

Convergence in the Nigerian Communications Sector¹

INTRODUCTION

The telecommunications industry globally is regulated by the International Telecommunications Union and at the continental level, the African Telecommunications Union.² This industry has experienced reforms in the sector globally as a result of liberalization, deregulation and privatisation policies spearheaded by the World Trade Organisations (WTO) at the twilight of the 20th Century. This has brought in technological innovation and the deployment of digital technology in the distinct communications sub sectors have ushered in a new phenomenon called "Convergence." Convergence has created a borderless medium, removed the distinction and joined the hitherto distinct sectors into one. This has posed challenges to regulators globally as some have adopted different strategies and models to conform to this phenomenon.

Convergence in the ordinary parlance is the integration, joining, merging, union or coming together of distinct things into one. The International Telecommunications Union describes convergence as *'the technological, market, legal or regulatory capability to integrate across previously separated technologies, markets or politically defined industry structures.'*³ The Australian Convergence Review defines the concept as *'the restructuring of the services sector enabled by digitization'.*⁴

Convergence is defined in Newton's Telecom Directory as:

the word to describe a trend, now that most media can be represented digitally, for the traditional distinctions between industries to blur and for companies from consumer electronics, computer and telecommunications industries to form alliances, partnerships and other relationships, as well as to raid each others' markets.⁵

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² At the regional level, the West African telecommunication regulation regulates the industry while domestically; the industry is regulated principally by telecommunications-specific legislation, the Nigerian Communications Act 2003 – and telecommunications specific regulator: the Nigerian Communications Commission.

³ International Telecommunications Union, Trends in Telecommunication Reform: Convergence and Regulation (1999) 2 <www.itu.org>. Accessed 10th July 2019.

⁴ Australian Convergence Review (2000) <<http://www.note.gov.au>> accessed 10th September, 2019.

⁵ H. Newton, *Newton's Telecom Dictionary* (18th edn, Miller Freeman Inc 2002) 300 .

Regulating Communications Approaching Convergence In The Information Age Command Paper

CL Gary



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