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Stephanie
Busari

**Launches
Her Story:**

Taking Root,
Sparking Change



TRAVEL

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INTERVIEW

At Malala Fund, we challenge societal norms, push for policy shifts in girls' education - Aguele

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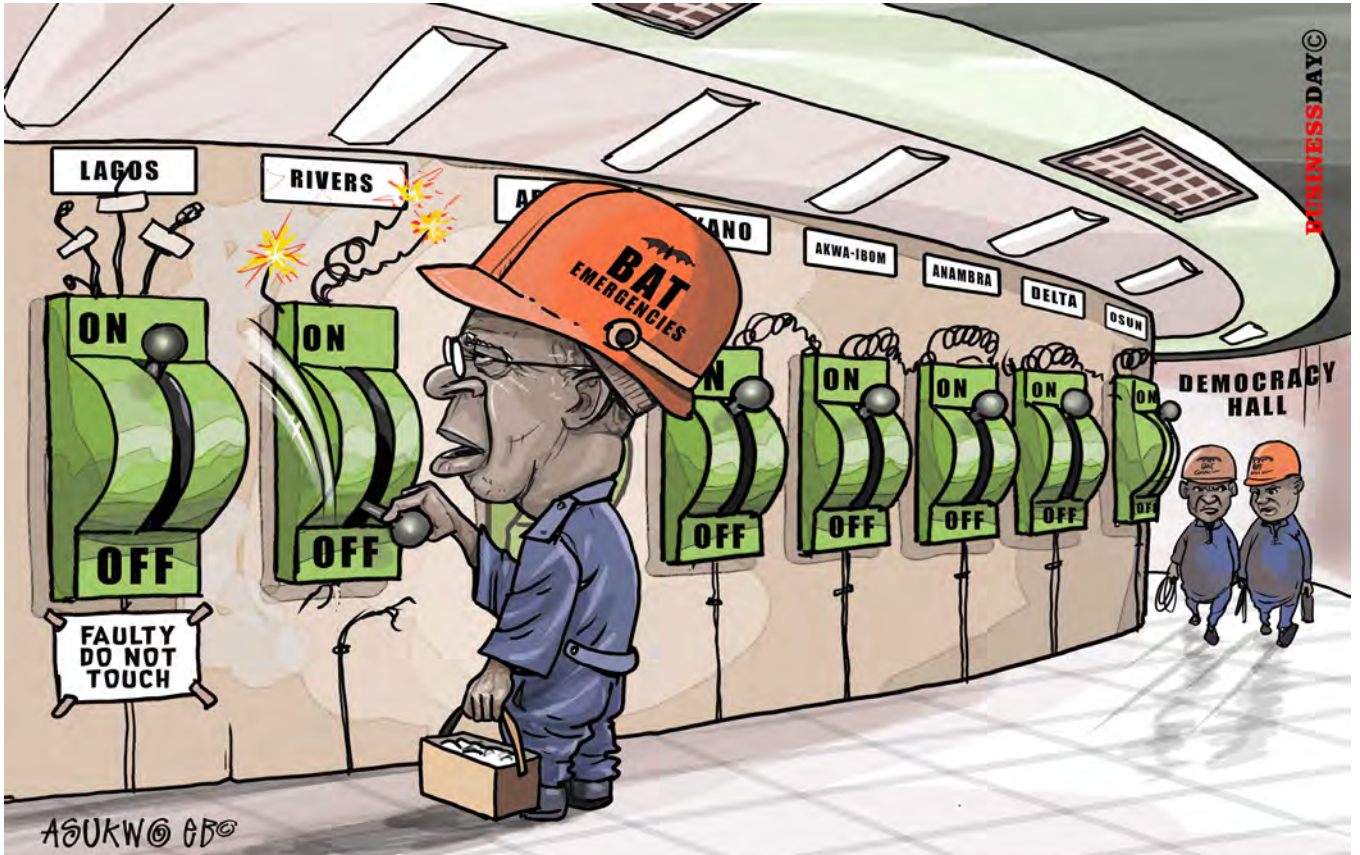
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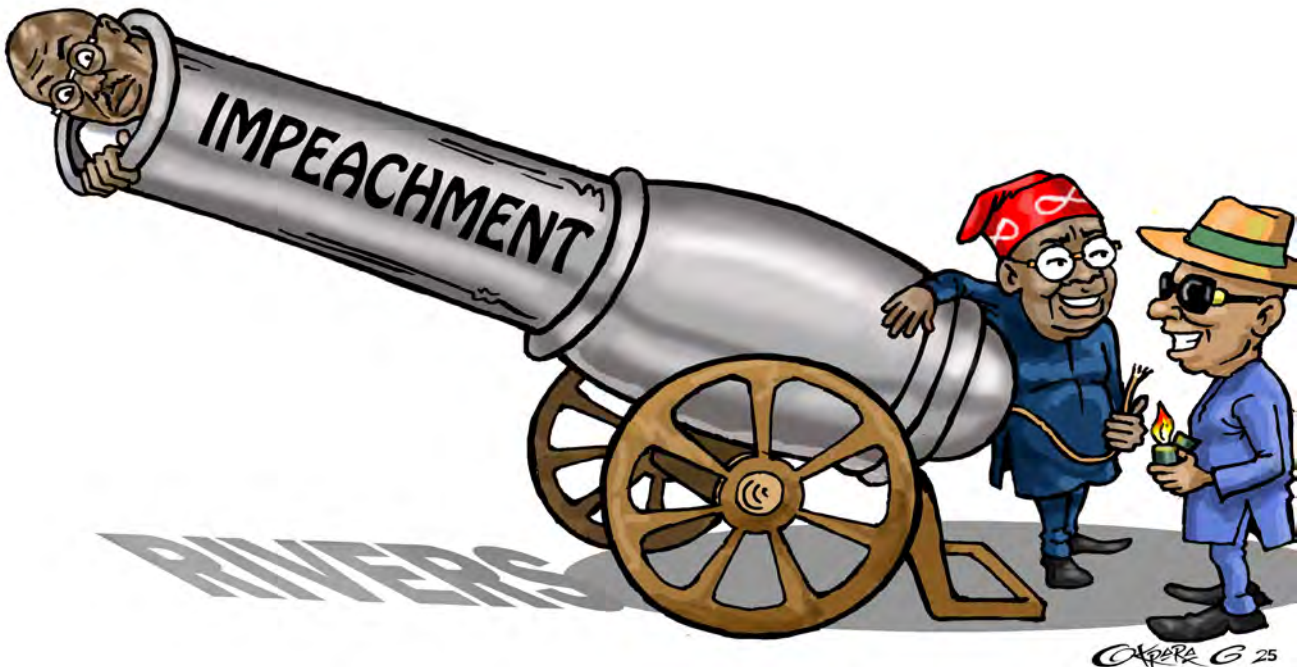
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STEPHANIE BUSARI LAUNCHES HER STORY: Taking Root, Sparking Change





Some people spend a lifetime searching for their purpose, but for Stephanie Busari, that moment of clarity came at just 11 years old in a classroom in the United Kingdom. It was there, under the guidance of an inspiring teacher, that she first discovered the power of storytelling. That lesson ignited a lifelong passion for journalism, a passion that would drive her to uncover the truth, amplify unheard voices, and challenge global narratives about Africa.

Today, Busari is an Emmy, Gracie, and Peabody award-winning journalist and a powerful force in African storytelling. With 25 years of experience in global media, including 16 impactful years at CNN International, she pioneered the network's first digital and multiplatform bureau globally, significantly expanding CNN's reach and impact across the African continent.

Her journalism has shaped global narratives on critical issues. Busari's two-time Emmy-nominated investigation into the Lekki tollgate shooting and her exclusive 2016 proof-of-life interview with the Chibok schoolgirls were pivotal, resulting in negotiations that

led to the release of over 100 abducted girls. Her work earned her a Hollywood Gracie Award and recognition as an Outstanding Woman in Media.

During the pandemic, she created the highly successful CNN show COVID Heroes and Newsmakers, reaching millions worldwide. Now, as the founder of SBB Media, she empowers organizations and leaders to amplify their impact through strategic communication, public relations, and authentic storytelling.

A passionate advocate for amplifying African voices, Busari led CNN Africa's digital editorial and operational strategy, mentoring and nurturing the next generation of African storytellers. Fluent in English, French, and Yoruba, she engages effortlessly with diverse stakeholders on prestigious global platforms, including the United Nations, AfDB, Afrexim Bank, UNESCO, and TED, while interviewing world leaders and changemakers.

Her influence extends beyond journalism. Recognized by the United Nations as one of the 100 Most Influential People of African Descent in 2017, she has been consistently named one of Africa's 25 Most Powerful Female Journalists from 2020 to 2024. In 2020, she was selected as a Maurice Greenberg World Fellow at Yale University, a prestigious honor that further solidifies her reputation as a global thought leader.

Her TED talks have garnered over 2 million views, establishing her as a sought-after speaker, host, and high-level panel moderator. She is also the founder of TEDxBrixton and divides her time between Lagos and London. In this exclusive interview, with founding editor Lehlé Baldé, Busari takes us back to that pivotal moment in her childhood that set her on this path, reflects on her toughest assignments, and shares her vision for the future of media on the continent. From breaking news to personal breakthroughs, Busari's story is a testament to the power of journalism as a force for justice, change, and empowerment.

Lehlé Baldé: I'd like to start by commending you for your remarkable career in journalism, from breaking major stories to leading CNN Africa's digital strategy. What inspired you to pursue journalism?

Stephanie Busari: Thank you again for having me. I'm a big fan of the BusinessDay Weekender, so being interviewed is a great pleasure. I've always known that I wanted to be

a journalist since I was 12 or 13, and I was encouraged by my English teacher. She saw that I had a skill for writing, and she was very encouraging. She wrote a note in my notebook saying, "Journalism, perhaps." From that moment, it was like a light bulb went off in my mind. I started pursuing a career in journalism at the age of 12 or 13. I was driven and determined to be successful, and here we are, 25 years later, as a journalist. I'm so grateful for a phenomenal career that has, by God's grace, been impactful.

Lehlé Baldé: What an incredible story. Are you still in touch with your English teacher?

Stephanie Busari: Funny you should say that because when I celebrated my 25th anniversary in journalism in December 2024, I thought about her and wondered where she was because she played such an instrumental role in my journey. I looked her up on LinkedIn and sent her a message saying, "I hope you remember me." She responded the very next day, saying, "Wow, of course I remember you." It was such a delightful exchange. Next time I'm in London, I'll meet up with her, and I'll let you know how the reunion goes.

Lehlé Baldé: We must always acknowledge those first mentors. Parents ideally should be your first mentors, but teachers also play an incredible role in shaping young people and their future careers.

Stephanie Busari: Absolutely.

Lehlé Baldé: You played a crucial role in verifying the Chibok girls' kidnapping story, which had a profound global impact. As a journalist, what was that experience like for you, and how did it shape your approach to reporting?

Stephanie Busari: My story as a journalist cannot be written without the Chibok girls' story. It's a defining moment. Every journalist has a defining moment, and this was mine. In 2014, when they were kidnapped, I was living in London, and it was just a shocking event. We knew we had to cover this story.

I came to Nigeria in April 2014, and it was complete chaos. The government at the time didn't seem to have a handle on the situation or appear to care much about what we were observing. We were being briefed that "this is a political thing, enemies of Jonathan did this."

We thought "Well, that may be true, but you can't ignore the fact that nearly 300 schoolgirls were kidnapped and missing." These girls were taken from school in the middle of the night, carried in huge trucks across the Sambisa Forest for hours, traveling hundreds of kilometers without anyone stopping them.



What kind of world do we live in where this happens? The international pressure and focus we brought to that story pushed people to take action. Unfortunately, nothing was done, and the girls remained missing for another two years.

When I moved back to Nigeria, I picked up that story again. Through contacts, I learned there was a video showing the girls were still alive. It was a proof-of-life video filmed by Boko Haram, showing the girls lined up, stating their names and where they had been taken from. Some people said it was fake, but I verified the story by speaking to the girls and their families.

A lot of parents died of heartbreak because of this tragedy, and it was never truly acknowledged. This video, which I obtained, kicked off negotiations that eventually led to the release of more than 100 of the girls. I'm grateful I was part of that journey and could bring some relief to the families, but tragically, over 80 or 90 of the girls are still missing. We'll never know the true number or what happened to them.

Last year marked 10 years since the Chibok kidnapping, and I went to Chibok to speak to the mothers and families who are still waiting for their daughters to come home. It's heartbreaking. We need to value life more in this part of the world.

So, that's in a nutshell what happened with that story. Every time I try to walk away from it, it's like, no, this is your story to own. The Chibok girls didn't want to be forgotten. From a spiritual perspective, God used me to tell their story. I felt like I was the only one who kept going back, keeping in touch with the parents, and telling their stories.

Lehlé Baldé: Did the story resonate with you on a deeper, more personal level because you have a daughter yourself?

Stephanie Busari: Of course, it did. How could it not? I also attended boarding school in Nigeria from the age of 10 to 12, before I left the country for England. So, for the grace of God, it could have been me or any of my family members. I felt strongly that I had to advocate for them.

Lehlé Baldé: Journalism can be a tough field. Have you faced any challenges in your career, and how have you overcome them?

Stephanie Busari: Journalism is one of those careers that suits women quite well. Many of my bosses at CNN were women, but it can still be a tough field. Journalism is broad, you have news journalism, which can involve hard news and disaster reporting, and then you have magazine journalism. News reporting is

especially tough and often male-dominated. It requires you to develop a hard shell because you're constantly confronting tragedies and disasters.

For example, when the building collapsed in Ikoyi in November 2021, I rushed there and discovered that my cousin, who was like a brother to me, was in that building. How much tougher can it get? You're dealing with the worst of human behavior and the worst tragedies. You have to be resilient and tough.

At CNN, they gave us access to therapists and counselors, especially after particularly tough stories. We're the ones running into burning buildings when everyone else is running out. You need support because it's emotionally challenging.

But journalism has so many rewards. You're documenting history for posterity. The work you do now will be remembered in history books for generations to come, and I'm glad my work will be part of that.

Lehlé Baldé: I'm truly sorry for your loss. In a role as demanding as yours, how do you prioritize your well-being and self-care?

Stephanie Busari: Family, family, family. I'm a super family-oriented person. I love spending time with my loved ones, cooking, and just being indoors because my work takes me out often. I also enjoy swimming. Sometimes, doing nothing is my favorite thing to do. I just relax, sit at home, and watch TV. Spending time with people who care about me is the best self-care I can recommend.

Lehlé Baldé: You've played a significant role in digital journalism, leading CNN's Africa Digital presence for years. How do you see African media evolving in the digital age, and what opportunities or challenges stand out to you?

Stephanie Busari: I feel that traditional publishers have not fully embraced the opportunities that exist with digital platforms. The people who are leveraging these platforms are content creators and creatives. Media outlets must embrace digital-first strategies, but there's still a heavy fascination with TV. In my view, news organizations must be platform-agnostic and create content that works across various formats. Digital storytelling is the future, and we need to evolve with it.

Lehlé Baldé: What role do you think AI and digital tools will play in shaping the future of African media?

Stephanie Busari: AI is already transforming journalism. Some newsrooms are using AI to generate

content quickly and analyze massive amounts of information. It's incredibly useful for journalists because AI can summarize reports and pull relevant data from thousands of pages in minutes. I also use AI to craft headlines when I have an idea. It's a great tool, and if used correctly, it can make our jobs much easier.

Lehlé Baldé: You mentioned that you mentor young journalists and advocate for diversity in media. What advice do you give to young Africans who want to enter the media industry?

Stephanie Busari: I always tell them not to wait for permission to create. Now, with all the tools at your disposal, if you want to be a broadcaster, start a YouTube channel. Record yourself, present the news, and show potential employers your passion. You don't need traditional media organizations to give you a platform. Start your blog, podcast, or newsletter. If you're passionate and determined, someone will eventually notice.

Lehlé Baldé: You've been recognized globally for your work. You won an Emmy amongst many other awards. Congratulations. What achievements are you most proud of?

Stephanie Busari: The Chibok story is up there. I'm proud of the impact I had in shaping CNN's digital strategy, growing CNN Africa's presence by 70-80%, and launching the first digital-first bureau in Lagos. I'm also proud of hiring the first interns for CNN in Africa and training many who now hold top jobs in media. I've put my heart and soul into this work, and I believe in Africa's potential.

Lehlé Baldé: What's next for you in your career? Do you have any exciting projects or initiatives?

Stephanie Busari: I've launched my own communications consultancy, providing high-level advice to governments, individuals, and multinationals. I'm passionate about helping people communicate their vision and narrative effectively. I've also launched a storytelling academy to empower the next generation of journalists and storytellers.

For women, I've created a platform called Her Story to amplify women's voices. We're putting out a book called Her Story, Taking Root, and Sparking Change, featuring 40 amazing women from around the world, centering African women's voices. The book will be launched on March 25th in Lagos as part of International Women's Month.

Lehlé Baldé: If you weren't a journalist, what career path would you have taken?

Stephanie Busari: For a long time, I wanted to be a lawyer. I love to argue and debate my points. But after my teacher encouraged me, I decided journalism was my path. However, I'm also fascinated by human behavior and psychology. I may pursue a master's in psychology one day.

Lehlé Baldé: If you had a magic wand and could affect anything on Earth, what would it be?

Stephanie Busari: If I could, I'd eradicate hate. There's too much hate in the world, and it's leading to less compassion. People misunderstand one another intentionally. We need to restore the love that God has for us. Compassion is the answer, and that's what I'd wish for, an injection of love in the world.





**AT MALALA
FUND, WE
CHALLENGE
SOCIETAL
NORMS, PUSH
FOR POLICY
SHIFTS IN GIRLS'
EDUCATION
- Aguele**



Nabila Aguele is Chief Executive, Nigeria at the Malala Fund, where she leads the organisation's country strategy and operations, and oversees the external affairs portfolio. She is a lawyer, public policy expert and advocate for gender equality with more than 20 years of experience.

As an expert in sustainable development, she employs data-driven and narrative-based advocacy to drive policy change and shift societal norms.

Aguele also serves on the boards of Women for Women International, INSEAD, and Girl Rising. At Girl Rising, she is Vice-Chair of the Board and Chair of the Nominating & Governance Committee. She is a Non-Resident Fellow with the Center for Global Development and a Senior Fellow with the African Center for Economic Transformation.

Before joining Malala Fund, Aguele served as a Special Adviser to Nigeria's Minister of Finance. In her role, she championed gender-responsive fiscal policies and budgets and helped craft Nigeria's Integrated National Financing Framework. Prior, she was a Special Adviser

to Nigeria's Minister of Finance, co-leading the Strategic Revenue Growth Initiatives; and a Technical/Special Assistant to Nigeria's Minister of State for Budget & National Planning.

Before transitioning into the policy and governance space, Aguele served on the full-time faculty at American University Washington College of Law (AUWCL), co-leading the GlushkoSamuelson Intellectual Property Law Clinic (an in-house pro bono law firm). She also designed and taught the school's first Patent Litigation course. Prior, she represented Fortune 500 companies in complex civil patent litigation at large law firms, including Morrison Foerster, and was appointed Special Assistant Attorney General with the District of Columbia Office of the Attorney General, on secondment.

In this interview with Lehlé Baldé, Nabila Aguele speaks on Malala Fund and its mission in Nigeria and how the initiative helps to challenge societal norms and push for policy shifts in girls' education, amongst others.

Can you share an overview of the Malala Fund and its mission in Nigeria?

Malala Fund is an international non-profit organization co-founded by Malala Yousafzai and her father, Ziauddin Yousafzai, aimed at ensuring every girl accesses quality education. In Nigeria, our focus is on removing the barriers that prevent girls from going to school, particularly in regions where cultural norms, economic challenges, and security issues limit educational opportunities. We work closely with our partners to advocate for gender-responsive education policies that ensure girls can access and stay in school.

What inspired the creation of Malala Fund, and what have been some of your key achievements since its inception?

Malala Fund was inspired by Malala's personal fight for education, which began when she spoke out against the Taliban's efforts to deny girls' access to education in her home country of Pakistan. Since its inception, Malala Fund has achieved remarkable milestones.

Some of our more recent key achievements can be found in our Annual Report but in Nigeria specifically, Malala Fund has actively advocated

for increased education funding resulting in a 10 percent increase in the national education budget. We have invested over \$8 million in programs, policy work, and advocacy led by local partners to address the unique challenges faced by girls in accessing education.

Our grantee, Invictus Africa for instance, is working with Oyo and Gombe states to incorporate a Gender Responsive Education Budgeting framework into various phases of their education budgets. The framework helps policymakers address gender inequalities in education by ensuring that they consider gender in all steps of the budget process. It also outlines activities to improve girls' enrolment and completion rates.

Just recently, the Centre for Advocacy, Transparency and Accountability Initiative (CATAI) supported Adamawa in developing and launching the state's first gender responsive Policy on Education. It includes provisions on mentorship programs, safe school environments, gender-sensitive leadership, and active parental involvement to enhance opportunities for girls. Our goal in Nigeria is to ensure that more girls not only have the opportunity to go to school but also to stay in school and complete 12 years of education. We will continue to work tirelessly until all girls can learn and choose their own futures.

As a lawyer and public policy expert with over 20 years of experience, how has your narrative-based advocacy approach influenced policy change and societal norms?

I strongly believe that advocacy is fundamentally about getting people to care—and to do that; you must have data and stories because while numbers provide evidence, stories create urgency. Policy change isn't just about presenting the right facts; it's about shifting mindsets and making issues human and personal. My approach is informed by my time as a lawyer and law professor in Washington, DC. As a patent litigator, I worked on high-profile federal court cases on behalf of Fortune 500 companies, and learned quickly that success hinged on presenting facts compellingly, and leveraging persuasive arguments. Later, as Professor and Practitioner-in-Residence at American University Washington College of Law, I educated senior law students to recognise the importance of knowing their audience and tapping into the power of advocacy and strategic storytelling - be it in representing independent filmmakers, entrepreneurs, or preparing Amicus Briefs. In government, working on gender-responsive fiscal policies, I saw first-hand how framing issues through real stories of women and girls changed perspectives.

When stories are rooted in facts and enriched by real human experiences, they have a direct impact on decision-makers. Fiscal policies and budgetary choices resonate most when they move beyond abstractions and reflect real life experiences. They become tangible issues— determining whether a girl remains in school, a mother receives life-saving prenatal healthcare, or women-owned small businesses secure the critical financing they need to thrive.

All of these experiences have reinforced a fundamental lesson: policy cannot stand alone. It must be human-oriented, responsive, and accountable.

At Malala Fund, we use narrative-based advocacy to challenge societal norms and push for policy shifts in girls' education. We center the voices and needs of girls so that their real lived experiences and stories drive policy conversations and inform policy decisions. Data can tell you that millions of girls are out of school, but hearing from a 14-year-old girl who has had her education disrupted by insecurity, hidden school fees, or child marriage, presents an important and sobering sense of urgency.

Ultimately, advocacy is about connection. Policymakers and other key stakeholders, like all of us, are moved by what they can relate to. It is therefore critical to bridge the gap between policy and lived experience to create real, lasting change.

Could you tell us about your roles with Women for Women International and Girl Rising? What impact have these organisations had in advancing women's rights?

My commitment to gender equality is rooted in shifting systems and narratives to create real opportunities for women and girls. Serving on the boards of Women for Women International (WfWI) and Girl Rising allows me to contribute in complementary ways.

WfWI equips women in conflict-affected regions with the skills and resources to rebuild their lives. Beyond economic independence, the organisation fosters agency and advocacy, ensuring women can drive change in their lives and for their communities. At Girl Rising, storytelling is a tool for advocacy and education, shifting global perceptions about girls' potential. Both organizations reinforce what I deeply believe: investing in women and girls isn't just the right thing to do—it's essential for sustainable development.

As a technical lead and advocate for implementation of INFFs, I made technical presentations at global meetings, G20 side events, and senior-level regional meetings.

During your time as a Special Adviser to Nigeria's Minister of Finance, what key initiatives did you champion that focused on women's empowerment?

As Special Adviser to Nigeria's Minister of Finance, I was privileged to lead on the development of and advocacy related to gender-responsive fiscal policies and budgets — ensuring that inclusive policy design was not just as an afterthought, but as a strategic priority. One of the most impactful policies I helped shape was integrating gender-responsive budgeting into the National Budget process (as reflected in the Budget Call Circular), driving targeted investments in education, healthcare, and women's economic empowerment programs.

I also led work on the development of Nigeria's gender-responsive Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) — a tool developed by the United Nations to help countries strengthen planning processes and finance national priorities. This framework helps align public and private sector investments with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including those focused on women's economic participation. As a pioneer INFF country, Nigeria was among the very first countries to develop and launch an INFF Report - during a landmark presidential launch event that took place in New York on the sidelines of the 2022 United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). As a technical lead and advocate for implementation of INFFs, I made technical presentations at global meetings, G20 side events, and senior-level regional meetings.

Finally, I supported the development of the national Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) Policy, a first of its kind, cross-sectorial roadmap for enhancing women's economic empowerment in Nigeria.

What was your journey like serving as a Special Adviser to Nigeria's Immediate Past Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning and what challenges did you encounter in that role?

My time in government was both rewarding and transformative. After returning to Nigeria in 2016, I spent seven years supporting the Honourable Minister across three ministries—Budget and National Planning (2016 - 2018), Finance (2018 - 2019), and the combined Ministry of Finance, Budget, and National Planning (2019 - 2023). Switching careers and returning home to work in government after having practiced law in the United States required adapting to a different personal and professional culture, building new networks, and understanding the nuances of policy implementation within the local context. While it was an adjustment, it also gave me a unique perspective. My work spanned development cooperation, integrated and inclusive financing frameworks, monitoring and evaluation, and gender responsive fiscal policy.

I began as a Technical Assistant to the Honourable Minister of State for Budget and National Planning, supporting the implementation of Nigeria's National Monitoring and Evaluation Framework—tracking progress, measuring impact, and contributing to the development of the draft National M&E Policy. In 2018, following a transition to the Ministry of Finance, I shifted focus to support the development and implementation of the Strategic Revenue Growth Initiatives (SRGI), a key fiscal reform effort. I also supported implementation of Nigeria's Open Government Partnership (OGP) revenue transparency commitments, aimed at driving greater fiscal accountability. In 2019, the two ministries merged to form the Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning. As Special Adviser to the Honourable Minister, I led initiatives on performance management, gender-responsive fiscal policy, and international development cooperation. One of my biggest takeaways was that governance is complex, and driving sustainable policy change requires more than evidence and advocacy. Success depends on stakeholder buy-in, alignment with national priorities, and strategic engagement across ministries, agencies, and partners. Taking the time to build consensus and ensure reforms were well understood and positioned for long-term implementation was essential—especially in a rapidly shifting economic landscape, including during the COVID-19 pandemic.

I quickly realized the value of drawing from the rich experiences of global convenings like the UN General Assembly, the World Economic Forum Annual Meetings, and the World Bank IMF Spring and Annual Meetings to gain a broader perspective on how our work in Nigeria connected to the global landscape, and to develop a network of like-minded professionals. On a personal level, balancing public service with motherhood was both a challenge and a blessing. I had all three of my children while serving as an advisor in government, navigating pregnancy, maternity leave, and a high-pressure role simultaneously. I found this experience incredibly grounding amid the often dizzying and all-consuming demands of being an Adviser. It taught me the importance of setting priorities and embracing flexibility.

Despite these challenges, my time in government reinforced the power of collaborative policymaking and strategic advocacy. It was an opportunity to work within existing structures to drive meaningful change, and to help ensure that gender equality was not just seen as a social issue but as a critical driver for economic development.

Before your transition into policy and governance, you were part of the faculty at American University Washington College of Law. What motivated that shift? My time as a law professor at my alma mater, American University Washington College of Law was an incredibly fulfilling experience. Teaching gave me the opportunity to mentor and help shape future lawyers, with a focus on clinical legal education, which prioritizes hands-on learning through pro bono client representation. What made it even more special was the chance to teach in the same classrooms and alongside the very professors who had shaped my own legal perspective—one grounded in the belief that social justice and inclusivity should not be confined to social impact law but should be embedded in every aspect of one's life and practice.

During my time as a full-time member of the Glushko-Samuels Intellectual Property Law Clinic (a non-profit law clinic within the law school's top ranked clinical education programme), I taught, supervised, and mentored student attorneys on real-world cases at the intersection of law, business, and human rights. I also created and taught the school's first Advanced Patent Litigation course. A highlight was leading a team of student attorneys who co-authored an amicus brief in a landmark U.S. Supreme Court gene patent case - an experience that underscored the strength of narrative and framing to inform legal and policy decision-making at the highest level.

I enjoyed teaching and strongly considered staying on that path. Over time, I felt drawn to working on systemic reform beyond legal practice and academia. I also wanted to experience life and work in Nigeria—a homeland I had left at 7 and knew only through family, visits and diaspora connections. I wanted to be in spaces where law, policy, and governance intersected - where decisions that shaped entire economies and societies were made.

I wanted to be in spaces where law, policy, and governance intersected - where decisions were being made that shaped entire economies and societies. Transitioning into government allowed me to work on structural reforms, economic policy, and gender-responsive governance, applying my legal expertise in ways that could drive large-scale impact.

The shift wasn't about leaving law behind—it was about using what I had learned to help shape inclusive, forward-thinking policy decisions with lasting impact.

What lessons from your academic experience have significantly influenced your decisions and initiatives?

My academic journey has shaped how I think and lead. Studying law and business gave me the tools to analyze complex challenges, but more importantly, both experiences taught me resilience and adaptability. At American University Washington College of Law, I learned that systems are designed - but they can also be changed. Law school sharpened my ability to advocate effectively and communicate with the audience in mind, skills that have been invaluable throughout my career. Returning to the school as a law professor added another layer. It reinforced that true impact comes from not just knowing the law, but from shaping how others engage with it.

My MBA at INSEAD, a top international business school, reinforced the importance of diverse perspectives and of the powerful interplay between business and society. It was a truly transformative experience that laid the foundation for my transition to Nigeria.

One of the biggest takeaways from my academic journey is that knowledge alone isn't enough - execution and coalition-building matter just as much. Whether in government, advocacy, or business, change doesn't happen in isolation. Good ideas need the right people, the right timing, and the right strategy to turn them into action.

What fuels your passion for women's equality and empowerment? Are there specific experiences from your childhood or career that shaped this commitment?

My passion for women's equality and empowerment is deeply personal. It's shaped by both lived experiences and the systemic barriers I've seen women and girls face - whether in my own life, in policy spaces, or through my work in advocacy and governance.

Growing up, I was fortunate to be surrounded by strong women—especially my mother—and to be raised by a father with an unwavering belief in the power of educating and empowering all his children. I also saw how opportunity isn't evenly distributed. I grew up in multiple countries - Nigeria, England, Qatar, and Canada - which meant I saw, firsthand, how access to education and economic independence shaped women's lives differently across and even within cultures. Even in spaces of privilege, the barriers for women were undeniable. This awareness deepened in my career, and through my work in the national planning and fiscal policy space I was able to support policies and initiatives that recognized the important link between women's empowerment and improved economic, health, and broader development outcomes.

I also believe strongly in the power of storytelling. Whether through our advocacy work at Malala Fund alongside incredible partners, or through my board responsibilities, I've seen how amplifying the voices of women and girls, sharing their stories, and ensuring they have platforms to advocate for themselves can be transformative.

At the heart of all of this is a fundamental truth: when women and girls succeed, societies progress. This isn't just about fairness - it's an economic and social imperative. Giving women the freedom, resources, and opportunities to thrive isn't a luxury - it's essential.

Who do you consider your role models, and what qualities do they possess that inspire you?

My parents, Prof. Isa Odidi and Dr. Amina Odidi, both pharmaceutical scientists and entrepreneurs, have been my greatest role models. My mother, in particular, has been my biggest inspiration. She embodies strength, resilience, and quiet leadership, showing me what it means to lead with purpose and integrity.

She has always balanced career, family, and service with a deep sense of responsibility - proving that ambition and kindness can go hand in hand. She taught

me that leadership isn't about titles but about how you show up for others and the impact you leave behind. Watching her navigate challenges with grit and grace reinforced my belief in the power of perseverance, adaptability, and staying true to your values.

Both of my parents instilled in me a deep respect for education, hard work, and the responsibility to give back. Their example shaped my approach to public service, advocacy, and leadership, reminding me that success isn't just about what you accomplish—it's about what you build for others.

In the coming months, I'm excited to unveil Nigeria's priority focus areas under the incoming 2025-2030

What's next for you, Nabila Aguele? Are there any upcoming projects or initiatives you're particularly excited about?

Right now, I'm deeply focused on our work at Malala Fund, particularly on advocating and grantmaking to push for policies that ensure that girls have access to 12 years of free education, securing increased and better quality education financing, and shifting social norms around girls' education in Nigeria.

In the coming months, I'm excited to unveil Nigeria's priority focus areas under the incoming 2025-2030 Malala Fund strategy. Our team is also looking forward to continued engagement with key stakeholders, and to working closely with our partners to ensure that more girls can learn, lead and choose their own futures. More updates to come!

CAPE VERDE: AN AFRICAN ISLAND DESTINATION WITH 10 HOURS OF SUNSHINE IN MARCH

CHISOM MICHAEL



Travellers looking for a warm escape in March can find an ideal destination in Cape Verde, an island nation off the west coast of Africa. The archipelago consists of ten main islands in the Atlantic Ocean, offering long hours of sunshine and warm temperatures.

According to the Met Office, Cape Verde records an average daily high of 25.7C in March, with around 10 hours of sunshine per day. Rainfall is minimal, making it a suitable location for those seeking clear and dry weather.

The islands attract visitors with their beaches, landscapes, and cultural heritage. Sal, one of the most visited islands, features golden sands and the town of Santa Maria, which has surf shops, restaurants, and outdoor cafés. It is also a popular location for windsurfing and kitesurfing, particularly between November and March when strong winds provide favourable conditions.

Boa Vista, known for its extensive coastline, offers 55km (34 miles) of uninterrupted beaches with white sand dunes and clear waters. Praia de Chaves and Santa Monica Beach provide swimming and sunbathing opportunities.

For visitors interested in adventure, Cape Verde has additional attractions beyond the beaches. The island of Fogo is home to Pico do Fogo, an active volcano that hikers can climb for views of the surrounding landscape. On Boa Vista, Ervatao Beach is a significant nesting site for loggerhead turtles, with guided night tours available to observe the nesting process.

Cape Verde's culture reflects African, Portuguese, and Brazilian influences, evident in its music, traditions, and cuisine. Local markets and restaurants serve dishes such as cachupa, a slow-cooked stew considered a national dish. The islands also have a strong music tradition, with performances of morna, a musical style often compared to fado in Portugal.

Visitors seeking alternative experiences can explore the islands through quad biking on the sand dunes of Sal and Boa Vista or horse riding along the coastline. Fishing, including deep-sea and rock fishing, is also available for those interested in maritime activities.

Cape Verde continues to grow as a tourist destination, providing a combination of warm weather, scenic locations, and cultural experiences in March.

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE: THE DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF DIRECTORS UNDER NIGERIAN LAW

Corporate Governance plays a fundamental role in impacting the success and sustainability of any company and at the heart of a company's governance structure is its Directors. The Directors are the decision-makers with fiduciary responsibilities to the company, its shareholders and other stakeholders including, employees, creditors, and regulators. Understanding the duties and responsibilities of directors is therefore crucial. In this newsletter we examine some of these responsibilities and their importance.

Who is a Director?

A director is an individual appointed to oversee and manage the affairs and operations of a company. The Board of a company may comprise executive directors who are responsible for the day-to-day operations, non-executive and independent directors who provide external oversight. Under the Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA) 2020, directors owe fiduciary duties to the company, requiring them to act in good faith, and in the best interests of the company and its shareholders. These fiduciary duties include:

1. Duty to Promote the Business of the Company

Under the CAMA and the Nigerian Code of Corporate Governance, directors must act in a way that promotes the business of the company. In fulfilling this duty, directors must consider the impact of the company's operations on the environment and society and the impact of their decisions on the company's stakeholders, shareholders and employees. To fulfill this obligation, directors must ensure that the company operates in a manner that maximizes its profitability. This includes making strategic

decisions, managing risks effectively, and ensuring compliance with legal and regulatory requirements

2. Duty to exercise Care and Diligence

A director is obligated to exercise reasonable care, skill, and diligence in performing his duties. This duty requires directors to act in good faith and in the best interest of the company, its members and stakeholders in the course of operations. A director's obligation to exercise care implies that his actions must be conducted in a manner in which a reasonable man would conduct themselves in dealing with the company's affairs.

3. Duty to Avoid Conflicts of Interest

Directors have a fiduciary duty to ensure that their personal interests do not conflict with those of the company. They are obligated to disclose any actual or potential conflicts and, where necessary, recuse themselves from related decision-making processes. Additionally, directors are prohibited from using their position for personal gain or deriving undisclosed financial benefits from the company, while discharging their duties.

4. Duty to Exercise Independent Judgment

Directors are required to exercise independent judgment when making decisions on behalf of the company. In essence, a director must make decisions based on his personal opinion and skills, without any bias or undue influence by a third party. A director must not fetter his discretion by committing in advance to vote in a particular way, as doing so may compromise their ability to act in the best interests of the company.

5. Duty to Act Within Authorized Powers

A director's powers are defined by the company's articles of association and the board charter. Directors must act within the scope of these powers and cannot make decisions that exceed their authority or contradict the provisions of the articles or board charter.

What Happens When Directors Breach Their Duty?

When directors fail to exercise the duties stated above, the consequences may range from regulatory sanctions and civil liability to criminal prosecution. Some of these consequences include:

Loss of Investment: While the directors are responsible for the day to day operation of the company, they are also responsible to the shareholders and investors of the company. Where the directors are in breach of their duties, it may affect investor confidence, and such an occurrence may lead to withdrawal of investment.

Civil Liability: Legal action may be filed against the director for breaching his fiduciary duty. Directors may also face removal from the board of the company or other personal liability for financial mismanagement, fraud etc.

Criminal Liability: A director can also be held criminally liable for offences such as insider trading or fraud committed during the course of operation of the company. Under the Investments and Securities Act, for example, a person convicted of insider trading may be fined 500,000 or an amount equivalent to twice the profit gained, or face imprisonment of up to seven years. In the event that a director is convicted, the director will be disqualified from holding office as a director in any company for a period of 10 years.

Regulatory Sanction: The impact of breach of directors' duties often extends beyond the personal liability of the director. Failure to manage the affairs of a company in accordance with regulatory requirements may lead to

sanctions against the company by regulators. A notable example is the recent withdrawal of the banking license of a Nigerian commercial bank by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), demonstrating that regulatory bodies can take decisive actions in response to corporate governance failure.

Conclusion

The obligations and duties of directors are crucial in ensuring adherence to corporate governance framework. Therefore, directors must continue to discharge their fiduciary duties to the company while balancing multiple responsibilities, from strategic decision-making to financial management and compliance and risk management.



Aderonke Alex-Adedipe is the Managing Partner and a Founding Partner at Pavestones; a full service corporate and commercial law firm with particular interest in Technology and Foreign Investment. She has extensive experience advising local and foreign firms including one of the world's largest technology firms on the Nigerian regulatory environment.

She has acted in conjunction with both indigenous and international law firms in advising on several commercial transactions. Aderonke was recognised by IFLR 1000, a guide to the world's leading financial law firms, as a Highly Regarded Lawyer in 2023 and 2024.

Aderonke was also recognised by the Esquire Nigerian Legal Awards as one of the 40 outstanding lawyers under the age of 40 who have distinguished themselves and are clearly setting new standards in the legal sector.

Aderonke holds a Bachelor of Laws degree from Obafemi Awolowo University and a Master of Laws degree from George Washington University.

She is currently the Legal Director (Non-Executive) of the Women-in-Tech Global Movement (Nigeria Chapter).

JOURNEE DE LA FRANCOPHONIE CELEBRATES CULTURAL DIVERSITY, UNITY IN LAGOS

IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA



In a bid to foster and promote stronger cultural diversity and growth between France and Nigeria, this year's International day of Francophonie, organised by Alliance Française in partnership with the consulates general of France and Switzerland as well as the Embassy of Canada in Nigeria marked the auspicious day with movie screenings and an award ceremony.

Environmental conflicts have emerged as key issues challenging local, regional, national and global security. Environmental crisis and problems throughout the world are widespread and increasing rapidly.

In a bid to address these concerns, this year's International Day of Francophonie, also centrally

explored major environmental challenges, such as climate, biodiversity and resource-related conflicts.

Speaking during the event in Lagos, Marc Bréban, Directeur, Alliance française de Lagos, said Journée De La Francophonie is celebrated in Lagos this year with movie screenings and awarding the best French students of secondary schools in Lagos.

Bréban said the competition involved 15 secondary schools in Lagos and 12 winners emerged overall. He said the theme this year was chosen by the members of the Group of Francophone Ambassadors (GAF) and has helped consolidate the cultural programming of the Francophonie month in Lagos,



Abuja, and in the nine other cities where there is an Alliance Française operating.

According to him, each year, a theme intended to convey a message about the French language and ten words illustrating it, is chosen by Francophone partners (France, Belgium, Quebec, Switzerland, and the International Organization of La Francophonie) for an initiative called "Tell me ten words." The 2025 edition of this initiative has the theme, "Tell me ten words for the planet."

He said the International Organization of La Francophonie (OIF) and the International Day of Francophonie celebrated every year on March 20 aims to showcase French language, solidarity, cooperation and the diversity of member states.

According to Brébant, the OIF's mission is to promote the language as well as cultural and linguistic diversity, peace, democracy, human rights, education, training, higher education, research and economic cooperation for sustainable development.

He said in Nigeria, French is the first foreign language taught at secondary school level with about 15,000 French teachers, 10 Alliances Françaises, a French Institute and two French high schools.

Laurent Favier, the Consul General of France based in Lagos who spoke on the theme of the event said, "I love my planet. But this is a general concern. And if we have all our strength collectively, we can do more to defend and to protect our planet.

"So the idea is to innovate, try to find solutions, better adaptive solutions to fight against climate change."



Favier said the mission of the International Organisation of Francophonie, (OIF), is to promote the French language and the cultural diversity in its different languages.

"The second objective is to promote peace and human rights all around the world and to support education. And the last is to develop economic cooperation, but in a sustainable development way. So it means that climate is included, the protection of the environment is included, etc."

As part of the celebration, two films were shown at Alliance Française Lagos, the first is a screening of *Karnaval*, a Canadian film directed by Henri Pardo that won the Audience Award at the Toronto International Film Festival. At 5:30pm, *The Crusade* by Louis Garrel (2021) was shown. This French film was featured in the Cinema for the Climate selection at the Cannes Film Festival.

On Saturday, March 15, Alliance Française Lagos hosted Mona de Pracontal for the first time, winner of the Baudelaire Prize for her translation of *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

On the occasion of her visit to the media library of the Alliance Française de Lagos, she presented the French translation of *The Fishermen* by Chigozie Obioma in a dual French and Nigerian voice, in front of an audience composed of Nigerian writers, translators and publishers.

Finally, the French Bazaar will close the Francophonie month on Saturday, March 22, with a karaoke box of Francophone songs, Nigerian culinary tastings and a DJ set of English and French music. The event was held in partnership with Nestlé and Nestlé Pure life.



HOW ERASMUS OGBONNA, UK-BASED NIGERIAN IS PROTECTING IOT SYSTEMS FROM CYBER THREATS

IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA



The fast rising adoption of the Internet of Things (IoT) has assisted several industries, in increasing efficiency and convenience.

However, this proliferation has also introduced significant cybersecurity risks, making IoT security a top priority. A UK based Nigerian tech expert, Erasmus Ogbonna, is at the forefront of the battle of protecting IoT systems from cyber threats.

Leveraging his extensive cybersecurity expertise, he uses up-to-date security

solutions that safeguard critical infrastructures and personal data.

Understanding IoT Security Challenges
IoT devices, the likes of smart home gadgets to industrial sensors, are often vulnerable to cyber threats due to weak authentication mechanisms, lack of encryption, and outdated firmware.

Attackers exploit these weaknesses to launch large-scale attacks, including Distributed Denial-of-Service (DDoS), ransomware, and data breaches. Given that IoT devices are deeply integrated into essential sectors such as healthcare, finance, and manufacturing, securing them is important in order to prevent potential disruptions.

Erasmus Ogbonna's Approach to IoT Security
To overcome these issues, cybersecurity experts are deploying advanced security solutions that enhance IoT protection at multiple levels. One of these professionals is Erasmus Ogbonna, a UK-based Nigerian cybersecurity specialist who focuses on strengthening IoT defenses against evolving cyber threats.

He leverages real-time threat detection tools like Splunk and Google Chronicle to monitor IoT traffic for suspicious activity. Leveraging his experience in endpoint security, he ensures that IoT devices are safeguarded against malware and unauthorized access. Also, his work with cloud security tools such as WIZ helps organizations identify and mitigate vulnerabilities in cloud-connected IoT environments.

Beyond technical measures, human error remains one of the weakest links in cybersecurity. Phishing remains a major attack vector, allowing cybercriminals to gain access to IoT networks through compromised user credentials. To combat this, Erasmus has contributed to large-scale cybersecurity training initiatives, educating thousands of employees across multiple countries on how to recognize and respond to phishing attempts.

Also, Artificial intelligence is also playing an increasingly important role in IoT security. Machine learning algorithms analyze large amounts of IoT data to identify abnormal patterns, allowing security teams to act swiftly against potential threats.

As part of the fight against cyber attacks, Ogbonna integrates AI-driven security solutions to improve threat detection, automate responses, and predict vulnerabilities before they can be exploited. AI-powered security analytics also help reduce false positives, which helps organizations focus their resources on real risks rather than being overwhelmed by unnecessary alerts.

Why IoT Security is a National Priority

The importance of IoT security extends beyond individual organizations—it is a national security concern with far-reaching implications. Cyber-attacks targeting IoT-connected infrastructure, such as hospitals, transportation systems, and power grids, can have devastating consequences.

A well-coordinated attack on critical infrastructure could disrupt essential services, endangering public safety and economic stability. Recognizing the urgency of these threats, governments worldwide have begun implementing stricter IoT security regulations.

The Internet of Things Cybersecurity Improvement Act of 2020 is one such initiative, requiring IoT devices used by U.S. federal agencies to meet specific security standards. At the international level, frameworks such as ISO 27001 and the NIST Cybersecurity Framework provide guidelines for organizations looking to strengthen their IoT defenses.

This discussion is especially relevant as the world marks Cybersecurity Week, a time dedicated to raising awareness about cyber threats and reinforcing best practices for digital protection. With IoT devices playing a central role in both personal and industrial settings, experts like Erasmus Ogbonna keep working on providing stronger security measures to protect against new cyber risks.

Economic and Infrastructure Facilities Improvement

Economic stability is another factor that shows the importance of IoT security. Cyber incidents involving IoT devices can lead to substantial financial losses due to downtime, data breaches, and regulatory penalties. Organizations that fail to secure their IoT systems risk not only financial harm but also huge blow to their reputation and legal consequences.

Moreover, the expansion of smart cities and infrastructure increases the stakes for IoT security. Public services, including traffic management, surveillance, and energy distribution, depend on interconnected IoT devices.

A breach in these networks could lead to widespread service disruptions, compromising urban safety and functionality. That's where cybersecurity professionals like Erasmus Ogbonna comes in, to help in mitigating these risks by implementing standard security frameworks.

PEACHES AND C.R.E.A.M (CASH RULES EVERYTHING AROUND ME)

EYESAN TORITSEJU

A peach is a delicate fruit, soft, lush, and eye-catching. Its velvety skin suggests elegance, yet it bruises with the slightest pressure. Unlike tougher fruits that can endure rough handling, a peach's beauty is fleeting; its ripeness is both a gift and a vulnerability. Once blemished, its value diminishes, its glow fades.

In many ways, Nigeria's financial culture mirrors this fragility, where success, much like the peach, is often on display but prone to sudden deterioration. Success here is often about appearance, how much you look like you have rather than how much you truly have. In a world that celebrates status, the pressure to appear successful can sometimes outweigh the reality of building lasting wealth. But just like a peach, the pursuit of financial prosperity is a balancing act, one that requires us to recognize the difference between substance and spectacle, between wealth that sustains and wealth that only shines for a moment.

Nigeria's relationship with wealth has evolved dramatically over generations. Before colonialism, prosperity was not measured by cash or material goods. It was about land, livestock, and social influence. The ability to provide for one's family and community was central to success, and wealth was seen as something that should be nurtured over time, passed down through generations. A farmer who worked diligently to cultivate his land was respected as much as a wealthy merchant or ruler. Success was rooted in legacy and stability, values that prioritized sustainability over flashiness.

However, colonialism ushered in a new paradigm. The European colonizers brought with them the idea of cash as the ultimate marker of success. Land was commodified, the social fabric was torn, and the focus shifted from collective prosperity to individual wealth. As cash became king, the pursuit of personal affluence became not only desirable but imperative. This transformation was accelerated by the discovery of oil in the 1950s and the subsequent boom of the 1970s.

The oil boom brought with it an era of unprecedented affluence. With vast wealth suddenly available to the nation, the display of opulence became not just a sign of success but a social expectation. The concept of "making it" in Nigeria became synonymous with wealth that was seen. An individual's success was validated by their ability to flaunt it. Lavish parties, oversized homes, and the ostentatious display of material wealth

became cultural markers of achievement. By the time Nigeria entered economic downturns in the 1980s and 1990s, this mindset had already taken root. The country faced widespread poverty, devaluation of currency, and mounting unemployment and with fewer opportunities available, many were determined to rise above their circumstances by any means necessary.

Today, in the age of social media, this pursuit has intensified. Young Nigerians are not just chasing financial security, they are chasing visibility, global relevance, and proof that they, too, have arrived. As a young man myself, I am not immune to the struggle. I too often feel the weight of comparison and the urge to project success and I am in no position to cast aspersions. The desire to succeed is second nature, and the urge to be seen as successful is rooted in our biological need for social signaling. This need for social recognition is one of the strongest pillars of ambition. However, the challenge lies in ensuring that our ambition is not just about fleeting displays but centered around creating lasting impact.

True prosperity is not just about what can be flaunted, but what can be sustained. It is about creating wealth that outlives trends, wealth that empowers and uplifts, wealth that tells a story of innovation and endurance. The world moves fast, and the pressure to "show up" is real, but perhaps the most powerful thing we can do is redefine success on our own terms.

Like the peach, wealth that is too fragile to endure pressure will not last. But when cultivated with patience and purpose, it becomes something more than just a fleeting glow. It becomes legacy. And that is the real currency of change.

About the Writer

Eyesan Toritseju is a graduate of Civil Engineering from Covenant University turned serial entrepreneur and corporate strategist. Passionate about society and the cultural ideologies that shape us, he explores how these forces propel or inhibit progress through his writing. In his column, *Cosmopolitan Nigeria*, Eyesan examines how young Nigerians navigate the complexities of culture, religion, and identity in a rapidly evolving world.

BUILT TO LAST: SURVIVING IN AN INCREASINGLY DIGITAL WORLD — Ogunlana

CHISOM MICHAEL



To remain competitive in the digital era, businesses should focus on sustainable and long-term growth rather than immediate profits. For Mode Media Ltd's Co-Founder and CEO Monisade Ogunlana, this philosophy is the foundation of her overarching strategy. Motivated by a long-held passion for facilitating the success of small businesses, Ogunlana has dedicated herself to helping brands achieve growth potential by leveraging data-driven decision-making and digital marketing.

She began her marketing career at Utopia Media Group and progressed at Red for Africa, a leading consulting and data company with activities across the continent. She was a Senior Associate and one of the pioneer members of its digital practice, and she

assisted in developing successful digital strategies. Her leadership in account management helped the company achieve an N60 million billing goal in 2020, and she worked with global brands such as Suzuki Motors, Zenith Bank, Marie Stopes International, and Pladis Global. This, alongside her academic pursuits, laid the foundation for her next giant leap.

Seeking to enhance her capabilities, Ogunlana received an MBA in Management Science from the Jones Graduate School of Business at Houston's Rice University, where she was a Forte Fellow. She performed well as an MBA Ambassador and then transitioned into a Marketing and Admissions Analyst role at the Business School, guiding aspiring entrepreneurs along their journey to success in



achieving their business goals. Reflecting on this path, she says, “I’ve learned that meaningful results come from embracing change and being ready so that when opportunities come, there’s no need to ‘get ready’ because you already are.”

At Mode Media Ltd, the agency she co-founded as a solution to the post-pandemic challenges of SMEs, Ogunlana employs her body of knowledge to prepare businesses to compete in the digital era. She feels that data is a game-changer for SMEs as it allows them to make more informed decisions and foresee market trends. “The beauty of digital marketing is that businesses can see precisely where their money is going and how it’s performing. With the use of AI tools, social media websites, email marketing, and SEO, businesses can get to know their customers better and modify their strategies accordingly.”

Beyond marketing, Ogunlana is a firm believer in business resilience, innovation, and financial health. She advocates for businesses to embrace digital transformation, consolidate operations, and view their brands as long-term investments. “Many SMEs shy away from adopting AI or utilizing AI tools and integrating them wholly into their business, not just in Nigeria but globally. But I believe emphasising

customer engagement and making data-led decisions is the recipe for long-term success.”

Her commitment to building excellence also extends to leadership and mentorship. She has built teams throughout her career where innovation and collaboration thrive. “I believe people do their best work when they feel empowered and secure enough to provide their honest opinions.”. Setting proper expectations and alignment on S.M.A.R.T goals have helped us greatly in being able to quantify our success.

In addition, she aims to open doors to greater possibilities for women leaders and entrepreneurs and actively helps them through groups such as The RICE Business admissions office, Shine Your Light: The Young Marketing Pro Hub, Texas Young Professionals, and the business alumni network at RICE University.

For Ogunlana, the future of business is digital innovation and strategic flexibility. With Mode Media Ltd, she continues to break new ground in marketing, helping brands not just survive but thrive in a volatile economy. As she rightly puts it, “By building brand equity, streamlining operations, and developing new sources of revenue, businesses can set themselves up for resilience and long-term growth, no matter how volatile the market gets.”

Looking ahead, “I intend to expand my business model to the U.S. market and helping small businesses with marketing strategies that support disaster recovery, longevity, expansion, and financial stability in the near future,” she said.



WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP: WISCAR DEMANDS GOVERNMENT, OTHERS' COMMITMENT TO GENDER INCLUSION

...insists on procedural justice, right to fair hearing

CHARLES OGWO



Women in Successful Careers (WISCAR), a not-for-profit organisation focused on empowering professional women to contribute to national development has called on government, stakeholders and corporate organisations to reaffirm commitment to gender inclusion.

WISCAR made this known in an address to commemorate the 2025 International Women's Day, stating the organisation's desire to see more women given leadership roles in Nigeria and Africa as a whole, even

as it emphasised the need to allow more women to lead.

Ekemini Akpakpan, the executive secretary of WISCAR in her message said, "We call on all stakeholders, government, corporate organisations, and civil society to reaffirm their commitment to gender inclusion.

"Let us create enabling environments where women can lead, contribute, and thrive without bias or discrimination. Together, we can build a better Nigeria for all."

WISCAR insists that as the female gender mark International Women's Month and the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and as women across the globe continue to face systemic barriers in governance, there is need for a paradigm shift; from cultural and structural discrimination to targeted intimidation aimed at silencing their voices, the journey to leadership remains fraught with challenges.

The organisation maintained that Nigeria as a developing nation with immense potential and a female population of 49.5percent cannot afford to marginalise women in leadership.

"Research consistently shows that countries with greater gender parity in governance experience stronger economic growth, improved policymaking, and more robust democratic institutions. Empowering women to lead is not just a moral imperative, it is in our national interest.

"But what does this empowerment truly mean? It means creating an environment where women can rise without fear of harassment, discrimination, or victimization," WISCAR stated.

Furthermore, Ekemini explained that this means ensuring that women in leadership are afforded the same respect, opportunities, and protections as their male counterparts. And that it means upholding the principles of fairness and justice in all matters, particularly those as sensitive as allegations of harassment.

"A fundamental principle of justice is the right to a fair hearing. No matter the seriousness

of the allegations, the circumstances under which they arise, or the time that has elapsed, every case deserves to be investigated and adjudicated in a fair and competent forum.

"Procedural justice ensures that both the complainant and the accused have the opportunity to present their case before an impartial body. This is not just a legal obligation, it is a cornerstone of democracy and a reflection of our collective values," he said.

For women in leadership, WISCAR said the stakes are even higher, stressing that too often, allegations whether proven or unproven are weaponised to undermine their credibility, silence their voices, and derail their careers. This is not just an injustice to the individuals involved; it is a loss for our nation, which benefits from the contributions of women leaders.

"WISCAR calls on all public institutions to uphold the principles of procedural justice in every case, no matter who is involved. We urge the adoption of deliberate policies that protect women in leadership from discrimination, harassment, and victimization. This includes ensuring that all allegations are handled with transparency, impartiality, and respect for due process.

"To the women who have navigated these challenges, we see you. We stand with you. Your resilience and determination inspire us to continue fighting for a world where women can lead without fear or favor," the organisation stated.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: WHY NIGERIA MUST MAKE SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN COUNT

CHARLES OGWO



Mahatma Gandhi, the great Indian philosopher and leader once emphasised the importance of making positive impacts on others, when he said; “The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”

Consequent to the above, the country can only find itself by investing massively in educating all children including the special needs.

Unfortunately, the Nigerian education system is falling short of accommodating special needs children. Experts maintain there is a need to consider individual differences which is not unconnected with the fact that children do not develop the same way and at the same pace.

The universal modern trend is shifting towards addressing the educational challenges of children with one form of disabilities or the other so as to better their life.

The idea is contingent upon the fact that people with disabilities too have invaluable roles to play in national

development, and to be able to do this effectively and meaningfully, their education needs must be given proper attention.

It is still fresh in our memories how in a roundbreaking moment for the world of art and disability awareness, 14-year-old Nigerian-born Kanyeyachukwu Tagbo-Okeke, an autistic artist successfully completed his attempt to break the Guinness World Record for the Largest Art Canvas.

A special needs child with the help of education made Nigeria proud with his talent, a feat even many normal physically children of his age could not achieve. Obviously, no parents would want to see their child go through life suffering developmental disabilities, yet it is also a fact that such do happen at one time or the other for various reasons.

Children with developmental disabilities such as Autism, Down- Syndrome, and Cerebral Palsy,



part of the same learning and interactive community. They are included in the feeling of belonging among other students, teachers and other members of community.

Udenta Henry, a teacher stressed the need for special adaptation and modification of curriculum, because according to him, the present curriculum of the regular school system in Nigeria should be re-worked in the light of inclusive practices in the schools.

“Curriculum designers should be such that encourage learning experiences in a way that the unique needs of the children are adequately addressed. The roles of supportive staff such as sign language interpreters for hearing impaired and other ancillary should be therefore spelled.

among others, may find it difficult to live up to normal children’s developmental expectations.

This is why the government, corporate organisations and individuals should consider it necessary to invest in building education ecosystem that accommodates the special needs children.

Gabriel Ogbechie, the group executive director at Rainoil Limited once made a case for public special school system that would exclusively cater for the needs of special needs children in Nigeria, as the private ones are too costly for many parents.

Speaking at the launch of Brace Foundation, Ogbechie said that Nigeria needs to provide special schools that cater for special needs children.

“What we have seen in Nigeria is normal schools that say that they cater for special needs children, but the truth is that they’re normal schools who just bend backwards to actually tolerate these children, and not cater for them.

“So we look forward to having full-blown schools that do nothing but just cater for special needs children,” he said.

Similarly, Samson Ibikunle, a special needs educator said for Nigeria to achieve a successful implementation of inclusion education, there must be appropriate funding for special education facilities. Besides, he said the government and various authorities must redesign inclusive schools and make adequate rooms to conveniently accommodate special need children.

Inclusion education, means that all children in a school, regardless of their strengths and weaknesses in any area of disability become

“It should be pointed out that large classes should not be encouraged given the fact that children with disabilities benefits more from individualized educational programme, the school must make conscious attempts within the framework of the curriculum to address in a differential manner the learning needs of each child,” he said.

It is time we change our attitude towards ‘disability’ as a physical or mental limitation that hinders ones thoughts, movements, senses, or daily activities. Unlike most people living average, normal lives, people with disabilities go to school, work, have families, laugh, cry, play like everyone else, despite their disabilities.

A handicapped child is a gifted being who has the ability to be educated irrespective of his or her disabilities. Hence, schools should be designed with adequate access to all parts of the classroom for special needs children.



5 STRUGGLES NIGERIANS FACE ABROAD

ESTHER EMOEKPERE

The dream of relocating abroad, popularly called “Japa”, has taken hold of many Nigerians. With economic uncertainties and a desire for better opportunities, countless individuals have packed their bags in search of greener pastures.

But while the dream of moving abroad is exciting, the reality can be quite different. Settling into a new country often comes with struggles that no one warns you about.

If you are planning to Japa, here are five funny yet frustrating experiences you might face.

The immigration law

Back in Nigeria, people often assume “settling in” is as easy as getting a plane ticket. But abroad, immigration laws are no joke. There’s no room for “Oga, abeg” or “just manage am like that.” Your visa and work permits must always be up to date, and breaking any immigration rule can lead to deportation. Some newcomers even fall victim to scams promising “shortcut” papers—only to lose money and face legal trouble.

Cultural shock

You step off the plane expecting warm greetings from neighbours, only to realise that no one really cares that you exist. In Nigeria, moving into a new home often means neighbours stopping by with smiles and small talk.

But in many Western countries, people mind their business, sometimes for years. If you want a sense of community, you’ll have to make the effort to introduce yourself first.

Cost of living reality

One of the biggest Japa shocks is realising that your rent abroad could pay for a 3-bedroom flat in Nigeria. Groceries, transport, and even basic services cost far more than expected. Some Nigerians move abroad only to find themselves working multiple jobs just to survive. That’s why many Africans abroad rarely tell the full story when relatives ask, “Send me small money.”

The food struggles

While there are some markets that sell African food items, it still lacks the authenticity of a proper Nigerian meal. Ingredients tend to be very expensive, difficult to find, or simply not taste the same. Unless you are lucky enough to live near a Nigerian restaurant and can afford them, you might have to learn how to make do with the meals available .

Coping with extreme weather

Adjusting to the weather, especially the cold, can be quite challenging. Many Nigerians are used to the warm tropical climate, so experiencing harsh winters with freezing temperatures, snow, and shorter daylight hours can be overwhelming.



TOP 5 BEST BRAIN GAMES TO KEEP YOUR MIND SHARP

CHISOM MICHAEL



A study found that playing Lumosity's exercises for 15 minutes daily over three weeks improved attention and motor speed. Lumosity is available via its website and as an app for iOS and Android. It also offers a separate mindfulness app called Lumosity Mind.

3. Crosswords

Crossword puzzles engage language skills and memory across various topics. Many newspapers include daily crosswords and puzzle books cater to different skill levels and interests. Online platforms and apps also provide a range of crosswords, some for free.

Keeping the brain active is essential for cognitive function. Various games help improve memory, concentration, and problem-solving skills. Here are five brain games that support mental fitness.

According to Verywell mind, here are the top 5 best brain games to keep your mind sharp

1. Sudoku

Sudoku is a number placement game that requires short-term memory. Completing a Sudoku puzzle involves looking ahead and following sequences. Placing a number in one box determines what fits in others. This improves concentration and memory.

Sudoku can be played online, through an app, or on paper. Many newspapers include daily Sudoku puzzles, and puzzle books offer collections. Digital versions provide various difficulty levels, making it accessible for beginners and advanced players.

2. Lumosity

Lumosity is a brain training programme offering games designed to improve cognitive skills. Users can register for free and play three games per day or subscribe for access to more exercises. The platform tracks progress over time.

The AARP website offers a daily crossword accessible to everyone, not just members. Regularly solving crossword puzzles can support vocabulary, recall ability, and problem-solving skills.

4. Elevate

Elevate provides games that focus on reading, writing, speaking, and mathematics. Users can customise training sessions to target specific skills. The platform allows tracking of progress over time.

The app offers 35 different brain-training games. It is free to download with in-app purchases. Elevate is available for iOS and Android, with high ratings from users who seek an educational approach to brain training.

5. Peak

Peak is a mobile app offering games designed to enhance focus, memory, and problem-solving abilities. Users can compare their performance with others, adding a competitive element to the experience.

The app is free to use, with a subscription unlocking additional features. Available on iOS and Android, Peak provides structured exercises for cognitive development.

7 REASONS WHY 90% OF AFRICAN STARTUPS FAIL – AND HOW TO AVOID

ESTHER EMOEKPERE



Starting a business in Africa is tough. While the continent has a growing entrepreneurial spirit, the reality is that more than half of startups do not make it past the early years.

Data from Statista shows that as of 2020, 54% of African startups failed, with some countries like Ethiopia and Rwanda seeing rates as high as 75%, while Kenya had a lower rate at 24%.

According to global data, 90% of startups fail, with 10% shutting down in the first year and about 70% not making it past five years.

Despite the odds, some startups thrive. Understanding why so many fail is the first step to success. While failure rates vary by industry, the underlying reasons are often the same.

Here are seven key reasons why most startups do not survive, and what founders can do differently.

Not enough market research

Many startups launch with the belief that their product or service is unique, but they often fail to validate if there is real demand. Some assume a market exists simply because a similar idea worked elsewhere, without considering local consumer behaviour, affordability, or competition.

A business that does not meet a specific demand or fails to adapt to customer preferences will struggle. In Africa, where purchasing power varies widely, even a great idea can fail if the pricing is not aligned with the target market.

What founders can do: Conduct thorough market research before launching. Speak to potential customers, run pilot tests, and analyse competitor success and failures. Validating demand early can prevent costly mistakes later.

Funding

Funding remains one of the biggest hurdles for startups. Many struggle to secure investment, and even those that do often burn through their capital too quickly, assuming revenue will grow fast enough to sustain the business. Poor financial planning, over-reliance on a single funding source, and failing to control costs contribute to early failure.

What founders can do: Develop a clear financial strategy. Maintain lean operations in the early stages, diversify funding sources, and plan for slower-than-expected revenue growth. Understanding financial management is important, poor cash flow kills more businesses than lack of profit.

Regulatory and bureaucratic challenges

Africa's business environment can be complex, with bureaucratic red tape, unpredictable regulations, and lengthy approval processes making it difficult for startups to operate smoothly. Some businesses fail simply because they cannot keep up with compliance requirements or struggle with sudden policy changes that affect their industry.

What founders can do: Learn about local business laws before launching. Seek legal advice when necessary and engage with industry associations that can provide guidance. Having a regulatory strategy early can help avoid costly setbacks later.

Poor infrastructure and operational challenges
Basic infrastructure remains a challenge in many African countries. Unstable electricity, unreliable internet, poor road networks, and limited payment systems can make running a business more expensive and complicated. Tech startups, in particular, face difficulties when connectivity is inconsistent, while logistics-heavy businesses struggle with inefficient transport systems.

What founders can do: Have contingency plans. Invest in alternative power sources, choose digital payment solutions that are widely accessible, and

build operations that can adapt to infrastructure challenges.

Weak business models

Some startups focus on acquiring customers but lack a clear strategy for long-term revenue generation. Offering services at unsustainable prices in an attempt to attract users often leads to cash flow problems. Many startups also fail to account for the high cost of acquiring customers versus their lifetime value.

What founders can do: Test different revenue models early and ensure pricing covers costs while allowing for growth. It is important to strike a balance between affordability and profitability.

Leadership gaps

A great idea is not enough, execution matters. Many startups fail because their teams lack the right skill set, experience, or cohesion. Founders often struggle to delegate, leading to burnout and ineffective decision making. A weak team also affects a startup's ability to adapt and scale.

What founders can do: Build a team with complementary skills. If a founder is strong in technology but weak in finance, they should bring in a co-founder or executive with expertise in that area. A well-rounded team increases the chances of long-term success.

Poor execution

A startup can have a good product and a strong team, but if execution is weak, it will struggle to gain traction. Poor customer service, weak marketing strategies, and slow decision making can quickly erode a startup's chances of survival. Many also fail to adapt when initial strategies do not work.

What founders can do: Focus on execution. Ensure that products or services meet quality expectations, marketing is targeted effectively, and customer engagement is strong. The ability to pivot when necessary is also a key trait of successful startups.

10 GOOGLE SEARCH HACKS FOR RESEARCHERS: MAKING THE MOST OUT OF EVERY QUERY

IMOH BRIGHT



In the digital age, information is both a blessing and a curse. While Google provides unprecedented access to vast amounts of knowledge, navigating this ocean of data effectively is a skill that separates the casual browser from the dedicated researcher. For researchers, students, analysts, journalists, and academics alike, mastering Google search techniques is a critical step toward achieving precision and efficiency in their work.

The reality of online research is that not all information is created equal. Between outdated studies, misleading articles, and overwhelming quantities of content, finding reliable and relevant resources can feel like searching for a needle in a haystack. Knowing how to fine-tune your search queries can make all the difference, especially when accuracy and credibility are at stake.

Consider the impact of ineffective searching: wasted hours, incomplete findings, and missed opportunities

to access high-quality, authoritative information. For researchers working under tight deadlines or tackling complex topics, these obstacles can significantly hinder productivity. Fortunately, Google's advanced search capabilities offer a powerful solution, only if you know how to leverage them.

According to BusinessDay research, these 10 essential Google search hacks will teach you how to sharpen your search skills, filter out irrelevant information, and uncover the most accurate, up-to-date sources available.

Use quotation marks for exact phrases

When searching for an exact phrase, enclosing the query in quotation marks ensures Google returns results that contain the precise wording. For instance, searching "climate change impact on agriculture" will exclude results that only mention some of the words. This simple trick can save time and improve accuracy, especially when dealing with specific data or reports.

Use the minus sign to exclude words

To eliminate unrelated topics from your search results, place a minus sign before words you want to exclude. For example, searching 'Python programming -snake' will focus your results on coding rather than reptiles. This technique is especially helpful when a keyword has multiple meanings, allowing you to narrow down the context effortlessly.

Search within a specific website

Sometimes the most authoritative information resides on a particular website. To find it quickly, use the 'site:' operator followed by the website's URL and your query. For instance, 'site:nytimes.com global warming' will display only results from The New York Times related to global warming. This is particularly useful when sourcing credible news or academic content.

Use asterisk (*) as a wildcard

If you're unsure about a missing word or want to broaden your search, using an asterisk acts as a placeholder. Searching 'The future of * technology' allows Google to fill in the blank with various relevant terms. This trick works wonders when dealing with evolving terms or emerging trends.

Search for related websites

To discover websites similar to a particular one, use 'related:' followed by the URL. For example, 'related:wikipedia.org' will list websites similar to Wikipedia. This hack can help expand your research sources, leading to more diverse and comprehensive insights.

Define words instantly

Researchers dealing with complex terminology can quickly obtain definitions by using 'define:' followed by the word. Typing 'define:epistemology' will provide a concise definition without navigating away from the search page. This feature ensures that you stay informed without breaking your research flow.

Filter results by time range

When you need the latest research or data, click 'Tools' under the search bar and adjust the time range to view results from the past hour, day, week, month, or year. This is vital when tracking real-time developments or analyzing recent trends in your field.

Search for file types

Looking for specific file formats such as PDFs or PPTs? Use 'filetype:' followed by the desired extension. For instance, 'renewable energy filetype:pdf' will display only PDF documents related to renewable energy. This technique is especially handy when searching for academic papers, reports, or presentations.

Use Google Scholar for academic sources

For credible academic papers, go beyond regular Google searches and use Google Scholar (scholar.google.com). It's a goldmine for peer-reviewed journals, theses, books, and conference papers. Always leverage this platform when your research demands scholarly accuracy.

Combine multiple operators for precision

Combining techniques like quotes, minus signs, and filetype searches can refine results. An advanced query like '"machine learning" -tutorial filetype:pdf site:researchgate.net' will help you find relevant, high-quality papers on machine learning without tutorial content. Mastering this approach will make your searches both efficient and precise.

THE AMAZON EXPERIENCE: 15 FEATURES TRANSFORMING ONLINE SHOPPING AND CUSTOMER CONVENIENCE

IMOH BRIGHT



In the world of e-commerce, Amazon has established itself as a dominant force, revolutionising how people shop and interact with online platforms. What began as a humble online bookstore in 1994 has since grown into a global retail powerhouse, offering everything from everyday essentials to cutting-edge technology.

Amazon's relentless commitment to innovation and customer satisfaction has enabled it to create an ecosystem that caters to millions of consumers worldwide.

Over the years, Amazon has expanded its reach by introducing features that streamline the shopping process, enhance personalisation, and improve delivery efficiency. By continuously adapting to technological advancements and consumer preferences, Amazon has remained at the forefront of e-commerce innovation.

From AI-powered recommendations to groundbreaking delivery models, the company has redefined what convenience looks like in the digital age.

According to data compiled by BusinessDay, here are 15 features that have been pivotal in transforming online shopping and enhancing customer convenience, with each feature representing a piece of Amazon's broader strategy to make shopping easier, faster, and more personalised than ever before.

One-click ordering

Amazon's patented one-click ordering is more than just a convenience—it's a groundbreaking simplification of the purchasing process that has set a benchmark for frictionless online transactions. By allowing customers to complete purchases with a single click, it reduces the likelihood of abandoned carts and boosts overall sales efficiency.

Personalised recommendations

Using sophisticated machine learning algorithms, Amazon tailors product suggestions based on users'

browsing and purchasing history. This personalised approach not only enhances the user experience but also increases sales by making product discovery feel intuitive and relevant.

Amazon Prime membership

Launched in 2005, Amazon Prime has become a cornerstone of the company's customer retention strategy. With benefits such as free two-day shipping, exclusive deals, streaming services, and more, Prime members enjoy a seamless shopping experience that goes beyond mere convenience.

Alexa Voice shopping

By integrating voice-activated shopping through Alexa-enabled devices, Amazon has made online purchasing accessible and hands-free. This innovation caters to multitasking users who prefer to shop without breaking their workflow, reinforcing Amazon's commitment to user-friendly technology.

Subscribe & Save

Amazon's subscription-based model offers customers savings on recurring orders of essential items. This feature not only ensures convenience and consistency but also strengthens customer loyalty by making the purchasing process almost effortless.

Amazon Go stores

The introduction of Amazon Go's cashier-less technology has reshaped the concept of convenience shopping. With its "Just Walk Out" technology, customers can simply grab items and leave, eliminating the need for checkout lines and enhancing the in-store experience.

Amazon Fresh and Pantry

Amazon's expansion into the grocery sector with services like Amazon Fresh and Pantry caters to customers seeking hassle-free access to fresh produce and household essentials. These services represent Amazon's ambition to dominate not only e-commerce but also everyday retail needs.

Dash Buttons

Though discontinued, Amazon's Dash Buttons were a testament to the company's experimental approach to enhancing customer convenience. These devices offered a tactile, one-click solution for reordering household items, paving the way for more sophisticated subscription models.

Amazon Lockers

Amazon Lockers offer an alternative to home delivery, providing a secure and convenient pickup option for customers. By addressing concerns about package theft and missed deliveries, this feature enhances Amazon's logistics network.

Virtual try-on

Through augmented reality (AR) technology, Amazon's virtual try-on feature allows users to visualize products before purchasing. Whether it's fashion items or home decor, this innovation provides a more engaging shopping experience and reduces the likelihood of returns.

Customer reviews and ratings

The incorporation of detailed reviews and ratings allows Amazon to build trust with its customers. By providing authentic user experiences, potential buyers can make informed decisions, ultimately improving satisfaction and reducing the chance of post-purchase disappointment.

Amazon Prime Air

While still in its developmental phase, Amazon Prime Air aims to revolutionize delivery logistics through drone technology. By significantly reducing shipping times, this initiative highlights Amazon's ambition to push the boundaries of e-commerce efficiency.

Wish Lists

Amazon's Wish Lists are not just a tool for future purchases; they're a social feature that allows users to share desired items with friends and family. This capability enhances the shopping experience by

9 INTERNATIONAL TRADE AGREEMENTS IMPACTING NIGERIA'S ECONOMY IN 2025

IMOH BRIGHT



Nigeria's economic future hangs in the balance as the 'African giant' grapples with a rapidly evolving global landscape. With a population exceeding 230 million and a youthful demographic hungry for opportunities, the pressure to secure economic growth through strategic international partnerships has never been more urgent.

While crude oil has long been Nigeria's economic backbone, diversification is no longer a luxury but a necessity. From tech entrepreneurs striving to break into global markets to farmers seeking fairer trade conditions, Nigerians across all sectors are feeling the ripple effects of international agreements shaping the nation's economic prospects.

As the world shifts under the weight of technological advancements, climate policies, and geopolitical tensions, Nigeria's approach to international trade is undergoing a crucial transformation.

For policymakers, these trade agreements represent potential catalysts for industrial growth, foreign

investment, and economic stability. For ordinary citizens, they are promises that may or may not translate into real-life benefits like better jobs, improved infrastructure, and affordable goods.

According to data obtained from BusinessDay research, here are ten pivotal trade agreements shaping Nigeria's economy in 2025, examining their potential, their pitfalls, and the future they may hold for millions of Nigerians.

African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)

The AfCFTA, launched in 2021, remains the crown jewel of Africa's economic integration efforts. By aiming to create a single market for goods, services, and capital across 54 of Africa's 55 countries, it promises to boost intra-African trade by over 50% in the next decade.

For Nigeria, the AfCFTA presents an unprecedented opportunity to expand its export base beyond crude oil.

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are at the forefront of this revolution, particularly in the agriculture, textiles, and manufacturing sectors. However, the real challenge lies in building infrastructure that can support efficient trade logistics, particularly road networks, rail systems, and port facilities.

Moreover, tariff reduction policies under the AfCFTA have sparked debates within Nigeria's manufacturing sector, with some stakeholders expressing fears of an influx of cheaper goods from other African countries, undermining local industries. Yet, advocates of the agreement argue that with the right structural reforms, Nigeria could emerge as a manufacturing hub serving the entire continent.

Nigeria-Morocco Gas Pipeline Agreement

Originally conceptualized in 2016, the Nigeria-Morocco Gas Pipeline Agreement has gained renewed momentum in 2025, as both nations strive to strengthen their energy security and economic cooperation. The ambitious project, stretching over 5,600 kilometers, will transport Nigerian natural gas through several West African countries to Morocco and eventually Europe.

For Nigeria, the pipeline offers a transformative opportunity to diversify its revenue streams beyond crude oil, tapping into the lucrative natural gas market. Projections estimate the project could generate billions of dollars in revenue annually while also enhancing regional energy security and integration.

Nevertheless, the project faces several hurdles, including funding gaps, political instability along the pipeline route, and environmental concerns. Nigeria's government continues to negotiate financing options with international partners while also working to address potential security risks that could undermine the project's success.

EU-Nigeria Partnership Agreement

The EU-Nigeria Partnership Agreement is part of a broader effort to solidify economic ties between Africa and Europe. Through this partnership, Nigeria enjoys preferential access to European markets for its agricultural products, textiles, and raw materials. The EU, in turn, seeks to deepen its presence in Nigeria's lucrative consumer market while investing in critical sectors such as technology and infrastructure.

Despite the benefits, compliance with stringent EU standards remains a significant obstacle for Nigerian exporters. Products like cocoa, rubber, and processed foods often face rejection due to quality control issues,

making it difficult for smaller producers to break into the European market.

Additionally, the agreement has sparked debates over unequal trade balances, with critics arguing that Europe continues to benefit disproportionately from the arrangement. Nonetheless, policymakers are working on strategies to enhance Nigeria's capacity to meet EU standards, including initiatives aimed at improving certification processes and boosting industrial output.

Nigeria-China Trade Agreement

China's economic footprint in Nigeria continues to expand, particularly through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and various bilateral trade deals. With China accounting for nearly 20% of Nigeria's imports in 2025, the trade relationship is a double-edged sword.

On one hand, Chinese investments in infrastructure, such as railways, power plants, and telecommunications, have been instrumental in Nigeria's developmental efforts. On the other hand, local industries face growing competition from cheap Chinese imports, particularly in manufacturing and consumer goods.

The agreement's critics argue that Nigeria's dependency on Chinese goods has deepened its trade deficit, while proponents highlight the importance of technology transfer and financing support that China continues to offer. Additionally, Nigeria's shift towards exporting more agricultural products and raw materials to China aims to reduce the trade imbalance and enhance bilateral relations.

ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS)

Established to promote free trade within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the ETLS is a key driver of regional economic integration. Under this agreement, member states, including Nigeria, enjoy duty-free and quota-free access to each other's markets for approved goods and services.

For Nigeria, the ETLS has bolstered trade in agro-processing, manufactured goods, and services, particularly in border regions where cross-border trade thrives. However, insecurity along key trade routes, poor infrastructure, and cumbersome customs procedures have hindered the full realization of the scheme's potential.

Additionally, smuggling and tariff evasion have emerged as major challenges, prompting Nigeria to enforce stricter border controls at times, much to the frustration of its ECOWAS partners. Nevertheless, the agreement

remains a critical framework for Nigeria's regional trade policy, with efforts underway to streamline customs processes and enhance border security.

Nigeria-United States Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA)

The Nigeria-U.S. TIFA, established to enhance bilateral trade and investment relations, has been a significant framework for addressing trade barriers and fostering economic cooperation between the two countries. In 2025, discussions under the TIFA have intensified, focusing on expanding Nigeria's non-oil exports to the U.S. and attracting American investment in technology, energy, and infrastructure.

While the agreement has paved the way for increased agricultural exports, particularly cocoa, sesame seeds, and ginger, Nigerian exporters continue to grapple with issues related to compliance with U.S. food safety and quality standards. Efforts are underway to build capacity for meeting these standards, especially for small-scale farmers who form the backbone of Nigeria's agricultural sector.

Furthermore, negotiations are ongoing to broaden the scope of the agreement to include digital trade, intellectual property rights, and renewable energy, which could offer Nigeria new avenues for economic diversification. However, concerns over transparency and bureaucratic bottlenecks remain key challenges to unlocking the agreement's full potential.

UK-Nigeria Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)

The UK has been keen on strengthening its trade relations with African countries, including Nigeria. The UK-Nigeria EPA, signed in 2022 and reinforced through various agreements in 2025, seeks to promote trade and investment by eliminating tariffs on Nigerian exports to the UK.

This agreement has notably benefited Nigeria's agricultural and manufacturing sectors, with products like textiles, cocoa, and processed foods gaining improved access to British markets. However, the agreement's critics argue that the focus on raw material exports reinforces the colonial pattern of trade, where value-added goods remain limited.

On the flip side, British investments in Nigeria's energy, finance, and education sectors have continued to grow. Nonetheless, ongoing debates about the trade

imbalance persist, particularly as Nigeria seeks to enhance its capacity for producing high-quality finished goods that can compete globally.

Nigeria-India Bilateral Trade Agreement

India remains one of Nigeria's largest trading partners, particularly in the energy sector. The Nigeria-India Bilateral Trade Agreement, regularly updated to reflect changing economic realities, focuses on the exchange of crude oil, natural gas, agricultural products, and pharmaceuticals.

In 2025, Nigeria has been exploring opportunities to diversify its exports to India beyond crude oil, seeking to increase agricultural exports and attract investment in its manufacturing sector. Additionally, collaboration in technology transfer and education has become a focal point of the agreement, with Nigeria looking to tap into India's expertise in IT and healthcare.

However, challenges persist, especially concerning trade imbalances and Nigeria's over-reliance on crude oil exports. Policymakers are pushing for reforms that encourage higher local production of pharmaceuticals and technology products to reduce dependency on imports from India.

Nigeria-Turkey Trade Agreement

In recent years, Nigeria and Turkey have made significant strides in deepening their trade relations, particularly in construction, manufacturing, and defense. The Nigeria-Turkey Trade Agreement, updated in 2025, aims to enhance cooperation in various sectors, including textiles, machinery, and agricultural processing.

Turkey's investment in Nigeria's construction industry has grown significantly, with Turkish firms actively participating in infrastructure projects, including road networks, railways, and housing. Additionally, the agreement has opened doors for Nigerian agricultural products to enter the Turkish market, particularly sesame seeds, cocoa, and cassava.

Nevertheless, challenges related to bureaucracy, inconsistent trade policies, and infrastructural inadequacies continue to hinder the full potential of the agreement. Policymakers are advocating for a more streamlined process to facilitate smoother trade flows and enhance the mutual benefits of the partnership.

AKOR ADAMS: SEVILLA'S RISING STAR WITH SUPER EAGLES AMBITIONS

ANTHONY NLEBEM



From a young Nigerian talent to a rising force in La Liga, Akor Adams' journey has been one of patience, resilience, and ambition. The 25-year-old striker, who recently joined Sevilla from Montpellier in a €5.5 million deal, is embracing life at one of Spain's most prestigious clubs while keeping an eye on his ultimate dream—representing the Super Eagles on the biggest stage.

In an exclusive chat via Zoom from Seville, Adams shared insights on his early days at the club, his Super Eagles aspirations, and the road ahead.

'You Just Feel the Greatness of Sevilla'
Having spent a season and a half in France with Montpellier, Adams knew moving to Sevilla would be a step up—but even he wasn't fully prepared for the aura surrounding the club.

"From the moment you walk into Sevilla, you can feel it's a great club. Nobody needs to tell you; you just know," Adams said. "I even learned a phrase—though I'm not sure if I'm saying it right—Uno, gran club a Sevilla. You feel the history, the structure, the professionalism. Even though I've only been here for two months, I already feel part of something special." Despite the challenge of adapting to a new league, the Nigerian forward has settled in seamlessly. Sevilla's management ensured his transition was smooth, handling all logistical concerns so he could focus on training and integrating into the squad.

Super Eagles Dreams Still Alive

Adams was named in Nigeria's 39-man provisional squad for the 2026 FIFA

World Cup qualifiers against Rwanda and Zimbabwe, but he didn't make the final cut. While some players might dwell on the disappointment, Adams sees it as motivation.

"For the Super Eagles, this opportunity has been building for the past two or three years," he explained. "Finally getting a call-up, even though I was injured or just returning, was a significant milestone. Nigeria has so many talented players, so just being on the provisional list means I must be doing something right." His strategy for breaking into the squad? Keep delivering for Sevilla.

“My primary focus is on Sevilla because we have objectives to meet this season. The better I perform, the greater my chances of making the national team. Nigeria has really talented strikers, and everyone has their place.”

From Kogi to Benue to Sevilla

Born in Kogi State, Adams’ roots trace back to Benue State, where both his parents hail from. “My journey is quite long,” he laughed. “I was born in Kogi because my father, a teacher, worked there. But I’m originally from Otukpa in Benue. I grew up in Niger State.”

His upbringing shaped his career, instilling discipline and determination—qualities that helped him make the leap to European football.

‘You Don’t Say No to Sevilla’

Before joining Sevilla, Adams had several suitors across Europe. But when the Andalusian club came calling, the decision was easy.

“The truth is, you don’t say no to Sevilla,” he said. “It’s one of those clubs with an undeniable legacy. Growing up in Nigeria, we watched Sevilla, and in academy discussions, their name always came up. It wasn’t just a privilege; it was an opportunity I couldn’t turn down.”

The club’s track record in European competitions and their clear vision for his role sealed the deal. “Sevilla is the king of Europe when it comes to the Europa League, and I want to be part of that winning legacy.”

Handling Injuries and Staying Strong

Adams has had his fair share of injury setbacks, but he remains unfazed. “It’s unfortunate to get injured after joining a new team, but Sevilla knew what they wanted when they signed me. I didn’t feel pressure to prove myself to the club—only to the fans,” he admitted. “The medical staff and coaches have been incredibly supportive, and that belief in me has made a huge difference.”

Giving Back to Nigerian Football

Despite his rising status, Adams hasn’t forgotten where he came from. He regularly visits Nigeria and supports young footballers in any way he can.



“I try to visit during the summer or December, but if the break is too short, I stay put because I need to be fresh for league games,” he said. “As for aspiring players, I help by providing football boots—something I lacked growing up in the academy.”

Beyond material support, he also shares advice and mentorship through a group chat with young footballers. “I try to do my part and hope it positively impacts someone’s journey.”

Sevilla Derby Fever and Following Finidi's Footsteps

Adams is gearing up for his first El Gran Derbi—the legendary clash between Sevilla and Real Betis. “From the moment I arrived, I understood that there’s only one club in Sevilla—Sevilla FC. That’s my focus,” he stated. He acknowledges the history between Nigeria and this fixture, with Finidi George having played for Betis. “Finidi is a Nigerian legend, and following in his footsteps in Spanish football is a privilege. But my focus is on the club’s objectives. Yes, it’s a derby, but it’s also one of many important games in the season that we need to win.”

Ronaldo and Drogba: Striking Inspirations
When it comes to role models, Adams looks up to some of the greatest to ever play the game.

“Thank God for YouTube!” he laughed. “Growing up, I watched a lot of Ronaldo Luís Nazário de Lima. His ability to enjoy the game while scoring goals is something I admire. I also studied Didier Drogba closely because we have similar physical builds and playstyles as strikers.”

No Pressure, Just Football

With expectations high at Sevilla, Adams remains calm. “No, I don’t feel pressure. If you’re impressed, there’s pressure. But I know I have the ability, I’m in the right frame of mind, and I’m surrounded by the right group of people.”



For him, the focus is clear—help Sevilla win, score goals, and let everything else fall into place.

“The goal is to win. If I score, great. If I don’t, that’s football. But I trust the process.”

WHY NIGERIAN CLUBS MUST BUILD FAN-BASE TO DRIVE SPORTS GROWTH



Sports analysts and stakeholders have proffered solutions to growing clubs' economy and visibility at the continental and international level.

Many sports enthusiasts who spoke at the Businessday inaugural Sports Conference 2025 identified low fan base, lack of technocrat administrators and inadequate funding as clogs on wheel of sports growth in the country.

Mozez Praiz, Supersport sportscaster speaking at the event said for Nigerian clubs must begin to build their fan base in order to grow their economy.

"To grow a club, the ideal thing is to start with building the fan base, and to achieve this, there is need to give the fans a sense of ownership.

"Until we fix the disconnect between the club managers and the fans, we will continue to struggle. Club managers should take seriously how they brand their persons," he said.

Praiz explained that one of the ways clubs can build their fans base is through the social media and ideal branding that depict what the club stands for.

According to the television host/sportscaster, social media will give clubs visibility beyond the shores of the country and help attract supporters.

He cited clubs such as Arsenal and Chelsea, clubs based in Europe but have many fans even in Nigeria, a feat he said is made possible via television and social media.

Seun Fakorede, ex- commissioner of youth and sports in Oyo State emphasised that the fundamental problem facing sports business growth in Nigeria is lack of intentional action to develop sports by governments.

Fakorede frowned at the ways and manner many Nigerian fans go about supporting clubs, which he described as exploitive instead of supportive.

They applauded Kunle Soname, the owner of Remo Stars, describing him as one with understanding of what it takes to manage a club successfully.

The club's trajectory from FC Dender to Remo Stars FC, and their promotion to the Nigeria National League, and then the Nigeria Premier Football League shows a club on the rise, with a growing fan base.



Praiz emphasised that it is lack of understanding of the business of sports that make politicians to appoint anyone that pleases them as a club chairman.

“Club chairmanship is given as a political compensation as against professionalism. Most of the club administrators don’t have blue prints on how to grow the clubs,” he said.

Emeka Enyadike, director at Digital Sports, Africa said sports is a massive industry, one that generates billions of dollars.

“The global sponsorship was pegged at I think about \$73 billion in 2022 and it was projected to rise to \$150 billion in 2032, in about 10 years. Just one year, in 2023, it had crossed \$100 billion,” he said.

Enyadike said that digital transformation is having impact on fan engagement and changing the narratives in the contemporary era. He explained that when a

club fails to have its games on TV, or broadcast on other platforms, such as YouTube, FaceBook, and other social media, you won’t be able to get the incomes that come from the usage.

However, he said for clubs to optimise the benefits of digital transformation, they must first build the platforms.

“Today, these social platforms bring people much closer, they bring you much closer to the fans. We need to invest there, because social media is cooking, and there is only one instance, which means that when you wake up from sleep and you are a fan of Twitter stars, the idea that the majority of the people in Nigeria support one team or another in England is not by accident,” he noted.



THE OYASAF COLLECTION:

A Private Collection Preserving and Promoting Nigeria's Artistic Heritage

Nigeria has a rich and diverse art history, deeply rooted in traditions, culture, and modern expressions. Among the significant contributors to preserving and promoting this heritage is the OYASAF (Omooba Yemisi Adedoyin Shyllon Art Foundation) collection. This private collection is not only one of the largest in Nigeria but also one of the most influential in the preservation and advancement of Nigerian art.

The OYASAF collection holds thousands of paintings, sculptures, photographs, and cultural artefacts that reflect the evolution of Nigerian art. It represents a bridge between traditional African art forms and contemporary expressions, making it a vital component in understanding Nigeria's artistic journey. Through its numerous programs, exhibitions, and fellowships, OYASAF has empowered artists, researchers, and art enthusiasts, reinforcing Nigeria's position in global art discourse.

This digest explores the importance of the OYASAF collection in Nigerian art history, its impact on artists, and its role in shaping contemporary African art.

TOP PICKS OF THE WEEK FROM OUR COLLECTION



This digest is brought to you by Patrons MCAA. Think African art, think Patrons.

Patrons is Africa's leading art advisory and dealership firm that helps private and corporate art collectors diversify their wealth through art collection, appraisal, packaging & transportation, storage, insurance, maintenance, and restoration. Purchase inquiry? Reach out: art@patronsmcaa.com



Title: Pepites

Artist: Aza Mansongi

Medium: Acrylic on cotton canvas, collage

Dimensions: 24 x 24 in | 61 x 61 cm

Available on Request



Title: The Waste Experience
Artist: Anita Cudjoe
Medium: Plastic rice bags on photography
Dimensions: 30 x 30 in | 76 x 76 cm
Available on Request



Title: Kumwe (Together)
Artist: Lambert Shumbusho
Medium: 300+ aged iron wood
Dimensions: 26 x 45 x 24 in | 66 x 114 x 61 cm
Available on Request



Title: Self Discovery
Artist: O'dare Adenuga
Medium: Relief Sculpture
Dimensions: 10 in H
Available on Request

Preserving Nigerian Artistic Heritage

The OYASAF collection serves as a living archive of Nigeria's artistic heritage. It includes works from legendary artists, alongside emerging artists shaping the future of Nigerian art. By maintaining and displaying these works, the foundation ensures that future generations can appreciate the depth of Nigerian creativity and craftsmanship.

Additionally, OYASAF actively collaborates with institutions like the Nigerian National Museum and international galleries to showcase Nigerian art. This effort not only preserves historical pieces but also promotes a greater understanding of Nigerian art forms on a global scale.

Supporting and Promoting Contemporary Artists

One of the most significant contributions of OYASAF is its support for contemporary Nigerian artists. The foundation provides a platform for emerging artists to showcase their work, gain international exposure, and connect with collectors and galleries worldwide. Through fellowships, grants, and artist-in-residence programs, OYASAF has empowered countless Nigerian artists to refine their craft and gain recognition. For instance, the OYASAF Art Fellowship provides international scholars and researchers with access to its extensive collection, encouraging in-depth studies of Nigerian art. This initiative fosters a deeper appreciation of Nigerian aesthetics and artistic philosophies, ensuring that the country's creative narratives are well documented and understood.

Influencing Global Perception of Nigerian Art

Through exhibitions, partnerships, and digital archives, OYASAF has played a pivotal role in reshaping global perceptions of Nigerian art. Many international audiences previously viewed African art through a narrow, often colonial lens. However, with OYASAF's efforts, Nigerian artists have gained widespread recognition for their originality, technical mastery, and powerful storytelling. Prominent institutions such as the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, the British Museum, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art have collaborated with OYASAF, further solidifying its influence in the global art scene. These partnerships have provided Nigerian artists with a wider platform to showcase their talents and redefine African artistry beyond stereotypes.

Fostering Art Appreciation in Nigeria

Art appreciation in Nigeria has historically been limited to a niche audience. However, OYASAF has been instrumental in fostering a wider appreciation for art across different demographics. Through public exhibitions, workshops, and outreach programs, the foundation has brought Nigerian art closer to the people. By organising community-based art programs, OYASAF encourages the younger generation to engage with art, fostering a deeper connection between Nigerians and their cultural heritage. These programs help nurture the next generation of artists, collectors, and art enthusiasts who will continue to drive the industry forward.

The OYASAF collection stands as a monumental force in Nigerian art history, preserving the country's artistic heritage while propelling contemporary artists onto the global stage. Through its vast collection, educational initiatives, and international collaborations, OYASAF has cemented its role as a key institution in Nigerian and African art discourse.

By providing a platform for both traditional and contemporary art, supporting emerging artists, and influencing global art narratives, the foundation has significantly shaped the landscape of Nigerian art.



Keturah Ovio

Keturah Ovio is an Executive at Patrons Modern & Contemporary African Art. She is also an engineer and Founder of Dukka, a Fintech startup providing bookkeeping and payments solutions for small businesses. Keturah is passionate about African Art and has been collecting art since her early 20s. Now, she advises, curates, and manages collections for individuals and corporate organisations looking to start or diversify their wealth management through art collecting. She strongly believes that a fine marriage exists between Art and Technology.

ETHICAL MARKETING

FEYISITAN IJIMAKINWA

Defining ethical marketing is tricky. The concept of ethics can vary from person to person. However, ethics in marketing generally refer to an honest and responsible promotion of products, services and brands. Ethical marketing, ultimately, means infusing your company's moral principles into your promotional activity. An organisation may convey these ethical decisions and values to varying degrees in its external messaging.

Depending on your overall business strategy, at minimum ethical marketing can increase consumer satisfaction and trust in your brand. For some businesses, their ethical values can morph into education, campaigning and activism alongside promoting their product or service.

Principles of ethical marketing

Generally, marketing activities guided by ethics adhere to a high standard of

- Honesty
- Transparency
- Social and environmental responsibility
- Fairness
- Compliance (in terms of personal data and human rights)

While the focus of an ethical marketing campaign is still on promoting a product, service or brand, ethical marketers aim to do it in a way that upholds these principles.

What is unethical marketing?

When discussing ethical marketing tactics, it's also worth briefly mentioning what unethical marketing practices may involve. While the main reason for unethical tactics is to gain profit, they can ultimately backfire. Relying on unethical strategies can cause irreparable damage to your brand's reputation.

Examples of unethical marketing practices include:

Focusing on profit at the expense of everything else

Making false, unproven claims about your products, services, brand or ethics

Baiting customers into purchasing your product or service unnecessarily

Utilising scare tactics

Slandering or belittling your competitors

Adhering to harmful stereotypes of marginalised groups

Why use ethical marketing strategies?

Treating ethics as a top priority in your marketing activity can have significant benefits.

Help consumers make conscious choices

Showing your product or service benefits alongside the ethical benefits of doing business with you, you're contributing to conscious consumption. In a world that is broadly committing to sustainable and social standards, highlighting your impact will help you stand out.

Reach target audiences with similar values

Consumers are increasingly choosing to support brands with values that match their own. Highlighting your ethical standards can help to build a positive rapport with your existing audiences as well as new ones.

Increase your profit

Ethical marketing strategy has the potential to increase your profits. The collective benefits of following ethical principles can uplift your brand image and set you apart from competitors. Over time, these positive changes can grow your market share.

How to ensure your campaigns Are Socially Responsible?

If you're unsure about the ethicality of your campaigns (advertisements, branding), use the principles of ethical marketing as a checklist. Ask yourself: 'am I doing something that goes against these principles?'. Keeping an eye on what other organisations are doing will also help you to assess your own ethical marketing tactics.

What are the ethical implications of using AI in marketing?

The rapid, continuing developments in AI technology have introduced various AI-powered tools to marketing teams. While the prevalence of AI can improve the efficiency of many processes within marketing, it also raises some questions about ethics.

Many of the ethical considerations for AI are in the hands of the developers behind it. Nonetheless, there are things that marketers can do to use it responsibly. Being aware of the potential risks of using AI is crucial. This awareness will help you to avoid the pitfalls that could negatively impact your organisation.

AI Algorithm Bias

Although AI is a machine relying on seemingly unbiased, factual data, it's not free from human influence and bias altogether. AI will reflect any biases that are present in the data the AI is trained on. Recognising the potential bias of your chosen AI marketing tool is a crucial step towards utilising more AI technology. Bias can negatively impact the integrity of your business, affecting your ethical marketing efforts as a whole.

AI Information Accuracy

There are also concerns about the accuracy of the information that AI tools produce. The use of generative AI in content creation in particular can be at risk of spreading unreliable information. AI tools rarely can provide you with the exact sources they've used to gather information.

At this point in time, AI tools aren't here to take over copywriters' jobs. Avoid using any unchecked and unedited AI-generated information to ensure you don't share inaccurate information.

AI Data Security & Privacy

AI is a powerful tool in marketing for personalising the targeting of ads and campaigns. However, in order for it to successfully achieve this level of personalisation, it requires significant amounts of user data. Maintaining your audience's trust and the integrity of your business is vital. You can achieve this by being transparent about the personal data you collect and how you use it.

LAST LINE

From building audience trust to increasing internal and external business integrity, infusing ethical principles into your marketing can have many benefits. Constantly review your ethical standards and ensure that your marketing reflects them.



Feyisitan Ijimakinwa

Feyisitan Ijimakinwa is a Reputation and Perception Management expert. He is a prolific writer and researcher who, at different times, served as Head of Corporate Communications of top brands quoted on the Nigerian Stock Exchange. A versatile communications specialist, he practiced extensively as a print journalist and was variously engaged in the broadcast media, working on radio and television. Feyisitan continues to write on corporate communications, brand reputation and perception management, and brand intelligence, among others. He organises the 'Brand Intelligence and the Marketplace' masterclass. Feyisitan advocates a pollution free and sustainable environment

WALKING IN GRANDPA'S SHOES

UDY OSARO-EDOBOR



For three years, Grandpa's shoes sat untouched in my room. Every time I looked at them, I felt a mix of disappointment and resentment. The day of the will reading was supposed to be one of the happiest days of my life. Grandpa was a wealthy man, and everyone knew I was his favorite grandson—his namesake and his lookalike. I had walked into that lawyer's office expecting to leave as a young millionaire. Instead, I walked out with a single pair of shoes.

As the will was read, I listened eagerly, waiting for my name to be called, my heart pounding with anticipation. Then finally it came—only for the lawyer to announce that all Grandpa had left me was one of his old shoes. Laughter erupted around me. My cousins, who had inherited houses, jewellery and businesses made fun of me. It stung.

Then came the video. Grandpa appeared on the screen, his deep, familiar voice filling the room. His eyes held the same intensity I had always admired, and his words were firm:

"Under no circumstances should you sell these shoes or give them away. Promise me, my boy."

I swallowed hard. There was something about the way he said it—like he knew something I didn't. Still, at that moment, all I could feel was heartbreak and humiliation.

I admired the shoes whenever Grandpa wore them, but I never imagined he would bequeath them to me. Worse still, they were a size too big—I couldn't even wear them.

So... that's it? A pair of old shoes? Grandpa left everyone something meaningful, something valuable but me? I get... this?

My voice rising, frustration building.

I sat by his bedside every day. I listened to all his stories, even the ones I'd heard a hundred times. I ran errands for him, made him laugh when he was too weak to even smile. And this is what I meant to him? I thought I was special to him. I thought I mattered. My eyes burned with unshed tears. I looked down at the shoes again and whispered: Did I mean nothing to you Grandpa? I was really disappointed.

Three years later, everything changed. One day I finally wore the shoe. It was my first major business meeting and I was nervous. I had a great idea for an investment but I wasn't sure if I had the confidence to convince the investors. On a whim, I decided to wear Grandpa's shoes. The moment I slipped my feet into them, something shifted. I felt an overwhelming sense of assurance, like I was walking in the footsteps of a man who had seen it all, conquered challenges and built an empire from nothing.

At that meeting, I spoke with a boldness I never knew I had. Every word I said carried weight and by the end of the day, I had secured a deal that changed my life forever. That was just the beginning.

From then on, I wore the shoes to every important event. Each time, they seemed to bring me luck. I closed business deals effortlessly, found myself at the right place at the right time and met influential people who opened doors for me. It was as if the shoes carried an invisible force, a whisper of Grandpa's wisdom guiding me along the right path.

There was a day I got a call to meet with a top investor. It was a last-minute opportunity and I had barely prepared. In my haste, I hurriedly wore another pair of shoes. The meeting didn't go well. I was nervous, my words fumbled and the investor walked away unimpressed. That night, as I stared at the shoes, I realized the truth—Grandpa hadn't just left me an old pair of shoes; he had left me his legacy, his blessings and his essence. I never went to an important meeting again without wearing them.

With time, my name became known in business circles. I grew wealthier than anyone in my family, surpassing even those who had inherited estates and diamond jewellery. The same cousins who had laughed at me now looked at me with envy and admiration. They asked what my secret was, but I simply smiled.

One day, my mother sat me down and told me something that made my heart swell with gratitude.

"Your grandpa knew you were destined for greatness. He gave you his shoes because he wanted you to walk in his footsteps and carve your own path. He trusted you to carry his wisdom, his hard work and his blessings. That's why he made sure you wouldn't sell them or give them away. He knew their value."

At that moment, everything clicked. Grandpa hadn't cheated me—he had given me the greatest gift of all.

Now, as I sit in my office, overlooking the glass buildings across the street, then I look down at the fine leather of Grandpa's shoes. They've been with me through every triumph, every challenge, every moment of doubt turned into victory. I smile, my heart full.

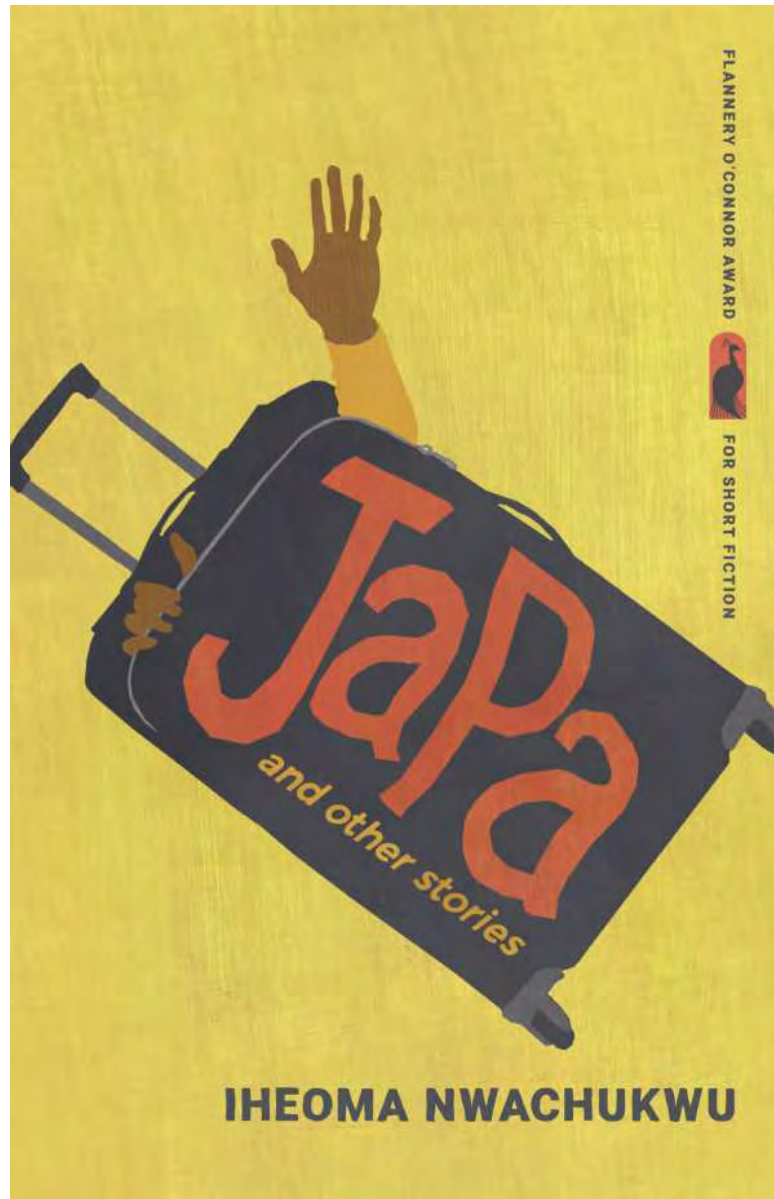
"Thank you, Grandpa," I whispered. "I understand now. And I will forever be grateful for your gift." I could have sworn that I felt a pat on my shoulder and I knew that grandpa was proud of the man that I have become.



Udy Osaro-Edobor

Udy Osaro-Edobor is the Content Creator for SoTV (Supernatural Online TV) Nigeria. She is a movie/scriptwriter, editor, and proofreader. She has several stories to her credit which she posts for free on her Ebook called Udy's Chapter. She is currently working on two short movies. Udy is also a wife, mother, and a "serial entrepreneur".

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Dreams, Desperation, and Destiny-A Review of Iheoma Nwachukwu's Japa and Other Stories

Title: Japa and Other Stories
Author: Iheoma Nwachukwu
Year of Publication: 2024
Number of Pages: 162
Category: Short Stories

JAPA AND OTHER STORIES

TITILADE OYEMADE

Which Nigerian wouldn't instantly recognize Japa at the sight of Iheoma Nwachukwu's *Japa and Other Stories*? Anything involving Japa is bound to be dramatic, and the book cover already hints at what's to come.

For those unfamiliar with the term, Japa is Nigerian Yoruba slang for "to flee," and that's exactly what many of the characters in this collection attempt to do or already did. However, while readers may expect a single gripping tale, Nwachukwu delivers multiple compelling dramas, each with its own unique twists and turns.

The book takes you on a journey across different parts of the world, America, Canada, Spain, Russia, and beyond, offering a diverse and reading experience. At first, you may feel indifferent to some of the stories, but as you settle into the author's style, you begin to appreciate the subtle humor woven into certain stories.

As Japa and immigration go hand in hand, the book naturally presents a variety of languages, from Igbo to Jamaican Patois and more, reflecting the rich diversity of its characters. The protagonists are bold, they take risks, and their choices often lead to unexpected consequences. Despite their sometimes questionable actions, a recurring theme unites them all, desperation. And at times, you might even find yourself sympathizing with them rather than passing judgment.

Some stories will stir deep emotions, and if you've ever been stranded in a foreign land, you may find certain moments uncomfortably relatable.

Perhaps hidden within its pages, the author wants readers to uncover an unexpected lesson.

Interestingly, while some stories are interconnected, others stand alone. You may feel relieved when certain characters don't reappear in later chapters, allowing each story to deliver a fresh perspective. The later stories, in particular, are filled with jaw-dropping moments that showcase Nwachukwu's storytelling skill, each revelation more striking than the last.

By the end, you'll find yourself questioning whether Japa is truly worth it. But if you're in the mood for an engaging, thought-provoking, yet easy read, *Japa and Other Stories* is a book you shouldn't miss.

Titilade Oyemade

Titilade Oyemade is a business executive in a leading organisation and holds a degree in Russian Language. She's the convener of the Hangoutwithtee Ladies Event and the publisher of Hangoutwithtee magazine.

She spends her weekends attending women conferences, events and book readings. She loves to have fun and to help other women have the same in their lives.

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CHALLENGING MENTAL HEALTH STIGMA IN “A GIRL, HER GOD, AND HER MENTAL HEALTH” — ASIEGBUNAM

CHISOM MICHAEL





Anthonate Asiegbunam is a writer, mental health advocate, and the founder of Unveil Mental Health Awareness Foundation. She has dedicated her resources to breaking the silence surrounding mental health in communities where cultural norms and stigma often suppress open dialogue.

Her work is deeply rooted in her personal experiences as a firstborn Nigerian-Igbo daughter navigating societal expectations, mental health challenges, and her unwavering faith in Jesus.

In her debut book, “A Girl, Her God, and Her Mental Health”, Asiegbunam’s memoir takes readers on a poignant journey of self-discovery and healing. She sheds light on the realities of mental health within Nigerian-Igbo communities, challenging the misconception that faith and mental wellness are mutually exclusive. Through her story, she

demonstrates how open conversations about mental health can lead to healing, hope, and transformation.

As a firstborn daughter in Igbo culture, Asiegbunam understands the weight of societal expectations. She describes being an Ada (firstborn daughter) as both a source of pride and a heavy burden: “Being an Ada in Igbo culture is a thing of pride. I have always been my parents’ pride—their firstborn daughter, the one expected to set the standard, hold the home together, and embody responsibility.”

Yet, these expectations often came at a cost. Asiegbunam recalls feeling the pressure to be strong, even when she had nothing left to give: “There were days when I wanted to say, ‘I don’t have an answer to this.’ When I was a child, I just wanted to be a child, not the Ada who always had to be strong.” This pressure led to struggles with hyper-independence, perfectionism, and people-pleasing, which took a toll on her mental health and relationships. She reflects, “I became so accustomed to looking out for everyone else that I found myself alone, drained, and lost.”

Healing was not an easy journey for Anthonate. It required self-awareness, unlearning harmful patterns, and leaning into her faith. She emphasises the importance of setting boundaries and redefining strength: “The most effective strategies I’ve found? Setting boundaries unapologetically. Redefining strength to include vulnerability and rest. Finding safe spaces where I don’t have to perform.” She also found solace in her faith, realising that

God’s love was not something she had to earn through achievements or perfection: “Even in my walk with God, I wrestled with the idea that I could just be—that I didn’t have to prove my worth or perform for His love.”

Asiegbunam’s work extends beyond her writing. In 2019, she founded the Unveil Mental Health Awareness Foundation to break the silence around mental health in Nigeria. The foundation focuses on creating safe spaces for people to share their mental health struggles and find support. Through initiatives such as “Catch Them Young,” which trains parents to recognise mental health challenges in their children, and “The Speak Up Event,” a programme that encourages open discussions about vulnerability, the foundation has worked to challenge the cultural stigma surrounding mental health.

Asiegbunam has also organised “Reveal and Rebuild,” an anonymous support group for women who have experienced abuse, and led awareness walks in Lekki to educate the public about mental health. These initiatives aim to provide education, resources, and solidarity to individuals who are often left in the dark about how to seek help. The impact of these efforts is measured not only by participation but also by the stories of those who, after years of suffering in silence, find the courage to speak out and seek professional help.

In her advocacy, Asiegbunam also addresses the responsibility of both religious and governmental institutions to support mental health. She urges faith communities to stop viewing mental health struggles as spiritual shortcomings and to offer practical support through therapy and professional care. She also calls on the Nigerian government to prioritise mental health care by increasing access to services, improving funding for mental health programmes, and incorporating mental health education into schools.

Looking ahead, Asiegbunam remains committed to her mission. She plans to expand the foundation’s reach to other Nigerian states and African countries, further normalising mental health conversations and ensuring that more people have access to the care and support they need. She also aims to empower young people to take a leading role in mental health advocacy, hoping to break the cycle of stigma and silence.

Asiegbunam’s story is that faith and mental health can coexist, proving that they can complement each other in the journey toward healing. Her work as a mental health advocate is rooted in the belief that open conversations can transform lives.

Through her writing and the Unveil Mental Health Awareness Foundation, Anthonate continues to inspire individuals to embrace their mental health journeys without fear or shame. She reminds us, “My journey is mine first before it belongs to anyone else.”



WEEKENDER

MOVIE REVIEWS

COUNTER ATTACK (2025)

If you are searching for a nice action-packed movie to check out this weekend, then you might to check this out, the action started from the very beginning to the very end, I was stunned at the very end to see them fight to save one another. To the movie a lady and her daughter stumbled into a mass grave in the Mexico country side, when they went to report, they were kidnapped by members of El Enjambre cartel, fortunately they were rescued by special forces captain Guerrero and his men, who didn't allow the bad guys take them away, from then onwards the bad guys became furious and wanted to get the special forces team, they ambushed them, staged and attack and wanted to kill them all, you will need to go check out the movie to see how the special forces fought day and night to fight for a good course. The 85 Mexican, military, action movie was directed by Chava Cartas, they featured actors like Luis Alberti, Noe Hernandez, Luis Curiel, Leonardo Alonso, David Calderon, Guillermo Nava, Isreal Islas, Mayra Baalla.



NOPE (2024)

After much hype and recommendation by friends, I decided to finally check out the movie, honestly at first I totally didn't get the movie as I was so distracted, decided to check it out again, so Em and Oj were siblings but weren't so close especially after the death of their dad, after a commercial ad they were working on they both decided to go home, well on arrival that night they find out that they was a strange creature descending from the sky that swallows up everything that comes in contact with it, they wanted to tell the world what they had witnessed but there was no way to capture this moment by camera, so they had to look for someone else to help to capture the moment and tell the world what they had seen, you will need to go check out this movie to see how they fought to save themselves. The 130m Sci-Fi, horror movie was directed bi Jordan Peele, they featured actors like Daniel Kaluua, Keke Palmer, Steven yeun , Michael Wincott, Brandon Perea, Keith David, Wrenn Schmidt and Barbie Ferreira and mani more.



DELICIOUS (2025)

If you are searching for something weird, creepy and troubling, then maybe this will be worth your while, honestly when I stumbled on trailer, I wasn't so sure of what to expect, but I decided to give it a short. To the movie, there was this very wealthy German family who always travelled ever summer to France to spend their holiday, during this faithful summer period, they almost crushed a young female hotel worker, who they decided to grant a job in their luxury country home, if they knew better they would never have granted her the job no access to their home, her coming into their home was the end of their happy marriage, well you will need to go check out the creepy thriller movie o see for ourself the disaster she brought to their home with her click of friends, I never really expected the twist at the end of the movie. The 102 German thriller movie was directed by Nele Mueller-Stofen, they featured actors like Valerie Pachner, Fahri Yuardim, Carla Diaz, Naila Schuberth, Casper Hoffmann, Julien de Saint Jean, Nina Zem, Miveck Packa, Tom Rey and many more.



Linda Ochugbua

WEEKEND QUOTES



1

Love is easy when you understand humanity
.....WhispersbyTEN

2

Sleep is easy when you understand productive work
.....WhispersbyTEN

3

Favour is easy when you appreciate honour
..... WhispersbyTEN

4

Hugging is easy when you understand loneliness or elongated aloneness
..... WhispersbyTEN