence, the empirical studies reviewed here suggest some existing gaps that need to be filled in by researching and exploring deeper into the issue. Previous studies related to the broadcast media funding focused largely on general challenges facing broadcast media, which funding is identified as just one of the numerous challenges, hence there is no adequate focus on issues of funding in broadcast media particularly in relation to performance in the digital age. Moreover, the studies largely focused on public broadcast media with only few incorporated private broadcast firms to examine the challenges. However, issues concerning

alternative sources of funding and how they can sustain broadcast media performance in the digital era in Nigeria remain a major gap in the previous studies. Again, one of the limitations of the previous studies is that the studies have not considered sampling the broadcast media across the existing ownership structure in Nigeria and examine them as case study.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on three theories which are Media Ownership Theory and Organizational Performance Theory. The Media Ownership Theory holds that media content is directly correlated with the interests of those who finance it. Media organisations enjoy autonomy within the boundaries of owner's profit. Thus, it is interesting to note here that broadcast media in Nigeria, despite its different ownership pattern (private, public and community ownership) that are most likely to have different goals and objectives, their economic interest is obvious, considering the commercial services they render to generate revenue. On the other hand, **Organisational Performance Model**: emphasises the organization's ability to exploit its environment for accessing and using the limited resources to accomplish its goals; thus, profit is one of the many indicators of performance. In view of the fact that performance is critical to organizational effort towards accomplishing its objective, this study adapted the Dimensions of Organisational Performance Model by Gavrea *et al.* (2011), with modification to assess the performance of selected broadcast media in relation to their nature of funding and performance. The Model has variables that fall within the context of both external and internal environments. The variables include strategy, innovation and development, employee, quality, corporate governance, leadership, clients, competitor/business uncertainty and information technology. Hence, the two aforementioned theories are found to be relevant on the basis that the Media Ownership Theory justifies the selection of the broadcast media within the existing broadcast media ownership in Nigeria and also explains how ownership pattern influences funding in the broadcast industry while the

Dimensions of Organisational Performance Model provides the indicators upon which broadcast media funding is assessed in relation to its performance.

## **Methodology**

The study used a mixed approach, which is a combination of qualitative (survey) and quantitative (in-depth interviews) methods. The study has two sets of populations. The first set of population comprises employees of the selected broadcast stations that stand at 2,825 at the time of this investigation, while the second set was the licensed broadcast organisations operating in Nigeria within the same period, which stands at 625 as reported by National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) (2020). The sample from the universe of the broadcast stations used in this study was nine (9), which was purposively selected from 625 licensed broadcast media operating across the country. These are FRCN Network Abuja, NTA Network Abuja, Channels Television Lagos, RayPower FM Abuja, Kano Radio, Plateau Radio Television, Unilag TV, Bayero University Kano (BUK) FM Radio and Lavun Community Radio, Kutigi, Niger state with an estimated population (staff) of 420, 1200, 600, 22, 160, 370, 20, 8 and 15 respectively. The nine (9) selected broadcast stations comprised four television stations (one private, one state-owned and two federal-owned stations) and five radio stations (one private, two public and two community-owned. Again, the sample size for the survey population was 353, which was drawn from 2,825 employees of the selected broadcast stations. The technique used to select the sample for the survey was a multi-stage sampling. The sample was first purposively selected and further selected proportionately based on staff population of each broadcast media from five (5) categories of the broadcast media in Nigeria (Federal, State, Private and Community). The sample of the 353 was apportioned to each broadcast media. However, only 235 questionnaires were responded and retrieved after the administration of the 353 copies upon which the analysis was conducted. The sample for the In-depth interview formed a different layer from the sample of the survey. The sample was 39, who were

management staff drawn purposively across the nine (9) selected broadcast stations. These are managers, Executive Officers and Heads of department of News/Current Affairs, Programmes, Commercials, Administrative, Engineering and IT/Online departments of the respective selected broadcast stations. However, the in-depth interviews were conducted with 27 persons out of 39 sampled that comprised Executive Officers and Heads of Departments from across the selected broadcast media organisations between January and February, 2022. The interview was conducted at their various offices; and each interview lasted for an average of 30 minutes, while the survey was conducted with 235 staff out of 353 sampled respondents from News and Current Affairs, Programmes, Marketing, Accounting, Engineering/ICT and Admin/Personnel departments from across the same selected broadcast media organisations.

**Table 1.: Distribution of sample size by broadcast stations**

Ownership	Broadcast Media	Population	Population (%)	Sample size
Federal	Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) Headquarters Abuja	1200	42.4	149
Federal	Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) Headquarters Abuja	420	14.8	52
Private	Channels Television, Headquarters Lagos	600	21.2	75
Private	RayPower Radio, Abuja	22	0.7	3
Community	Lavun Community Radio Kutigi, Niger state	15	0.5	2
Institution	Unilag TV	17	0.6	2
Institution	BUK FM Radio	8	0.2	2
State	Radio Kano	173	6.1	22
State	Plateau Radio Television (PRTV) Jos	370	13.0	46
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2825</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>353</b>

**Source: Fieldwork, 2023**

Ethical considerations: The study considered the consent and confidentiality of the respondents and the interviewees. Written consent forms were issued to the respondents to which they were allowed to read, understand and accept the participation. It was also disclosed to them that their participation was voluntary and that the exercise is purely for academic

purposes. All documents obtained from the stations were treated with utmost confidentiality especially where such demands were categorically stated by the stations.

## Results and Findings

This section presents the data, result and findings of the study. The data from this study shows that there are different strategies broadcast media organisations in Nigeria deployed to generate alternative funding from online platforms. This was revealed by an interviewee who said: *“We are cashing on the opportunities provided by technology. We do a lot of things on YouTube. We make sure that, major videos that we do for today are uploaded on YouTube and or other platforms. The quicker you do it the better for you, so our motto here is ‘digital face’. Whatever we do we think of the digital platform because that is where money is and we will continue to grow it” (P6).*

The statement above presents that the proliferation of online media, particularly social media has paved way for easier access to information. More audiences and advertisers who are the major targets of media outlets are now patronising the online media, which broadcast media consider it profitable to harness their social media and other online platforms to ensure that they generate alternative funds from the patronage. An Interviewee said: *“They connect online to watch most of the TV or radio station you can listen to them on the normal conventional media before, but they also [have] online media now; the platform that if you can’t listen to them on your radio or TV, you listen or watch on your handset via YouTube or Facebook or Instagram or Twitter; name them. And advert on this platform, if you advertise on normal conventional media, they will help you place on...” (P19).*

Equally, another Interviewee explains how such online platforms help broadcast media organisations to generate money:

*Once we get a number of large likes and users on our pages, we get the number of viewers on those pages, the clientele will increase. People that want to associate with us on social media will now see that they can reach*

*out. So, they will bring their product and we will sell for them, help them reach out to where they want to reach out (P25).*

However, some broadcast stations, though they generate relatively little funds from the online platforms, they appear to face some challenges with the online platforms, especially the low number of audiences with access to devices and internet facility, and thus, leverage on the off-line base, which is perceived to be more effective. An interviewee says: “*Some of our programmes are on social media but to generate revenue out of what we are airing is very difficult because up till now majority don’t have this social media network, so we prefer our radio station to be broadcast directly to the public*” (P23). Moreover, the responses here seem to emphasize on maintaining customer relation to attract more funds. The broadcast media strive to satisfy the demands of the audience and advertisers by offering them the desired contents. This is a strategy that helps attract more funds to the broadcast stations as affirmed by one of the interviewees:

*The customer first model that is when a customer gives you money to do anything then you must satisfy that customer, then when a customer is satisfied that customer will tell 10 customers and that 10 can tell 100 customers. But when one customer is dissatisfied and you don't find way to ensure that that customer is satisfied, he can convince 1,000 customers [not] to come to you and that will affect you greatly, so model is customer first (P5).*

**Table 2. Alternative Sources of Funding and Sustainability of Broadcast Media Performance**  
**n = 235**

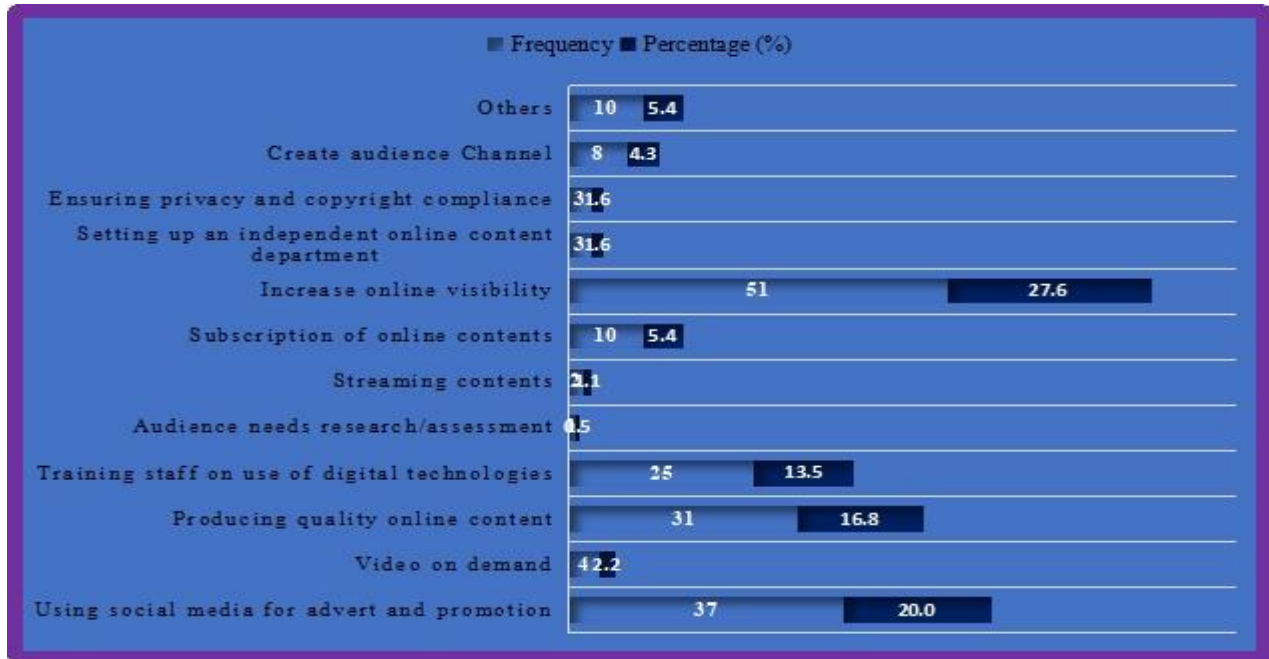
Variable	Statements	SA	A	U	SD	D
Quality	Alternative sources of funding can sustain broadcast media performance	125 (53.2%)	105 (44.7%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (2.2%)
Strategy	The broadcast media develops and utilizes alternative sources of funding to supports its performance	76 (32.3%)	136 (57.9%)	20 (8.5%)	1 (0.4%)	2 (0.9%)
Leadership	The broadcast media managers have the skills and	65	126	34	3	7

	ability to explore alternative sources of funding for sustainable performance	(27.7%)	(53.6%)	(14.5%)	(1.3%)	(2.9%)
Clients	Advertisers and audiences help sustain the media operation through alternative funding strategies developed by the station	101 (42.9%)	107 (45.5%)	18 (7.7%)	2 (0.9%)	6 (2.6%)
Competition/business uncertainty	Having alternative sources of funding can be of advantage to the organisation in the environment it operates	126 (53.6%)	90 (38.3%)	15 (6.4%)	2 (0.9%)	2 (0.9%)
Employees	Staff welfare is sustained through alternative sources of funding	70 (30.6%)	85 (36.2%)	41 (17.4%)	17 (7.2%)	22 (9.4%)
Innovation and Development	The station develops alternative sources of funding that can generate funds and sustain the performance of the station	64 (27.2%)	125 (53.2%)	22 (9.4%)	10 (4.3%)	14 (5.9%)
Information Technologies	The station harnesses the potentials of online tools and techniques in developing alternative sources of funding	71 (30.2%)	114 (48.5%)	31 (13.2%)	11 (4.7%)	8 (3.4%)
Corporate governance	The ability of the station to carry out corporate responsibility depends on the funds it generates through alternative sources	56 (23.8%)	98 (41.7%)	34 (14.5%)	2 (0.9%)	30 (12.8%)

Table 2. shows how alternative sources of funding can sustain broadcast media performance in the digital era in Nigeria. Variable one above shows that, 53.2% and 44.7% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively with the statement, none 0.0% were undecided and disagreed while 2.2% strongly disagreed with the statement. It can be inferred that broadcast media develop and utilise alternative sources of funding to support their performance. Variable two above shows that, 32.3% strongly agreed, 57.9% agreed, while 8.5% were undecided. Furthermore, 0.4% disagreed and 0.9% strongly disagreed with the statement. This implies that broadcast media develop and utilise alternative sources of funding to supports their performance. Variable three above shows that, 27.7% strongly agreed, 53.6% agreed, while 14.5% were undecided. Furthermore, 1.3% disagreed and 2.9% strongly disagreed with

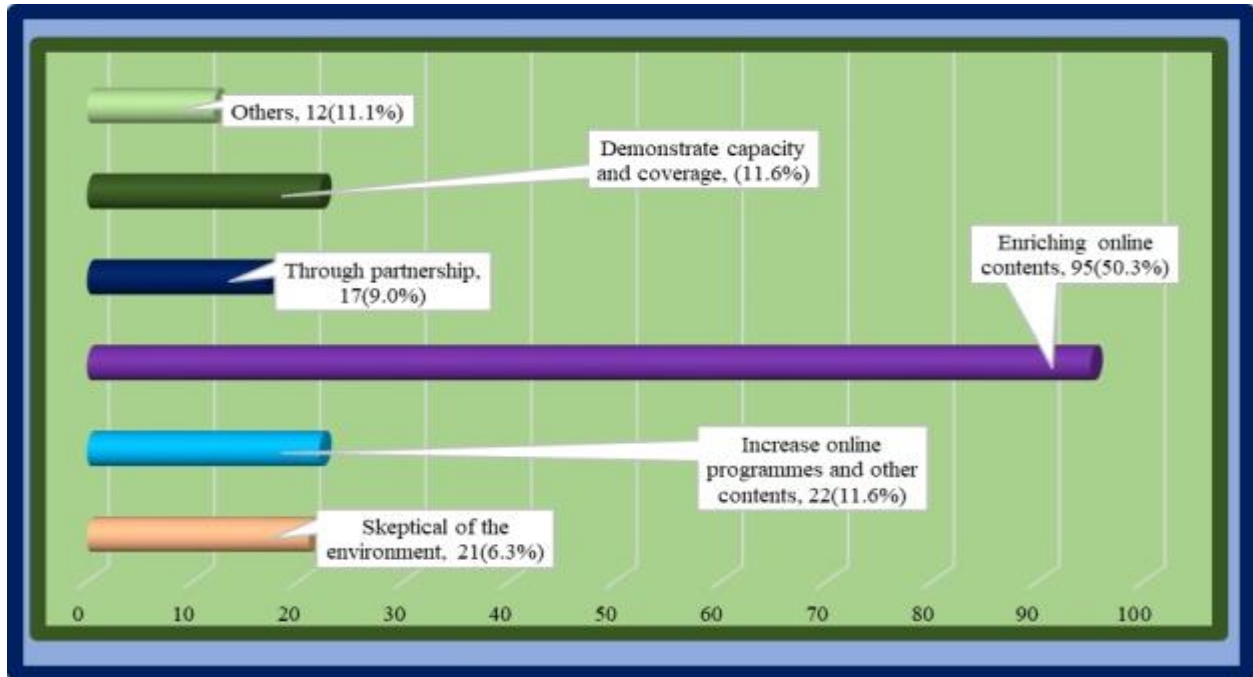
the statement. This implies that broadcast media managers have the skills and ability to explore alternative sources of funding for sustainable performance. Variable four above shows that, 42.9% strongly agreed, 45.5% agreed, while 7.7% were undecided. It further shows that 0.9% disagreed and 2.6% strongly disagreed with the statement, which implies that advertisers and audiences help sustain the media operation through alternative funding strategies developed by the station. From variable five above, 53.6% strongly agreed, 38.3% agreed, while 6.4% were undecided. However, 0.9% disagreed and 0.9% strongly disagreed with the research statement respectively. This suggests that having alternative sources of funding can be of advantage to the organisation in the environment it operates.

Variable six above shows that, 30.6% strongly agreed, 36.2% agreed, while 17.4% were undecided. However, 7.2% disagreed and 9.4% strongly disagreed with the statement. This implies that staff welfare is sustained through alternative sources of funding. From variable seven above, 27.2% strongly agreed, 53.2% agreed, while 9.4% were undecided. But, 4.3% disagreed and 5.9% strongly disagreed with the research statement respectively. This means that broadcast media develop alternative sources of funding that can generate funds and sustain the performance of the station. Variable eight above show that, 30.2% strongly agreed, 48.5% agreed, while 13.2% were undecided. It further indicates that 4.7% disagreed and 3.4% strongly disagreed with the statement, which implies that broadcast media stations harness the potentials of online tools and techniques in developing alternative sources of funding. From variable nine above, 23.8% strongly agreed, 41.7% agreed, while 14.5% were undecided. However, 0.9% disagreed and 12.8% strongly disagreed with the research statement respectively. This means that ability of the station to carry out corporate responsibility depends on the funds it generates through alternative sources.



**Figure 1.: Utilisation of online platforms and other digital technologies for funding and Performance**

Figure 1.1 above indicates different ways and activities that broadcast media engage with online platforms as alternative sources of funding. The data shows that the frequency of using social media for advert and promotion indicates 37(20.0%), video on demand 4(2.2%), producing quality online content 31(16.8%), training staff on use of digital technologies 25(13.5%), audience needs research/assessment 1(.5%), streaming contents 1(.1%), subscription of online contents 10(5.4%), increasing online visibility 51(27.6%), setting up an independent online content department 3(1.6%), ensuring privacy and copyright compliance 3(1.6%) and creating audience channel and others 8(4.3%) and 10(5.4%) respectively. Hence, the data shows that broadcast media organisations rely more on the online platforms to increase visibility, which records 51(27.6%). This further implies that the more audiences and advertisers access the online platforms, the higher the chances that the broadcast media organisation can generate funding, either through placement of online adverts or other means.



**Figure 2.: Audience and advertisers' willingness to support in generating funding through alternative sources**

The Figure 2. reveals the level of willingness the audiences and advertisers are likely to support broadcast media organisations to generate funding through alternatives sources. The data indicates the frequency of audiences and advertisers being sceptical of the environment 21(6.3%), increasing online programmes and other contents 22(11.6%), enriching online contents 95(50.3%), partnership 17(9.0%), Demonstrate capacity and coverage (11.6%) and others 12(11.1%). Hence, the data shows that audiences and advertisers may be willing to pay for broadcast media services if the online contents are rich to meet their expectations.

### Discussion of Findings

Aside the traditional sources of funding (advertising, programme sponsorship and live coverage) in the broadcast media, this study found some alternative sources, though these sources generate comparatively insignificant funds, they are potential sources. The advent of the internet and the proliferation of online platforms have opened opportunities for broadcast media to harness economic benefits by effectively utilising their websites and social media platforms such as YouTube, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook to share and stream contents and to also engage in other activities such as podcasting. The quantitative data has confirmed that

broadcast media harnessed the potentials of online tools and techniques in developing alternative source of funding; this is indicated in the variable on information technologies in relation to alternative funding where the respondents agree with 48.5% responses. These findings corroborate the position of Evens (2018), who reported that advertisers have begun to move their huge budgets to online and redirecting their money from print to digital platforms as internet advertising is rapidly growing. Abubakar (2017) has noted that most well established broadcast media organisations such as The Voice of America (VOA), Cable News Network (CNN), Germany's Deutsche Welle, China Global Television Network (CGTV), formally known as China Central Television (CCTV), China Radio International (CRI) and Al Jazeera now have websites with interactive tools that enable them attract more audience. This explains that having online presence to optimise performance has become the trend.

One of the strategies that the media deploy to generate fund is to ensure that they attract more users on their platform through quality content. By this strategy, advertisers and other clients patronise their broadcast media to place advert or announcement on the platform, which can generate more alternative funds to the organisation. However, using social media for advert and promotion and increasing online visibility are among the required strategies to enhance alternative funding in broadcast media. It was also found that maintaining customer relation is essential in ensuring that broadcast media generate alternative funds. Thus, broadcast media strive to satisfy the demands of the audience and advertisers by offering them their desired contents. The findings also point out that issues of funding were analysed based on the variables provided in the Organisational Performance Model that serve as the theoretical basis of this study. The result demonstrated that *quality* in terms of contents can influence alternative source of funding with a potential to sustain broadcast media performance. The study also shows that the broadcast media developed and utilised alternative sources of funding to supports its performance. Leadership is also found to be an influential variable in the effort to

develop alternative funding and sustain performance. The qualitative data has also shown that the emerging technologies and the proliferation of media in the digital environment have created a competition.

## Conclusion

The study concluded that the advent of the internet and the proliferation of online platforms have opened opportunities for broadcast media to harness economic benefits by effectively utilising their websites and social media platforms such as YouTube, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook to share and stream content and to also engage in other activities such as podcasting. Accordingly, it is also concluded that the stations have developed strategies such as streaming, video on demand, subscription, social media advertising, and promotion as alternative online funding source which are considered effective by the broadcast media. However, these alternative sources are only supplementing what is being generated from the dominant sources, such as the advertising, sponsored programmes and live coverage. This is because what is being generated is comparatively insignificant. However, there are effective online strategies such as by increasing content visibility online to attract *likes*, which rather than making the online sources (e.g. online advertising) more effective, these strategies tend to strengthen the on-air based sources by attracting more advertisers and programme sponsors, who may want the advantage of getting their contents shared also on the online platforms.

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**NOTE: This study is drawn from a Ph.D. thesis seminar paper presented at Bayero University Kano, with a title Nigerian Broadcast Media Funding and Performance in the Digital Age in October 2024, but has not been published anywhere.**