

**LOCAL CONTENT INITIATIVES AND TECHNOLOGY PROMOTION IN NIGERIA:
ASSESSMENT OF THE INTERNET SERVICE**

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ABSTRACT

This research provides an in-depth analysis of local content initiatives and technology promotion in Nigeria. The study examines the current state of local content initiatives on technology promotion in the internet service, examined the nexus between local content initiatives and technology promotion, identified challenges and barriers hindering effectiveness of existing initiatives in technology promotion especially in the internet services. The qualitative research design and the Technology Acceptance Model were adopted, the secondary sources of data were obtained from indexes of scholar's work, seminar, conference paper, journal articles and newspapers. The findings revealed that local content initiatives influences technology promotion in the internet services through value creation, job creation, innovation and technology promotion. Although financial and innovation challenges technically delay the effectiveness of local content initiative. The study provided recommendations for policy makers, stakeholders and industry players to promote local content and drive the Nigeria internet services for a digitalised economy.

Keyword: Local Content Initiative, Technology Promotion, Internet Service

INTRODUCTION

Over the years the Nigeria government had formulated and implemented various local content initiatives that aimed at promoting economic development and also that help reduced over dependence on foreign goods and services especially the internet services industry. One fundamental aspect that these initiatives focus is the technology sector particularly the internet service which is the focus of this study. This study assesses the impact of local content initiatives on the internet service in Nigeria. Local content initiatives and technology development are crucial for driving digital economies, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria. Technology promotion is fundamental to development of any country in the world because it has become a force for speedy development of almost every sector of any economy of the world. Vincent and Udeorah (2018) opined that technology promotion and science has been a major force driving the economy of most countries in the world. Nigeria is akin to foster development in every sector of her economy. The importance of the internet services in the technology sector cannot be underestimated. Thus, Weiss (2015) opined that development occurs in several stages and most development occurs as a result of policy that had been adopted to foster it. Weiss further depicted that development occurs in three stages which are the early state of industrialisation/ development which is characterised by the transfer of low skilled workers out of agriculture into labour intensive activities that involves relating simple technology. The second stage he termed the middle stage of development has more sophisticated production capacity which requires a shift to medium technology activities and the last stage of development is the postulated stage which involves the activities that requires frontier technologies and education to promote and ensure invention of modern and new technologies. Policies and initiatives is the instrument required to drive these stages of development in most countries.

The Nigeria government had over the years introduced several local content policies and initiatives as a tool to foster technology development and in the internet service industry. Local content policies and initiatives are purposeful, deliberate and calculated effort of government to promote the

development of local and indigenous technological skills especially amongst the internet services providers in Nigeria (Vincent and Udeorah, 2018). Local Content Initiatives often targets industries and technological development of the indigenous people at the local level. The rationale for local content initiatives is also to add value to the societal development; to create and increase wealth; create employment opportunity and encourage the development of the backward, forward and sideways linkages along the value chain (Odeyemi, 2023; Ramdo, 2016). The Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board was set up in 2010 and its Act was also established in 2010 to promote Nigerian content and development of local capacity. Also, The National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) was set up to pilot the promotion of Nigerian local content initiatives and policy execution in the Information and communication technology sector. The agency releases its guidelines in 2013 to achieve its objectives, these guidelines require that information and communication technology companies and internet provider companies in Nigeria maintained at least 50% of local content, either directly or by outsourcing to local businesses. These guidelines amongst others serve as government initiatives initiated towards fostering technology development in Nigeria, especially in the internet service and information and communication technology industries in Nigeria.

Statement of Problem

The level of development of a country is determined by its ability to control global phenomenon and strength in the universe. Nigeria like every other country is determined and concerned to foster its development at all times. Atairat, Atairat and Joseph (2021) opined that Nigeria government efforts towards development had gone beyond mere international recognition to international collaborations. Nigeria government had adopted several strategies to foster development of all sectors of its economy which the technology sector is not excluded, some of these strategies included public private partnership, encouragement of Foreign Direct Investments, reduction of tariff rates, initiating policies and programmes, etc. despite several efforts geared towards developing the Nigeria economy cum technology sector, the Nigeria internet service industry is still faced with challenges that hinders it from beefing up its services to meet global standard. In fact, Odeyemi (2023) stated that the Nigeria internet service growth dwindled beyond expectation in contemporary age. Ramdo (2016), and Okoro and Ndukwe (2022) added that there are undermining factors that could prevent the success of local content initiatives as well as the possibilities in promoting economic development. This study therefore is keenly concerned at investigating Nigeria local content initiatives and their relationship or impacts on the internet services and technology development in Nigeria. To provide a clear clue of the nexus that exist between local content initiatives and internet service in Nigeria and to further identify possible factors hindering the benefits of local content initiatives on internet service in Nigeria. And to propagate local content initiatives as a tool to achieve Nigeria sustainable development goals.

Objective of the Study

The main objective is to examine the contributory efforts of local content policy and initiatives on internet services in Nigeria. Thus, the specific objectives are to:

1. Analyse the overview of Local Content initiatives in Nigeria
2. Examine the impact of local content initiatives on the internet services
3. Determine the challenges of local content initiatives on technology promotion of the internet service

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a qualitative research design to gain adequate insight into the nature of Local Content initiatives and how it relates to technology promotion. The descriptive and observation methods was implored for the examination of local content policy on technology and its impact in

the internet service industries. The study is also theoretical, it's basically draw its arguments from content analysis of secondary data, which also included the Nigeria policy documents on internet services and policy, technology development,

Theoretical framework

The Technology Acceptance Theory

The technology acceptance theory was propounded by Davis (1989) and it postulated that users of new technology form attitudes and intentions towards using a new technology. The theory posits that two factors influences individual's decision to use technology which are perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. The perceived usefulness refers to the extent that an individual believes that using a particular technology will improve performances and achieve set goals. In this context, perceived usefulness relates to the perceived benefits of utilising the locally developed internet services; the perceived ease of use means the extent that an individual believe that utilising a particular technology for a time frame, one would be free from errors and effort, thus, in this context, the degree to which an individual utilised the internet service will determine the ease of its accessibility, affordability and user-friendliness of locally developed internet services and technology in Nigeria. Ovaldo (1069) opined that development of local technology reduces over dependence on foreign products and services. Vincent (2008) further buttressed this opinion that local content development foster national development and encourage local people to reduce interest in foreign goods and services and foster economic development.

The implication of this theory on the study is that local content initiatives are government instruments adopted to foster indigenes to depend on self-manufactured products or locally developed technology that would foster the Nigerian youths with that opportunity to access and afford the internet services at all times and also, to avail job opportunities for many youths and young generation considering the advantages of utilising the internet in contemporary society. This means that once local industries are self-relied and developed, and do with what they made locally, it can then give room for international patronage.

Conceptual clarification

Local Content Initiatives: These are initiatives designed by a country to enable her maximise the benefits of foreign direct investment through promotion of local participation and the use of local raw materials by investors, (Tardo; 2013)

Technology Promotion: This refers to the activities and strategies used to encourage the adoption and use of new technologies.

Internet Service: This is the provision of access to the internet, enabling users to browse, communicate, and utilise online resources.

Literature Review

Local Content Initiatives

Initiatives are programmes, or policies that are met to achieve a specific goal. Policy itself is a set of rules that are adopted to guide, shape and promote a course of action with the desire to yield benefit within a time frame. The very essence of policy is to enhance changes to a phenomenon. Ramdoo (2016) and Kuntz and Moerenhout (2013) defined local content initiatives as a concept that is generally understood to be a set of regulatory instruments put in place by the government as a means to enhance certain factors of production such as labour, supplies, technology and knowledge that is required at each stage of value as a source of the domestic economy. Suleman and Zaato (2021) ascertained that Local Content Policy (initiatives) are part of the larger classification of productive development policies of any country with the target of strengthening the productive sectors of any nation's economy. Local Content initiatives aims to build a workforce that is skilled and competitive in nature; this is pivotal because every country in the world desires its citizens to

capture the commanding heights of its economy and developing (Ala-Mustafa; 2020), through the adoption of technology skill; knowledge and abilities. This will attain creativity, job opportunity, increase productive and quality service provision locally. In most developing countries, local content initiative enhances enterprises to be the drivers of their economy and gained development. Local content initiative help to close the widen development gap between developed and developing countries through the constant encouragement of local technologies to fast track development. Promotion of technology through initiatives helps the advancement of wealth and underpins low income and poverty level (Arizona-Ogwu, 2008 cited in Ala-Mustafa; 2020). It was observed that local content initiative s could positively influence job creation, reduce dependency rate and activate activeness of the local industries to yield economic benefits of the resources especially in the technology sector.

Ovadia (2014) collaborated this assertion that local content initiatives have the potentials of transferring, promoting and developing technology, and other enterprising or industries in Nigeria; this will in turn improve the general economy and the people standard of living. This is because LCP are well designed to foster local industries, technocrats and entrepreneurs. The outcome could promote technology and national economic development (Ala-Mustafa, 2020). It is therefore paramount to state that local content initiatives contribute immensely to technology development especially in the internet service in Nigeria and it spurs local value creation, to ensure its efficacy, there is need to closely monitor so as to fast-track its purpose for realisation.

Technology Promotion

Technology promotion relates to those set of activities and strategies used to encourage the adoption and use of new technologies. Its aims are to increase awareness, acceptance and utilisation of technological innovations; focusing on value chain benefits and enhancing general market and educational outreach efforts to promote technology. There has been a common misconception of technology promotion in Africa generally, that Africa's capacity and innovative strength is weak and cannot be enhanced due to unfavourable terrain, weak institution, and general lack of resources (Odeyemi, 2023). However, several technologies entrepreneurs had performed greatly despite the harsh economic environment (Odeyemi, 2023). The pace of technology promotion has steadily increased and Africa, inclusive of Nigeria has grown and prosper tremendously in her technology advancement and promotion. Giwa (2019) pointed out that Nigeria has increased numerous technologies rise with great significant contributions to the general economy development of the country. He further asserted that Nigeria has one of the most vibrant technology entrepreneurship activities in Africa. Giwa (2019) and Odeyemi (2023) wishes some technology ventures such as jobberman, Andela amongst others.

Technology promotion had also brought about transformative initiatives and performance in key industries in Nigeria which the internet service industry is one of it. Nigeria is one of the several countries serving as Africa's hubs for technology venture; in fact, the largest internet service provider network of Africa investors and entrepreneurs (Odeyemi, 2023), there are so many companies within Nigeria that venture into internet service as a means for technology promotion. Some of these internet service providers in Nigeria include Spectranet Nigeria Limited; IPNX Nigeria Limited; Swift Network limited; MTN Nigeria, CobraNet Nigeria; Globacom Nigeria Limited; Smile Communication Nigeria Limited; 9Mobile Nigeria; Netcom African Limited; Airtel Nigeria; Tizeh; Astramix Limited; 21st Century Limited; Broad based Communications; Suburban Fiber Company Limited; MainOne Cable; Dotmac Technologies Limited; Hyperia Limited; Inq. Digital Nigeria Ltd; Internet Solution Nigeria Ltd; I-World Network limited; Brainshare Ltd ;IP Express Ltd, etc.

Giwa (2019) observed that technology promotion has attracted an appreciable level of foreign development investors to Nigeria. Adeyeye, Jegede and Akinwele (2013) opined that the technology internet industries has witnessed increasingly steady growth due to its largely wholesale and retail telecommunication.

Overview of Local Content Initiatives on Technology in Nigeria

Historically, local content initiatives began in Nigeria after the independence of Nigeria, and it became noticeable in 1971 when the Nigeria National Oil Corporation (NOC) was established, with the purpose of ensuring that indigenous people (Nigerians) were fully engaged in the implementation of certain assignments where they have the requisite skills and knowledge. The Nigeria government had established several initiatives such as the establishment of the Nigeria Content Development and Monitoring Board in 2010 to promote local content development in the oil and gas sector. The board has since its inception expanded its scope beyond oil and gas to include other vital sectors such as the technology and manufacturing sectors amongst others. Okoro and Ndukwe (2022) depicted that since independence, there was no much emphasis on Local content initiative since then, until 2010 when the Nigeria Oil and Gas Industry Content Development Act was enacted. The aim of the Act was to build native industries and offer more opportunities for indigenes to partake in trade and commerce, allowing direct involvement of local firms. The adoption of local content initiatives was perceived as one of the best strategies that can enhance indigenous industries to create employment opportunities for domestic labour force (Abdulkabir, Shaufique, Azmawani, and Siong, 2016). Local content initiatives over the years had cut across several sectors of the economy. In fact, Fred and Evan (2018) cited in Okoro and Ndukwe (2022) enumerated some local content initiatives provisions and the areas they covered; they include Oil and Gas, Architecture, banks, aviation, shipping, broadcasting, engineering, private security, advertisement, legal practitioner, pharmacists, and information and communication technology which is our area of focus in this study. Okoro and Ndukwe (2022) opined that the guideline on Nigeria Content development in information and communication technology was released in 2013 by the National Information technology Development Agency (NITDA) Under the President Goodluck Jonathan administration. It has been observed that over the years, the firms that operates under the information and communication technology in Nigeria had retained 50% of local contents, these firms do so directly or by outsourcing to home businesses that persuade Nigerians on involvement of technology advancement (Fred and Evan; 2018 cited in Okoro and Ndukwe, 2022, Odeyemi, 2023).

The administration of President Muhammadu Buhari found it necessary to promote local industries and technology, and so the president signed into law the National Policy for Promotion of Indigenous Content in the Telecommunication Sector (NPPIC) in March, 2021. This was in accordance with the provisions of Section 148 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria; Sections 23(a) and 25(1) of the Nigeria Communication Acts, 2003. This policy was envisaged to tackle the problem of insufficient value creation in the communication sector. To enhance acerated achievement to this regard, the Nigeria Office for Developing the Indigenous Telecommunication Sector (NODITS) was established on 5th July, 2021 to stimulate the creation and development of top-quality indigenous content in the telecommunication and technology sector. NODISTS was subsequently domiciled in the Nigeria Communication Commission (NCC). In its course of operation Okoro and Ndukew (2022) and Odeyemi (2023) observed that NODITS partnered with or collaborated with some identified agencies so as to enable it achieve its goals, some of these agencies were set up to implement some local content initiatives and they includes NCC, NITDA, Standard Organisation of Nigeria (SON), Ministry of Communication and Digital Economy, Nigeria Investment Promotion Communication (NIPC), Nigeria Contents Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB), The Raw Material Research and Development Council (RMRDC), Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP), Industrial Training Fund (ITF), National Agency for Science and Engineering Infrastructure (NASeni), National Automotive Design and Development Council (NADDC), Nigeria Exports Zones Processing Authority (NEZPA), Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiatives (NEITI), Ajaokuta Steel Company (ASC), etc. most functions of the some of these bodies are purely governmental policies and initiatives that are expected for them to carry out towards the achievement of technology development in Nigeria. It is fundamental to note that the Nigerian Content Development Act,(2010) became the legal

framework for promoting local content development in the oil and gas industries as well as other industries where local participants are encouraged such as the technology sector.

Objectives of Local Content initiatives on Technology

The Nigeria government objectives for local content policy initiatives are quite noble, the specific objectives of Local Content Policy on technology promotion include:

1. Diversification of the sources of investment into the technology sector
2. Promotion of Indigenous participation and fostering foreign direct investment and technology promotion
3. Create employment opportunities for all classes of Nigerian youths;
4. Increase service delivery quality in the technology sector, etc.

An evaluation of the above objectives revealed that local content policy initiatives is meant to promote indigenous industries to foster quality service delivery in the technology sector and further create job opportunities for Nigerian youths. Okoro and Ndukwe (2023) noted that the objectives and the effects of local content initiative in technology promotion have been tremendous, for once, there has been a large extend of job creation for Nigerians who have interest in the technology sector. Ajanaku (2021) in The Nation's Newspaper depicted that there has been the need for NODITS to close the gap of non-contributory efforts of some indigenous industries towards the National economy. NODITS as a body had made assiduous efforts to liberate the internet service industry by opening the floodgate of both local and foreign Investments. This made the indigenous service providers to make some contributions to the technology sector and the Nigeria economy at large (the Nation's Newspaper, 2021 cited in Odeyemi, 2023, and Fred and Evan 2018 cited in Okoro and Ndukwe, 2022). NODITS had been able to ensure that Nigerians made efforts towards software service delivery, research and development for digital innovation and entrepreneurship. Furthermore, Okoro and Ndukwe (2022) noted that on 24th August, 2021 NCC issued a guideline that required all telecommunication and technology operators and service providers to commence the local production of Subscriber Identity Modules (SIM) cards In Nigeria and this became a reality. Through this modus operandi, the objectives of local content policy on technology promotion are actualised. With the introduction of local content policy, there has been a high level of investment in the technology sector as investors have been receiving sound international companies providing every necessary platform for global involvement through partnership and collaboration or quality service delivery in Nigeria. (Okoro and Ndukwe, 2022; Suleman and Zaato, 2021 and Ala-Mustafa, 2020).

Effects of Local Content Initiatives on Internet Service

The internet service evolved from novel communication tools to ubiquitous infrastructure globally prior to the 21st Centuries, most adult rate of internet service utility was significantly low. However, with local content initiatives formulation and implementation has been fundamental because Nigeria experienced significant growth in the internet penetration recently, with huge number of persons subscribing to the internet as internet subscribers and this number has increased from 10 million in 2010 to over 100 million in 2020 (Odeyemi, 2023). The Nigeria internet service was observed to be booming (Ramdoo, 2016), it has contributed to technology promotion through value creation (Odeyemi, 2023), increase wealth and employment creation. Odeyemi (2023) observed that it has economic benefits because it fosters Gross Domestic Products within a short time; Moreso, it enhances economy growth which promote income of the people. Odeyemi (2023) depicted that local content initiatives allows infant industries to become internationally competitive through several innovation, initiation and improvement in the local industries. In some countries, the government will not just enact policy or formulate initiatives to boom the local industries but also render supports -technical and financial supports to local industries to local industries and investors to enhance quality production and service delivery. Giwa (2019) and Weiss (2016) noted that local content

initiatives create social impact on the people through enhancement of compensation and insurance on investors technological promotional activities; where there are challenges government intervene to cushion the social- economic effects of such challenges.

In another ambit, Ala-Mustafa (2020) and Odeyemi (2023) further observed the local content initiatives pursues environmental goals which is intended to improve human standard of living in a conducive atmosphere; thus, limited financial resources would be used to actualised huge environmental goals, the help to increase technology and innovation. Furthermore, local content initiative is a tool for technology transfer whereby the requisite skills, knowledge, abilities and capability are transferred through the foreign direct investment to local investors through learning, training and capacity building (Weiss,2016; Kuntz and Morenhout, 2013; Suleman and Zaata, 2021). Local content initiatives encourage exportation of good and services over importation, remove internal barriers that could hinder industries and then enhance innovation of local investors within the confine of the law. Furthermore, local content policy increases cultural relevance and diversity, support local languages and dialects in the internet services, stimulate innovation and entrepreneurship, encourages local content creation and of course it helps to promote local digital economy (Ala-Mustafa, 2020; Odeyemi,2023). In a nut shell, the study found that local content initiatives have had a positive impact on internet service provision in Nigeria, especially in terms of increasing local internet subscribers and participants in the technology sector and in terms of increasing local subscribers in Nigeria internet services. However, certain constraints persist such as high cost of internet services and accessibility, inadequate infrastructure, amongst others.

Challenges of Technology Promotion

The followings are some of the challenges of local content initiatives on the internet service

1. **Limited access to finance:** Having access to fund has been a huge significant challenge for technology promotion in Nigeria, many local investor, techno crafts and entrepreneur with potential faces a lot of hurdles when attempting to access start-up capital. Where there is financier like the banks, the paucity of fund to be access is very low and this abstract technology promotion.
2. **Inadequate infrastructure:** The lack of reliable infrastructure such as power supply, internet connectivity, and transportation, poses hurdles to technology promotion especially in the internet service providing industries. Infrastructure requirements are necessary to trigger and properly technology and internet service provisions.
3. **Limited innovation, research and investment:** There has been insufficient investment in innovations, research and development with regards to high-breed technology. Innovation, research and development are pivotal drivers of technological entrepreneurs, and they also promote technological production, and creativity. The level of investment to this regard on the part of government is quite inadequate, thus, creating inability of internet service providers and technology entrepreneur from competing in the global market.
4. **Poor Implementation of Local Content Initiatives:** The implementation methods adopted on local content initiatives towards technology promotion is quite inadequate and poor. This constituted a huge challenge to speedy developmental level of technology especially in the internet service. The modus operandi adopted to implement local content initiatives on technology promotion is expedient to fast-tracking the actualisation of technology in development and promotion that will meet international standard.

CONCLUSION

Fundamentally, local content initiatives are designed to achieve specific goals and to further foster indigenous participation and foreign direct investment, technology promotion and creation of job and career opportunity for Nigerians. It was observed that through the implementation of local content policies and initiatives, Nigeria internet service has begun to boom, create value and

increase Gross Domestic Product and job creation for many Nigerians. Despite government efforts to foster local industries in the technology sector, there are some observable challenges that had constituted hindrance to the effectiveness and efficiency of the impact of local content initiatives on technology promotion. Some of these problems are limited access to finance, inadequate infrastructure, limited innovation, research and investment, amongst others. This study therefore demonstrated the fundamentals of local content initiatives in promoting internet service development in Nigeria, to foster on this gain, the government and the private sectors must encourage investment in infrastructural development, capacity building and regulatory reforms.

RECOMMENDATION

This paper recommends the followings as mechanism to ameliorate challenges confronting local content policy on technology promotion especially in the internet service industry in Nigeria.

1. There is need to balance local needs with global connectivity
2. Ensuring online freedom and security with the intent to foster international cooperation and standards.
3. Local content policy should equally address emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, internet of things etc.
4. Local content policy should help to improve local service delivery, foster innovation, encourages researches and boost local industries to a global standard.

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