Digital disconnects? Unpacking the extent and limits of engagement with the digital TV switchover among remote rural communities in the Lagos region

By

Oluwole Elebiju

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Faculty of Arts and Humanities

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Declaration:

I hereby affirm that this present thesis is my original work, representing the findings derived from my personal research endeavours. In cases of collaboration, due credit has been given to the contributions made by others, as outlined in the thesis.

Oluwole Elebiju

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I LOVE YOU ALL !!!!

List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
ATV	Analogue Television
AIT	Africa Independent Television
ASO	Analogue Switch off
AV	Audio-Visual
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CTV	Channels Television
DP	Digital Poverty
DSO	Digital Switchover
DTH	Direct to Home
DTT	Digital Terrestrial Television (Known as FreeTv in Nigeria)
DTV	Digital Television
EPG	Electronic Programme Guide
FRCN	Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria
FTA	Free-to-Air
GTV	Galaxy Television
HBO	Home Box Office
HD	High Definition
HDTV	High-Definition Television
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IP	Information Poverty
IPTV	Internet Protocol Television
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
LCDA	Local Council Development Area
LGA	Local Government Area
LTV	Lagos Television

Abbreviation	Meaning
MITV	Murhi International Television
NBC	National Broadcasting Commission
NTA	Nigerian Television Authority
Ofcom	United Kingdom Telecommunications Regulatory Body
OGTV	Ogun State Television
OTT	Over–the-Top
PACT	Presidential Advisory Committee on Transition
PCT	Post-Colonial theory
PVOD	Paid Video on Demand
PVOD	Push Video-On-Demand
STB	Set-Top Box
TVC	Television Continental
U&GT	Uses and Gratification theory
UHD	Ultra-High Definition

Abstract

This study investigates how remote rural communities in Lagos State, Nigeria, have engaged with the government-led digital terrestrial television (DTT) switchover initiative, focusing on two Local Council Development Areas (LCDAs): Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin in Ikorodu. While the digital switchover (DSO) has been championed as a symbol of national development and a gateway to the global digital economy, this research critically examines its accessibility, inclusivity, and impact on historically marginalised rural populations. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study combines household surveys, semi-structured interviews, and policy document analysis to capture perspectives from rural residents, the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), and television service providers. The findings reveal a significant disconnect between the aspirations of the DSO and the lived realities of rural communities. Many respondents reported little or no awareness of the initiative, largely due to inadequate public communication strategies and the use of urban-centric media channels that fail to reach remote populations. This lack of awareness is compounded by infrastructural deficits, including irregular electricity supply, poor signal coverage, and insufficient technical support. Even where awareness exists, adoption is often hindered by high perceived costs, low digital literacy, and cultural dissonance. Respondents cited concerns about the loss of local-language programming, the erosion of indigenous storytelling traditions, and the dominance of homogenised, elite-driven content that fails to reflect rural realities.

To conceptualise these overlapping forms of exclusion, the study introduces the intersectional digital marginalisation framework (IDMF), a diagnostic model that synthesises digital colonialism, digital poverty, information poverty, and intersectionality to explain how structural inequalities intersect with user agency. The framework is further supported by uses and gratifications theory (UGT), which highlights how media users make selective engagement decisions based on whether their informational, cultural, or social needs are met. Together, IDMF and UGT offer a multi-dimensional lens for understanding digital disengagement, not as passive neglect, but as a rational response to unmet expectations and systemic neglect. In this light, the DSO appears not as a linear path to digital inclusion, but as a process that reproduces layered exclusions along lines of geography, income, gender, language, and cultural relevance. The study concludes that a successful digital transition must move beyond infrastructure-focused metrics to embrace community engagement, cultural inclusion, and equity-driven design. Key policy recommendations include targeted multilingual awareness campaigns, rural infrastructure investment, subsidies for low-income households, stronger regulatory accountability, and the protection of local content. Ultimately, the study calls for a critical reimagining of digital inclusion as a socio-cultural and political process, one that recognises rural users not as passive recipients, but as active agents shaping their digital futures.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.0 Introduction

In recent years, digital technologies have transformed global media landscapes, but access to these innovations remains uneven, particularly in the Global South. In Nigeria, rural communities continue to face significant digital exclusion due to infrastructural deficits, economic disparities, and limited awareness. This is especially evident in Lagos State's rural regions, where the implementation of digital terrestrial television (DTT) under the national digital switchover (DSO) initiative has raised questions about inclusion, accessibility, and policy effectiveness. While DTT offers a low-cost, free-to-air alternative for communities with limited internet access, its uneven rollout and urban bias risk reinforcing the very divides it seeks to bridge.

This section introduces the background, context, and aims of this study, which focuses on the rural LCDAs of Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin in Ikorodu, Lagos. It situates the research within broader debates on digital colonialism, information poverty, and intersectionality, and proposes a conceptual framework, intersectional digital marginalisation framework (IDMF), to examine how identity, infrastructure, and power interact to shape digital engagement in marginalised communities. The section further outline the research problem, questions, objectives, and significance of the study, while also describing the methodology and structure of the thesis. In doing so, it establishes the foundation for a critical examination of DTT's role in advancing, or hindering, digital inclusion in rural Nigeria.

1.1 Background to the Study

Over the last two decades, rural communities in Lagos have continued to struggle with digital access due to weak infrastructure and limited awareness. Prior studies (e.g., Adeleke, 2021; Paul and Eghe, 2023) have highlighted how this persistent digital divide continues to hinder educational and economic opportunities in these areas. To fully grasp the roots of this inequality, it is essential to understand the broader trajectory of Nigeria's media landscape, which has evolved significantly over time. From colonial-era newspapers to today's hybrid environment of broadcast, print, and digital platforms, media development in Nigeria has been shaped by shifting political ideologies, economic transitions, and technological advancements. During the colonial period, for instance, newspapers such as The West African Pilot (founded by Nnamdi Azikiwe) played a vital role in promoting anti-colonial nationalism and promoting a collective political consciousness (Akinola, 2018; Senam, 2021). Post-independence, the Nigerian state harnessed radio and television as tools of mass education and national unity, with the establishment of the Western Nigerian Television Service (WNTV) in 1959 marking the start of Africa's first television broadcast (Arthur & Ukelina, 2021). These media platforms, under the control of institutions like the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) and later the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), aimed to integrate Nigeria's diverse ethnic and linguistic communities, even as they maintained strong links to state propaganda and top-down communication models (Mutsvairo & Ekeanyanwu, 2021).

A significant turning point arrived with the liberalisation of the media sector in the 1990s. Private television and radio stations flourished, regional voices emerged, and the rise of the Internet at the end of the decade enabled online media platforms to reach national and diaspora audiences. Social media platforms, especially Facebook, Twitter (now X), and Instagram, have since become central to news dissemination and civic mobilisation, exemplified during the #EndSARS movement (Mustapha & Omar, 2020; Uwalaka, 2021). Despite this apparent democratisation of media access, stark inequalities persist. Urban areas, sustained by infrastructure and digital literacy, have benefited more from digital media growth, while rural communities remain largely disconnected due to limited broadband, erratic electricity supply, and a lack of culturally relevant digital content (Ifijeh et al., 2016; Okocha & Dogo, 2023). Thus, Nigeria's media development reflects a dual narrative: one of increasing media pluralism, but also of deepening digital exclusion. As highlighted by Jamil (2021), this exclusion is particularly acute in rural areas, where limited infrastructure intersects with cultural and linguistic marginalisation. The dominance of English and urban-centred content continues to alienate many rural viewers, while global streaming platforms such as Netflix and YouTube increasingly crowd out local narratives. Although digital terrestrial television (DTT) was introduced as part of the ITU's global digital switchover initiative, promising to extend access to free-to-air, high-quality programming, its implementation has been uneven and urban-focused, raising critical questions about equity, inclusion, and media sovereignty.

Media ownership structures further complicate this landscape. State-owned broadcasters such as NTA face criticisms of bias and lack of independence (Banigo & Udeze, 2024), while private media outlets, though more diverse, are shaped by commercial interests and elite influence (Bappayo et al., 2021). Independent blogs and social media accounts provide alternative narratives but struggle with issues of credibility and misinformation (Caled & Silva, 2022). Meanwhile, foreign media conglomerates, particularly DStv, GOtv, and StarTimes, dominate the DTT space, reinforcing patterns of digital colonialism by shaping content, infrastructure, and access in ways that reflect global rather than local interests (Chiumbu & Radebe, 2020; Arewa, 2021). The regulatory environment, overseen by institutions such as the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), also faces scrutiny. Critics argue that restrictive policies, such as amendments to the Nigerian Broadcasting Code, have stifled innovation, suppressed press freedom, and discouraged local content creation (Olubiyi & Oriakhogba, 2021). Proposals to regulate social media and control digital narratives, often framed as national security measures, have sparked fears of censorship and digital authoritarianism (Obiora et al., 2022). This fragile balance between regulation and freedom underscores the challenges of advancing a media ecosystem that is both ethical and inclusive.

While digital transformation has expanded opportunities for civic engagement and media entrepreneurship, it has not significantly altered the concentration of media ownership, or the structural inequalities embedded in Nigeria's media system. Urban-rural divides, unequal infrastructure investment, and the dominance of foreign content providers continue to restrict rural Nigerians' access to meaningful media experiences (Serres, 2023; Ogbodo et al., 2023). This is not merely a question of access but of agency: whose voices are heard, whose stories are told, and who controls the platforms that shape national narratives? In response to

these contradictions, this study explores the intersection of digital television, marginalisation, and rural engagement in Nigeria, using the concept of intersectional digital marginalisation to examine how identity, infrastructure, and power converge. It aims to critically interrogate the assumptions underpinning Nigeria's digital switchover policies, particularly the idea that technological expansion automatically equates to inclusion. Instead, the research highlights the lived experiences of rural users, whose disengagement from DTT reflects not a lack of interest, but a rational response to exclusionary media systems.

By situating this inquiry within broader debates on digital colonialism, media ownership, and digital and information poverty, this study contributes to a growing body of scholarship that calls for decolonial, participatory, and culturally responsive approaches to digital transformation in the Global South.

1.2 Context and Argument

Nigeria's media ecosystem has undergone dramatic transformations, from colonial-era newspapers and state-controlled broadcasters to a complex, increasingly digital media environment. Within this shifting landscape, digital terrestrial television (DTT) has emerged as a potentially inclusive platform, particularly for rural regions lacking broadband and satellite infrastructure. While often conflated with the broader umbrella of digital television (DTV), DTT refers specifically to free-to-air digital signals transmitted via land-based towers, offering a low-cost alternative to satellite, cable, or streaming services (Ariansyah & Yuniarti, 2021). DTV encompasses broader content delivery technologies, including subscription and internet-based platforms (Dhiman, 2023; Njomo, 2022), while DTT is uniquely positioned as a public broadcasting medium accessible to underserved communities (Wamanji, 2022). This distinction is particularly relevant in rural Nigeria, where infrastructural limitations and economic constraints continue to hinder full media participation. In areas like Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin in Ikorodu, Lagos State, used as case studies in this thesis, DTT was expected to bridge access gaps. However, persistent challenges such as unreliable electricity, high device costs, weak signal coverage, and insufficient awareness campaigns have created conditions where digital inclusion remains aspirational rather than achieved (Chambers et al., 2022).

The broader policy context is shaped by Nigeria's commitment to the International Telecommunication Union's (ITU)digital switchover mandate (Olayinka, 2022). Yet, the roll-out of the DTT initiative has been largely urban-centric, reinforcing spatial inequality in access to public information. Scholars such as Berger (2012), Endong (2015), Onumah (2019), Meyers (2022), and Motsaathebe and Chiumbu (2021) have documented how Africa's digital migration often exacerbates existing inequalities in access, representation, and infrastructure, particularly for rural populations in the Global South. Additionally, the proliferation of foreign-owned streaming platforms, such as Netflix and YouTube, adds another layer of complexity. While these platforms offer content diversity, they also reinforce global media dependency, often sidelining local storytelling and content production. For rural Nigerian communities where broadband penetration remains limited, DTT remains a viable public service technology (Gikis, 2021; Ariansyah, 2022; Ilori et al., 2022). However, without culturally relevant programming, local content representation, and strategic rural infrastructure investments, DTT risks reproducing the very exclusionary patterns it was meant to challenge.

This thesis critically examines DTT not merely as a broadcast technology, but as a contested site of inclusion, exclusion, and power in Nigeria's digital ecosystem. While DTT is promoted as a tool for bridging the information divide, its implementation exposes deep structural contradictions that disproportionately impact rural communities. To interrogate these dynamics, the study draws on an original conceptual framework, the intersectional digital marginalisation framework (IDMF), developed by combining four interrelated concepts:

- Digital colonialism (Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Kwet, 2019), which critiques the extension of colonial-era control into digital infrastructure and data extraction;
- Digital poverty (Galperin & Mariscal, 2007; Diga, 2020), reflecting material deprivation in access to digital tools and services;
- Information poverty (Chatman, 1996), highlighting the unequal flow and comprehension of information; and
- Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), emphasising how gender, geography, class, language, and age intersect to produce layered forms of exclusion.

These concepts are further complemented by uses and gratifications theory (UGT) (Blumler & Katz, 1974; Ruggiero, 2000), which foregrounds audience agency and motivation, helping to explain why users adopt, reject, or circumvent technologies depending on how well these platforms meet their personal, cultural, and informational needs. Together, these perspectives offer a multi-dimensional diagnostic tool for analysing digital disengagement, not merely as a function of access, but as a result of structural inequality, cultural alienation, and rational user responses. By applying the IDMF through a mixed-methods study, incorporating survey data, in-depth interviews, and policy analysis, this thesis explores what has worked, what has failed, and why in Nigeria's DTT rollout, particularly in rural areas.

Ultimately, the thesis argues that a genuinely inclusive digital transition must move beyond technocratic models of infrastructure deployment. Instead, it must centre cultural relevance, economic accessibility, community engagement, and local content creation. Digital inclusion should not be framed solely in terms of connectivity or device ownership, but as a political and cultural process rooted in justice, autonomy, and media sovereignty. In doing so, this research contributes to broader academic and policy debates on technology, inequality, and development in the Global South. It aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries (United Nations, 2015). By highlighting the lived realities of rural users and advancing a locally grounded, theoretically informed framework, this thesis aims to reframe digital inclusion as an issue of rights, representation, and social participation, positioning rural Nigerians not as passive recipients, but as active agents in shaping their digital futures.

1.3 Research Problem Statement

While the digital switchover (DSO) in Nigeria has attracted scholarly attention, existing research has predominantly focused on macro-level concerns such as policy frameworks, regulatory structures, and institutional implementation (Abikanlu, 2018; Bedu-Addo, 2022; Akingbulu, 2023). These studies offer valuable insights into governance and technical logistics, but they largely overlook the lived experiences of rural end-users, particularly those in underserved areas where digital access remains structurally limited. Even audience-focused research (e.g., Eze et al., 2017; Akinola-Badmus & Ojebuyi, 2021) has tended to prioritise urban populations and media professionals, leaving a critical gap in understanding how rural communities engage with digital terrestrial television (DTT). This gap is particularly significant in Global South contexts like Nigeria, where rural populations face intersecting barriers, economic, infrastructural, linguistic, and educational, that fundamentally shape their access to and experience of digital media. In regions such as Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin in Ikorodu, Lagos, these barriers are not only technical but also cultural and representational. Yet, these dynamics remain under-theorised in current literature, which lacks frameworks that account for the layered exclusions and user agency embedded in digital disengagement.

This study addresses that gap by shifting the analytical focus from institutional and urban perspectives to the grassroots realities of rural DTT users. It introduces the intersectional digital marginalisation framework (IDMF) to explore not only *who* is excluded and *how*, but also *why* certain users opt out of formal digital systems. Through a mixed-methods approach combining survey data, in-depth interviews, and policy analysis, this research will examine the lived experiences, expectations, and adaptive behaviours of rural users facing digital disconnection. In doing so, it contributes to a more inclusive and justice-oriented understanding of the DSO, one that centres rural agency, critiques digital colonialism, and informs policy solutions for equitable digital futures.

1.4 Research aims and objectives

Research Aim

The primary aim of this research is to evaluate the effectiveness, reach, and impact of digital terrestrial television (DTT) under the government-led digital switchover (DSO) initiative in promoting digital inclusivity, with a particular focus on Ikorodu LGA, one of the four remaining rural area in Lagos-Nigeria. This study seeks to identify levels of awareness, access, engagement, infrastructural and socio-economic barriers, and user satisfaction to provide insights for enhancing DTT adoption and fulfilling Nigeria's digital strategy goals of closing the urban and rural divide which is a significant concern in Nigeria's digital transformation strategy, with efforts focused on improving infrastructure and access to digital services in underserved areas.

Research Objectives

- ⇒ **To assess the level of awareness of DTT services under the DSO initiative among the target audience in Lagos-Ikorodu.**

This objective aims to determine how well-informed the target population is regarding DTT services, which is essential for adoption and engagement.

⇒ **To assess the extent of access to and engagement with digital terrestrial television (DTT) and broader digital television (DTV) services among residents of Lagos-Ikorodu, identifying patterns of usage, accessibility, and engagement levels within this community**.

This objective aim to understand how these services contribute to information dissemination, access, and entertainment within the community.

⇒ **To identify and analyse infrastructural, economic, educational, and cultural barriers to the adoption of DTT, as well as the impact of these barriers on local content production and consumption in rural communities.**

This objective seeks to uncover challenges that hinder DTT's effectiveness and accessibility, as well as its broader socio-economic and cultural impact on rural populations.

⇒ **To evaluate the extent to which DTT aligns with and fulfils the digital inclusivity goals, especially in underserved regions.**

This objective focuses on assessing how well DTT contributes to reducing the digital divide by providing accessible media services to underserved areas.

⇒ **To assess whether the needs, wants, and expectations of prospective DTT users are being met in terms of content, accessibility, and service quality.**

This objective aims to evaluate user satisfaction and alignment with audience expectations, which is critical for enhancing adoption and sustained engagement.

Overall, each of these objectives are designed to provide insights that address the core issues surrounding DTT's role in promoting digital inclusivity and meeting the needs of diverse communities within (Ikorodu-Lagos) Nigeria.

Research Questions:

1. What is the level of awareness of DTT services, particularly the government-led digital switchover (DSO) initiative, among the target audience in Lagos-Ikorodu?
2. What is the extent of access to and engagement with DTT (and broader Digital TV) services among Lagos-Ikorodu residents?
3. What infrastructural, economic, educational, cultural, and other barriers hinder access to and the adoption of DTT, and how do these factors influence local content production and consumption?
4. To what extent does DTT fulfil its goals of digital inclusivity, especially in underserved and rural regions?
5. To what extent are the needs, preferences, and expectations of potential DTT users in rural communities being adequately met?

These research questions guiding this study are structured to move progressively from initial awareness to broader engagement patterns and finally to an exploration of structural barriers and user satisfaction. The

enquiry begins by examining the level of awareness of DTT services among Lagos-Ikorodu residents, followed by an assessment of their extent of access and engagement with digital television. The study further explores infrastructural, economic, educational, and cultural barriers that may inhibit adoption. In addition, it considers whether DTT fulfils its intended goals of digital inclusivity and evaluates how well the needs and expectations of users in rural communities are being met. This sequence ensures that the study captures a comprehensive and layered understanding of DTT implementation in the study area. By situating this analysis within a wider Global South (and, indeed, global) context, this study seeks to offer a refined understanding of DTT's role in the evolving digital media landscape, addressing its potential and limitations as a tool for promoting inclusive digital access in rural Nigeria and beyond.

1.5 Scope of the research study

This study examines the implementation and impact of digital terrestrial television (DTT) as part of Nigeria's digital switchover (DSO) initiative, with a specific focus on rural communities in Lagos-Ikorodu (Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin LCDA). It evaluates DTT's effectiveness in delivering accessible and reliable information, education, and entertainment, particularly in regions with limited internet access, and its role in bridging the digital divide. The research adopts a mixed-methods approach, incorporating surveys and interviews with local residents, as well as perspectives from the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and television service providers to understand regulatory frameworks, policy implications, and operational challenges. The findings aim to inform policy recommendations for enhancing digital broadcasting and provides valuable insights for similar underserved regions across Global South. While the study offers an in-depth analysis of DTT's impact in Lagos-Ikorodu, its generalisability is limited. Constraints such as the COVID-19 pandemic, restricted access to data, and a relatively small sample size impacted the breadth of the research. However, the study mitigates these challenges by employing diverse data collection methods, offering a more detailed understanding of digital inclusion in the context of Nigeria's digital transition.

1.6 Significance of the study

As Nigeria moves towards a more digital economy, the government-led digital switchover (DSO) initiative seeks to bridge the digital divide, especially for rural and underserved communities. This research provides valuable insights into the progress, challenges, and potential of DTT in achieving digital inclusivity goals. Understanding how DTT contributes to digital access is essential for policymakers, broadcasters, and stakeholders involved in digital development, as it highlights the areas where further investments and adjustments may be necessary to optimise DTT's impact. Firstly, the study offers a comprehensive evaluation of DTT's role in providing accessible, free-to-air television services to populations with limited or no internet access, such as those in Lagos-Ikorodu selected rural communities. With online streaming largely inaccessible for these areas due to high costs and connectivity issues, DTT serves as an alternative platform for delivering essential information, educational programs, and entertainment. By evaluating the degrees of awareness and satisfaction within potential DTT users, this study provides essential data regarding the present accessibility and efficacy of DTT services, which can guide the development of strategies aimed at improving user engagement and adoption.

Secondly, this research is significant in finding the infrastructural, cultural, educational and economic barriers that limit DTT adoption in rural Nigeria. By understanding these challenges, stakeholders can better address the gaps that prevent DTT from fulfilling its potential. The findings can guide government agencies and broadcasting companies to design targeted initiatives that overcome these obstacles, such as community education programs, subsidised equipment, or infrastructure development in underserved regions. Addressing these barriers will be crucial to maximising DTT's impact and ensuring that its benefits reach the intended audiences. Moreover, this study explores the extent to which DTT aligns with and supports Nigeria's national digital inclusivity goals. By analysing DTT's impact on digital inclusion, this research can help measure the effectiveness of the DSO initiative, providing a basis for assessing the progress toward reducing the urban-rural information and technology gap. Findings from this research can be instrumental in guiding future policy adjustments and resource allocation to enhance digital access and inclusion across Nigeria.

Finally, this study has broader implications for other countries in the Global South undergoing similar digital transitions or have not started at all. The challenges and successes documented here can serve as a model for implementing DTT in comparable contexts, contributing to the global discourse on digital inclusion and equitable access to media. In this regard, the research not only addresses a national issue but also provides insights that could benefit international development efforts in digital infrastructure and media accessibility.

1.7 Study area: Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin LCDAs in Ikorodu LGA

This research project was conducted in Lagos State, one of Nigeria's 36 states, located in the southwestern region of the country. Lagos State is known for its dense population, which was estimated to have reached approximately 15,946,000 people as of 2023, with a growth rate of 3.63% based on data extrapolated from the 2006 census (Macrotrends, 2019). The state is divided into five administrative boundaries: Badagry, Epe, Ikeja, Ikorodu and Lagos Island, which are further subdivided into 20 Local government areas (LGAs) and 37 Local council development areas (LCDAs) respectively. The focus of this study, however, centres on the two Ikorodu LCDAs known as 'Imota' and 'Ikosi-Ejirin'. Ikorodu itself is a densely populated area with a mix of semi-urban, suburban and rural communities, estimated to have a population of approximately 1,037,728.28, growing at a rate of 3.2% (LBS, 2020). The selection of Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin Local council development areas (LCDAs) within Ikorodu LGA holds significant relevance for several key reasons. Firstly, these regions are integral to the current shift from rural settings to semi-urban or peri-urban territories, a prevalent occurrence in numerous countries and regions within the Global South that are witnessing swift population expansion and increasing economic endeavours (Rajendran, 2024). This transition provides valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with urbanisation.

Secondly, these LCDAs exhibit diverse socioeconomic characteristics. While Ikosi-Ejirin retains pastoral traits (Waheed et al., 2016), Imota has experienced more rapid urbanisation due to an influx of people (Fasona et al., 2020). This diversity allows for comparative analysis of various stages of urban development

within a single study area. Thirdly, recent urban expansion and infrastructure development initiatives in these areas mirror broader urbanisation trends in Lagos state (Adedire, 2017; 2020). Studying these developments sheds light on urban planning, service delivery, and governance challenges and opportunities, making them a suitable subject for academic inquiry. Fourthly, both Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin fall under the jurisdiction of the Lagos state government, which has actively implemented policies and initiatives to address urbanisation challenges (Adedire, 2017; 2020; Dekolo et al., 2015). Therefore, the research findings hold direct policy implications for the state government and other urban centres facing similar issues. The selection of Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin LCDAs is justified by the global significance of the urbanisation process and the need to understand its variation in various contexts. These areas offer a microcosm of urbanisation dynamics within the framework of Lagos state, enabling an in-depth examination of these processes.

Moreover, as semi-urban areas, Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin face wider governance challenges related to urban planning, service provision, and community engagement due to lack of basic infrastructure (Adedire, 2017; 2020; Dekolo et al., 2015). Analysing these issues provides insight into the relationship between governance effectiveness and an area's potential for digital TV investment. It underlines how governance structures and practices influence resource allocation and infrastructure development, including DTT implementation. Furthermore, it explains how regulatory difficulties might affect the efficacy of such programmes, emphasising the value of transparent, responsible, and inclusive governance frameworks in assuring the success of DTT projects. By studying these disparities in the selected LCDAs (Imota and Ikosi), this research aims to uncover the nature and extent of any such infrastructural inequalities in these areas, their underlying causes and the impact these are having on residents. Lagos state, like many other urban centres in the Global South, is grappling with a number of significant development-related challenges. The research findings can inform policy decisions at National, the state and local government levels, assisting in the formulation of strategies to manage urbanisation more successfully. Understanding the role of communities in shaping the development route of semi-urban areas is important for developing community engagement and participation. Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin offer an opportunity to examine community engagement practices and their influence on local development.

1.8 Overview of methodology

This study employs a qualitative research approach to explore the effectiveness, accessibility, and engagement of digital terrestrial television (DTT) in rural communities of Ikorodu, Lagos, within the broader context of Nigeria’s digital switchover (DSO) initiative. Given the complexities surrounding digital adoption, the methodology provides a contextualised and participant-driven understanding of the challenges and experiences associated with transitioning from analogue to digital broadcasting. Grounded in an interpretivist paradigm, the study focuses on understanding subjective experiences and the social contexts that influence participants’ engagement with DTT. This approach enables an in-depth exploration of socio-economic, infrastructural, and regulatory factors shaping digital adoption. Employing a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, the research integrates both quantitative and qualitative methods to ensure comprehensive

data collection and analysis through a two-phase process. The first phase involves a survey-questionnaire to gather demographic and contextual data while identifying participants for in-depth interviews.

The second phase consists of semi-structured interviews conducted with some participants who indicated they can be approached, alongside the regulators (NBC) and services-providers to gain deeper insights into their experiences with DTT and digital inclusion usage and implementation. The study adopts a non-probability purposive sampling method, focusing on household viewers in the rural communities, regulatory officials from the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC), and broadcasting professionals under the Broadcasting Organisation of Nigeria (BON). Snowball sampling enhances representation by allowing participants to refer others with relevant experiences for data collection. Data collection instrument includes questionnaires designed with a mix of open-ended and closed-ended questions to assess respondents' awareness, access, and engagement with DTT, semi-structured interviews conducted in person, via phone, or through digital platforms such as WhatsApp due to COVID-19 constraints, and document analysis involving the review of policy reports and regulatory documents to support primary data. Thematic analysis is employed to identify patterns and themes, involving transcription of interviews and survey responses, systematic coding using Microsoft Excel, and triangulation of findings across multiple data sources to ensure validity and reliability.

Ethical considerations include obtaining informed consent from all participants, ensuring confidentiality and data protection, and securing ethical approval from relevant institutions. The impact of COVID-19 necessitated methodological adjustments, such as remote data collection via WhatsApp and phone calls, the use of digital questionnaires to reach participants, and flexible scheduling to accommodate respondents' availability. This methodological approach ensures rigorous, reliable, and contextually relevant findings on the adoption of DTT in rural Nigeria. Combining qualitative insights with strategic sampling and robust data analysis, the study offers a holistic perspective on the challenges and opportunities associated with digital inclusion in underserved communities.

1.9 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into eight chapters (including this introduction). Chapter two examines existing research on digital television transition, citizen engagement in digital initiatives, and the digital divide, particularly in rural and semi-urban communities. In this context the extent of community engagement and the barriers that hinder DTT widespread adoption and consistent usage. The chapter discusses relevant theoretical frameworks and conceptual models, identifying gaps in the literature that this study aims to address. By analysing past studies, the chapter situates the current research within the broader field and informs the chosen methodology. Chapter three details the research methodology approach adopted for the study, including the rationale behind selecting the methods. The section outlines the methodological framework for data collection and analysis. Furthermore, this chapter examines ethical implications, inherent limitations, and the methodologies implemented to guarantee the reliability and validity of the resultant research findings.

Chapter four presents quantitative analysis of findings from the local residents Ikorodu (Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin) respectively. The purpose of this quantitative was to recruit participants for follow up interviews. The quantitative analysis was interpreted using descriptive statistics e.g., frequency distribution and percentages, which describes profile characteristic of participants that is age, gender, occupation, location and educational levels. A thematic analysis was perform using the open-ended questions to determine pattern levels of awareness, engagement, and barriers to participation in the DTT/DSO initiative. Chapter five present and interprets the data to identify prevalent trends, providing insights that form the basis for deeper qualitative exploration for triangulation of opinions. Moreover, building on the survey results, this chapter also considers the qualitative findings from interviews with certain participants. Through thematic analysis, it explores the personal experiences, perceptions, and challenges residents face in engaging with the DSO initiative.

Chapter six present an in-depth analysis of the qualitative data obtained from interviews conducted with officials from the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and key members of the service providers known as Broadcasting Organisations of Nigeria (BON). These interviews were aimed at gathering insights into the perspectives and operational approaches of television service providers operating within the dynamic media landscape of Lagos, Nigeria. The analysis includes a broad range of viewpoints, policies, and strategic frameworks that officials from NBC and BON employ to address challenges and opportunities in Nigerian broadcasting. Through these interviews, participants shared their experiences, challenges, and the supervisory standards that guide the broadcasting environment. Focusing on the content of these findings, this chapter provides a thorough qualitative exploration of the underlying themes and patterns that emerged from the interviews, offering a comprehensive understanding of the broadcasting sector's regulatory and organisational strategies within Nigeria. This analysis not only contextualises the roles and functions of NBC and BON but also highlights the implications of their strategies on the broader media environment, particularly in Lagos.

Chapter seven synthesises the findings by discussing both the quantitative and qualitative analyses, connecting them with the study’s research questions and objectives while situating the results within the broader context of existing literature. By integrating quantitative survey data with qualitative insights, interviews with rural residents, and qualitative insights, interviews NBC officials and BON members, the chapter aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of DTT through the digital switchover (DSO) initiative’s impact on the Ikorodu community. The discussion is structured to highlight the primary themes that emerged across both types of data, addressing how each theme aligns with or diverges from previous research and theoretical frameworks.

While chapter eight presents conclusion and recommendations on the study’s implications for policy, practical applications, and future research, with a focus on enhancing the effectiveness of the digital switchover (DSO) initiative and improving citizen engagement in similar contexts. Key findings are

summarised, and recommendations are presented for policy adjustments, community outreach, and strategies to address barriers identified in the study. The chapter also reflects on the study's contributions to digital broadcasting and community engagement, while acknowledging limitations related to geographic scope, data access, and sample size. Finally, it suggests future research directions and researcher personal reflection on the PhD journey. These reflections and recommendations provide a concise conclusion to the study, highlighting its practical and theoretical value.

1.10 Summary of chapter one

The first chapter introduces the study's focus on digital terrestrial television (DTT) as a crucial broadcasting technology, particularly for rural areas where internet access is limited. Unlike online streaming, which requires high-speed internet, DTT offers a stable, cost-effective alternative for underserved communities. The Nigerian government's digital switchover (DSO) initiative aims to transition from analogue to digital broadcasting, improving information access and media quality. However, challenges such as infrastructure deficits, affordability, and digital literacy gaps persist, which could undermine its success. The study argues that DTT plays a vital role in bridging the digital divide and reducing socio-economic inequalities, particularly in rural Nigeria. Despite the rise of digital media, many communities in the Global South remain excluded due to poor broadband infrastructure and high data costs. DTT provides free-to-air television content for communities that have traditionally had a strong attachment to TV as a medium, and without requiring expensive subscriptions. However, its effectiveness in promoting digital inclusion remains underexplored in Nigeria – a country whose remoter, more rural, communities present particular challenges in terms of their socioeconomic profile and ease of access to communications and wider technological infrastructure. This study assesses awareness, engagement, and barriers to adoption in rural Lagos while investigating how policy, technology, and socio-economic factors impact digital accessibility. The primary objective is to evaluate the success or failure of the DSO initiative in advancing digital inclusivity, with a focus on infrastructural, economic, and socio-cultural barriers affecting DTT adoption.

Nigeria's media landscape has evolved from colonial-era print media to state-controlled broadcasting and, more recently, a dynamic digital ecosystem. While urban areas benefit from digital advancements, rural regions face persistent challenges such as unreliable electricity, poor internet connectivity, and digital illiteracy. These disparities highlight the need for inclusive policies to ensure equitable access to digital broadcasting. The study focuses on rural communities in Lagos-Ikorodu, specifically Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin LCDAs, which represent transitional areas experiencing rapid urbanisation. Using a mixed-methods approach, including surveys and interviews, the research evaluates DTT accessibility, engagement, and regulatory challenges. As Nigeria shifts towards a digital economy, the DSO initiative is crucial for bridging the urban-rural digital divide. Understanding DTT's role in this transition is essential for policymakers, broadcasters, and stakeholders. This study identifies infrastructural, cultural, and economic barriers, offering recommendations to enhance adoption through community education, subsidised equipment, and improved infrastructure. Beyond Nigeria, the findings provide insights applicable to other Global South countries undergoing similar digital transitions, contributing to global discussions on digital inclusion.

The research is structured into eight chapters, beginning with an overview of the study's background, significance, and objectives. The literature review explores existing research on digital television transition and inclusion. The methodology chapter explains the mixed-methods approach, while subsequent chapters present findings from surveys, interviews, and regulatory perspectives. The final chapters synthesise insights, offer policy recommendations, and discuss future research directions. By highlighting key findings, the study aims to contribute to ongoing discussions on digital inclusion and the role of DTT in ensuring equitable media access. Against this backdrop, chapter two establishes the theoretical and conceptual foundation of the study. It reviews key literature on digital television transition, media engagement, and digital inequality, particularly in the context of the Global South. By critically examining both structural and user-centred perspectives, this chapter situates the research within broader academic debates and identifies the analytical frameworks that guide the empirical investigation. Together, these insights provide the lens through which digital terrestrial television (DTT) engagement in marginalised rural communities is understood and interpreted.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

Engaging with digital terrestrial television (DTT) in the Global South particularly within marginalised rural communities demands a critical examination of the power structures, infrastructural limitations, and sociocultural dynamics that shape media access. Although digital television has been widely promoted as a vehicle for inclusion, development, and modernity, this narrative often obscures the complex realities faced by under-resourced populations in contexts like rural Lagos, Nigeria. This literature review interrogates these complexities, positioning the study within broader academic debates on digital inequality, postcolonialism, and media participation. The chapter opens by presenting a blended theoretical-conceptual framework that draws together structural and behavioural perspectives. Structural critiques such as digital colonialism, digital poverty, intersectionality and information poverty help illuminate systemic inequalities in infrastructure, governance, and representation. At the same time, uses and gratifications theory introduces a user-centric lens that recognises the motivations, needs, and strategies of individuals interpreting these systems. Together, these frameworks enable a multi-scalar analysis that accounts for both global irregularities and localised, everyday experiences of media use.

Building on this foundation, the review surveys key themes within existing empirical scholarship on digital television /digital terrestrial engagement with a particular focus on the Global South. Four main thematic areas are identified: (1) the evolution and affordances of digital TV technologies; (2) global patterns of adoption and use; (3) disparities between urban and rural engagement; and (4) the influence of cultural attitudes on media consumption. These themes underscore the multifaceted degree of engagement, demonstrating how access is shaped by a convergence of technological, economic, and cultural conditions. In parallel, the chapter examines five core barriers that continue to obstruct meaningful engagement in rural and marginalised settings: (1) infrastructural and technological deficiencies; (2) economic exclusion and affordability constraints; (3) limited digital literacy and information poverty; (4) policy shortcomings and institutional mistrust; and (5) content irrelevance and cultural alienation. These challenges reveal that disengagement is not merely a consequence of material scarcity, but rather the outcome of intersecting exclusions embedded in broader systems of inequality and digital hegemony. For instance, erratic electricity supply, the high cost of decoders, opaque policy implementation, and the dominance of foreign programming each contribute to a layered experience of marginalisation.

Crucially, this review highlights key gaps in the existing literature. Most notably, rural perspectives are frequently overlooked, and digital transitions are too often analysed through technocratic, top-down frameworks that neglect the lived realities of those on the margins. This chapter therefore advocates for a more inclusive, intersectional, and culturally grounded approach one that values community knowledge, local media practices, and user agency. In doing so, it provides the conceptual scaffolding for the study's empirical inquiry, which explores how rural residents in Lagos State engage with, resist, or repurpose digital television technologies within their everyday lives.

2.1 Conceptual Frameworks and Theoretical Framework

This study adopts a blended conceptual and theoretical framework to examine digital terrestrial television engagement in marginalised rural communities, particularly in the context of Lagos, Nigeria. Recognising the complex interplay between technological, economic, cultural, and social forces, the research draws on multiple intersecting lenses to interrogate how digital transitions are experienced in underrepresented regions. However, a clear distinction is maintained between theories understood as structured, systematic bodies of knowledge that offer coherent explanations of social phenomena and concepts, which function as diagnostic tools that help illuminate particular dimensions of exclusion, marginalisation, and engagement (Aksnes et al., 2019; Kovecses, 2021). Together, these frameworks form an integrated analytical model that allows for both macro-level critique and micro-level insight into individual behaviours and motivations.

2.1.1 The conceptual level

- Digital colonialism (Kwet, 2019),
- Digital poverty (Galperin and Mariscal, 2007),
- Information poverty (Chatman, 1996), and
- Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989).

Each offers a unique perspective on structural inequality and media engagement, enabling a more refined analysis of digital terrestrial television access and usage in rural Nigeria. These are further complemented by the uses and gratifications (U&G) theory (Blumler & Katz, 1974), which provides a behavioural perspective, highlighting the active role of users in selecting and interpreting media content based on personal and social needs (Hussain et al., 2020). This blended approach facilitates a multi-scalar analysis connecting global systems of power to local, lived experiences (Momanyi, 2023; Molho et al., 2020).

Digital colonialism, as articulated by Kwet (2019), critiques the disproportionate control exerted by multinational technology firms and foreign governments over digital infrastructures, platforms, and content, particularly in the Global South. In this way, digital platforms, algorithms, and content moderation systems have become new tools of discursive power. Scholars argue that tech giants (like Google, Meta, Amazon, and Microsoft) export not only products but also knowledge, values, and cultural norms, often erasing or marginalising local knowledge systems. Mutsvairo & Ragnedda (2019) frame the internet and platforms as new structures of influence, which is similar to how missionaries operated during colonial times. Just as Spivak said that marginalised people (the “subaltern”) can’t truly express themselves in systems built by and for the powerful, indigenous and marginalised communities today also struggle to be seen, heard, or recognised in the digital world because global digital platforms are shaped by dominant (Western, capitalist) interests (Makananise, 2024; Spivak, 2023). In the Nigerian context, this control manifests in various ways, including the dominance of companies like DStv, GOtv, and StarTimes in the digital television market. These corporations often dictate infrastructure development, programming, and content delivery systems, leaving local broadcasters with limited influence (Lewis, 2023). The imposition of Euro-American content

results in cultural displacement, where indigenous languages, traditions, and narratives are marginalised (Kwet, 2019; Cizek and Uricchio, 2022; Lichtman and Traganou, 2021). This is further exacerbated by dependency replication, whereby Nigeria's DTT transition is shaped by external policy frameworks, technological models, and international mandates such as the ITU's 2015 switchover deadline often with limited consideration for local needs or capacities (Mphigalale, 2020; Ruohonen, 2021). In addition, data extractivism the harvesting of user data without consent mirrors historical colonial logics of resource extraction, reinforcing asymmetries between the Global North and Global South (Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Kwet, 2019).

While digital colonialism critiques the global dynamics of domination and dependency, the concept of digital poverty shifts attention to the economic and infrastructural conditions that hinder digital inclusion. Galperin and Mariscal (2007) argue that digital poverty covers more than just a lack of access to digital devices it includes the absence of enabling environments, support systems, and user competencies necessary for meaningful engagement. In rural Nigerian communities, digital poverty is evident in the limited availability and affordability of digital decoders, inadequate electricity infrastructure, and the high cost of subscriptions (Mora-Rivera & García-Mora, 2021 Okocha & Edafewotu, 2022). Access inequality remains a persistent challenge, with rural-urban divides, gender disparities, and class differences influencing who can afford and utilise digital television services (Rana, 2024). Functional literacy the ability to use digital interfaces such as program menus or channel guides also plays a critical role in digital adoption (Salami, 2024). Additionally, exclusion-by-design, a term used to describe technologies developed without consideration for marginalised users, highlights the failure of digital technology policy systems to accommodate the specific needs of rural populations (Park and Humphry, 2019; Udegbunam et al., 2023).

Closely related to digital poverty is the concept of information poverty, originally developed by Elfreda Chatman (1996). This framework centres on the lack of access to trustworthy, relevant, and timely information, often due to social, economic, or institutional barriers. In the context of Nigeria's digital television switchover, information poverty manifests in the form of weak public communication campaigns, misinformation, and a general lack of awareness about the requirements and implications of the transition (Balogun et al., 2020; Philip and Williams, 2019). Many rural residents remain uninformed about the types of devices needed, the cost of digital services, or the long-term benefits of DTT, leading to confusion, scepticism, and low uptake (Helsper, 2021; Udosen & Ogri, 2019). The role of information gatekeeping where local authorities or broadcasters filter or distort access to key information is particularly relevant in these settings (Adamu & Nkwo, 2023). Moreover, trust in sources becomes a critical factor, as rural users often place greater confidence in oral, interpersonal networks than in government messaging. Risk aversion the reluctance to adopt unfamiliar or poorly explained technologies further compounds the problem, reinforcing patterns of disengagement (Russell & de Souza, 2023; Zondi et al., 2024).

The concept of intersectionality, introduced by Crenshaw (1989), adds further analytical depth by highlighting how multiple axes of identity such as gender, class, age, geography, and education intersect to

shape digital exclusion. In rural Nigeria, digital access is not experienced uniformly; instead, it is stratified along these identity lines. Women, for instance, may face patriarchal constraints that limit their access to household technologies or restrict their agency in media consumption (Zheng & Walsham, 2021; Campbell, 2020). Similarly, older individuals may be less comfortable making sense of digital interfaces due to low literacy or unfamiliarity with technology (Schneider, 2022). Positionality where one stands socially profoundly influences access, engagement, and perceived value of digital television (Veracini & Weaver-Hightower, 2023) furthermore, interlocking oppressions further illustrate how disadvantage compounds when multiple marginalised identities overlap, creating unique and heightened barriers to digital participation (Gillwald & Partridge, 2022; Tsatsou, 2022). Cultural norms, infrastructure limitations, and socio-economic exclusion are not experienced in isolation but as embedded, interacting systems of inequality.

2.1.2 Theoretical Lens: Uses and gratifications theory (UGT)

In addition to structural concepts that highlight systemic exclusion, this study also draws on uses and gratifications theory (UGT) (Blumler & Katz, 1974) to examine how individuals engage with DTT when access is possible. While digital colonialism, digital poverty, and information poverty offer compelling accounts of why rural communities are excluded from digital systems, they offer less insight into how individuals and households make sense of, adapt to, or derive value from media when they do gain access. Here, UGT provides an important counterbalance focusing on audience agency, intentionality, and everyday media use. Originating from media studies, U&G theory asserts that individuals actively seek out media to fulfil specific cognitive, emotional, and social needs (Blumler & Katz, 1974; Dingemans et al., 2023). In rural Nigerian communities, digital television serves various purposes beyond means of passive entertainment. For example, cognitive needs such as acquiring agricultural knowledge or staying informed about civic matters are often prioritised, especially where access to alternative sources of information is limited (Akins et al., 2019). Affective needs, including emotional connection, cultural resonance, and stress relief, are also critical, particularly in low-resource settings where television offers a form of escapism that is it helps to fulfils emotional needs due to access to plural chose of channels on DTT (Habes, 2019; Maddalena, 2021; Su & Chen, 2020; Ames, 2020). The introduction of digital terrestrial television (DTT) in rural communities can amplified the role of television as a medium for satisfying social integrative needs. As DTT improves access to diverse and higher-quality content, television increasingly becomes a communal practice, with residents gathering in shared spaces to collectively watch, discuss, and interpret programming. This shared media experience not only reinforces interpersonal bonds that promote social cohesion but also strengthens cultural identity by providing plural content that reflects and affirms local traditions and values. (Menon, 2022; Steiner & Xu, 2020; Sutrisno, 2023). Finally, tension release needs as a result of gratification highlight the role of television or digital television in offering distraction or psychological refuge from daily challenges such as poverty, insecurity, or infrastructural instability (Norman, 2021).

Within the context of this study, UGT helps to explain why users may disengage from analogue television or DTT services, even when infrastructural access is present. Many rural communities in Global South are

likely to opt for alternative media formats such as mobile phone video sharing, radio, or informal content exchanges when digital television fails to meet their expectations (Mwangi, 2021; Wildermuth, 2021). These actions are not merely the result of exclusion but also expressions of media agency, where users reject platforms that do not provide meaningful cultural or informational gratification (Bojanie et al., 2022; Slot and Opree, 2021). UGT thereby enriches the conceptual framework by attending to how people make sense of exclusion and choose alternatives that better fit their needs. It bridges the gap between structural barriers (e.g., digital poverty) and everyday decision-making, reinforcing the argument that effective digital inclusion strategies must be both structurally equitable and cognitively and emotionally resonant with users. Moreover, this study builds on recent UGT research in Global South contexts, which has expanded the framework to consider how media engagement is shaped by uncertainty, hybrid information systems, and low-resource environments. Scholars such as Haile (2024) and James and James (2021) have argued that UGT remains relevant in low- and middle-income settings, particularly when integrated with structural critiques.

The inclusion of UGT in this study is not without limitations. UGT has been critiqued for its limited capacity to address issues of power, access, and inequality, especially in contexts where media systems are governed by elite or commercial interests. While it illuminates how and why users engage with media, it often takes access for granted an assumption that is problematic in rural Nigeria, where infrastructural deficits and affordability barriers remain unresolved. However, by combining UGT with structural concepts of exclusion, this study avoids such reductionism and presents a dialectical view: one that recognises the agency of rural users, without losing sight of the systemic constraints that shape their choices. The inclusion of UGT further strengthens this thesis by offering a complementary lens one that highlights media engagement as a socially meaningful activity, even within conditions of constraint. While structural concepts explain the broader forces of exclusion, UGT reveals how rural viewers explore, interpret, and find value in DTT, often in creative and resilient ways.

The integration of these frameworks in this study provide means to analyse digital television engagement through a multi-dimensional lens. At the structural level, digital colonialism critiques the global irregularities shaping Nigeria's digital transition, while digital and information poverty frameworks help surface localised material and informational barriers. Intersectionality enables an exploration of how these dynamics are experienced differently depending on social location. Meanwhile, U&G theory provides insight into why individuals engage with or disengage from digital television, based on their personal motivations, constraints, and lived realities. This combined framework informs both the design and interpretation of the study. It shapes the research questions, guides data collection (including interviews and content analysis), and structures the thematic analysis. Constructs such as platform dominance, access inequality, trust in sources, affordances are used as coding categories to explore empirical patterns. Ultimately, this framework enables a layered understanding of the digital terrestrial television landscape in rural Lagos, capturing both the systems of power that shape access, and the everyday strategies rural users employ to manage, adapt to, or resist digital transitions.

2.1.3 Intersectional digital marginalisation as a diagnostic concept for digital disconnect

This study introduces the concept of intersectional digital marginalisation to capture the cumulative, layered, and dynamic forms of exclusion experienced by rural users adapting or exploring Nigeria's digital television transition. The framework is built by integrating four interrelated conceptual domains digital colonialism, digital poverty, information poverty, and intersectionality alongside uses and gratifications theory (UGT), providing a comprehensive lens through which digital disengagement can be understood. The analysis begins with the concept of digital colonialism, which highlights how technological infrastructures, content ecosystems, and policy frameworks increasingly reflect foreign interests rather than local needs (Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Kwet, 2019). Digital colonialism reveals that top-down technology rollouts, such as Nigeria's DTT switchover, often extend neo-colonial patterns of control. In this context, rural populations are positioned not as active citizens within a digital public sphere, but as passive data subjects, while global corporate platforms and urban elites dominate content creation and distribution. This systemic dominance erases local media voices, undermines indigenous content production, and entrenches cultural dependency on foreign digital infrastructures.

In parallel, the concept of digital poverty (Galperin & Mariscal, 2007; Diga, 2020) further illustrates how rural users are excluded through a lack of access to the material resources necessary for meaningful digital participation. Digital poverty captures barriers such as the unaffordability of set-top boxes, unreliable electricity supply, and weak DTT signal reception all of which critically shape rural engagement with new broadcasting technologies. Relatedly, information poverty (Chatman, 1996) refers to the unequal distribution of knowledge and informational resources. It explains why many rural residents remain unaware of the digital switchover, misunderstand its benefits, or lack the digital literacy needed to engage with DTT services effectively. Thus, even where infrastructure is available, gaps in communication, trust, and informational access perpetuate marginalisation. Overlaying these systemic exclusions is the concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), which foregrounds the multiple, overlapping axes of identity such as gender, class, age, language, and geography that shape individuals' experiences of marginalisation. In the Nigerian rural context, a low-income woman or an elderly adult may face compounded disadvantages: material barriers to device access, infrastructural constraints like unreliable power, cultural dissonance from urban-centric programming, and household power dynamics that control media consumption (Zheng & Walsham, 2021; Gillwald & Partridge, 2022). This intersectionality highlights that exclusion is not uniform but is structured through intersecting social inequalities.

To complement these structural perspectives, this study integrates uses and gratifications theory (UGT) (Blumler & Katz, 1974; Ruggiero, 2000), which brings audience agency and behavioural motivations into focus. UGT posits that media users are active agents who selectively adopt or reject technologies based on the ability of these technologies to fulfil specific informational, social, cultural, or entertainment needs. In the context of rural Nigeria, disengagement from digital technology such as DTT was often not passive but strategic: when the content failed to align with users' linguistic, cultural, or informational expectations, many of the respondents chose to turn to alternative platforms such as mobile-based informal content sharing.

Thus, while digital colonialism, digital poverty, information poverty, and intersectionality explain why users are structurally marginalised, UGT explains how users respond to exclusion through agency, resistance, and adaptation. Accordingly, this intersectional digital marginalisation functions as a diagnostic concept that bridges macro-level structures (colonial legacies, infrastructural gaps, informational inequalities) with micro-level lived experiences (motivations, gratifications, behavioural rejection). It offers a holistic understanding of why rural communities may disengage from technology such as DTT, not merely due to technological limitations, but through a converging matrix of socio-economic, cultural, informational, and motivational barriers. While digital exclusion has been widely recognised in academic literature, the unique experiences of multiply marginalised users in rural Global South contexts remain under-examined (Banerjee et al., 2023; Maulida & Rarasati, 2019). Naming and conceptualising intersectional digital marginalisation thus allows this study to centre rural voices and experiences while framing more culturally grounded, community-informed, and structurally sensitive policy responses (Dalton, 2020).

The conceptual framework diagram visually represents these relationships is shown below and together, these elements depict both top-down systemic pressures and bottom-up behavioural responses, offering a comprehensive, layered model for understanding rural digital marginalisation during Nigeria's digital television transition.

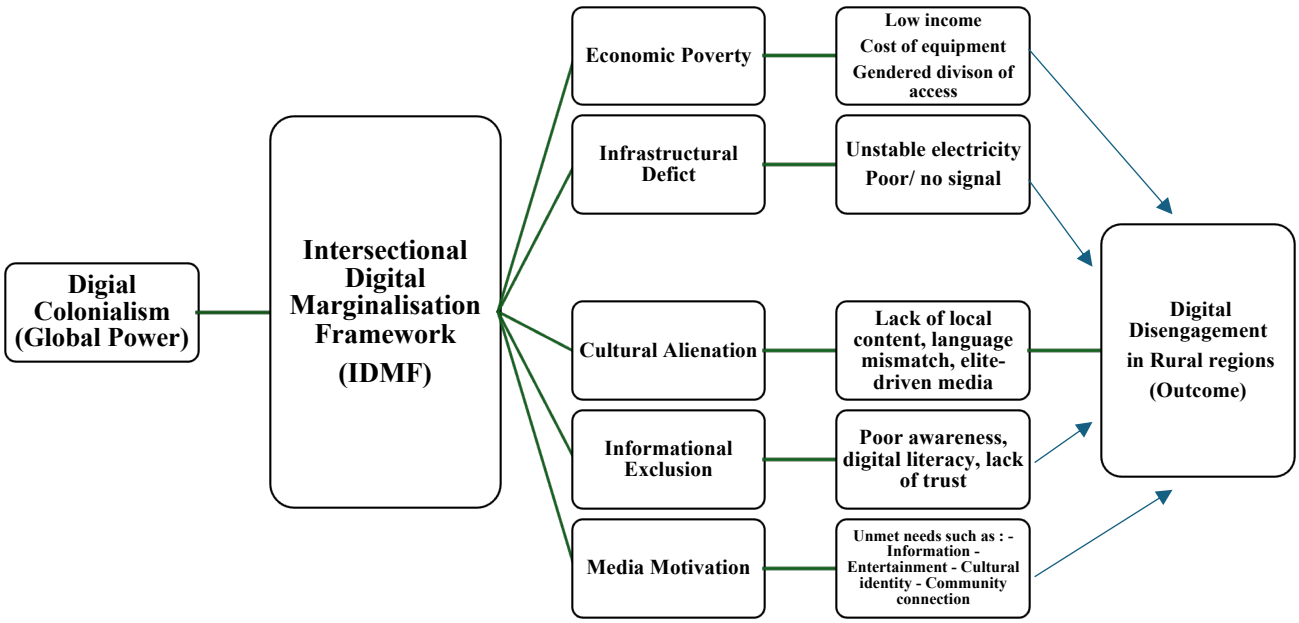

Figure 1: The Intersectional Digital Marginalisation Framework (IDMF)

The framework integrates four key concepts: digital colonialism, digital poverty, information poverty, intersectionality and a theory, uses and gratifications (UGT). Directional arrows illustrate the flow of influence between systemic factors and user agency, converging on the central outcome of digital disengagement. Arrows also indicate the interactive, layered nature of exclusion processes, showing how multiple forces operate simultaneously to shape rural media experiences during Nigeria's digital switchover. Consequently, expanding upon this foundational framework, the next section situates the study within existing empirical research on digital transitions and media engagement majorly across the Global South. By critically reviewing relevant literature, it traces the evolving dynamics of technological adoption, access disparities, and user agency in digitally marginalised contexts. This review provides the empirical grounding necessary to contextualise Nigeria's digital switchover within broader patterns of infrastructural unevenness, policy experimentation, and socio-cultural negotiation in digital media landscapes.

2.2. Literature review

2.2.0. Empirical Context: Digital transitions and media engagement in Global South regions

Building upon the theoretical and conceptual frameworks outlined in the preceding section, this section now turns to an empirical review of digital terrestrial television (DTT) engagement in the Global South. In doing so, it explores how regional experiences and socio-cultural contexts shape both the uptake and limitations of this broadcasting technology. This literature review aims to synthesise existing studies on the levels of public engagement with DTT, identifying both enabling factors and persistent barriers that mediate access and usage. Importantly, it also examines how cultural perceptions of television as a communication medium continue to influence the nature and extent of this engagement. These perspectives are particularly salient in Global South contexts, where media infrastructures, historical legacies, and localised viewing practices often diverge significantly from Global North paradigms. By reviewing empirical studies and region-specific analyses, this section seeks to ground the study in the lived realities of DTT users and non-users alike, shedding light on the intersection of technology, culture, and accessibility. The review is organised thematically, beginning with degree of engagement, followed by barriers to adoption or engagement, and concluding with a discussion on cultural attitudes towards television in the Global South.

2.2.1. Degree of engagement

Television remains one of the most pervasive and influential media forms in the world, shaping entertainment, information consumption, and cultural norms for decades (Bignell and Woods, 2022). However, the ways in which individuals engage with television have undergone profound transformations, particularly with the advent of digital technologies (Miller, 2020). The perception of "engagement" now extends far beyond passive viewership to include interactive behaviours, personalised content selection, multi-platform usage, and social media integration (Shahbaznezhad et al., 2021). These changes invite critical review of how technological, geographical, and cultural variables mediate television use. This literature review seeks to explore the multifaceted nature of audience engagement with television, focusing specifically on the digital age. Under this theme, it is structured around four key thematic areas:

- Evolution and affordances of digital TV: Traces the shift from analogue to digital and highlights distinctive features that influence user interaction.
- Global patterns of engagement: Identifies broad trends in digital TV adoption and use across different world regions.
- Rural vs. Urban engagement in the Global South: Examines disparities in access and use between urban centres and rural areas.
- Cultural attitudes toward television: Investigates how local beliefs, values, and norms shape perceptions of television and influence engagement.

2.2.1.1 Evolution and affordances of DTV/ DTT

The transition from analogue to digital broadcasting represents a pivotal shift in global media history, reshaping how television content is produced, transmitted, and consumed. At the heart of this transformation are two interlinked yet distinct technological paths: the broader ecosystem of digital television (DTV) and the more specific pathway of digital terrestrial television (DTT). Together, these technologies reflect a convergence of infrastructural modernisation, user-centred innovation, and evolving media ecologies, but they also highlight significant disparities in access, design, and inclusion, particularly between the Global North and South. Digital television (DTV) initially emerged to overcome the limitations of analogue broadcasting, using digital compression and modulation to enhance picture and sound quality (Sjuchro et al., 2023). This foundational shift laid the groundwork for various modes of content delivery including cable, satellite, and streaming services which collectively enabled greater viewer autonomy.

Technologies such as digital video recorders (DVRs) and smart TVs facilitated time-shifting, while Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms like Netflix and Hulu revolutionised consumption by offering on-demand access to extensive libraries of content (Ha, 2020; Hilmes & Jacobs, 2021; Park, 2017; Twenge et al., 2019). These developments also spurred the growth of interactive television (iTV), which blended traditional viewing with online functionalities through middleware systems (da Silva Klehm et al., 2022), allowing users to browse the internet or access social media directly through their television interface (Galperin & Bar, 2023; Nwokedi et al., 2023). The rise of multi-screening where viewers simultaneously use smartphones or tablets while watching television further redefined the DTV experience (Dias, 2016; Dias & Serrano-Puche, 2020). Content producers now cater to audiences that demand interactivity, social engagement, and algorithmically personalised experiences (Lalmas et al., 2022; Munaro et al., 2021). However, these advancements also introduced challenges. The complexity of modern DTV interfaces may overwhelm less tech-savvy users, necessitating user-friendly designs and more accessible remote-control systems (Kozyreva et al., 2020; Weinberger, 2019; Andreadis et al., 2021).

In parallel, digital terrestrial television (DTT) followed a trajectory rooted in public broadcasting and free-to-air accessibility. As part of international policy frameworks like the Geneva 2006 Plan, DTT was deployed to ensure more efficient use of frequency spectrum and to enable new media services in countries transitioning from analogue systems (Abdelghany and Digham, 2019; Więcek et al., 2024). However, while infrastructure expanded rapidly in many regions Bulgaria, for example, reached 96.2% population coverage by 2024 local content production often lagged behind, raising questions about media pluralism and representational equity (Milkova, 2024). DTT also demanded extensive editorial adaptation that is previously, broadcasters might have aired one movie per week due to analogue constraints. With DTT, they could air multiple films across several channels daily, but this requires selecting appropriate content for different demographics, ensuring cultural relevance and inclusivity or coordinating with technical teams to integrate digital features (e.g., subtitles, guides, or interactive options). In Serbia, for example, television transitioned from weekly genre-limited scheduling to a multi-genre digital offering shaped by editorial creativity and technical integration (Gajic & Lutovac, 2024).

On a technical level, DTT standards like DVB-T2 use Orthogonal Frequency-Division Multiplexing (OFDM) and support mobile and rooftop antenna reception, enabling better signal performance even in challenging environments (Li et al., 2022; Zannou et al., 2024). Enhancements such as Universal Filtered Multicarrier (UFMC) and non-uniform constellations (NUCs) further bolster system resilience against interference, reducing performance degradation from issues like carrier frequency offset (Fuentes Muela, 2017). Affordance-wise, DTT offers three core advantages. First is efficiency and accessibility, especially in areas with limited infrastructure. Second is interactivity, albeit in simpler forms compared to DTV's IPTV capabilities. Some DTT systems include return-path features that support user interaction, making programming more inclusive when coupled with responsive editorial policy. Third is cost-effectiveness, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. Simulation studies in Ghana using Bit Error Rate (BER) and Signal-to-Noise Ratio (SNR) analyses underscore DTT's performance viability under low-resource conditions (Geraci et al., 2022; Hassan et al., 2020; Ngala et al., 2024).

Yet, the digital media landscape remains uneven. In the Global North, systems like DVB (Europe), ATSC (North America), and ISDB (Japan) facilitated standardisation, allowing for efficient spectrum use and high-definition content delivery (Pineda & Hernández, 2019; Morello & Mignone, 2016). These systems benefited from supportive infrastructure consistent electricity, digital literacy, and competitive markets (Lyons et al., 2020; Doyle, 2021). Conversely, in much of the Global South, digital adoption is fractured by infrastructural limitations, economic inequality, and residual colonial structures (James, 2021; Graham, 2019; Zylinska, 2022). Scholars describe this imbalance through the lens of digital colonialism, where technological systems are imported from the Global North without local customisation, reinforcing dependency and excluding non-Western voices from global media development (Couldry & Mejias, 2023; Mouton & Burns, 2021; Kwet, 2019). For example, the DVB initiative established in Europe in 1993 disproportionately shaped the global broadcasting landscape while sidelining African and Asian stakeholders (Hakim & Hayat, 2024). In sub-Saharan Africa, where only 28% of rural households have reliable electricity (Blimpo et al., 2020; World Bank, 2023), DTV adoption often relies on diesel generators, informal satellite networks like FreeTV, and communal viewing practices that resist the individualism embedded in streaming models (Larkin, 2020; Srinivasan, 2018).

The evolution of digital television above encapsulates a shift from centralised, analogue broadcasting to an interactive, on-demand digital ecosystem. While DTV continues to expand consumer choice and media interactivity, DTT remains a critical infrastructure for public access, particularly in underserved regions. Together, these technologies illuminate the broader challenges of equitable digital transformation where innovation must be paired with cultural responsiveness, infrastructural investment, and inclusive policy design.

2.2.1.2 Global patterns of engagement with DTV and DTT

The global media landscape has experienced a dynamic shift, driven by digitalisation and the proliferation of smart technologies. Digital television (DTV) encompassing cable, satellite, IPTV, and streaming platforms

and digital terrestrial television (DTT), a free-to-air broadcast system, represent the dual pathways through which audiences now engage with televised content (Pineda & Hernández, 2019; Morello & Mignone, 2016). While both technologies offer digital access, their implementation and user experiences vary significantly across global contexts, particularly when comparing urban centres to rural regions in the Global South (Graham, 2019; Zylinska, 2022). In high-income and urbanised regions, DTV has matured into a platform dominated by Over-the-Top (OTT) services such as Netflix, Hulu, and Disney+, supported by high-speed internet, smart devices, and digital literacy (Lalmas et al., 2022; Nielsen, 2024). These services allow for on-demand, personalised viewing experiences. Countries in North America, Europe, and parts of Asia have facilitated this transition through coordinated policy frameworks, market competition, and infrastructure investment (Chester & Montgomery, 2024; Okano-Heijmans and Vosse, 2021). However, this consumer-centric model is deeply exclusionary in low-income and infrastructurally weak environments (Dickens, 2023).

In contrast, DTT offers an inclusive, cost-effective alternative, particularly in underserved areas. DTT systems have been critical in broadcasting educational content, news, and culturally specific programming without the need for internet access (Hyun, 2023; Gikis, 2021). As a public service medium, DTT addresses the affordability barrier associated with subscription-based platforms and supports access among economically marginalised groups (Kwet, 2019). Despite these strengths, many rural regions continue to face limitations due to inadequate signal coverage, lack of affordable receivers, low levels of digital literacy, and insufficient policy support (Chambers et al., 2022; Larkin, 2020). In some Global South countries such as Nigeria and across sub-Saharan Africa, informal and communal viewing practices persist, highlighting the continued relevance of shared media spaces in shaping engagement (Okocha & Dogo, 2023). Empirical data indicates that DTV adoption has been rapid in digitally advanced economies, with smart TV penetration and streaming usage climbing steadily (Vantiva, 2023a; PR Newswire, 2023). In contrast, DTT uptake remains uneven and often under-theorised in research on digital transitions (Viljoen-Stroebel, 2022). While technical studies highlight the viability and efficiency of DTT systems (Zannou et al., 2024; Ngala et al., 2024), there is a notable absence of inquiry into how DTT is culturally and socially embedded in rural life. Furthermore, existing literature often overlooks the hybridised nature of media consumption in rural Global South contexts where analogue, DTT, and OTT systems coexist and serve different social functions (Sekgothe, 2024; Tengeh & Udoakpan, 2021).

A significant gap in current scholarship lies in the limited exploration of how structural inequalities such as economic precarity or uncertain, infrastructural deficits, and historical marginalisation influence patterns of engagement (Curtis et al., 2022; Helsper, 2021). Studies tend to prioritise urban experiences, with rural regions either generalised or treated as monolithic (Correa & Pavez, 2016). Additionally, while theoretical frameworks like uses and gratifications have been applied to understand user motivations (Hidayati & Irwansyah, 2021), they frequently ignore the contextual barriers that shape those motivations, particularly in remote or rural areas (Mao, 2024). In relation to this thesis "Digital Disconnects," the existing literature is

rich in global and technological insights but lacks grounded, qualitative engagement with rural users' lived realities. There is a pressing need for ethnographically informed, intersectional research that situates DTV and DTT engagement within broader questions of access, identity, and digital sovereignty (Evans & Robertson, 2020). This study seeks to fill that void by critically engaging with the concept of intersectional digital marginalisation and centring the experiences of rural communities often sidelined in mainstream digital narratives.

2.2.1.3 Rural vs Urban disparities in the level of DTT engagement in the Global South

The level of engagement with digital terrestrial television (DTT) in the Global South is marked by persistent disparities, shaped by a combination of infrastructural, socio-economic, and cultural inequalities (Hernandez et al., 2024; Pandit, 2023). Unlike high-income regions, where strong infrastructure and consumer affordability have facilitated smoother transitions to digital television, many parts of the Global South particularly rural and marginalised areas remain constrained by structural barriers. These include limited broadband penetration, unreliable electricity supply, and restricted access to digital-ready television devices (Dakduk et al., 2023; Kaplinsky & Kraemer-Mbula, 2022). Beyond these infrastructural deficits, digital poverty defined by the intersection of economic hardship and low digital literacy further limits access and engagement with DTT platforms (Dixit et al., 2023; Innocenti & Pescatore, 2023). Despite policy-led attempts to increase digital access, the rural-urban divide in DTT engagement remains a consistent pattern across much of the literature. Academic studies tend to focus heavily on urban populations, often marginalising or omitting the experiences of rural audiences. For example, research on DTT adoption in South Africa (Duncan, 2017; Diseko-Biagini, 2016), Indonesia (Citra, 2019), and Brazil (Garcia-Da-Rocha, 2022) often centres on urban contexts while overlooking the specific challenges faced by rural communities. Similarly, regulatory analyses from Ghana (Bedu-Addo, 2022), Botswana (Mosanako & Lesitaokana, 2021), and Nigeria (Olayinka, 2022) rarely account for differentiated access based on geography, class, or gender.

A critical shortcoming across this body of literature is the limited use of intersectional frameworks that consider how social categories such as class, gender, and rurality interact to influence media access and engagement (Banerjee et al., 2023; Walker et al., 2019). The result is an overly homogenised understanding of digital television uptake, one that often neglects the realities of those living in non-urban, resource-poor settings. For many rural communities, digital transitions are further obstructed by a lack of relevant and culturally resonant content. Although Chivers et al. (2023) emphasise the importance of localised programming in encouraging viewer engagement, the majority of DTT content remains linguistically inaccessible and culturally detached from rural audiences. This issue is particularly acute in contexts where English or urban dialects dominate the broadcast landscape, as seen in Nigeria (Felix, 2024) and Bangladesh (Tsatsou, 2022), where non-English-speaking or indigenous-language speakers are effectively excluded from full participation in the digital media environment. The case of Lagos State in Nigeria provides a particularly vivid example of rural-urban disparities in DTT engagement. Despite being one of Africa’s most economically vibrant regions, rural districts such as Badagry, Epe, and Ikorodu continue to suffer from infrastructural neglect and social marginalisation (Adagun, 2021; Fagbohun, 2021). These areas frequently

lack consistent electricity, that can affect level of engagement and strong DTT signal reception, along with affordable access to subsidised digital decoders (Ibrahim & Fatile, 2024; Fagbohun & Adejugbagbe, 2020). Studies suggest that only around 30% of households in communities such as Ajido (Badagry), Itoikin (Epe), and Ijede (Ikorodu) have access to reliable electricity, a prerequisite for the successful use of digital television systems (Zhou et al., 2023). In the absence of stable infrastructure such as the digital signal, many residents are forced to either continue using analogue television sets or rely on informal viewing centres, often powered by petrol generators, to access content (Adebajo, 2023). This infrastructural exclusion reinforces regional inequalities and reflects a broader fragmentation in Global South regions like the Nigeria's media landscape (Saheed & Obianuju, 2021).

In response to these challenges, rural populations have increasingly adopted alternative media strategies, often bypassing formal DTT systems altogether. This trend is evident in places like Ikoga-Zebbe (Badagry) and Ijebu-Lekki (Epe), where mobile phones frequently preloaded with Nollywood films, religious content, serve as the dominant media platforms (Afolabi, 2019; Hitchen & Hassan, 2022). These mobile-first practices reflect broader patterns of what scholars have termed "digital leapfrogging," whereby underserved communities circumvent traditional digital infrastructure in favour of more accessible, low-cost alternatives (Isotani et al., 2023; Ndung'u & Oguso, 2023). Services such as mobile cinema vendors have emerged, charging small fees to load films onto users' devices, offering culturally relevant content entirely outside the state-supported broadcast ecosystem (Haynes, 2018; Lorenz, 2022; Simon, 2021, 2024). These grassroots adaptations expose the limitations of top-down digital switchover (DSO) policies, which often overlook the realities of rural life. The degree of engagement with Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) across rural and urban areas in the Global South is significantly shaped by unequal infrastructural access, socio-economic barriers, and linguistic exclusion, all of which directly impact how populations interact with and benefit from digital media platforms. As detailed in the literature, while urban centres often benefit from policy attention, better infrastructure, and culturally relevant programming, rural communities face layered forms of marginalisation, limiting not just their access but also their sustained engagement with DTT services (Duncan, 2017; Chivers et al., 2023).

Nigeria's DSO strategy, coordinated by the National Broadcasting Commission and the Federal Ministry of Information, officially launched in Lagos in 2021. However, this rollout focused heavily on urban centres such as Ikeja, Surulere, and Victoria Island, neglecting more remote areas where digital infrastructure is weakest (NBC, 2021). As of late 2023, there remains a lack of publicly available data on DTT penetration in the rural wards of Lagos, reflecting a policy and research gap that homogenises Lagos as uniformly urban and digitally connected (Sanusi, 2024; Olayinka, 2022). The inaccessibility of DTT content is further exacerbated by language barriers. Most digital broadcasts in Lagos are produced in English or dominant urban Yoruba dialects, effectively excluding speakers of minority languages such as Egun, Awori, or Ijebu, which are widely spoken in Lagos's coastal and agrarian regions (Ajayi & Adediran, 2024). This linguistic marginalisation contributes to a deeper form of media exclusion, in which digital television may be technically available but socially and culturally alienating. Viewers seeking local narratives, language

authenticity, and community-specific programming are left with few meaningful options (Uche et al., 2020; Nwankwo & Arimitan, 2021). The implications of these disparities extend far beyond media access. Without adequate infrastructure, digital literacy training, and inclusive policies, rural populations remain effectively excluded from the benefits of digital transformation (Salisu et al., 2023; Ezeudu, 2023). The exclusion is both technical and socio-economic, limiting participation in the broader digital economy and contributing to a deepening of information poverty. Scholars argue that addressing these challenges requires more than technical fixes; what is needed are intersectional and community-based approaches that acknowledge local realities and lived experiences (Lu et al., 2024; Maulida & Rarasati, 2019; Olawale & Aderoju, 2023). Without addressing the root causes of infrastructural inequality and cultural exclusion, digital transitions will continue to reproduce the same structural divides they aim to overcome (Okafor et al., 2022).

As such, this literature points to a pressing need for more inclusive and context-sensitive policies in digital television rollouts. Frameworks such as digital colonialism, intersectionality, and information poverty offer useful lenses through which to analyse the power dynamics and exclusions embedded in current media development strategies. For DTT to serve as a tool for digital inclusion, particularly in low-connectivity and rural contexts, future interventions must prioritise culturally relevant content, gender-inclusive access, and community-driven literacy and infrastructure initiatives. Only through such strategies can meaningful engagement be achieved, and the structural disparities in digital television access between rural and urban populations in the Global South begin to narrow. Hence, the essence of this thesis to fill in these identified gaps.

2.2.1.4 Cultural attitudes toward television engagement

Cultural attitudes toward television represent a significant analytical framework for understanding both engagement and disengagement with digital television, especially in rural and marginalised settings (Thompson, 2021). These attitudes capture a complex interplay of socio-historical, generational, religious, and gendered dimensions, attributing unique meanings to television beyond mere technological appreciation (Abbiss, 2020; Migowski, 2023). Essentially, television transforms into a cultural artifact, reflecting the values, norms, and identities of the societies that engage with it (Hodkinson, 2024; Lekngam, 2019). For instance, in rural Nigeria, where communal viewing practices prevail, television consumption is frequently situated within collective familial or community experiences (Obong, 2019; Odochie et al., 2021). This contrasts starkly with urban contexts where individualised media consumption patterns dominate, highlighting the importance of local social customs in shaping media engagement (Ibrahim et al., 2024a; Omoera & Ihekwoaba, 2022a).

In many rural Global South regions, particularly Africa, television is often perceived as a communal medium. Shared viewing environments promote collective interpretations of content, instigating discussions that reinforce social bonds while promoting interactions steeped in local culture (Omoera & Ihekwoaba, 2022b; Ufuophu-Biri, 2020). The communal viewing tradition is a vital cultural practice that builds narratives and shared experiences among viewers, emphasising a collective identity. Such dynamics are

augmented by historical societal structures that have long associated the medium with trust and moral authority. For instance, elders frequently express concern regarding the effects of Western values permeating through television programming, fearing cultural deterioration and the moral decay of younger generations (Iyorza & Abu, 2020; Mahmood et al., 2021a). The cultural significance attributed to television as a transmitter of both knowledge and ethical standards underscores the intricate relationship between media and local knowledge systems. The interplay of gender norms also presents a critical lens through which television consumption is structured. In many males dominated households, access to television technologies remains skewed, often favouring male viewers who exert greater control over content selection and viewing schedules (Chima & Alawode, 2019; Lucas & Lazarus, 2024a). Consequently, women's engagement with television becomes secondary and largely incidental, shaped more by caregiving roles and domestic responsibilities rather than personal agency (Adeloye et al., 2021; Ndibuagu et al., 2017).

This distribution of access and authority over the media highlights the broader socio-cultural hierarchies that influence how technologies are engaged within households. Such disparities are evidentially linked to entrenched power dynamics rather than mere technological limitations, indicating that the barriers to engagement with digital television are fundamentally cultural (Cawley, 2020; George, 2024). Religious and moral narratives also play a crucial role in shaping public attitudes toward television in rural communities. In certain contexts, religious leaders serve as arbiters of acceptable media consumption, guiding community sentiment toward specific content types while discouraging others deemed inappropriate or harmful (Apuke & Omar, 2021; Adedayo & Falade, 2019a). For example, many Islamic and Pentecostal leaders may label certain television channels as detrimental, associating them with spiritual distraction and moral corruption (Lucas & Lazarus, 2024b; Mahmood et al., 2021b). These prevailing narratives not only dictate viewer preferences but also actively mitigate engagement levels, illustrating the governance exerted by local religious ethos on media consumption practices. The tensions between modern digital television content and traditional moral frameworks create a polarised viewing environment, where engagement is actively negotiated rather than passively undertaken. These cultural dynamics ranging from gendered control and religious gatekeeping to communal values highlight that the degree of engagement with digital television is never uniform but deeply mediated by local norms and societal structures. Engagement is not simply about content access or digital infrastructure; it is about how television is embedded within the lived realities, belief systems, and relational hierarchies of everyday life. In this sense, disengagement can be a form of cultural resistance, while selective engagement may reflect strategic cultural negotiation underscoring that rural media practices are active, not passive (Abbiss, 2020; Cawley, 2020).

Generational perceptions of television and media consumption further complicate these dynamics. Older generations frequently express skepticism toward modern digital platforms, often maintaining a preference for traditional analogue systems due to their established familiarity (Ibrahim et al., 2024b; Mahmood et al., 2021c). Conversely, younger adults, particularly those adepts in digital technologies, tend to embrace digital television as a conduit to a wider world of content and cultural capital (Felix, 2024b). This generational

divide reveals a layering of attitudes, whereby younger audiences view digital engagement as an opportunity for expanding horizons, while older viewers may perceive the shift as a challenge to established cultural narratives and social practices. Ultimately, cultural attitudes toward television serve as both facilitators and impediments to digital engagement. They delineate the terms under which new technologies are integrated into everyday life, influencing which content is celebrated or rejected and determining who holds power within these media practices (Uchegbuo & Azubuike, 2023; Lucas & Lazarus, 2024c). The appreciation of television according to these scholars is more than just a medium that indicates engagement is embedded within cultural contexts, revealing deeper societal dynamics at play.

Understanding these attitudes thus necessitates an acknowledgment of the various cultural negotiations that occur around media consumption, which transcend simple infrastructure or policy discussions to cover the rich interplay of local practices and identities. Additionally, community implications of television viewing highlight the medium's duality in shaping and reflecting cultural values. The significance assigned to media engagement offers pathways for communal bonding, particularly in rural contexts where shared experiences promote collective identities and reinforce social norms (Adedayo & Falade, 2019b; Ibrahim et al., 2024c). Conversely, as television becomes more integrated into the daily lives of these communities, it may also serve as a vehicle for globalisation, introducing new ideas that could potentially disrupt traditional societal structures (Ding, 2024; Nugraha & Nugroho, 2021). Thus, engaging with digital television becomes an act of cultural negotiation, wherein communities continuously redefine boundaries around acceptable content while attempting to maintain cultural integrity amidst the pervasive influence of global media.

These cultural attitudes toward television especially in rural and marginalised settings are central to understanding the varying degrees of engagement and disengagement with digital media. Gendered power hierarchies, religious authority, generational divides, and communal norms converge to shape who engages, how, and under what conditions. These attitudes frame engagement not merely as a function of access or technology, but as a culturally embedded process negotiated within everyday life. In this context, digital television is both a site of cultural continuity and disruption serving simultaneously as a tool for community bonding and a conduit for global influence. Recognising this duality is essential for any media engagement strategy in the Global South, particularly in rural areas, where cultural meaning-making and media use are tightly interwoven. Acknowledging these layered dynamics allows us to move beyond simplistic urban-centric or infrastructure-driven models, and instead highlight the differentiated, culturally specific pathways through which digital engagement is enacted or resisted.

2.3 The barriers to engagement with digital TV

While digital television holds significant potential for broadening access to information and entertainment, various structural and contextual barriers continue to limit its reach, particularly in marginalised and rural communities. These barriers are not merely technical but intersect with economic, social, cultural, and political dimensions that influence how digital TV is accessed, understood, and valued. This section outlines

the key impediments that hinder meaningful engagement with digital television, emphasising how these challenges disproportionately affect populations in the Global South and entrench existing inequalities. Key areas of focus include:

- Infrastructure and technological constraints: - Examines the uneven availability of essential infrastructure such as electricity, signal coverage, and digital devices that forms the backbone of digital TV access.
- Cost and economic barriers: - Discusses how affordability of equipment, subscription fees, and ongoing costs limit uptake among low-income households.
- Digital literacy and poverty: - Explores the role of limited digital skills and lack of awareness in preventing effective use of digital TV services.
- Trust and policy barriers: - Highlights how lack of regulatory transparency, inconsistent policies, and public mistrust in media systems can deter user engagement.
- Cultural homogenisation & content irrelevance: - Considers how the dominance of foreign content and lack of locally relevant programming can alienate viewers and reduce perceived value.

2.3.1 Infrastructure and technological constraints

Infrastructural challenges have hindered equitable digital technology engagement. Scholars have addressed various technical and policy aspects of these challenges, but many of these studies fail to capture how digital exclusion is shaped by the intersection of infrastructural inadequacies and broader socioeconomic inequalities in Global South. A fundamental infrastructural barrier is the unreliable energy supply, which underpins the operation of all digital systems. In many Global South countries, frequent power outages, limited grid coverage, and high electricity costs disrupt both the deployment and maintenance of digital television infrastructure (Ramsetty & Adams, 2020; Ukoba et al., 2024). The absence of reliable power forces many rural communities to depend on costly and unreliable alternative energy sources according to Magoro & Bidwell (2022) which further restricts their ability to engage with digital platforms meaning that without stable power, efforts to expand digital access remain fragile and unsustainable. For instance, in Nigeria, Abikanlu (2020) highlights key infrastructural barriers to the country's digital switchover, citing unstable electricity, inadequate internet bandwidth, and restricted access to transmission equipment. However, while he acknowledges systemic issues, it does not explore how these limitations specifically affect rural communities, nor does it incorporate an intersectional framework to examine how exclusion varies by socioeconomic status or gender.

Similarly, Bakare et al. (2021) offer a technically robust study of interference between digital television and Long Term Evolution (LTE) systems (a 4G wireless broadband standard that significantly enhances mobile data speeds and network capacity compared to older 3G technologies) in Nigeria's digital dividend spectrum. While valuable from an engineering perspective, their research overlooks the lived realities of rural users and the sociocultural dimensions that influence digital media adoption. These, while insightful in technical terms, share a common shortcoming: they do not centre the experiences of digitally marginalised populations or

interrogate the broader social implications of infrastructural gaps. Other Nigerian-based studies, including those by Akpan (2020) and Chike-Iyo et al. (2024), focus on urban or institutional stakeholders such as broadcast professionals, often relying on secondary data to assess digital readiness. These studies rarely engage directly with rural communities and thus missing critical insights into the implications of rural exclusion. Likewise, while Ngozi and Nzan-Ayang (2023) studies on regulatory issues that also affect infrastructure, however, they fail to consider how these regulatory gaps intersect with infrastructure deficiencies in hard-to-reach areas.

Across this body of literature, there is limited exploration of the role of digital terrestrial television in communities where internet access is sparse or non-existent. Beyond Nigeria, research from other regions provides additional perspectives, though often with similar limitations. Kumar (2019) and Mohan & Punathambekar (2019) analyse India's digital transition through largely urban-focused lenses, leaving rural engagement underexplored. While Murphy (2021), on the Balkans in Europe, offers some comparative insights but lacks relevance to African contexts. Although, the institutional, historical, and geopolitical frameworks within which media policy operates in the Western Balkans particularly those shaped by European Union accession processes differ significantly from those found in African countries like Nigeria. Some African states often contend with foundational infrastructure deficits (Appiah et al., 2022), more fragile regulatory environments that affect infrastructure development (Cirolia, 2020), and distinct post-colonial governance legacies (Parashar and Schulz, 2021) that are not adequately addressed in Murphy's analysis. As such, while the is valuable for comparative purposes, its practical applicability to African media systems remains constrained. Oliver and Majumder (2019) on the other hand introduce TV white space as a potential broadband solution in Africa, yet they stop short of linking this innovation to digital television infrastructure or user-level experiences. These studies highlight technological possibilities but do not sufficiently engage with the reality of digital poverty or the diverse ways in which rural users interact with media platforms.

More recent scholarship, such as Hambly and Rajabiun (2021), approaches rural broadband from an investment and policy perspective on infrastructure, yet it neglects alternative technologies like DTT that may be more immediately viable for under-connected populations. Similarly, Ruiz-Martinez and Esparcia (2020) examine rural internet access in the aftermath of COVID-19, but their focus on European contexts fails to capture the structural and historical inequalities that underpin digital exclusion in African rural regions. High-tech and futuristic solutions, like those proposed by Yaacoub and Alouini (2020) including 6G and satellite connectivity offer promise but are disconnected from current infrastructural conditions and everyday community needs. This research addresses this gap by focusing on the ongoing use and relevance of DTT in rural Lagos, exploring how it serves as a practical and accessible alternative to internet-dependent platforms. Ruffini et al. (2019) advocate for scalable fibre deployment and public-private partnerships in Global South countries. While their model is progressive, it is framed through a technocratic, top-down lens and neglects the perspectives of users particularly the trust, familiarity, and cultural attachment rural

communities may have with DTT. This study fills this gap by offering interview insights into how rural residents operate within infrastructural limitations and why they continue to rely on terrestrial television. In rural digital infrastructure for entrepreneurship, Sekhar (2024), narrows the conversation to economic utility, overlooking how DTT may contribute to non-economic goals such as cultural identity, civic participation, and community inclusion. This research expands this understanding by positioning DTT as a medium for both social connection and informational access in marginalised communities. Lastly, on technical aspect studies like that of Kalula et al. (2024), which examine sustainable broadband in Tanzania to have full benefits of DTT, offer useful policy recommendations to promote digital infrastructure but fail to critically interrogate the power dynamics and socio-cultural contexts embedded in digital infrastructure deployment.

In contrast, this study, grounded in the of digital colonialism, reveals how systemic neglect and exclusion continue to shape media access in rural Nigeria. This infrastructure issues examined overall reveal several recurring gaps: the consistent neglect of DTT as a viable platform for rural populations, a lack of engagement with critical theories such as digital colonialism and intersectionality, and an overreliance on top-down, technocentric models that fail to incorporate lived realities. This study addresses these omissions by integrating frameworks with field-based insights, offering a grounded and contextually understanding of how rural Nigerians experience digital disengagement. In doing so, it not only advances academic discourse but also contributes to more inclusive digital policymaking and media planning for infrastructure development in the Global South.

2.3.2 Cost and economic barriers

In many Global South countries, the transition to digital terrestrial television (DTT) has been marked by a complex interplay of technological ambition and socio-economic exclusion. Central to this tension is the issue of cost not merely as an economic figure but as a structural barrier that shapes who engages with DTT, how, and to what extent, even in regions where digital infrastructure is available. While policy frameworks often present DTT as a tool of modernity and digital inclusion, the financial realities of rural and marginalised communities paint a different picture one of disconnect, fragmentation, and exclusion. Research indicates that households in the Global South often face financial constraints that prevent them from purchasing necessary digital devices such as set top box or subscribing to digital television services (Assefa et al., 2024; Khalil and Zayani, 2022). Nkaka and Mukumbwa (2016), for instance, provide a technical assessment of Zambia's DTT switchover, highlighting how the high cost of set-top boxes and decoder equipment created substantial barriers to adoption. Their findings align with those of Mosanako and Lesitaokana (2021) in Botswana, who argue that DTT uptake in rural areas remains limited due to the inability of low-income households to afford the required digital devices. Similarly, Ariansyah and Wardahnia (2022) offer a more systemic analysis, distinguishing between supply-side cost inefficiencies such as poor subsidy implementation and infrastructure rollout and demand-side constraints, especially affordability among end-users. They underscores the need for holistic cost mitigation strategies but lacks deep exploration of the social realities underpinning these financial constraints.

While these studies surface the theme of economic exclusion, they often fall short of interrogating the broader structures of power and digital inequality. This is where the of Heeks (2021; 2022) becomes particularly useful. He shifts the discourse from mere "access" to adverse digital incorporation, arguing that inclusion into digital systems does not necessarily translate to empowerment especially when cost barriers persistently limit meaningful engagement. His conceptual framing invites us to see cost not just as a practical issue but as part of a systemic logic of digital marginalisation, particularly in Global South contexts where infrastructural gaps and historical inequalities remain unresolved. Adding another layer to this critique is Arora (2019), who introduces the lens of postcolonial perspective, arguing that digital infrastructures including DTT often replicate Western-centric paradigms that fail to resonate with local contexts. While Arora does not focus explicitly on television, her critique of digital development models reveals how cost barriers intersect with cultural alienation and technological imposition. This aligns with Khalil and Zayani's (2022) analysis of how streaming platforms and global media regimes are displacing local media ecosystems, often leaving public DTT systems underfunded and irrelevant particularly in rural regions that are already digitally marginalised.

In contrast to these structural analyses, other studies have explored the lived experiences of exclusion. Assefa et al. (2024) and Song et al. (2021) use the framework of intersectionality to show how cost barriers disproportionately affect women, the elderly, and the rural poor groups often left behind in digital transitions. Yet, these still largely focus on education or internet access rather than the specificities of digital broadcasting. Anugrah et al. (2024) take a more class-based approach, mapping digital divides in Indonesia onto rural development metrics. However, they rely heavily on secondary data, offering limited insight into the subjective dimensions of cost-related exclusion such as how communities perceive value, negotiate priorities, or engage with information poverty. Moreover, existing literature tends to prioritise urban and peri-urban regions or national aggregates, thereby masking the hyperlocal realities of remote rural communities. The voices of those who remain most disconnected both digitally and developmentally are often missing. For example, Galperin (2017) provides valuable cross-country survey data on non-adoption of internet services in Latin America but does not disaggregate his findings in a way that captures deep rural disconnection or covered meanings of cost.

Equally problematic is the tendency to focus narrowly on technological solutions, without critically examining knowledge gaps and institutional shortcomings as they affect cost. While Chawarura and Mawere (2022) and Tacchi (2020) call for participatory approaches to digital development, they stop short of unpacking how cost intersects with information poverty a concept that recognises the multiple forms of deprivation that limit people's ability to access and use information meaningfully. In the context of DTT, this includes not only hardware affordability but also how a lack of public awareness, limited digital literacy, and unclear implementation pathways in rural communities have an impact on cost.

Against this backdrop, this thesis "Digital Disconnects?" offers a much-needed corrective. By focusing on remote, often-overlooked rural communities, this research directly addresses the geographic blind spots in

much of the existing literature. Furthermore, the use of digital colonialism as the overarching lens allows me to situate cost not merely as a technical hurdle, but as a manifestation of structural exclusion perpetuated by uneven global power relations. The inclusion of intersectionality, information poverty, and digital poverty as interpretive tools enables an exploration of how gender, income, education, and geography compound the effects of cost barriers. Additionally, applying the uses and gratifications theory brings user agency into the conversation, allowing for the exploration of not just access, but the motivations, expectations, and outcomes of DTT engagement or lack thereof. This offers a rare behavioural dimension that is often missing in structural and policy-heavy literature. Perhaps most significantly, this thesis reasserts the relevance of DTT in low-infrastructure environments, challenging dominant narratives that prioritise internet streaming and overlook the persistent centrality of terrestrial broadcasting for information access in marginalised communities. In doing so, the research not only fills empirical gaps but also contributes to policy discourse on how digital transitions can be made more equitable, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of those most often excluded.

2.3.3 Digital literacy and information poverty (Awareness)

Rural populations, particularly in Africa and parts of Asia, often remain excluded from digital transformation not due to resistance, but due to systemic barriers in access, knowledge infrastructure, and policy inclusion. Evans et al. (2024) highlight how digital streaming platforms are expanding rapidly, yet digital terrestrial television (DTT) remains crucial in underserved regions. Their UK-focused study reveals a disconnect between policy enthusiasm for internet-based services and the stark infrastructural realities of digitally excluded communities. However, its relevance to Global South contexts remains limited, revealing a pressing need to understand how DTT functions or fails within digitally scarce environments. In Nigeria, similar trends are evident, for example, Olayinka (2022) explores digital switchover challenges among broadcast regulators in North-Central Nigeria, offering a predominantly institutional lens that overlooks end-user experiences and socio-economic hurdles. Akinola-Badmus & Ojebuyi (2021) capture journalists' awareness of digitalisation in Oyo State but stop short of interrogating public understanding or value perceptions of DTT. Meanwhile, Udosen et al. (2019) focus on urban Calabar, limiting the study's applicability to rural contexts. Their omission of cultural, educational, and economic factors constrains our understanding of digital engagement at the grassroots level. Furthermore, Sanusi's (2024) analysis of digital switchover challenges highlights critical failures in public engagement and awareness. However, the study remains limited by its exclusion of community-level experiences and perspectives.

The South African experience reflects similar dynamics. Diseko-Biagini (2016) examines the community television sector's adaptation to DTT, emphasising that a lack of audience training significantly impeded adoption. However, the study does not investigate how social factors such as income, gender, or language shape digital engagement, missing an opportunity to explore intersectional barriers. Research in Kenya offers further insights: Mabele et al. (2022) find that national digital strategies often marginalise rural regions, focusing predominantly on internet access. While their study centers on broadband inclusion, the broader finding that digital poverty extends beyond infrastructure to encompass awareness and skills applies equally

to DTT. This broader framing of information poverty highlights how technological access alone is insufficient. Ilinanga (2017) reports that in Lusaka, Zambia, many residents remain unaware of DTT availability, despite national-level rollouts. Similarly, Baasanjav et al. (2024) and Bedu-Addo (2022) criticise the elite-driven nature of digital policy in Mongolia and Ghana, respectively. These studies argue that DTT initiatives often prioritise technical benchmarks over participatory inclusion, leaving citizens sidelined in the decision-making process. Without community consultation and targeted digital literacy programs, DTT becomes a disconnected policy artifact rather than a meaningful media tool.

In Zambia, Chimanga and Mumba (2020) also underscore this challenge. Their study finds that public awareness and digital competency are essential to successful digital migration yet remain poorly addressed by national strategies. Dlamini and Walwyn (2022) echo these findings in South Africa, attributing limited DTT uptake not only to infrastructural gaps but also to institutional inertia and weak public communication. On a more solution-oriented note, Pade-Khene (2018) introduces a four-phase knowledge transfer framework Explore, Enable, Engage, Embed to guide the integration of digital literacy into community programs. Her model underscores the need for structured, locally responsive capacity-building efforts. Despite the breadth of scholarship on digital migration, there remains a limited understanding of how DTT is perceived, accessed, and valued by rural users. The dominant emphasis on policy and infrastructure has often sidelined user-centric inquiries particularly in rural communities, where the intersection of digital literacy, information poverty, and social exclusion is most acute.

One theoretical lens that remains underutilised in this domain is uses and gratifications theory, which could provide detailed insights into how audiences interpret and interact with DTT content. While this theory has been extensively applied to studies of internet and mobile media use, its application to linear broadcasting systems like DTT remains rare. This oversight limits our understanding of whether rural users see DTT as informative, entertaining, empowering, or simply irrelevant to their needs. Moreover, motivations for media use in digitally constrained environments may differ significantly from those in urban or broadband-rich settings, where alternative sources of information and entertainment are more abundant. In addressing these conceptual and empirical gaps, this study adopts a community-grounded, participatory approach to investigate rural engagement with DTT. By foregrounding the experiences of rural audiences particularly their levels of awareness, perceptions of relevance, and the socio-cultural filters through which digital content is interpreted it aims to shift the discourse from top-down implementation to bottom-up media engagement.

Framed through the critical lenses of digital colonialism, information poverty, and intersectionality, this study contends that effective digital transition cannot be achieved solely through technological deployment. It requires a conscious effort to embed digital literacy within local governance, cultural contexts, and civic structures. As scholars such as McQuail (2010) and Norris (2000) have argued, media systems especially public broadcasting play an essential role in democratic participation, civic visibility, and cultural representation. In rural contexts where alternative communication channels are scarce, DTT holds the

potential to serve as a vital public utility. However, this potential is often undermined when digital media transitions exclude the very communities they aim to serve. Poorly designed awareness campaigns, inaccessible content, and the absence of participatory mechanisms all contribute to a deeper form of representational exclusion. This study seeks to illuminate these dynamics and advocate for a more inclusive, bottom-up model of digital transformation where awareness is not a secondary consideration, but a foundational element in media policy design and implementation.

2.3.4 Civic Engagement and Democratic Visibility through DTT

While access to digital terrestrial television (DTT) infrastructure is increasingly widespread in the Global South, civic engagement through this platform remains uneven and often underdeveloped. As highlighted in the preceding section, the challenges of awareness and digital literacy are foundational barriers to DTT usage in rural areas. However, beyond these functional deficits lies a more profound democratic concern: the ability of DTT to act as a medium for civic participation and democratic visibility. In regions where alternative media infrastructures are scarce and broadband access remains unaffordable, DTT could play a transformative role by offering a low-cost, inclusive medium for public information, civic discourse, and cultural representation. Public broadcasting systems, including DTT, have long been conceptualised as instruments of democracy. McQuail (2010) and Norris (2000) argue that such systems are essential for disseminating reliable information, promoting civic dialogue, and amplifying marginalised voices. When effectively deployed, DTT can deliver programming in local languages, made to regional concerns, thereby supporting informed citizenship and local governance participation. However, in many Global South contexts, this potential has been undermined by centralised, elite-driven policy frameworks that prioritise technological metrics over community empowerment (Manwaring and Holloway, 2023; Ndasauka, 2024).

Rather than embracing participatory approaches, many national DTT rollouts have treated citizens as passive recipients of technology, failing to account for local informational needs or the sociocultural filters that shape media use. As a result, DTT infrastructures though present often do not promote the civic inclusion they are capable of enabling. This is evident across a range of empirical contexts. In South Africa, for instance, Dlamini and Walwyn (2022) document how rural communities in the Eastern Cape initially welcomed the introduction of DTT, seeing it as an opportunity to access public service announcements and educational content in indigenous languages. Yet, this optimism was quickly diminished by a rollout that lacked consistent community engagement and delivered information campaigns primarily in English. Local voices were sidelined in both policy discussions and media production, resulting in programming that felt disconnected from rural realities. As a result, residents reported confusion about the purpose of the digital switchover, limited understanding of how to use the new technologies, and growing disinterest in DTT as a relevant civic tool.

This pattern of top-down, technocratic implementation is not unique to South Africa. In Zambia, Chimanga and Mumba (2020) offer parallel insights. Their analysis of digital migration reveals that, although

infrastructure had been successfully rolled out, low public awareness and limited public education campaigns significantly hindered uptake. While their study is not explicitly framed around civic participation, it identifies a critical democratic gap: citizens were not sufficiently informed or included in the switchover process. As a result, many Zambians could not engage meaningfully with DTT as a platform for public discourse or civic learning. The authors recommend policy measures to enhance community awareness, implicitly reinforcing the argument that media access must be accompanied by agency for DTT to serve its democratic function. Their findings underscore the importance of citizen-focused digital communication strategies, aligning with broader calls for participatory media ecosystems in the Global South. Similar dynamics emerge in Australia, where Park et al. (2019) describe how rural communities often face a "double jeopardy" where inadequate digital infrastructure compounds existing social and economic disadvantages. This intersection exacerbates issues like limited access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities.

In Kenya, Mabele et al. (2022) provide further evidence of how national digital strategies have failed to translate into democratic inclusion at the grassroots. Their study, focusing on rural counties such as Turkana and Kakamega, reveals that digital infrastructure alone is insufficient to generate meaningful civic engagement. Although physical access to DTT and related digital technologies exists, the lack of localised content, language inclusion, and digital literacy has prevented rural citizens from utilising these platforms for news, civic education, or public dialogue. Moreover, regulatory and financial obstacles have hindered community broadcasters from entering the DTT space, reinforcing the centralisation of media power and silencing local voices. The authors argue that decentralised, community-managed media solutions are necessary to rebuild digital inclusion and restore the civic value of media technologies. Their findings align strongly with the theme of democratic visibility, underscoring that access alone does not ensure representation cultural and communicative inclusion are equally vital. Across these diverse contexts South Africa, Zambia, Australia, and Kenya a consistent disconnect is evident between the democratic promise of DTT and the realities of its implementation. While infrastructure may exist, the exclusion of rural populations from the design, content, and governance of digital broadcasting systems has constrained its civic potential.

As Belando Montoro et al. (2022) notes, civic empowerment through media requires both technological access and pedagogical inclusion citizens must be equipped with the knowledge, skills, and trust necessary to interpret and engage with media critically. This research seeks to bridge that gap by proposing a community-led, dialogical approach to understanding how rural populations engage with DTT. By foregrounding the lived experiences of users particularly how awareness, trust, and perceived value shape their interactions with media it reframes DTT not as a static broadcast utility, but as a potentially dynamic platform for inclusion, participation, and visibility. Drawing on the lens of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991; Cho et al., 2013), this study interrogates how gender, income, language, and education intersect to either facilitate or

obstruct media access. In doing so, it rejects the narrative of rural populations as passive recipients and instead highlights their potential as active agents in shaping a more equitable public media sphere.

2.3.5 Trust and policy barriers

The critical role of trust or the lack thereof in influencing engagement with digital technologies. This is particularly evident in the context of the Global South, where infrastructural deficiencies, governance failures, and lingering postcolonial inequalities shape how communities interact with digital systems. The lack of trust whether in institutions, technologies, or implementation processes remains a significant barrier to engagement, particularly with initiatives such as digital terrestrial television (DTT), which are often presented as universally beneficial but fail to account for the unique realities of marginalised populations. Chawarura and Mawere (2022) move closer to this focus by examining digital inclusion in marginalised African societies. This is precisely where this study contributes: by applying a postcolonial concept and critical media theory unpacking how digital disconnection is not merely a technical issue but deeply rooted in historical and political structures. Fasta et al. (2023) highlight top-down nature of DTT regulation in Indonesia, illustrating the dominance of state narratives and the marginalisation of user perspectives. They underscores governance challenges but largely omit questions of user trust or the implications of centralised policy for rural inclusion. In contrast, this research brings these dynamics to the fore, particularly how institutional mistrust rooted in histories of neglect shapes the reception of digital switchover programs.

Ramadani et al. (2022) explore governance failures in digital policy implementation, offering a strong foundation for analysing mistrust in institutional processes. Yet their focus remains on systemic inefficiencies without adequately capturing the experiential dimension of disengagement how rural citizens perceive, interpret, and respond to digital transitions. This study builds on their findings by integrating uses and gratifications theory, revealing not just structural barriers but also the motivations and choices that drive or hinder engagement. Mustaf et al. (2020) provides a broad review of e-government adoption in Global South countries, identifying lack of trust as a major obstacle. However, their high-level synthesis lacks the localised specificity necessary to understand how trust (or mistrust) manifests in everyday interactions with state technologies like DTT. This study bridges this gap by focusing on the lived experiences of rural communities, highlighting how disengagement is not just about access but also about belief in the system’s credibility and relevance. These critiques are further substantiated by supplementary evidence from other key contributors. Yeo and Keske (2024) find that trust plays a moderating role in technology adoption, especially when profitability and ease of use are unclear. Steyn (2018) notes how digital literacy interventions often fail because they overlook community-specific contexts and mistrust of ICT providers. Bon and Akkermans (2020) reinforce the idea that digital exclusion in the Global South is not merely a matter of access but also trust, cultural relevance, and power imbalances. King et al. (2019) go further to argue for "Southern agency," highlighting how learners in Timor-Leste resist imposed digital models that ignore local practices and histories.

Specifically, from the Nigeria context, studies such as Okoye et al. (2023), Agwu (2021), AbdulKareem and Oladimeji (2024), and Mendy et al. (2021) effectively highlight the roles of digital illiteracy, institutional failure, and policy inconsistency in impeding the uptake of digital services. However, these analyses largely also adopt a top-down perspective, focusing on national or urban-centric policy environments. As a result, they often treat rural populations as a homogeneous, passive demographic, overlooking the complex social, cultural, and infrastructural dynamics that shape digital engagement in these areas. A significant omission in the literature is the lack of grounded, community-based insights into how rural residents perceive, trust, and interact with digital technologies such as digital terrestrial television (DTT) and e-government platforms. There is minimal exploration of informal trust networks, such as peer learning groups, community influencers, or religious and social leaders, which often serve as gateways to digital adoption in rural areas. Moreover, while trust is identified as a determinant of citizen engagement, current research fails to account for the relational and experiential nature of trust-building in rural settings. Trust is too often reduced to institutional performance or policy credibility, ignoring the social dynamics through which citizens come to trust or distrust digital systems.

Furthermore, in addition to these critical barriers to digital terrestrial television (DTT) engagement in rural parts of Lagos particularly in areas like Ijede, Imota, and Agura within Ikorodu Local Government Area is the issue of trust, both in formal institutions and in broader information ecosystems. For many residents in these peri-urban and rural communities, trust in state-led digital initiatives has been eroded by decades of perceived neglect, inconsistent communication, and unmet infrastructural promises (Sanusi, 2024; Olayinka, 2022). This distrust is not merely ideological or abstract; rather, it manifests in deeply pragmatic ways, shaping how residents respond to the DTT rollout and whether they choose to engage with digital television at all. There is widespread scepticism in Ikorodu's rural wards regarding the DTT transition, which many view as either irrelevant or primarily designed to benefit urban elites. Research shows that residents often interpret the switchover as a revenue-generating scheme for private interests, or as a technological upgrade targeted mainly at wealthier neighbourhoods like Ikeja or Victoria Island, while communities in Ijede or Igbogbo or Ikosi- Ejirin are left behind (Okoye et al., 2023). This perception has led many residents to rely more heavily on informal and interpersonal communication networks such as church groups, traditional leaders, market women, and town criers to filter, verify, or contest information regarding digital technologies (Nciweni, 2023).

These community-based information networks are especially influential in Ikorodu, where digital literacy remains uneven and many households lack consistent exposure to formal state broadcasts (Agwu, 2021; Lucas & Lazarus, 2024). When a respected religious leader or community elder in places like Ijede expresses doubt about the content or morality of DTT programming, or questions the reliability of decoder subsidies, their opinion often holds more sway than official communication from the National Broadcasting Commission (Adedayo & Falade, 2019a). This influence becomes even more pronounced in contexts where state presence is limited. Basic services such as road maintenance, electricity, and public transportation remain unreliable across much of Ikorodu's hinterlands, further reinforcing scepticism toward national

policies presented as “developmental” (Ibrahim et al., 2024). In this information landscape, socially embedded communication systems including WhatsApp groups, peer-to-peer content sharing, and local youth associations play a central role in shaping media behaviour. These platforms offer content that is often more culturally relevant, linguistically familiar, and affordable than state-sponsored DTT broadcasts, which are sometimes perceived as overly formal, overly urban, or disconnected from local realities (Mahmood et al., 2021). Many residents, for instance, prefer to watch Nollywood films shared via preloaded USB drives over engaging with online streaming or any other digital platforms that require electricity, decoder activation, or payment subscriptions.

This reliance on informal networks reveals a paradox at the heart of Nigeria’s digital television strategy: while DTT is framed as a national tool for inclusion and development, it often lacks participatory legitimacy at the grassroots level. In Ikorodu’s rural communities, non-engagement with DTT is frequently a rational, culturally informed choice, rather than a simple consequence of affordability or access. This choice is reinforced by the availability of mobile-first alternatives for those who want to access media content ranging from locally sold memory cards to offline streaming vendors whose offerings are more resonant with local tastes and less entangled in bureaucratic procedures (Tomicic & Gjorgjioska, 2024). Layered onto this issue of trust is a broader governance disconnect that has further hindered DTT engagement in places like Ikorodu. Although Lagos was included in the national digital switchover (DSO) strategy in 2021, the rollout has been fragmented and top-down, with limited coordination between the federal government, state broadcasting agencies, and local councils (NBC, 2021). Rural stakeholders including traditional rulers, ward councillors, and local civil society organisations have had minimal involvement in shaping DTT policies or awareness campaigns. As a result, the digital transition has often arrived in communities like Igbopa or Erikorodo with little contextualisation, explanation, or local relevance (Olayinka, 2022; Sanusi, 2024).

The delayed implementation timeline coupled with inconsistent messaging about decoder subsidies and poor infrastructural preparation has produced what Sanusi (2024) describes as a “policy vacuum.” Many rural households for instance, in Ikorodu only learned about government programmes through hearsay, social media, or informal vendors rather than through direct engagement with public broadcasters or government representatives (Fagbohun &Adejugbagbe, 2020). This situation has led to confusion, misinformation, and further erosion of trust. Compounding these issues is the dominant role of private-sector DTT operators, particularly GOtv and StarTimes, whose services often overshadow public media channels. While these operators have expanded access in some areas, their commercial orientation raises concerns about affordability and class-based exclusion. In rural Ikorodu, where income levels are lower and infrastructure remains underdeveloped, reliance on private DTT providers can exacerbate existing digital divides (Lewis, 2023). This dynamic has been interpreted by some scholars as an extension of digital colonialism, in which global or corporate priorities shape local access to digital infrastructures without adequate sensitivity to the lived conditions of rural communities (Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Mutsvairo & Ragnedda, 2019).

What emerges across these studies is a pattern of top-down digital policy implementation that neglects to build trust with marginalised users. This research fills this gap by explicitly engaging with the concept of digital colonialism, arguing that DTT transitions in Nigeria are not value-neutral but embedded in broader histories of state neglect, infrastructural apartheid, and exclusion. Using frameworks such as intersectionality, information poverty, and digital poverty, this study explores how gender, geography, class, and education shape differential access to and trust in DTT technologies. By applying uses and gratifications theory, it highlights the importance of user agency, and the reasons people choose not to engage whether due to lack of information, distrust, or a misalignment between platform design and user needs. Crucially, this research underscores that DTT is not obsolete in rural regions. In fact, it remains a vital medium for communities with limited or no access to internet-based platforms. However, for DTT to fulfil its inclusive potential, trust must be rebuilt through transparent communication, participatory design, and the decolonisation of digital infrastructure. This study, therefore, does not merely critique existing systems but offers a grounded, community-informed framework for understanding and addressing digital disengagement in the Global South.

2.3.6 Cultural homogenisation & content irrelevance

As digital platforms become increasingly dominated by global players, concerns about cultural homogenisation have intensified, particularly regarding the potential loss of local and indigenous cultures. This rapid expansion of global media corporations and streaming services has resulted in an overwhelming presence of international content that often overshadows local programming, leading to a diminished representation of diverse cultural narratives (Mathrani et al., 2022). To begin with, Ajani et al. (2024) advocate for the revitalisation of indigenous knowledge systems through digital media technologies to support indigenous language sustainability. While their contribution is valuable in spotlighting cultural preservation, the authors adopt a techno-optimistic lens, assuming that digital infrastructures are uniformly available. The study omits a discussion on infrastructural and informational access inequalities that often characterise remote rural settings. It also overlooks the intersectional challenges, particularly gendered, socio-economic, and locational barriers that hinder meaningful engagement. This thesis addresses these concerns by demonstrating the relevance of digital terrestrial television (DTT) in regions where digital infrastructures remain absent or misunderstood, revealing the critical role of information poverty in sustaining digital exclusion.

Building on this, Alfonzo (2023) present compelling ethnographic accounts of Kukama Radio and indigenous media in the Peruvian Amazon, framing them as sites of cultural resistance and aesthetic innovation. However, the research tends to idealise indigenous engagement, failing to interrogate the asymmetrical distribution of digital access. Their analysis lacks critical engagement with digital colonialism or the infrastructural realities of marginalised communities. In contrast, this thesis explores the political economy of digital switchover policies in Nigeria and how they reproduce colonial patterns of exclusion through digital transitions that bypass already marginalised rural populations. Similarly, Azam-Ali et al. (2021) provide a macro-level overview of indigenous priorities in marginal areas, drawing attention to the

need for inclusive policy frameworks. However, the lack of focus on media-specific engagements and grounded empirical data limits its utility in understanding how digital transitions affect indigenous media practices. Research bridges this gap by offering a micro-level case study of rural Lagos, grounding analysis in lived experiences and participatory narratives that reflect the intersectional dimensions of exclusion from digital television engagement.

In the same vein, Chakma and Sultana (2024) offer a decolonial critique of the loss of language, land, and identity among the Chakma people in Bangladesh. While the article is rich in historical and political insights, it fails to engage with digital media transitions specifically, thus missing an opportunity to link colonial governmentality with contemporary digital infrastructures. This thesis extends their argument by applying the concept of digital colonialism to contemporary state-led DTT initiatives in Nigeria, showing how these policies replicate colonial logics of marginalisation and erase indigenous cultural expressions through exclusionary technological transitions. Furthermore, Dutta (2019) explores the preservation of indigenous narratives through digital media but lacks field-based evidence. The study assumes that digital presence equates to digital participation, ignoring barriers such as digital literacy and affordability. This thesis challenges, this assumption by revealing that in rural Lagos, many communities remain unaware of or disengaged from the DTT transition, not by choice but due to structural conditions of digital and information poverty. In addition, Lamptey (2023) contributes to the discourse on African rhetorical traditions and their continuity in the digital age. However, the study is symbolic and largely theoretical, with minimal empirical data. It does not consider rural access to digital platforms or how infrastructural gaps impede rhetorical continuity.

By focusing on rural engagement with DTT, this thesis contributes a grounded perspective on how infrastructural marginalisation translates into rhetorical invisibility. Continuing this line of critique, Lobensteiner and Thies (2020) document indigenous media production across the Americas, celebrating media success stories. However, they fail to consider what occurs in media-poor environments where even basic access to television content is unattainable. This thesis contributes to this gap by studying rural areas where media production is absent and even consumption is precarious due to digital and infrastructural exclusions. Equally important, Roy (2020), Anand (2024), and Makananise (2024) collectively warn against the homogenising tendencies of global digital media. While their critiques are valid, they often adopt deterministic perspectives and neglect the agency of indigenous communities or the infrastructural realities that shape engagement. Furthermore, their analyses rarely engage with uses and gratifications theory to understand how communities interpret or resist media content. My study addresses this by applying the theory to investigate how rural users explore, reject, or reframe their media experiences in light of infrastructural and informational constraints.

Turning to Nigerian-specific contributions, s by Jimada (2020), Uche et al. (2020), Maikaba and Msughter (2019), Endong (2021), Ajayi and Adediran (2024), Eke and Adeyemi (2024), and Nwankwo and Arimitan

(2021) discuss digital media's homogenising impact on indigenous values. However, these studies often lack methodological rigour, empirical depth, and critical engagement with theories like intersectionality and digital colonialism. research responds by offering empirical evidence from under-researched rural communities, integrating a robust that includes digital colonialism, information poverty, uses and gratifications theory. This reviewed literature highlights important concerns about the cultural consequences of digital media such as digital television but tends to overlook structural barriers to engagement, especially in rural African contexts. By grounding analysis in empirical data from rural Lagos and framing the research within a decolonial and intersectional paradigm, this thesis contributes a critical, context-sensitive understanding of digital television engagement. It challenges prevailing assumptions of technological neutrality and universality, asserting the continued relevance of DTT in areas excluded from the digital mainstream.

2.4 Unaddressed gaps and missed perspectives

Despite the breadth of existing scholarship on digital television transitions, several critical gaps remain particularly in relation to rural and marginalised communities in the Global South. Much of the literature is dominated by urban-centric, technocratic, or policy-focused analyses, which often fail to engage with the lived experiences of rural users. Studies tend to generalise the Global South or treat rural populations as homogeneous, overlooking intersectional differences such as gender, class, age, and language that shape access and engagement. Moreover, while frameworks like digital colonialism and digital poverty have gained traction, they are rarely combined with behavioural or audience-centred theories such as uses and gratifications. As a result, the literature often lacks a multi-layered understanding of both structural exclusion and user agency. Additionally, there is limited attention to how local cultural practices, informal viewing habits, or linguistic marginalisation influence disengagement from state-led DTT initiatives. This study addresses these gaps by offering a qualitative, community-grounded approach that foregrounds intersectional marginalisation and integrates both macro-structural and micro-behavioural perspectives. In doing so, it seeks to reframe digital disconnection not as a technological failure alone, but as a complex product of historical, cultural, and epistemic exclusions.

2.5 Conclusion of chapter

The preceding review has traced the intersecting theoretical, conceptual, and empirical contours that shape digital terrestrial television (DTT) engagement in the Global South. Drawing from frameworks such as digital colonialism, digital poverty, information poverty, and intersectionality, the chapter has illuminated how systemic inequalities spanning infrastructure, policy, culture, and identity structure media access and use. Complementing these structural analyses, uses and gratifications theory has provided a user-centred perspective, enabling insight into the motivations, expectations, and behavioural responses of rural media audiences. Together, these perspectives have shaped a critical lens through which digital engagement and disengagement are understood not merely as technological outcomes, but as socially embedded practices. This multi-scalar approach linking global systems of power with localised, lived experiences forms the

analytical scaffolding of the study. Key empirical insights have highlighted persistent rural-urban disparities, the cultural and linguistic alienation experienced by rural viewers, the prevalence of informal media practices, and the enduring role of television as a site of both social cohesion and symbolic exclusion. Importantly, the concept of intersectional digital marginalisation, introduced in this chapter, offers a diagnostic tool to capture the cumulative exclusions faced by multiply marginalised users in digitally underserved settings.

These insights directly inform the study's methodological design. In response to the identified gaps in the literature particularly the lack of qualitative, user-centric, and intersectional research in rural contexts the study adopts a qualitative methodology rooted in semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and thematic analysis. This approach is grounded in the need to prioritise community knowledge, local media ecologies, and user agency. Concepts such as platform dominance, access inequality, trust in information sources, and cognitive and affective gratifications serve as key analytical categories for data collection and interpretation. Furthermore, this methodological orientation rejects technocratic assumptions of linear adoption and instead foregrounds the adaptive strategies, resistances, and alternative practices employed by rural users. It acknowledges that digital disconnection is not merely a symptom of infrastructural deficit but is also shaped by cultural mistrust, epistemic exclusion, and the failure of state-centric media frameworks to resonate with local realities.

This chapter has laid a robust theoretical and empirical foundation for the research that follows. It bridges critical theory with fieldwork by demonstrating how abstract concepts translate into everyday media encounters. The next chapter builds on this framework to articulate the study's methodological procedures, outlining the research design, sampling strategies, and analytical techniques employed to investigate the lived experience of digital television engagement in rural Lagos State.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed discussion of the methodological framework used in this study, aimed at evaluating the effectiveness, accessibility, and engagement of DTT within rural communities in Ikorodu, Lagos, in the context of Nigeria's digital switchover (DSO) initiative. Given the complex nature of digital inclusion and technology adoption, a qualitative research approach was employed to provide in-depth insights into the experiences and perspectives of participants regarding DTT adoption. This approach ensures a deeper understanding of how individuals engage with digital television technology and the challenges they face in transitioning from analogue to digital broadcasting. To achieve this, the chapter outlines the guiding research philosophy, the chosen approach and strategy, as well as the rationale behind selecting specific research methods. The discussion extends to data collection techniques, covering a preliminary survey-questionnaire to identify and recruit participants, followed by semi-structured interviews to explore their experiences in greater detail. The analytical processes are detailed, demonstrating how thematic analysis was employed to interpret qualitative data and identify key patterns in participants' narratives.

A key aspect of this discussion involves the challenges and advantages associated with using a qualitative design in a research setting characterised by socio-economic and infrastructural disparities. The chapter explores how semi-structured interviews provide deeper interpretative insights into digital inclusion challenges that may not be evident in quantitative data. The approach strengthens the credibility of findings by allowing for rich, contextualised narratives that reflect the lived experiences of participants. Additionally, issues concerning the validity and reliability of research instruments are critically examined, with discussions on piloting the questionnaire to refine its clarity and ensure participant comprehension. The study also considers potential biases in qualitative data collection and how researcher reflexivity was maintained throughout the process. Triangulation techniques were employed to corroborate findings from different sources, such as policy documents, regulatory reports, and participant interviews. These methodological strategies collectively contribute to the robustness and trustworthiness of the study's findings, ensuring that they are both empirically and contextually sound.

3.1 Research philosophy

This study is grounded in the interpretivist research philosophy, which asserts that reality is socially constructed, fluid, and shaped through human interactions and contextual experiences. Interpretivism seeks to understand the subjective meanings and lived experiences of individuals rather than impose external, objective measurements (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Borg, 2024; Saunders et al., 2019). Drawing upon the insights of Alvesson et al. (2022), this paradigm encourages researchers to prioritise participants' perspectives, recognising that each individual's engagement with technology is deeply embedded in local realities and cultural contexts. In this vein, the research aims to uncover how residents of rural Lagos, particularly within Ikorodu's Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin LCDAs, perceive, experience, and interact with ongoing digital switchover (DSO) initiatives. Guba and Lincoln (2000) argue that within an interpretivist framework,

knowledge emerges through understanding the meanings individuals assign to their experiences, while Denzin and Lincoln (2011) emphasise the importance of rich, qualitative engagement for grasping the socio-political dimensions that underpin technological adoption.

Understanding digital inequality, therefore, requires engaging with these lived experiences, as interpretivist research highlights the multifaceted nature of digital disparities, shaped by socioeconomic, cultural, and infrastructural factors (Goedhart et al., 2022a; Burrell, 2018a). In rural regions, digital inequality is deeply influenced by the uneven deployment of internet infrastructure, which affects how residents experience and interact with digital technologies (Burrell, 2018b). The feelings of exclusion or empowerment that individuals express are central to understanding the real impact of digital inequality, underscoring the need to prioritise subjective experiences (Goedhart et al., 2022b). An interpretivist lens also brings attention to the intersections between digital inequality and broader social inequalities, such as class, gender, and ethnicity (Campbell, 2020; Tsatsou, 2022; Zheng and Walsham, 2021). In rural areas, these intersections are further complicated by factors such as age, income, and education, demanding the complex appreciation of how multiple dimensions of marginalisation operate simultaneously to shape digital experiences (Ranganai et al., 2022; Ruiu and Ragnedda, 2024).

Moreover, this approach encourages examination of the relational and material aspects of digital inequality, moving beyond simplistic notions of individual access to focus on the socio-technical infrastructures that enable or restrict connectivity (Husain et al., 2022). By shifting attention to the broader systems that structure digital engagement, interpretivism provides a more holistic understanding of the challenges faced by rural populations (McBride et al., 2022). Therefore, a qualitative study grounded in an interpretivist framework indicate that understanding the adoption of DTT requires researchers to engage with the perceived benefits and challenges as articulated by users, thereby recognising their subjective experiences and the meanings they attach to this technology. This aligns with the work of Maali and Jaara (2014) who argue that qualitative approaches can effectively capture the complexities of socially constructed economic realities, similar to the constructed realities surrounding technology adoption.

3.2 Research approach

In alignment with the interpretivist research philosophy, this study adopts a qualitative research approach to explore the lived experiences, challenges, and perceptions of digital terrestrial television (DTT) users in rural Lagos. Qualitative research is especially suited for inquiries that aim to understand complex human experiences, subjective realities, and social phenomena as they unfold within specific contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Flick, 2022). Unlike quantitative methods that seek generalisation through statistical representation, qualitative research prioritises depth over breadth, enabling a textured and intricate examination of individual and collective realities. Adopting a qualitative approach is particularly critical in contexts such as rural Nigeria, where digital transitions are shaped not only by technological factors but also by layered socio-economic, infrastructural, and cultural influences (Silverman, 2021). This approach allows

the researcher to capture participants' motivations, emotions, and perceptions, which are often missed in positivist, quantitative models that rely solely on numerical data (Nowell et al., 2017).

As Tracy (2024) observes, qualitative inquiry is indispensable when studying under-explored or rapidly evolving phenomena, such as the adoption of new communication technologies in marginalised settings. Similarly, Lim highlights that qualitative methods are particularly effective in capturing the depth and richness of human experiences, making them suitable for investigating areas where understanding the complexity of behaviour and context is crucial. In the case of DTT adoption in rural Lagos, the dynamics are not merely technical but deeply embedded in affordability challenges, infrastructural gaps, digital literacy levels, and socio-cultural norms. The qualitative strategy in this study facilitated the collection of rich, narrative-driven data through a multi-phase data collection design. This layered data collection strategy ensured that participants could articulate their experiences, perspectives, and feelings in their own words, thereby honouring the core interpretivist commitment to participant-centred knowledge production. Moreover, the qualitative approach allowed for thematic exploration and iterative analysis, where data collection and analysis occurred in a flexible, responsive manner. This iterative design aligns with best practices in qualitative research methodology, wherein researchers adapt and refine their inquiry processes based on emerging insights from the field (Marshall & Rossman, 2014).

By employing a qualitative approach, the study not only highlights participants' voices and experiences but also produces a refined insights into the structural, cultural, and individual barriers to digital inclusion. These insights, which might otherwise be obscured in purely quantitative studies, are crucial for informing policies and interventions aimed at enhancing digital equity, particularly in rural and underserved communities (Guest et al., 2013). Ultimately, qualitative research offers the depth, flexibility, and contextual sensitivity necessary to capture the multifaceted realities of DTT engagement in Lagos' rural communities, thus contributing valuable knowledge to ongoing debates on digital inclusion, technological change, and social development.

3.3 Research Design

The research design for this study follows a sequential explanatory mixed methods model, structured to ensure a systematic exploration of the adoption of DTT services. Sequential explanatory designs involve two distinct phases: an initial quantitative phase followed by a qualitative phase, with the aim of explaining and expanding upon the preliminary results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2021).

In this study:

- The first phase involved administering a structured survey-questionnaire to collect preliminary quantitative and qualitative data from residents in Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin.

A similar quantitative framework has been effectively employed in prior studies, which illustrated the utility of quantitative data in establishing baseline trends in technology adoption (Vu et al., 2023), and the

advantages of collecting structured numerical data to facilitate statistical analysis (McKim, 2017). This sequential model is consistent with established practices in mixed methods research, where quantitative findings inform the qualitative phase that follows (Darmaji et al., 2023).

- The second phase comprised semi-structured interviews, where participants from the survey were invited to engage in deeper discussions based on their earlier responses.

Previous research designs in related fields have demonstrated that qualitative methods, such as interviews, can unveil complex perspectives that quantitative data alone cannot capture (Subasman & Aliyyah, 2023; Tudor et al., 2022). For instance, studies have explored the attitudes and behaviours surrounding technology adoption through qualitative interviews, revealing that qualitative insights often complement and expand upon initial quantitative findings (Osei & Cheng, 2023; Silwana & Jokonya, 2020). This design allowed for an iterative and flexible exploration of emerging themes, ensuring that early insights from the questionnaire could inform the focus and framing of the interviews. As Doyle et al. (2016) argue, sequential designs are particularly powerful for exploring social phenomena where initial trends require deeper, context-rich investigation.

Furthermore, document analysis was integrated into the research design to triangulate findings and situate individual experiences within broader regulatory, policy, and infrastructural frameworks. The inclusion of document analysis aligns with recent best practices in qualitative mixed methods research, enhancing the credibility and transferability of findings (Fetters et al., 2017). As a result, this sequential explanatory mixed methods design is appropriately structured not only to quantify the landscape of DTT adoption but also to explore the qualitative dimensions that influence user behaviour and decision-making regarding technology adoption. This methodological rigor aligns well with established frameworks in mixed methods research (Gani et al., 2022), validating the choice of an explanatory sequential design for this study.

3.3.1 Development and Structure of Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study were carefully designed to create a coherent and logical pathway, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of both the degree of engagement with DTT services and the barriers to that engagement in rural Lagos. Initially, the study assesses awareness of DTT services, particularly the government-led digital switchover (DSO) initiative (Research Question 1). Awareness is a critical first indicator of engagement, reflecting exposure and initial impressions of digital television availability. Following this, the study examines the extent of access to and use of DTT and digital television services (Research Question 2), providing direct insights into actual engagement patterns. Next, the research investigates infrastructural, economic, educational, and cultural barriers to DTT adoption (Research Question 3). This phase captures systemic and personal factors that inhibit meaningful digital participation.

The study then evaluates whether DTT initiatives are meeting their goals of promoting digital inclusivity, particularly in rural and underserved regions (Research Question 4), linking back to both engagement levels

and barriers. Finally, the research assesses how well the services align with users' needs, expectations, and preferences (Research Question 5), offering a critical perspective on the effectiveness and user-centeredness of DTT adoption strategies. By structuring the research questions around degree of engagement and barriers to engagement, the study establishes a robust framework capable of delivering
both diagnostic and evaluative insights into rural digital transformation.

3.4 Research strategy and methodological approach

To address the research questions comprehensively, the study employed a multi-technique qualitative strategy. Initially, a structured survey-questionnaire as stated in the research design above was used through snowball sampling technic to gather background information, including demographic variables (gender, age, education, location, occupation) and initial perceptions of DTT services. Open-ended questions within the survey enabled the capture of early qualitative insights, which were analysed thematically using Braun and Clarke's (2021) six-phase framework. Following the survey, purposive sampling was employed to select participants for semi-structured interviews, prioritising individuals who offered rich, varied perspectives (Berndt, 2020; Busetto et al., 2020). Interviews allowed for deeper probing into emergent themes around accessibility, affordability, digital literacy, infrastructural challenges, and cultural perceptions. Additionally, document analysis of government policy documents, regulatory reports, and previous DTT adoption studies was conducted.

This triangulation provided context and validated the insights gathered from participants, ensuring a holistic understanding of the research problem (Bhattacharya, 2017; de Haan et al., 2021). The methodological approach was flexible and iterative, allowing for continuous refinement of data collection tools based on emerging findings. This participant-centred strategy ensured that the voices and experiences of rural residents remained central throughout the research process, while simultaneously providing the breadth and depth necessary for rigorous academic analysis. By combining these complementary methods, the study adheres to the standards of methodological rigor, credibility, dependability, and transferability that underpin high-quality qualitative research (Jackson-Gordon & Clark, 2023; Nowell et al., 2017). This methodological design supports the synthesis of quantitative and qualitative data, enhancing the comprehensive understanding of consumer adoption patterns and the contextual factors influencing these patterns.

3.5 Study population and location

Purposive sampling was used to select participants (samples) from the two local council development areas (LCDAs) in Ikorodu Local Government Area (LGA) of Lagos state (a sample with specific characteristics representative of their respective communities). Furthermore, willing and reachable regulatory officials and service-providers were also engaged to get their perspective. Specifically, the study population are the householders in Ikorodu, the government regulatory agency officials known as Nigeria broadcasting commission (NBC) and television service-provider members known as broadcasting organisation of Nigeria (BON) in Lagos. The BON functions as a unified entity that serves as the overarching representative and advocate for the diverse interests of all broadcasting stations operating within Nigeria. This inclusive

umbrella body includes a wide spectrum of broadcasters, both from the public and private sectors, television and radio stations under its purview. BON plays a central and important role in the sphere of broadcasting by actively advancing and facilitating cooperation among its member organisations, establishing and upholding stringent standards for broadcasting practices, as well as engaging in constructive dialogues with regulatory entities, National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), on a myriad of pertinent policy and regulatory matters. These sample was selected based on age, gender, geographical location, experiences and socioeconomic status (Hiebl, 2023). Although purposive samples come in various forms, Patton (2002) for example, defined sixteen distinct categories of purposive samples.

However, they all have one thing in common: participants are chosen based on predefined criteria pertinent to a specific study purpose (Patton, 2014). In this case, the potential participants would be anyone who falls under this criterion hence, those who have at least a television set (digital or analogue) or, precisely, those who have a working relationship within the broadcast media as well as the regulators. The population chosen could be any of these identified characteristics such as community audience or householders, professionals (engineers, presenters, Newscasters, accountants, cleaners and government regulators) who live or those who work in the broadcast media stations such as the public television stations, Nigeria Television Authority (NTA), Lagos State Television (LTV) and other private television stations and under the umbrella of BON and the government regulatory agency National Broadcasting Commission (NBC). There are two types of participants in this study: those who can read and write in English, as well as being computer literate. The second group are those who cannot speak or write English but understand the phenomenon when translated or interpreted into their local languages. These identified populations all have common characteristics that are of interest to the researcher, over which the researcher seeks to obtain a representative sample regarding research design and analysis. The idea here was to focus on precise similarity and its relation to the research context.

The purposive sampling adopted was because of its cost and time effectiveness implication to the researcher, also the ability to narrow the focus on specific characteristics of a population that are of interest, based on the sound judgement of the researcher to address research questions successfully. The non-probability purposive sampling proved to be effective for this kind of research because only a limited number of participants will be approached since not all population members have a chance of participating in the study. Other conditions considered are that the participant must be from 15 years and above, and this choice of participants from this age is that, in Nigeria today, the minimum age for workers in any industrial enterprise is 15 years.

The term ‘population’ in the context of this research refers to a community of individuals constrained geographically. It includes the broadcasters, content providers, journalists, and the regulatory body (NBC) representing the government and the viewers as stated above. They all share at least one characteristic in common (television). According to Gay et al. (2009), a researcher must choose a target group from which to generalise the findings of a study. However, because this research is focused on rural community residents

and NBC and the findings may not be generalisable. The detailed list of targeted audience respondents for interviews are provided in table 2 and a detailed list of NBC officials along with television service providers are provided in table 3 in appendix two respectively.

3.6 Sampling strategy

In recruiting participants for the research, the researcher used a non-probability purposive sampling method such as the snowball sampling method to administer questionnaires. This method involves finding and selecting individuals or groups highly informed about or familiar with the phenomenon of interest according to Plano Clark (2017) that is those who are not necessarily known to the researcher. The researcher utilised informal social networks, including friends, acquaintances, and colleagues in the broadcast industry, to recruit participants. Participants were recruited using an innovative online application distribution medium (Email and SMS - WhatsApp) due to the researcher's physical absence from the area Additionally, conveniently accessible community members within the chosen LCDA with at least a television set (analogue or digital) were selected through a community head and media practitioners who could provide valuable information for analysis. This referral system the researcher adopted involved identifying individuals with television sets who could refer others within the study area. Snowball sampling has been used in various media studies to explore public opinions (Dusek et al., 2015; Gao et al., 2021) but not specifically to explore viewers' engagement with digital television services in rural Nigeria. Factors such as participant accessibility and availability were also considered to ensure rich information was gathered. While snowball sampling is valuable for accessing hidden populations, it can lead to biassed samples and uncertainty in sample size determination.

The researcher adopted the Hybrid Probabilistic-Snowball Sampling Design (HPSSD) to address these issues, aiming to reduce bias and improve sample representativeness. HPSSD attempts to mitigate biases by oversampling the initial stage of the snowball, though its effectiveness depends on factors like homophily within the population (Cantone and Tomaselli, 2022; Dosek 2021). Adjustments to the estimator can improve performance, but challenges such as limited generalisability, difficulty in reaching diverse participants, data quality issues, ethical concerns, and logistical challenges remain (Chambers et al., 2020; Kennedy-Shaffer et al., 2021).

3.7 Piloting the study

To ascertain the reliability and viability of this study, the researcher conducted a pilot study to pre-test research instruments, such as questionnaires and interviews according to Aung et al. (2021). A sample from Imota, one of the LCDAs in Ikorodu, was selected to complete the questionnaire, similar to the actual study population (Gay et al., 2009) with the aim of doing preliminary investigation in a small-scale exploratory evaluate different aspects of the methodologies intended for a more extensive, stricter, or validating research endeavour (Eldridge et al., 2016). The primary aim of a pilot is not to address specific research inquiries but to avert researchers from initiating a large-scale examination lacking sufficient understanding of the

proposed methodologies; essentially, this preliminary investigation is carried out to prevent the emergence of a critical defect in a study that incurs significant time and financial costs (Lowe, 2019).
The pilot study allowed the researcher to assess the practicality of choices made, from conceptualisation to the method of analysis.

Pre-testing the data collection instruments was necessary for the following reasons:

- To test if participants understood the questions asked.
- To gain an in-depth understanding of participants' engagement in the survey and their willingness to participate.
- To determine the relevance and dependability of questions by identifying possible issues before large-scale research.
- To pilot test different data collection instruments.
- To obtain research competency and necessary skills, including time management.

In the pilot study, a questionnaire designed to find out participant knowledge, interest, access and engagement on digital switchover and digital terrestrial television (DTT) or digital television services was design and distributed via snowball sampling to 25 community members, with 15 responding. The questionnaire included open and closed-ended questions designed to elicit information about viewers' perceptions of DTT and their methods of engaging with television. Additionally, it asked about constraints affecting access to, awareness of, interest in, and use of DTT. The responses were used to refine and test both open and closed-ended questions for the main study.

The key findings and adjustments made to the main study

- Blank responses because question were not clear enough
- Too much of closed ended questions
- Some participants abandon surveys halfway
- Some provided rushed responses.
- Some participants expected financial compensation or incentives, which impact participation rates.

To address initial shortcomings experienced during the pilot study, the researcher designed a questionnaire to gather information from participants, specifically those who own TV sets (analogue or digital) and those working in the broadcast media sector. This approach aimed to collect insights into their individual interests, views, and experiences. The questionnaire served as the primary source for gathering information remotely from a large community that couldn't be examined firsthand. While questionnaire response rates are typically low, timely delivery and response can significantly increase participation (Wu et al., 2022). The questionnaire was developed based on the research questions to determine whether additional public information was necessary to improve DTT services engagement or to generate further questions for interviews. The design ensured respondents' anonymity, encouraging them to freely express their views.

Other considerations included cost-effectiveness, scalability, interactivity, and flexibility for data collection (Chyung et al., 2018; Kristina, 2018). Challenges cited in literature, such as complex data collection methods, non-responses, questionnaire imperfections, and processing errors, were addressed as seen from the pilot study. These issues are often categorised as 'sampling' and 'non-sampling' errors (Fraval et al., 2019; Lustig, 2020). For instance, non-response bias was mitigated by providing 'Others' options and increasing the number of open-ended questions from 9 to 19 to allow diverse responses as stated by Patten (2016) and Krosnick (2018). The questionnaire consisted of 34 question items: 15 closed-ended and 19 open-ended. It aimed to measure engagement, awareness, accessibility, and use of DTT, without collecting personal data. The open-ended questions aimed to capture rich narratives from respondents (Emde, 2014; Weller et al., 2018).

Demographic factors such as gender, education, needs, and employment status were explored to understand what their perspective is to DTT engagement (Rinaldi et al., 2018). Closed-ended questions increased response rates by providing predetermined answers but also included an 'others' option for flexibility (Zhou et al., 2017). The Likert scale was used to evaluate respondents' expectations and engagement with DTT. This psychometric tool allows for numerical data analysis and captures degrees of agreement (Taherdoost, 2019). Despite its limitations, such as one-dimensional choices and potential bias, it provided valuable quantitative data (Bishop and Herron, 2015; Pimentel and Pimentel, 2019). The questionnaire was distributed via email and WhatsApp with the help of a research assistant living in Ikorodu LGA. This assistant, working with a media advocacy NGO, distributed the questionnaires and organised fieldwork for those without internet access. The questionnaire included a consent letter detailing participants' rights and confidentiality, and featured university colours and symbols to enhance legitimacy. After six months of data collection, 401 questionnaires were returned, with 306 used for analysis (279 online and 31 paper), and 94 voided due to discrepancies. All the responses were further transferred into an excel spreadsheet for analysis which the findings will be discussed in a later section. The detailed content of the questions in the questionnaire are provided in the appendix one.

3.8 Data collection and analysis

Data collection for this study was conducted in a structured, sequential manner to ensure a comprehensive exploration of participants' experiences with digital terrestrial television (DTT) adoption. The research employed a survey-questionnaire as an initial data collection tool to identify and recruit participants for a more detailed, semi-structured interview phase. This two-stage process was crucial in refining the study's focus, ensuring that the most information-rich participants were selected for in-depth qualitative inquiry. The survey-questionnaire, which served as a preliminary exploratory tool, was designed to gather essential demographic and contextual data, including participants' age, gender, location, education, and occupation. These demographic variables were significant in understanding the socio-economic diversity of the study population and how these factors influenced DTT adoption. Beyond demographic data, the questionnaire also contained open-ended questions that explored participants' awareness, interest, access, use, and engagement with DTT. These open-ended responses provided qualitative insights that informed the structure

of the subsequent interviews, ensuring that emerging themes and participant concerns were adequately explored. As Creswell and Poth (2018) note, using preliminary survey-questionnaires in qualitative research enhances data richness by allowing researchers to refine their focus based on initial participant responses.

Following the questionnaire phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected participants. The selection was guided by the richness of the responses provided in the questionnaire, ensuring that the interview sample represented a diverse range of perspectives on DTT adoption. These interviews provided an opportunity to probe deeper into themes identified in the survey responses, such as digital accessibility challenges, socio-cultural influences on technology use, and regulatory concerns affecting the digital transition. Brinkmann and Kvale (2018) highlight that semi-structured interviews enable researchers to balance a structured approach with the flexibility needed to explore complex social phenomena in greater depth. The interviews were conducted either in person or via telephone, depending on participant availability and logistical constraints.

3.8.1 Questionnaire design

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These issues are often categorised as ‘sampling’ and ‘non-sampling’ errors (Fraval et al., 2019; Lustig, 2020). Non-response bias was mitigated by providing ‘Others’ options and increasing the number of open-ended questions from 9 to 19 to allow diverse responses as stated by Patten (2016) and Krosnick (2018). The questionnaire consisted of 34 questions: 15 closed-ended and 19 open-ended. It aimed to measure engagement, awareness, accessibility, and use of DTT, without collecting personal data. The open-ended questions aimed to capture rich narratives from respondents (Emde, 2014; Weller et al., 2018).

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3.8.2 Adapting research methods due to Covid

The researcher was forced to adapt their data-gathering methods to address concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the distance between the UK and Nigeria. These adaptations influenced how the questionnaires were administered and semi-structured interviews conducted. The primary method chosen was telephone-video-calling via WhatsApp and text-based instant messaging like WhatsApp and SMS to replicate face-to-face interactions as supported by Archibald et al. (2019); Sutherland et al. (2020) research respectively. The researcher preferred distributing questionnaires via WhatsApp over email due to the more frequent checking of WhatsApp messages compared to emails and the issue of emails being intercepted as spam by ISPs (Wilson, 2013). Though WhatsApp is quick and easy to use, it lacks the formality of email. The online questionnaire was created using Google Forms and distributed via WhatsApp and email (Nayak and Narayan, 2019) using convenient and snowball sampling methods. A research assistant familiar with the subject matter facilitated this process. To recruit participants, the researcher contacted a former colleague in Lagos via Facebook, who introduced the researcher to a local research assistant. This assistant identified eligible localities and provided guidance on engaging with the community. The researcher used telephone calls to introduce himself and explain the research purpose, facilitating participant access and engagement. This process helped the researcher engage with cultural norms and ensured effective community involvement.

3.8.3 Interview design

To complement the online and paper questionnaire surveys, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with viewers, broadcast professionals, and NBC officials to gain deeper insights into their experiences with DTT/DSO. Participants were purposefully selected from survey results in the LCDAs in Ikorodu, with 52 viewers, three NBC staff, and 24 television service providers professionals, known as broadcast organisation of Nigeria (BON) agreeing to participate. Semi-structured interviews were chosen for their flexibility, allowing new questions to emerge during discussions (DeJonckheere and Vaughn, 2019). This method enabled a dialogue between the researcher and participants, guided by an adaptable interview procedure and augmented with follow-up questions. Open-ended questions focused on challenges related to

awareness, access, wants, needs, and expectations from viewers' perspectives, and DSO implementation from operators' and regulators' perspectives. This approach allowed the researcher to obtain open-ended data, deeply probing participants' thoughts, feelings, and opinions according to Osborne and Grant-Smith (2021). Interviews were conducted in real-time, either face-to-face or via phone, with participants individually contacted and given brief information about the study. While some were done with open ended questions. A cordial relationship was established to encourage ongoing participation, balancing the researcher's interests with those of the respondents. Interviews were scheduled with pre-determined but open-ended questions, using a secured audio recording device to capture exact quotes. This method provided flexibility, enabling the researcher to follow up on responses, seek clarifications, and reword questions if necessary (Osborne and Grant-Smith, 2021).

The interviews aimed to explore viewers' socio-cultural, digital literacy, and economic status concerning awareness, access, and use of DTT, along with anticipated satisfaction or dissatisfaction and the challenges or barriers faced. The regulators' perspectives on the challenges and opportunities of implementing DSO were also sought. NBC staff were recruited through snowball sampling. The goal was to encourage respondents to freely and extensively express their experiences as viewers, operators, and regulators. This required the researcher to follow ethical guidelines in line with the University of Stirling's research procedures. Additional participants were recruited through referrals until saturation was reached, determined by sample size adequacy and the absence of new data, themes, or coding (Braun and Clarke, 2021). Recognising those most essential for the research justified the use of purposive sampling according to Thompson Burdine et al. (2021). The interview questions were structured to guide the researcher and keep participants focused, with caution taken to avoid forcing questions into preconceived categories (Knott et al., 2022). The detailed content of the interview questions is provided in Appendix One. These questions include: "What are your expectations when using Digital TV or a Set-Top Box (FreeTV decoder) compared to Analogue TV?" and "Do you have access to the new FreeTV decoder (STB) recently launched by the government as part of the digital switchover initiative?", among others.

3.9 Data analysis

Given the qualitative nature of this study, thematic analysis was employed as the primary method of data analysis. Participants were assigned unique identifiers based on their method of participation and role. For the questionnaire, participants from the two communities were designated as volunteer respondents for the questionnaire (VRQ) and numbered sequentially from VRQ 001 to VRQ 306. Similarly, for the interviews, participants from the two communities were identified as volunteer interview respondents (VI), numbered from VI01 to VI052. Regulatory officials were identified by their official titles (e.g., Zonal Manager, Coordinator, and Monitor), while the twenty-four service providers were categorised based on their respective job titles. A detailed breakdown of these identifiers is available in the appendix table for clarity. Thematic analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006; 2021), involves identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. This approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of participants' narratives, capturing both explicit statements and underlying meanings. The first

step in the analysis involved data familiarisation, where responses from the open-ended survey and interview transcripts were read multiple times to identify recurring patterns. This was followed by coding, a process where significant phrases and ideas were systematically categorised to form initial themes. The next stage involved refining and defining these themes, ensuring that they accurately represented participant experiences and perspectives.

To enhance the reliability of the thematic analysis, Microsoft Excel was utilised for systematic coding and pattern recognition, replacing conventional software like NVivo to ensure accessibility and transparency in data organisation. The Excel spreadsheets were structured with predefined categories, allowing for effective data segmentation and comparative analysis of different responses. This method enabled efficient cross-referencing of participant narratives, ensuring that emerging themes were consistently identified across multiple data sources. The use of Excel for qualitative data analysis aligns with recommendations by Creswell and Poth (2018), who highlight the importance of systematic coding in qualitative research to enhance credibility and reproducibility. Additionally, triangulation was employed by cross-referencing findings from the questionnaire, interviews, and document analysis to ensure a comprehensive interpretation of the data. This triangulated approach strengthened the reliability of the study by confirming emerging insights across multiple data sources (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Specifically, as stated above the data analysis process in this case was done by integrating the analysis of survey questionnaire data with the analysis of semi-structured interviews. This combination provided a comprehensive understanding of the research problem by capturing both descriptive statistical trends of the demography of participants and in-depth personal experiences (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2023). This use of mixed methods allows for a more holistic exploration of the factors influencing digital terrestrial television (DTT) adoption, ensuring that patterns identified are complemented by richer, contextual insights (Bell et al., 2022). To ensure accuracy and consistency, a data cleaning and preparation process was conducted, wherein incomplete or inconsistent responses were removed, resulting in 306 valid responses from the survey questionnaire for analysis after voiding unreliable entries (Chai, 2020). Descriptive statistics such as frequency distributions, percentages were then computed to summarise key demographic characteristics, (Cooksey and Cooksey, 2020).

For this qualitative analysis, data from the semi-structured interviews were then examined using thematic analysis, a widely used method for identifying patterns and themes within textual data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The first step involved transcription and data organisation, where all interviews were transcribed verbatim to maintain an accurate representation of participant responses, followed by cleaning to remove filler words and irrelevant content (Nowell et al., 2017). The researcher then familiarised himself with the data by reading the transcripts multiple times, making initial observations and reflections to capture emerging ideas (Guest et al., 2011). This was followed by manual coding and categorisation, where key phrases and concepts were identified and grouped into preliminary codes representing recurring themes, perceptions, or barriers to DTT adoption (Gibbs, 2018). The analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis framework, which included (1) familiarisation with the data, (2) generating initial

codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the final thematic report. To further strengthen the validity of findings, a triangulation process was undertaken, comparing themes from qualitative interviews with trends emerging from quantitative data to identify areas of convergence or divergence (Natow, 2020).

This cross-verification ensured that findings were consistent across different data sources and reinforced the reliability of conclusions. Member checking was also employed, where a subset of interview participants was invited to review preliminary findings and confirm whether their perspectives were accurately represented (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The final stage involved the integration of both quantitative and qualitative findings using a convergent parallel design, where both data types were analysed separately before being compared (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2023). Points of agreement between datasets reinforced the study's key conclusions, while discrepancies were examined further to uncover underlying causes. Specifically, data were collected through interviews from three NBC officials, 24 broadcast professionals, and 52 viewers across various Local council development areas (LCDAs) until saturation was reached. The semi-structured interviews, lasting 45 minutes to an hour, included participants from diverse geographical regions with varying experience levels. This variation maximised the data's richness (Drosou et al., 2017). The interviews focused on participants' views on DTT services post-DSO, their engagement levels, and issue resolution, comparing responses from viewers, broadcast experts, and regulators. The analysis followed a bottom-up approach guided by research questions (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The semi-structured interview and open-ended question responses were transcribed using Otter software, with manual transcription for questionnaire responses. Audio files were transcribed verbatim, and transcripts were reviewed for accuracy, anonymisation, and notation of non-verbal cues. Data excerpts were categorised based on similarity, with relevant quotations extracted for analysis.

This process produced various lines of inquiry, defining the themes explored fully in the subsequent chapter. For instance, to enhance the transparency and rigour of the coding process, the researcher systematically developed and applied codes during the thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework. The process began with familiarisation with the data, where audio recordings were transcribed, and interview transcripts and open-ended questionnaire responses were carefully reviewed multiple times. This initial stage allowed the researcher to immerse themselves in the data and take preliminary notes, identifying recurring ideas, phrases, and patterns (Mayring, 2021). For example, in one instance, a participant mentioned, "Most people in the rural areas don't know about the digital switchover. There are no TV signals there, so what's the use?" Here, the researcher noted issues related to lack of awareness, infrastructure deficits, and accessibility barriers. From these observations, initial codes were generated inductively, emerging directly from the data. The researcher manually coded transcripts line-by-line, assigning labels to specific segments of text. Codes such as "Lack of Awareness," "Infrastructure Deficits," "Affordability Issues," and "Public Engagement Challenges" were created to reflect participants' concerns. For instance, when a participant stated, "We were not informed properly about DSO. Most people in the villages can't afford new TVs or decoders or know about DSO," the segment was coded as "Lack of Awareness" and

"Affordability Issues." Similarly, another participant's comment, "There's no infrastructure for proper digital signals here. I only get TV channels when I travel to the city," was coded as "Infrastructure Deficits" and "Rural-Urban Divide."

After coding the entire dataset, the researcher moved to searching for themes by grouping related codes identified into broader categories. For example, codes that speak to challenges such as "Lack of Awareness," "Infrastructure Deficits," and "Affordability Issues" were grouped under the theme "Digital Divide and Inequality," while codes like "Public awareness Engagement," "Educational Accessibility," and "Signal Reception" formed the theme "Engagement and Accessibility." Another theme, "Role of Government and Policy," included codes like "Inadequate Government Communication," "Need for Subsidies," and "Private Sector Involvement." To ensure the themes accurately represented the data, the researcher reviewed and refined the themes by revisiting the coded excerpts. Some themes were merged or redefined for clarity. For example, an initial theme titled "Affordability and Infrastructure Challenges" was refined and renamed "Barriers to DTT Adoption in Rural Communities" to better reflect its scope. This theme ultimately included codes such as "Affordability Issues," "Infrastructure Deficits," and "Rural Access Limitations." Following this, the researcher moved to defining and naming themes, providing clear descriptions for each one. For instance, the theme "Digital Divide and Inequality" was defined as highlighting how infrastructural deficits, affordability barriers, and limited public awareness contribute to the exclusion of rural communities from digital television services. Supporting quotes were carefully selected to illustrate each theme, ensuring that the findings were well-grounded in the data. For example, one participant's statement says "Even if people know about DSO, they can't afford new equipment, and the government hasn't made any effort to reach us" provided strong evidence for the "Digital Divide and Inequality" theme. Finally, the researcher produced a comprehensive report, presenting the themes in alignment with the research questions. Relevant data excerpts were included to support the analysis and demonstrate the depth of participants' experiences.

This systematic coding process starting with familiarisation, followed by the generation of codes, identification and refinement of themes, and their clear presentation ensured transparency, rigor, and reliability in the analysis. By linking the findings to specific themes and supporting them with participant quotes, this demonstrated a robust methodological approach, enhancing confidence in the validity of the study's outcomes. Overall, by combining statistical descriptions of the questionnaire data with thematic analysis of interview responses, this approach ensures a robust, data-driven understanding of the factors influencing DTT adoption in rural communities. While the quantitative analysis provided a means of generating participants, it offers measurable trends, the qualitative insights provide deeper explanations, leading to well-rounded, evidence-based conclusions that contribute to both policy and academic discussions on digital inclusion in underserved regions (Dźwigoł and Dźwigoł-Barosz, 2020).

3.10 Reflective impact of COVID-19 during and after data collection (2019–2021)

During the course of this research, significant challenges arose, particularly in data collection, due to the profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic between 2019 and 2021. These unprecedented circumstances

demanded considerable adaptations and innovative approaches to manage the difficulties effectively. The research journey began as a significant professional and personal milestone, transitioning from the UK to Lagos, Nigeria, and finally to Ikorodu. The primary aim was to survey Ikorodu's rural areas and devise an effective strategy for data collection. The initial preparatory phase included reconnaissance to understand the local context, identify key respondents, and establish rapport with stakeholders. This stage was critical for logistical planning and building trust within the community. However, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 disrupted these plans, introducing challenges that necessitated a shift in methodology. As the first wave of the pandemic led to global uncertainty and lockdowns, in-person access to Ikorodu's communities became impossible, forcing a pivot from traditional methods like interviews and focus group discussions to digital data collection tools. This transition was fraught with obstacles, primarily stemming from the digital divide in rural areas. Limited internet access, inadequate devices, and low digital literacy among respondents compounded the difficulties, exposing the socio-economic inequalities central to the research.

Furthermore, the cultural importance of face-to-face interaction in encouraging trust made digital engagement less effective. Privacy concerns, unfamiliarity with technology, and the competing demands of the pandemic, including health concerns, financial insecurity, and homeschooling which made parents or guardians to take on teaching responsibilities or assist their children with remote learning, which created additional demands on their time and resources. This added pressure likely influenced their availability and willingness to participate in research activities, further reduced participation. To adapt, the research employed alternative methods such as telephone interviews, WhatsApp questionnaires, and voice notes, which yielded varying levels of success. Despite these challenges, this period underscored the necessity of resilience and adaptability, providing valuable insights into the digital realities and infrastructure gaps in rural communities. Post-lockdown, in-person engagements resumed, supplemented by digital methods in a hybrid approach that enriched the data collection process and offered a comprehensive perspective on the study area. This experience highlighted the importance of contingency planning and methodological flexibility in fieldwork, revealing how the pandemic reshaped both the research process and the understanding of resilience and resourcefulness.

General challenges during the study extended beyond the pandemic's disruptions. Many elderly respondents, particularly those without formal education, were reluctant to participate, believing they lacked the requisite knowledge to contribute meaningfully. Their responses often required assistance from literate family members or translators, leading to subjectivity. Additionally, locating respondents to retrieve completed questionnaires proved challenging, as many were occupied with farming or domestic duties. General discontent toward the study further limited survey responses. The use of online questionnaires exacerbated difficulties, as Nigeria's ICT infrastructure is predominantly urban-centric, with rural areas lacking reliable internet, stable power, and sufficient digital literacy. Two major methodological shortcomings of online questionnaires became apparent. First, the difficulty in defining the surveyed population complicated result generalisation, while self-selection bias risked skewing the findings. Second, the predetermined nature of

some responses, such as Yes or No answers, restricted opportunities for discovery. To mitigate this, open-ended questions were introduced, encouraging richer responses, although at a higher cost. Semi-structured interviews also presented issues, as not all respondents were forthcoming, and recruiting enough participants proved difficult. Cultural considerations, such as the need for politeness and respect in addressing elderly participants, were crucial in ensuring participation, particularly in the Yoruba cultural context.

Financial and logistical constraints further limited the study to Southwestern Nigeria, excluding other regions like the South-East and South-South, which also faced digital switchover challenges. Resources required for participant recruitment, interviews, transcription, and data analysis were underestimated, affecting the comprehensiveness of the findings. As a result, generalising the data to the entire population of the Ikorodu Local council development areas (LCDA) was challenging, though the study provided an in-depth overview of digital television services and socio-economic inequalities. In retrospect, the research experience during the COVID-19 pandemic was a testament to endurance, adaptability, and innovation. While it highlighted significant limitations, it also deepened the researcher's understanding of digital inequities and the socio-cultural dynamics of rural communities. The insights gained, despite the challenges, have profoundly shaped the approach to academic research and community engagement, offering valuable lessons in resilience and resourcefulness that transcend the immediate scope of the study.

3.11 Ethical approval

The researcher ensured ethical compliance by obtaining informed consent from participants at the outset of the study. This process involved clearly outlining the research intent, as the protection of participants is fundamental in any research (O'neill, 2017). Participants agreed to complete the survey based on this informed consent, which requires that they be fully informed about the research process (Bryman, 2016). In seeking consent, the researcher explained that the information provided by participants would be used exclusively for the intended research on digital television/switchover in their community and emphasised maintaining confidentiality throughout the study (Jenkins, et al., 2020). The rights and liberties of the participants were prioritised, particularly in decisions about reporting and disseminating results. Confidentiality of participants' identities and characteristics was strictly maintained, and they were informed that participation was voluntary, with the option to withdraw at any time to avoid compulsion (Kirchhoffer and Richards, 2019). To further ensure ethical integrity, the researcher implemented measures for the secure storage of research-related documents and data. Access to this information was restricted to the researcher and his supervisor (Bell and Waters, 2018; Creswell, 2021). The study, which examined the challenges encountered by rural residents in Ikorodu, Lagos, concerning the government's digital switchover (DSO) initiative, was conducted with ethical approval. Adhering to ethical principles, the research prioritised the well-being and rights of participants, maintaining responsible and ethical research practices. The study provided valuable insights into the challenges faced by rural dwellers in accessing and adopting digital TV technology.

3.12 Summary of chapter

This chapter has outlined the research methodology adopted to examine the effectiveness, accessibility, and engagement of digital terrestrial television (DTT) in rural communities in Ikorodu, Lagos, within the broader framework of Nigeria's digital switchover (DSO) initiative. A qualitative research approach was employed, underpinned by an interpretivist paradigm that highlights the subjective nature of digital adoption and the socio-cultural factors influencing media engagement. To achieve a comprehensive understanding, a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design was implemented, beginning with a survey-questionnaire for participant recruitment, followed by semi-structured interviews for deeper exploration. The research population comprised household viewers, regulatory officials from the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC), and broadcasting professionals affiliated with the Broadcasting Organisation of Nigeria (BON). Participants were selected through purposive and snowball sampling techniques based on criteria such as media engagement, socioeconomic status, and access to television services. A pilot study was conducted to refine research instruments and enhance data collection processes. Given the constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, alternative data collection methods such as WhatsApp, SMS, and phone interviews were adopted to ensure participant engagement.

For data analysis, thematic analysis was applied, using Microsoft Excel for systematic coding and pattern identification within participant narratives. The integration of survey responses with interview insights provided a refined understanding of digital adoption barriers. Triangulation with policy documents and regulatory reports further strengthened the study's reliability. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality, and secure data storage, were rigorously upheld, with ethical approval obtained to maintain research integrity. This foundation paves the way for the next chapter, which focuses on the presentation and analysis of findings, offering critical insights into the realities of DTT implementation and its impact on digital inclusion.

Chapter Four: Survey analysis of data on targeted audience gathered

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyses the data obtained from survey questionnaires administered to residents of Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin local council development areas (LCDAs) in Ikorodu, Lagos State, Nigeria. The primary aim is to examine the extent and limits of engagement with digital terrestrial television (DTT) services in these rural areas, focusing on how infrastructural, economic, social, and cultural factors shape (dis)engagement with Nigeria's digital switchover (DSO) initiative. The findings reveal that digital disengagement among rural residents in Ikorodu cannot be attributed to any single factor such as infrastructure or affordability alone. Instead, the data points to a layered and overlapping experience of exclusion, which this thesis conceptualises as intersectional digital marginalisation (IDM). This framework captures the ways in which cost barriers, unreliable signal coverage, low digital literacy, and cultural disconnection intersect particularly among low-income, linguistically diverse, or educationally disadvantaged groups. For instance, one female respondent from Imota noted that although her family could afford a decoder, they ultimately abandoned digital television due to unstable electricity, limited knowledge of how to use the device, and a preference for local-language content that was unavailable on digital platforms. Rather than waste resources on a service with little benefit, they reverted to using non-paying analogue television. This case exemplifies how multiple exclusions economic, infrastructural, informational, and cultural interact in ways that cannot be reduced to mere "access."

To complement this structural analysis, the chapter also draws on uses and gratifications theory (UGT) to examine how rural audiences actively evaluate and respond to the media services available to them. UGT helps explain why some users disengage from DTT despite having technical access often because the service fails to meet their informational, cultural, or entertainment needs. The decision to switch to alternative platforms (such as mobile streaming or informal content sharing) reflects not only exclusion, but agency a behavioural response to unmet gratifications. Thus, while IDM explains the conditions of exclusion, UGT provides insight into the motivations and expectations that shape audience choices. These findings validate the use of intersectional digital marginalisation, enhanced by a UGT lens, as a diagnostic framework that enables a more comprehensive reading of rural disengagement from digital media technologies. The data was collected using a 34-item questionnaire, which served not only as a quantitative instrument but also as a screening tool for identifying interview participants. As noted by Camilloni et al. (2013) and Duffy et al. (2017), this method often called a participant screening survey enables researchers to collect demographic and behavioural data while identifying suitable participants for qualitative follow-up.

The questionnaire was distributed using a snowball sampling method, as explained in the previous chapter, and the responses were coded and analysed around three core thematic categories that emerged from the data. Before presenting these themes, the chapter begins with a participant profile section, providing demographic and contextual insights into the communities under study. This profile forms the foundation for understanding variations in DTT access and usage.

The analysis is then structured around the following three key themes:

- Level of Understanding of DTT – This theme assesses the degree of awareness, familiarity, and informational access residents have regarding DTT services, including knowledge of the broader digital switchover initiative.
- Factors Encouraging Engagement with DTT – This section explores the enabling conditions that support adoption, such as affordability, availability of relevant content, perceived value, and ease of use. It also considers the extent to which DTT is perceived as inclusive of rural needs.
- Factors Discouraging Engagement with DTT – Here, the analysis turns to barriers, including infrastructural deficits, economic hardship, cultural misalignment, and the marginalisation of local language or indigenous content. These challenges are often compounded by intersectional inequalities.

These themes are analysed through the intersectional digital marginalisation framework, now complemented by uses and gratifications theory, to highlight how DTT adoption in rural Nigeria is shaped by the interplay between structural exclusions and user agency. By grounding the survey data in this integrated framework, the chapter offers a more understanding of why the digital switchover has, in many cases, failed to engage the rural populations it was designed to include.

4.1 Demographic representation of respondents (Imota & Ikosi-Ejirin LCDA)

This section presents a broad demographic profile of the target audience respondents in the initial survey/questionnaire, giving an insight into their appreciation of digital switchover (DSO), DTV and digital terrestrial television (DTT) in terms of location: Imota and Ikosi rural areas of Ikorodu LGA, capturing varied experiences such as: - Age: From young adults to seniors, exploring generational perceptions. Sex: Both genders represented, highlighting potential gender-related viewpoints. Education: Diverse academic backgrounds, revealing tech-awareness impact. Occupation: Various professions, unveiling implications across careers. These profiles enrich the understanding of how DSO/DTT is appreciated across these different areas. In the same vein, it also presents the understanding of digital television/ digital terrestrial television by the audience in these areas.

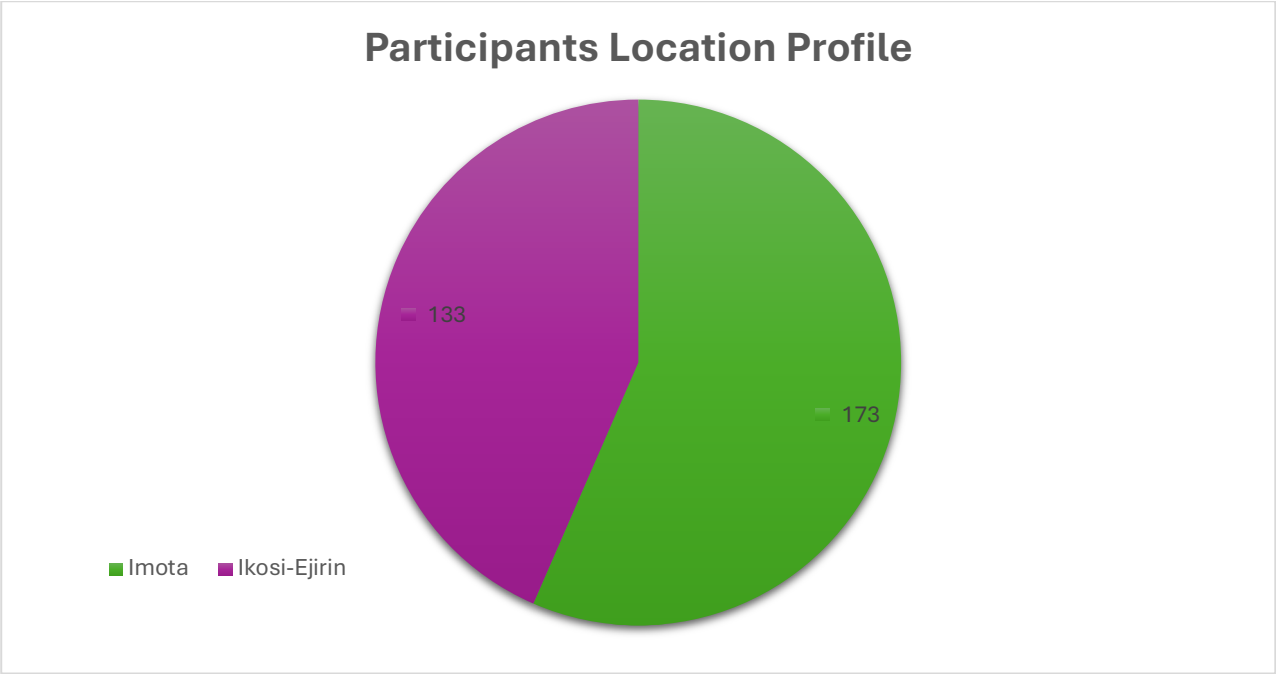

Figure 4.1

The greater proportion of participants from Imota (56.5%) compared to Ikosi (43.5%) resulted from a higher distribution of questionnaires in Imota, facilitated by the participants' willingness to cooperate. This difference in representation also reflects varying levels of infrastructure development between the two locations. In the context of the digital disconnect and engagement with the digital TV switchover, these proportions highlight the need for more interventions that address the unique challenges and opportunities within each location. Imota's larger participant base might provide a broader platform for implementing and testing awareness campaigns or digital switchover initiatives. However, Ikosi's slightly smaller representation underscores the importance of ensuring equitable outreach and engagement efforts to avoid inadvertently widening the digital divide. This data reinforces the necessity of location-specific strategies that account for population dynamics, resource availability, and local engagement levels to ensure the digital TV switchover is inclusive and effectively bridges the digital disconnect in these rural communities.

Table 4.1

Participants Age Profile				
Classification	Imota		Ikosi	
Age	Frequency	Percent (%)	Frequency	Percent (%)
15 Years – 24 Years	23	13.3	17	12.8
25 Years – 34 Years	72	41.6	60	45.1
35 Years – 44 Years	61	35.3	38	28.6
55 Years – 64 Years	16	9.2	18	13.5
65 & above	1	0.6	0	0
Total	173	100	133	100

The age group 25–34 years is the most represented in both Imota (41.6%) and Ikosi (45.1%), followed by the 35–44 years group, which accounts for 35.3% in Imota and 28.6% in Ikosi. Younger participants aged 15–24 years make up 13.3% in Imota and 12.8% in Ikosi, while older adults in the 55–64 years category represent 9.2% and 13.5% in Imota and Ikosi, respectively. The least represented age group is 65 years and above, with only 0.6% in Imota and none in Ikosi. The data on age distribution across Imota and Ikosi offers critical insights into the potential digital disconnect and engagement with the digital TV switchover in remote rural communities of the Lagos region. The predominance of younger age groups, particularly those aged 25–34 years and 15–24 years, highlights a demographic likely to be more adaptable and engaged with digital technologies. This indicates an opportunity for targeted digital literacy programs and technology adoption initiatives aimed at enhancing their ability to engage with the digital TV switchover effectively.

Conversely, the significant representation of the 35–44 years age group underscores the need for interventions that combine digital awareness with practical demonstrations to accommodate their dual roles as working individuals and potential household decision-makers. The representation of older adults in the 55–64 years age group, alongside the minimal presence of those aged 65 years and above, raises concerns about the inclusivity of the digital switchover process. These groups may face significant barriers, including limited digital literacy and accessibility issues, which necessitate personalised outreach programs, such as community workshops or simplified interfaces for digital TV devices. The urban-rural divide is further reflected in the slight demographic differences between Imota and Ikosi, suggesting that engagement strategies must account for local variations, with Ikosi potentially requiring more youth-centric approaches and Imota benefiting from a broader age-inclusive strategy.

The absence of a substantial elderly population, coupled with the challenges faced by middle-aged and older demographics, underscores the importance of addressing the digital divide by ensuring that the switchover process is not only technologically inclusive but also sensitive to the unique challenges of rural communities. This data points to the critical need for multi-pronged strategies that combine infrastructure improvements, education, and community engagement to ensure that the digital TV switchover can effectively bridge, rather than deepen, the digital disconnect in these remote rural areas.

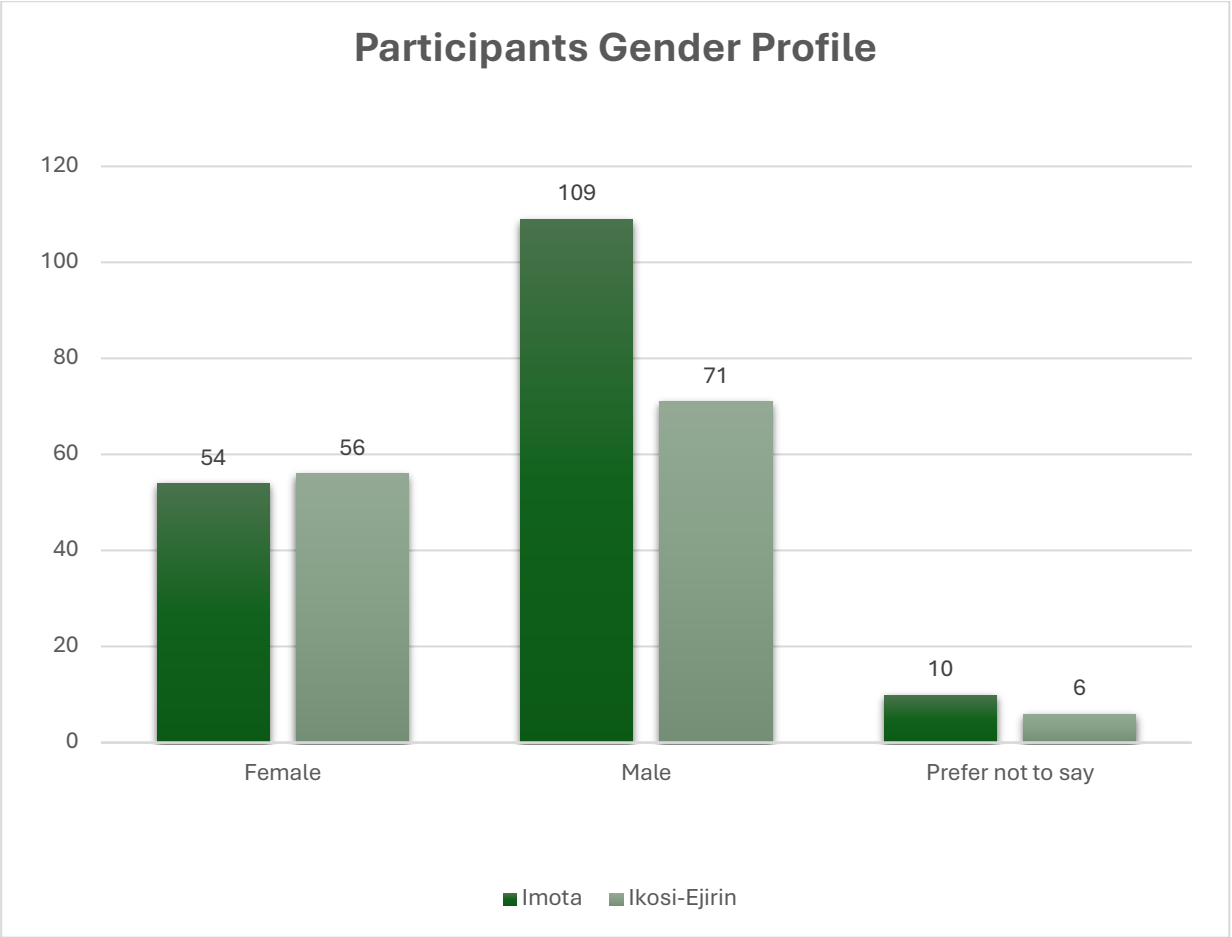

Figure 4.2

The graph above shows the predominance of males in both Imota (63.0%) and Ikosi (53.4%) suggests that men might be more engaged or accessible for surveys related to the digital TV switchover. However, the significant representation of females (31.2% in Imota and 42.1% in Ikosi) highlights the need for inclusive engagement strategies that ensure women have equal access to resources and information about the switchover. The smaller proportion of participants who "prefer not to say" their gender suggests minimal barriers related to gender disclosure but underscores the importance of maintaining inclusivity in outreach efforts.

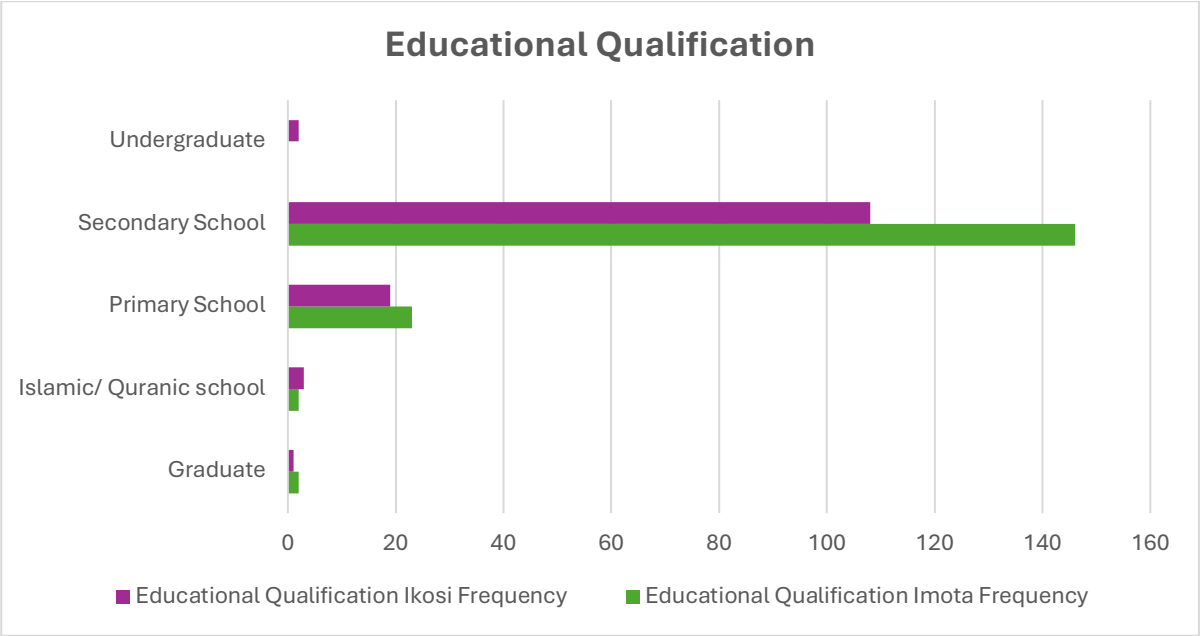

Figure 4.3

The dominance of secondary school education in both Imota (84.4%) and Ikosi (81.0%) indicates that most participants have a foundational level of education, potentially enabling them to understand and adapt to new technologies like digital TV. However, the low percentage of graduates (1.2% in Imota, 1.0% in Ikosi) and the absence or minimal representation of undergraduates highlight limited access to higher education, which could pose a barrier to deeper technological engagement. Personalised information campaigns in accessible language and formats are crucial to bridge this gap.

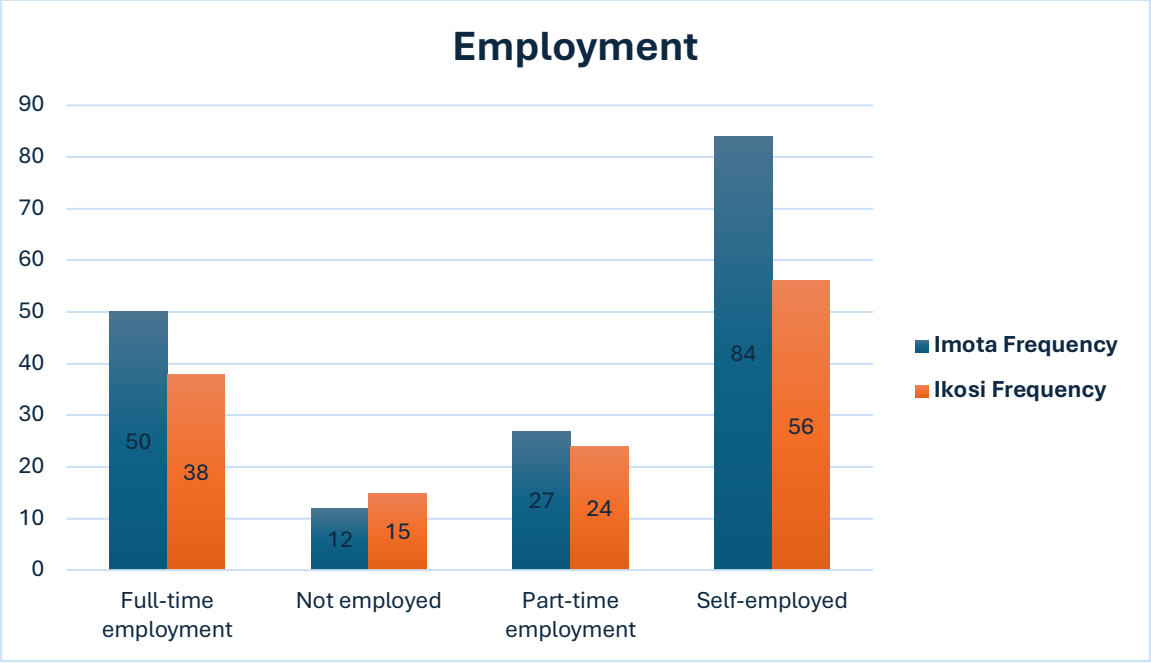

Figure 4.4

The high proportion of self-employed participants in both Imota (48.6%) and Ikosi (42.1%) reflects the prevalence of informal economic activities in these rural communities. This demographic may require

flexible and low-cost digital TV solutions to accommodate their economic constraints. The relatively smaller representation of individuals in full-time or part-time employment suggests limited exposure to workplace-driven digital literacy programs, further emphasising the need for community-based training and awareness campaigns. The presence of unemployed individuals (6.9% in Imota and 11.3% in Ikosi) highlights a group that might benefit from subsidised access to digital TV services as part of broader social inclusion initiatives. The data underscores the multidimensional challenges of achieving full engagement with the digital TV switchover in remote rural communities. Factors such as gender disparities, limited higher education, and reliance on informal employment highlight the risk of a digital disconnect. To address this, targeted interventions should focus on creating affordable, accessible, and inclusive solutions, ensuring that both male and female participants, regardless of their educational or occupational status, can fully benefit from the digital transition.

4.1.1 Overall view of the demography in relation to intersectional view

The demographic data collected from respondents in Imota LCDA and Ikosi-Ejirin LCDA revealed patterns of digital exclusion that are best understood through an intersectional lens. Participants varied widely in age, with a majority falling between 25 and 44 years, while a smaller but significant portion were aged 55 years and above. Although gender representation was relatively balanced, a closer examination revealed that gender, in combination with other factors such as education, economic status, and access to infrastructure, contributed significantly to disparities in digital access and awareness. This digital exclusion reflects more than a technological divide it represents a manifestation of digital poverty, where the lack of both access to digital devices and the capability to use them meaningfully hinders full participation in a rapidly digitising society. Most respondents had either primary or secondary school education, with several indicating Islamic schooling as their highest level of attainment. Employment was predominantly informal, with many identifying as self-employed or engaged in part-time work, while a smaller number reported full-time employment. A few were unemployed entirely. These socioeconomic conditions deeply influenced respondents' exposure to, and understanding of, the government's digital terrestrial television (DTT) switchover program. Limited income and low educational attainment contributed to both the inability to acquire relevant technology and the absence of critical digital literacy. These findings support the concept of information poverty, where certain populations lack the ability or opportunity to access and use information effectively due to structural constraints like education and income inequality.

Awareness of the DTT initiative was generally low across both LGAs, but particularly limited among older adults, individuals with little formal education, and residents of Ikosi-Ejirin LCDA. Many respondents expressed unfamiliarity with the term "digital switchover" or uncertainty about its relevance and implications. As one male respondent with primary education in Ikosi-Ejirin remarked, "I didn't know anything about the government DTT." Such statements underscore a condition of information deprivation, where important public service messages fail to reach the most vulnerable due to literacy and infrastructural barriers. The lack of awareness among younger but under-educated individuals further complicates assumptions about youth being inherently digitally literate, indicating that age alone does not guarantee

digital engagement in contexts of entrenched socioeconomic disadvantage. Gender also played a significant role in shaping digital experiences. Many women, especially in the 55–64 age bracket, reported not only limited awareness but also a lack of confidence in engaging with digital technologies. One woman in Imota LCDA stated, “We don’t know about it yet, and I don’t think I can operate it,” while another commented, “Didn’t have an idea about DTT in our area.” These quotes reflect a compounded vulnerability resulting from the intersection of gender, age, and education. This digital marginalisation of women may also be seen as a byproduct of digital colonialism, in which the design, dissemination, and control of digital technologies often reflect dominant power structures that ignore or exclude local knowledge systems, cultural practices, and gendered realities in non-Western communities. As a result, women especially older and rural women are rendered passive users or entirely invisible in the digital narrative.

Economic barriers were equally pervasive. Many respondents noted their inability to afford Set-Top Boxes, or the subscription services required to use them. A self-employed male respondent aged 55–64 in Imota LCDA explained, “Currently, I find myself unable to afford subscriptions and I am not buoyant to make use of the decoder.” This reveals how financial precarity intersects with other identity markers to restrict digital participation. Even where some degree of awareness exists, poverty imposes limitations on the actual adoption and sustained use of digital services. Such findings resonate with the concept of digital poverty, wherein the digital divide is not just about access but also the affordability and usability of digital tools for everyday life. Internet access emerged as another decisive factor in shaping digital engagement. Respondents who had internet mostly accessed through mobile phones were more likely to have some awareness of DTT services, often informed through social media, WhatsApp groups, or community chats. However, many, especially in Ikosi-Ejirin, reported having no internet access at all. The absence of digital infrastructure in these communities significantly limited residents' exposure to public information campaigns and online content, reinforcing their isolation from state-driven digital transformations. One respondent reflected this condition succinctly: “It is not operating in our area yet, and I cannot afford it anyway.” This response encapsulates how infrastructural neglect, economic disparity, and regional marginalisation converge to create a form of structural digital exclusion, perpetuating unequal access to information and media resources.

Moreover, the patterns of engagement and non-engagement with DTT services also reflect elements of uses and gratifications theory, which suggests that media consumption is shaped by individual needs, preferences, and the perceived utility of the media. For many respondents particularly those who were unemployed, under-educated, or isolated from mainstream communication channels there was little perceived value or gratification associated with digital television. Their media consumption was driven more by accessibility and affordability than by content preference, indicating a lack of meaningful choice in how and why media is consumed. In contrast, those with more access to information and digital tools were able to use media to meet specific social, entertainment, or informational needs. Overall, the findings illustrate that disparities in awareness and adoption of digital terrestrial television services among respondents are not shaped by any single factor. Rather, they arise from the interwoven effects of age, gender, education, income, geography, and infrastructure, each layering onto the other to reinforce exclusion. Individuals who are older, female,

under-educated, and economically disadvantaged are consistently the least likely to own a Set-Top Box or understand the digital switchover. Their experience of digital exclusion is complex, multifaceted, and shaped by systemic forces that go beyond individual behaviour. These patterns of exclusion, shaped by both local inequalities and global power structures, will be explored in greater detail in the subsequent sections of this study.

4.2 First Theme: The understanding of DSO/DTV/DTT among rural audiences

In adopting digital terrestrial television (DTT) and digital television (DTV) services, this study identifies the baseline level of digital television engagement among rural populations, their awareness of the DSO process, and their perceptions of its effectiveness or lack thereof.

4.2.1 The baseline level of digital television engagement

In today's fast-evolving digital landscape, staying consistently connected or engaged is crucial for keeping up with emerging technologies. The digital switchover mandate in Lagos offers insights into why community members may or may not have adopted digital TV. To determine participants understanding to digital television, participants were asked the type of television they currently use. Their responses indicate the baseline level of engagement, shedding light on how well these communities understand the digital transition in their area. Moreover, the findings from populaces in Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin LCDAs, based on the types of television sets they own, reveal an uneven pattern of digital TV engagement reflecting broader disparities in access to and adoption of digital technologies, which are influenced by either digital colonialism, digital poverty, and information poverty.

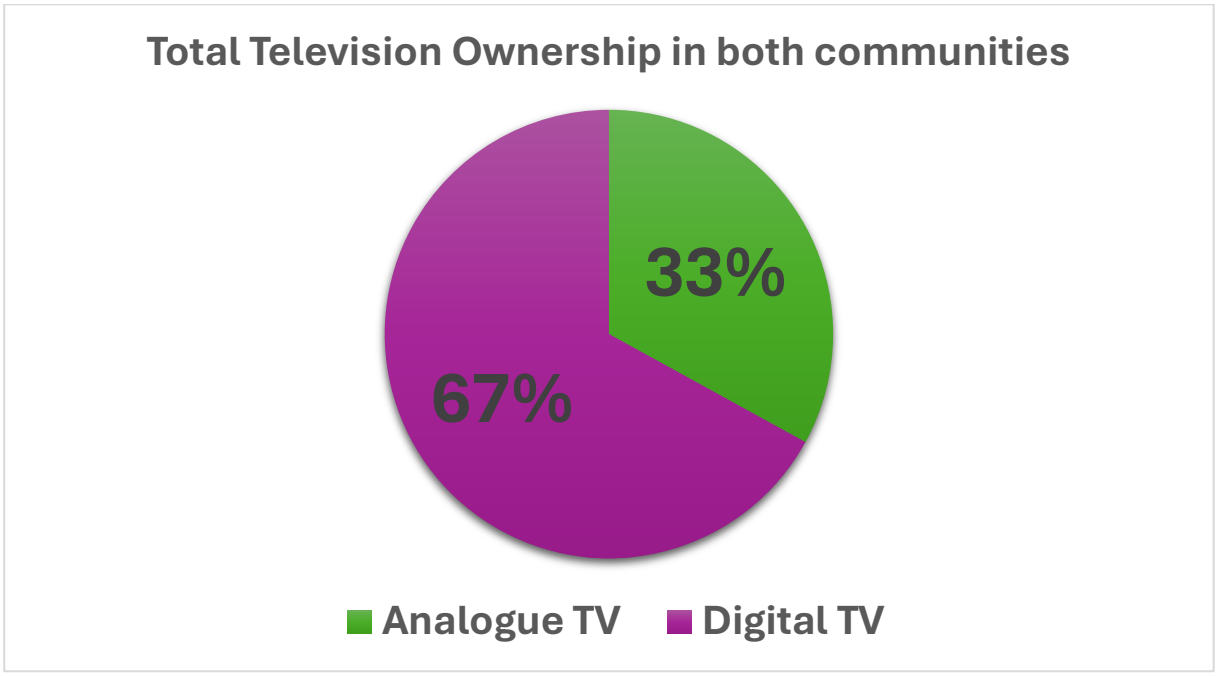

Figure 4.5 - The baseline level of engagement

The above pie chat (figure 4.5) shows that all the participants all have one form of television either analogue or digital. Specifically, in the survey overall 67% householders had digital televisions in both community and

likewise 33% householders still rely on analogue television sets. The next graph below, figure 4.6 shows ownership by location.

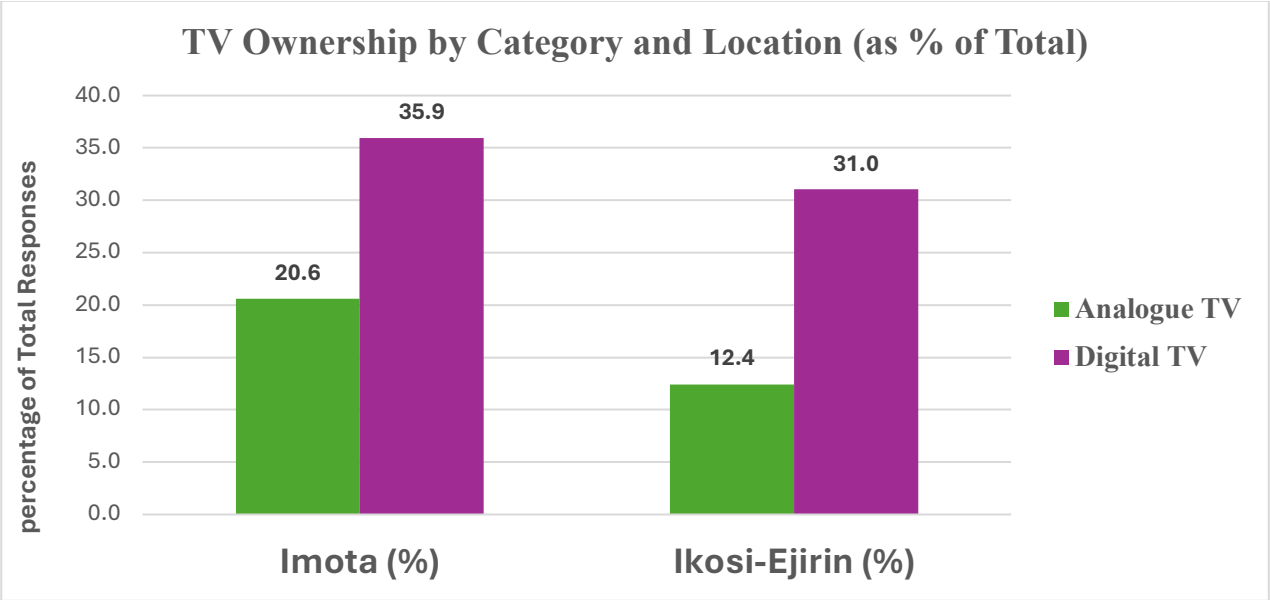

Figure 4.6 - TV Ownership by Category and Location (as % of Total)

While the overall penetration of digital televisions is relatively high, indicating progress in the transition to digital TV, the persistence of analogue televisions suggests that certain barriers to full engagement remain. A closer look at the data shows a disparity between the two localities. In Imota, approximately 20.6% households use analogue TVs, compared to 12.4% households in Ikosi-Ejirin. Conversely, 35.9% households in Imota have digital TVs, slightly less than the 31% households in Ikosi-Ejirin. These differences could reflect variations in socio-economic conditions, infrastructural availability, and access to public awareness campaigns about the digital switchover. For instance, Imota's higher proportion of digital TV ownership suggest greater access to resources or more effective dissemination of information regarding the transition.

The uneven spread of digital TV ownership illustrates digital divide reinforcement. The divide is not merely a matter of whether households have transitioned to digital technology but also reflects broader socio-economic and infrastructural inequalities, rooted in digital poverty and information poverty. Some of the households that continue to use analogue TVs may face financial barriers to upgrading their devices or purchasing set-top boxes necessary for digital reception. This financial gap exacerbates digital inequality by limiting access to diverse digital content and interactive features available on digital platforms. Moreover, residents may lack awareness of the benefits of digital TV, or the processes involved in the transition due to inadequate media literacy programs. The persistence of analogue TVs in certain households exemplifies the hegemony of traditional media consumption, where structural constraints limit participation in the digital sphere.

Furthermore, the availability and quality of digital TV signals in these rural areas could play a role in residents' decisions to adopt the technology. Poor signal quality or inconsistent coverage may discourage households from transitioning, further entrenching digital disconnection. This issue aligns with the uses and gratifications theory, which suggests that people adopt media technologies based on their perceived usefulness and ability to meet their needs. If digital TV is perceived as unreliable or inaccessible, individuals may not find it gratifying enough to warrant investment.

The persistence of analogue TV in a significant portion of households has critical implications for the digital divide and digital inequality. Residents with analogue TVs are excluded from accessing the full range of digital content and services, limiting their engagement with modern information and entertainment ecosystems. This exclusion reinforces broader societal inequalities, as digital platforms increasingly serve as avenues for education, entertainment, employment, and civic participation. Intersectionality further complicates the digital divide by highlighting how overlapping social identities such as income level, gender, age, and geographic location interact to produce deeper and more persistent forms of exclusion. The survey data indicates that rural residents are not equally positioned in their ability to access and benefit from digital technologies. In particular, those from lower-income backgrounds often lack the financial means to purchase digital televisions or Set-Top Boxes (STBs), a reality confirmed by several respondents who cited affordability as a primary barrier. Women, especially those engaged in informal or part-time work, also face gendered barriers including lower digital literacy, reduced access to household decision-making, and cultural expectations that deprioritise their technology use.

Meanwhile, elderly individuals expressed not only a lack of access but also a lack of confidence in operating digital devices, with one respondent stating, "We don't know about it yet, and I don't think I can operate it." These compounded disadvantages are not isolated but intersect, resulting in certain groups being consistently left behind in digital transitions. The intersection of these factors creates a layered experience of digital poverty, where exclusion is not simply about lacking devices, but about being structurally marginalised from the knowledge, infrastructure, and support systems required to meaningfully participate in the digital age. The findings underscore the need for targeted policies to bridge the gap between digital adopters and non-adopters in rural areas. To mitigate these challenges, governments and stakeholders must consider initiatives such as subsidies for digital devices, improved infrastructure, and personalised awareness campaigns that reflect the hybridity of media consumption practices in these communities. Digital engagement is often linked to societal modernisation and cultural shifts. The slower adoption of digital TV in certain households could have cultural implications, as these residents may remain disconnected from the narratives and trends shaping contemporary media consumption. This detachment reinforces marginalisation by being excluded from the ecosystem of digital knowledge, infrastructure, and cultural integration, which are essential for meaningful participation in modern media life.

4.2.2 Respondents' awareness of the digital switchover (DSO)

The analysis of questionnaire responses highlighted a strikingly low awareness and understanding of the digital switchover (DSO) among participants. This limited awareness is a clear manifestation of both information poverty and digital poverty, illustrating how individuals in marginalised communities face compounded barriers, not only in accessing digital technologies but also in understanding the information needed to operate them effectively. Of the total participants residing in Imota LCDA, a significant majority of approximately 79% expressed a lack of familiarity regarding the idea of digital switchover. In Ikosi-Ejirin LCDA, 91% of the participants expressed a lack of understanding regarding digital switchover. This overwhelming unfamiliarity aligns with information poverty concept, which highlights how the marginalisation of certain communities' results in limited access to critical information, reinforcing digital exclusion. The responses also underscore a pattern of digital colonialism, where access to digital transformation is skewed towards privileged demographics, leaving others uninformed and excluded from technological advancements. For instance, statements such as "I don't know what it means" (Respondent VQR289, a full-time worker from Imota between the age bracket of 25-34 years) and "Not really sure what it stands for" (Respondent VQR011, a part-time worker from Ikosi between the age bracket of 15-24 years) typify the lack of understanding among respondents, irrespective of demographic factors such as age, education, or occupation.

Even when participants demonstrated some level of awareness, their understanding was limited and fragmented. This limited understanding reflects hegemony, wherein dominant groups maintain control over the flow of digital knowledge, creating an environment where the less privileged struggle to grasp and engage with new technological changes. For instance, a few respondents associated the DSO with "changing from analogue to digital" (Respondent VQR149, a secondary school graduate male from Ikosi, within the age bracket 15-24 years) or "switching of television signals" (Respondent VQR280, a primary leaver female from Ikosi, within the age bracket 25-34 years). These responses, while indicative of basic awareness, lacked depth, underscoring the inadequacy of educational and informational campaigns regarding the DSO. This phenomenon aligns with uses and gratifications theory, which suggests that individuals seek out media that fulfils their specific needs; however, when informational resources are inadequate or inaccessible, their ability to engage meaningfully with technological transitions is hindered.

Another critical component of the analysis pertained to whether respondents had been informed about the DSO by the government or other official sources. The data unequivocally indicate that communication has been grossly insufficient, reinforcing informational exclusion a systemic lack of access to timely, relevant, and understandable information especially in ways that enable informed decision-making or meaningful participation in social, economic, or political life. Responses such as "Not informed at all" (Respondent VQR097) and "No idea about this information" (Respondent VQR222) dominated the majority of the responses. Some participants attributed their limited knowledge to indirect sources like friends, advertisements, or occasional radio mentions. This underscores intersectionality concept, as socio-economic

disparities, linguistic barriers, and educational limitations intersect to create layered disadvantages for digital access. For example, Respondent VQR160 from Imota region (female) noted, "I heard about it on the radio," while Respondent VQR223 also from Imota region stated, "I heard it on the radio a few times," suggesting that the initiative has not been adequately publicised. Moreover, respondents highlighted the lack of localised efforts to make the information accessible in regional dialects or simpler terms, an essential consideration in a multilingual and culturally diverse region like Lagos. The absence of inclusive outreach campaigns highlights the hybridity concept, where digital initiatives should merge both global and local communication strategies to cater to diverse populations effectively.

This failure was neatly captured by Respondent VQR164 from Imota, who remarked, "This confusion on my part shows not only my own uncertainty but also highlights how poorly the government explained the digital switchover, showing a clear gap in how they shared the news." Such observations reflect systemic lapses in outreach strategy, where digital transitions become instruments of exclusion rather than empowerment, reinforcing digital poverty concept and hegemony, as those without prior digital literacy remain disenfranchised in an increasingly digital world. In the same way, the responses on this government campaign were also thematically categorised into three distinct categories informed, partially informed and not informed (Male, 2016) as illustrated in the graph (figure 4.7) below.

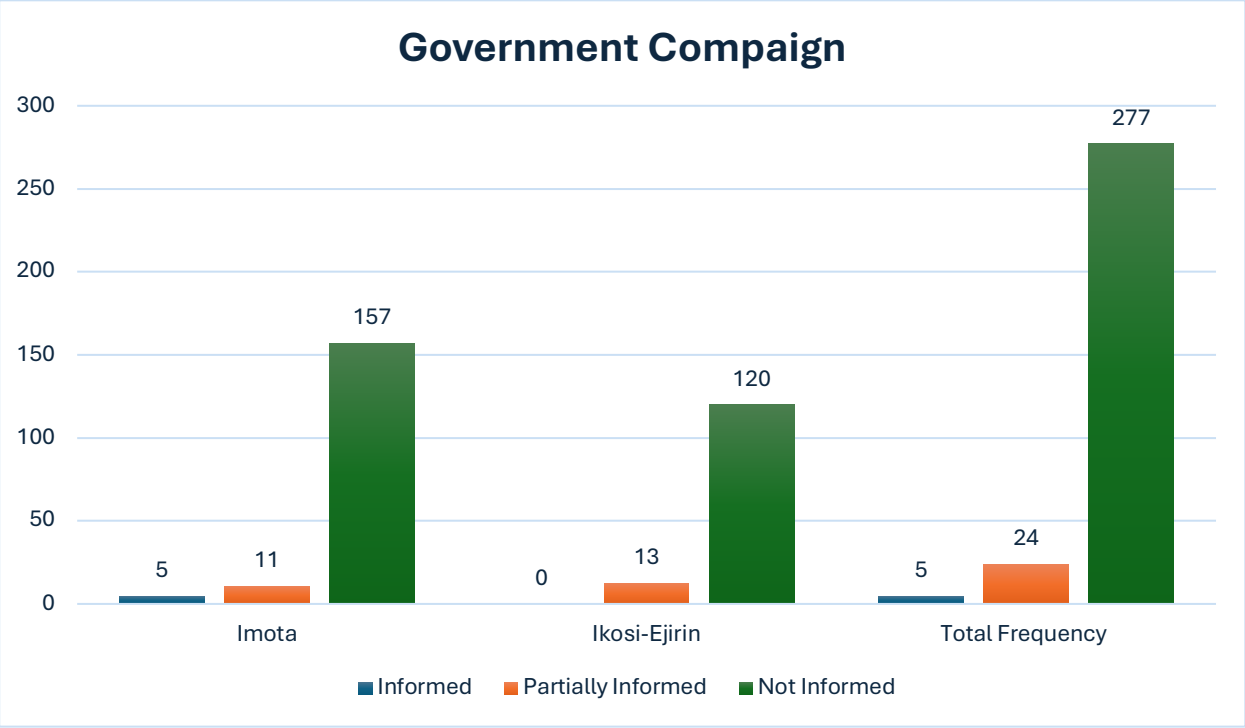

Figure 4.7

The first category, Informed, included responses indicating direct awareness through reliable sources such as newspapers, TV, or word-of-mouth, with some acknowledgment of understanding. Examples of such responses include statements like, "I read about it that the country was changing from analogue to digital platform from the newspapers," "A friend told me about it," "I ran into the advert on TV once," and "Yes, although inadequately done." The second category, Partially Informed, reflected exposure to the digital

television transition (DTT) but with insufficient or unclear information. Typical responses in this category included: "Not well informed," "Not well informed enough," "I don't understand it well," "One day, I unexpectedly ran into digital switchover TV jingles, but I don't know what it means," and "Yes, my senior sister said something like that, but the government could have done better to inform us properly." Lastly, the Not Informed category comprised responses indicating no awareness or recognition of the switchover initiative, such as "Not informed," "No," "I didn't know anything about it," and "Not at all just knowing for the first time." The results reveal a glaring disparity in the dissemination of information regarding the digital TV switchover a critical transition aimed at modernising television broadcasting and access to digital services especially for low-income earners. As noted above, the responses, categorised into three levels of awareness ("Informed," "Partially Informed," and "Not Informed"), provide insight into how effectively the switchover process was communicated. This disparity can be understood through the lens of digital colonialism, where global digital transformations continue to favour urban and elite communities while marginalised groups remain uninformed, reinforcing pre-existing hegemonic structures that dictate technological access. Only a meagre 5 individuals across both communities reported being fully informed about the digital switchover. These figures are strikingly low and suggest that efforts to educate and engage these rural populations were either minimal or ineffective. The complete lack of informed responses in Ikosi-Ejirin highlights an uneven distribution of resources or outreach strategies, reflecting digital poverty the systemic inability to access and benefit from digital transformations due to infrastructural and socio-economic constraints.

A slightly larger group, comprising 24 individuals (11 from Imota and 13 from Ikosi-Ejirin), indicated partial awareness of the switchover. This category reflects some level of engagement but underscores significant gaps in communication. Partial information could stem from informal channels or incomplete messaging, leaving individuals without a full understanding of the switchover's implications or their role in it. This aligns with uses and gratifications theory, which suggests that media consumption is purposive; however, when access is sporadic or constrained, individuals fail to derive its full benefits. The overwhelming majority of respondents, 277 individuals (157 from Imota and 120 from Ikosi-Ejirin), were not informed about the digital switchover. This category dominates the data, painting a stark picture of exclusion and digital disconnect. It suggests systemic barriers, such as a lack of targeted outreach, infrastructural challenges, or socio-economic factors, preventing these communities from accessing critical information, which is a manifestation of information poverty where the lack of relevant, accessible, and actionable information exacerbates socio-economic marginalisation. These findings expose the depth of the digital divide**,** which extends beyond access to technology and infrastructure to include the uneven flow of information and awareness about technological advancements. The digital TV switchover represents an opportunity to bridge this divide, but the data reveals that these communities remain marginalised that is, there is a structural inequity.

The stark difference in awareness levels indicates a systemic neglect of rural and remote areas in digital policy implementation, reinforcing hegemonic control where urban populations benefit disproportionately

from technological shifts. Limited access to information can perpetuate existing socio-economic inequalities by excluding communities from the benefits of digital technology. Furthermore, the cultural and linguistic barriers suggest that if outreach campaigns did not consider local languages, cultural contexts, or traditional communication channels, they would have been ineffective in engaging these communities. This aligns with intersectionality, where factors such as geography, language, and socio-economic status intersect to deepen digital exclusion. The data suggests that these factors may have played a role, revealing a hybridity gap, where the lack of integration between local and national communication strategies results in failed engagement. The government's approach appears to have been insufficiently inclusive, resulting in policy gaps. This disproportionate lack of engagement highlights the need for more equitable and targeted policy measures to ensure no community is left behind.

4.2.3 The perception of implementation (in)effectiveness

The respondents were overwhelmingly dissatisfied with the implementation of the DSO initiative, a reaction that can be understood through the lenses of digital colonialism, information poverty, and hegemony. Findings show that there are nonexistence of government DTT within the localities. Negative sentiments being expressed by respondents such as "I am not impressed at all" (Respondent VQR103, female from Ikosi, aged between 25-34 years) and "It has been very poorly implemented" (Respondent VQR018, female from Imota region) were recurrent. Participants criticised the slow pace of execution, the lack of transparency, and the apparent disinterest in engaging rural communities an indication of digital poverty and the perpetuation of digital divides. Respondent VQR072 (male full-time employee from Imota region, aged between 35-44 years) lamented, "It's not popular; people do not really know about it well enough," reflecting a broader issue of information poverty, where access to essential knowledge is unevenly distributed. Another respondent bluntly stated, "No adequate information was given out in our area" (Respondent VQR298, a male adult from Imota LCDA aged between 55-64 years), reinforcing the notion that informational accessibility remains a privilege of urban and elite groups, further entrenching social inequalities.

Several respondents perceived the initiative as emblematic of broader governmental inefficiency, reflecting hegemonic governance structures that consistently overlook or fail to engage with grassroots concerns. Respondent VQR223 (male, aged between 35-44 years from Imota LCDA) remarked, "I am not impressed at all with how the government is handling it," while Respondent VQR135 (male, 35-44 years from Imota region) observed, "I don't know what this is all about, and I'm not too sure about it." These reflections underscore a growing mistrust in authorities' ability to manage technological transformations equitably, highlighting the need for hybridity in policy-making where top-down approaches are complemented by community-led initiatives to promote trust and participation. These findings illuminate critical challenges to the success of the DSO initiative. First, the low awareness levels highlight the necessity of personalised educational campaigns that leverage multiple communication channels, including radio, television, and community-based outreach programs. This strategy should prioritise translating technical information into local languages, thereby mitigating digital colonialism by ensuring that the transition to digital technology

does not privilege dominant linguistic and cultural groups. Second, the inadequacy of government-led communication efforts reflects poorly on the execution strategy. Respondents' remarks, such as "Government is too slow in implementing things" (Respondent VQR080, self-employed male from Ikosi region), underscore the urgency of addressing bureaucratic inefficiencies. The concept of uses and gratifications becomes relevant here individuals must be actively engaged in content consumption based on their informational and social needs. A shift toward community-driven engagement, where local leaders and organisations facilitate awareness campaigns, could encourage trust and improve reception. Third, the data reveal a pressing need for digital literacy initiatives, which could bridge the knowledge gap and empower rural populations to adapt to digital technologies. Given the growing role of digital platforms in accessing public services, information, and entertainment, intersectionality must be considered to address the layered disadvantages experienced by marginalised groups, particularly women and the elderly, in accessing digital services.

The above response analysis reveals a striking disconnect between the objectives of the DSO program and the reality of its reception among rural Lagos communities. The widespread lack of awareness, compounded by inadequate communication and inefficient implementation, has left many residents disengaged from the initiative. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive, culturally sensitive approach that prioritises inclusivity and transparency. As Respondent VQR164 from Imota sadly observed, "This lack of clarity on my part serves as clear evidence of inadequacies in governmental publicity, revealing an interesting deficiency." This statement exemplifies the hegemony inherent in technological rollouts, where elite-driven narratives obscure the lived realities of grassroots communities. By rectifying these deficiencies and embracing hybridity in policy execution, the government can transform the DSO from a poorly understood concept into a celebrated milestone of technological progress, ensuring that the benefits of digitalisation are equitably distributed rather than reinforcing existing social hierarchies.

4.3 Second Theme: Factors encouraging engagement with DTT

To determine the factors that encouraged engagement with digital television usage, three key categories were established based on the responses of residents. These categories include access/viewing experiences based on time spent alongside the type of programmes available to watch, which examines how frequently individuals interact with digital TV and whether prolonged exposure influences their digital skills development. The second category, preferences and motivations, explores the specific reasons people choose to engage with digital TV, such as content variety, accessibility, or technological features that encourage digital literacy. The third category, incentives for deeper engagement**,** focuses on the perceived benefits of digital TV, particularly in terms of enhancing digital skills, interactivity, and familiarity with digital platforms. The study seeks to evaluate whether respondents recognise digital TV as a tool that contributes to their overall digital competency and whether these factors collectively drive engagement with digital television.

4.3.1 Access as a critical factor for engagement

Accessibility plays a crucial role in user engagement, particularly in determining how long viewers spend watching content and it significantly influence viewer retention and satisfaction (Panda and Kaur, 2023) as demonstrated by respondents within the two communities in table 4.2 below

Table 4.2

Hours spent watching DTV per day.				
No of hours/day	**Imota**		**Ikosi-Ejirin**	
	Frequency	**Percent (%)**	**Frequency**	**Percent (%)**
Less than an hour/day	2	2%	2	2%
1 – 3 Hours per day	53	48%	38	40%
3 – 5 Hours per day	44	40%	46	48%
More than 5 hours per day	11	10%	9	9%
Total	110	100%	95	100%

The data in table 4.2 above highlights the level of engagement with digital television (DTV) among residents of Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin, two remote rural communities in Lagos, in terms of hours spent watching per day. The largest proportion of viewers in both communities fall into the 1–3 hours per day category (Imota: 48%, Ikosi-Ejirin: 40%), suggesting moderate engagement with DTV. A slightly higher percentage of residents in Ikosi-Ejirin (48%) compared to Imota (40%) watch for 3–5 hours per day, indicating a potential difference in factors that encourage longer viewing times. Very few residents watch for less than an hour daily (2% in both communities), suggesting that once access is available, some level of engagement occurs. A small fraction of residents (Imota: 10%, Ikosi-Ejirin: 9%) engage with DTV for more than five hours per day, which could indicate better digital literacy or fewer alternative entertainment options. Access remains a critical factor for digital engagement, and digital poverty may be a limiting element in these communities, where affordability and infrastructure challenges impact prolonged DTV engagement. The variation in viewing hours suggests that access to a stable power supply, digital literacy, and the affordability of DTT receivers could significantly influence engagement levels. The transition to digital television can also be understood within the framework of digital colonialism, where foreign-owned technology and policies shape access and content, potentially reinforcing systemic inequalities rather than promoting local empowerment. If access to digital television is driven primarily by external forces, rural communities may face structural limitations in their ability to fully benefit from the transition.

Intersectionality also plays a crucial role, as factors such as income levels, gender, and social class may intersect to determine how different demographics within these communities engage with DTV. For instance,

on closer look at the data there are 40% female respondents watch digital television daily while there are 52% male respondents also there is a 9% prefer not to state their gender respondents that watch digital television daily. This means that if certain groups, such as women, older individuals, or lower-income households, have less access, their exclusion could further reinforce broader societal inequalities. These patterns of engagement also align with the uses and gratification theory, as individuals may use digital TV for entertainment, education, or social connectivity. Differences in hours spent watching between the two communities could relate to the type of programs available or the cultural significance of television as a source of information. Furthermore, the concept of information poverty is relevant, as limited access to digital platforms may restrict these communities' ability to receive essential news and educational content. If DTV engagement is primarily driven by entertainment rather than informational needs, it could highlight a gap in content diversity and digital literacy efforts.

The findings directly relate to the study digital disconnects which illustrate that while digital TV switchover has led to engagement, the level of engagement remains constrained by factors such as access, affordability, and socio-economic disparities. The differences in engagement levels between Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin, despite their similar rural settings, suggest that access is not uniform, reinforcing the notion of digital disconnects even within rural regions. This supports further examination into whether digital engagement is promoting inclusion or merely replicating existing inequalities in media access.

Reflecting on the viewing habits of the 33% respondents in graph below still using analogue television specifically in both communities in Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin, also offered insights into their engagement with media and the broader implications for understanding the digital divide and digital inequality. These findings reveal how pre-digital habits might shape, or be reshaped by, the transition to digital terrestrial television (DTT)

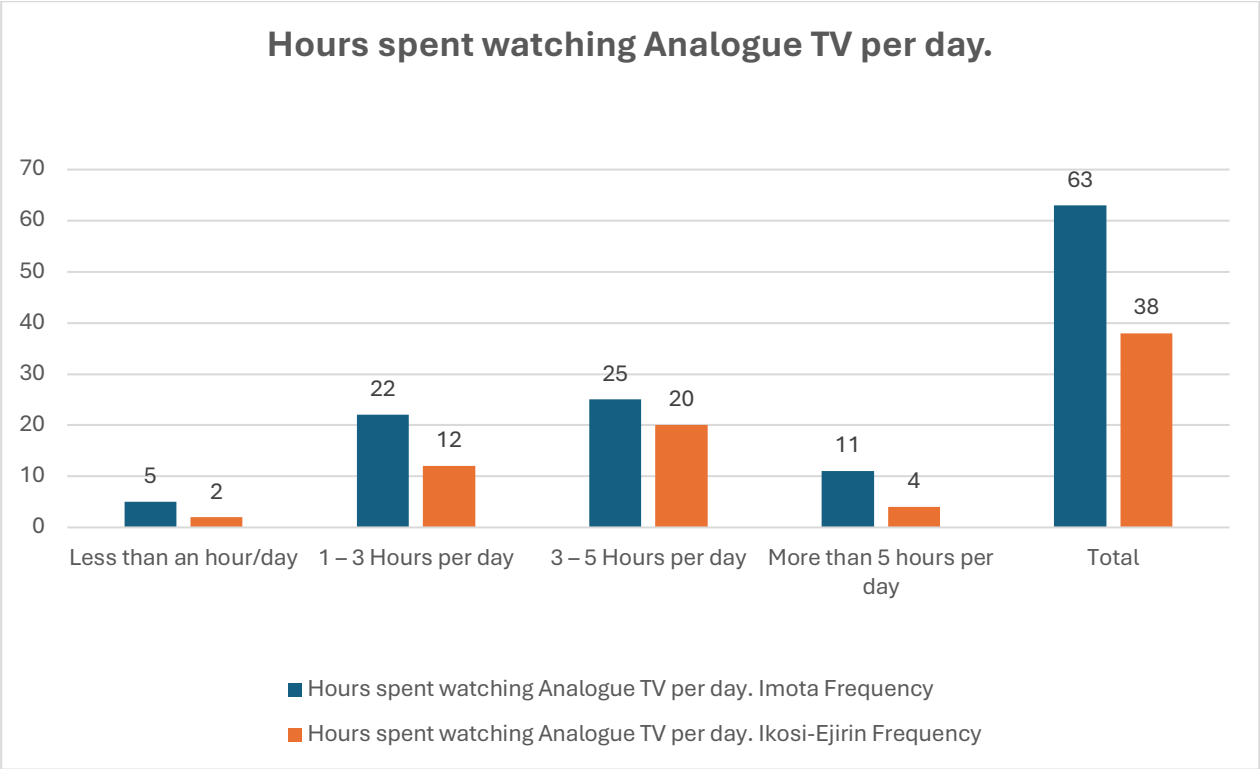

Figure 4.6

In Imota, the majority of respondents (36.6%) spent between 3 and 5 hours daily watching analogue TV, followed closely by those viewing for 1 to 3 hours (32.8%). This high level of engagement suggests that television played a significant role in their daily lives, serving as a primary source of information and entertainment. A smaller percentage (16.4%) reported watching for more than 5 hours per day, indicating an even deeper reliance on TV for leisure and possibly limited access to alternative activities or media. In contrast, the data from Ikosi-Ejirin reveals a somewhat lower overall engagement. The majority (52.6%) also reported viewing 3 to 5 hours per day, but fewer individuals (31.6%) watched for 1 to 3 hours. Notably, only 10.5% of respondents watched for more than 5 hours daily, significantly lower than Imota, while 5.3% of respondents watched for less than an hour, suggesting slightly diminished integration of television in daily routines compared to Imota LCDA.

The disparities between the two communities underscore the complex nature of the media inequality which illustrates how media access is not binary (have vs. have not) but exists on a spectrum of quality, control, and benefit that can shape who is better informed, more engaged, or culturally connected. Imota exhibits a higher intensity of television engagement across all viewing brackets, indicating a relatively greater familiarity and reliance on TV media. This could reflect better access to electricity, availability of TV sets, or cultural norms that prioritise television viewing. Equally, the lower engagement in Ikosi-Ejirin may signify underlying inequalities such as less consistent electricity supply, fewer economic resources for purchasing televisions, or differing socio-cultural patterns. These baseline differences in analogue TV engagement may predict varied responses to the digital switchover. For instance, communities with higher engagement (e.g., Imota) might be more actively seek out digital alternatives to maintain their accustomed viewing habits. On the other hand,

lower engagement levels in Ikosi-Ejirin could lead to slower adoption or resistance to the switchover, exacerbating existing disparities in access to digital information.

The findings suggest that Imota's relatively higher engagement with analogue TV could serve as a foundation for more seamless adoption of DTT, assuming infrastructural and financial barriers are addressed. However, in Ikosi-Ejirin, the lower baseline engagement might indicate greater challenges in transitioning, such as limited awareness of the switchover benefits or reluctance to invest in necessary equipment like set-top boxes. This baseline disparity is critical for policymakers and stakeholders implementing the digital switchover. Without targeted interventions, such as subsidies for digital equipment, educational campaigns, or improved infrastructural support (e.g., electricity), the transition may deepen the digital divide. Communities like Ikosi-Ejirin, already less engaged with television, risk being further marginalised in the digital era, missing out on the broader economic and social benefits of digital inclusion.

The data reflects how levels of ongoing analogue (rather than digital) TV engagement can be seen as a proxy for digital inequality generally, as well as broader inequalities (e.g. socioeconomic and educational, or relating to levels of digital literacy). Higher awareness of and engagement with DTV in Imota appeared to translate into a greater propensity for digital adoption, while lower engagement in Ikosi-Ejirin reflected systemic barriers that seemed to mirror broader inequalities in digital access, affordability, and skills. These barriers are not merely technological but are also deeply embedded in socio-economic and cultural contexts, which influence how communities perceive and interact with media technologies. This analysis reveals significant disparities in both cases, for instance, the analogue television engagement between Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin, highlighted the uneven starting points for the digital switchover in these rural communities. The transition to DTT, while promising, risks amplifying existing inequalities unless deliberate efforts are made to address the structural and socio-economic factors underpinning digital disengagement. Policymakers must use this baseline data as a critical reference for designing interventions that ensure equitable access and meaningful engagement with digital television for all communities in the Lagos region.

4.3.2 Preferences and motivations of respondents using DTV

Many respondents highlighted that cost-effective subscription options offered by services like GOtv and StarTimes have enabled previously excluded populations to access digital TV. For instance, one participant stated, “GOtv’s inexpensive subscription options have allowed people like me to enjoy a wide array of programs without straining my pockets” (VQR207, a female self-employed in Imota). This affordability addresses aspects of digital poverty and information poverty, as it provides access to media for those who were previously unable to afford such services. However, this accessibility is tiered, reinforcing hegemonic structures where premium content remains out of reach for low-income households, creating disparities in the depth of engagement and available information. A key driver of engagement with DTV is the diversity and localised relevance of content, aligning with the uses and gratifications theory, which suggests that individuals actively seek media that satisfies specific needs. Channels showcasing Nollywood films, local language programs, and culturally resonant themes play a significant role in making digital television

inclusive and engaging. Participants frequently mentioned the importance of such programming, with one observing, “I love the Yoruba magic channels because they showcase our movies and preserve our cultural heritage” (VQR280, female self-employed from Ikosi). This aspect also speaks to hybridity, where global digital infrastructures facilitate the dissemination of local content, promoting both cultural preservation and a counterbalance to dominant global media narratives. By providing a mix of local and international programming, DTV both strengthens cultural identity and exposes audiences to global perspectives.

Furthermore, the availability of educational channels is transformative, particularly for children, helping to combat information poverty. Several respondents emphasised the impact of such programming on language acquisition and learning. A mother aged between 25-34 years shared, “DTV has transformed how our kids learn English. My nieces and nephews now engage with various educational shows, and their language skills have shown remarkable improvement” (Respondent VQR199). This underscores how digital television serves as an educational tool, particularly in resource-limited settings where traditional educational infrastructure may be lacking. The empowerment potential of digital television extends beyond entertainment. Interactive features such as program guides, recording options, and mobile integration empower viewers, especially marginalised groups and women, addressing intersectionality in media access. Respondents noted that these features provide access to vital educational and health-related content. As one female participant aged between 25-34 years from Ikosi remarked, “Digital television offers women programs that focus on our rights, health, and education, giving us the tools to make informed decisions and assert our equality” (VQR200 - market leader). This empowerment aspect demonstrates how DTV can act as a catalyst for reducing information poverty and raising greater societal inclusion, particularly for historically marginalised demographics. However, infrastructural disparities remain a persistent challenge, with the benefits of the digital switchover unevenly distributed, reflecting digital colonialism and entrenched inequalities. While respondents reported improvements in picture and sound quality, signal reliability varied across locations. Some lauded the uninterrupted viewing experience compared to analogue systems, but others in more remote areas still faced issues during adverse weather. For instance, one respondent noted, “The improved signal strength and stability ensure uninterrupted viewing in our remote area” (VQR179, a female from Imota LCDA), illustrating both the potential of DTV and the persistent gaps in service delivery.

This underscores the need for targeted investments in infrastructure to address geographical inequalities, ensuring that digital television does not perpetuate a new form of digital poverty. Digital inequality within rural communities is also evident in engagement patterns. Wealthier and more educated households displayed greater use of DTV features, while others were limited to basic functions such as channel viewing. This secondary digital divide highlights socioeconomic and educational barriers to deeper engagement, requiring comprehensive strategies to promote digital literacy alongside access. Without intervention, this divide risks reinforcing pre-existing hegemonies within the media landscape, where access to knowledge and engagement tools is concentrated among privileged groups.

Another notable premise is the role of DTV in enhancing community and family dynamics. Television has evolved into more than an entertainment medium; it is a social hub that brings families and communities together (uses and gratifications theory). Participants frequently cited shared viewing experiences as a source of bonding. One participant observed, “Watching TV with my family provides a platform for meaningful discussions, particularly regarding topics covered in the programs” (VQR190, a full-time employed male from Imota aged between 35-44 years). This aspect of DTV not only entertains but also educates, creating opportunities for informal learning and community connection, reinforcing its role in addressing information poverty. The educational value of DTV is particularly pronounced among the youth, with respondents highlighting its role in promoting general knowledge and language skills. Parents noted that educational channels were instrumental in helping children learn English and other subjects, filling a critical gap in resource-limited rural areas. As one participant stated, “The introduction of digital TV has significantly improved our home entertainment options and supported my child’s schoolwork by providing educational insights” (VQR173, a male from Imota). This suggests that digital television plays an essential role in bridging information poverty, particularly for young learners. DTV also plays a dual role in cultural preservation and global exposure. Channels featuring local content help maintain linguistic and cultural heritage, while international programming connects rural communities to broader global perspectives. One respondent eloquently summarised this duality: “Digital TV has brought the world to our small community while helping us celebrate our own cultural richness through local programming” (VQR143, a full-time worker from Ikosi LCDA between the age of 35-44 years). This reflects hybridity, where digital television enables both local and global narratives to coexist, challenging hegemonic media structures that traditionally privilege Western perspectives.

The digital TV switchover in Lagos has initiated meaningful strides toward digital inclusion, yet significant challenges remain. While affordability and diverse content have encouraged initial engagement, the persistence of infrastructural gaps and socioeconomic disparities underscores the complexity of the digital divide. Addressing these issues through localised content, targeted infrastructure improvements, and digital literacy initiatives can ensure that DTV serves as a powerful tool for bridging the digital divide and empowering marginalised populations. This transformation hinges on a sustained commitment to inclusivity and equity, leveraging DTV not only for entertainment but as a platform for education, empowerment, and cultural connection.

4.3.3 Potential incentives for deeper engagement (Motivation and Viewing experience)

One of the strongest motivators for engaging with DTT is its accessibility, particularly the availability of free-to-air channels. Respondents frequently cited the appeal of free access to diverse channels as a significant advantage. For example, one participant noted, "The free access to channels makes it much easier for us to engage with digital television" (VQR104, a self-employed female from Ikosi). This accessibility not only reduces financial barriers but also encourages broader usage across different demographics. However, it also raises concerns about digital poverty, as limited exposure to premium or specialised services may perpetuate digital inequality by restricting access to higher-quality, diverse content for marginalised

communities. Another critical factor influencing DTT adoption was the improvement in technological features, particularly signal quality. Many users appreciated the enhanced picture and sound quality compared to analogue systems, with one stating, "Digital television enables us to receive higher quality video and audio signals than conventional analogue TV, with no shaking images and no distorted noise." (Respondent VQR066, a male from Ikosi LCDA). However, inconsistent internet connectivity and signal reliability remain barriers for full engagement, particularly in areas affected by digital colonialism, where infrastructural investments favour urban centres over rural communities. "We need stable electricity and consistent signal quality to make the most of digital television," noted another respondent (VQR226, a male self-employed from Imota).

Content diversity also emerged as a critical driver of engagement, with participants highlighting the importance of culturally resonant and localised programming. However, many respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the underrepresentation of their stories and cultural experiences in existing content, reinforcing issues related to information poverty. One participant from Ikosi, a secondary school graduate, explained, "I've been struggling to find programs that speak to my community's experiences. It would be amazing to have special night programs or special time slots for content that highlights our culture and heritage" (VQR142). Another participant, a female from Imota LCDA, echoed this sentiment, stating, "Our community celebrates unique festivals, and it would be great to see programs that showcase these cultural celebrations" (VQR167). Local dramas, Yoruba and Hausa programming, and community-based shows were among the most requested types of content, reflecting a demand for greater inclusivity in programming. This lack of representation in media content aligns with the concept of hegemony, where dominant narratives overshadow minority perspectives, reinforcing a media hierarchy that excludes rural voices.

Educational programming also featured prominently in participant preferences. Respondents articulated the potential of DTT to serve as a tool for community development and learning. One female individual from Ikosi noted, "Education is key, and it would be beneficial to have short educational segments that explain cultural practices, traditions, and historical events" (VQR201, aged between 25-34 years). Supporting this assertion, another participant, a male from Imota LCDA in his 30s, although unemployed, emphasised the value of agricultural programs, stating, "Farming programs would benefit our community, as farming is a major livelihood here" (VQR202). These requests underline a broader expectation for DTT to move beyond entertainment and contribute to the socio-economic growth of rural areas, a perspective that aligns with the uses and gratifications theory, wherein audiences actively seek media content that meets their informational and practical needs.

The integration of internet capabilities and interactive features into DTT systems was another area of strong interest. Participants valued the potential to use DTT for online activities such as browsing, shopping, and on-demand viewing. One respondent from Imota LCDA, a male in his 40s, self-employed, stated, "Being able to connect to the internet and offer interactive features is very important because it allows more people

to join in and take part" (VQR288). Another participant, a self-employed individual in the age bracket 25–34 years, also from Imota LCDA, noted, "For ease of payment and online shopping, these features would make digital television more useful" (VQR018). This increased reliance on digital television as an entry point to the online world further underscores the intersectionality of digital access, where economic status, geographic location, and technological infrastructure shape digital inclusion. These insights highlight the evolving expectations of rural users, who increasingly watch television not just as a viewing medium but as a gateway to the broader digital world.

Despite these positive aspects, participants repeatedly pointed to gaps in programming that fail to address their diverse needs. Many noted that current content often overlooks the unique experiences and cultural narratives of rural communities. One participant, a female in her 30s from Ikosi LCDA, lamented, "Our community has a rich history, and it would be fascinating to have programs that show historical presentations" (VQR192), while another suggested, "There seems to be a lack of programs that highlight the rich musical and dance heritage of our community" (VQR203, a female adult from Ikosi LCDA). Such gaps reflect broader digital inequality, where urban and global narratives dominate programming, leaving rural perspectives marginalised.

The social and cultural impacts of DTT were also emphasised, particularly its role in promoting community cohesion. Shared viewing experiences and programming that highlights cultural traditions or local festivals can strengthen social bonds within families and neighborhoods. One respondent, a male self-employed from Imota, articulated, "Television brings families together, and it would mean a lot to see more programs that reflect our shared values" (VQR007). Another participant expressed hope for multilingual programming to cater to the linguistic diversity of the community: "Our community is full of people with different languages, and it feels like they are limiting us to have programs in only one language" (VQR177, a female from Ikosi). This lack of linguistic representation aligns with the concept of hybridity, as rural audiences seek a balance between globalised media content and their cultural identity. While DTT has made significant strides in reducing some barriers to access, substantial challenges remain. Participants' responses illuminate the need for a dual focus: improving technological infrastructure to address signal and connectivity issues, and expanding content offerings to include more culturally relevant, educational, and interactive programming. As one respondent, a self-employed individual, aptly put it, "Digital TV has the potential to transform our lives if it includes programs that educate, entertain, and resonate with our unique experiences" (VQR206 from Imota). Addressing these challenges will be key to ensuring that DTT serves not only as a medium of entertainment but as a platform for bridging the digital divide and promoting inclusive growth in rural Lagos.

These findings underscore the significant role of DTT in shaping digital engagement, reflecting both opportunities for social inclusion and the persistent challenges of digital poverty. The ongoing transition from analogue to digital television offers an avenue for greater connectivity and diversified content. However, unless concerns related to affordability, accessibility, and representation are addressed, the full

potential of DTT as a democratising tool will remain unrealised, reinforcing the disparities outlined by concepts of digital colonialism and hegemony. To assess respondents' perceptions of digital TV as a tool for enhancing digital skills, specifically evaluating the extent to which they believe engaging with digital TV contributes to their digital literacy and competency. The table below reveal participants perception about digital skills.

Table 4.3

Do you agree that using digital TV can help to improve your digital skills?			
Category	**Imota**	**Ikosi-Ejirin**	**Total**
	Frequency	**Frequency**	
Agreed	62	54	116
Disagreed	2	3	5
Strongly agreed	67	36	103
Strongly disagreed	1	0	1
Neutral	41	40	81
Total	**173**	**133**	**306**

The analysis of responses indicates a strong positive perception of digital TV as a tool for improving digital skills, with 71.57% of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing that it contributes to their digital literacy. This aligns with the uses and gratifications theory, as users perceive digital TV as an interactive medium that enhances their knowledge and technical competencies. The smart functionalities and internet-based applications embedded in digital TV serve as digital enablers, fulfilling informational and educational needs. A significant portion, 26.47%, remained neutral, implying that while they do not strongly oppose the idea, they may not fully recognise digital TV's potential in enhancing digital skills. This neutrality can be examined through the lens of information poverty, as limited access to digital resources or inadequate digital education might contribute to an unclear perception of digital TV's benefits. Raising awareness about its digital functionalities could help shift more neutral respondents towards a positive perception. Only a small fraction, 1.96%, either disagreed or strongly disagreed, indicating minimal opposition to the idea that digital TV supports digital literacy. This low opposition could be linked to hegemony**,** where dominant narratives about digital inclusion shape public perceptions and acceptance of technology as an essential tool for skill development.

A closer look at responses from different locations reveals slight variations in perception, which can be explained using intersectionality and digital poverty. In Imota, a higher percentage of respondents strongly agreed (38.7%) compared to Ikosi-Ejirin (27.1%), suggesting that users in Imota may engage more actively with digital TV or have better access to its interactive features. Conversely, a larger proportion of respondents in Ikosi-Ejirin (30.1%) remained neutral compared to those in Imota (23.7%), possibly reflecting infrastructural disparities, differences in digital exposure, or variations in socio-economic conditions that

influence digital engagement. These findings also resonate with the concept of digital colonialism**,** as the disparities in perception could stem from unequal access to digital infrastructure, shaped by historical and economic power structures that dictate the availability of digital resources in different communities. If digital TV is primarily designed and distributed by foreign or corporate entities with limited local adaptation, certain populations may struggle to leverage its full benefits due to systemic digital exclusion.

4.3.4. Level of access to internet

Having access to internet also promote full benefit derived from digital television usage. The analysis on internet access and the devise used for accessing are described below among the participants within the two communities reveals a significant limitation: 66% of respondents rely solely on mobile phones for internet access, with no one having broadband at home**.**

Table 4.4 Level of Access to Internet

Responses	**Internet access**		**Total**	**Internet devise - Mobile Phone**		**Total**
	Imota	Ikosi		Imota	Ikosi	
Yes	114	90	204	119	91	210
No	59	43	102	54	42	96
Total	**173**	**133**	**306**	**133**	**173**	**306**

The table above shows an analysis of internet access among the 306 participants reveals disparities in connectivity. A total of 204 participants reported having access to the internet, with 114 from Imota and 90 from Ikosi LCDA. Meanwhile, 102 participants do not have access to the internet, with 58% from Imota and 42% from Ikosi LCDA. Probing further into the means through which they connect to the internet, 67% of participants reported having access, and when asked ‘Through what device do they access the Internet at home?’ 210 out of 306 participants, including 119 from Imota and 91 from Ikosi LCDA, stated that they access the internet through their mobile phones. This heavy reliance on mobile internet presents significant challenges in promoting deeper engagement, particularly for digital experiences that require stable, high-speed connections. The reliance on mobile internet can shape users' motivation for engagement in various ways. Mobile access allows users to stay connected on the go, raising spontaneous and flexible interactions with digital content. However, without broadband access, users may be reluctant to engage in data-heavy activities, such as streaming high-resolution videos, participating in live webinars, or downloading large files. A slow or unstable mobile network may discourage users from actively participating in online forums, virtual events, or educational platforms. Mobile networks, especially in areas with poor infrastructure, like these two communities (Imota and Ikosi) may not support seamless streaming, leading to buffering and lower

resolution content, which can reduce viewer satisfaction. Unlike broadband users who can engage on multiple screens or devices simultaneously, mobile-only users face limitations in multitasking, which could impact productivity and overall engagement.

The strain of consuming content on small mobile screens, coupled with possible interruptions due to network instability, may lead to decreased engagement over time. The implications of this heavy dependence on mobile internet access extend beyond digital experiences and affect broader socioeconomic aspects. Educational access is severely restricted as students relying on mobile internet may struggle with accessing online learning platforms, research materials, and virtual classrooms as the case was during the covid 19 pandemic. Work and career limitations emerge as remote job opportunities became inaccessible to individuals without stable, high-speed connections, restricting economic mobility. Furthermore, digital inequality deepens, as the absence of broadband access exacerbates disparities in accessing essential online services, digital literacy resources, and business opportunities, widening the digital divide between different socioeconomic groups.

To encourage deeper engagement despite these limitations, federal government could consider offering data-free access to specific content or discounted data packages to enhance motivation. Platforms providers should prioritise lightweight formats, adaptive streaming, and offline accessibility to cater to mobile-only users. Public Wi-Fi hotspots or shared access points in community centres could improve access and encourage participation. By addressing these challenges with targeted incentives, digital platforms can ensure that mobile-only users experience a more engaging, inclusive, and rewarding online experience.

4.4 Third Theme: Challenges of engagement with DTV/DTT in rural communities

The transition to digital terrestrial television (DTT) can bring significant advancements to rural communities due to lack of access to broadband infrastructure, but this rural communities had faced unique challenges in fully adopting and engaging with these services. Key findings barriers from the respondents include no existence of access to necessary equipment such as Set-Top Boxes (STBs), while existing services from the private providers come with high costs of acquisition and maintenance, and technical difficulties that hinder seamless usage. Dissatisfaction with the digital TV experience, unmet expectations, and nostalgia for features of analogue television further complicate engagement. Additionally, questions about the relevance of government-provided DTT services compared to private options highlight gaps in service delivery designed to rural needs. Issues such as digital literacy, infrastructure limitations, and localised challenges emerge as critical factors affecting engagement.

4.4.1 Barriers to engagement based on affordability, infrastructure and awareness

The findings reveal that economic affordability, infrastructural limitations, and informational awareness were the critical challenges discouraging user engagement with DTT. The financial incapacity emerged as a dominant theme, with many participants highlighting the nonexistence of STB in their locality and prohibitive cost of acquiring and maintaining the private provider decoder (receiver box). This issue extends

beyond the initial purchase to include the recurring costs of subscriptions, which remain out of reach for many with limited or unstable incomes. This economic barrier reflects digital poverty, where financial constraints hinder access to digital services, reinforcing hegemony as only those with higher economic standing can afford uninterrupted access to digital television. For example, one male respondent aged between 55-64 years from Imota LCDA still using analogue television stated, "I find myself unable to afford subscriptions to DStv or GOtv, and this financial constraint is further exacerbated by the non-availability of the service roll-out in my area" (VQR019). Another respondent, although younger (15-24 years - male) from Imota, too, emphasised, "Financial hurdles further restrict my participation in the digital television landscape, denying me the potential benefits of advanced technology and modern broadcasting" (VQR258). These responses underscore how affordability serves as a fundamental barrier to digital access, disproportionately affecting economically disadvantaged populations and perpetuating information poverty, where a lack of financial resources translates into limited access to critical information and entertainment.

Infrastructural limitations also play a crucial role in deterring engagement. Respondents frequently reported the absence of key facilities such as electricity, reliable broadcasting signals, and stable internet connectivity. This reflects digital colonialism, as the uneven distribution of technological infrastructure creates systemic inequalities, where rural or underdeveloped areas remain at the periphery of digital expansion. For instance, one participant (VQR113) from Ikosi in his 40s remarked that DSO is, "Not in our area yet, and we don't have good infrastructure, power/poor connectivity, and no good road network," while another female respondent from Ikosi LCDA stated, "Lack of infrastructure in the area such as power, internet, poor connectivity" is a major problem to get connected (VQR140). These gaps in basic infrastructure exacerbate the challenges faced by rural communities, making the successful roll-out of DTT services difficult in these underserved regions. The unreliable power supply in many areas compounds the problem, as consistent electricity is essential for both accessing and maintaining digital broadcasting, reinforcing a hegemonic digital divide, where urban areas thrive while rural communities struggle for basic access. A significant number of respondents were unaware of the existence or benefits of DTT/DSO services, highlighting a stark informational gap. Many participants had never heard of the service, even as Imota had become a more popular place due to the influx of people to the area. This lack of awareness points to inadequate outreach and education efforts, which are essential for increasing community engagement and participation in digital initiatives. This phenomenon aligns with information poverty, where individuals are denied access to valuable information due to socio-economic constraints, further marginalising them in the digital ecosystem.

For instance, one male respondent noted, "I had no idea of this before" (VQR126), and another shared, "The discovery of this digital terrestrial television service in our area came as a surprise to me as I was previously unaware of their existence," a young female from Imota LCDA too (VQR071). Across these challenges, perceptions of government intervention emerged as a recurring theme. Many respondents expressed hope that government-led efforts could address the financial and infrastructural barriers hindering DTT adoption. However, the hegemony of government and private sector monopolies over digital services fuels distrust. For

example, one male participant from Ikosi LCDA in his 40s commented, "I hold the hope that government intervention will play a crucial role in addressing the financial challenges faced by individuals" (VQR131). However, others expressed skepticism, with one male respondent from Ikosi LCDA remarking, "If it's available, I don't think I can afford it because everything from government big men always hijack it from the poor masses" (VQR306). This duality reflects a complex relationship between reliance on institutional mechanisms and distrust in their implementation, emphasising the need for transparent and inclusive policies. The findings highlight how economic disparity, inadequate infrastructure, and poor information flow perpetuate digital inequality, leaving rural communities marginalised in the transition to digital broadcasting. This digital divide restricts access to entertainment, education, and vital information, thereby deepening social and economic disparities.

The implications of these barriers vary across different regions. In areas where digital signal is accessible, the primary issue appears to be a lack of awareness and education on how to transition to the service. Many individuals in these regions may still be relying on analogue television services simply because they are unaware of the availability and benefits of DTT. This reflects uses and gratifications theory, where users choose media based on available options and personal circumstances rather than optimal technological advancements. This suggests a need for targeted public education campaigns that inform people about the features of digital television, how to access it, and how it can enhance their viewing experience. Conversely, in regions where DTT has not yet been introduced, the challenge is more fundamental without the necessary infrastructure, residents have no option to transition, even if they are aware of its benefits. Until the government extends the service to these areas, communities will remain dependent on traditional analogue broadcasting or alternative digital services that may be financially out of reach for many households. This lack of availability reinforces digital inequality and widens the gap between urban and rural populations in terms of access to modern broadcasting services. More broadly, the absence of DTT services and the associated barriers contribute to a growing digital disconnect within communities. The digital divide is not just about internet access; it also extends to digital broadcasting and access to quality television content. Communities that lack DTT are deprived of important informational, educational, and entertainment resources that could improve their quality of life. For instance, government-sponsored programs, public health campaigns, and educational broadcasts often rely on digital platforms to reach a broad audience. Without access to DTT, individuals in underserved areas miss out on these critical resources, further deepening social and economic disparities.

The economic impact of this digital disconnect is also significant. Individuals who cannot afford subscription-based services such as DStv or GOtv are left with limited options, forcing them to either rely on outdated analogue television or forgo television access altogether. This situation not only affects their access to information but also limits their entertainment choices and social connectivity. Furthermore, businesses operating in media, advertising, and entertainment may struggle to reach audiences in regions where digital television adoption is low, reducing potential market opportunities. Given these challenges, there is a

pressing need for a hybrid approach to address the barriers preventing DTT adoption. The government should invest in widespread awareness campaigns to educate the public about digital television, its benefits, and how to access it. Such campaigns should be personalised to reach diverse populations, including rural and less-educated communities that may not have been exposed to information about DTT. Additionally, efforts should be made to accelerate the infrastructure roll-out to underserved areas, ensuring that all communities have the opportunity to transition to digital broadcasting. Finally, policymakers should consider implementing subsidy programs or financial assistance initiatives to make Set-Top Boxes and digital receivers more affordable, particularly for low-income households. Without targeted interventions, the transition to digital terrestrial television will continue to be uneven, leaving many individuals and communities behind. Bridging this gap requires a coordinated effort between the government, broadcasters, and the private sector to ensure that digital television services are both accessible and affordable for all. By addressing the barriers of awareness, availability, and affordability, the hegemonic digital divide can be narrowed, allowing more people to benefit from the advancements in modern broadcasting technology.

4.4.2 Barriers to engagement based on usability experience

The usability experience of respondents also emerged as a significant barrier to engagement, highlighting technical issues and dissatisfaction with service providers. These factors collectively shape the extent and nature of engagement with the digital TV switchover, exposing persistent issues of digital divide, digital colonialism, and inequality. Insights from respondents reveal recurring themes that underscore these barriers to full engagement with digital television services, reflecting the intersection of economic, infrastructural, and technological constraints. As stated in section 4.4.1, the high cost of access, which underscores digital poverty and information poverty also contribute to usability experience. Respondents frequently cited the financial strain of maintaining digital TV subscriptions, with many describing the monthly fees as prohibitively expensive. For instance, one male participant (VQR008) from Ikosi LCDA noted, “The financial burden of maintaining GOtv services at my current financial level is undeniably challenging,” reflecting how economic pressures force households to prioritise essential needs over entertainment. Another respondent from Imota LCDA (VQR001) added, “The subscription fees are high, and network connection sometimes fails.” These financial barriers exclude many low-income households, reinforcing structural inequalities that limit access to the benefits of digital television and deepening the digital divide. This mirrors the hegemonic control of media accessibility, where corporate pricing models privilege the affluent while marginalising lower-income communities.

Technical difficulties, particularly unreliable signals and connectivity problems, further discourage engagement. Signal loss, often exacerbated by either weather conditions or topography and inadequate technical services, was a recurring issue. This above respondent (VQR001) also lamented, “Signal loss, sometimes bad customer services make me to abandon their services,” indicating how frustrating residents are thereby limiting their digital adoption. Another female participant from Imota LCDA (VQR135) echoed this concern, stating, “Low signal sometimes make me forget about using this box again.” These issues highlight the disparities between urban and rural service quality, where rural areas, often overlooked in

infrastructural development, face increased digital exclusion. This disparity reflects poor usability caused by unreliable infrastructure and unsupportive service environments leads to digital disengagement. Compounding these challenges is the unstable power supply that defines rural living in many parts of Nigeria. Frequent power outages interrupt programming, making it difficult for viewers to enjoy uninterrupted television. One female respondent, a full-time employee from Imota (VQR228), explained, “Frequent power outages really affect how much I can enjoy watching TV,” emphasising the frustration caused by sudden blackouts during shows or movies. Another respondent from Imota LCDA (VQR085) noted, “No light to fully enjoy watching TV,” further illustrating how inconsistent electricity hinders access and reinforces exclusion. This underscores how energy poverty, a persistent condition in rural Nigeria, acts as a structural barrier to digital TV adoption and sustained use. Despite the physical presence of digital devices, the lack of consistent electricity interrupts usage patterns, leading to fragmented viewing experiences and ultimately contributing to digital disengagement.

Content accessibility presents another significant barrier, as many respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the limited variety of channels and the repetitive nature of programming. There is a strong yearning for locally relevant content that resonates with the cultural and social realities of these communities. As one female participant from Imota LCDA, a self-employed individual (VQR040), observed, “In our community, there is a deep yearning for more programs that authentically resonate with our local culture,” pointing to the disconnect between the offerings of digital television services and the needs of rural audiences. Another respondent, an unemployed male from Ikosi LCDA (VQR196), criticised the repetition of foreign programs, noting, “The foreign programs are good, but the constant repeats are making us lose their attractions.” This reflects media hegemony, where foreign content dominates local screens, undermining indigenous cultural expression and limiting the potential for hybridity in programming.

These findings underscore that usability experience is not merely a matter of user preference or device interface it is deeply embedded in structural inequalities that span economic, infrastructural, and cultural dimensions. The financial burden of maintaining digital TV services, compounded by unreliable connectivity, poor customer service, and unstable electricity, reflects a layered experience of digital poverty and exclusion. Far from being isolated complaints, respondents’ frustrations point to a systemic failure to provide enabling environments for digital participation in their areas. These barriers hinder not just access but sustained and meaningful engagement, reinforcing the digital divide and reflecting elements of digital colonialism, where media infrastructures and pricing models are skewed toward affluent, urban consumers. Moreover, the lack of culturally relevant content highlights a hegemonic media landscape that marginalises local voices, limiting the potential for hybrid, community-responsive programming. Overall, the usability challenges faced by rural residents illuminate how technical, economic, and cultural exclusions intersect, leading to a form of digital disengagement that is both preventable and policy relevant.

4.4.3 Barriers to engagement based on comparative and expectation-related factors

Respondents' reflections on the digital switch over (DSO) initiative reveal a complex interplay between lived experiences, socio-economic realities, and unmet expectations. For many rural residents, digital television was initially seen as a promising alternative to the high costs of private providers like DStv, GOtv, and StarTimes. Several participants viewed government-led digital terrestrial television (DTT) as an opportunity for more affordable media access. For instance, a self-employed male respondent from Imota LCDA (VQR007) stated, "It is very essential because it will be cheaper than the private providers' services," while another (VQR012) noted, "It can make it easy for the providers to change or reduce their subscription fees once it starts to function." These perspectives highlight a widespread expectation that state intervention would reduce media costs and enhance accessibility, reflecting broader desires for economic inclusion and information equity. However, this optimism is counterbalanced by a persistent skepticism regarding the government's ability to implement and sustain such initiatives effectively. A full-time male employee from Imota LCDA (VQR100) remarked, "The way government implements projects in Nigeria is not encouraging," capturing a commonly expressed lack of confidence in the public sector's competence. This distrust stems from prior experiences of mismanaged state initiatives, poor service delivery, and inconsistent infrastructure support. It reflects a hegemonic disconnect between state-level promises and local experiences, and aligns with critiques of digital colonialism, where government or corporate entities introduce digital infrastructure without adequately addressing the socio-technical needs of marginalised communities.

In practice, the transition from analogue to digital television has unveiled deeper intersectional barriers, particularly across generational and digital literacy divides. Many older users find the digital interface complex and alienating. As participant VQR135 from Imota LCDA observed, "The elderly, less technologically savvy individuals... may find it difficult to access DTT due to the need for new equipment and potentially more complex interfaces." Similarly, participant VQR019 (aged 55–64) from Imota, who continues to rely on analogue television, called for state support, stating, "Government should help the poor masses by giving us the set-top box free." These concerns reflect information poverty, where both economic and cognitive access to digital systems are limited, particularly for older and less educated demographics. The call for free set-top boxes also underscores the expectation that digital access should be treated as a public good, especially for vulnerable populations. Even younger respondents echoed the importance of mass accessibility. A female participant in her 40s (VQR121) from Imota LCDA stressed, "It is very essential for the masses," reinforcing the belief that digital access should be equitable and inclusive. Yet, the comparative experience with analogue TV continues to shape user expectations. Many respondents expressed nostalgia for analogue's reliability, simplicity, and cost-free nature, while digital TV, despite its perceived potential, often failed to meet expectations regarding service quality, content relevance, and usability.

Nevertheless, not all responses were negative, as some participants acknowledged improvements in programming diversity and user choice with digital TV. Participant VQR070 from Imota LCDA stated, "Yes, my needs are met compared to the analogue TV," and VQR032 from Ikosi LCDA noted, "I am able to choose from different channels what to watch." These reflections resonate with the uses and gratifications

theory, where users actively assess how well media meet their personal and informational needs. However, such positive feedback was the exception rather than the norm. These communities approach the DSO initiative by government with a combination of hope and caution. Their expectations are rooted not only in a desire for modernised media access but also in long-standing demands for infrastructural justice, social inclusion, and policy accountability. When digital interventions fall short due to cost, complexity, or cultural disconnect they risk reinforcing the very exclusions they aim to overcome. The DSO, in this light, is more than a technological transition; it becomes a symbolic and practical test of state responsiveness to its most underserved citizens. Its success hinges not just on implementation, but on how well it aligns with the real needs, capacities, and expectations of those it intends to serve.

4.4.4 Barriers to engagement based on accessibility

Accessibility is a critical determinant of engagement with digital terrestrial television (DTT) services, yet institutional barriers often limit individuals' ability to fully participate in digital broadcasting initiatives. The findings from the questionnaire reveal a significant lack of access to the recently launched government FreeTv, as stated above. Every respondent confirmed they do not have access to the service government FreeTv. This widespread inaccessibility highlights potential barriers to digital terrestrial television (DTT) inclusion, particularly in the surveyed regions. The responses suggest systemic challenges in infrastructure deployment, a lack of public awareness, and inconsistencies in policy execution, raising concerns about the effectiveness of the FreeTv initiative by government and its ability to bridge the digital divide in underserved communities. This scenario reflects the concept of digital poverty, where limited access to digital services exacerbates existing socio-economic disparities and reinforces information inequalities. A recurring theme in the responses is the disconnect between the promise of FreeTv and the reality of its availability. Many respondents expressed frustration and confusion, with some stating they had heard about the service but had no idea how to access it. Others indicated that despite the government’s assurances, they have not seen any tangible impact of the initiative in their communities. The lack of clear communication and public sensitisation has further compounded the problem, leaving many individuals uncertain about what steps to take to benefit from the service. Quotations such as "The FreeTv should be for everyone, but I don’t know anyone who has been able to use it in my area," from a male (VQR082) full-time employee from Imota, and "We were promised this service, but nothing has changed on our end," from a female (VQR160) part-time employee from Imota LCDA, illustrate the growing dissatisfaction among residents who feel excluded from this supposed public benefit. These concerns suggest a need for better government outreach efforts, including comprehensive public awareness campaigns that clarify access requirements and availability timelines. This lack of effective communication aligns with information poverty, wherein individuals are deprived of essential knowledge and resources required to assess the digital ecosystem effectively.

Regional disparities in digital access also emerge as a critical issue. Since no respondent in the surveyed local council development areas reported having access to Free TV, it suggests a broader infrastructure gap that may be affecting multiple regions. The lack of access may be due to an incomplete rollout, lack of

reception equipment, poor signal coverage, or insufficient communication from the authorities. This situation has significant implications for digital inclusion, as communities in these areas risk being left behind in the transition to digital television services. The digital disconnects resulting from this exclusion is particularly concerning for low-income households that rely on terrestrial television for news, education, and entertainment. Many respondents emphasised their dependence on free-to-air channels, expressing frustration that they must now resort to costly alternatives to access information and entertainment. Comments such as "We don't have cable, and now we can't even access Free TV," from a male (VQR002) secondary school leaver in his 40s from Imota LCDA and from a male part-time employee also in his 40s in Ikosi LCDA stating, "If this service doesn't reach us, what's the point of calling it 'free'?" reflect the growing sense of marginalisation among affected communities. This digital exclusion reflects hegemonic structures, where dominant institutions control access to information and media consumption, reinforcing socio-economic hierarchies. The implications of this lack of access extend beyond mere inconvenience, as it reinforces systemic inequalities in digital connectivity. Communities without FreeTv risk falling further behind in terms of information access, educational resources, and civic engagement. The absence of this service disproportionately affects those who cannot afford paid alternatives, exacerbating socio-economic disparities. If this issue is not addressed, it could deepen the digital divide between urban and rural populations, limiting opportunities for those in underserved regions. The lack of engagement with FreeTv services not only undermines the effectiveness of government-led digital transformation initiatives but also restricts individuals' right to equitable information access. This situation is emblematic of digital colonialism, where state-controlled digital services fail to reach marginalised communities, perpetuating historical imbalances in media accessibility.

Infrastructure and policy gaps appear to be at the core of this issue. The complete inaccessibility of FreeTv suggests failures in service delivery, either due to technical shortcomings, inadequate funding, or a lack of governmental oversight. The situation calls for urgent intervention, including targeted public awareness campaigns, infrastructure expansion, and improved policy implementation to ensure inclusivity. Government agencies responsible for overseeing digital broadcasting initiatives NBC must work collaboratively with local governments, private sector stakeholders, and community representatives to ensure that FreeTv becomes a truly inclusive and accessible service. Additionally, mechanisms for accountability must be put in place to track the progress of the initiative and address the concerns of affected populations promptly. Without such corrective measures, FreeTv risks becoming another unfulfilled promise, leaving vulnerable populations further disconnected from the digital revolution. This reflects the intersectionality of digital poverty and information poverty, where socio-economic status, geography, and policy decisions intersect to deepen inequalities in access to information and digital services.

4.5 Summary of chapter

The chapter provides an in-depth analysis of data collected through survey questionnaires on the adoption and engagement with digital terrestrial television (DTT) in two rural communities, Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin, in Lagos State, Nigeria. The research utilises a screening survey to identify participants for further qualitative interviews, examining factors influencing engagement with digital television and the barriers preventing full adoption. The analysis reveals that the level of understanding of DTT among the target audience is relatively low, with a significant knowledge gap regarding the digital switchover (DSO). Many respondents were unaware of the transition from analogue to digital television, largely due to poor government communication, information poverty, and digital colonialism. Limited outreach efforts have left rural communities uninformed, reinforcing disparities in digital access and engagement. Despite these challenges, several factors encourage engagement with DTT. Affordability, content diversity, and educational benefits play a crucial role in driving adoption. Cost-effective subscription services like GOTV and StarTimes have made digital TV more accessible, especially for lower-income households. The availability of local content, including Nollywood films and culturally resonant programming, has further contributed to engagement by ensuring that viewers find relatable and meaningful content. Educational programming also stands out as a major advantage, helping children improve their language skills and expanding access to learning materials in underserved areas. However, infrastructural limitations, such as unreliable signal quality and frequent electricity shortages, continue to hinder full engagement, limiting the benefits that digital television could provide.

While some users actively engage with digital TV, several barriers still prevent widespread adoption. Economic challenges are among the most significant obstacles, as many respondents struggle to afford Set-Top Boxes and subscription fees. The financial burden associated with digital TV reinforces digital poverty, where only those with higher economic standing can enjoy uninterrupted access to television services. In addition to affordability, lack of awareness remains a key issue, with many respondents reporting that they had never heard of DTT or did not understand its purpose. This highlights a failure in government-led awareness campaigns and a gap in digital literacy. Moreover, technical difficulties, including poor signal reception, connectivity issues, and unstable electricity supply, further discourage engagement, particularly in rural areas where infrastructure remains underdeveloped. Dissatisfaction with content offerings and usability issues also contribute to a reluctance to adopt digital television fully. The findings of the chapter highlight a significant digital divide shaped by socio-economic disparities, infrastructural shortcomings, and policy implementation gaps. While digital TV presents an opportunity to bridge information gaps and promote inclusivity, existing challenges threaten to deepen the divide between urban and rural communities. To ensure that rural populations fully benefit from the digital switchover, targeted interventions are necessary. These should include better public awareness campaigns, investments in infrastructure to improve signal reliability and electricity access, and inclusive policy frameworks that make digital television more accessible to low-income households. Without these efforts, digital transformation risks perpetuating social and economic inequalities rather than reducing them.

To complement the quantitative and policy-driven analyses, chapter five shifts focus to the lived experiences of those directly affected by digital transitions. Drawing on qualitative data from rural and marginalised communities, this chapter explores how audiences perceive, engage with, or disengage from digital terrestrial television (DTT). By foregrounding user voices, it provides critical insights into the socio-cultural, economic, and infrastructural realities that shape digital inclusion on the ground, enriching the study's understanding of barriers and opportunities from the perspective of the end-users themselves.

Chapter Five: Qualitative findings from the targeted audience

5.1 Introduction

This chapter builds on the findings from the previous quantitative chapter by drawing from semi-structured interviews with 52 participants in Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin Local Council Development Areas (LCDAs) of Ikorodu, Lagos State. While the questionnaire data identified patterns of engagement and disengagement with Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT), the interview data provides a richer, contextualised understanding of the lived realities behind those patterns. These narratives allow for a deeper exploration of how participants experience DTT not only through the lenses of infrastructure or affordability, but also through the intersecting dimensions of identity, community, and social positioning. To interpret these experiences, the chapter applies the intersectional digital marginalisation framework (IDMF), which synthesises insights from digital colonialism, intersectionality, digital poverty, and information poverty, and is further enriched by uses and gratifications theory (UGT). This blended framework supports a multi-level analysis, connecting structural forces (such as policy design, infrastructure, and market dynamics) with individual-level experiences, motivations, and acts of resistance or adaptation.

The analysis is structured around three key themes that emerged during the manual coding process. These themes reflect both the opportunities and obstacles participants encountered in their interaction with the government-subsidised, free-to-air DTT platform. They also point to significant intersectional patterns, where age, class, language, gender, and local culture mediate media usage and perceptions of digital inclusion. The first theme explores differential awareness and understanding of DTT. While a small number of participants had a clear grasp of the platform's purpose and benefits, many expressed confusion or misinformation. This was often linked to limited literacy, inconsistent communication from government actors, or broader distrust in state institutions. The second theme addresses factors that encouraged engagement, including content relevance, affordability, ease of use, and influence from peers or family. In contexts where these enablers were present, participants displayed greater media confidence and uptake, suggesting that digital adoption is strongly shaped by social and cultural resonance. The third theme examines the barriers to access and sustained use. These included infrastructural deficits (e.g., unreliable electricity and signal), perceived high cost of decoders or subscriptions, lack of local-language programming, and broader socio-cultural resistance. These challenges were frequently amplified by dynamics of digital colonialism, where both state and corporate actors failed to provide culturally inclusive content or empower local voices in shaping digital policy. As a result, many participants responded with active disengagement, turning to alternative or informal media spaces that were more attuned to their cultural and practical needs.

Taken together, the qualitative data in this chapter brings the intersectional digital marginalisation framework, complemented by uses and gratifications theory, into practice. It demonstrates how rural residents interpret and respond to DTT in contextually embedded, often improvised ways. These findings reveal not only the fragility of top-down digital inclusion policies, but also the structural power dynamics, both global and local, that shape how media technologies are received and reinterpreted on the ground.

Ultimately, this chapter underscores that rural digital disengagement is not simply a matter of technical access only. It is a manifestation of deep structural inequalities, unmet user expectations, and ongoing imbalances in digital power and representation. Addressing these issues requires a shift from infrastructural expansion alone toward decolonial, inclusive, and community-centred media policies, ones that prioritise meaningful participation, cultural relevance, and the everyday realities of rural users.

5.2 Theme 1: Levels of understanding among the target audience

The success of this transition largely depends on public awareness, knowledge, and understanding of the DSO process to promote engagement. As observed in the survey presented in chapter four, there was a significant lack of awareness regarding DSO implementation in respondents' respective areas. Similarly, interviews further confirmed this widespread unawareness. Only 25% of respondents indicated familiarity with DSO, with 54% of them from Imota and 46% from Ikosi LCDA. A participant (VI031) succinctly noted, “I’m not aware of any digital switchover happening in my area.” Similarly, participant VI033 stated, “I have no idea what you’re talking about,” highlighting severe communication gaps in rural communities. This lack of awareness is a recurring issue, with residents in both Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin expressing confusion about the initiative and its benefits. For some, their first encounter with DSO occurred during the interviews themselves, reflecting inadequate information dissemination and a broader issue of information poverty.

For the few participants who had some knowledge of the DSO, their information primarily came from limited sources such as word-of-mouth, radio, or television advertisements. Participant VI015 remarked, “I became aware of the digital switchover (DSO) in my area through radio broadcasts, but since then, I have not seen anything of such in this area.” These findings underscore how sporadic and inconsistent messaging about the DSO has failed to reach many intended audiences, leaving large portions of the rural population excluded from the transition. Also, participant VI045 shared, “I got to know about digital switchover through announcements on NTA, saying they are going to change from analogue to digital television in the whole of Nigeria.” However, the reliance on mass media channels without follow-up community engagement has left gaps in understanding. These gaps are particularly pronounced among those who are illiterate or speak only local languages. Participant VI014 emphasised, “If [DSO information] was publicised in Yoruba, I could understand it and maybe buy into it.” The absence of a comprehensive, localised communication strategy not only limits awareness but also exacerbates skepticism about the DSO’s benefits, demonstrating an intersectional divide where language and education levels determine access to digital information.

Due to this low awareness, many respondents have not engaged with the government-provided DTV options, such as FreeTV. Instead, they rely on private providers like DStv, GOtv, or StarTimes. Participant VI001 highlighted this preference, stating, “In my current situation, my area hasn’t been covered by the new digital switchover (DSO) implementation by NBC, so I’m using services from a private provider, in this case, GOTV.” This reliance on private providers underscores the exclusionary nature of the DSO, which reflects elements of digital colonialism, where foreign or private entities monopolise access to technological services

in underserved regions. This lack of engagement stems not only from the absence of government infrastructure in many areas but also from a failure to communicate the benefits of FreeTV. Respondents like VI004 voiced expectations for affordable government-led services but noted that these expectations remain unmet. Participant VI004 explained, “While I currently don’t have access to FreeTV, I would anticipate a more cost-effective and affordable service compared to private providers.” For some respondents, the limited awareness of DSO has raised skepticism about its intent. Participant VI051 expressed distrust, stating, “I think it’s just a way for media companies and the government to make more money from us poor people.” Similarly, Participant VI040 dismissed the initiative, noting, “The digital switchover is a non-issue for me because it seems meant for the big people in society.” This skepticism reflects a broader disconnection between rural communities and government-led technological initiatives, reinforcing perceptions of exclusion and exploitation. This top-down approach to digital transformation mirrors hegemonic structures where policies are designed without incorporating the lived realities of the communities they aim to serve.

Other respondents indicated that they perceived DSO as irrelevant to their immediate needs, particularly in areas where access to basic services like electricity remains unreliable. Participant VI013 stated, “I didn’t pay attention to any information about digital switchover in my area because it doesn’t solve my immediate problems, which is power electricity.” This sentiment underscores how broader infrastructural challenges intersect with low awareness to reduce engagement with the DSO, demonstrating the impact of information poverty in rural areas. Without stable electricity, even if digital services were available, the lack of consistent power supply makes the adoption of digital television impractical for many. The prioritisation of basic infrastructure over digital switchover by these respondents reflects the pressing concerns of survival and daily functionality over technological advancements.

Many participants emphasised that they had not been directly engaged by the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) or any other government agency responsible for implementing the DSO. This lack of direct engagement has created a widespread sense of detachment from the initiative, as many rural residents feel excluded from the decision-making process. The absence of town hall meetings, informational outreach, and interactive government-led discussions has left gaps in understanding. Participant VI036 noted, “Government officials should address us on this on time so that people like me can better understand what it’s all about and can be involved actively in the transition when it occurs.” The failure to integrate community participation in the implementation phase has further contributed to skepticism and reluctance toward the DSO, as communities feel that their concerns and unique challenges are overlooked in the policymaking process. More inclusive, localised, and community-centered awareness campaigns could help bridge this gap and promote trust in the initiative.

The lack of culturally relevant messaging was also highlighted, further compounding the issue of accessibility. As Participant VI014 observed, “If [DSO information] was publicised in Yoruba, now I can know or learn about it.” This underscores the intersectionality of digital inclusion, where language barriers and cultural disconnects marginalise rural populations, making it more difficult for them to participate in

digital advancements. The absence of targeted communication strategies personalised to local languages and cultural contexts prevents meaningful engagement and fuels misinformation or indifference towards the initiative. Additionally, the failure to incorporate indigenous knowledge systems and locally trusted information channels further alienates communities, leading to widespread skepticism and reduced adoption rates. A more effective approach would involve collaboration with local leaders, religious figures, and community radio stations that broadcast in native dialects to enhance outreach and promote acceptance. Without such measures, the digital divide will persist, deepening socio-economic inequalities and reinforcing existing disparities in media access and digital literacy.

In the absence of effective government-led DSO initiatives, private providers have stepped in to fill the gap, albeit at a cost. Participant VI019 reflected, "GOTV has made it possible for us to have choices, which wasn't possible before," but added that affordability remains a concern. The dominance of commercial providers reflects digital colonialism, as private entities monopolise access to digital services, reinforcing economic dependencies and inequalities. This pattern of privatised digital access creates a dependency on external corporations, further alienating rural communities from government-supported digital inclusivity. Additionally, many respondents expressed frustration that private service providers focus primarily on urban areas, neglecting rural communities where access to affordable digital services is already limited.

Moreover, the control exerted by private digital service providers mirrors a form of hegemonic control, where access to digital content and television programming is dictated by profit-driven companies rather than public interests. This results in a significant lack of representation of local culture and perspectives in the media content available to rural residents. This lack of publicly available, cost-effective alternatives exacerbates information poverty, as rural populations with limited economic resources find themselves excluded from meaningful engagement with digital services. The absence of government interventions to regulate the affordability of digital services further entrenches economic barriers, making digital television an unattainable luxury for many low-income households. Without policy changes to enforce price controls and public investment in rural connectivity, private monopolies will continue to dictate access, deepening the socio-economic divide between urban and rural areas.

These findings reveal a critical gap in awareness and understanding of the DSO initiative in rural Lagos communities, significantly hindering engagement with government-led digital television services. The lack of clear, sustained communication has left many residents uninformed about the benefits and requirements of the transition, reinforcing a cycle of digital exclusion. Without targeted efforts to bridge the knowledge divide through culturally relevant messaging, grassroots communication networks, and affordability measures, the digital divide will continue to widen, exacerbating the marginalisation of rural communities from technological advancements. The absence of structured interventions, such as digital literacy programs personalised to these communities, further limits their ability to adapt to and leverage digital television technology. In addition, economic constraints make the adoption of digital services an uphill task for many, as affordability remains a key concern. Government-led subsidies or incentives could mitigate these

challenges, but their current absence only reinforces existing socio-economic disparities associated with digital poverty. This gap reflects information poverty, where limited access to relevant, timely, and comprehensible information leaves communities uninformed and disempowered. The absence of outreach in indigenous languages and the failure to leverage local information networks (e.g., community leaders, churches) further alienates residents. This void is not neutral, it represents a structural silencing, consistent with colonial-era broadcasting, where rural populations were seen as passive recipients rather than media stakeholders.

5.3 Theme 2: Factors encouraging people to access DTT

The adoption of digital terrestrial television (DTT) is influenced by various factors that encourage individuals and communities to transition from analogue to digital broadcasting. A key driver is the willingness to use DTT as many viewers recognise the advantages of improved picture quality, expanded channel options, and enhanced viewing experiences. Affordability and economic considerations also play a significant role, as the availability of cost-effective digital decoders and government subsidies can make DTT more accessible to low-income households. Additionally, the interactive features of DTT contribute to bridging the digital divide offering viewers access to information, entertainment, and digital services that enhance user engagement. Cultural representation and the impact of digital colonialism are also crucial factors, as audiences are more likely to adopt DTT when local and culturally relevant content is available, countering the dominance of foreign media influences.

Furthermore, the educational benefits of DTT present a compelling incentive, particularly in regions where access to digital learning resources can help address structural inequalities by providing educational programming and bridging knowledge gaps. These encouraging factors, that promote wider acceptance of DTT, ensuring that digital television serves as an inclusive and beneficial medium for all segments of society are further elaborated below.

5.3.1 Willingness to use digital terrestrial television (DTT)

The willingness of individuals to engage with digital television (DTV) is shaped by several key factors that either facilitate or hinder their viewing experience. Among the most significant motivations for adopting DTT, as identified by 67% of interviewees, is the affordability of the necessary equipment and services. This economic accessibility plays an important role in overcoming digital poverty, ensuring that a broader spectrum of the population can participate in the digital transition. However, affordability remains a double-edged sword while low-cost decoders and subscription plans make DTT accessible to many, financial constraints still exclude certain demographics, underscoring the hegemonic structures that dictate access to digital resources. Another critical factor, highlighted by 63% of interviewees, is the improvement in picture and sound quality that digital television offers. This enhancement in uses and gratifications directly influences engagement, as viewers seek higher-quality experiences that elevate their entertainment value. Additionally, 31% of interviewees specifically expressed a preference for the expanded variety of channels available on DTT, demonstrating a shift toward hybrid consumption practices, where digital media serves a

diverse array of interests and identities. Meanwhile, 42% of the participants emphasised how diversified content encouraged their engagement, reflecting the importance of personalised programming in catering to individual and communal needs. The accessibility of community-focused content, valued by 19% of interviewees, further underscores the role of intersectionality, as regionally relevant programming promotes a sense of belonging and identity among marginalised or localised communities. However, this willingness was often conditional and fragile. Engagement depended on perceived value and ease of use, suggesting the relevance of UGT, which posits that users adopt media that fulfil their cognitive, affective, and social needs. The dominance of information poverty as a barrier to digital inclusion is also evident in participants' experiences. While many praised the increased availability of content, VI036, a mechanic from Ikosi LCDA, lamented the limited reach of DTT in his area, saying, “Our area lacks coverage; we feel left behind in this digital transition.” This disparity in access exemplifies the digital divide, where unequal infrastructure development perpetuates socio-economic inequalities and restricts full participation in the digital ecosystem. The uneven rollout of DTT services further entrenches digital colonialism, as global and urban-centric media development often prioritises affluent regions while neglecting economically disadvantaged communities.

5.3.2 Affordability and economic considerations

The economic feasibility of transitioning to DTT was another recurring theme in participants’ responses. VI006, a homemaker, noted that acquiring a digital converter box provided an affordable way to upgrade her television, stating, “The affordability of digital converter boxes ensured that I could access digital broadcast programs without replacing my TV.” This reflects the necessity for cost-effective technological solutions in regions experiencing digital poverty, where economic constraints often dictate access to technological advancements. The affordability factor plays a crucial role in determining who benefits from digital inclusion, as individuals with limited financial resources may still struggle to afford even low-cost options. However, others, such as VI012, a building material trader, expressed concerns about affordability, stating, “Affording the necessary equipment for digital TV is proving to be a challenge.” This highlights how hegemonic economic structures continue to privilege certain social groups over others, limiting technological adoption among lower-income households and reinforcing existing socio-economic disparities. While affordability can serve as an enabler of digital engagement, it can also function as a gatekeeper, restricting full participation in the digital ecosystem for marginalised populations. Without targeted interventions such as subsidies, community-based distribution programs, or alternative financial models, the promise of widespread digital access remains unfulfilled for many who need it most.

5.3.3 Interactive features and the digital divide

Beyond affordability, many interviewees cited interactive features as a key incentive for engaging with DTT. Features such as pausing, rewinding, recording, and on-demand content were praised for enhancing convenience, personalisation, and user control. VI007, a fashion designer, stated, “Interactive features like personalised recommendations and parental controls make the experience enjoyable and relevant to our needs.” These functionalities allow users to personalise their viewing experience, enabling them to engage with content in a more flexible and meaningful way. Similarly, VI030, a female teacher from Imota LCDA,

noted that these features allowed her to integrate television into her busy lifestyle more effectively, stating, “With the ability to record and pause content, I no longer have to worry about missing my favorite programs due to work commitments.” The increasing demand for interactive media options reflects the growing expectation for digital platforms to offer more control over content consumption, aligning with broader shifts in media engagement preferences.

However, the sophistication of these features presents challenges in information poverty, particularly among rural populations where digital literacy levels are significantly lower. The lack of structured awareness campaigns and limited access to technical support further deepens this divide, making it difficult for individuals in remote areas to manage and maximise the benefits of DTT. This gap reinforces an intersectional divide in digital access, where socio-economic and geographical disparities limit certain groups' ability to fully engage with and benefit from digital advancements. Addressing these disparities requires comprehensive digital literacy initiatives and targeted outreach efforts to bridge the growing gap between urban and rural users in the digital landscape.

5.3.4 Cultural representation and digital colonialism

A significant concern raised by many participants was the perceived lack of culturally relevant programming. VI001, a barber shop owner from Ikosi LCDA, expressed frustration over the dominance of foreign programs, stating, “There’s too much focus on foreign programs. I want content that reflects my culture and community.” This sentiment aligns with critiques of digital colonialism, wherein global media corporations prioritise Western and international content over local narratives, leading to cultural homogenisation and marginalisation. The overwhelming presence of foreign content, particularly from Western nations, not only dilutes local storytelling traditions but also contributes to a cultural disconnect for many viewers who feel alienated from their own heritage. DTT appears to replicate colonial-era dynamics to this respondent where dominant, urban, and foreign interests shape the information landscape. Although some respondents expressed how they enjoy local programmes that help them to reconnect to their culture, a homemaker, (VI006) explained how programmes like Gbe-Body and Oshapra helped her reconnect with her cultural heritage, stating, “These shows use our language and teach us about traditional music and storytelling. It helps us remember and appreciate our culture.” The demand for locally produced content highlights the importance of hybridity in digital media, where traditional and modern narratives can coexist, allowing for a more inclusive media landscape.

The implication of this is that the lack of substantial government or industry investment in indigenous content production exacerbates the problem, making it difficult for local creators to compete with international media conglomerates which could further encourage people to access DTT. Without intentional policies that support the development and promotion of regional content, the influence of foreign programming will continue to overshadow local identities, further entrenching the effects of digital colonialism. This underscores the necessity for diverse programming strategies that incorporate local

languages, folklore, and socio-political narratives, ensuring that local and indigenous stories are not erased but rather amplified alongside dominant global media influences.

5.3.5 Educational benefits and structural inequality

Some respondents highlighted the educational benefits of using digital TV. VI041, a local shop owner, described how his children's exposure to educational channels improved their learning experience, transforming their home into a space for intellectual growth. The access to diverse educational content not only supplements traditional schooling but also promotes independent learning and critical thinking skills by engaging with these educational programmes on television. This demonstrates how digital TV can serve as an informal educational tool, bridging gaps in access to formal education. Likewise, a teacher (VI030) from Imota LCDA, noted that how television programs helped enhance her teaching methods, saying, "I now engage my students more actively after learning new techniques from teaching programs on GOtv television." The availability of educational television programs offers an alternative approach to pedagogy, allowing educators to integrate new strategies into their teaching practices. Although residents can also watch educational programmes on other means of television, however digital platform has made it possible to have a dedicated educational channel (e.g., NTA ETV, Branama TV) unlike programmes on analogue television provided by a service provider that will have to be segmented base on air timing. In many cases, digital TV content serves as an extension of the classroom, reinforcing subjects through engaging visual narratives and interactive learning.

However, the continued concern on the hegemonic control of media infrastructures ensures that these educational opportunities remain unevenly distributed. Limited digital coverage in rural areas restricts access to these benefits, perpetuating systemic inequalities in education and information dissemination. Many students in underserved communities remain excluded from these digital learning resources, widening the educational divide between urban and rural populations. Without strategic interventions such as expanding digital infrastructure, increasing awareness of educational television programming, and providing subsidies for necessary equipment, the full potential of digital TV as an educational tool cannot be realised. Addressing these challenges is crucial in ensuring that digital education is inclusive and accessible to all, particularly in regions where traditional educational resources are scarce or inadequate. These findings underscore the transformative potential of digital terrestrial television (DTT) as an informal educational tool, particularly in contexts where traditional schooling infrastructure is weak. The presence of dedicated educational channels on digital platforms offers both cognitive enrichment and pedagogical innovation. As such, the educational value of DTT emerges as a key motivator for rural residents to engage with the technology, not simply as entertainment, but as a strategic response to structural educational deficits. However, this motivation is tempered by persistent inequalities in access, reinforcing the need to address infrastructural and socio-economic barriers that inhibit full participation. It is within this dual context, promise and exclusion, that educational benefits become a critical factor encouraging digital adoption, especially when users perceive a direct alignment between DTT content and their learning aspirations.

Overall, these factors that encourage access to DTT shows findings presented across the five subthemes of this section reveal that the factors encouraging residents to engage with digital terrestrial television (DTT) are complex and intersectional, shaped by the interplay of economic realities, cultural representation, infrastructural accessibility, and individual motivations. While many participants expressed a willingness to use DTT due to its enhanced picture quality, diverse content offerings, and educational value, these drivers were consistently mediated by structural conditions such as digital poverty, information inequality, and cultural alienation. Through the lens of the intersectional digital marginalisation framework (IDMF), these findings illustrate how DTT adoption is not simply a matter of technological availability, but a contextual negotiation shaped by intersecting identities and unequal media ecologies. Factors such as affordability, for example, simultaneously act as both an enabler and barrier, depending on the user's socio-economic position, while interactive features attract more media-literate or younger users, yet exclude others due to information poverty and low digital literacy.

Moreover, cultural representation emerged as a decisive factor in user engagement, confirming how digital colonialism can suppress adoption when foreign content dominates the media space. Participants consistently preferred local, culturally resonant programming, an area where DTT has the potential to serve as a decolonial platform, if supported by policy and local content production. Similarly, educational programming acted as a powerful motivator, especially in areas where formal schooling is inadequate or inaccessible. Here, DTT serves as a supplementary educational tool, bridging learning gaps and contributing to intellectual development within households. However, this potential is unequally realised, as geographic and infrastructural disparities continue to restrict who benefits from these opportunities. Taken together, these findings suggest that engagement with DTT is highly contingent on whether the platform aligns with users' material conditions, linguistic backgrounds, cultural values, and educational aspirations. Encouragement, then, is not merely a function of access, but of inclusion, relevance, and responsiveness. Without policies that address these intersectional barriers, even the most promising features of DTT risk reproducing existing inequalities rather than overcoming them.

5.4 Theme 3: Factors preventing and discouraging people

The transition to digital terrestrial television (DTT) has faced significant barriers that prevent and discourage people from fully adopting the technology. These barriers stem from structural, economic, and socio-political challenges that hinder accessibility and participation. The limited availability and unequal distribution of FreeTV decoders have created disparities in access, especially among marginalised communities. Economic constraints and digital poverty further exacerbate the issue, making it difficult for lower-income households to afford the necessary equipment. Additionally, infrastructural inadequacies and digital colonialism have left many regions, particularly in developing countries, without the necessary digital infrastructure to support a smooth transition. The failure of digital switchover implementation has also contributed to delays and inefficiencies, preventing widespread adoption. Moreover, technical and operational challenges such as signal reception issues and inadequate technical support, have discouraged many users. Mistrust in government initiatives further complicates the process, as concerns over transparency, corruption, and

political influence deter public confidence in digital television projects. Additionally, content relevance and cultural hybridity play a crucial role in shaping audience engagement, as people may resist DTT if programming does not align with their cultural and linguistic preferences.

Despite these challenges, several proposed solutions for DTT adoption have been identified, focusing on policy reforms, subsidy programs, and technological innovations. The importance of technical education and community engagement is also emphasised, as awareness campaigns, training programs, and grassroots initiatives can help bridge the digital divide and facilitate a more inclusive transition to digital broadcasting. Addressing these factors holistically is essential for ensuring equitable access and maximising the benefits of DTT for all.

5.4.1 Limited availability and unequal distribution of Freetv decoders

The restricted access to digital terrestrial television (DTT) services and FreeTV decoders in Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin reflects a deeper pattern of structural exclusion that aligns with the principles of the intersectional digital marginalisation framework (IDMF). Despite the national rhetoric of inclusivity surrounding the Digital Switchover (DSO), participants repeatedly noted the uneven rollout of FreeTV decoders and signal coverage, particularly in rural and economically disadvantaged areas. This spatial disparity in access exemplifies digital colonialism, wherein technological infrastructures and media innovations disproportionately benefit urban and elite populations while peripheral communities are systematically overlooked. The absence of FreeTV distribution in these communities' signals more than a logistical failure, it reflects a digital development model rooted in centralisation and inequality, echoing colonial-era patterns of uneven resource allocation.

As participant VI001, a barber from Ikosi-Ejirin, lamented:

"Regrettably, the introduction of the new FreeTV decoder has not yet reached our locality, leaving us without the opportunity to experience the benefits and features it brings."
This testimony captures the felt impact of infrastructural marginalisation, where technological advancement becomes a symbol of urban privilege rather than national progress. Within the IDMF framework, this condition also constitutes a form of information poverty, where entire communities are denied access to public information, educational programming, and culturally relevant content simply due to their geographic and socio-economic positioning. This reinforces the intersectional nature of digital exclusion, as those most affected tend to be low-income, linguistically diverse, and often women or older adults, groups that already face systemic barriers in other areas of life.

Therefore, the limited availability of FreeTV decoders does not merely inhibit entertainment consumption, it deepens the digital divide and entrenches existing power imbalances in knowledge access, civic participation, and educational opportunity. Correcting this inequity requires a shift away from top-down, one-size-fits-all distribution strategies toward targeted, context-aware interventions that prioritise rural and

underserved communities. Without deliberate policy action, the DSO risks replicating the very inequalities it was meant to resolve, solidifying a new form of technological disenfranchisement under the guise of national development.

5.4.2 Economic constraints and digital poverty

While the digital switchover aims to promote inclusion, the upfront costs of set-top boxes, coupled with recurring subscription fees, render the service financially inaccessible for many households. This condition exemplifies digital poverty, where limited economic resources restrict access to digital infrastructure, content, and associated services, thereby exacerbating existing socio-economic inequalities. For respondents such as VI019, a market leader in Ikosi LCDA, and VI009, a furniture maker from Imota LCDA, the ongoing financial burden of maintaining subscriptions often competes with essential household needs such as food, rent, and school fees. Their testimonies underscore how digital access is not merely a question of interest or willingness, but of financial prioritisation in contexts of scarcity. In these settings, digital participation becomes a luxury, rather than a right.

Expression such as "Government should subsidise and give financial support to us poor people here to help us buy." – VI013, Transporter and "My parents' income is very low, but they struggle to pay for the subscription for some months because of other pressing issues." – VI004, Male Student, illustrate the intersectional nature of digital exclusion. Low-income residents, particularly women-led households, students, and informal sector workers are disproportionately affected, positioned at the convergence of economic vulnerability and systemic infrastructural neglect. The intersection of class, location, and generational status magnifies their exclusion, reinforcing patterns where the urban, affluent, and digitally literate benefit from media innovations while rural populations are left behind. Participants also voiced concerns about the broader commercialisation of digital TV, noting the high and rising costs of subscription-based services like DStv, GOtv, and StarTimes. This aligns with critiques of digital colonialism, where access to digital services is controlled by private corporations with limited accountability to the local population. The lack of affordable or state-supported options further entrenches this disparity.

To mitigate these challenges, several participants advocated for flexible payment systems, such as pay-as-you-watch models, as well as government-subsidised decoders and content access. These recommendations highlight the urgent need for equity-driven digital policy that recognises affordability as a foundational requirement for inclusion. Without such interventions, economic constraints will continue to serve as a gatekeeping mechanism, excluding large segments of the rural population from participating in the digital media ecosystem, and deepening the fault lines of Nigeria's digital divide.

5.4.3 Infrastructural inadequacies and technological exclusion

The adoption and sustained use of digital terrestrial television (DTT) in both communities Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin are critically undermined by infrastructural inadequacies, which persist as one of the most discouraging and exclusionary forces within the digital ecosystem. Viewed through the intersectional

digital marginalisation framework (IDMF), these infrastructural deficits are not just technical oversights, they are manifestations of systemic neglect, underpinned by digital colonialism and resource irregularity. Power supply instability, weak signal reception, and the near-total absence of broadband connectivity form the structural backdrop against which rural residents attempt, and often fail, to engage with digital technologies.

As Participant VI018, a mechanic from Ikosi LCDA, described:

“There’s no point in having a decoder if there’s no light or the signal disappears every time.”

This sentiment captures the frustration and demotivation felt by users who have been promised the benefits of digital modernity but are continuously denied the basic infrastructure required to realise them. Similarly, VI010 from Imota noted:

“When there’s no light, we can’t use the digital decoder system.”

These testimonies reveal how energy poverty and signal instability serve as gatekeepers, preventing meaningful engagement with DTT. They also illustrate a broader pattern of geographic inequality, where rural communities are deprioritised in national infrastructure planning, reflecting a digital colonial logic in which the urban core is privileged over the rural periphery. Compounding these issues is the complete lack of broadband internet access, with all 52 interviewees reporting that they lacked home internet connections. This disconnect further entrenches information poverty, as rural users are unable to access digital tools and platforms that could enhance their television experience, such as interactive content, online guides, or educational supplements. While urban users operate a hybrid media environment, rural residents remain isolated from the broader digital ecosystem, limiting their exposure, literacy, and empowerment.

The consequences of these infrastructural deficiencies extend far beyond entertainment. They impair access to educational programming, public health information, emergency broadcasts, and civic participation, core elements of digital citizenship. Moreover, these barriers disproportionately affect groups already disadvantaged by intersectional factors such as age, gender, and income. For example, elderly users and female-led households may lack the resources or technical support to navigate or maintain DTT setups, even when the devices are available. As a result, infrastructure becomes not only a technical precondition for access but a symbol of exclusion, a reminder of who is seen, supported, and counted within the digital state. Without deliberate investment in rural power grids, broadband expansion, and signal quality, DTT risks reinforcing the very marginalisation it seeks to overcome.

Addressing these barriers requires state-led infrastructure commitments, equitable public-private partnerships, and targeted resource allocation for rural zones. Until these structural inequalities are addressed, technological engagement will remain aspirational, and digital policy will continue to fail those who need it most.

5.4.4 Failure of digital switchover implementation and systemic exclusion

The uneven and largely ineffective implementation of Nigeria's digital switchover (DSO) policy emerged as a central discouraging factor for rural residents in Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin. Despite public declarations of progress by the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), respondents consistently described the DSO as absent, incomplete, or confusing in their communities. Within the intersectional digital marginalisation framework (IDMF), this failure represents more than administrative delay, it reveals a deeper pattern of technological abandonment, shaped by digital colonialism, information poverty, and intersectional neglect.

As VI011, a 55-year-old bricklayer from Ikosi LCDA, lamented:

"The unavailability of this service leaves our community without the chance to enjoy the benefits of digital broadcasting."

This comment reflects widespread discontent with the lack of tangible implementation, where the digital switchover exists only in policy documents and urban centres, but not in the lived realities of rural residents. The absence of FreeTV decoder access and reliable signal coverage exemplifies structural exclusion, where national digital agendas prioritise well-connected, commercially viable regions, leaving peripheral areas in a state of technological limbo. This mirrors colonial development patterns, wherein central authorities focused investment on strategic hubs while relegating rural populations to the margins, a classic feature of digital colonialism in contemporary media policy. Moreover, the failure of communication and public sensitisation compounds this exclusion. Many respondents expressed confusion about how the DSO works, where to access services, or what its benefits might be. The lack of public awareness campaigns tailored to local languages and literacy levels reinforces information poverty, limiting people's capacity to make informed choices about digital adoption. Instead of promoting enthusiasm, the ambiguity surrounding the switchover breeds scepticism, misinformation, and disengagement, especially among already-marginalised groups.

This informational vacuum intersects with broader socio-economic vulnerabilities. Households already grappling with economic hardship, low education levels, or limited media literacy are disproportionately affected by policy opacity. Their inability to operate the switchover process reflects not apathy, but a rational response to systemic disempowerment. In this way, the failure of implementation is not just technical, it becomes a socially stratified barrier, perpetuating digital inequalities along lines of geography, class, and education. Respondents advocated for several reforms, including clearer communication, greater policy transparency, and stronger coordination between government and service providers. These demands reflect a desire not just for access, but for equitable inclusion, for digital services to be deployed in ways that respect rural realities, address structural gaps, and restore public trust.

This failure of the DSO to deliver on its promises in rural communities actively discourages engagement with DTT. It undermines the credibility of national digital initiatives and reproduces patterns of neglect that leave entire communities excluded from educational, economic, and civic opportunities tied to digital media. Without intentional, equity-driven interventions to decentralise digital governance and extend meaningful access to underserved populations, the DSO risks becoming a symbol of urban privilege, rather than a tool for national inclusion.

5.4.5 Technical and Operational Challenges: Interactivity, Instability, and Systemic Exclusion

While digital terrestrial television (DTT) promotes a suite of interactive features, such as content recording, parental controls, and on-demand services, these functions often serve as reminders of exclusion rather than as tools of empowerment for rural users. This disparity underscores the mismatch between design assumptions and lived realities. DTT systems are built around the needs and expectations of urban, educated, and digitally literate users, rendering them inaccessible or irrelevant to many in low-income, rural contexts who lack stable infrastructure and personalised support. Participants from Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin repeatedly expressed a desire to use these features but were frustrated by their inability to operate them or access them consistently. Lacking digital literacy, technical guidance, or infrastructure support, users found the promised benefits to be functionally out of reach.

"I like the idea of recording shows, but I don't even know how to set it up, and there's no one to explain it." – VI027, Retired Civil Servant
"With all these features, it feels like they made it for city people, not for us." – VI030, Female Teacher, Imota LCDA

These reflections highlight both information poverty and intersectionality in practice. Older adults, women, and less formally educated participants were most likely to rely on others, often younger males, for assistance, limiting their autonomy and control over media interaction. This unequal distribution of digital skills further entrenches marginalisation, where technological empowerment is stratified by gender, age, and education level. Moreover, technical instability, including screen freezing, weak signal reception, and frequent disruptions, was cited as a recurring source of frustration. Approximately 15 interviewees noted that unreliable service degraded trust in DTT systems. For example, VI017, a food vendor, complained about signal losses during important broadcasts, stating that these disruptions discouraged continued use. From the lens of uses and gratifications theory (UGT), this dissatisfaction erodes user motivation, as engagement is tightly linked to consistent, reliable performance that meets cognitive or entertainment needs.

"Sometimes I just stop watching when the channels start freezing or the decoder restarts itself, it's frustrating." – VI017, Food Seller

Technical shortcomings were compounded by poor customer service and the absence of responsive support systems. Several participants reported that service providers were difficult to reach or failed to resolve

complaints. VI029, a transport driver, shared his disillusionment with the lack of feedback or follow-up after multiple attempts to fix recurring faults. Such neglect signals a broader issue of institutional disengagement, where service delivery infrastructures are unresponsive to the needs of rural users, further reinforcing the urban bias embedded in the system. Alongside operational failures, government outreach and public education about the digital switchover (DSO) was found to be severely lacking. Many respondents reported that they were unaware of the DSO's purpose, process, or benefits. VI044, a history teacher, questioned the very existence of the programme, asking:

“Is this what they meant by digital switchover? No one ever explained it here.”

This gap reflects the persistent reality of information poverty, wherein marginalised communities are systematically excluded from key knowledge channels. The absence of awareness campaigns in local languages, or adapted to rural realities, ensures that many users remain not only technically excluded but cognitively and culturally disconnected from digital progress narratives.

Taken together, these challenges transform interactivity, often framed as a hallmark of modern media, into a symbol of structural inequality. Without access to consistent electricity, reliable networks, training resources, and responsive institutions, rural users are left to navigate technologies that are not designed with their realities in mind. As a result, the gap between technological promise and actual experience widens, reinforcing digital colonialism by privileging urban, globalised models of innovation at the expense of local usability and inclusion. For DTT to serve as a truly inclusive platform, policy interventions must extend beyond device distribution. They must include comprehensive digital literacy initiatives, community-based training, and context-sensitive user interface designs that reflect the linguistic, social, and infrastructural contexts of marginalised populations. Without such targeted efforts, technical innovation will continue to function as a barrier, discouraging the very populations it aims to uplift.

5.4.6 Mistrust in government initiatives and the erosion of digital confidence

Mistrust in government-led initiatives emerged as a significant discouraging factor in rural residents’ willingness to engage with digital terrestrial television (DTT), this mistrust is not merely attitudinal, it is the cumulative result of historical policy failures, broken promises, and systemic exclusion that have disproportionately affected marginalised communities. For many participants, past experiences with state projects, particularly in rural and low-income areas, have produced a lasting skepticism toward digital reforms, including the digital switchover (DSO). An expression such as this, “I don’t possess the new FreeTV decoder/DTT introduced by the government and, to be honest, I’m not particularly eager to obtain it.” – VI014, 29-year-old Tailor, Ikosi LCDA, comment reflects a deep-rooted distrust that extends beyond the DTT platform itself. For many, digital initiatives are viewed as symbolic or performative gestures, announced with great fanfare but rarely implemented in tangible ways that benefit rural populations. The perceived absence of meaningful impact, especially in marginalised regions, reinforces a sense of structural

abandonment and contributes to information poverty, where communities remain uninformed or misinformed about national programmes due to poor outreach and lack of local engagement.

Similarly, VI051, a 55-year-old homemaker from Imota, captured the frustration of continued exclusion: "DTV progress may be sweeping the nation, but in our rural community, there's none in my area."

This disconnect underscores the geographic and class-based inequalities inherent in the DSO rollout. Urban centres receive attention, infrastructure, and support, while rural areas remain peripheral relegated to the status of spectators rather than participants in the digital transition. This reflects a form of digital colonialism, in which the distribution of technological benefits follows historical patterns of centralisation and marginalisation, favouring urban elites while rural populations are left behind. Within this context, intersectionality becomes critical in understanding how trust, or the lack thereof, is distributed unevenly. Women, older adults, and less-educated individuals were especially skeptical of the initiative, often citing long-standing neglect, limited representation, and unmet basic needs as reasons for disengagement. Their skepticism is not irrational; it is a pragmatic response to chronic exclusion from both political and digital systems. Participants repeatedly emphasised that tokenistic policies and one-time interventions would not be enough to rebuild trust. Instead, they called for grassroots-level engagement, transparent governance, and visible, community-specific infrastructure investment to signal genuine commitment.

This means moving beyond announcements and pilot projects to long-term, inclusive implementation strategies that reflect the needs, languages, and lived realities of rural communities.
Without these efforts, mistrust will continue to serve as a barrier to digital participation, eroding public confidence and undermining adoption, even in cases where the technical or economic barriers are surmountable. In this sense, trust is not a secondary concern; it is foundational to equitable digital transformation. If rural communities do not believe in the credibility of the state's promises, or see themselves reflected in digital policy design, they are unlikely to embrace DTT or any future innovations. As such, restoring trust is a necessary condition for bridging the digital divide and ensuring that national digital reforms are both inclusive and transformative.

5.4.7 Content relevance, cultural hybridity, and adaptive disengagement

Cultural relevance or the lack thereof, emerged as a critical factor in discouraging engagement with digital terrestrial television (DTT), among rural residents who perceived digital programming as disconnected from their everyday realities, the dominance of foreign and urban-centric content reflects a key facet of digital colonialism, where global media flows marginalise local narratives and contribute to cultural erasure. Instead of functioning as a platform for inclusion and identity expression, DTT in its current form often replicates the same hegemonic structures that historically excluded rural communities from the national media space.
"There are barely any programs that reflect our day-to-day realities. We want to see ourselves in these programs." – VI052, Market Vendor, Ikosi

This sentiment reflects a disruption in cultural continuity, where viewers find limited value in digital platforms that fail to speak their language, literally and figuratively. Despite initial interest in the novelty and aesthetics of foreign content, many participants reported disengagement over time, citing the lack of localised programming that aligns with their linguistic, cultural, and social environments. From the perspective of uses and gratifications theory (UGT), this disengagement is not passive, it is a rational act of media refusal, rooted in unmet cognitive, affective, and identity-based needs.
"Even if the government gave me the decoder for free, what's the point if all the stations are showing things I don't understand or care about?" – Mechanic-E, Ikosi

Such feedback underscores the limitations of supply-driven media systems that neglect to integrate audience voice, representation, and cultural understanding into their programming. In contexts where traditional culture, language, and communal life remain central to everyday experience, media that fails to reflect these values is not simply ineffective, it is disaffecting. In response, some users adopted alternative modes of engagement that reflect creative adaptation. As noted by a fashion designer (Fashion Designer-B), sharing locally produced clips and comedy skits via WhatsApp offered a more relatable, flexible, and social media experience than DTT broadcasts. These informal content-sharing practices, facilitated through mobile devices, represent a form of adaptive hybridity, wherein users re-route their engagement to platforms that better satisfy their expectations and cultural frames of reference.

This behaviour challenges the assumption that digital disengagement is primarily due to poverty or illiteracy. Rather, it reveals media agency, as users selectively withdraw from platforms that do not offer value, relevance, or recognition. Within the IDMF, this decision-making reflects a deeper interplay between intersectionality (who feels excluded, and why) and UGT (how users pursue alternative gratifications when formal systems fall short). "We prefer to share local programme clips and comedy skits on WhatsApp instead of watching GOtv channels once we can't afford to pay." – Fashion Designer-B.
Respondents also proposed transformative solutions, advocating for increased investment in indigenous content, including regional dramas, folklore, historical documentaries, and broadcasts in local languages. This content, they argued, could enhance DTT's cultural value and transform it into a tool for cultural preservation, education, and empowerment, particularly for younger generations at risk of cultural detachment.

The current underrepresentation of local voices in DTT programming not only reduces viewer motivation but also deepens the symbolic digital divide, where some populations are visible, and others are not. Without policies that mandate a fair quota of local content, the platform risks functioning as a one-way channel for foreign cultural flows, reinforcing digital colonialism and alienating the very audiences it aims to serve. This disconnect between content and context discourages digital adoption and participation among rural users, not due to a lack of interest, but because the platform fails to reflect who they are. Reimagining DTT

as a culturally grounded, participatory media ecosystem is essential to bridging the engagement gap and realising the inclusive potential of digital broadcasting.

5.4.8 Respondents' proposed solutions: Toward equitable and inclusive DTT adoption

In response to the numerous barriers that discouraged their engagement with digital terrestrial television (DTT), respondents offered a set of practical, locally grounded solutions aimed at overcoming the systemic inequalities highlighted throughout this study. These proposals address the multiple layers of exclusion, economic, informational, technological, and cultural, that shape how rural populations experience digital transformation. Rather than passive recipients of policy, respondents positioned themselves as active stakeholders with a clear vision for a more inclusive and participatory digital ecosystem.

Economic solutions were at the forefront of participants' suggestions. Recognising digital poverty as a primary barrier, many called for financial support in the form of free or subsidised decoder distribution, especially for low-income households. As VI033 recommended, targeted subsidies could facilitate widespread DTT adoption in economically disadvantaged communities. Others advocated for flexible payment models, such as pay-as-you-watch or time-based subscriptions, to make ongoing service access more feasible for households balancing digital costs with daily necessities. These measures respond directly to the economic exclusion that disproportionately affects rural, informal, and working-class families, intersectional groups most vulnerable to digital disengagement.

To combat information poverty, respondents emphasised the urgent need for multi-channel public awareness campaigns. As VI040, a mechanic from Ikosi, noted, limited knowledge about DTT services had left many potential users disengaged or misinformed. Respondents suggested outreach strategies that leveraged local radio, community leaders, mobile units, and social platforms, ensuring that communication was delivered in accessible languages and formats. Several proposed community-based education initiatives, such as local workshops, roadshows, and decoder demonstrations, to enhance digital literacy and demystify the technology for those unfamiliar with its use. These grassroots approaches reflect a recognition that top-down information dissemination fails to reach those most in need, particularly older adults, women, and individuals with limited formal education.

Participants also identified infrastructural development as foundational to addressing digital inequality and disengagement. Recommendations included investment in electricity supply, strengthening DTT signal coverage, and expanding broadband access, particularly in remote or semi-rural areas. These infrastructure needs intersect with all dimensions of the IDMF, especially digital colonialism, as current infrastructure deployment disproportionately benefits urban centres while rural areas remain underserved. Respondents suggested that public-private partnerships could leverage government support and private sector capacity to expand digital infrastructure in an equitable, sustainable manner. Furthermore, they recommended regulatory reforms to incentivise service providers to extend their coverage to marginalised zones, making DTT a national public good rather than a market-driven privilege.

Finally, respondents stressed the importance of technical education and support to promote long-term digital inclusion. VI043, a male teacher, linked his personal growth in technological proficiency to his exposure to DTT, suggesting that media engagement can serve as an entry point into broader digital competencies. Others, such as VI046, a vulcaniser, called for community-based training models and mobile support teams to provide hands-on assistance and build local confidence in using digital platforms. These interventions would not only address digital skills gaps but also restore user agency, allowing individuals to feel more empowered and independent in navigating the digital ecosystem.

These proposals are united by a clear demand for community-centred, culturally relevant, and equity-driven digital policy. They reflect a rejection of one-size-fits-all technological rollouts and a call for localised, participatory governance models that treat rural users not as passive consumers, but as critical actors in shaping Nigeria's digital future. If adopted, these solutions could directly dismantle the structural barriers outlined across this chapter, from economic exclusion and infrastructural neglect to information poverty and cultural alienation. In doing so, they would move Nigeria's DTT rollout closer to its stated goal: a truly inclusive and transformative digital switchover.

5.5 Summary of chapter

Chapter five explored the lived experiences of residents in Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin LCDAs in Lagos State, highlighting the multifaceted barriers to digital terrestrial television (DTT) adoption in rural Nigeria. Using the intersectional digital marginalisation framework (IDMF), the findings reveal that low engagement is not due to user apathy or technical shortcomings alone, but stems from systemic inequalities involving digital poverty, information poverty, infrastructural neglect, cultural disconnection, and weak institutional support. Limited awareness of the digital switchover (DSO), confusion with private providers, and a lack of effective government communication strategies reinforced patterns of exclusion and mistrust. Residents identified critical structural issues, such as limited decoder availability, high subscription costs, unreliable electricity, poor signal strength, and lack of local content, as central barriers, which were compounded for women, older adults, low-income families, and informal workers. These challenges reflect broader dynamics of digital colonialism and policy neglect. Yet, users displayed agency through selective disengagement and alternative media use, aligning with uses and gratifications theory (UGT), which frames media consumption as a rational and needs-based activity.

Despite the challenges, the study also surfaced motivators for adoption, including improved picture quality, educational benefits, and demand for interactive and culturally relevant content. Importantly, community members proposed viable, bottom-up solutions such as subsidies, flexible payments, infrastructure investment, local-language outreach, and content rooted in indigenous identities. These recommendations point toward a more equitable vision of digital transformation. The chapter overall argues that meaningful digital inclusion requires more than infrastructure; it demands socio-cultural relevance, policy reform, and community participation. Without addressing these intersectional barriers, the DSO risks reproducing the

very inequalities it seeks to resolve. The next chapter builds on these grassroots insights by examining the institutional and regulatory perspectives that shape Nigeria's digital transition.

Chapter Six: Findings from NBC and Service Provider - Members

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings from qualitative interviews conducted with three officials from the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and 24 members of the broadcasting organisations of Nigeria (BON) comprising both public and private television service providers involved in the rollout and promotion of the digital terrestrial television (DTT)/FreeTV platform in Lagos State. These 27 participants represent key institutional stakeholders who have shaped the policy, communication, and technical implementation of Nigeria's digital switchover (DSO) initiative. Their insights shed light on the perceived benefits, challenges, and institutional assumptions guiding the analogue-to-digital transition. These elite perspectives offer critical context for understanding how the DSO was designed and rationalised at the policy level, and how implementation efforts align or fail to align with the needs of rural target populations. To interpret these perspectives, this chapter continues to draw on the intersectional digital marginalisation framework (IDMF) a diagnostic tool developed in this thesis that integrates digital colonialism, intersectionality, digital poverty, information poverty, and uses and gratifications theory (UGT). While earlier chapters applied this framework to explore how users experience exclusion, the current chapter applies it upstream to examine how service providers and regulatory bodies conceptualise inclusion, make assumptions about end users, and potentially perpetuate exclusionary systems.

By using the IDMF, the analysis reveals gaps between policy intentions and user realities, particularly in relation to infrastructural distribution, content diversity, communication strategy, and cultural relevance. It also highlights how institutional perspectives may reinforce urban-centric, technocratic narratives that overlook the intersectional barriers faced by rural communities' barriers that were repeatedly voiced by participants in earlier chapters. The analysis in this chapter is organised around thematic categories reflecting on perceived goals and benefits of the switchover, institutional understandings of rural inclusion, challenges in implementation and reflections on policy shortcomings and future directions. These themes are not only informative but also analytically significant: they reveal the institutional logic behind digital inequality and allow for a more complete diagnosis of the systemic disconnect between top-down DSO strategy and bottom-up user experience.

6.2 Perceived goals and benefits of the switchover by NBC officials

The interviews with NBC officials revealed two main themes: Affordances of digital switchover and challenges in implementation of DSO.

6.2.1 Affordances of DTT- Access to digital television

The findings from the interviews with three NBC officials reveal the significant benefits of the digital switchover (DSO) initiative, including improved access to information and services, enhanced economic opportunities, and technological upskilling. These advantages, particularly in the context of digital terrestrial television (DTT)/FreeTV, highlight the potential for positive change in marginalised rural areas. However, they also bring to light concerns regarding the persistent digital divide and the broader implications of digital

inequality, which may reflect patterns of digital colonialism and neo-colonialism. The NBC officials Zonal Manager, Zonal Coordinator, and Zonal Monitoring Officer outlined the advantages of the DSO initiative, including superior audio and visual quality, expanded channel selection, and access to on-demand services. They emphasised that this digital transition could create new economic opportunities, particularly within the local creative industries, such as Nollywood. While this shift enhances local content production and distribution, it also reinforces existing socio-economic inequalities, particularly for marginalised rural communities. This disparity aligns with the concept of digital poverty, where certain populations are structurally excluded from benefiting fully from technological advancements due to inadequate infrastructure, affordability issues, and digital illiteracy. Furthermore, this digital exclusion can be examined through the lens of hegemonic power structures, where those with economic and technological control dictate the accessibility and distribution of digital resources, leaving vulnerable populations at a disadvantage. Additionally, these inequities are exacerbated by intersectionality, as socio-economic status, geographic location, and gender further influence individuals' ability to engage with digital advancements. This reveals a complex layering of disadvantages, requiring targeted interventions to ensure digital inclusivity for all segments of society.

The zonal manager also described how NBC's extensive advertising campaigns was, using TV, radio, newspapers, and direct community engagement through town hall meetings in the cities. He remarked, "Our awareness strategy went beyond traditional media, engaging directly with communities through town hall meetings, informational sessions, and feedback forums." While these efforts successfully disseminated information, they also highlight hegemonic control over digital narratives, wherein urban and privileged groups drive technological discourse and policies, often marginalising rural voices in decision-making processes. This dynamic reflects a broader pattern of digital colonialism, where the imposition of dominant technological systems dictates the accessibility of digital platforms, favouring urban elites while leaving rural communities with limited agency. Moreover, the intersectionality of economic status, literacy levels, and geographic barriers further deepens these disparities, as rural populations may struggle to engage with digital technologies due to systemic infrastructural neglect and socio-economic constraints. These advertising campaigns, while beneficial in theory, also risk reinforcing existing information poverty, as they often prioritise urban-centric outreach efforts, leaving rural residents with inadequate exposure to and understanding of the digital transition's implications.

Although the digital switch is framed as an opportunity to reduce disparities, the deeper issue of information poverty remains a critical concern. The zonal coordinator and monitoring officer supported this viewpoint, emphasising that the digital transition is not just about more channels but ensuring equitable benefits. The zonal coordinator stated that the initiative requires "continuous evaluation and adaptation to meet the evolving needs of diverse communities." However, the infrastructure and resources required to implement these services in rural areas remain scarce, reinforcing a digital divide that mirrors digital colonialism, where more technologically advanced urban centres disproportionately benefit while rural areas remain peripheral consumers rather than active participants in the digital economy. Furthermore, this digital exclusion aligns

with broader hegemonic structures, where the dominant players in the technological and economic sectors dictate the terms of digital access and participation. This creates a hierarchy in which urban elites control digital narratives, while rural populations are relegated to passive consumption. The persistence of this divide highlights the structural nature of digital poverty, where disparities in technological infrastructure, digital literacy, and economic constraints prevent equal access to digital opportunities.

Additionally, intersectionality plays a crucial role in exacerbating these inequalities, as factors such as gender, socioeconomic status, and education levels influence one's ability to engage with digital advancements. Women and lower-income individuals in rural areas, for instance, often face compounded barriers that further hinder their participation in the digital economy. This reinforces a cycle of exclusion, where lack of digital access perpetuates broader social and economic marginalisation. Addressing these disparities requires more than just technological upgrades; it necessitates targeted policies that integrate digital education, infrastructural investment, and equitable access to digital resources to ensure that all communities can benefit from the digital switchover.

6.2.2 Economic prospects of DSO

NBC officials agreed that DSO would stimulate economic growth by creating jobs in broadcasting, electronics, and local content production. They highlighted new TV stations and increased demand for content, generating employment for content developers, actors, technicians, and engineers. The zonal coordinator (ZC) explained, "When you create a TV station, you have to feed it with content," suggesting a boom for content creators and suppliers. The zonal monitoring officer (ZMO) described DSO as a potential "job spinner" for the creative industry, particularly for Nollywood producers. However, while these opportunities present new economic advantages, they also reinforce existing disparities in digital hegemony, where urban regions continue to dominate content production and technological infrastructure. The benefits of job creation, for instance, may remain concentrated in metropolitan areas where financial investments and resources are readily available, leaving rural and underprivileged communities on the periphery of this economic growth.

Furthermore, the expansion of digital broadcasting may not equally translate into improved economic outcomes for all content creators. Intersectionality plays a significant role in shaping who has access to these job opportunities, as factors such as socio-economic background, gender, geographic location, and cultural capital determine one's ability to leverage digital employment. Women and individuals from rural communities, for example, may struggle to enter the digital economy due to systemic barriers, such as lack of technological literacy, financial capital required to create high-quality content, and social constraints that limit their participation in digital entrepreneurship. Additionally, the absence of targeted support structures and mentorship programs further widens the gap, preventing marginalised groups from fully benefiting from digital opportunities.

Moreover, the uneven distribution of digital infrastructure exacerbates these disparities, reinforcing a cycle of exclusion where underprivileged populations remain consumers rather than active participants in content creation and distribution. This aligns with broader discussions of digital colonialism, where dominant corporate entities and urban elites control digital platforms, dictating the economic terms of participation. Without comprehensive policies that address these intersectional barriers such as access to training, funding for digital startups, and infrastructure expansion marginalised groups will continue to face significant challenges in achieving equitable representation in the digital economy. Furthermore, the increasing digitalisation of the media landscape could contribute to digital colonialism, as foreign investors and media conglomerates may exert significant control over content distribution and monetisation. While local content creators are positioned to benefit from expanded platforms, they may still be dependent on larger, well-resourced entities that dictate the terms of engagement, reinforcing a hierarchical system that limits true local autonomy in the digital space. Without targeted policies and investment in local talent from diverse backgrounds, these new economic prospects may only serve to deepen the existing inequalities rather than bridge them.

However, this economic expansion also raises concerns about intersectionality in digital access, as multiple dimensions of disadvantage intersect to limit equitable participation. If digital infrastructure and opportunities for content production are concentrated in urban centres, rural and socioeconomically disadvantaged populations may be excluded from these advancements. This exclusion perpetuates digital colonialism, reinforcing an urban-rural divide where technological progress primarily benefits the elite while marginalised communities remain dependent consumers. Additionally, this pattern reflects broader hegemonic power dynamics, where dominant groups control digital access and media narratives, leaving rural and economically disadvantaged populations without the necessary resources to fully engage in digital content creation. Additionally, information poverty exacerbates these issues, as rural populations not only lack the necessary digital infrastructure but also face educational and literacy barriers that prevent meaningful engagement with digital tools. This disparity highlights how digital exclusion is not merely a matter of lacking access to technology, but a broader socio-economic issue rooted in historical and systemic inequalities. Addressing these concerns requires intentional policies that prioritise the expansion of digital infrastructure in underserved areas, investments in digital literacy programs, and the implementation of inclusive content production strategies that enable marginalised communities to become active contributors in the digital economy rather than passive consumers.

6.2.3 Improved connectedness

NBC officials credited DSO with improving connectedness, particularly in rural areas, through emergency broadcasts and public notifications. The ZM stated, “In times of natural disasters or emergencies, rural communities can receive timely and accurate information through digital channels, aiding in evacuation efforts and ensuring the safety of residents.” However, rural areas with insufficient infrastructure may struggle to benefit from these services, exacerbating information poverty. This challenge is compounded by digital hegemony, where urban areas with stronger technological infrastructures and economic resources

dictate the pace and scope of digital inclusion, leaving rural populations reliant on limited and often outdated technologies. The digital transition, while beneficial in principle, risks reinforcing digital colonialism by positioning urban centres as the primary beneficiaries of improved connectedness, while rural communities remain marginalised and dependent on external interventions for access.

Furthermore, intersectionality plays a key role in understanding these disparities, as the ability to access and utilise digital information is often shaped by socioeconomic status, gender, education, and geographic location. Women and lower-income individuals in rural areas, for example, may face compounded barriers in engaging with digital services due to cultural norms, limited digital literacy, and financial constraints. Without targeted policies that address these structural inequalities, the promise of improved connectedness through DSO may remain unrealised for the most vulnerable communities. Additionally, the licensing regime for DTT service providers was highlighted, with the ZM noting, "Our goal is to enable service providers to navigate challenges and capitalise on opportunities afforded by the digital switchover." Despite this, service providers raised concerns about favouritism in licensing, illustrating how hegemonic structures within regulatory bodies may hinder the fair distribution of digital benefits, disproportionately affecting rural and marginalised communities.

6.2.4 Enhanced digital literacy

NBC officials emphasised that DSO could enhance digital skills and literacy, transforming the country's media landscape. The zonal manager (ZM) noted, "Citizens can now participate in polls, quizzes, and discussions related to the content they consume, creating a more engaging and dynamic media experience." This aligns with the uses and gratifications theory, where digital consumers actively engage with media based on personal needs such as entertainment, information, and social interaction. However, while this theory highlights the active role of audiences in selecting media that suits their needs, it does not fully account for the structural inequalities that shape digital literacy and access. The ability to participate in such interactive media experiences is often contingent on digital inclusion, which remains limited in many rural and economically disadvantaged communities.

Furthermore, digital poverty exacerbates these disparities, as access to hardware, stable internet, and technical skills varies significantly across different socio-economic groups. Individuals in low-income and rural areas may lack the necessary devices or internet connectivity to engage meaningfully with these interactive features, leaving them excluded from the participatory benefits of digital television. Additionally, the hegemonic control of digital platforms influences which voices are amplified in these digital debates. While urban users with access to education and technology can fully participate in polls, discussions, and content creation, marginalised populations may find their perspectives underrepresented or even silenced. Without targeted interventions such as digital literacy programs, affordable access to necessary technology, and inclusive content production policies DSO's potential to transform the media landscape could remain unevenly distributed, perpetuating existing digital inequalities rather than bridging them.

However, while digital broadcasting is framed as a pathway to greater engagement and literacy, digital poverty remains an obstacle. The reality of infrastructure gaps, limited connectivity, and low digital literacy levels in rural areas suggests that these benefits may not be uniformly experienced. Rural populations, already disadvantaged in digital access, may face barriers to fully participating in the digital shift, deepening the divide between urban and rural regions.

6.2.5 Bridging digital divide and digital inequality

The officials discussed how DSO could empower local content creators by providing more accessible platforms to showcase their work. The zonal coordinator (ZCO) emphasised, "DSO enhances civic engagement by offering interactive features such as call-in programs, enabling citizens to actively participate in discussions and engage with the government on various issues." While framed as a tool for media democratisation, the reality is that unequal access to digital tools, skills, and infrastructure may reinforce digital colonialism. Content producers in rural and marginalised regions may struggle to fully participate, limiting their ability to influence the digital media landscape. Furthermore, the concentration of digital media ownership in urban centres and the dominance of major digital platforms contribute to a hegemonic structure**,** where urban-based and well-resourced content creators gain greater visibility and influence. This creates a power imbalance where rural and marginalised content producers are relegated to peripheral roles, unable to compete on an equal footing with their urban counterparts. The economic barriers associated with content creation such as production costs, internet access fees, and marketing expenses further disadvantage those in low-income and rural areas, perpetuating a cycle of exclusion.

Additionally, the intersection of digital poverty and information poverty plays a critical role in shaping participation. Many rural-based content creators may lack not only the necessary digital tools but also the media literacy required to operate digital platforms effectively. Without structured interventions, such as digital skills training, subsidies for content creators in disadvantaged regions, and equitable revenue-sharing models, the benefits of DSO will remain unevenly distributed, reinforcing existing socio-economic disparities rather than bridging them. Moreover, NBC highlighted DSO's environmental benefits, such as reduced energy consumption compared to analogue transmission. The ZM noted, "Energy savings contribute to sustainability efforts and help create a more environmentally friendly media landscape." While this is a positive development, it does not address the deeper issue of digital exclusion**,** where infrastructural barriers prevent rural areas from benefiting fully from digital advancements.

6.3. Challenges of the DTT rollout in Lagos

The second common theme identified the key challenges in implementing the digital switchover. The regulators (NBC) admitted that the successful completion of DSO in Lagos faced numerous obstacles, from budgetary limitations to legal and regulatory impediments, which hindered the rollout and raised doubts about the federal government's ability to bridge the digital divide. These obstacles not only delayed the transition but also raised concerns about the ability of the government and the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) to address the digital divide and promote inclusion. Additionally, the challenges have

implications for persistent digital inequality and the potential reinforcement of patterns of digital colonialism and neo-colonialism, which is more like the indirect control or influence that former colonial powers and other dominant nations exert over developing countries, particularly in economic, political, technological, and cultural spheres particularly in marginalised rural areas. These limitations serve to highlight the structural constraints that mirror the historical forms of economic dependency and technological reliance, which define digital colonialism.

6.3.1 Budgetary limitations

NBC officials acknowledged that financial difficulties were a major challenge in the successful implementation of DSO. The zonal manager (ZM) cited "funding shortages or misallocation" as key factors leading to missed deadlines and delays in project timelines. These financial constraints were particularly impactful in addressing the affordability of key technologies, such as set-top boxes (STBs), which were initially priced at ₦12,000 an amount that posed a significant barrier for low-income households. While there were efforts to make STBs more accessible through financing plans, the affordability issue reflected a broader concern about how economic limitations could perpetuate the digital divide. The ZM stated that these "financial difficulties... slowed the project's completion," raising doubts about whether the project could truly bridge the digital divide. The high cost of digital technologies in a context of limited financial resources for rural and low-income urban communities further entrenches digital inequality, creating barriers for marginalised populations to participate fully in the digital era. This financial exclusion reinforces the concept of digital poverty, where access to essential digital infrastructure remains limited by economic barriers.

The technical and infrastructural challenges associated with transitioning from analogue to digital broadcasting were also compounded by financial limitations. The ZM highlighted that these complex technological changes, such as upgrading infrastructure and managing spectrum, were difficult to achieve within the available budget. The zonal monitoring officer (ZMO) noted that "achieving 100% coverage, especially in rural areas, remains a challenge given the current state of our country's infrastructure," suggesting that rural and underserved areas would likely remain disadvantaged in terms of access to digital broadcasting and related benefits. These gaps in infrastructure, coupled with limited financial resources, underscore the persistent issue of digital inequality. Rural regions, which often face lower levels of development and less access to technology, are at risk of being excluded from the benefits of digital transformation, reinforcing patterns of digital colonialism where the urban centres benefit at the expense of marginalised communities. This exclusionary pattern echoes the broader global dynamics of technological dependence, where digital progress is dictated by urban elites, leaving rural areas technologically deprived.

6.3.2 Promotional issues

NBC officials also identified challenges in promoting the digital switchover in Lagos, especially in terms of public awareness, affordability, and outreach. One of the key issues was the complexity of conveying technical information to a diverse audience, which made it difficult to engage the public effectively. The ZM

emphasised the challenge of communicating the "advantages of digital broadcasting and methods to access digital channels and set-top boxes," and acknowledged that these efforts fell short of expectations. The reliance on media campaigns, such as TV, radio, and print advertisements, was insufficient in addressing the unique needs of different communities, particularly in rural areas where awareness of the transition was notably low. The ZMO noted that the "prevailing state of awareness in rural areas of Lagos... reflects limited access to information and communication infrastructure." This gap in awareness, particularly in rural areas, is a critical issue in addressing digital inequality. The lack of accessible and personalised promotional efforts for rural populations exacerbates the digital divide. While urban centres may benefit from more robust awareness campaigns and access to digital technologies, rural areas often remain disconnected from these efforts, both in terms of information dissemination and the provision of necessary digital tools. Without specific outreach strategies and infrastructure improvements, rural communities' risk being left behind in the digital shift, highlighting the danger of digital colonialism. This colonial mindset manifests in the privileging of urban populations in the rollout of technological advancements, leaving rural areas to be passive consumers of content rather than active participants in the digital transformation.

Furthermore, NBC's efforts to engage diverse demographics, including people with disabilities, older individuals, and low-income communities, were emphasised as a way to ensure inclusivity in the DSO process. However, the ZM acknowledged the difficulty in reaching these groups effectively, underscoring the limitations of the promotional strategies in ensuring that all segments of society are included. The failure to adequately include marginalised groups in the digital transition further perpetuates social and economic inequalities, with these groups at risk of becoming more disenfranchised in an increasingly digital world. The absence of personalised communication strategies further illustrates the issue of information poverty, where access to relevant information remains restricted based on socio-economic status.

6.3.3 Regulatory concerns

Several regulatory concerns emerged in the interviews with NBC officials, particularly around the lack of a comprehensive legal framework for DSO implementation. The absence of clear legislation led to confusion, inefficiencies, and regulatory gaps. The zonal coordinator (ZC) stated that "the absence of a legal framework... has posed a substantial hindrance to successful DSO implementation," which further complicated the role of the government and private sector in managing the transition. The ZMO added that "the project has faced persistent funding challenges... resulting in delayed payments to service providers," and that this uncertainty around funding contributed to logistical difficulties and further delays. These regulatory gaps not only hindered the DSO rollout but also pointed to the lack of a well-structured approach to addressing the challenges of digital inequality and inclusion. In the absence of strong regulatory oversight, the interests of marginalised rural communities were often sidelined in favour of larger urban markets, where the focus on profitability outweighed the need for inclusive digital policies.

Governance and corruption also surfaced as significant barriers, with NBC officials acknowledging the challenges posed by the mismanagement of resources and delays in project implementation. The ZM

remarked that “acquisition of corruption... has eroded public trust and led to inefficiencies.” These issues further undermine the credibility of the digital transformation process and suggest a pattern of governance failure that disproportionately affects vulnerable communities. The lack of effective regulation and oversight exacerbates existing inequalities and allows powerful actors to dictate the terms of digital access, reinforcing neo-colonial dynamics where marginalised communities continue to struggle to access the benefits of technological advancements.

Overall, these challenges faced in the DSO rollout in Lagos reflect broader concerns about digital colonialism and neo-colonialism in the context of digital transitions. While the DSO initiative aims to bridge the digital divide and enhance access to information, its implementation has been plagued by issues of affordability, infrastructure gaps, and regulatory inefficiencies that disproportionately affect rural and marginalised communities. The lack of targeted interventions for these groups risks further entrenching digital inequality, where urban populations benefit from enhanced access to digital technologies, content, and opportunities, while rural areas remain sidelined. Addressing these issues is not just a matter of technological development but also a matter of social justice and civic responsibility, ensuring that marginalised populations are not left behind in the pursuit of digital progress.

6.4 Service-providers' perspectives

The service providers highlighted several key affordances of digital television technology (DTT) that benefit both the populist and themselves. These include enhanced public engagement, educational advantages, and improved accessibility, alongside a broader variety and higher quality of entertainment programming. Additionally, technological advancements in DTT have contributed to significant improvements in viewer satisfaction. This comprehensive set of benefits reflects the dual role of DTT in promoting societal value while also advancing the interests of service providers.

6.4.1 Awareness and public engagement by the service providers

While service providers expressed enthusiasm about the benefits of digital television, their varying definitions of 'digital switchover' pointed to potential challenges in aligning the objectives and purpose of the DSO program. About 65% of respondents who had an ideal about DSO, among them the program manager and coordinator, demonstrated a technical understanding, describing DSO in terms of the digitalisation of broadcast signal generation, distribution, and reception, as well as the shift from analogue to digital TV transmission. These individuals had a clear grasp of the technological and policy implications surrounding DSO. In contrast, other respondents, such as duty continuity announcers, station managers, presenters, VCR editors, and marketers, exhibited more general interpretations. Their descriptions focused primarily on the method of signal transmission, with minimal emphasis on the technical intricacies involved. For instance, they referred to DSO as simply ‘changing the method of transmitting television signals’ or ‘change of TV signal.’ Some, like filmmakers and content producers, saw DSO as a technological upgrade, highlighting improvements in image and audio quality and the support for multiple digital channels. Others, such as

canteen staff and public servants, provided brief descriptions, mainly emphasising the shift from analogue to digital broadcasting.

However, this significant and concerning pattern that emerged regarding the inconsistency in the dissemination of information about the DSO initiative raised concerns about their appreciation on the DSO. Meaning that not all employees within the television service provider network had received formal briefings from the federal government. In contrast, 38% of respondents, for instance, the program coordinator, reported that they had not received official communication but instead relied on advertisements on television and radio for information about the digital switchover. This inconsistency highlights the persistent issue of unequal access to vital information, contributing to the digital divide.

The lack of uniform communication further exposes the implications of digital inequality, particularly in marginalised and rural areas. Those in more remote locations may have limited access to formal briefings or up-to-date information, exacerbating existing disparities in digital literacy and access. Furthermore, the reliance on commercial broadcasts for information can perpetuate patterns of information poverty, where access to critical knowledge and resources remains controlled by centralised urban hubs or commercial entities, leaving some officials at a disadvantage. The variation in awareness and understanding among these service providers, who serve as intermediaries between the initiative and potential audiences, underscores the urgency of ensuring consistent and comprehensive communication. Only through equitable access to information can we bridge the digital divide, ensuring that all communities, particularly for those service providers who are not within city centres, can fully participate in and benefit from the announcement of the digital transition. This approach would be essential to prevent the perpetuation of digital inequalities and avoid reinforcing colonial-like power structures within the digital landscape. By acknowledging the effects of information poverty, it becomes evident that without strategic and inclusive engagement, the benefits of digitalisation may remain unevenly distributed, further entrenching social and economic disparities among different demographic groups.

6.4.2. Identified affordances of DTT

Service providers have identified several key affordances, including improved content variety, enhanced signal quality, a broader range of entertainment options, and overall technological advancements that contribute to greater user satisfaction. Additionally, the digital switchover (DSO) has brought substantial benefits to service providers, such as better service delivery and access to new technologies. However, this transition has not been without its challenges. Infrastructure deficits, low awareness of the DSO, issues of affordability, and concerns about digital inclusion remain critical obstacles. To overcome these challenges, solutions must be sought, with particular emphasis on collaboration between government and the private sector to ensure the successful implementation of digital television in underserved communities.

6.4.2.1 Content varieties/ signal improvement

Interviews with service providers revealed that content varieties such as educational programmes and signal coverage and accessibility offered by digital terrestrial television (DTT) were highly valued. The

Programmes Manager (PM) highlighted the improved signal fidelity and superior visual experience of DTT, which significantly enhance educational content and documentaries. They emphasised how the clarity and precision of the digital signal have expanded viewership, particularly for educational programming. The PM noted, “One of the standout advantages is the significant increase in channel availability. This expansion means that our audience can enjoy a broader spectrum of content, catering to a wide array of interests and preferences. Moreover, digital television facilitates an extraordinary diversity in programming choices. Whether you are a fan of niche genres, international content, educational programs, or local productions, the digital platform ensures that there is something for everyone. This variety enriches the viewing experience, offering endless opportunities for entertainment, learning, and cultural exploration.”

The programme coordinator (PC) echoed these sentiments, highlighting the improved understanding and information retention due to the enhanced image quality of educational materials. Additionally, the Station manager emphasised how DTT has broadened the scope of available educational programs, reaching diverse demographics, including remote and underserved areas. The Station manager stated, “The expanded coverage of digital signals can extend its reach to remote rural locations, thereby bridging the geographical gap and providing television access to previously underserved communities. This is a great advantage to us and can increase our viewership.” These responses collectively underscore the significance of digital television in providing enhanced educational resources with better accessibility and quality. The Marketing Officer also highlighted the educational programming available on DTT, describing it as a beneficial resource for viewers seeking to expand their knowledge. This consensus among service providers underscores the critical role DTT can play in enriching educational experiences and making learning more accessible to a wider audience.

However, while DTT promises vast educational benefits, its impact is not uniform across all communities. The expansion of educational content and programming availability through DTT is often touted as an opportunity to reach remote and underserved areas. Yet, the reality is that the digital divide persists, particularly in marginalised rural regions where access to digital infrastructure remains limited. The promise of bridging geographical gaps and providing access to previously underserved communities is a compelling argument for DTT’s potential, but it must be seen through the lens of persistent inequality.

Many rural and marginalised areas face challenges in accessing the necessary infrastructure to fully benefit from digital advancements, such as high-speed internet and reliable electricity. This digital inequality exacerbates existing disparities in educational access, where rural students and learners may be left behind in comparison to their urban counterparts. The increasing reliance on digital platforms for educational content also risks further alienating those in areas where digital infrastructure is sparse, perpetuating patterns of digital colonialism. In this context, urban centres often seen as hubs of technological development continue to benefit disproportionately, while rural and marginalised populations struggle to access the same opportunities. Moreover, while digital platforms may offer a greater variety of programming, the reach of these services is often determined by the extent of infrastructure investment. This reinforces patterns of neo-

colonialism, where powerful urban centres or commercial entities control the flow of digital knowledge, leaving rural and underserved areas dependent on external forces. In the case of educational content, this dynamic could result in the exclusion of rural populations from accessing the same level of educational resources and opportunities as their urban counterparts.

Therefore, while DTT offers significant potential to enhance educational accessibility and quality, there remains an urgent need to address the underlying digital inequalities. Bridging the digital divide requires a concerted effort to ensure that marginalised and rural areas are not left behind in the digital transition, and that all communities regardless of geographical location have equal access to the educational benefits that digital television promises. This can only happen when there is dismantling of digital colonialism that continues to shape global access to knowledge and opportunity.

6.4.2.2 Entertainment variety and quality programmes

The service provider also identified that entertainment variety and quality offered by digital terrestrial television (DTT) as benefits to viewers. The programme coordinator (PC), emphasised that DTT provides viewers, including students and learners, access to educational materials of unparalleled image quality, thus enhancing understanding and retention. The PC stated, “Our goal is to enrich our viewers' entertainment experience by providing more choices and better-quality content, ensuring that there's always something for everyone in the household to enjoy.” The duty continuity announcer (DCA) further underscored the convenience of an extensive channel lineup that caters to various viewer preferences, enriching the entertainment experience. The DCA noted, “In addition to more channels, digital television introduces an impressive diversity in content and programming choices. Whether viewers enjoy niche genres, international shows, educational programs, or local content, there's something for everyone. This variety enriches the viewing experience, making it more enjoyable and adapted to personal preferences.”

The DCA emphasised that the transition to digital technology reflects a commitment to providing viewers with high-quality, diverse, and easily accessible content. They stated, “We are dedicated to ensuring viewers have the best possible options at their fingertips, allowing them to discover new favourites and enjoy a wider range of programming.” Similarly, the VCR Editor agreed with the DCA, pointing to the increased channel availability and diverse programming choices offered by DTT. They stated, “With our state-of-the-art digital television service, viewers can access a wide array of channels and enjoy diverse programming options.” These responses collectively highlight the potential of DTT to offer a wide range of entertainment options with superior picture and sound quality, catering to diverse viewer interests compared to the analogue platform system. The commitment to providing high-quality, varied, and accessible content underscores how digital television can enrich the overall viewing experience for all audiences.

However, while DTT promises to enhance entertainment accessibility, the reality of its impact is not equally distributed. The entertainment options and superior content quality heralded by service providers often fail to reach the most marginalised and rural populations, exacerbating the persistent digital divide. Although DTT

introduces a wider array of channels and programming, the infrastructure needed to support this technology remains concentrated in urban centres, leaving rural and underserved communities at a disadvantage. In areas where digital infrastructure, such as high-speed internet and reliable electricity, is lacking, the benefits of DTT such as greater variety in content and improved quality are inaccessible. This persistent digital inequality highlights a form of digital colonialism, where urban and technologically advanced regions continue to dominate access to digital resources, while rural areas remain disenfranchised. Digital colonialism manifests through the concentration of technological advancements and resources in urban and wealthier regions, leaving rural populations dependent on external service providers for access to digital content. The entertainment landscape becomes yet another space where marginalised communities have limited agency in shaping their digital experiences, reinforcing neo-colonial structures where power remains in the hands of media conglomerates and urban elites. As urban areas benefit from an enriched entertainment landscape, rural populations are often left without the necessary infrastructure to take advantage of these opportunities.

Moreover, the reliance on digital platforms for entertainment and education risks further entrenching disparities between those with access to the latest technologies and those without. As entertainment increasingly becomes digitised, the exclusion of rural and marginalised communities from this transition contributes to a cycle of inequality, reinforcing existing power imbalances in digital access. The widening gap between urban and rural populations in terms of entertainment choices and content quality underscores the urgent need to address these digital inequities, ensuring that all regions, particularly those in rural and marginalised areas, are included in the digital evolution.

6.4.2.3 Technological advancement and user satisfaction

Service providers emphasised the benefits of technological advancements and enhanced user satisfaction associated with digital terrestrial television (DTT) implementation. The Programme Presenter (PP) highlighted how digital television overcomes the limitations of traditional programming, offering a dynamic and enriched learning environment with interactive features. The PP noted, “Additional services such as subtitles, multiple language options, and audio descriptions enhance our viewers' satisfaction, accommodating diverse audiences with varying preferences.” The Engineer emphasised the ease of installation and user-friendly setup, contributing to overall viewer satisfaction.

He went further to state that, “the interactive capabilities of digital TV open up new business models for which can increase our customer engagement and generate additional revenue. This is done by leveraging behavioural analytics gathered from interactive platforms, we can deploy targeted advertising, dynamically segment audiences, and implement subscription-based or hybrid revenue models. Additionally, the integration of third-party applications opens pathways for collaborative partnerships, co-branding initiatives, and cross-platform service convergence”.

They remarked, “The most significant benefits are the dramatic improvement in broadcast quality and reliability that digital technology offers. Digital TV provides superior picture clarity and enhanced sound

quality, ensuring that viewers receive a high-definition viewing experience that far surpasses the capabilities of traditional analogue broadcasts."
The Editor also discussed how improved reception and reduced interference on digital TV channels elevate viewer satisfaction, ensuring a consistent viewing experience. These responses collectively emphasise the importance of technological advancements in DTT, which enable a seamless, interactive, and satisfying viewing experience. The public servant added that advanced functions like video-on-demand and digital recording capabilities provide viewers with a customised viewing experience. Service providers were enthusiastic about the potential of DSO to enhance audience engagement, especially across regions like Lagos, where DSO is seen as a tool for empowering viewers by providing greater consumer choice. Identified benefits included expanded channel options, improved image and sound quality, more local content, cost savings, and user-friendly functionality.

A programme coordinator (PC) emphasised that viewers are now "no longer bound by rigid broadcasting schedules" and have "the liberty to control the timing of their content consumption." The ability to access more diverse and convenient programming was noted, with digital television offering a broader array of channels catering to various preferences. The controller of programmes highlighted the platform's flexibility, enabling viewers to enjoy programs across different devices, increasing the ease of DTT use. Similarly, a content producer added that "additional services like subtitles and multiple language options increase viewer satisfaction, accommodating different audiences."

While these advancements in technological features seem promising, their benefits are not universally accessible. The VCR Editor highlighted the positive aspects of DSO, especially in reducing household-level infrastructure requirements, stating that the switchover eliminates the need for cumbersome physical hardware associated with analogue TV. The Station manager in Lagos emphasised the expanded TV network coverage DSO would facilitate, reaching remote rural locations and providing television access to previously underserved communities. However, while these developments are beneficial for some, they risk exacerbating the digital divide in areas where the necessary infrastructure for DTT is still lacking, particularly in rural and marginalised regions. This disparity echoes concerns of digital colonialism, where technological advancements predominantly benefit urban centres, reinforcing existing hierarchies and deepening digital disenfranchisement among rural populations.

The marketing officer pointed out the affordability of digital television receivers, which they described as cost-effective for rural viewers. This affordability is crucial in addressing the financial barriers that often prevent marginalised communities from accessing technological advancements. The duty continuity announcer (DCA) similarly noted that this cost-effectiveness "encourages accessibility, particularly for those who live outside urban areas." Despite these positive remarks, the reality remains that rural and underserved populations are often unable to fully benefit from digital advances due to limited access to infrastructure, electricity, or affordable technology. Additionally, DTT's potential for community engagement through more localised, issue-specific programming was highlighted as an advantage. The duty engineer emphasised the

availability of community-centric content personalised to the unique interests of rural audiences, while the Filmmaker noted the interactive elements introduced by DTT, such as polls, surveys, and community-driven content. These features are intended to promote greater involvement and connection among viewers. Yet, the reality is that rural areas still struggle with inconsistent access to these features, limiting their ability to engage fully with the content.

The environmental benefits of DTT, such as energy efficiency, were also noted by the DCA, particularly in rural areas, where environmental concerns are more pronounced. However, the broader issue remains while DTT may offer energy savings and content variety for those with access, it perpetuates a cycle of digital colonialism where urban areas, with greater technological infrastructure, continue to enjoy the full benefits, while rural areas remain digitally disenfranchised. The uneven distribution of technological advancements mirrors historical patterns of infrastructural neglect in rural communities, reinforcing systemic inequalities in media access and participation.

Finally, the manager of the sport desk and an on-air personality (OAP) highlighted the convenience of on-screen program information, helping viewers manage their preferences more efficiently. These tools are designed to empower viewers by allowing greater control over their viewing habits, yet they may be inaccessible to those in rural regions, further reinforcing existing inequalities. As DTT expands its reach, addressing the inherent disparities in access is crucial to ensuring that digital switchover does not further entrench digital colonialism but rather promotes inclusivity and equal technological empowerment.

6.4.2.4 Benefits of DSO to service providers

Service providers also identified the importance of DSO as it relates to their operation to increase their viewership capacity. Such benefits include improved signal quality, which enhances their ability to deliver digital content more efficiently, resulting in cost savings, larger audiences, and ultimately more revenue. According to the programmes manager (PM), DSO marks significant progress in content distribution, particularly with the introduction of high-definition (HD) and ultra-high-definition (UHD) formats. The PM emphasised that “the adoption of digital broadcasting mitigates signal deterioration during transmission, ensuring smooth delivery of high-fidelity material and minimising interruptions for viewers.” However, this development underscores the growing concept of digital poverty, as marginalised and rural areas often struggle to access the infrastructure needed to fully benefit from these advancements, thereby widening the digital divide.

While service providers praise the technological benefits, the reality is that rural and underserved regions face significant barriers to access. The programme coordinator (PC) noted that DSO allows for more effective spectrum utilisation and a broader selection of channels, which increases the variety and inclusivity of programming. The PC explained, “The transition to digital technology facilitates the broadcast of a considerably larger number of channels, enabling a more varied and inclusive program lineup.” However, the expansion of available channels and content remains inaccessible to many rural populations, where limited

access to digital infrastructure and broadband services perpetuates information poverty. This highlights how digital transitions often prioritise urban, affluent populations, further marginalising already underserved rural communities. The inclusion of interactive elements in DSO, such as live polls, quizzes, and real-time engagement, is another significant advancement in digital television, as noted by the duty continuity announcer (DCA). The DCA highlighted that "The immediate engagement these elements provide enables viewers to actively participate in polls, quizzes, and live conversations about the content being aired." Yet, this level of interactivity is contingent on access to both the necessary hardware and stable internet connections, which remain scarce in many rural and marginalised areas. This situation exemplifies digital colonialism, where urban viewers enjoy the full benefits of digital interactivity while rural populations are left behind, reinforcing patterns of digital exclusion and economic disparity in the digital age.

The move to HD and UHD programming, praised by both TV presenters and filmmakers, represents a notable improvement in visual storytelling. Presenters noted, "The shift to higher resolutions allows us to deliver information with a heightened degree of accuracy and vividness." However, while urban areas benefit from this technological leap, rural communities with limited access to modern devices or high-quality signal reception continue to experience subpar viewing quality. This disparity underscores hegemonic structures in media access, where technological advancements are unequally distributed, leaving rural areas in a state of digital limbo. In addition to technological advancements, DSO's enhanced error-correction capabilities and improved broadcast quality were seen as protective measures against signal distortions, ensuring uninterrupted service. The VCR Editor highlighted how these features "guarantee the transmission of content to viewers with minimal interruptions." However, the digital infrastructure needed to support these features is still lacking in many rural areas, where poor signal reception and unreliable internet connections prevent rural viewers from experiencing the same level of service and satisfaction. This reflects the intersectionality of digital exclusion, where economic status, geography, and access to infrastructure collectively determine one's ability to benefit from digital transitions.

Energy efficiency and sustainability were also key themes discussed by service providers, particularly among station managers who aligned their operations with environmental principles. While they emphasised the eco-friendly benefits of DSO, these advantages are often overshadowed by the infrastructural challenges faced in rural areas, where access to energy-efficient technology is limited. The public official recognised that "enhanced signal quality ensures the clear and reliable transmission of important information," especially during emergencies. Yet, in rural regions where access to digital services remains scarce, these life-saving features are often inaccessible. This illustrates how digital switchover initiatives can exacerbate the vulnerabilities of already marginalised communities, reinforcing digital hegemony that privileges urban centres over rural populations.

The marketing department within the service providers also highlighted the financial potential of DSO, particularly in leveraging viewer data for targeted advertising. The marketer noted, "The DSO enables a thorough examination of viewer data, allowing us to customise our messages based on individual

demographics, interests, and behaviours." This shift toward personalised advertising, while beneficial for generating revenue, also highlights the growing commercialisation of digital platforms**,** where data from affluent, urban users becomes a commodity. Meanwhile, rural viewers, who may not have access to the same level of connectivity or consumer choices, are excluded from the personalised experiences that are becoming the norm for urban populations. This exacerbates digital colonialism**,** where urban centres not only have technological advancements but also hold the economic power to monetise the data and preferences of their residents, leaving rural communities at a disadvantage.

While DSO offers significant benefits to service providers, including improved signal quality, increased viewership capacity, and expanded monetisation opportunities, these advantages are not equally distributed. The transition to digital broadcasting disproportionately benefits urban populations, while rural and marginalised communities continue to experience digital poverty and exclusion. The interplay of digital colonialism, hegemony, and intersectionality in the implementation of DSO demonstrates that technological progress is often shaped by existing social and economic inequalities, reinforcing pre-existing disparities rather than eliminating them.

6.5 Challenges identified

The challenges identified by these service providers reflect ongoing issues of digital inequality and the persistence of the digital divide, particularly in marginalised rural areas. As stated above, the digital switchover (DSO) if implemented according to plans promises to deliver technological advancements, however, these benefits are not equally accessible to all communities, especially in rural and economically disadvantaged regions. These areas face not only infrastructure deficits but also a lack of awareness, affordability issues, and cultural barriers that further entrench digital exclusion which further discussed below.

6.5.1 Infrastructure-induced deficits

Service providers acknowledged that infrastructure challenges remain a significant barrier to the adoption of DTT in rural areas, reinforcing the persistent digital divide between urban and rural communities. Limited access to high-quality signal transmission, often due to the physical distance from broadcasting towers or natural obstructions, results in rural communities frequently experiencing poor signal strength and unreliable power supplies. These technical shortcomings make it increasingly difficult for rural households to receive uninterrupted digital broadcasting, placing them at a significant disadvantage compared to their urban counterparts. One engineer explicitly reported, "Poor signal strength is one of the biggest challenges faced by viewers in rural areas," underscoring the barriers preventing rural viewers from accessing digital services. Another commonly cited issue was the inadequate and unreliable power supply, which not only disrupts television reception but also hinders the ability of digital transmission equipment to function effectively.

As one duty continuity announcer explained, "One major problem viewers face is the power supply in these areas, which is limited." In some cases, alternative power sources such as generators or solar panels have been proposed, but these solutions remain costly and inaccessible to many rural dwellers. Such structural deficiencies reflect broader patterns of digital colonialism, where technological advancements primarily serve urban and privileged populations, while marginalised rural communities remain excluded from the digital shift. This exclusion is not merely incidental but reflects systemic inequalities in resource distribution, reinforcing the concentration of digital power and infrastructure in wealthier, more developed regions. Furthermore, the lack of investment in rural digital infrastructure continues to widen the gap between urban and rural communities, deepening socio-economic disparities. As a result, rural communities are left without the necessary tools to fully participate in the digital transformation, perpetuating their marginalisation in an increasingly digital world, where access to information is a crucial determinant of social and economic opportunities.

6.5.2 Lack of awareness of DSO

Service providers have reported that a significant challenge in the digital switchover (DSO) process is the lack of awareness, particularly in rural areas where educational resources and access to information are limited. This gap in awareness is reflective of broader information poverty, a condition where individuals or communities lack the necessary information resources to effectively participate in digital advancements. A TV station manager reported that "a substantial majority specifically over 79% of the public seems unfamiliar with the concept of digital switchover," highlighting the severe awareness gap that exists, particularly in rural communities. The lack of structured public education initiatives means that many individuals in these areas remain uninformed about the transition, leading to systemic exclusion from digital access. Another marketing officer stated, "It looks like the government is not committed to the project; it appears too slow, so viewers in these areas will certainly have challenges benefiting from this project." This observation suggests that the slow pace of the project, coupled with inadequate dissemination of information, exacerbates the digital divide, keeping marginalised populations in a state of information scarcity.

The issue extends beyond mere unawareness; it reflects how rural areas are treated as secondary in the development of digital infrastructure, reinforcing their existing socio-economic disadvantages. The absence of deliberate engagement strategies further entrenches information poverty, making it difficult for these communities to leverage digital technology for empowerment and inclusion. One public servant reported, "By implementing targeted communication strategies, we can ensure that individuals are well-informed about the transition from analogue to digital broadcasting." This statement underscores the need for intentional and inclusive public education efforts that go beyond surface-level awareness campaigns. To effectively bridge this gap, a multifaceted approach involving media outreach, community engagement, and collaboration with local leaders must be adopted. Without proactive steps to ensure widespread and accessible information dissemination, rural communities will continue to face barriers to accessing digital broadcasting, limiting their opportunities for economic participation, cultural inclusion, and overall digital empowerment. The marginalisation of these communities in the digital transition further deepens existing

inequalities, reinforcing the need for policies that prioritise the inclusion of underserved populations in national technological advancements.

6.5.3 Affordability of services

Service providers involved in the digital terrestrial television (DTT) rollout in Lagos highlighted affordability as a critical challenge impeding widespread adoption. They noted that the cost of digital TV sets, set-top boxes (STBs), and related equipment remains prohibitively high for many in low-income communities, thereby deepening the digital divide and reinforcing patterns of digital poverty**.** An Editor emphasised that "the cost of purchasing a new digital TV or set-top box can be a barrier for many people living in the Ikorodu area," reflecting how financial constraints systematically exclude economically disadvantaged groups from full participation in digital transformation. The commercial manager and programme coordinator corroborated this concern, pointing to the broader financial struggles faced by numerous households. A content producer, however, acknowledged the potential economic benefits of DTT, stating that "affordability is a key advantage, as digital television receivers are cost-effective, and the absence of ongoing subscription fees contributes to the financial well-being of viewers, particularly those in rural areas." While digital television eliminates recurring costs, the initial financial barrier still disproportionately affects lower-income populations, reinforcing information poverty where lack of financial resources translates to restricted access to vital media content.

This affordability crisis, according to service providers, underscores the need for government intervention to ensure equitable access to digital television services. A marketing officer remarked, "The only thing the government can do is to make sure that the fees are affordable, and STBs are accessible by all, or possibly give free set-top boxes to people who can't afford them." Such measures would prevent the exclusion of marginalised groups from the benefits of digital media, which is increasingly vital for education, information dissemination, and entertainment. Additionally, stakeholders argue that public-private partnerships could be instrumental in subsidising costs, providing incentives for manufacturers to lower prices, and expanding accessibility to digital services. Without targeted subsidies, infrastructural investments, or cost-reduction strategies**,** DTT will remain out of reach for the most vulnerable, further entrenching disparities in digital access, restricting socio-economic opportunities, and exacerbating the socio-economic inequalities that define digital poverty in Lagos.

6.5.4 Digital inclusion of communities

Service providers emphasised that digital inclusion extends beyond mere access to technology; it also involves ensuring that digital content and services are contextually relevant to the cultural, linguistic, and social needs of diverse populations, particularly in rural areas. For instance, the marketing officer reported, "There may be cultural and linguistic barriers that need to be overcome to ensure that DTT services are accessible and inclusive." Similarly, the presenter observed, "Rural areas may have unique viewing preferences, and it is important to ensure that DTT services cater to these preferences." These reflections underscore the significance of content that is deliberately personalised to meet the expectations and realities

of different communities, as failing to do so exacerbates digital exclusion and hinders equitable participation in the digital space. The absence of culturally relevant content and services within digital platforms perpetuates patterns of digital colonialism, wherein dominant urban-centric media continue to shape narratives, marginalising the voices and perspectives of rural populations. This form of exclusion advances a one-directional flow of information, reinforcing global media hegemony where digital transitions prioritise urban perspectives while rural communities remain underrepresented. The danger of such an imbalance is that rural audiences risk becoming passive consumers of external content rather than active participants in shaping their own digital experiences.

Moreover, digital exclusion in rural communities often intersects with economic barriers, lower literacy rates, and infrastructural limitations, further complicating the realisation of a fully inclusive digital transition. Without purposeful interventions such as community-driven content creation, multilingual digital offerings, and representation of rural cultures in mainstream programming, digital technology risks deepening existing inequalities rather than bridging them. Therefore, true digital inclusion demands a shift from a mere technological rollout to a holistic strategy that ensures relevance, representation, and accessibility for all communities, particularly those historically marginalised in digital transformations.

6.5.5 Need for solutions to implementation challenges

Respondents also suggested solution to the regulator (NBC) highlighting the necessity for an all-inclusive approach that addresses both infrastructural barriers and content creation. The transition to digital terrestrial television (DTT) is not merely about providing access but also ensuring that the populations affected can effectively utilise the technology to improve their quality of life. Strategies such as public awareness campaigns, infrastructure development, and digital literacy programs were deemed essential for narrowing the digital divide. A station manager stated, "The benefits of DTT are great if citizens can understand the importance of using DTT, generated through education, accessibility, and affordability as interconnected elements that ensure widespread adoption." Reinforcing this view, a content producer noted, "Initiatives should cater to different demographics, ensuring access to educational resources. This inclusivity can help bridge the digital divide and empower a broad range of the population."

The issue of digital poverty remains a significant barrier, as economic and educational disparities limit technological access. Many rural communities lack the necessary infrastructure and financial resources to afford DTT equipment or sustain its usage. This lack of access results in further isolation and exclusion from digital opportunities, leading to a cycle of information poverty that exacerbates social and economic inequalities. To address this, targeted investments must be made in low-cost or subsidised DTT solutions, digital training programs, and localised content production that reflects the realities and needs of these underserved communities.

Furthermore, the unique challenges that rural areas face require solutions that go beyond standard urban implementation models. Without dedicated interventions such as region-specific technology deployment,

localised training initiatives, and community-driven content creation, digital inequality will persist, leaving large segments of the population disconnected from the evolving digital landscape. Policymakers and stakeholders must recognise that a one-size-fits-all approach is inadequate. Instead, a multidimensional strategy that integrates technology with community-specific needs is essential for a successful and inclusive digital transition.

6.5.6 Role of government and private sector partnership

Collaboration between the government, private sector, and nonprofit organisations was recognised as critical to overcoming these barriers. However, concerns about the effectiveness of such partnerships were raised. The controller programme manager stated, "The government should involve the private sector to ensure efficiency and better service delivery." However, skepticism about government capabilities persisted, with a Filmmaker remarking, "We the public have little trust in the government's ability to handle such a project effectively, and we believe the private sector may be more dedicated and efficient in executing the project." Despite these reservations, the need for a government-led digital inclusion framework was emphasised by presenter-2, who stated, "The government needs to create a strong framework to address digital inclusion and eliminate digital inequality." These insights reflect broader patterns of digital colonialism and neo-colonialism, wherein infrastructural inadequacies, lack of awareness, and affordability constraints perpetuate the digital divide. The continued marginalisation of rural and economically disadvantaged communities reinforces existing structures of power, where access to digital resources remains concentrated in urban centres and among higher-income populations. Digital inequalities persist when marginalised communities remain disconnected due to economic constraints, educational disparities, and policy gaps that fail to prioritise inclusive digital development.

As the programme manager stressed, "The government needs to promote public awareness and education campaigns that help to demystify DTT technology and promote its benefits." This highlights the urgent need for widespread digital literacy programs that not only explain the technical aspects of DTT but also empower communities with the knowledge to maximise its benefits for education, business, and civic engagement. Without proactive governmental efforts and strategic partnerships, the risk of deepening digital inequality remains significant, further widening the socio-economic gap between connected and unconnected populations. Addressing these challenges requires an intentional, inclusive strategy that ensures rural communities are not left behind in the transition to digital broadcasting. This includes long-term investments in affordable digital infrastructure, equitable access to digital resources, and policies that encourage diverse content representation to cater to various linguistic and cultural groups. Only through active cooperation among stakeholders including government agencies, private sector players, civil society organisations, and local communities can digital inclusion become a reality, promoting an equitable and accessible digital future for all. Such a collective effort would not only bridge the digital divide but also promote digital sovereignty, allowing communities to take control of their digital futures rather than remaining dependent on external entities dictating their digital experiences.

6.6 Summary

Chapter six presents findings from interviews with three National Broadcast Commission (NBC) officials and 24 members of the broadcast organisation of Nigeria (BON), focusing on the digital switchover (DSO) initiative in Lagos. The chapter explores both the benefits and challenges associated with transitioning from analogue to digital broadcasting. NBC officials highlighted several advantages of DSO, including improved access to digital television, enhanced economic opportunities, and better connectivity for rural communities. They noted that DSO enables high-quality audio-visual broadcasting, boosts local content creation (especially Nollywood), and promotes digital literacy. However, they also pointed out the persistence of the digital divide, where rural communities struggle with affordability, infrastructure limitations, and digital illiteracy. This reinforces digital inequality, favouring urban elites over marginalised populations. The economic prospects of DSO were also discussed, with expectations of job creation in broadcasting, content production, and related industries. However, officials warned that without targeted interventions, these opportunities might remain concentrated in urban areas, deepening socio-economic disparities. Regulatory concerns, including licensing challenges and favouritism, were also identified as barriers to equitable participation in the digital economy. NBC officials admitted that implementing DSO in Lagos faced several hurdles. Budgetary constraints delayed the rollout, limiting the affordability of set-top boxes (STBs) and restricting digital access for low-income households. Public awareness campaigns struggled to reach rural populations, further widening the digital divide. Additionally, the absence of a clear legal framework and governance issues, such as mismanagement and corruption, hindered the initiative's success.

Broadcast service providers acknowledged DSO's benefits, particularly in offering a wider variety of high-quality content, improving public engagement, and expanding access to educational programs. They highlighted technological advancements, including better signal quality and interactive features like on-demand services, as key advantages of digital broadcasting. However, service providers also noted inconsistencies in information dissemination about DSO, with many employees relying on advertisements rather than formal briefings. Infrastructure deficits, including poor signal transmission in rural areas, unreliable power supply, and affordability issues, were major obstacles to widespread adoption. The high cost of STBs and digital TV sets posed a financial barrier for low-income populations, reinforcing digital poverty. The chapter underscores the need for strategic government interventions to address digital inequality. Recommendations include subsidising STBs, expanding infrastructure to rural areas, enhancing public awareness campaigns, and encouraging government-private sector collaboration to ensure efficient service delivery. Policymakers must also prioritise digital inclusion by developing culturally relevant content and digital literacy programs to bridge the urban-rural divide.

Overall, while DSO presents numerous advantages for Nigeria's media landscape, its implementation faces significant challenges related to infrastructure, affordability, regulation, and public awareness. Without deliberate policies to address these barriers, the digital switchover may exacerbate existing socio-economic inequalities rather than bridging them. In light of these findings, chapter seven synthesises insights from both audience and institutional perspectives to critically reflect on the broader implications of Nigeria’s digital

switchover (DSO). Drawing on the study's conceptual framework, this chapter interrogates the disconnects between policy intentions and lived realities, highlighting how structural barriers and socio-cultural dynamics influence digital engagement. Through this discussion, the chapter seeks to contextualise the empirical results within wider debates on digital inequality, media access, and technological inclusion in the Global South.

Chapter Seven: Discussion

7.1. Introduction

This chapter presents a critical discussion of the study's findings, derived from surveys, interviews, institutional insights, and supporting analyses of relevant policy documents and media discourse. These findings previously explored in chapters four, five, and six are re-examined through the conceptual and theoretical frameworks introduced in chapter two. The aim is to contextualise patterns of engagement and disengagement with Nigeria's digital switchover (DSO) initiative among residents of remote rural communities, specifically in Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin local council development areas (LCDAs) in Ikorodu, Lagos State. The discussion is structured around three central categories, derived from five research questions and the literature review, with particular attention to patterns of participation and barriers in digital television use:

1. Level of Understanding – assessing awareness and engagement with DTT services, particularly in relation to the DSO initiative;
2. Factors Encouraging Engagement – identifying drivers that support or promote DTT adoption in rural settings;
3. Barriers to Engagement – exploring obstacles to meaningful access and sustained interaction with DTT, especially in relation to local content production and consumption.

To frame this analysis, the study applies the intersectional digital marginalisation framework (IDMF) a conceptual model developed for this thesis that synthesises digital colonialism, intersectionality, digital poverty, information poverty, and uses and gratifications theory (UGT). This integrative framework enables a multidimensional exploration of exclusion, centring not only the structural and infrastructural inequalities that shape digital disengagement but also the individual and cultural motivations that inform media behaviours and choices. In particular, the concepts of digital colonialism, hegemony, and hybridity are used to unpack the ways in which global technological norms and state-led initiatives reproduce historical patterns of exclusion often under the guise of digital progress. These frameworks help reveal how urban-centric, technocratic policy narratives fail to address the realities of rural populations, thereby reinforcing both material and symbolic inequalities in media access, representation, and participation.

The chapter also engages with digital poverty understood as the infrastructural and socio-economic barriers that hinder digital inclusion and information poverty, which refers to the restricted flow and availability of contextually relevant knowledge. Both are shown to intersect with social identifiers such as class, gender, age, and geographic location to produce unequal outcomes in DTT engagement. To complement this structural critique, the chapter also draws on uses and gratifications theory (UGT) to explore how rural individuals negotiate, resist, or reconfigure digital media based on personal and social motivations. UGT enables a user-centred understanding of why some residents disengage from DTT in favour of informal content networks or mobile platforms, especially when the service fails to meet their expectations around language, content relevance, and accessibility. This theoretical balance between systemic exclusion and user

agency is critical to understanding how media adoption unfolds in resource-constrained, culturally diverse environments like rural Nigeria and, more broadly, in Global South contexts. By applying the IDMF, this chapter synthesises the diverse findings from earlier chapters into a cohesive, critical discussion. It offers not only an account of what structural and experiential barriers exist but also why digital disengagement persists even in the face of technological availability. This analysis aims to move beyond infrastructure-led approaches to digital inclusion, calling for culturally grounded, intersectionally informed, and decolonial strategies that reflect the lived realities of Nigeria's marginalised rural populations.

As a reminder, survey participants are referred to using identifiers VQ001 to VQ306, while interview participants are represented as VI001 to VI052. These participants were drawn from both Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin LCDAs. Regulatory officials (three in total) are identified by their formal titles Zonal Manager, Zonal Coordinator, and Zonal Monitoring Manager while service providers (24) are referenced by their respective job titles.

7.2. Level of understanding of DTT/DTV in Lagos-Ikorodu

Understanding the degree to which rural populations are aware of and engaged with digital terrestrial television (DTT) services is essential to evaluating the broader impact and inclusivity of the digital switchover (DSO) initiative in Nigeria. This section explores how residents of Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin LCDAs perceive, interpret, and respond to the DSO, paying particular attention to their levels of awareness, understanding, and initial interactions with DTT platforms. Building on the empirical data presented in previous chapters, the analysis reveals significant variation in understanding, shaped by factors such as age, education, access to media infrastructure, and socio-economic status. Despite official claims of widespread sensitisation, findings indicate that many rural dwellers remain uninformed or misinformed about the DSO process, its implications, and the technical requirements involved. This disjuncture between policy rhetoric and public knowledge raises critical questions about digital inclusion, accessibility of information, and the effectiveness of state-led communication strategies.

By assessing patterns of awareness and (dis)engagement, this section provides a foundation for interpreting the wider socio-technical barriers to DTT adoption. It also draws on theoretical insights from digital colonialism, intersectionality, and information poverty to contextualise how knowledge gaps are not simply a matter of individual awareness, but part of broader structural and cultural exclusions embedded in the digital transition process.

Overall key findings:

- **Limited Awareness:** Only 14% and 23% of respondents from the survey and interviews demonstrated awareness of DTT services, with many unable to distinguish it from traditional analogue broadcasting.
- **Urban-Centric Communication:** Messaging strategies have failed to reach rural communities effectively, contributing to significant information gaps.

- **Distrust and Marginalisation:** Many participants expressed skepticism, viewing the DSO as an urban-focused initiative.

7.2.1 Limited awareness and understanding of DTT

This section addresses the first research question: What is the level of awareness of DTT services, particularly the government-led digital switchover (DSO) initiative, among the target audience in Lagos-Ikorodu? The analysis draws on the concept of digital colonialism (Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Kwet, 2019), information poverty(Chatman, 1996), digital poverty (Galperin & Mariscal, 2007), intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), and uses and gratifications theory (Blumler & Katz, 1974) to critically examine the patterns of limited awareness and understanding observed in the two study sites Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin local council development areas (LCDAs). Evidence from both the survey and interviews reveals that awareness of DTT and understanding of the DSO initiative is significantly limited across the study locations. Survey findings show that only 14% of respondents had any awareness of DTT services, while just 23% of interview participants reported familiarity with the DSO initiative. This low level of awareness contrasts sharply with the DSO's stated objective of achieving national digital inclusion. However, rather than reflecting a simple communication oversight, these findings reveal deeper systemic exclusions shaped by infrastructural inequality, linguistic marginalisation, socio-economic constraints, and an entrenched urban bias in the digital transition process. These dynamics echo the critique of digital colonialism, in which digital infrastructures and technologies are introduced through top-down mechanisms with limited local participation, thereby reproducing colonial-era patterns of exclusion (Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Kwet, 2019).

Participant narratives illustrate the fragmented nature of the information ecosystem. One participant from Imota (VI034) stated, "We heard about the switchover, but we don't know how it works or why it's better than what we already have." Another interviewee (VI001) from Ikosi-Ejirin noted, "I heard about digital thing through a friend and later saw it on TV once. But ever since then, I have not heard or seen anything about it again." These statements reflect what Chatman (1996) refers to as information poverty, where marginalised groups cut off from mainstream information channels rely on informal, often inconsistent, second-hand knowledge. Even among those who had heard about the switchover, understanding of its purpose or benefits was limited, signalling a critical gap between policy communication and community-level comprehension. Compounding this is the urban-centric nature of the DSO's communication strategy. Messages about the switchover were primarily disseminated through English-language television and digital platforms mediums that are often inaccessible, irrelevant, or culturally distant for rural communities. As VI044, a female teacher in Ikosi-Ejirin, succinctly put it, "We don't get the same information as people in Lagos city." This points to a broader pattern of sociolinguistic exclusion, where English-dominant messaging fails to reach Yoruba-speaking and non-literate audiences. The failure to translate, simplify, or localise DSO materials contradicts foundational principles of development communication, which emphasise the importance of inclusive, context-responsive strategies (Dutta & Pal, 2020; Melkote & Steeves, 2001).

Comparative examples from other African contexts highlight the shortcomings of Nigeria's approach. Kenya's digital switchover, for instance, utilised multilingual community radio, mobile sensitisation vans, and grassroots training efforts to reach remote areas (Ugangu, 2018). In contrast, Nigeria's DSO rollout has remained concentrated in urban centres such as Abuja and Jos, with rural regions like Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin effectively left behind (Olayinka, 2022). This reflects a developmental logic that privileges urban innovation while rendering rural community's peripheral to public broadcasting reform. Beyond informational access, structural barriers further compound the challenge. Respondents cited erratic electricity supply, high costs of decoder boxes, and lack of training or technical support as major deterrents. These findings align with Galperin and Mariscal's (2007) concept of digital poverty, which frames digital exclusion not simply as the absence of devices or connectivity, but as the product of intertwined infrastructural, financial, and educational deficits. One NBC zonal manager acknowledged this gap, stating, "Public awareness remains a major issue, especially in underserved regions where digital literacy is low." Thus, access to information and technology is constrained by both infrastructural neglect and the lack of enabling support systems.

Applying an intersectional lens (Crenshaw, 1989) reveals further complexities. The study found that older rural women face intensified marginalisation due to the intersection of gender, age, geography, and socio-economic status. These women often had the least access to formal education, minimal exposure to digital platforms, and weak links to public information networks. A community leader in Imota observed, "It's mostly men who go out and hear things at the junction or from radio. Women are busy at home or in the farms. They don't get the same updates." These intersecting inequalities underscore how digital policies that fail to account for gender and locality risk reinforcing rather than reducing pre-existing disparities. Although DTT technology has potential for educational enrichment, civic engagement, and local content creation, usage in the study areas remains limited and skewed toward entertainment. When considered through the lens of uses and gratifications theory (Blumler & Katz, 1974), it becomes clear that in contexts where awareness is low, content lacks relevance, and digital literacy is minimal, audiences default to entertainment consumption as a more familiar and less cognitively demanding form of engagement. Most participants who had access to DTT services reported watching Nollywood films, comedy shows, and music programs. Very few used DTT for news, education, or civic learning. These patterns align with findings from Habes (2019) and Menon (2022), who observed that in resource-constrained environments, digital media is more often used for escapism than empowerment.

It is also important to acknowledge limitations in the present study. The findings are based on self-reported survey and interview data, which may be subject to recall bias or social desirability effects. Furthermore, while the analysis offers in-depth insights into two rural LCDAs, its generalisability to other regions should be approached with caution. Nonetheless, the convergence of quantitative data and qualitative narratives lends validity to the patterns identified. This limited awareness and understanding of DTT in Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin is not a reflection of individual ignorance, but a systemic outcome rooted in infrastructural neglect, linguistic and socio-economic exclusion, and the absence of participatory communication frameworks. If the DSO initiative is to truly promote national digital inclusion, it must confront these

structural barriers directly. This includes developing decentralised, culturally relevant messaging strategies; engaging community leaders and women's networks in outreach; and investing in rural-focused digital literacy programmes. As Crawshaw et al. (2022) and ElHajji and Malerba (2016) argue, sustainable digital transitions require communication systems that are embedded in the daily realities of the communities they intend to serve. Only then can digital television become a platform for empowerment rather than a new layer of marginalisation.

7.2.2 Extent of access and engagement with digital terrestrial television (DTT)

The uneven realities of digital access, policy implementation, and user behaviour in marginalised rural contexts was evidence from the responses of participants. Although the digital switchover (DSO) is framed by policymakers as a vehicle for national inclusion and technological advancement, evidence from the field presents a more fragmented and exclusionary reality. In both Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin, access to DTT is neither universal nor equitable. The study found a complete absence of FreeTV the government-supported free-to-air digital platform across both communities. Instead, television access is dominated by private, subscription-based platforms such as DStv, GOtv, and StarTimes. These platforms operate on commercial models that are not only cost-prohibitive for many rural residents but also guided by profit-driven distribution logics that deprioritise non-urban areas. As one respondent noted, “Even if we know about DStv or GOtv, the monthly subscription is too high. We only use it during big occasions, like football matches.” This comment reflects a form of precarious, event-driven access where affordability governs intermittent engagement.

These access limitations are emblematic of what Galperin and Mariscal (2007) define as digital poverty: a condition not merely defined by lack of devices or signal coverage but by the inability to sustain consistent and meaningful use due to infrastructural and economic constraints. Unstable electricity, poor signal reception, and limited access to media hardware emerged as recurring obstacles. One participant described the situation plainly: “We don’t even have reliable electricity, let alone the funds for a decoder and subscription.” These challenges are neither isolated nor accidental they reflect a broader developmental paradigm in which rural areas are structurally deprioritised. This aligns with Abikanlu’s (2020) findings and the wider urban-rural divide that defines digital transitions across sub-Saharan Africa. From the perspective of digital colonialism, these disparities constitute systemic exclusions that replicate colonial-era patterns of investment, control, and visibility.

Compounding these infrastructural constraints is the widespread lack of public awareness about the DSO initiative itself. As discussed in Section 7.2.1, many respondents encountered the term "FreeTV" or "DSO" for the first time during the research interviews. One participant remarked, “I never heard of DTT/DSO before. I’m hearing about it from your interview. I only know about DStv, not FreeTV.” This striking knowledge gap reflects what Chatman (1996) terms information poverty the failure of formal institutions to deliver relevant, understandable, and timely information to marginalised groups. The concentration of awareness campaigns in urban centres (Eze et al., 2017; Olayinka, 2022) reinforces Rahman’s (2020) critique of neo-colonial communication regimes, in which rural communities are denied access to state-

generated knowledge infrastructures. In this context, digital access becomes as much about epistemic visibility as it is about technological infrastructure.

Yet, despite these barriers, television remains a central medium for daily life in both communities. Survey results show that residents in Imota watched an average of 3.25 hours of television per day, while respondents in Ikosi-Ejirin reported a slightly higher average of 3.34 hours. These figures suggest that television engagement persists even under difficult conditions. Intermittent access, fuelled by shared devices or neighbourhood gathering points, reflects the flexibility and importance of media in local routines. These findings support the framework of uses and gratifications theory (Blumler & Katz, 1974), which posits that audiences actively select media content to fulfil emotional, social, or informational needs. For many rural viewers, television functions as a source of escape, a focal point for communal bonding, and a symbolic connection to the wider world. However, the dominant content largely urban-centric, commercial, or foreign limits the gratifications that can be derived from such engagement. Locally relevant stories, languages, and cultural perspectives are often absent, further reinforcing symbolic exclusion.

The dominance of private providers in shaping television experiences also has deeper implications for content diversity and civic autonomy. These platforms prioritise commercially viable programming, marginalising educational or civic content that could otherwise support democratic participation. The absence of FreeTV, which could offer public-interest programming, signals a missed opportunity for digital democratisation. As Couldry and Mejias (2019) argue, digital colonialism is not only about who owns infrastructure, but also about whose stories get told and circulated. In this sense, the continued dominance of private, urban-facing media reinforces cultural hierarchies and silences rural voices.

These exclusions are both economic and political. A senior NBC official interviewed during the study acknowledged: “We have been trying to expand access points for STBs, but operational hurdles and funding limitations slow down these efforts.” A service engineer from a private provider echoed this sentiment with greater candour: “The cost of deploying information in rural areas outweighs potential returns without government incentives.” These statements point to a market-first logic that governs infrastructure development where profitability, not equity, shapes decision-making. This logic mirrors critiques of digital colonialism in which infrastructure deployment is controlled by elite actors far removed from the needs of rural populations.

The findings also reveal how access and engagement are mediated by social inequalities. Applying the lens of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), it becomes clear that gender, age, and income intersect to shape experiences of exclusion. Older women were among the least represented in DTT access and awareness. Their exclusion reflects gendered digital marginalisation: limited formal education, domestic responsibilities, and restricted mobility reduce their exposure to public information and media technologies. This reinforces the need for gender-sensitive policies that go beyond device distribution and address the socio-cultural dimensions of digital inequality.

Even media professionals recognise these structural imbalances. A Lagos-based filmmaker noted, “The focus has been on urban adoption, leaving rural areas in an information vacuum.” This comment captures the broader cultural asymmetry in Nigeria’s digital transition, where rural communities are not just underserved they are often unseen. The result is a form of digital invisibility, where policy, media, and technology converge to exclude rural voices from national narratives of progress and modernity.

Yet, these communities are not passive in the face of exclusion. Some have developed adaptive, hybrid strategies that blend traditional communication with limited digital tools. One respondent in Ikosi-Ejirin (VI017) explained, “When the TV signal fails, we turn to radio or share news in the community. The new system has not completely replaced our old ways.” Such practices illustrate the concept of hybridity (Kraidy, 2006; Agboola & Tunay, 2023), wherein media users creatively deal with exclusion by incorporating digital tools into existing social and communicative networks. These responses challenge linear models of digital adoption and demonstrate the resilience of local knowledge systems.

It is also important here to acknowledge the limitations of the study. The data is based on self-reported viewing habits and may be influenced by recall bias. Moreover, while the findings offer in-depth insights into two rural LCDAs, they should not be uncritically generalised to all rural communities in Nigeria. Nonetheless, the convergence of narrative interviews, survey data, and expert perspectives provides a strong foundation for interpreting broader patterns of exclusion.

This extent of access to and engagement with DTT in Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin reveals a digital transition process marked by asymmetry, marginalisation, and cultural erasure. The absence of FreeTV, the cost-prohibitive dominance of private providers, and the lack of inclusive infrastructure all point to a policy agenda driven more by market rationality than social justice. These dynamics reaffirm that digital inequality is not a technical problem, but a political and cultural one. Addressing it will require more than expanding signal coverage or distributing decoders; it will require a rethinking of digital access as a public right. This includes decentralising control, promoting locally relevant content, investing in gender-sensitive digital literacy, and embedding traditional communication practices into future media strategies. Only through such systemic transformation can Nigeria’s digital future become genuinely inclusive.

7.3 Factors encouraging engagement with DTT by the three cohort’s perspectives

While much of the preceding discussion has focused on awareness and level of understanding, this section shifts the lens to explore what draws users into the digital ecosystem when access is possible. The motivating factors behind the uptake of digital terrestrial television (DTT) or other digital television among residents of the Lagos-Ikorodu region, was drawn from research question two and five: What is the extent of access to and engagement with DTT (and broader Digital TV) services among Lagos-Ikorodu residents? This directly addresses engagement i.e., the uptake and use of DTT services and allows exploration of what encourages or discourages engagement from the perspective of each cohort.

“To what extent are the needs, preferences, and expectations of potential DTT users in rural communities being adequately met?” This question relates to motivating factors for engagement: if user needs and expectations are met, engagement is more likely. It also allows you to capture perspectives across the three cohorts regarding what encourages usage. Findings from survey questionnaires and interviews from the three cohorts indicate that engagement with DTT is shaped by a combination of technical, economic, and cultural factors. Respondents widely acknowledged the enhanced picture and sound quality of DTT compared to analogue broadcasting, which improved overall viewing experiences. Affordability measures particularly the provision of government-subsidised set-top boxes also played a critical role in enabling access for low-income households. Additionally, participants expressed appreciation for localised content that resonates with their everyday realities, such as agricultural advice and culturally relevant programming. Together, these factors illustrate how both infrastructural support and content relevance contribute to DTT engagement across diverse user demographics. This discussion is also informed by the intersectional digital marginalisation (IDM) concept coined.

Key Findings:

- **Improved Quality:** Respondents appreciated DTT’s superior audio-visual quality compared to analogue systems.
- **Affordability Initiatives:** Government-subsidised set-top boxes were seen as beneficial by low-income households.
- **Local and Cultural Relevance:** Programs that reflect rural life, such as agricultural tips, were positively received.

7.3.1 Viewers’ perspectives on affordances: positive drivers of DTT engagement

Engagement with digital terrestrial television (DTT) in rural Lagos communities such as Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin LCDAs is shaped by a complex interplay of technological, cultural, economic, and social factors. While structural inequalities persist, respondents’ perspectives reveal that where access exists, DTT is not merely adopted as a technological upgrade, but embraced as a medium of cultural relevance, social bonding, and personal empowerment. These affordances, though unevenly distributed, reflect both the potential and limitations of DTT as a tool for inclusive digital transformation. Among the most immediate drivers of engagement was the technological appeal of DTT itself particularly its visual and audio quality. Respondents frequently expressed enthusiasm about the high-definition broadcasts, contrasting them with their previous experiences of grainy analogue signals. A furniture maker from Imota (VI009) commented, “The picture and sound are clear; it feels like we are part of the modern world.” Such responses indicate that digital television is not just perceived as an entertainment platform but also as a marker of progress and belonging in Nigeria’s rapidly evolving digital landscape. This aspirational value suggests that the medium has emotional and symbolic weight, reflecting rural users’ desire for inclusion in national narratives of modernity. Yet this same

appeal also reveals a fundamental contradiction. The enjoyment of these affordances remains conditional available only to those who can afford compatible equipment and live in areas with stable signal reception.

As Heeks (2022) argues, digital affordances can become mechanisms of exclusion when access is filtered through socio-economic hierarchies. Affordability, particularly through government-subsidised set-top boxes (STBs), was identified as a significant factor encouraging engagement. Participants welcomed the promise of lower-cost access enabled by these public interventions. A mother from Ikosi LCDA (VI014) noted, “With the government’s STB program, many families here can now watch clear TV channels without extra costs once it becomes available.” These subsidies were framed as a corrective to the market-driven exclusion associated with subscription-based platforms, providing an entry point into the digital ecosystem for low-income households. Ariansyah and Wardahnia (2022) similarly assert that financial support mechanisms are essential for expanding media access in underserved areas. However, concerns were raised about the irregularity and perceived tokenism of such interventions. Several respondents indicated that STBs were either unavailable, inconsistently distributed if at all they were distributed, or not accompanied by sufficient public information. This reflects a broader issue identified by Vargas and Monje (2021), who argue that without long-term policy commitment, such initiatives risk becoming symbolic gestures deployed for visibility rather than impact and may ultimately fail to empower the very populations they aim to support.

In addition to affordability, cultural relevance emerged as a central pillar of DTT engagement. Respondents consistently emphasised the value of programming that reflects local realities, languages, and traditions. A mechanic from Imota (VI018) explained, “Programs about farming tips and market updates are very helpful; they connect with our lives directly.” Similarly, a homemaker from Ikosi-Ejirin remarked, “When we see programs in our language, it feels like we are being included and respected.” These narratives affirm the powerful role of culturally resonant content in enhancing viewer engagement, a finding that aligns with research by Hye-Kyoung (2015) and Magalhães et al. (2017), who highlight the importance of localised media in advancing emotional and informational attachment among rural viewers. However, the growing dominance of global media conglomerates poses a serious challenge to this cultural inclusion. As the framework of digital colonialism suggests, when media content is primarily produced and disseminated by external actors, local identities risk being sidelined or erased. Fountaine et al. (2023) warn that such corporate-driven content regimes often marginalise indigenous narratives, replacing them with commodified representations that may not reflect or respect the lived experiences of rural audiences.

Still, many respondents did not frame the global and local as mutually exclusive. Instead, they expressed a preference for hybridised media experiences that blend global exposure with cultural rootedness. A schoolteacher from Ikosi (VI026) remarked, “This digital television has opened a window to the world, bringing us knowledge, culture, and entertainment... With our local programs, it keeps us rooted in our traditions.” This perspective resonates with Kraidy’s (2006) concept of media hybridity, which posits that media users actively combine and negotiate between global flows and local practices. In this case, DTT offers not only technological utility but also a space for cultural negotiation, where rural viewers seek both to

participate in global media culture and to preserve their own. However, the potential of hybridity is contingent on the presence of adequate support for local content production and participatory decision-making in media governance. Without such support, hybridity risks becoming a surface-level mix of content, rather than a meaningful integration of diverse cultural expressions.

Social advocacy was another frequently cited affordance of DTT, especially in its capacity to promote civic awareness and community engagement. Several respondents highlighted television shows such as "Politics Today" and "The Gavel" as important platforms for information and debate. A teacher (VI043) in Imota observed, "the choice of channels on these platforms (DTT) make it possible for us to see experts, activists, and community leaders discuss issues, propose solutions, and advocate for change for the community and the country itself." This aligns closely with uses and gratifications theory (Blumler & Katz, 1974), which emphasises that media users are not passive recipients but active seekers of content that meets cognitive and social needs. Yet, even in these empowering spaces, the influence of elite and foreign agendas may dilute the transformative potential of advocacy programming. As Couldry and Mejias (2019) caution, symbolic inclusion where marginalised populations are represented without being empowered can reinforce existing power structures under the guise of engagement.

DTT also plays a role in shaping intra-household dynamics, with shared television viewing cited as a source of familial cohesion. Many participants noted that digital television has facilitated new forms of family interaction and collective entertainment. A fashion designer from Imota (VI026) reflected, "DTT enabled my family to discover new shows and enjoy bonding time through shared viewing." Particularly for households with children, educational and youth-focused content was valued for its role in informal learning. At the same time, some respondents noted that the personalisation enabled by digital menus and on-demand content might eventually reduce these communal experiences. Liu et al. (2021) caution that while digital technologies can promote autonomy, they may also contribute to social fragmentation if they displace shared cultural rituals like group television watching.

Beyond entertainment and social bonding, DTT was seen as a gateway to digital literacy. Several respondents described how interacting with features like programme guides, subtitle settings, and basic navigation tools helped build confidence in handling digital interfaces. A teacher from Ikosi explained, "The skills gained from digital television improved my confidence in handling digital devices." Others praised accessibility features such as subtitling and sign language interpretation for enabling broader inclusion, particularly among older viewers and those with hearing impairments. These findings reflect Ismaili and Ibrahimi's (2017) argument that when thoughtfully designed, digital television can function as a stepping stone toward more comprehensive forms of digital inclusion. Nonetheless, participants also acknowledged persistent barriers: many lacked formal training, struggled with low literacy, or had inconsistent access to devices. Lyons et al. (2020) argue that digital literacy efforts must be embedded within broader socio-economic interventions to be truly effective, particularly in rural contexts where material deprivation and infrastructural limitations intersect.

Taken together, these insights suggest that engagement with DTT in rural Lagos is multi-dimensional anchored not only in technological appeal but also in cultural identification, economic accessibility, social meaning, and developmental aspirations. Participants described DTT as a source of pride, connection, and opportunity, even as they remained acutely aware of the systemic challenges that limited its reach. Viewed through the lens of digital colonialism, these dynamics raise critical questions about who controls digital infrastructures, whose interests shape content production, and who ultimately benefits from digital transitions. The tension between the promise of DTT and the persistent inequities of access reveals the complex interplay between empowerment and marginalisation in Nigeria's digital media landscape. If DTT is to serve as a truly inclusive and transformative platform, it must be embedded in a policy framework that goes beyond deployment and subsidy. It must invest in local content production, amplify marginalised voices, and prioritise community involvement in media governance. Moreover, digital literacy initiatives should be integrated into broader educational and economic support structures to ensure sustainability. By designing with, rather than for, rural communities, DTT can evolve from a symbol of technological modernity into a participatory tool of empowerment bridging gaps not just in signal coverage, but in culture, voice, and visibility.

7.3.2 Regulator's perspectives on affordances in the digital switchover

From the standpoint of the national broadcasting commission (NBC), the digital switchover (DSO) is envisioned as a transformative project aimed at modernising Nigeria's broadcasting landscape, aligning it with international standards, and promoting inclusive access to digital infrastructure. Regulators consistently describe DSO's core affordances enhanced picture and sound quality, expanded channel offerings, and more efficient spectrum use as evidence of technological progress and national development. As one NBC official based in Lagos explained, "The DSO is designed to give Nigerians access to high-definition television, clearer sound, and a wider range of channels, ensuring that everyone can enjoy world-class broadcasting." This rhetoric is underpinned by a modernisation ethos, positioning DSO not only as a technical upgrade but as a symbol of Nigeria's readiness to participate in the global digital economy.

However, when critically examined through the lens of digital colonialism (Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Kwet, 2019; Veracini et al., 2023), these framing risks obscuring the structural asymmetries that continue to shape access, control, and participation within the digital television ecosystem. While the regulatory discourse centres on national progress, the implementation outcomes remain uneven, disproportionately favouring urban populations and elite constituencies. Thus, even as the DSO aspires to be a national equaliser, it is simultaneously implicated in reinforcing digital hierarchies rooted in geography, class, and infrastructural availability. One of the most frequently cited benefits from the regulator's perspective is the potential for content diversity. By expanding available spectrum and channel capacity, the DSO theoretically provides a platform for new broadcasters, including those catering to specific linguistic or cultural communities. As an NBC zonal manager put it, "One of the major benefits of the DSO is that it creates room for more television stations to operate, offering the public a greater variety of programming choices." This ambition resonates with the foundational claims of uses and gratifications theory (Blumler & Katz, 1974; Wang et al., 2024),

which views media users as active agents who select content based on individual and social needs. Yet, in practice, this promise remains largely unrealised in rural communities. As explored earlier, infrastructural limitations, economic barriers, and information deficits prevent many rural viewers from accessing or benefiting from this proliferation of content.

The issue is not merely technological, but deeply structural. Digital and information poverty defined respectively by Galperin and Mariscal (2007) and Chatman (1996) persist in rural areas, undermining the promise of equal access. Despite the availability of niche programming or indigenous language content on paper by government, respondents in communities such as Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin reported limited exposure to such services, citing weak signal reception, absence of subsidised set-top boxes (STBs), and prohibitive costs. These disparities, viewed through an intersectional lens (Crenshaw, 1989), also reveal how overlapping social identities particularly age, gender, and economic status compound digital exclusion. For instance, women aged 55–64 in both communities frequently reported low awareness of DSO and expressed uncertainty about their ability to operate digital devices. One respondent from Imota LCDA admitted, “We don’t know about it yet, and I don’t think I can operate it,” while another (VI051) said, “Didn’t have an idea about DSO in our area.” These experiences illustrate how regulatory optimism can mask a reality of unequal participation, where those on the margins remain largely untouched by the benefits of digital transformation.

The regulator also frames DSO as a catalyst for economic growth and innovation, particularly through its potential to stimulate local content production, expand media entrepreneurship, and generate employment. As a senior NBC official noted, “This digital transition will empower content creators, broadcasters, and entrepreneurs by providing them with more platforms to showcase their work and reach wider audiences.” This vision aligns with broader government agendas to diversify the economy through digital industries. Yet, in the absence of targeted investment in rural infrastructure or training programs for local creators, the economic dividends of DSO are unlikely to be equitably distributed. In reality, the creative opportunities afforded by DSO remain concentrated in urban centres where production facilities, technical expertise, and market access already exist. Consequently, the digital switchover risks operating as a neo-colonial model of development channelling state and private resources into areas of existing privilege while positioning rural viewers primarily as passive consumers (Korovkin et al., 2023; Ragnedda, 2019).

Further regulatory enthusiasm is expressed in the projected public service potential of DTT, particularly its role in enhancing access to health information, education, and emergency alerts. An NBC coordinator emphasised this vision: “With the DSO, we can integrate emergency alert systems and educational content into television broadcasting, making it a more effective tool for national communication.” This framing casts DTT as a tool of social equity, particularly valuable in rural areas with limited access to print or digital media. However, as with other DSO affordances, this potential remains aspirational. Implementation continues to be hindered by infrastructural constraints, narrow content targeting, and a persistent urban focus in both programming and policy rollout. Content remains largely standardised and reflects the interests of urban audiences, rarely engaging with the local needs, languages, or lived realities of rural populations.

Reports on national daily newspapers have it that government investment has reinforced the regulator's commitment to DSO, with significant federal allocations intended to support implementation. According to Ikuomola (2024), ₦9.43 billion (approximately £4.9 million) was approved in 2021, followed by another ₦10 billion (approximately £5 million) in 2024 to accelerate progress. These figures are framed by officials as evidence of national commitment to equitable digital access. As the NBC Director General stated, quoted by Nnabuife (2024), this funding is "a testament to the visionary leadership of the President... to achieve a future where every Nigerian, regardless of their location, has access to superior broadband services." However, the allocation of funds must be examined not only in terms of volume but in terms of distribution. Without transparent accountability mechanisms, funding risks being absorbed by bureaucratic inefficiencies or redirected to urban projects, perpetuating the very inequalities the DSO seeks to redress.

Even within regulatory institutions, there is a recognition of the systemic challenges undermining DSO's equitable rollout. Officials candidly acknowledged ongoing gaps in rural access and public engagement. "We have been trying to expand access points for STBs, but operational hurdles and funding limitations slow down these efforts," one NBC official explained. A private broadcasting engineer further admitted, "The cost of deploying infrastructure in rural areas outweighs potential returns without government incentives." These comments reveal the economic logic that often guides infrastructure decisions where profitability, rather than public interest, determines service provision. This logic mirrors the political economy of media development more broadly, where rural areas are seen not as sites of innovation but as logistical challenges. Taken together, these insights show that the regulator's vision of DSO is characterised by a dual tension. On the one hand, it is an ambitious national project grounded in a belief in technology's capacity to democratise access, stimulate economic growth, and improve public service delivery. On the other, it remains deeply constrained by structural inequalities, regulatory bottlenecks, and policy inconsistencies that favour urban elites and private capital. Viewed through the framework of digital colonialism, DSO despite its democratic rhetoric risks reproducing the very systems of exclusion it purports to overcome, unless deliberate efforts are made to decentralise control, empower rural communities, and ensure equitable resource allocation.

To reconcile this gap between vision and outcome, a reorientation of the regulatory framework is necessary. This entails moving beyond technological deployment to prioritise localised media governance, inclusive content development, and participatory infrastructure planning. Only through such recalibration can the digital switchover evolve from a symbolic national achievement into a transformative, participatory framework for inclusive digital citizenship.

7.3.3 Service providers' perspectives on affordances in the digital switchover

From the perspective of digital television service providers in Nigeria, the digital switchover (DSO) represents a significant opportunity for technological innovation, audience diversification, and commercial growth. Far from viewing the DSO as merely a technical switchover, service providers frame it as a gateway to market-driven broadcasting models that enhance content delivery, optimise infrastructure, and generate new revenue streams. One of the most frequently cited affordances is the improved technical quality of

digital broadcasting. Providers emphasise the clearer resolution, enhanced audio fidelity, and reduction of signal disruptions that digital technology enables, particularly when compared to the limitations of analogue systems. As a programme manager at a leading television station explained, “Digital technology allows us to deliver higher-definition content, which enhances the viewing experience and increases consumer satisfaction.” This focus on high-definition broadcasting aligns with the principles of uses and gratifications theory (Blumler & Katz, 1974), which suggests that audience satisfaction is closely tied to media quality and responsiveness to user expectations.

Yet this perceived enhancement in technical quality is not uniformly experienced. Infrastructural disparities and economic exclusion in rural areas significantly undermine equitable access to these affordances. Households that lack the means to purchase decoders, maintain functional television sets, or secure consistent electricity remain effectively excluded from enjoying the full benefits of digital content. This unevenness exemplifies the condition of digital poverty described by Heeks (2022) and Galperin & Mariscal (2007) as a composite of affordability, infrastructural access, and technical competence. While the digital transition is marketed as a democratic leap forward in broadcasting, it simultaneously reproduces a form of selective modernity, where the most privileged reap the benefits while others remain on the margins of participation. Service providers also point to the DSO’s capacity to expand channel offerings and facilitate content diversification. The ability to host multiple channels within the same frequency band allows broadcasters to serve a range of audience niches, including regional programming, sports, entertainment, and educational content. One station manager noted, “The ability to broadcast multiple channels on the same frequency means we can offer more specialised content… thereby appealing to a wider audience.” This reflects the logic of market segmentation and mass customisation, in which content is made to capture differentiated consumer groups. While this approach can increase representational variety, it also raises important concerns about the commodification of culture. When content production is primarily driven by commercial imperatives, local narratives may be displaced or reshaped to fit more globally palatable or commercially viable formats. In this sense, the DSO risks amplifying the dynamics of digital colonialism (Fountaine et al., 2023), where cultural expression is filtered through the interests of globalised capital rather than local communities.

This tension is particularly evident in the accessibility and usability of these expanded offerings. While content segmentation theoretically benefits a wider array of audiences, its practical uptake is restricted by digital and information poverty. Many users in under-resourced areas lack the digital literacy or economic means to deal with multi-channel menus, subscribe to premium content, or engage with interactive features. These constraints are especially acute among older adults, women, and low-income groups, who are disproportionately affected by overlapping social exclusions. As Chatman (1996) and Crenshaw (1989) remind us, both information poverty and intersectionality help explain how access to digital services is shaped not just by geography, but by gender, age, educational level, and socio-economic class. Domestic responsibilities, limited exposure to technology, and patriarchal norms frequently limit women’s participation in digital media usage, further entrenching inequalities within the home and community.

Service providers also regard DSO as an engine for new revenue opportunities, particularly in the form of targeted advertising, pay-per-view models, and data-driven content curation. With access to audience analytics and segmented programming, advertisers can more precisely deliver personalised messages, increasing commercial efficiency. A marketing officer from one broadcaster remarked, “With digital TV, advertisers can better target their messages to specific demographics, increasing the effectiveness of ads and boosting revenue potential for broadcasters.” Subscription models and content bundling offer additional monetisation strategies. However, these innovations intensify the contradiction between inclusivity and profit. The high costs associated with these services remain a significant barrier for low-income users, reinforcing a system in which digital participation is governed by financial capacity. As digital colonialism critiques suggest, such models promise empowerment while operationalising exclusion, privileging monetised access at the expense of broad-based inclusion.

Another major shift observed among service providers is the growing emphasis on interactive capabilities such as electronic program guides (EPGs), on-demand services, and multi-platform integration. Providers see these features not only as user enhancements but also as avenues for expanding business models. As one technical officer observed, “The interactive capabilities of digital TV open up new business models… which can increase customer engagement and generate additional revenue.” Combining television with mobile internet, second-screen experiences, and social interactivity allows for innovative forms of user engagement and cross-promotional strategies (Seo et al., 2020; Sun, 2021). However, these affordances rest on assumptions of connectivity, affordability, and digital fluency that do not hold in many rural or low-resource environments. Advanced features may therefore appeal to digitally literate urban users but alienate rural populations, creating a tiered system of digital participation.

Despite their optimism, service providers acknowledge the structural limitations that hinder broader engagement. Infrastructure maintenance costs are high, broadcast licensing is complex, and public policy support is often inadequate. As one programme coordinator explained, “The benefits of digital broadcasting are clear, but without the right support, service providers will struggle to maximise these opportunities.” Many providers argue for greater government involvement in subsidising infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, and for regulatory frameworks that encourage market competition while protecting affordability. This reflects a paradox at the heart of the DSO: although premised on private-sector dynamism, its sustainability is often contingent upon public-sector intervention. As critics such as Menon (2023) and Onyekachi (2020) notes, such a model mirrors neo-colonial development logics, wherein private actors extract value from public infrastructure while marginalised populations bear the brunt of underinvestment and limited access.

Ultimately, the perspectives of service providers highlight both the transformative potential, and the structural contradictions embedded in Nigeria’s digital transition. While the DSO promises technical advancement, broader reach, and economic opportunity, these benefits remain unequally distributed across class and geography. Service providers operate within a market-oriented ecosystem that rewards commercial innovation but does little to mitigate systemic exclusion. Viewed through the framework of digital

colonialism, it becomes evident that unless counterbalanced by inclusive policy mechanisms and participatory governance, the digital transition may deepen rather than dismantle existing hierarchies amplifying the voices of corporate actors while muting those of historically marginalised communities.

To ensure that the DSO's affordances lead to meaningful engagement for all Nigerians, a reimagining of the digital broadcasting framework is required. This must include rural infrastructure investment, culturally relevant content creation, and inclusive pricing models that extend beyond the current urban elite base. If such reforms are not pursued, the digital promise of DTT may harden into a familiar pattern of exclusion where innovation exists, but only for those already positioned within the networks of technological and economic privilege.

Across all three cohorts, DTT is recognised as a medium with significant transformative potential. Yet, the realisation of this potential is constrained by a complex interplay of economic, infrastructural, cultural, and policy factors. The concept of digital colonialism and intersectionality help illuminate how aspirations for inclusion often collide with entrenched hierarchies and structural exclusions. At the same time, concepts like media hybridity and uses and gratifications theory also show that viewers are not passive they actively negotiate meaning and engagement, even in resource-limited contexts. It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this discussion. While multiple voices were included, further research is needed into the experiences of non-users, disabled users, and grassroots community media producers. Additionally, more access to internal planning documents and budgets from regulatory bodies would strengthen analysis of institutional dynamics. Ultimately, realising the inclusive promise of DTT requires a re-imagining of digital policy one that centres rural realities, amplifies marginalised voices, and reframes access as a civic right, not a commercial privilege.

7.4. Factors discouraging engagement with DTT (Viewers, Regulators, and Service Providers)

This discussion is premise on the structural, institutional, socio-economic, and cultural barriers that hinder engagement with digital terrestrial television (DTT) in Nigeria, particularly in rural and underserved communities. The discussion is framed by these three key research questions: (1) *What infrastructural, economic, educational, cultural, and other barriers hinder access to and the adoption of DTT, and how do these factors influence local content production and consumption?* (2) *To what extent does DTT fulfil its goals of digital inclusivity, especially in underserved and rural regions?* and (3) *To what extent are the needs, preferences, and expectations of potential DTT users in rural communities being adequately met?* Through these questions, the discussion is centred round the multiple and intersecting constraints experienced by viewers**,** regulators**,** and service providers, highlighting how each group are impacted by the promises and shortcomings of the digital switchover (DSO). Rather than viewing disengagement as a product of disinterest or technological resistance, the findings reveal a deeper architecture of exclusion shaped by systemic inequality, digital colonialism, and fragmented policy implementation.

The first part of the discussion explores economic and financial constraints across all stakeholders. For viewers, affordability issues remain a significant barrier to acquiring set-top boxes, accessing stable electricity, or subscribing to digital platforms. For regulators particularly the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) chronic underfunding and institutional limitations impede effective oversight and equitable implementation. Service providers also face mounting economic pressures, as high operational costs and limited commercial viability in rural regions challenge the sustainability of digital broadcasting models. These dynamics are further examined in light of broader patterns of financial inequality embedded in Nigeria's digital transition. The second part addresses infrastructural challenges, including the unequal distribution of DTT signals, regulatory bottlenecks, and commercial hesitancy to invest in unprofitable rural territories. These infrastructural deficits not only exacerbate geographic inequalities but also sustain long-standing disparities in technological access and participation. The third component turns to socio-cultural barriers, including low awareness and digital literacy, cultural misalignment of DTT content, persistent attachment to analogue television, and widespread public distrust in government-led digital initiatives. These dimensions are understood through theoretical lenses such as digital colonialism**,** intersectionality**,** and neo-colonial dependency, which collectively expose how power, representation, and access are unevenly distributed in the digital ecosystem.

Taken together, the barriers identified in this chapter challenge the assumption that technological rollout alone is sufficient to ensure digital inclusion. Instead, they point to the need for a more holistic and context-sensitive approach to digital policy one that centres the lived experiences of rural populations and addresses the material, cultural, and institutional conditions that shape their engagement with digital media.

7.4.1. Economic and financial constraints across viewers, regulators, and service providers

Economic and financial constraints have emerged as a critical barrier to the effective engagement with digital terrestrial television (DTT) in Nigeria, affecting viewers, regulator (NBC), and service providers alike. Although the digital switchover (DSO) promises improved media access, content diversification, and technological advancement, its benefits remain unequally distributed across geographic and socio-economic lines. This economic and financial constraints continue to be a pervasive obstacle for the successful adoption of digital television (DTV) in Nigeria. The switch from analogue to digital terrestrial television (DTT) has introduced a range of new financial demands, including the high upfront costs of acquiring digital equipment, ongoing subscription fees, and the unreliability of electricity supply particularly in regions already grappling with infrastructural deficits.

These barriers have created widespread apprehension and skepticism among the public. Many respondents, especially those with limited financial literacy, fear that the digital transition conceals hidden charges that could trap them into unaffordable payment structures. A vivid example comes from an 18-year-old student in Imota, who expressed the pressing need for flexible and affordable pricing systems: "Affordable pricing options not only make the service more inclusive but also allow me to customise my plan based on my

specific needs." This sentiment underscores the vital role of affordability in making digital television a truly democratic medium. For many low-income individuals, this financial burden associated with maintaining a digital TV subscription is overwhelming. A 41-year-old carpenter residing in Ikosi LCDA articulated this struggle: "The monthly fees are also a problem to keep up with sometimes, and these costly subscription fees become a financial limitation, forcing me to carefully manage how I allocate resources within my budget." His experience highlights how the recurring costs of digital TV services often force individuals and families to prioritise basic needs over digital access, thereby intensifying their financial strain.

These testimonies point to a larger and more insidious issue: the persistence of digital poverty. This term refers to the socio-economic condition in which individuals are unable to access or effectively utilise digital technologies due to financial constraints. The implications are far-reaching. As digital platforms increasingly become gateways to education, employment, healthcare, and civic engagement, the lack of access to these technologies' places economically disadvantaged groups at an even greater risk of marginalisation. Closely linked to digital poverty is the concept of information poverty, which suggests that individuals without access to digital tools are also deprived of critical information that could improve their quality of life. In this context, the inability to afford digital TV is not merely about the loss of entertainment it is about systemic exclusion from knowledge, opportunity, and participation in an increasingly digital society.

Furthermore, the voices of these viewers reveal underlying dynamics of digital colonialism that are embedded within the architecture of the digital television ecosystem. The push for digital adoption in Nigeria has largely been spearheaded by multinational corporations and foreign stakeholders who often impose standardised, subscription-based models without adequately considering the financial and social realities of rural and low-income communities. The result is a form of structural economic dependency, where access to digital services is conditional upon the ability to pay recurring fees. This creates a two-tiered digital society those who can afford access and those who are perpetually excluded. The carpenter in Ikosi's struggle to manage limited resources exemplifies this imbalance and reflects how global digital systems can replicate historical patterns of control and exploitation. By failing to consider local socio-economic contexts, these systems become instruments of neo-colonialism that reinforce existing inequalities and restrict technological empowerment.

These concerns are echoed in existing scholarly literature. Studies by Al-Emran and Griffy-Brown (2023), Smidt and Jokonya (2022), and Vyas and Jain (2021) all affirm that economic hardship is a major determinant in the adoption and sustainability of digital technologies. These constraints affect not only individuals but also amplify broader societal disparities, ultimately widening the digital divide. Respondents' calls for affordability and flexibility must be heeded. Policy recommendations to mitigate the impact of digital poverty include the implementation of subsidised services for low-income users, the development of tiered or pay-as-you-go pricing models, and the availability of free basic channels. Allowing users to personalise their digital television plans based on specific household needs would further reduce economic exclusion and promote equitable access. Governments and regulatory bodies must also acknowledge the

structural inequalities that hinder the adoption of digital technologies. The imposition of a uniform digital system driven primarily by commercial imperatives marginalises local communities and perpetuates digital colonialism. By investing in community-led solutions, empowering local content creators, and actively engaging with stakeholders at the grassroots level, policymakers can develop more inclusive and culturally responsive digital ecosystems.

In parallel to the financial challenges faced by viewers, the national broadcasting commission (NBC) the chief regulatory body overseeing the digital switchover (DSO) in Nigeria has been plagued by persistent budgetary shortfalls and financial mismanagement. These institutional challenges have significantly delayed the national rollout of digital broadcasting infrastructure, entrenching disparities in access and reinforcing a digital divide that disproportionately affects rural communities. The NBC's financial difficulties have translated into repeated failures to meet the country's digital transition targets. Originally scheduled for completion in 2012, the switchover deadline was first extended to 2015 and again to 2017 due to the lack of financial resources and logistical readiness. Despite renewed efforts, the absence of a robust infrastructure, sustainable funding mechanisms, and coherent governance strategies prevented the full implementation of the DSO.

A key area of concern has been the high cost of establishing digital infrastructure. This includes the deployment of transmission towers, the acquisition of modern broadcasting equipment, the upgrade of existing facilities, and the distribution of set-top boxes. The NBC has struggled to secure adequate funding for these initiatives. Officials have admitted that limited resources curtailed their ability to procure essential equipment, particularly the set-top boxes, which are crucial for households to access digital services. These devices, initially priced at ₦12,000 (£6.20), remained financially inaccessible for a vast segment of the population. This unaffordability significantly slowed down public participation in the digital transition. According to a 2024 report by Ogbonnaya, unresolved debts and policy ambiguities have further fuelled stakeholder discontent. Manufacturers and broadcast service providers voiced dissatisfaction over unpaid dues and a lack of transparent implementation strategies. This not only eroded public trust but also discouraged future investment in digital infrastructure.

The uneven geographic rollout of digital services has further exposed the consequences of NBC's financial constraints. Urban centres like Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt were prioritised due to their commercial viability and stronger infrastructure, while rural areas were largely neglected. As confirmed by an NBC zonal manager, "Funding shortages significantly slowed down the progress of the digital transition, particularly in areas with weaker infrastructure." Private investors have also been reluctant to invest in rural expansion, citing low population densities and poor consumer purchasing power. Financial limitations have also affected other crucial components of the digital transition, including public awareness campaigns and regulatory enforcement. Effective DSO implementation requires educating citizens about its benefits, processes, and costs. However, budget constraints meant that outreach efforts were largely concentrated in urban areas via radio, television, and digital platforms. Rural communities where digital literacy is lower received minimal

engagement. As an NBC official explained, “Our awareness strategy went beyond traditional media, but limited funding meant we could not reach remote communities effectively.” This communication gap has fuelled misinformation, skepticism, and public apathy toward the DSO.

Moreover, the NBC’s regulatory functions have suffered. With insufficient budget allocations, the commission has struggled to monitor compliance, allocate spectrum effectively, and address technical issues related to digital broadcasting. The lack of funds has also prevented the provision of subsidies for economically vulnerable households, thereby excluding a significant portion of the population from the benefits of digital television. Nigeria’s experience stands in stark contrast to countries like Ghana, which overcame similar challenges through strategic public-private partnerships and phased implementation plans (Paul & Yang, 2019). Similarly, Indonesia faced setbacks due to limited regulatory independence and weak economic assessments challenges that mirror Nigeria’s own difficulties (Zaber et al., 2020). Mismanagement of funds and governance failures have only compounded the NBC’s financial woes. The Set-Top Box Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (STBMan) has criticised the government's preference for foreign-produced hybrid or Android boxes over more affordable local alternatives. “We invested heavily in the project, yet the government prefers costly hybrid/android boxes that are out of reach for most Nigerians” (Ogbonnaya, 2024). Allegations of corruption, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and policy inconsistency have further undermined public confidence in the NBC’s ability to execute the digital transition.

As highlighted by Shema & Saint (2019) and Liu (2023), many Global South countries face similar infrastructural deficits and low user revenues, which complicate the financing of large-scale digital initiatives. For Nigeria to overcome these obstacles, a comprehensive strategy is required one that includes increased budgetary allocations, transparency in resource management, stakeholder collaboration, and policy reforms to improve regulatory effectiveness.

Service providers in Nigeria’s digital broadcasting ecosystem are also grappling with severe financial challenges that threaten their long-term viability. The transition to digital broadcasting has demanded substantial investment in infrastructure, workforce training, regulatory compliance, and content acquisition all of which place immense pressure on broadcasters and signal distributors. Many service providers, especially local entities lacking the financial muscle of multinational corporations, find it difficult to sustain operations. This has led to service disruptions, high subscription fees, and declining consumer confidence. The cost of expanding digital infrastructure is especially daunting. Unlike analogue broadcasting, which could rely on fewer transmission sites, digital broadcasting requires a far more extensive network of towers and repeaters to ensure consistent signal quality.

A programme manager from a leading television provider lamented, “The cost of rolling out digital services is high, and the returns are minimal. We are required to invest in new transmission equipment, but the revenue has not matched the expenditure.” Consequently, providers tend to focus on urban markets with a higher density of potential subscribers, leaving rural communities underserved and excluded. Operational

expenses compound these infrastructure costs. Licensing fees, regulatory compliance costs, and content acquisition represent significant financial commitments. To remain competitive, providers must offer high-quality entertainment, sports, and educational programming. A marketing officer explained, “The cost of acquiring broadcasting rights and quality programming is increasing. To cover these costs, we have to charge higher subscription fees, but not all consumers can afford it.” The resulting high prices deter subscription renewals and reduce consumer base growth.

Affordability remains a critical barrier to viewership. As the 41-year-old carpenter from Ikosi LCDA shared, “The monthly fees are difficult to keep up with sometimes. These costly subscription charges force me to carefully manage how I allocate my resources.” These comments illustrate how financial strain reduces engagement and undermines the sustainability of subscription-based revenue models. Signal instability and poor service quality have also eroded consumer trust. Limited funding means providers cannot maintain reliable networks. A food seller from Ikosi-Ejirin noted, “Even when it works, the signal can disappear suddenly, and we don’t know when it will return.” This unpredictability discourages subscription renewals and weakens loyalty. Advertising revenue, traditionally a key income stream, has also been affected. Uncertainty over viewership numbers has made advertisers hesitant to invest in digital TV. A station manager noted, “Advertisers are becoming reluctant to invest in digital TV ads because they are unsure if people are actually tuning in. Many are shifting to online advertising where they can track engagement.”

Service providers face growing competition from global streaming platforms like Netflix and YouTube. These platforms offer flexible pricing, large content libraries, and user-friendly experiences that appeal particularly to younger audiences. As a result, traditional broadcasters are losing ground. The repeated delays in the DSO rollout have further undermined industry confidence. Companies that made early investments in anticipation of returns are now struggling under the weight of debts. Regulatory fees and compliance requirements imposed by the NBC add to this financial stress. A sports desk manager stated, “We are expected to meet new compliance requirements and pay additional fees, but the regulatory body is not doing enough to support the financial stability of service providers.”

These financial constraints extend beyond providers to the broader media ecosystem. Many have been forced to scale back local content production, resulting in job losses among journalists, producers, and technicians. A program editor voiced concern: “We are seeing more foreign content on our screens because service providers cannot afford to produce local programs. This affects our culture and limits the visibility of Nigerian content.” According to Davison & Joia (2022) and Shema & Saint (2019), this underinvestment in local content contributes to a vicious cycle of declining revenue and limited growth. To break this cycle, the government must support service providers through targeted subsidies, innovative pricing strategies, and partnerships with private investors. Regulatory reforms are also necessary to reduce the financial burden and create a stable environment for sustainable digital broadcasting.

7.4.2. Reflections on financial inequality in the digital transition

The financial inequalities observed throughout Nigeria's digital television transition reveal a deeply entrenched and multifaceted digital divide that spans viewers, regulatory bodies, and service providers. At the viewer level, the prohibitive cost of digital equipment, recurring subscription fees, and poor infrastructure especially electricity supply have created formidable barriers to access. For economically disadvantaged individuals and communities, these costs are not just inconvenient; they are exclusionary, reinforcing digital poverty and limiting access to vital information, education, and public discourse. As highlighted by respondents, fears of hidden charges and inflexible pricing structures add layers of financial anxiety, discouraging widespread adoption and participation.

Regulatory bodies like the national broadcasting commission (NBC) face their own fiscal constraints. Chronic underfunding has led to delays in the nationwide rollout of digital infrastructure, a reliance on urban-centric implementation, and a failure to effectively conduct public awareness campaigns. These institutional limitations mirror structural governance challenges mismanagement, policy ambiguity, and a lack of strategic vision that have undermined public confidence and widened regional disparities in access to digital services. By prioritising urban centres with higher commercial viability, the regulatory process has sidelined rural and low-income populations, reinforcing patterns of digital colonialism and neo-colonialism in policy execution.

Service providers, meanwhile, are caught in a vicious cycle of high infrastructure costs, declining revenue streams, and market uncertainty. Without substantial state support or sustainable revenue from subscription and advertising, many providers struggle to deliver consistent, affordable, and high-quality services. Their financial struggles further reduce local content production, erode consumer trust, and intensify competition from global streaming platforms, thereby weakening the national media ecosystem. Regulatory delays and compliance burdens only add to these challenges, while the broader consequence is a shrinking space for indigenous content and cultural representation.

What emerges clearly is that the digital switchover, as currently implemented, reflects and reproduces existing socio-economic inequalities rather than mitigating them. Without a deliberate and inclusive approach to funding, policy design, and infrastructure deployment, the promise of digital television will remain inaccessible to large segments of the Nigerian population. Bridging this gap requires a coordinated, multi-stakeholder effort: targeted subsidies for vulnerable users, expanded support for local content producers, reform of regulatory frameworks, and strategic investment in rural infrastructure. Only by addressing the systemic roots of financial inequality can Nigeria's digital transition evolve into a tool for empowerment, inclusion, and sustainable development rather than one of exclusion and dependency.

7.4.3. Infrastructural challenges of viewers, regulators, and service providers

Infrastructural barriers continue to pose significant challenges to the realisation of Nigeria's digital switchover (DSO), affecting the capacity of viewers, regulators, and service providers to fully engage with digital terrestrial television (DTT). Although the DSO is framed as a progressive national agenda aimed at

improving broadcast quality and accessibility, its rollout is undermined by persistent infrastructural inequalities that reflect and often reinforce existing patterns of regional and socio-economic disparity. This discussion is centred around three interrelated dimensions of infrastructural constraint. First, it examines how unequal signal distribution contributes to the ongoing digital marginalisation of rural and underserved communities, thereby limiting the reach and utility of DTT services. Second, it considers the infrastructure and logistical challenges facing regulatory institutions such as the national broadcasting commission (NBC), whose capacity to coordinate the DSO is hampered by limited physical and technological resources. Finally, it discusses the high costs of infrastructure deployment and the commercial hesitancy that shapes service providers' reluctance to expand coverage to less profitable areas. Together, these issues reveal the infrastructural asymmetries that continue to impede equitable access and participation in Nigeria's digital transition.

7.4.3.1. Unequal signal distribution and the persistence of digital marginalisation

The transition from analogue to digital terrestrial television (DTT) in Nigeria has been fundamentally hindered by severe infrastructural limitations that cut across all key stakeholder groups: viewers, regulators, and service providers. These deficiencies manifest through unreliable signal coverage, erratic electricity supply, underdeveloped transmission infrastructure, exorbitant deployment costs, and an uneven distribution of digital resources. The consequences of these shortfalls have not only slowed the pace of digital adoption nationwide but have also deepened the urban-rural divide, excluding millions from the benefits of the digital switchover. This unequal distribution of digital infrastructure mirrors patterns of digital colonialism, where technological advancements are concentrated in urban centres, leaving rural communities in a state of systemic neglect and digital deprivation (Couldry & Mejias, 2023; Veracini and Weaver-Hightower, 2023).

For viewers, especially those in remote regions, unreliable signal reception remains one of the most pressing challenges. Numerous respondents described frequent service interruptions and poor-quality signals, which have negatively impacted user engagement with DTT services. A resident from Ikosi LCDA captured this frustration succinctly: "We experience constant interruptions; even when we have the devices, the signal is poor" (VI035). Another viewer echoed these concerns: "Sometimes, even after fixing the equipment, the problem reoccurs; it makes it hard to depend on the services" (VI006). These complaints point directly to the inadequacy of rural transmission infrastructure. Unlike cities with extensive networks of signal boosters and relay stations, rural communities often contend with sparse or outdated facilities. The resulting poor coverage leaves many without consistent access to digital broadcasts. This imbalance aligns with the concept of information poverty, whereby rural populations are denied the essential information flows and digital services needed to participate fully in modern civic and economic life (Helsper, 2021).

Another key infrastructural challenge is Nigeria's long-standing problem of unreliable electricity supply. This issue significantly hinders viewers' ability to consistently engage with digital television. Without a stable power source, digital decoders or even if the set top boxes were available to residents, it become inoperable for extended periods, rendering the service ineffective. As one fashion designer from Imota stated, "When there's no light, we can't use the digital decoder system" (VI010). For households in rural

areas, the reliance on alternative energy sources such as generators or solar panels imposes additional financial burdens that many cannot afford. Access to stable electricity has been identified in literature as a core prerequisite for meaningful digital adoption (Blimpo and Cosgrove-Davies, 2019; Zaber et al., 2020). Without this, users are unlikely to invest in digital services they cannot reliably use. The disproportionate financial pressure caused by these structural limitations reinforces the hegemony of digital access, where full participation becomes a privilege tied to income and geography, rather than a universally available right.

In addition to power and signal challenges, rural viewers face a chronic lack of localised technical support. Even when viewers manage to purchase and install digital devices, maintaining them presents yet another hurdle. Many rural communities lack access to affordable repair services or trained technicians. This was clearly expressed by a respondent from Ikosi LCDA: "If we could fix some of these issues ourselves, it would help. But there are no technicians nearby, and calling for repairs takes too long" (VI010). This gap in technical service provision reinforces digital poverty, as households are often left with inoperable equipment and no feasible means of resolving the issue. Without reliable maintenance support, adoption stalls and users disengage, leading to prolonged periods without access to digital broadcasting.

7.4.3.2. Infrastructure deficiencies and logistical constraints in regulatory operations

From the regulatory perspective, the national broadcasting commission (NBC) has struggled with the immense infrastructural demands of the DSO. As discussed earlier in section 7.4.1, financial constraints have severely restricted the commission's ability to roll out critical infrastructure nationwide. Achieving universal digital coverage requires massive investment in signal towers, relay stations, and boosters especially in difficult-to-reach rural areas. An NBC zonal monitoring officer confirmed the scale of this challenge: "Achieving 100% coverage for the entire country, especially in rural areas, remains a big challenge given the current state of our country's infrastructure deficiencies." These limitations reflect broader hegemonic economic structures that skew investment priorities toward urban commercial centres, leaving rural areas technologically underserved (Drezner, 2019; Liu and Tsai, 2021). A resident from Ikosi-Ejirin articulated this frustration: "We see these improvements happening in cities, but here, it feels like we are forgotten" (Barber shop owner, Ikosi-Ejirin). This sense of abandonment summarises the experience of many Nigerians living outside major urban centres and reflects a pattern of infrastructural digital colonialism (Brodie, 2023; Tait et al., 2022; Thorat, 2020).

Beyond funding, NBC's efforts have been hampered by logistical and environmental constraints. A zonal coordinator of NBC acknowledged the practical difficulty: "By the time infrastructure reaches rural communities, many have already given up on the promises of digital television" (NBC Official, Lagos). These infrastructure deficits partly explain the repeated failure to meet the DSO deadlines set for 2012, 2015, and 2017 failures that have increasingly eroded public confidence in the regulator's capabilities. This is due to poor road networks, inadequate telecommunications systems, and challenges in transporting equipment further delay infrastructure rollout (Ajayi et al., 2021; Kaiser and Barstow, 2022; Mashwama et al., 2019).

7.4.3.3. Costly infrastructure and commercial hesitancy among service providers

Service providers too face a series of infrastructure-related constraints, many of which are intimately tied to the economic challenges detailed in section 7.4.1. Deploying, upgrading, and maintaining transmission infrastructure is both capital- and labour-intensive, often exceeding the capacity of smaller providers. A program coordinator from a television station described these challenges: “Transporting equipment and maintaining infrastructure in rural areas is not only expensive but often delayed by poor roads and other logistical issues” (Programme Coordinator). Due to the lack of adequate investment in rural transmission networks, many service providers deliver poor signal quality to non-urban areas, limiting viewer satisfaction and market expansion. The reluctance of providers to invest in less profitable rural regions, driven by perceived low commercial returns, reinforces systemic inequality. An NBC staff member noted this issue, explaining that the commission has struggled to enforce coverage mandates among providers, particularly in low-density areas. This selective rollout operations entrenches unequal digital access, ensuring that affluent urban viewers enjoy high-quality services while rural dwellers are left behind.

Just as electricity instability affects household usage, it also imposes significant operational burdens on service providers. Broadcasting stations and transmission hubs require consistent power to maintain high-quality output. In the absence of a reliable national power grid, many service providers must operate fuel-powered generators or solar alternatives, significantly increasing their running costs. These expenses are often passed on to consumers. As one marketing officer from a television provider explained, “We have to account for power costs, equipment maintenance, and transmission expenses. These costs add up, and unfortunately, we have to pass some of them on to consumers” (Marketing Officer). As a result, subscription fees become prohibitively expensive for many low-income households, further limiting access and reinforcing the digital divide. This scenario mirrors findings from Van Dijk (2020) digital divide

Ultimately, the infrastructural challenges faced by all three cohorts viewers, regulators, and service providers are deeply interconnected. For viewers, the daily struggle with signal unreliability, power instability, and limited technical support diminishes the perceived value of digital television. For regulators like the NBC, infrastructural bottlenecks tied to funding shortages and logistical challenges have prevented the realisation of nationwide digital access. While for service providers, the high cost of network deployment, inadequate rural infrastructure, and additional operational burdens make sustainable expansion difficult, especially in marginalised areas. These challenges call for targeted infrastructure investment, inclusive policy reforms, and stricter regulatory enforcement mechanisms. Nigeria’s digital television transition cannot succeed without addressing these systemic shortcomings. Bridging these infrastructural gaps is critical to preventing the further entrenchment of digital inequality and ensuring that digital broadcasting is not a luxury reserved for a privileged few but a right accessible to all Nigerians, regardless of location or income level.

7.4.4. Lack of awareness and digital literacy as expressions of digital colonialism

One of the most formidable barriers to the successful adoption of digital terrestrial television (DTT) in Nigeria is the widespread lack of public awareness and digital literacy. This limitation, deeply rooted in

systemic neglect and unequal information dissemination, significantly hinders public engagement with the digital switchover (DSO). Many individuals remain unaware of what digital television entails, or even that a transition from analogue is taking place. As one participant candidly stated, "I have no idea about this digital television; I just know that television is television" (VI032). This expression reveals a condition of information poverty, where individuals are deprived of timely, relevant, and comprehensible knowledge necessary for informed decision-making (Chatman, 1996). This persistent information void is a direct result of the absence of structured, strategic, and contextually appropriate public awareness campaigns. The failure to provide comprehensive educational resources about DTT has contributed to public disengagement and confusion. A programme manager encapsulated this challenge: "The federal government's failure to provide adequate resources for spreading awareness has resulted in a widespread lack of understanding among the public about the digital switchover." Government-led efforts have predominantly used urban-centric media outlets such as television and online platforms that remain out of reach for many rural communities. This urban bias in communication strategy reflects a form of digital colonialism**,** wherein the infrastructure and flow of information are concentrated in technologically advanced urban areas, while rural and low-income populations are effectively sidelined.

This disconnect between official messaging and public comprehension has bred frustration and skepticism. Many respondents emphasised that a lack of relatable, easily digestible information contributed to their disinterest. One participant explained, "If they explained it well, maybe we would understand why it is important" (VI028), suggesting that more effective and culturally relevant communication could improve adoption. Others advocated for community-driven awareness models such as town hall meetings, local radio shows, and face-to-face sensitisation efforts. "If they came to our community and showed us how it works, I would be more interested" (VI036), one respondent proposed, highlighting the need for experiential and participatory learning. Additionally, digital television is widely perceived as an elitist, urban-centric innovation, divorced from the pressing needs of rural life. In regions plagued by infrastructural challenges like electricity shortages, DTT is understandably seen as a lower priority. One respondent captured this sentiment poignantly: "I don't know anything about digital switchover, and I didn't pay attention to any information about it in my area because it does not solve my immediate problems, which is power electricity" (VI013). Such perspectives further illustrate how DTT is seen through the lens of urban privilege, reinforcing the symbolic and material boundaries of digital colonialism.

This disengagement is compounded by a glaring lack of digital literacy **(**Peng and Yu, 2022**)**, which inhibits the public's capacity to navigate, understand, and use digital systems. According to findings in section 7.2.1, 77% of interview respondents and 86% of survey participants expressed uncertainty about how DTT systems work or what benefits they offer. These figures underscore a widespread literacy gap that serves as a structural barrier to technology access and reinforces digital poverty (Lechman and Popowska, 2022; Ruiu and Ragnedda, 2024). Without basic digital education, many potential users are left excluded from the opportunities digital television might offer.

Scholarly evidence supports the centrality of awareness and education in enabling digital transitions. Wang and Wu (2022) demonstrated that targeted communication strategies significantly enhance public engagement with DTT services. Similarly, Samarakoon et al. (2023) and Viljoen-Stroebel (2022) found that the absence of structured digital literacy programs is a core impediment to adoption in Global South regions. In this context, implementing community-specific digital literacy training becomes not just a developmental necessity but a means to resist digital colonialism by empowering local populations with the skills and knowledge required to participate meaningfully in the digital economy. To bridge this gap, respondents suggested a range of inclusive strategies, including interactive learning platforms**,** helplines**,** mobile education units, and real-time workshops where questions could be answered directly. These strategies should be delivered using local dialects, culturally relevant stories, and by trusted figures such as religious leaders, educators, and community heads. In sum, without a comprehensive, inclusive, and culturally sensitive strategy, Nigeria's DSO risks entrenching rather than alleviating digital exclusion reinforcing digital colonialism by ensuring that only a privileged few can access the benefits of digital broadcasting.

7.4.5. Cultural relevance, representation, and the reinforcement of digital colonialism

Closely tied to the issues of awareness and digital literacy is the lack of culturally relevant and representative content on digital television platforms. Despite the promise of DTT to diversify and democratise media access, the dominance of urban-centric and foreign programming has left many rural audiences feeling alienated and underrepresented. This imbalance not only undermines the inclusivity of digital television but also reinforces the cultural asymmetries central to digital colonialism. Respondents frequently voiced dissatisfaction with the overrepresentation of foreign content, which they perceived as disconnected from their lived realities. One viewer lamented, "The constant replay of foreign programs is becoming less captivating...more of our local programs would be better" (VI047). Another added, "The abundance of foreign programs feels like something meant for the city people" (VI040), implying that even local access to digital television is mediated by cultural distance. These insights reflect a media landscape dominated by Western-centric narratives that displace indigenous voices and traditions mirroring colonial-era patterns where external content is imposed without local consultation or integration.

The repetitive and formulaic nature of foreign programming further reduces its appeal. A respondent noted: "The persistent repetition of foreign programs is gradually diminishing the appeal that initially drew me to the channel" (VI037). This decline in engagement exemplifies the limitations of a content model driven by global market interests rather than local cultural value. As Chiumbu (2016) highlights, such models often ignore or silence local realities as in her study on South African miners thereby marginalising important voices in the pursuit of commercial homogenisation. More profoundly, the lack of cultural representation undermines essential processes of identity preservation and intergenerational knowledge transmission. Communities lose access to a critical medium for expressing traditions, languages, and values. This erasure contributes to both information poverty and digital poverty, as audiences are denied access to content that is meaningful, relevant, and empowering (Chatman, 1996). Respondents called for content that reflects local

experiences, such as agricultural programming, traditional festivals, and health education made to reflect rural concerns. “We believe that infusing more of our local programs instead of these repetitive foreign programs could bring more relevance to us” (VI047), one participant argued emphasising the need for contextualised, community-centric media.

Academic literature supports these observations. Marcella and Chowdhury (2020) stress that media failing to engage diverse cultural contexts exacerbates structural inequality by excluding marginalised voices from the public discourse. Moreover, the prevalence of foreign programming creates a form of cultural dependency, where global media conglomerates act as gatekeepers of information, reducing national autonomy over media narratives (Pradsmadji and Irwansyah2020). The imbalance in media representation also has significant emotional and psychological implications. As an elder in Ikorodu noted, “If they showed programs about our local events or spoke in our language, more people would feel included and use the service” (Mechanic-D). This powerful statement speaks to the exclusionary nature of media homogeneity and highlights how inclusive programming could promote a sense of belonging, participation, and empowerment. This vision aligns with the concept of cultural hybridisation, which advocates for the blending of global and local traditions to generate content that is both familiar and innovative (Hermans & Kempen, 1998; Maikaba and Msughter, 2019). Through this lens, digital television could serve as a platform for cultural revitalisation, rather than a channel for homogenised entertainment.
To realise this potential, deliberate policy interventions are required. These include implementing established quotas for local content, supporting local creators through grants and training, and empowering communities to participate in programming decisions. Scholars such as Chiumbu (2016) and Iordache et al. (2022) advocate for regulatory frameworks that promote cultural plurality and prevent monopolisation by global media corporations. Governments must actively resist the extractive logic of digital colonialism by investing in infrastructure and institutions that elevate indigenous storytelling and digital inclusion. If implemented effectively, such strategies could transform digital television from a tool of exclusion into a medium for empowerment, cultural resilience, and equitable representation. In resisting the homogenising effects of digital colonialism, Nigeria can build a more inclusive digital ecosystem one that values, preserves, and celebrates the diverse identities and experiences of its people.

7.4.6. Enduring appeal of analogue television and the struggles of cultural integration in the digital age

The persistence of analogue television use in Nigeria, despite the global push toward digital terrestrial television (DTT), reveals complex social, cultural, and economic dynamics that continue to obstruct full digital integration. Among surveyed respondents, 33% reported a preference for analogue over digital services. This resistance is rooted not merely in technical unfamiliarity or economic constraint but in a deeper, multilayered reality: a socio-epistemic ecosystem in which rural viewers remain culturally tethered to analogue systems that are embedded in their everyday routines and media habits. This finding aligns with Chatman’s (1996) notion of information poverty, where the absence of timely, relevant, and culturally accessible information prevents individuals from making informed decisions about emerging technologies. For many rural residents in Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin, the analogue platform represents not obsolescence but

familiarity, accessibility, and trust. A 35-year-old dressmaker in Imota LCDA exemplified this sentiment, explaining that she continued to rely on her analogue television to access legacy channels like AIT – Africa Independent Television, NTA – Nigerian Television Authority, MITV – Murhi International Television, LTV – Lagos Television on the analogue television, despite receiving poor signal from stations such as DBN – Degue Broadcasting Network and STV – Silverbird Television. Her reliance was based not only on habit but on the perceived reliability and clarity of analogue content in relation to her local life.

Similarly, a 37-year-old male transporter from Ikosi LCDA revealed, “I rely on my existing analogue TV because I am very familiar with it. I don't know anything about digital television except hearing it from you now.” This simple but powerful statement reflects the core of epistemic exclusion a condition where entire populations are left out of knowledge systems, technological vocabularies, and decision-making frameworks. For such respondents, the digital transition is not just a technical upgrade it is an alienating shift that fails to acknowledge their histories, needs, and lived experiences. This disjuncture between formal policy discourse and grassroots media practices recalls Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s (2023) seminal question: “Can the subaltern speak?” While rural Nigerians clearly articulate their media preferences and frustrations, their speech does not find institutional recognition. Their communicative agency manifested in preferences for analogue, oral knowledge transmission, and culturally embedded viewing practices is rendered unintelligible within the elite technocratic frameworks that structure Nigeria’s DSO. Spivak reminds us that the issue is not whether the low ranking or subaltern has a voice, but whether dominant systems of knowledge allow that voice to count as speech.

Spivak’s critique of epistemic violence maps powerfully onto the Nigerian media transition. The subaltern in this case the rural viewer speaks, but their voice is not heard because it does not conform to the bureaucratic logic or techno-utopian narratives that guide the switchover process. Hence, the enduring appeal of analogue television is not a failure of progress but a critique of imposed futurity a refusal to be overwritten by a digital template that was never designed with them in mind. Cultural preferences further deepen this resistance. A 43-year-old building materials trader from Ikosi LCDA reported a strong preference for his analogue television because it enabled him to stay connected to local events in his native language, cost-free and user-friendly. This behaviour exemplifies cultural hybridity, wherein users explore between traditional and emerging platforms to preserve cultural integrity. Meanwhile, a 62-year-old mechanic in Ikosi LCDA stated, “I don't see the need for the new FreeTV decoder as I'm satisfied with the FreeTv channels I already receive.” His skepticism centred not only on unfamiliarity but also fears of hidden costs, thereby linking this preference to conditions of digital poverty. These narratives highlight the limitations of a technocentric model of digital migration that assumes infrastructure equals inclusion. As one marketing officer from a major TV station acknowledged, “Overcoming adoption resistance requires programming that aligns with rural interests and local languages.” This suggests that DSO must be more than a technological initiative, it must be a cultural and justifiable beliefs dialogue. An editor from the broadcast sector reinforced this position by stating: “Effective communication requires collaboration, and operators may face challenges

when regulatory bodies fail to consult more during their formulation of new policies or regulations. Lack of input from industry players results in rules that are impractical or difficult to implement."

This reflects what Spivak would call caring paternalism (government or corporation) a neo-imperial logic that presumes to speak for the subaltern without actually consulting or co-creating with them. Such policymaking re-inscribes a colonial structure of governance in which power flows unilaterally from the state to the people, without deliberation or reciprocity. Crucially, this alienation from policy processes reinforces the hegemony of legacy media systems, which continue to offer familiarity, linguistic accessibility, and social embeddedness that DTT has not yet replicated. This is supported by uses and gratifications theory (Philip & Williams, 2019), which posits that audiences gravitate toward platforms that fulfil personal and social needs. If DTT fails to provide those gratifications, be it usability, cultural relevance, or affordability resistance is not only rational but expected. Consistent with studies by Doyle et al. (2016) and Schauerte et al. (2021), this resistance suggests that unless digital services deliver clear, localised, and tangible advantages, especially for users satisfied with existing analogue systems, the transition will remain partial. The loyalty to analogue television thus becomes an act of everyday resistance a declaration of communicative agency in a policy environment that too often equates digital transformation with civilisational uplift, without recognising the epistemic displacements it causes. Spivak's insight compels us to reframe the DSO not just as a technical rollout but as a site of struggle over voice, representation, and legitimacy. Until rural users are not only connected but recognised as epistemic subjects, the switchover will continue to replicate rather than redress inequality. The enduring appeal of analogue television, then, is not a refusal to modernise but a demand to be seen, heard, and meaningfully included.

7.4.7. Public distrust in government-led digital initiatives

Widespread distrust in government-led initiatives emerged as a dominant theme in respondents' attitudes towards DTT, cutting across viewers, service providers, and even regulatory stakeholders. This skepticism, shaped by past experiences of failed infrastructure projects, significantly dampened enthusiasm and engagement with the digital switchover. For many citizens, government involvement served as a red flag, triggering doubts about the initiative's credibility and sustainability. Audience members expressed particular disillusionment with regulatory failures at the national broadcasting commission (NBC)**,** citing poor enforcement and subpar oversight that allowed service providers to deliver low-quality services**.** A carpenter from Ikosi-Ejirin LCDA voiced his dissatisfaction: "How can I say my needs are met? No, there is a lot to meet with the current DTV I am using. The regulatory body has not done enough to ensure that service providers deliver high-quality and reliable service. There are constant signal issues and interruptions, and the range of available channels is insufficient." This reflects digital poverty, where poor service delivery combined with weak regulation prevents marginalised users from accessing reliable digital services.

The domination of the DTV space by satellite television providers like DStv, GOtv, and StarTimes**,** many of which are subsidiaries of foreign multinational corporations, contributes to a digital colonialism dynamic.

These companies control essential infrastructure and service distribution, creating economic dependencies that deprive local consumers of ownership or influence. The lack of government regulation to counter these monopolistic practices has enabled neo-colonial market dynamics, where high prices and limited innovation prevail, and consumer choice is diminished. A male sales representative from Imota LCDA pointedly blamed this failure on government inaction, stating: “There’s a lack of competition in the market, as you can see only companies operating the services GOtv, DStv, and StarTimes leading to monopolistic practices and high prices without corresponding quality improvements. The government’s failure to invest in infrastructure and enforce standards has resulted in frequent signal issues and a limited selection of channels.” These conditions reveal a market capture that mirrors colonial economic systems: foreign-controlled monopolies extract profit without reinvesting in local capacities or infrastructures. Respondents also linked their skepticism to long-standing government inefficiency. A participant recalled how Nigeria’s mobile telecommunications system took “almost 15 years” to become affordable, suggesting a historical precedent of delay, inaccessibility, and inefficiency**.** A teacher echoed this concern, stating: “Given this track record, I find myself hesitant to invest time and effort in obtaining the new decoder, as I question whether it will genuinely offer any substantial benefits over existing options in the market.” These perceptions illustrate information poverty, as mistrust in government communications deters engagement with new digital services.

From the service providers’ perspective, doubt wasn’t just about governmental capacity but also its commitment**.** A marketing officer observed: “It looks like the government is not committed to the project,” citing slow investments and a lack of prioritisation. This failure exacerbates rural exclusion, where underdeveloped infrastructure further deepens digital inequality. Service providers also noted a lack of synergy between broadcasters and government agencies like the NBC. A program manager said, “One of our duties is to inform the public about DSO,” but stressed that “it is the government's responsibility to provide us with resources to use for the public awareness campaign.” An engineer echoed this, lamenting: “The federal government’s failure to provide adequate resources for spreading awareness has resulted in a widespread lack of understanding among the public about the digital switchover.” These observations reflect the broader problem of asymmetric governance, characteristic of digital colonialism, where decision-making is centralised, poorly coordinated, and top-down, with minimal input from local actors.

Zaber et al. (2020) observed similar issues in Indonesia’s DTV transition, citing regulatory weakness, technical ambiguity, and a lack of cost analysis as key reasons for failure problems worsened by clientelist relationships between state and corporate actors. Even NBC regulators themselves acknowledged the absence of a comprehensive legal framework, which has undermined policy coherence and implementation. As one NBC zonal coordinator noted, “The absence of a legal framework...has posed a substantial hindrance to successful DSO implementation.” This legal vacuum reinforces neo-colonial governance, where public institutions rely heavily on private and often foreign entities for execution and direction, undermining national autonomy. The need to rebuild citizen trust in public digital initiatives is echoed in recent literature. Studies have shown that policy credibility, transparency, and inclusive decision-making are critical to

promoting civic engagement in digital transformation processes (Liu et al., 2024; Mahmood, 2022; Sintorn, 2024). Without trust, citizens are unlikely to invest financially or emotionally in new technologies, thereby prolonging digital exclusion. The promise of digital transformation will remain unfulfilled unless governments address structural weaknesses, coordinate with industry stakeholders, and actively involve local communities in shaping the digital future.

7.5 Summary reflection

Chapter seven presented a critical synthesis of findings from surveys, interviews, and policy analysis to examine Nigeria's digital switchover (DSO) through the lens of rural communities in Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin, Lagos State. Using the intersectional digital marginalisation framework (IDMF), the chapter interrogated the structural, cultural, and behavioural dynamics underpinning digital disengagement in these underserved areas. Despite the government's framing of the DSO as a path to national development, the chapter reveals a persistent disconnect between policy rhetoric and lived rural realities. Awareness of digital terrestrial television (DTT) remains remarkably low—only 14% of survey respondents and 23% of interviewees demonstrated meaningful understanding—reflecting deep-seated challenges such as inadequate public communication, infrastructural neglect, and socio-economic exclusion. Through the lens of digital colonialism, the chapter explored how DSO implementation continues to replicate global and metropolitan power hierarchies, privileging urban elites and foreign platforms while marginalising local voices. Rather than empowering rural users, the switchover has concentrated digital access within commercial ecosystems (e.g., DStv, GOtv) that remain financially inaccessible for many. The absence of public infrastructure such as FreeTV, combined with poor electricity and signal reception, further limits meaningful engagement.

Yet structural exclusion alone does not tell the full story. Drawing on uses and gratifications theory (UGT), the chapter also foregrounds rural agency. Many participants selectively disengaged from DTT not only because of infrastructural barriers but because the content failed to resonate with their needs, languages, or cultural values. Instead, they turned to hybrid alternatives—such as radio, mobile phones, or communal content sharing—that aligned more closely with their daily lives. This behaviour reflects rational responses to unmet expectations, not passive disinterest. The chapter also applied intersectionality to highlight how gender, age, education, and geography converge to deepen exclusion. Women, older adults, and low-income households were disproportionately disadvantaged, revealing that digital inequality is not uniform but shaped by overlapping structural identities.

By integrating these conceptual tools, the chapter concluded that the failure of the DSO in rural Lagos is not merely a case of flawed execution, but a symptom of deeper governance and policy design issues. Rooted in neo-colonial logics, the current approach prioritises commercial viability and technological performance over inclusion, equity, and cultural integrity. Nevertheless, the findings also point to possibilities for transformation. Participants expressed clear demand for affordable, culturally relevant content, and community-based outreach—suggesting that rural disengagement is a product of systemic neglect, not inherent disinterest. Ultimately, chapter seven argues that the success of digital switchover policies depends

not on more technology, but on more justice. This means placing rural voices, needs, and knowledge systems at the centre of digital development. As the thesis transitions into chapter eight, the insights from this discussion lay the groundwork for actionable recommendations focused on inclusion, equity, and cultural sovereignty in Nigeria's digital media landscape.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion and Recommendation

8.1 Conclusion

This study set out to critically examine the extent and limits of engagement with Nigeria's digital switchover (DSO) initiative among rural communities in the Ikorodu region of Lagos State. It focused on two Local council development areas (LCDAs) Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin where digital terrestrial television (DTT) infrastructure and services have been introduced under the government-led FreeTV rollout. Through a multi-method research design combining survey data, semi-structured interviews with rural residents, and elite interviews with regulators and service providers this study reveals the complex interplay between policy intention, structural inequality, and everyday user experience in the digital transition. The central finding is that the DSO, despite its promise of national development and technological progress, has largely failed to engage and include rural populations in meaningful ways. Access remains uneven, awareness is low, and usage is often fragmented or substituted by informal and hybrid practices. These outcomes reflect not just gaps in communication or infrastructure, but deeper structural contradictions embedded in Nigeria's digital policy environment.

To make sense of these findings, the study introduces the intersectional digital marginalisation framework (IDMF) a conceptual tool that synthesises five interlocking perspectives: digital colonialism, intersectionality, digital poverty, information poverty and uses and gratifications theory (UGT). This framework provides a diagnostic model to understand how multiple forms of exclusion converge including socio-economic status, gender, age, education, language, and geography while also accounting for how individuals respond to digital systems based on personal and social needs. Throughout chapters 4 to 6, the IDMF helped interpret not only the material constraints of rural users (e.g., unstable electricity, poor signal, unaffordable set-top boxes or decoders), but also their cultural disconnection from the DSO's urban-centric design and its prioritisation of commercial content over community needs. The concept of digital colonialism, as applied in this context, draws attention to how foreign-owned corporations, urban elites, and state institutions collaborate intentionally or otherwise to reproduce hierarchies that marginalise rural voices in the digital public sphere. Meanwhile, the persistent absence of public infrastructure and participatory mechanisms reinforces this marginalisation, leaving users feeling alienated from the very services intended to empower them.

In tandem with this structural critique, the framework draws on uses and gratifications theory to foreground audience agency and motivation. Users in these communities are not passive victims of exclusion; they are active agents who assess, negotiate, and when necessary, reject digital technologies that do not align with their expectations, interests, or socio-cultural realities. For example, the preference for local-language content, educational programming, or agricultural information reflects a strong demand for culturally relevant, community-driven media. When these needs are not met by DTT, users opt for alternatives such as radio, or mobile platforms demonstrating rational decision-making in a constrained media environment. Thus, this study redefines digital disengagement not as a symptom of technological

backwardness or apathy, but as a strategic response to marginalisation. The act of disengaging from DTT becomes, in some cases, a form of resistance a rejection of systems that exclude, ignore, or homogenise rural identities and information needs.

The research also surfaces the intersectional nature of exclusion, particularly for women, older adults, and those with limited formal education, who experience compounded disadvantage in accessing and understanding digital media. The combination of material inequality, cultural dissonance, and gendered access produces a layered marginality that standard access-driven policy metrics often fail to capture. This complexity affirms the need for multidimensional frameworks like the IDMF that attend to both structure and subjectivity, both policy and practice. Finally, the study critiques the technocratic and elite-driven governance of Nigeria's digital transition. It identifies a systemic disconnect between policy rhetoric and lived reality, and between national ambitions and local implementation. Regulatory bodies such as the NBC, though tasked with oversight, appear constrained by political interests, limited transparency, and a lack of grassroots consultation. As such, the DSO's failure in rural Lagos is not merely a technical issue it is a governance issue, shaped by historical legacies of exclusion and contemporary logics of neoliberal development.

This thesis overall offers both a conceptual and empirical contribution to the study of digital inequality in the Global South. By developing and applying the intersectional digital marginalisation framework, it provides a holistic lens to understand why digital disengagement persists despite infrastructure investments. And by incorporating uses and gratifications theory, it recovers the agency of rural users who make strategic, culturally embedded decisions about their media environments. These findings set the stage for the next section policy recommendations. The success of DTT and broader digital inclusion efforts in Nigeria depends not only on improving infrastructure, but also on recognising and responding to the diverse, intersectional, and context-specific needs of rural communities. In this sense, the call is not just for better technology but for better governance, better engagement, and ultimately, digital justice.

8.2 Recommendations

To address the intersecting barriers to digital engagement identified throughout this study, this section outlines a set of policy and practice recommendations informed by the intersectional digital marginalisation framework (IDMF) and grounded in the lived experiences of rural users in Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin. These recommendations target not only infrastructural and economic constraints, but also the socio-cultural, behavioural, and institutional dynamics that have shaped the failure of the digital switchover (DSO) in rural Lagos. The goal is to promote a more inclusive, participatory, and culturally responsive approach to digital broadcasting in Nigeria. A fundamental step forward involves rethinking the concept of digital access. In the Nigerian context, access has often been narrowly defined in terms of technological rollout installing transmitters, distributing set-top boxes, and establishing signal coverage. However, this study has shown that access alone is insufficient to ensure meaningful engagement. Digital inclusion must be understood as a multidimensional goal, requiring not only physical infrastructure but also affordable services, linguistic

accessibility, locally relevant content, and sustained user support. This calls for an equity-based approach to DSO implementation one that prioritises underserved communities rather than treating them as an afterthought.

In addressing infrastructural inequality, government agencies must extend their efforts to ensure not only signal penetration into rural areas but also the stability of supporting systems such as electricity. Public–private collaboration could enable the deployment of off-grid or solar-powered broadcasting solutions in remote areas where power supply is unreliable or absent. Additionally, access must be made economically viable. This could involve targeted subsidies or voucher schemes for low-income households, particularly those headed by women or persons with disabilities, who are more likely to face compounded barriers. Equally critical is the development and promotion of culturally relevant content. One of the study's strongest findings is that rural disengagement from DTT is driven in large part by the lack of programming that reflects the linguistic, cultural, and informational needs of local communities. To counter this, a national content policy must be developed that mandates a quota of locally produced programming in indigenous languages and dialects. Public funding and technical support should be provided to enable community-based organisations and local creatives to produce such content. This approach would not only support engagement but also decentralise media power and promote local ownership of the digital narrative.

To further support engagement, public awareness campaigns and digital literacy initiatives must be significantly reimagined. The data reveals that most rural participants were either unaware of the DSO or had misunderstood its purpose, scope, and benefits. Current communication strategies often broadcast in English and relying on urban media have failed to penetrate rural contexts. Instead, outreach efforts should be community-led, conducted in local languages, and adapted to the communication norms of different age and literacy groups. Training local "digital ambassadors" or "media champions" from within the community could offer a sustainable, trusted means of promoting understanding and uptake of DTT services. Governance structures also require urgent reform. As shown in Chapter Six, the failure of the NBC and other stakeholders to meaningfully engage rural communities has created a significant gap between policy design and everyday media realities. Transparency, inclusion, and accountability must become core principles of the DSO's institutional framework. This includes implementing participatory planning mechanisms that involve local stakeholders in content, infrastructure, and policy development. Community feedback loops should be institutionalised, allowing residents to voice their needs, concerns, and suggestions on a regular basis. Moreover, regulatory reporting should be disaggregated by region, gender, and other indicators of marginalisation to assess progress and gaps in real time.

Importantly, the findings also underscore the need to respond to audience motivations and behavioural patterns insights illuminated by uses and gratifications theory. Rural users are not simply excluded by circumstance; many disengage from DTT because the service does not meet their expectations. The dominance of foreign or urban content, the inaccessibility of programme guides, and the lack of local interactivity led users to turn toward hybrid alternatives such as mobile streaming, radio, or communal

content sharing. Rather than viewing these behaviours as evidence of backwardness, policymakers and service providers should treat them as valuable indicators of what audiences want. Audience research should be embedded into the planning and development phases of DSO services, so that engagement strategies are built around real user needs rather than assumed ones. This user-centred approach must also inform how DTT content is accessed. In areas where TV ownership is limited, or where multiple platforms coexist, service providers should explore ways to integrate DTT content into mobile and app-based platforms. Supporting cross-platform accessibility and hybrid viewing models would align policy with real-world usage and expand reach to harder-to-serve groups.

Further, decentralising the digital ecosystem is crucial to long-term sustainability. The current concentration of decision-making power in Abuja and Lagos undermines the participatory ideals of digital inclusion. Decision-making around infrastructure rollout, content programming, and funding allocations must be decentralised to reflect regional realities. Establishing regional or state-level DSO advisory bodies, inclusive of community representatives, local broadcasters, and civil society groups, could improve responsiveness and ensure more contextually grounded implementation. In line with the intersectional findings of this study, digital inclusion efforts must address the specific needs of multiply marginalised groups. Women, older adults, and those with limited education require tailored interventions, such as simplified user interfaces, oral instruction materials, and gender-sensitive outreach. Without explicitly accounting for these disparities, digital policies risk reinforcing rather than reducing inequality.

Finally, a rights-based approach to digital inclusion must be adopted. Access to digital infrastructure and content should not be seen as a commercial privilege, but as a civic right and cultural entitlement. The state must reframe digital broadcasting as a public good, not merely as a commercial or technical enterprise. Aligning DSO policy with broader national development goals such as poverty reduction, education, health, and cultural preservation will ensure that digital inclusion is integrated into the fabric of social and economic policy, rather than relegated to the margins of technology planning. In sum, the recommendations proposed here call for a fundamental reorientation of Nigeria’s digital switchover initiative: away from technocratic delivery models and toward community-based, culturally embedded, and equity-driven strategies. Only by addressing the intersectional and behavioural dimensions of digital marginalisation can Nigeria build a truly inclusive digital future one that reflects the diverse realities of its rural citizens and restores their rightful place in the country’s digital transformation.

8.3 Limitations of the study and suggestions for further studies

While this research offers valuable insights into the implementation of digital terrestrial television (DTT) services and their consequences within the Imota and Ikosi Local council development areas (LCDAs) in the Ikorodu community, there exist certain constraints that may have impacted the results. One example of a limitation is the study's restricted geographical scope, which was influenced by security challenges such as prevalent kidnapping incidents and the exorbitant travel costs in the western region of Nigeria. The original intention of the researcher was to broaden the research to include other areas of the region for comparative

evaluation; however, these obstacles posed restrictions. Moreover, the use of surveys, interviews, and document analyses as the primary methods of data collection in this research presents inherent drawbacks. Surveys and interviews are susceptible to response bias, especially in scenarios where participants, notably government officials, may withhold candid feedback due to concerns regarding identification or repercussions. The likelihood that certain officials may lack a full understanding of the regulatory background and policy implications pertaining to DTT could have influenced the research outcomes.

Subsequent studies could contemplate involving government stakeholders such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs), local governments, regulatory agencies, private sector businesses, international organisations, media and press, interest and advocacy groups and academic and research institutions in a manner that cultivates trust, in addition to exploring archival research to mitigate the impact of response bias. One notable constraint of the present study pertains to the language barrier observed within the local community. The use of English as the predominant language for surveys and interviews resulted in the unintentional exclusion of individuals lacking proficiency in this language. This exclusion could have further marginalised certain individuals with intersecting identities, especially those not fluent in English. Moreover, this approach runs the risk of perpetuating neocolonial challenges, such as the limited availability of information on DTT exclusively in English or 'mainstream' Nigerian languages.

To mitigate these constraints, forthcoming research endeavours should contemplate employing multilingual data collection strategies or engaging bilingual researchers to enhance inclusivity. Additionally, a sole reliance on surveys, interviews, and document analyses may not adequately capture the full spectrum of experiences among participants. Subsequent studies could gain value from a mixed-methods strategy, integrating qualitative methodologies like focus groups or participant observation to attain a more inclusive knowledge of the community's viewpoints.

8.4 Suggested future research directions

It will be interesting to see whether the conclusion of this thesis can act as a springboard for further research to examine the impact of digital technologies on marginalised communities or groups using different sampling frames, units of analysis and/or additional research methods – especially to examine issues around ease of use, accessibility, flexibility and other design characteristics. As the digital environment has undergone significant changes in how information is distributed and consumed, providing unique possibilities for connectivity and availability. This thesis has shown that the digital TV transformation presents intricate challenges, particularly for marginalised communities. In the process of examining the complexities of digital availability, two key problems emerged through analysis: digital exclusion/poverty and digital colonialism. There are tensions between these two phenomena, as they represent conflicting issues that will require imaginative approaches to explore them in further research. While digital poverty/exclusion is a problem concerning the unequal access to digital technologies between more and less affluent (and rural versus urban) communities – in the context of this study, suggesting that the availability of digital TV is implicitly ‘a good thing’ – digital colonialism questions this assumption by emphasising how

the imposition of digital TV platforms/channels/services may pose a (real or perceived) threat to cherished indigenous cultures, and therefore not be desirable for everyone after all. These issues can be further broken down into the following,

- Analysing the impacts of digital colonialism with an objective of exploring the cultural implications of globalised digitalisation processes.
- Balancing digital inclusion and cultural preservation with the objective of develop strategies that promote digital access while respecting cultural diversity.

8.5 Reflective Diary: Evolution of my perspective on digital TV (2019-2024)

When I began this research journey in 2019, my perspective on digital television (DTT) was deeply shaped by my professional background in the television industry. Having worked within a system that celebrated the transformative potential of digital technologies, I approached DTT with a sense of optimism—viewing it as a powerful tool for information access, educational enhancement, and entertainment delivery, particularly for underserved communities. My initial research proposal reflected this outlook. It was grounded in two seemingly straightforward assumptions: first, that some communities lacked adequate access to digital TV; and second, that others lacked the interest to engage with it. I believed that these challenges were primarily technological or infrastructural in nature, and that once access improved, disparities in media consumption would narrow. However, as I progressed into fieldwork and engaged with rural communities in Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin, my assumptions began to unravel. The data revealed far more complex and layered patterns of digital disengagement than I had anticipated. While access was certainly an issue, it became increasingly evident that access alone was not the solution. Many participants described experiences that suggested a deeper disconnect—one rooted not only in technological exclusion, but also in cultural alienation, lack of relevance, and representational invisibility. For some, digital television content felt foreign, urban-centric, and disconnected from their daily lives, languages, and values. These findings prompted a fundamental shift in my thinking: the issue was not simply about infrastructure or affordability, but about whose voices are heard, whose stories are told, and whose realities are represented.

This turning point led me to engage with postcolonial theory and intersectional concept, which offered the critical tools I needed to reinterpret what I was observing on the ground. The concept of digital colonialism in particular illuminated the structural dynamics at play—how global corporations and national elites shape digital infrastructures and content flows in ways that marginalise local cultures and reinforce existing hierarchies. Through this lens, I came to understand DTT not as a neutral technology, but as a potential vehicle of cultural dominance, often exporting homogenised content that undermines the richness of Nigeria's media pluralism. Simultaneously, intersectionality allowed me to see how exclusion was not experienced equally across the population. Women, elderly persons, low-income households, and speakers of local languages often faced compounded disadvantages due to overlapping barriers—economic, informational, cultural, and infrastructural. These insights culminated in the development of what became my core conceptual contribution: the intersectional digital marginalisation framework (IDMF). Conceived as a diagnostic lens, the IDMF brought together four interrelated concepts—digital colonialism, digital poverty,

information poverty, and intersectionality—to explain the structural dimensions of digital disengagement. To this, I added uses and gratifications theory (UGT) to account for the agency of rural users who selectively adopt, reject, or bypass digital technologies based on whether their needs are met. This framework provided me with a more refined way to understand why disengagement persists—not merely because people lack access, but because the system itself often fails to deliver content that is linguistically accessible, culturally relevant, or socially empowering. By naming this constellation of exclusions as intersectional digital marginalisation, I sought to reframe the conversation around digital inclusion to acknowledge both structure and agency.

Between 2023 and 2024, this evolving perspective matured into a more critical and reflexive stance. While I continue to recognise the potential of digital TV to democratise information and enhance civic engagement, I now approach these claims with caution. My optimism has been tempered by an awareness of the risks of digital hegemony, where a few dominant actors shape the digital public sphere in ways that marginalise others. The challenge, therefore, is not only to expand access, but to ensure that digital platforms support local content ecosystems, reflect cultural diversity, and promote inclusive participation. Throughout this process, my positionality has been both a source of insight and a site of tension. My early professional experiences gave me insider knowledge of the industry's ambitions, but also a bias toward its presumed benefits. I have tried to be transparent about this positionality throughout the thesis, particularly in the methodology chapter, where I reflect on how my views evolved in response to empirical encounters. Engaging with community members—many of whom challenged my assumptions—and embracing critical theoretical perspectives forced me to confront and reframe my own standpoint. This reflexivity, I believe, has strengthened the integrity and depth of my research.

In retrospect, the journey from 2019 to 2024 has been one of intellectual and personal transformation. I now understand that digital exclusion is not only about lacking access to technology—it is also about lacking access to meaningful, affirming, and culturally resonant content. It is about who gets to participate in the digital future, on what terms, and with whose voices. The creation of the IDMF reflects this expanded understanding and offers a tool that future scholars and policymakers can use to approach digital inclusion in ways that are more equitable, grounded, and inclusive. Ultimately, this journey has taught me that technologies are never neutral—and that critically examining their social, cultural, and political dimensions is essential for ensuring that the digital revolution does not leave the most vulnerable behind.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Participant information sheet

PROJECT TITLE:

Digital disconnect? Unpacking the extent and limits of engagement with the digital TV switchover among remote rural communities in the Lagos region.

PURPOSE:

This research activity is conducted as part of the primary research for a Doctoral Degree.

WHAT IS THIS RESEARCH PROJECT ABOUT?

This research explores how respondents in Lagos state southwest of Nigeria are aware and can access and use digital television services that were just launched and map the appropriate digital information provision culturally. Specifically, the study identifies information on awareness, needs and use, the criteria for choosing information sources, and the effect of culture on seeking information, particularly in rural communities.

WHAT WILL YOU HAVE TO DO, AND HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?

The researcher wishes to interview you. This should take no longer than 1 hour and will take place at your desired time (if safe and void of interruption). The interview will be recorded. You will be asked to give consent before the interview.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE INFORMATION COLLECTED?

The researcher will study, analyse, and provide findings based on what you have said. The findings will help understand the situation under study and achieve a doctoral degree (PhD). Only the researcher and his supervisor (if applicable) will be privy to the notes, documents, and recordings. The researcher will keep transcriptions of the recordings and a copy of the paper but treat them with the strictest confidentiality. No participants will be identified in the publications, and every effort will be made to disguise your identity. At the end of the study, notes will be destroyed and recordings erased.

DECLARATION TO PARTICIPANTS

If you take part in the study, you have the right to:

- Refuse to answer any question, and
- To withdraw from the study at any time (including after the interview has been completed).
- Ask any further questions about the study that occurs to you during your participation.
- Be given access to a summary of findings from the study when it is concluded.

WHO'S RESPONSIBLE?

If you have any questions or concerns about the project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:

THE RESEARCHER:

Oluwole Elebiju

Ole1@stir.ac.uk

THE SUPERVISOR

Dr James Morrison, Reader in Journalism

James.morrison@stir.ac.uk

Dr Bernadine Jones

b.l.jones@stir.ac.uk

Provisional Interview Questions for NBC Official 1

1. Can you give me an overview of the digital switchover process in Lagos and what Lagosian hope to benefit from the project?
2. Though at the introduction level you mentioned some benefits of DSO, what other benefits do you think citizens of Lagos will get out of this DSO?
3. How do you intend to meet up with the technical and infrastructure needed for digital
4. switchover in Lagos?
5. How do you intend to publicise or promote the initiative? I mean the awareness of DSO.
6. What challenges do you currently face, particularly your thoughts on this widespread belief that we missed deadlines primarily due to poor planning, governance, corruption, and leadership problems?
7. Is the government's release of funds sufficient and What will you do differently to get the people's interest, particularly engaging rural communities?
8. Did NBC take into consideration people with disabilities, older, isolated and low-income consumers and the rural communities to tackle digital inequality, educational demands, civic engagement, and social exclusion?
9. How do you intend to support them and service-providers too?
10. When do you hope the process will be completed?

Provisional Interview Questions for NBC Official 2

1. How do you see the DSO journey so far in Lagos, sir and what Lagosian hope to get from the project?
2. What is the level of awareness I mean how do you intend to publicise or promote the initiative?
3. What do you think will be the benefits of implementing DSO to Lagosan?
4. What challenges do you currently face, particularly your thoughts on this widespread belief that we missed deadlines primarily due to poor planning, governance, corruption, and leadership problems?

5. Do you think as a regulatory body that you have met the expectation of potential viewers on how DSO can help reduce the digital inequality of citizens or tackle digital inequality, educational demands, civic engagement, and social exclusion?
6. What are you doing to support the service-providers/operators regarding the successful discharge of your regulatory roles towards DSO?
7. Do you have a provision for local content?
8. When do you hope the process will be completed?

Provisional Interview Questions for NBC Official 3

1. What is your expert opinion on the overview digital switchover in Lagos?
2. What are the benefits to Lagos and Nigeria on this digital transition?
3. What is the level of awareness to potential viewers and the publicity campaign?
4. What challenges have you observed on public awareness?
5. Could you please break down other challenges that you think are hindering this process?
6. How do you intend to meet up with the technical and infrastructure needed for digital switchover in Lagos to meet the expectations of the people?
7. How have you encouraged the operator in regard to the DSO implementation
8. Again, what actions have you taken to support the DSO process in rural communities?
9. When do you hope the process will be completed?

Provisional Interview Questions for Targeted Audience

1. Respondent ID- IV
2. What is your Gender
3. How old are you (Age)
4. What is your present location?
5. Your Occupation
6. Do you have broadband internet at home?
7. Did you have prior knowledge of the digital switchover (DSO) occurring in your locality (Awareness)?
8. Were you notified about the current digital switchover in your locality by the government (NBC)?
9. Do you have access to digital television (DTV) in your place of residence?
10. Do you have access to the new Freetv decoder (STB) recently launched by the government through digital switchover initiation?
11. Which type of provider do you use for your TV?
12. Can you tell me the benefits you derive from using digital television (DTV)?
13. What is your expectation using DTV or Set-Top Box (Freetv decoder) compared to analogue TV?
14. What prompted your transition to digital television?
15. Would you say your needs are met if you are currently using any DTV? If yes, how and if no, why?

16. What challenges do you experience using your digital television (DTV) or Freetv Set-Top Box (Decoder) or preventing you from accessing DTV services?
17. What do you want in order to be able to access the FreeTvin your area?
18. What measures do you believe the government should take to accelerate the completion of the Digital switchover (DSO) implementation to a successful outcome that would satisfy you?

Provisional Interview Questions for Television Service-Providers

1. What do you understand about the term digital switchover (DSO)?
2. Did you get any briefing of DSO by department heads?
3. Do you think the general public understood the digital switchover process going on in the state?
4. Do you think DSO will have an improved citizen digital engagement in terms of their needs, wants and expectations?
5. What advantages do you think viewers can experience through their engagement with digital terrestrial television from your station?
6. What are the benefits of Digital switchover to you as an operator in the industry?
7. What do you think is the main challenge of viewers in rural areas in regard to DTT use or engagement?
8. Would it be advantageous if the private sector assumed sole responsibility for the execution of the project (DSO), as opposed to the public sector, and if so, what are the reasons for this potential advantage?
9. What do you think is the main challenge of the national government to achieve a successful DSO process in Nigeria?
10. How would you describe viewer's engagement concerning present digital television services, particularly the rural communities in your state?
11. In your opinion, what do you think the government can do to increase participation /digital inclusivity in Nigeria from the implementation of DSO to help tackle digital inequality?
12. Any other comments or suggestions?

Survey Questions for targeted audience in Imota and Ikosi-Ejirin LCDAs

1) Select your appropriate gender.
2) Age group.
3) Educational Qualification.
4) Occupation.
5) What is your current Local Government Area location?
6) Do you have access to the Internet?
7) Through what device do you access the Internet at home?
8) What is your major source of accessing information?
9) Which device do you mostly use for accessing information from?
10) What type of television set do you have? Tick the appropriate choice.

11) How often or how many hours do you spend watching any TV in a day? (TV engagement)
12) How often would you say you use or engage with your TV?
13) Which television service provider do you use with your TV and why?
14) How many channels do you receive from your monthly subscription?
15) Which channel do you use most often from your TV and why?
16) Other than watching the channels you pay for, what is the most important use you make of your DTV?
17) What genre of programmes do you enjoy using your current TV?
18) What benefit(s) do you get using your current television?
19) What do you NOT like about your digital TV experience – if anything?
20) What (if anything) do you miss about your old analogue television?
21) Can you describe any problem(s) you faced using your current TV?
22) How essential is the government digital terrestrial television (DTT) to you and your family compared to other forms of services from the private sector like DSTV, GOTV, or STARTIMES?
23) Do you agree that using digital TV can help to improve your digital skills?
24) In your opinion, do you think your needs, wants, and expectations for digital terrestrial television (DTT) services are met now?
25) What is preventing you from getting or using the digital terrestrial television (DTT) or Set-Top Box?
26) What would make you more likely to use digital terrestrial television (DTT) for a wider range of services?
27) What other programme content/s do you wish to see on television?
28) How has your new viewing experience changed compared to the old analogue television service you used to have?
29) Do you understand the term ‘digital switchover’?
30) Were you informed by the government about the ongoing digital switchover in your community?
31) Was the digital switchover information translated into your local language?
32) Are you impressed with how the government is going about the implementation of digital terrestrial television (DTT) services in your area?
33) Please tick the appropriate box below that applies to you on how you acquire or maintain (cost) the Set-Top Box (STB) for digital terrestrial television (DTT) services.
34) Can you be approached for a follow up interview if need be?
35) Is there any other issue(s) not touched that you think is important to you or any other comment, please?

Appendix 2

Table 1: Research Design/Framework of Investigation			
Research Questions	**Objectives**	**Sources of data**	**Data analysis methods**
What is the level of awareness of DTT services, particularly the government-led digital switchover (DSO) initiative, among the target audience in Lagos-Ikorodu?	To assess the level of awareness of DTT services under the DSO initiative among the target audience in Lagos-Ikorodu.	Survey questionnaires and structured interview	Quantitative Analysis Qualitative analysis
What is the extent of access to and engagement with DTT (and broader Digital TV) services among Lagos-Ikorodu residents?	To assess the extent of access to and engagement with digital terrestrial television (DTT) and broader digital television (DTV) services among residents of Lagos-Ikorodu, identifying patterns of usage, accessibility, and engagement levels within this community.	Survey questionnaires and structured interview	Quantitative Analysis Qualitative analysis
To what extent does DTT fulfil its goals of digital inclusivity, especially in underserved and rural regions?	To evaluate the extent to which DTT aligns with and fulfils the digital inclusivity goals, especially in underserved regions.	Survey questionnaires and semi-structured interview	Quantitative Analysis Qualitative analysis
What infrastructural, economic, educational, cultural, and other barriers hinder access to and the adoption of DTT, and how do these factors influence local content production and consumption?	To identify and analyse infrastructural, economic, educational, and cultural barriers to the adoption of DTT, as well as the impact of these barriers on local content production and consumption in rural communities.	Survey questionnaires and semi-structured interview	Quantitative Analysis Qualitative analysis

Table 1: Research Design/Framework of Investigation			
Research Questions	**Objectives**	**Sources of data**	**Data analysis methods**
Are the needs, preferences, and expectations of potential DTT users in rural communities being adequately met?	To assess whether the needs, wants, and expectations of prospective DTT users are being met in terms of content, accessibility, and service quality.	Survey questionnaires and semi-structured interview	Quantitative Analysis Qualitative analysis

Table 2: Targeted Audience Interview List			
No.	**ID**	**AREA**	**Gender**
1.	Barbar shop owner	Ikosi-Ejinrin LCDA	Male
2.	Seamstress	Ikosi-Ejinrin LCDA	Female
3.	Restaurant owner	Ikosi-Ejinrin LCDA	Female
4.	Homemaker-A	Ikosi-Ejinrin LCDA	Female
5.	Fashion Designer-A	Ikosi-Ejinrin LCDA	Female
6.	Student-2	Ikosi-Ejinrin LCDA	Female
7.	Brick-Layer-A	Ikosi-Ejinrin LCDA	Male
8.	Building materials Trader	Ikosi-Ejinrin LCDA	Male
9.	Transporter	Ikosi-Ejinrin LCDA	Male
10.	Tailor-1	Ikosi-Ejinrin LCDA	Male
11.	Fisher man	Ikosi-Ejinrin LCDA	Female
12.	Student-3	Ikosi-Ejinrin LCDA	Female
13.	Food seller	Ikosi-Ejinrin LCDA	Female
14.	Market trader	Ikosi-Ejinrin LCDA	Female
15.	Carpenter-A	Ikosi-Ejinrin LCDA	Female
16.	Homemaker-B	Ikosi-Ejinrin LCDA	Male
17.	Student-4	Ikosi-Ejinrin LCDA	Male
18.	Teacher-B	Ikosi-Ejinrin LCDA	Male
19.	Student-5	Ikosi-Ejinrin LCDA	Female

Table 2: Targeted Audience Interview List			
No.	**ID**	**AREA**	**Gender**
20.	Homemaker-C	Ikosi-Ejinrin LCDA	Male
21.	Student-6	Ikosi-Ejinrin LCDA	Male
22.	Road transporter- Driver	Ikosi-Ejinrin LCDA	Female
23.	Mechanic-B	Ikosi-Ejinrin LCDA	Female
24.	Brick-Layer-B	Ikosi-Ejinrin LCDA	Male
25.	Student-7	Ikosi-Ejinrin LCDA	Female
26.	Teacher-D	Ikosi-Ejinrin LCDA	Male
27.	Mechanic-C	Ikosi-Ejinrin LCDA	Female
28.	Mechanic-D	Ikosi-Ejinrin LCDA	Male
29.	Carpenter-B	Ikosi-Ejinrin LCDA	Female
30.	History teacher- H	Ikosi-Ejinrin LCDA	Male
31.	Tailor-4	Ikosi-Ejinrin LCDA	Male
32.	Mechanic-E	Ikosi-Ejinrin LCDA	Male
33.	Student-1	Imota LCDA	Male
34.	Primary school Teacher-A	Imota LCDA	Female
35.	Furniture maker	Imota LCDA	Male
36.	Fashion Designer-B	Imota LCDA	Female
37.	Mechanic-A	Imota LCDA	Male
38.	Sales rep	Imota LCDA	Male
39.	Lesson teacher G	Imota LCDA	Female
40.	Teacher-C	Imota LCDA	Female
41.	Welder	Imota LCDA	Male
42.	Tailor-2	Imota LCDA	Female
43.	Teacher-E	Imota LCDA	Female
44.	Tailor-3	Imota LCDA	Female
45.	Local Shop Owner	Imota LCDA	Male
46.	Teacher-F	Imota LCDA	Male

Table 2: Targeted Audience Interview List			
No.	**ID**	**AREA**	**Gender**
47.	Vulcaniser	Imota LCDA	Male
48.	Tailor-5	Imota LCDA	Female
49.	Driver	Imota LCDA	Male
50.	Dress maker	Imota LCDA	Female
51.	Student-8	Imota LCDA	Male
52.	Homemaker-D	Imota LCDA	Female

Table 3: List of Interviewees from NBC and Television service- providers (BON)				
No	**Position**	**Format**	**Gender**	**Organisation**
1)	Zonal Coordinator	Face to Face	Female	National Broadcasting Commission
2)	Marketer	Open-ended semi-structured questionnaire	Female	African Independent Television
3)	Filmmaker	Open-ended semi-structured questionnaire	Male	COOL TV
4)	Assistant Monitoring Officer	Open-ended semi-structured questionnaire	Female	CORETV
5)	Editor	Open-ended semi-structured questionnaire	Male	Degue Broadcasting Network (DBN TV)
6)	Monitoring Officer	Open-ended semi-structured questionnaire	Male	Galaxy Television (GTV)
7)	Duty Engineer	Open-ended semi-structured questionnaire	Female	HipTV
8)	VCR Editor	Open-ended semi-structured questionnaire	Male	Lagos Television Ikeja
9)	Marketing Officer	Open-ended semi-structured questionnaire	Female	LTV
10)	Canteen staff	Open-ended semi-structured questionnaire	Female	LTV Lagos
11)	Programme Presenter	Open-ended semi-structured questionnaire	Female	Minaj Broadcast International (MBI)

Table 3: List of Interviewees from NBC and Television service- providers (BON)				
No	**Position**	**Format**	**Gender**	**Organisation**
12)	Station Manager	Open-ended semi-structured questionnaire	Male	Muri International Television
13)	Zonal Manager	Face to Face	Male	National Broadcasting Commission
14)	Zonal Monitoring Officer	Face to Face	Male	National Broadcasting Commission
15)	Commercial Manager	Open-ended semi-structured questionnaire	Male	News Central
16)	Presenter	Open-ended semi-structured questionnaire	Female	Nigeria Television Authority (NTA 2)
17)	On Air Personality	Open-ended semi-structured questionnaire	Female	NTA 7
18)	Public Servant	Open-ended semi-structured questionnaire	Female	NTA 7
19)	Station Manager	Open-ended semi-structured questionnaire	Male	ONTV
20)	Duty continuity announcer (DCA)	Face to Face	Female	Plus TV Africa
21)	Controller Programmes	Open-ended semi-structured questionnaire	Female	Silverbird TV
22)	Content Producer	Open-ended semi-structured questionnaire	Male	SOUNDCITY
23)	Engineer	Open-ended semi-structured questionnaire	Male	Superscreen Television
24)	Programmes Manager	Face to Face	Male	Televista TV
25)	Manager sport desk	Open-ended semi-structured questionnaire	Female	TV360 Nigeria
26)	Duty Continuity announcer (DCA)	Open-ended semi-structured questionnaire	Female	TVC Lagos
27)	Programme Coordinator	Face to Face	Female	WAZOBIA MAX