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**FROM AJIBADE
TO NHADOZIE:
MEET NIGERIA'S
CAF AWARDS
HOPEFULS**



INTERVIEW

From Aid to Trade:
How Ezinne Nwazulu
Is Unlocking Regional
Integration and Driving
AfCFTA Implementation
through MMC



TRAVEL

10 cities around the world
suitable for retirement

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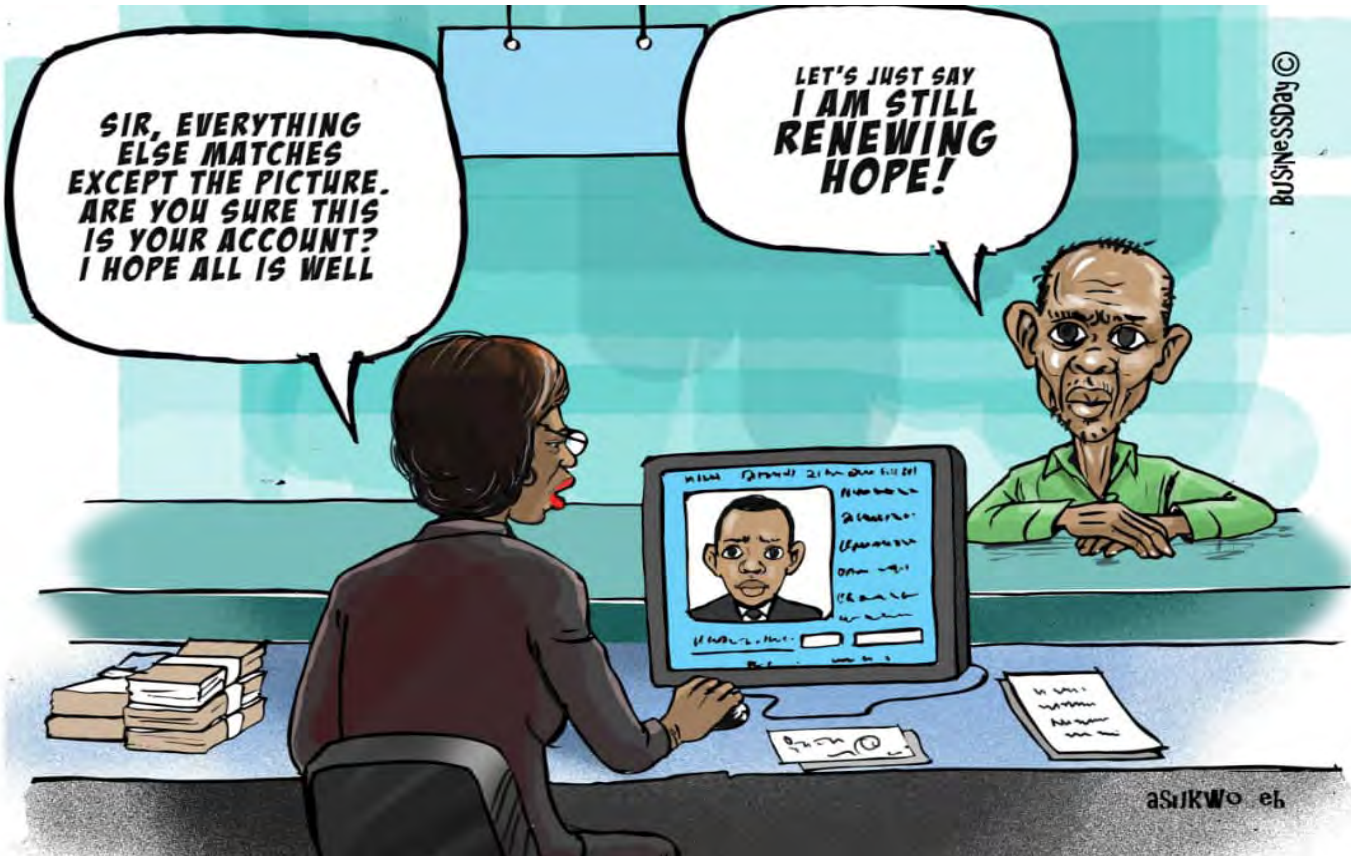


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FROM AJIBADE TO NNADOZIE: MEET NIGERIA'S CAF AWARDS HOPEFULS

FAITH OMOBOYE

For decades, Nigeria has been the heartbeat of women's football in Africa — and the CAF Awards have reflected that dominance. From Perpetua Nwokocho's four-time reign as Africa's best to Asisat Oshoala's record six wins, Nigerian players have consistently shaped the women's game on the continent.

As the 2025 CAF Awards draw near, that legacy continues. The Super Falcons and their coaches are strongly represented across multiple categories, reaffirming Nigeria's enduring influence in African women's football.

Set for November 19 in Morocco, the ceremony will honour players, coaches, and teams who have excelled between January and October 2025. A panel of CAF technical experts, legends, and journalists shortlisted the nominees — and once again, Nigeria is front and centre in the women's player, coach, and goalkeeper categories.

Here Are the Nigerian Stars Vying for Glory at the 2025 CAF Women's Awards:

WOMEN'S COACH OF THE YEAR

This award honours coaches whose leadership, vision, and results have inspired success on the pitch.

Justine Madugu

The coach from Adamawa State etched his name into history by leading the Super Falcons to their 10th Women's Africa Cup of Nations (WAFCON) title — a dramatic 3–2 comeback win over host nation Morocco in Rabat.

It was Madugu's first WAFCON as head coach, though he had served for years as an assistant. His tactical bravery and calm leadership not only delivered Nigeria's record-extending triumph but also revived faith in homegrown coaching talent.



In the final, he outclassed Spain's World Cup-winning coach Jorge Vilda, proving that indigenous coaches can excel on any stage.

Madugu is up against compatriot Bankole Olowookere and Desiree Ellis of South Africa, who has won the award twice consecutively.

Bankole Olowookere

At 44, Bankole Olowookere has quietly built one of the most inspiring success stories in Nigerian women's football. Appointed coach of the U-17 women's team (the Flamingos) in 2020, he guided them through pandemic-disrupted qualifiers and led Nigeria to a historic bronze medal at the 2022 U-17 Women's World Cup.

Although the Flamingos exited in the round of 16 at the 2025 edition, Olowookere's consistency and dedication to youth development have earned him continental respect. He joins Zambia's Carol Kanyemba and Côte d'Ivoire's Adelaide Koudougnon as fellow nominees.



WOMEN'S GOALKEEPER OF THE YEAR

This category celebrates Africa's most commanding presence between the posts — and Nigeria's Chiamaka Nnadozie stands tall among them.

Now at Brighton & Hove Albion, Nnadozie was named Best Goalkeeper at WAFCON 2024 following a string of heroic performances that powered the Super Falcons to the final. Her leadership, composure, and reflexes have made her a pillar of Nigeria's defence and a role model for young African goalkeepers.

A two-time CAF Goalkeeper of the Year, she is also shortlisted for The Best FIFA Women’s Goalkeeper Award 2025, underscoring her global impact.

Her closest rivals for the CAF award are Andile Dlamini and Sedilame Boseja, both of Mamelodi Sundowns.



WOMEN’S PLAYER OF THE YEAR

The most competitive category of all — and Nigeria boasts two of Africa’s finest talents.

Esther Okoronkwo

At 28, Esther Okoronkwo fulfilled her dream of representing Nigeria at WAFCON — and did it unforgettably. The AFC Toronto forward was one of the standout performers of the 2024 tournament, providing six assists and scoring a crucial goal in the final against Morocco.



Her blend of vision, technique, and composure helped spark Nigeria’s comeback, as she converted from the spot and later set up the winning goal in the 3–2 victory. From France to Spain to China, Okoronkwo’s global journey has refined her into one of Africa’s most complete forwards.

Rasheedat Ajibade

Captain of the Super Falcons and forward for Paris Saint-Germain, Rasheedat Ajibade was named Woman of the Tournament at WAFCON 2024, leading Nigeria to their 10th continental crown.

At just 25, her leadership and tenacity on and off the pitch continue to inspire. She scored once, claimed three Woman of the Match awards, and embodied the spirit of resilience that defined Nigeria’s campaign.

Ajibade faces stiff competition from Morocco’s Ghizlaine Chebbak (Golden Boot winner) and Zambia’s prolific duo Barbra Banda and Racheal Kundananji.



10 CITIES AROUND THE WORLD SUITABLE FOR RETIREMENT

CHISOM MICHAEL



As global mobility increases and remote living becomes easier, more retirees are considering international destinations for their post-work years.

Factors such as healthcare quality, living costs, visa access and proximity to family now play central roles in deciding where to settle.

According to Forbes, here are 10 countries offer various retirement options for those seeking comfort, affordability and cultural variety.

1. Albania

Located across the Adriatic Sea from Italy, Albania is gaining attention for its low living costs and Mediterranean climate. The country's beaches,

mountains and stable political environment make it an appealing base for retirees. Healthcare is improving but still rated as "adequate," and private insurance is recommended. English is spoken in some areas. A "D Long Stay Visa" leading to a retirement permit requires proof of around \$17,500 in annual pension income. Popular locations include Tirana, Durrës, Vlorë and Shkoder.

2. Argentina

Known for its European influence and diverse climate, Argentina combines urban and scenic living at a fraction of U.S. costs. Healthcare is well regarded, especially in larger cities like Buenos Aires and Mendoza, and private insurance is advised. The renewable "pensionado" visa requires proof of at least \$24,000 in yearly retirement income. Spanish language skills are highly useful.

Retirees often choose Buenos Aires, Córdoba, Mendoza and Rosario for their mix of amenities and accessibility.

3. Austria

Austria offers a stable environment with high-quality healthcare and a cost of living close to the U.S. average. A tax treaty with the U.S. prevents double taxation, and crime rates are low. The “settlement permit except gainful employment” visa requires proof of about \$50,000 in annual income for couples and proficiency in German. Vienna, Innsbruck, Salzburg and Linz are top locations for retirees seeking cultural immersion and reliable services.

4. Belize

Belize remains popular for its warm climate and English-speaking population. The cost of living is lower than in the U.S., and flights to Houston take just two hours. Healthcare is basic, and many retirees return to the U.S. for major medical care. The “Qualified Retirement Program” offers permanent residency for those earning at least \$24,000 per year and exempts income from outside Belize. Coastal areas like Ambergris Caye, Corozal, Caye Caulker and Placencia attract most retirees.

5. Canada

Canada’s stability, shared language and proximity to the U.S. make it a convenient option. Permanent residency is difficult without family connections, but six-month stays are allowed annually. Healthcare is affordable but generally not accessible to non-residents without private insurance. Taxes are higher than in the U.S., though a treaty prevents double taxation. Retirees often favour Guelph, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Moncton and Estevan for their peaceful lifestyles and lower living costs.

6. Colombia

Colombia’s improved stability, lower cost of living and strong healthcare system have made it a top choice for retirees in South America. The “pensionado” visa requires proof of around \$12,000 in annual income and is valid for three years. Spanish knowledge is useful. The country’s cities offer different lifestyles: Medellín and Pereira for mild weather, Cali for culture and Cartagena for coastal living. Flights to the U.S. are short and affordable.

7. Costa Rica

Costa Rica’s biodiversity and consistent political stability attract thousands of retirees each year. The pensionado visa is renewable and requires only \$12,000 in annual income. Retirees can join the public healthcare system or use private options at low cost. English is widely understood, though Spanish remains valuable. Popular destinations include San José, the Central Valley region, Atenas and Santa Cruz.

8. Cyprus

Cyprus combines a Mediterranean climate with a strong expat community. English is widely spoken, and healthcare is available through both public and private systems. A “Category F” residency permit requires roughly \$15,500 in annual income for a couple, while purchasing property above \$340,000 also provides eligibility. A tax treaty with the U.S. avoids double taxation. Retirement locations include Limassol, Paphos, Pyrgos Village and Larnaca.

9. France

France remains a consistent favourite for retirees seeking cultural depth and reliable infrastructure. Living costs drop outside Paris, and healthcare is both excellent and affordable. The renewable “VLS-TS Long-Stay Visitor Visa” demands proof of about \$19,000 in annual income for couples. Knowledge of French is essential. Popular options include Bordeaux, Lyon and Carcassonne. Taxes are high, but a treaty prevents double taxation, and pension income from the U.S. is not taxed in France.

10. Greece

Greece offers a mix of history, islands and affordable living. Healthcare is accessible and affordable with private coverage. A “Financially Independent Person Visa” requires an annual income of around \$26,000 for couples. There is a tax treaty with the U.S., and a favourable tax rate may apply to foreign retirees. Common choices include Athens, Trikala, Mykonos and Thessaloniki.

FROM AID TO TRADE: HOW EZINNE NWAZULU IS UNLOCKING REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND DRIVING AFCFTA IMPLEMENTATION THROUGH MMC





When Ezinne Nwazulu launched the Mentor Matchup Challenge (MMC), her goal was to create a platform where entrepreneurs could connect with mentors, gain practical insights, and access the right networks to grow their businesses. Over the years, that vision has evolved into an ecosystem that goes beyond mentorship to drive investment, innovation, and cross-border collaboration across Africa.

As Convener of MMC, Ezinne in this interview with IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA, speaks on how she is championing a mission to bridge gaps between African entrepreneurs and global opportunities. She also hints on how she is transforming MMC into a meeting point for investors, founders, and industry leaders shaping the future of equitable trade and sustainable growth on the continent.

How did the idea for Mentor Matchup Challenge (MMC) come about, and how has it evolved over time?

At 234Finance.com, a digital content platform that supports SMEs by producing content on opportunities, economic trends and SME feature, featuring SMEs, but we realized we were not truly engaging with the founders themselves. To address this gap, MMC was conceived by my late friend and advisor, Emilia Asim-Ita, Founder of A-lime Media. Emilia recognized the need to build a physical touch point for entrepreneurs to connect with mentors for practical support in business.

As an initiative of 234Finance, MMC began by connecting SMEs with mentors and also supported entrepreneurs with grant funding through a pitching competition. It has since evolved into a Pan-African forum with exhibitions, cross-border networking, and knowledge sharing. Today, MMC creates meaningful connections, bridges the knowledge gap, and enables entrepreneurs to exchange value, access opportunities, and participate in regional integration. What started as a simple support initiative has grown into a full ecosystem for growth and collaboration across Africa.

What was the make-or-break moment for MMC and how did it shape your approach to balancing impact and profitability?

The make-or-break moment came when we realized that simply hosting an annual event and giving grants was not enough. Many beneficiaries would receive support and then disappear, so we needed a community-driven approach.

We decided to build an ecosystem that supports SMEs year-round. We also faced the challenge of balancing social impact with managing overhead cost and profitability. To sustain our work, we leveraged the same skillset we support SMEs with through our 5Cs framework, to serve corporate clients willing to pay a premium for our business development and capacity building services. Our 5Cs include Content, Community, Collaboration, Capacity Building, and Capital and this has become a focal point for us in creating value to SMEs and our Corporate clients. MMC is now one of several initiatives designed to support SMEs while we continue developing other initiatives and partnerships. The aim is to increase our impact, expand our reach across borders and maximize profitability. Over the years, I have learned that there must be a balance between impact and sustainability. Providing meaningful and measurable support to SMEs requires a holistic, year-round approach.

How do you envision a future of Pan-African collaboration and trade, and what role does MMC play in making that a reality?

The Africa we are building is one where we have built trust and mutual respect, united by a shared mission for prosperity.



A future where we are actively trading with each other, leveraging each country's unique strengths and resources. We want to see a Kenyan's supplier play to their expertise in coffee production, processing and packaging, while partnering with a Nigerian trader who pushes the coffee into the Nigerian market through an end-to-end supply chain that everyone along the value chain benefits. MMC has created a trusted ecosystem, Mentor Matchup Community, where entrepreneurs, investors, and mentors can connect safely and confidently. Over time, this ecosystem will enable cross-border partnerships, shared knowledge, and lasting business relationships. The goal is to make collaboration, trust, and regional trade the norm, not the exception, and to ensure African businesses thrive together rather than in isolation. We are bullish that through the Mentor Matchup platform, we will increase intra-African trade by 15 percent in the next 5 - 10 years.

What is the most significant disconnect you see between founders, policymakers, and funders, and how does MMC create the common language?

The most significant disconnect is trust. Founders are often apprehensive about giving up some control in the business, while investors struggle with finding credible founders to back. Policymakers on the other hand, are often disconnected from the realities of the private sector and as a result, create unfavorable policies. MMC creates a space for progressive dialogues between key stakeholders, with action plans in place, as well as monitoring and evaluation. We want all stakeholders speaking the same language, and working towards a mutual goal of shared prosperity. We force-feed collaboration through our matchmaking lounges and deal rooms. The common language we create isn't just vocabulary; it's the language of execution, deal signings, success stories driven by a unified vision for a self-sufficient continent.

What is the one piece of advice you wish first time delegates would take away from the event and act on immediately?

My one piece of advice is this: Don't just collect business cards; collect commitments."The room is full of potential partners, not just contacts. Before the event ends, identify one person who can truly impact your business, an investor, a potential partner, a specific mentor, and secure a concrete next step with them. A follow-up meeting, an introduction, a promise to review your proposal.

What is the most common pushback you face when building MMC, and how do you stay committed to your vision?

One of the most common pushbacks comes from brands and corporates who think MMC only caters to SMEs. In reality, we are building an ecosystem where everyone has a role to play. Mentors connect with other mentors, investors link to key players, corporates offer services,

and policymakers drive systematic change. Each part contributes to a larger transformation.

Over 100 mentors and investors in our community have shown that these connections translate into real value and transactions. Another frequent question is, "Why isn't the event free?" We are completely data-driven as an organisation and experience has taught us that people do not value or fully commit to what they receive for free. The event is ticketed to ensure that we are curating an experience for delegates who value the thoughtfulness and creativity that goes into MMC. We want participants to take the opportunity seriously and engage fully during the sessions. Staying true to these principles has allowed us to build a thriving, trusted ecosystem where impact and accountability go hand in hand.

How would you describe the MMC Culture, and what's one intentional decision you've made to foster that?

The MMC Culture is pragmatic collaboration. It's a culture that we intensely focus on for actionable outcomes, not mere discussions. One intentional decision we are making is to build an entire ecosystem of individuals and institutions who are aligned with our values and willing to work with us to ensure measurable outcomes, beyond the conference.

We bring the mentorship lounges, deal rooms, and exhibition spaces to the heart of the event. This breaks down barriers to networking, and forces the kind of spontaneous, high-value interactions that lead to signed deals and partnerships, like the one that occurred between a participant and a major corporate executive he met while attending our event two years ago.

How do you personally measure the true impact of MMC?

While we track dollars invested and the growth of businesses, the true impact lies in the quality of connections forged. It's the SME that secures a distribution deal after exhibiting, the founder who meets a mentor that transforms the trajectory of their business, or the investor who connects with a policymaker to create better regulatory outcomes. These connections strengthen the entire fabric of African trade. Financial metrics follow naturally, but human connections are the cause.

What is the most common and limiting mindset you see founders arrive with, and what is the most significant shift you witness?

Many founders start with a scarcity mindset, believing there is only one seat at the table, one pot of funding, or one winner. The biggest shift we see at MMC is toward collaborative abundance. Founders begin to see peers not as competitors but as partners in a larger ecosystem.



By combining strengths, such as a manufacturer teaming up with a logistics startup, founders are able to build ventures that are far more scalable and impactful than they could ever accomplish alone.

Where do you see the biggest untapped opportunity for African entrepreneurs in the next five years, and how is MMC 7.0 designed to help them seize it?

The biggest untapped opportunity is regional value chains. With the AfCFTA, the potential to build and control entire supply chains within Africa is immense. MMC 7.0 is specifically designed to help founders seize this by connecting them across sectors and borders.



Our theme, “Building Bridges for Equitable Trade,” is a direct response to this. Through cross-border mentorship, sector-specific masterclasses, and the Pitch2Scale competition targeting key industries, we are giving entrepreneurs the blueprint and the relationships to build integrated Pan-African enterprises.

Family often shapes how we approach leadership and purpose. How has your family influenced the way you lead?

My family shapes how I lead by keeping me grounded, focused, and accountable. My husband is my sounding board and strategist, helping me see blind spots and make better decisions. My three energetic boys remind me that my presence matters more than any achievement, teaching me to lead with balance and empathy.

The influence runs even deeper with my parents, who modelled hard work, resilience, and integrity long before I stepped into leadership. Their example instilled the values that guide every choice I make today. Together, my family ensures that my leadership is not just about results, but about building something meaningful that aligns with my values and purpose.

You lead multiple initiatives and teams across borders. How do you intentionally rest and recharge?

Rest has become a discipline for me. I try to balance my high-energy work life with intentional downtime, including gym sessions to clear my head, massages to release stress, and proper sleep to reset. I also schedule “quiet days” where I disconnect completely, with no emails and no meetings, focusing instead on reflection, prayer, and journaling. It is amazing how much clarity comes when you allow your mind to rest.

Outside of work, what brings you the most joy or fulfillment?

Honestly, it is the small, real moments, like cooking with my kids, spending time with close friends, or simply being outdoors. I also love travel that combines relaxation and inspiration, exploring new cultures, new cuisines, and seeing how people live and create. Those experiences always refill my creative tank and remind me why I do what I do, to build something that allows more Africans to live fully and freely.

SUSTAINABLE FASHION: HOW LAGOS FASHION WEEK, HEINEKEN PARTNERSHIP PUTS AFRICA ON THE GLOBAL MAP

IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA



Lagos came alive with colour, rhythm, and confidence as the 15th edition of Lagos Fashion Week (LFW) brought together designers, models, and culture enthusiasts from across the continent.

This year’s showcase, officially branded “Heineken Lagos Fashion Week (HLFW),” marked a decade-long partnership between Heineken and LFW that has reshaped African fashion into a driver of sustainability, creativity, and economic visibility.

Since 2015, Heineken’s collaboration with Lagos Fashion Week has evolved from a traditional sponsorship into a strategic partnership with purpose, one that champions sustainable design, nurtures emerging talent, and positions Lagos as a leading hub for fashion innovation in Africa. This alliance has strengthened the city’s creative ecosystem and also amplified Africa’s voice in the global fashion conversation.

“Heineken’s partnership with Lagos Fashion Week celebrates the creativity and cultural robustness that make this city so unique,” said Sandra Amachree, Head of Marketing Communications, Nigerian Breweries Plc. “Fashion is a force for progress and identity, far beyond aesthetics.”

A platform for purpose-driven design

Founded in 2011 by Omoyemi Akerere, Lagos Fashion Week has evolved from a local runway show into a continental movement driving sustainability and economic empowerment.

“What began as fashion week is now a movement,” Akerere said. “It’s about education, mentorship, and accountability proving that African creativity belongs on the global stage as leadership.”

This year, Lagos Fashion Week earned a finalist spot for the Earthshot Prize, an environmental award launched by the



Prince of Wales, and Akerele herself was listed among TIME Magazine's most influential climate leaders of 2025.

Despite Nigeria's economic hurdles, from limited funding to unstable infrastructure, the event's success underscored the resilience of Africa's creative ecosystem. Partnerships with brands like Heineken, MTN, Nivea, Meta (Facebook), etc, have helped sustain the event's mission, to push the boundaries of fashion, not just in style but in substance.

Designers turning waste into art

Among this year's stars was Titus Doku, founder of Ghana's Calco Studios, who brought sustainability to life through upcycling. "I use secondhand clothes from Kantamanto market in Accra, about 15 million pieces arrive there every week," he said. "Instead of letting them rot, I transform them into new, wearable art. Fashion should help the planet, not harm it."

Doku's designs blend creativity and conscience, merging waste management, heritage symbols, and design innovation.

"I also use cultural motifs from my Dangbe tribe," he said. "Our ancestors migrated from Ile-Ife, Nigeria. My work connects us back to that shared origin."

The Green Access Initiative, part of Lagos Fashion Week, also spotlighted Alexandra Obochi, founder of Ndiche, a Nigerian brand championing sustainability through repurposed fabrics and body diversity.

"We use denim, cotton, and batik to tell stories of identity," she said. "Our goal is to make people feel confident and connected to culture, no matter who they are."

For Obochi, sustainable fashion is as much about representation as it is about the environment. "We feature models of all body types," she said. "Our pieces are designed to make everyone feel seen."

Youth, identity, and a new creative consciousness



Africa's sustainability wave is being powered by its youth. With more than 60% of Africans under 25, a new generation is shaping the continent's fashion identity, one that blends cultural pride with environmental awareness.

Bakare Mubarak, one of Africa's most recognisable models, believes this generation is redefining fashion's purpose. "People are beginning to embrace their Africanness," he said.

"They're wearing their heritage; their fabrics, their colours, with pride. African fashion is no longer imitation; it's innovation."

Mubarak urged global brands to invest more deeply in the communities that inspire their products. "Many of these companies profit from African creativity," he said. "They should also help sustain it. Platforms like Lagos Fashion Week make that possible."



A green love letter to Lagos

Heineken's grand finale, A Lagos Love Letter, "City of Cities", captured this shift perfectly. Through light, rhythm, and movement, it celebrated the evolution of Lagos Fashion Week, from legacy to innovation.

"Leadership isn't just about visibility," said Amachree. "It's about showing up differently and daring to tell new stories." For founder Akerele, the journey continues. "Our goal is simple," she said. "To make sustainability part of Africa's fashion DNA, where culture, creativity, and responsibility coexist."



AFRICA'S FINEST ON DISPLAY AS GTCO FASHION WEEKEND KICKS OFF



The Guaranty Trust Holding Company Plc (GTCO) is set to ignite the fashion scene once again with the 2025 GTCO Fashion Weekend, scheduled to take place on November 8-9 at the GTCentre in Lagos.

This highly anticipated event marks the eighth edition of the fashion weekend, a testament to its enduring success in showcasing Africa's fashion creativity on the global stage.

The GTCO Fashion Weekend is more than just a fashion event - it's a platform for emerging fashion businesses in Nigeria to reach a wider audience and would feature 12 epic runway shows showcasing Africa's finest designers and international brands.

Here's a look at some of the talented designers taking the runway:

Mulawwan: Known for their bold and vibrant designs, Mulawwan is expected to bring a burst of energy to the runway.

Sassy By Etty: This Nigerian designer is celebrated for creating stunning outfits that showcase African heritage with a modern twist.

Illona Atelier: Illona Atelier is a fashion powerhouse, renowned for its exquisite craftsmanship and attention to detail.

Nya Lagos: Nya Lagos is a rising star in the fashion world, known for her edgy and avant-garde designs.

Tongoro Studio: This design studio is celebrated for its unique blend of traditional and modern African aesthetics.

Mmuso Maxwell: Mmuso Maxwell is a talented designer known for her innovative and daring approach to fashion.

Imane Ayissi: Imane Ayissi is a Cameroonian designer recognized for his stunning and intricate designs that showcase African elegance.



Patrick McDowell: Patrick McDowell is a celebrated designer known for his bold and vibrant designs that blend African heritage with modern style.

The Ben Collective: This collective is dedicated to promoting Benin culture through fashion, showcasing traditional textiles and designs with a modern twist.

Sevon Dejana: Sevon Dejana is a talented designer known for her stunning and intricate designs that showcase African beauty.

Stella Jean: Stella Jean is a Haitian-Nigerian designer celebrated for her vibrant and eclectic designs that blend African and Caribbean influences.

Ituen Basi: Ituen Basi is a talented designer known for her stunning and elegant designs that showcase African beauty.

Mowalola: Mowalola is a rising star in the fashion world, known for her bold and daring approach to fashion.

In addition to the runway shows, the event will also feature six masterclass sessions, hosted by internationally recognized professionals in fashion, modeling, and makeup. These sessions will provide valuable insights and practical tips for emerging designers and fashion enthusiasts alike.

A Celebration of African Creativity

According to Segun Agbaje, Group CEO of Guaranty Trust Holding Company Plc, the GTCO Fashion Weekend aims to showcase talent and innovation across the continent, while inspiring shared, sustainable, and people-centered growth. "Our focus every year remains Promoting Enterprise," he said.

"By bringing together emerging and established voices in fashion, we continue to highlight the ingenuity and diversity that define African creativity, while reaffirming our commitment to promoting enterprise in ways that enrich lives and strengthen communities."

The GTCO Fashion Weekend promises to be an unforgettable experience, showcasing the best of African fashion and creativity. With its blend of style, learning, and retail experiences, this event is a must-attend for fashion enthusiasts and industry professionals alike.



IJEOMA OKONKWO'S 'TRAXIS' PUBLICATION CONNECTS NIGERIAN BUSINESSES TO GLOBAL OPPORTUNITIES



For years as Head of Operations in NBC Trade Fair, Ijeoma Okonkwo had the privilege of witnessing the brilliance of Nigerian entrepreneurship. She has seen several business owners driven by passion and persistence; travel across the country to showcase their products at exhibitions.

However, in their efforts, Okonkwo saw a striking disconnect: world-class products, thoughtful packaging and unwavering dedication, yet limited visibility.

In a bid to bridge this disconnect, she has created 'Traxis'- a name born from 'Trade' and 'Axis', a bridge designed to connect the resilience of Nigerian businesses to visibility, funding and global opportunities they rightfully deserve.

With a twofold mission; first to showcase the unknown businesses quietly doing remarkable work in the corners of the country and second is to change the narrative, the magazine is a confidence showcase of excellence and potential of Nigerian entrepreneurs.

Speaking during the inaugural launch of the magazine at the Wheatbaker hotel in Lagos, Ijeoma Okonkwo, founder and Editor-in-Chief, Traxis Africa said the magazine was born out of a passion to help businesses, entrepreneurs in Nigeria and Africa at large.

"I've been in charge of exhibitions; we have been within and outside of the country, hosting these exhibitions. I see businesses come together for two, three days, make sales, get visibility and then they go. And then I ask myself, what's next for these businesses?"

"Why are they here? These people need visibility, what can we do for them? And I said, let me find a way of amplifying their story, let me tell their story, let me help them. And that's what gave birth to Traxis," she explained.

She said right now, she is highlighting businesses that are doing the work behind the scenes, whose processes are top-notch and 50 percent indigenous.

"When I say 50 percent indigenous, it means that they are sourcing their raw materials from within this country. Because a lot of people don't even know the resources that Nigeria has. Nigeria is a blessed nation that has so much to offer. And people are taking advantage of these resources and turning it into things that are beautiful," Traxis Editor-in-Chief said.

She stressed that Traxis is telling stories of business owners, to attract investors to them, and introduce them to global markets where they can highlight and showcase their materials and products.



“For us, we don’t care who you are, per se. It’s what you do and what you’re able to offer that matters to us,” she said.

Speaking at the event, Princess Adeyinka Tekenah, Founder/Chief Happiness Officer at Happy Coffee, an indigenous Nigerian coffee brand and coffee solution company said for the first time in our history as a country, there hasn’t been greater support for businesses and building the Nigerian story.

Tekenah, who was featured in the inaugural edition of Traxis said being a female founder, it’s very important for women to see role models of women who are working hard and are building.

“Because we’re not in a culture that really speaks about how hard working our women are in terms of building very strong businesses. So for me, it’s always very important for me, so that girls can see the picture of another girl winning. That also encourages them to do that.

“I think first things first, being a Nigerian is very important. What good would it do for us not to build the Nigeria of our dreams? I should be one person who shouldn’t like Nigeria. My dad was killed when I was 16. My sister died at 39 from childbirth. I shouldn’t believe in this country.

“I should be angry at it. But I also know that there is good out of this country. So for me, we’re blessed with so many things; great weather, great agriculture, amazing people. I mean, look at our music. So for me, being a Nigerian is the easiest thing. I’ve travelled abroad. I’ve lived abroad as a student. And

I know what it is to be an immigrant student in somebody else’s land.

“The only place where I feel 100 percent Nigerian is in Nigeria. So it only befits me as a Nigerian to keep building the Nigeria of my dreams; a Nigeria that my child can be proud of,” Tekenah explained.

Chibueze Obinwanne, co-founder, The Milk Booster, a breastfeeding support company, helping moms that are not lactating properly to be able to breastfeed their children.

Obinwanne who was also featured in the magazine said it’s a pain point for a mom to go through the hassle of carrying a baby for nine months, only for the baby to come out, and the baby doesn’t have any food to eat.

“So that’s a problem we solve. And we have taken it a step further by launching ‘The Milk Bank,’ in April 2022. And it came with its own challenges.

“There were people that were curious as to how something like this function in this part of the world. And I can tell you that after three years of running The Milk Bank, Nigerians are beginning to respond very well to what The Milk Bank is there to solve,” Obinwanne said.

He mentioned that initially, people will prefer to donate milk than to receive milk. “But right now, I’m using this medium as well to speak to every nursing mother. If you know you have excess breast milk, please go to Instagram and look for ‘The Milk Bank’ and send us a DM. We have a lot of babies that are in need of that milk.

“We are going to take it off you and make sure that you play your role in reducing the infant mortality rate in Nigeria. And that is what we are all about. We are all about moving maternal health in the country forward.

“When we joined this space, I think the breastfeeding rate was 17.3 percent back in 2017 and currently we are doing over 30 percent. We’ve played our role in ensuring that these numbers go up,” Obinwanne explained.



FEMALE-LED STARTUP WINS \$10,000 TOP PRIZE AS NIGERIA PUSHES INNOVATIVE CLIMATE SOLUTIONS



Nigeria’s push to build a resilient, low-carbon economy gained fresh momentum last week as three pioneering startups clinched top honours and a share of \$32,500 at the third Global Cleantech Innovation Programme (GCIP) National Awards.

The event, held in Lagos recently, celebrated local innovators dedicated to tackling the nation’s urgent climate and environmental challenges, showing that the fight against global warming can be won on African soil.

The competition, championed by the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) and funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), marks a crucial step in transforming promising ideas into market-ready solutions.

From Farm Waste to Funding: The Top Winners

The award ceremony saw three companies, focused on sustainable farming, clean energy access, and cooling, split the \$32,500 prize money.

Allgreen Ivy Limited was crowned the national winner, securing a \$10,000 prize. The company also won a special award as the Best Female-led Startup.

Founder Lydia Ekpong Thompson highlighted the immediate impact the funding will have on scaling their sustainable agriculture model.

“Currently, we are only able to deliver 150 to 200 packs daily,” Thompson said, referring to their biodegradable sanitary pads made from farm waste like banana stems. “With the automated equipment that we want to buy, we’ll be able to increase our production to at least 3,500 packs daily.”

Thompson added that the prize provides a “push” for more efficiency, profitability, and crucial impact on women and the environment.

The first runner-up, One Grid Energies, received \$7,500 and was recognized as the Best Climate Mitigation Startup. Rekoal Access Technology secured the second runner-up position, earning \$5,000.



Bridging the 'valley of death' for green ideas

The GCIP is designed to help local cleantech businesses bridge the difficult gap between a great idea and market success, often called the "valley of death."

Akinwande Akinsulire, Head of Startup Support at CcHub Africa (the Project Management Unit), explained the program's vital role. "Over the last three years, we have been supporting 25 entrepreneurs each year... They got both technical and non-technical support during this period," Akinsulire noted.

This support includes mentorship, business model refinement, and calculating the crucial CO2 emission offset their work achieves. This effort is central to Nigeria's climate goals.

Lukman Amin, the Project Lead for GCIP at the Rural Electrification Agency (REA), emphasized the global context. "The whole world is going green. We are going toward net-zero emissions... CleanTech is the future," Amin stated.

The REA's specific role is providing the financial mechanism to help these enterprises access the capital needed to upscale their technologies.

A National Strategy for Resilience

The program is a core part of the government's commitment to sustainable development. Esuabana Nko Asanye, Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Innovation, Science and Technology (FMIST), stressed that the GCIP "directly addresses this mandate by nurturing Small and Medium Enterprises... that tackle the most pressing environmental and climate challenges."

She further highlighted the resilience of the local entrepreneurs in her keynote address.

"These innovators have been contributing in their own way to really ensuring that we are able to offset a lot of CO2" she said, acknowledging the difficulty of building cleantech businesses in Nigeria due to import costs and exchange rate challenges.

Similarly, Reuben Bamidele from UNIDO reinforced the organisation's commitment to a low-carbon future for Nigeria, noting that even as the initial project concludes. "Clean technology is not just good for the planet, it's good for business," he told BD Weekender. "We hope to have the second phase of that

project."

He also confirmed that UNIDO's ongoing Programme for Country Partnership (PCP) in Nigeria extends support for industrial development through 2028, ensuring sustained commitment to clean technologies.

"This continued collaboration is essential for building a robust policy environment that promotes the widespread uptake of cleantech solutions across the country," he said.



ORÍKÌ FOUNDATION: EXTENDING WELLNESS INTO PURPOSE, IMPACT



ORÍKÌ, one of Africa's leading wellness and beauty brand, celebrated its tenth anniversary recently, with an unveil of its foundation.

The ORÍKÌ Foundation unveil is a moment that underscored the brand's commitment to extending wellness into purpose and impact.

In her address, Abiodun Williams, Head of Operations at ORÍKÌ, explained that the Foundation was established to empower, restore, and uplift communities through initiatives focused on restoring caregivers, dignifying the elderly, empowering survivors through vocational training, and advancing mental wellness.

She described it as an extension of ORÍKÌ's long-standing mission to build a global wellness ecosystem powered by African excellence, emphasizing that every person supported by the Foundation represents an opportunity to rebuild hope and self-worth.

The elegant evening at The Jewel Aeida, Lagos brought together guests, loyal customers, industry partners, and team members to honour a decade of transformative impact

and unveil an ambitious new chapter that positions African wellness excellence on the global stage.

The room was filled with notable personalities, including Ibukun Awosika, Tara Fela-Durotoye, Fela Durotoye, Bolarinwa Akinlabi, and Bamidele Abiodun, the First Lady of Ogun State.

Abiodun, while delivering the goodwill address, commended ORÍKÌ for becoming a proud symbol of African excellence and praised the founder, Joyce Awosika, for her commitment to redefining wellness across the continent. She also pledged the support of the Ajoye Foundation in partnering with The ORÍKÌ Foundation to promote holistic health among young people.

Tola Awosika commended the ORÍKÌ team for their unwavering commitment to excellence and innovation over the past decade.

He described the brand's story as one of resilience, vision, and discipline, emphasizing that its success reflects the power of consistency and a clear sense of purpose.



He encouraged entrepreneurs to pursue excellence with patience and integrity, noting that true success is built through daily effort and intentional growth.

Expressing gratitude and optimism, Joycee Awosika, shared, “This is not just a celebration of our birth but of our journey. We are redefining wellness in a continent where people often see it as a luxury.

“I believe wellness is essential to how we live, work, and grow. As we enter this new era, our mission is to export excellence, scale access, and build an ecosystem that places African beauty and wellness at the center of global conversations.”

She further announced plans to expand ORÍKÌ beyond the shores of Africa with the upcoming launch of ORÍKÌ UAE.

The evening featured soulful musical and dance performances, a short documentary chronicling ORÍKÌ's growth, and surprise awards presented by Humans of ORÍKÌ to Joycee Awosika, Tola Awosika, and their sons.

The event concluded with prayers of blessing by Pastor Bolarinwa Akinlabi, Co-Global Lead Pastor of The Elevation Church, followed by a joyful cake-cutting ceremony led by Dere Awosika, Florence Awojoodu, and Joycee Awosika.

The celebrations continued on Monday, October 27, with an Adire Praise Party that brought together ORÍKÌ staff across all branches for a day of gratitude, fellowship, and recognition.

Rita Ugwu was honoured as a long-serving team member and appreciated for her dedication, while Pastor Dr. Muyi Mepaiyeda charged the team to uphold excellence, value themselves, and remain steadfast in purpose.



The ORÍKÌ 10th Anniversary was more than a celebration. It was a defining moment for a brand that has become synonymous with African innovation, wellness, and purpose. As ORÍKÌ embarks on its next decade, it continues to lead a movement that champions African beauty and wellness on the global stage, inspiring a generation to live well, do good, and build legacies that endure.

FROM MENTOR TO MARKET: HOW NETWORKS BECOME WOMEN'S CAPITAL

EKEMINI AKPAKPAN

I remember my very first article on unlocking women's potential, published on the World Economic Forum. The highlight was my induction into the WISCAR Mentoring Programme, because I believed structured career mentorship was one of the most tangible ways to unlock women's potential.

One of the most memorable moments of that induction was the fireside chat with Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala — an eye-opener to how transformative this programme could be if it truly bridged experience with access and opportunity. And I wasn't wrong.

Through WISCAR, I was paired with a non-profit intrapreneur. She graciously hand-held me through that season and helped lay a roadmap that strongly aligned with my career aspirations.

I still remember when she helped me search for a course titled Finance for Non-Finance Managers. She helped me see not just who I was more clearly but who I could become, serving both as a reference point and a co-creator of vision.

That experience left an imprint. It taught me that mentorship is not just guidance; it's a form of capital transfer — a bridge to knowledge, networks, and visibility. So when the opportunity came, I held the door open for someone else, who wrote back to me after her own induction:

"Thank you, Ekemini. I have never been in a room with such powerful women."

And in a beautiful twist of fate, I now serve as Executive Secretary at WISCAR, the very institution that once shaped my own intrapreneurial journey. It's not just a full-circle moment; it's living proof that intentional mentorship model works.

The Power of Belonging
— and Why It Matters for Women

This is not to say that women have never been surrounded by networks; we have always built communities of support. But now, we must network with purpose, intentionally positioning ourselves for professional and economic advancement.

A few weeks ago, I told you the story of Purl, who struggled to fit into a workplace steeped in "bro culture" until she began mirroring her male colleagues' behaviour. This phenomenon, known as social mirroring, helps explain why many women remain excluded from the informal power networks that drive advancement. The "boys' club" effect is not always intentional, but it is structural — access breeds access.

Men naturally network with men, exchange referrals, share board seats, and invest in one another's ventures. The result is that women like Purl often find themselves working hard within systems that were never designed to elevate them.

Now, thanks to the women who continue to challenge these patterns, the world has made more room for women in leadership spaces. But presence alone is not enough. It is our turn to structure mentorship as a system of access, transforming belonging into leverage, and relationships into results.

Turning Relationships into Results

Mentorship, when properly designed, becomes a launchpad for visibility and growth. When a mentor shares beyond advice, offering access to networks, opportunities, and influence, she becomes a broker of a whole universe another woman can thrive within. In doing so, she transforms her experience into capital for another woman.

Across industries, we've seen what happens when mentorship systems are structured rather than spontaneous.

Career mentorship evolves into sponsorship and board placements, peer mentorship grows into partnerships, consultancies, or co-founded ventures, and alumni networks create pathways to capital, grants, and high-value collaborations.

These outcomes don't happen by chance; they happen by design. The WISCAR framework has shown me how to turn goodwill into measurable growth — designing access with intent, not accident.

Designing Mentorship as an Ecosystem

The next frontier for women's advancement is not more networks. Too many associations, programmes, and professional circles remain casual, ending at inspiration instead of translating into opportunity. Better-designed mentorship ecosystems should serve as enablers that track outcomes, reward reciprocity, and institutionalize access. Imagine a mentorship pipeline that doesn't just connect women but mobilizes them. That's how we evolve from "having mentors" to building markets of opportunity.

1. Start from the Workplace

Change begins where women work. When mentorship systems are formalized with clear accountability, they move beyond tokenism. Embedding mentorship ecosystems into workplaces where senior leaders are accountable for the career mobility of emerging talent transforms mentorship from charity or DEI optics into strategy. Such systems make it possible to track measurable outcomes like promotions, leadership placements, and business growth. They turn mentorship into structured, strategic, and scalable growth.

2. Stay Strategic, Yet Safe

Powerful mentorship is not a replication of the "boys' club" model. It should not thrive on competition or exclusion. The best ecosystems promote psychological safety, mutual respect, and collaboration rather than abrasiveness or transactional exchange. One of the greatest lessons WISCAR has taught me is the art of relationship-building: get along with everyone, recognize value, and nurture partnerships with grace. Mentorship should uplift without exploiting, challenge without diminishing, and connect without coercion.

Advancement must never come at the cost of humanity.

3. Monetise Value, Without Commercializing Relationships

To monetize relationships is not to sell them; it is to recognize and activate value. When women's networks evolve from spaces of encouragement to spaces of exchange, they unlock collective power. Across Africa, we're witnessing the rise of women-led investment collectives, founder networks, and professional alliances that pool influence to create market opportunities.

These models convert social capital into financial capital through shared deal flow, co-founded ventures, board nominations, and funding pipelines. When relationships yield measurable outcomes, women's ecosystems stop existing at the margins and start competing at the centre of power.

The Multiplier Effect of Reciprocity

Here is some news for you: every woman who is mentored has the potential to mentor another. This is how capital — intellectual, social, and even financial — multiplies across generations. My own journey from being mentored to mentoring and to leading and being genuinely invested in the mission of a mentorship institution is proof that the cycle works.

Women are not waiting for access; we are building it. When women see themselves not only as beneficiaries but as bridges for others, mentorship becomes more than personal growth. It becomes economic infrastructure.

In a world where women are still catching up on centuries of exclusion from capital, mentorship remains the most reliable equaliser. Because when women mentor women with intention, every introduction becomes an investment, and every relationship yields a return. The true test of mentorship is not how many women we guide, but how many markets we open.

5 FOOD MOVIES THAT WILL SATISFY YOUR APPETITE

ESTHER EMOEKPERE





Food has a way of bringing people together, telling stories, and reflecting culture. It is not just what we eat that matters, but what it represents—the effort, the history, and the connections it carries. In certain movies, food often becomes the centre of a story, shaping characters and their decisions, highlighting tension or celebration, and showing how ambition, creativity, and tradition collide. Watching these films is about more than appetite; it is about seeing how people navigate life through the lens of what they cook, serve, and share.

These movies show that the kitchen is more than a place for preparing meals, it is a stage for life's struggles, triumphs, and small victories. Characters face pressure, learn to collaborate, wrestle with family expectations, or chase perfection in ways that mirror challenges outside the kitchen. They remind us that every meal tells a story, and sometimes, the story behind the food is far more compelling than the dish itself.

Big Night (1996)

Big Night tells the story of two brothers, Primo and Secondo, who immigrated from Italy and run a small Italian restaurant in the United States. The central plot revolves around one "big night" they organise to impress a famous guest and save their struggling business. While the narrative centres on their cooking, it is also a study of dedication, strategy, and personal pride. The film explores the tension between artistry and commerce—Primo is obsessed with the quality and authenticity of his food, while Secondo understands the practicalities of running a business. Beyond the story of the restaurant, the film offers lessons about planning, teamwork, and the value of patience.

Ratatouille (2007)

Though animated, Ratatouille delivers more than visual appeal. It follows Remy, a rat with a remarkable sense of taste and smell, who dreams of becoming a chef in Paris. Remy's story examines the barriers of societal expectations and prejudice; he is an unlikely candidate in the high-stakes world of gourmet cooking. The film celebrates creativity, persistence, and the courage to follow one's passion despite obstacles.

The Secret of the Grain (2007)

This Franco-Tunisian film centres on Slimane Beiji, a divorced father dreams of opening a couscous restaurant while navigating complex family and social dynamics. Unlike many food films, The Secret of the Grain is deeply grounded in culture and identity. It explores how personal ambition interacts with familial duty, societal expectations, and the immigrant experience. The movie also captures the communal aspects of food—the sharing, collaboration, and connection that meals foster within communities. By showing the challenges of opening a restaurant in a foreign environment, the story reflects universal themes: identity, immigration, and other ethnic diversity themes.

Food Luck (2020)

Food Luck is a Japanese film that follows a food writer returning to his family's yakiniku (grilled meat) restaurant. While the plot revolves around the preparation and serving of food, it also examines the deeper connections between food, memory, and personal identity. The writer's journey of rediscovery demonstrates how food is a bridge between past and present, linking him to his family, heritage, and the values instilled in him from childhood. Through the lens of cooking and dining, it explores how returning to one's roots can provide clarity, grounding, and purpose.

Tampopo (1985)

Often called a "ramen western," Tampopo follows a widow determined to perfect her ramen shop with the help of an experienced truck driver. The film blends comedy and drama while exploring the role of food in daily life. Tampopo's pursuit of excellence is not just about taste; it is about creating an experience that brings satisfaction to others, highlighting the intersection of service, skill, and personal growth. The narrative demonstrates that mastery is a process involving trial, error, and guidance. It also addresses the broader cultural significance of food, illustrating rituals, techniques, and expectations surrounding preparation and presentation. Themes of mentorship, persistence, and understanding one's craft resonate throughout.

3 FAMOUS BOLE SPOTS IN PORT HARCOURT

ESTHER EMOEKPERE



There is something undeniably special about Port Harcourt's love affair with bole, roasted plantain paired with spicy pepper sauce, fish, and all the smoky goodness that defines the city's street food culture. It is more than just a meal; it is a lifestyle, a social experience, and a taste of home.

Ask anyone in Port Harcourt where to find the best bole, and be ready for an argument — the good kind. Everyone has their “go-to” spot, and loyalty runs deep. But no matter which camp you belong to, one thing's certain: no one does bole like Port Harcourt.

Here are three famous bole spots in Port Harcourt that have turned a simple street food into a full-blown city experience.

Maleesky Special

Maleesky Special, located on Ibeto Road in the old township area of Port Harcourt, is one of the city's well-known spots for bole and fish. The setup is straightforward, and the focus is on getting the basics right — evenly roasted plantain, well-seasoned fish, and pepper sauce that delivers steady heat. With a 4.3-star rating on Google, the

spot has built a solid reputation among locals for freshness and quick service. It caters to a wide range of customers, offering event catering, home and office service, and home delivery. The menu is simple and comes in packs. Options include bole, roasted fish, and a potato mix with vegetables. Customers can choose between the singles pack, couple pack, and family pack, depending on portion preference.

Elekahia Bole Joint

Elekahia, a housing estate located around Circular Road in Rumuola, has built a quiet reputation as one of Port Harcourt's main bole hubs. The area is dotted with small grills and family-run spots that have become go-to places for people who want their roasted plantain done just right. Among the popular names here is Martha Bole Elekahia, known for its steady crowd and simple but complete menu. Customers can choose from bole, roasted yam, croaker fish, fish tail, ugba, fish middle, and fish head — all served with spicy sauce that ties it together. Also within the estate is Chioma Bole, it has grown popular for its well-roasted plantain and fish, with many reviews praising its flavour. The menu mirrors what you'd expect from a classic Port Harcourt bole joint — bole, roasted fish, roasted yam, ugba, croaker fish, and fish. Goodluck Bole and Blessed Bole also add to the list of trusted favourites within the estate.

House of Bole

Located by Airforce Junction, 1 Ken Saro-Wiwa Rd, off Aba Road, Rumuola, House of Bole is one of the city's more structured bole spots. With a 4.3-star rating on Google, it has become a regular choice for people who want the familiar taste of roasted plantain and fish served in a more organised setting. The menu goes beyond the usual bole and roasted fish to include roasted yam, potatoes, chicken, turkey, and chips — giving customers a mix of traditional and modern options. Prices range from about ₦4,500 for a starter pack to around ₦30,000 for a large tray, depending on the choice of fish and sides. The spot is also known for its good packaging and parking space, which makes it convenient for takeaway and small gatherings. House of Bole blends street-food flavour with restaurant-style presentation.

NINE BEST PLACES TO VISIT IN ASIA IN 2026

CHISOM MICHAEL

Asia is set to welcome a new wave of travellers in 2026, with destinations across the continent blending heritage, art, and modern reinvention. From soaring skyscrapers to historic citadels, the region's contrasts are more captivating than ever.

In India, Udaipur is experiencing a renaissance as a string of new, distinctive hotels redefine the city's luxury scene. Meanwhile, Erbil, the capital of Iraqi Kurdistan, invites adventurous travellers to explore its 6,000-year-old Citadel and witness a city balancing preservation and progress.

Cultural landmarks are also taking centre stage. Abu Dhabi's Saadiyat Cultural District will unveil the Natural History Museum and the long-awaited Guggenheim Abu Dhabi. In Central Asia, Tashkent is positioning itself as a new creative hub with the opening of its Centre for Contemporary Art. With Seoul and Hong Kong debuting major arts venues, 2026 promises a dynamic new era for Asian travel.

According to CNTraveller, here are nine best places to visit in Asia in 2026

1. Erbil, Iraqi Kurdistan

Erbil, the capital of the semi-autonomous Kurdistan Region of Iraq, is positioning itself as a gateway for travellers seeking heritage and renewal.



The launch of Visit Kurdistan in 2025, backed by the private sector and government, aims to attract 20 million tourists by 2030.

Restoration work continues at the UNESCO-listed Citadel of Erbil, one of the world's oldest continuously inhabited sites. Within its walls are the Kurdish Textile Museum and the Cihan Cultural House, which showcase local art, crafts and food. The 37-metre-high Choli Minaret is also undergoing preservation.

Modern developments are reshaping the city skyline, including Erbil Avenue, home to international brands such as Gordon Ramsay's Street Burger and EL&N London. The United States is building its largest consulate here, while Real Madrid is planning a youth academy.

Erbil combines old and new – tea under ancient ramparts, music in Ankawa's bars, and warm hospitality that defines Kurdish identity.

2. Hong Kong, China

Hong Kong's cultural and infrastructure upgrades continue into 2026. The WestK Performing Arts Centre will open in the West Kowloon Cultural



District, offering three new performance stages for 2,300 guests. In Central, chef Daniel Boulud's Terrace Boulud will debut as part of the \$100 million renovation of the Mandarin Oriental, which includes new long-stay apartments.

Hong Kong International Airport's \$18 billion expansion will improve facilities ahead of a 2027 completion, with upgrades to Terminal 2 and new self-service check-in points.

For outdoor exploration, enhanced trail facilities across The Peak, Lantau Peak, Tai Mo Shan and Sai Kung Hoi will guide hikers more easily. The sky100 Observation Deck reopens mid-year with new city viewing experiences.

3. Naoshima, Japan

Naoshima, an island in Japan's Setouchi region, has evolved into a destination for contemporary art. The Naoshima New Museum of Art, designed by architect Tadao Ando, opened in 2025. It features works by Takashi Murakami and Cai Guo-Qiang exploring Asian futurism.

Luxury travel companies are expanding routes to include Naoshima. Tauck's Seoul to Tokyo small-ship itinerary in 2026 includes guided tours of the island's art sites. Mandarin Oriental will also open a ryokan-style property on Naoshima as part of its Setouchi expansion from 2027.

Visitors can explore art museums, converted schools, and coastal trails filled with installations that reflect Japan's rural regeneration.



4. Patan, Nepal

Patan, part of the Kathmandu Valley, is attracting new attention amid political and cultural renewal in Nepal. Artist-led spaces such as Gallery Mcube and Space A will host residencies in 2026, while local artisans continue traditional copper work.

The city's first appearance on Asia's 50 Best Bars list came with BARC, which is now expanding with a 12-seater bar, Swotha, dedicated to Nepal's rice spirit, aylā. Michelin-starred Old Nepal Tokyo is relocating to Patan, bringing contemporary Nepali cuisine home.

Visitors can explore the Rato Machindranath Jatra festival in spring and enjoy local dishes such as black dal pancakes at Honacha and spicy noodles at Binu's. Nepal also plans to introduce a five-year digital nomad visa in 2026.



5. Saadiyat Island, Abu Dhabi

Abu Dhabi is strengthening its global cultural standing through developments on Saadiyat Island. The Natural History Museum Abu Dhabi and the Zayed National Museum are opening in late 2025, followed by the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi in 2026.

Together with the existing Louvre Abu Dhabi, these institutions will anchor the Saadiyat Cultural District. The area will also include teamLab Phenomena and the Abrahamic Family House, an interfaith complex promoting cultural dialogue.

The island's nearby resorts along Saadiyat Beach continue to attract visitors seeking both culture and leisure in one destination.



6. Seoul, South Korea

Seoul's transport and creative infrastructure are expanding. The Seohae Line extension (2026) and Dongbuk Line (2027) will open new access to local districts such as Jegi-dong and Gongneung-dong.

The city is developing 12 new observatories by the end of 2026, offering panoramic skyline views. On the cultural side, Frieze House Seoul in Yaksu-dong now serves as a year-round gallery and event hub. The Photo SeMA in Chang-dong and Seo-Seoul Museum of Art in Geumcheon focus on photography and digital media.

Meanwhile, the Park Seo-bo Museum Seoul honours one of Korea's most influential artists, marking Seoul's continuing rise as a global art capital.



7. Shenzhen, China

Shenzhen, now a hub for innovation and design, continues to expand its cultural calendar. The Verbier Festival will hold its first edition outside Switzerland in early 2026, hosted at the Shenzhen Longgang International Art Centre, which opens in late 2025.

Luxury hotels including Rosewood and Mirage by MGM will debut in 2026, joining recent openings from St Regis and Shangri-La. Shenzhen Design Week and Art Shenzhen will also return, spotlighting the city's global influence in design and consumer technology.

These developments underline Shenzhen's evolution from a manufacturing centre into a global cultural and creative destination.





8. Tashkent, Uzbekistan

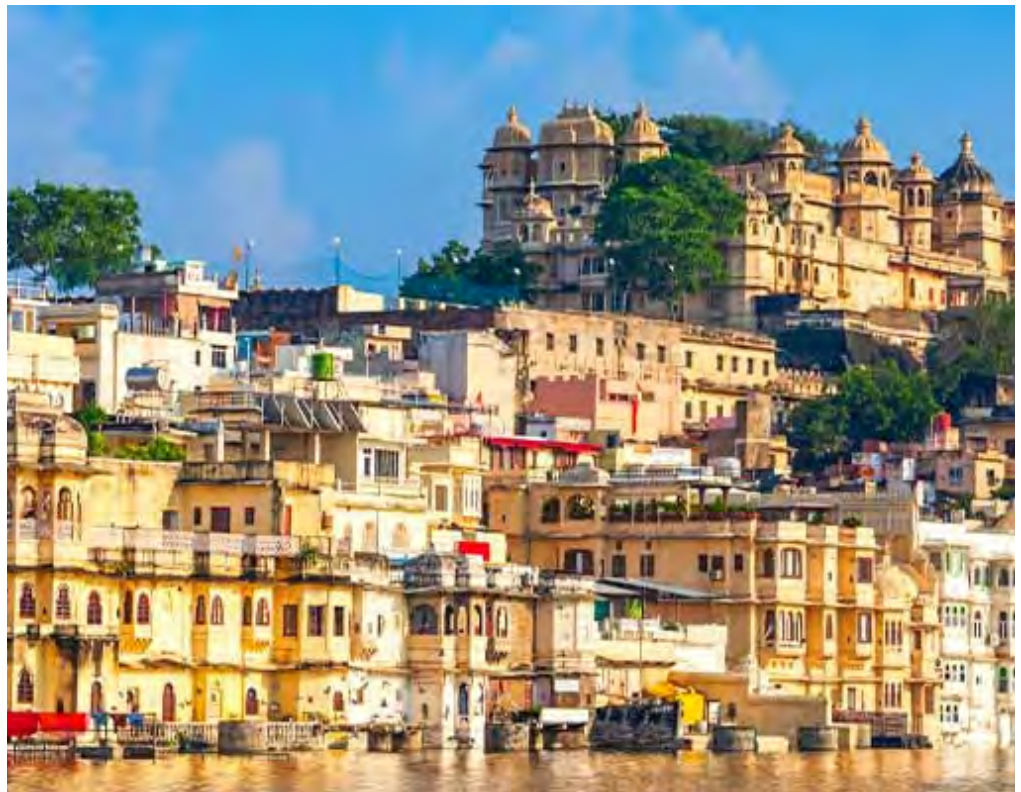
Tashkent, Central Asia's largest city, is expanding its cultural reach. The Centre for Islamic Civilisation opened in late 2025, and the Centre for Contemporary Art will debut in March 2026 in a renovated 1912 diesel station designed by Paris-based studio KO.

In nearby historic mahallas such as Namuna and Khast Imom, artist residencies are blending traditional craftsmanship with modern expression, reinforcing Tashkent's role as a creative hub beyond its Silk Road legacy.

9. Udaipur, India

Udaipur, the "lake city" of Rajasthan, is entering a new era of hospitality. Recent openings include Fairmont Udaipur Palace near the Monsoon Palace and a new Marriott overlooking Fateh Sagar Lake. The Leela Palace Udaipur has introduced Arq at Pichola, offering private villas with personal service.

Indian boutique brand Minimalist Hotels and the Hilton are also set to open in 2026. From 20 to 22 February 2026, The



Oberoi Concourse d'Elegance will return, displaying vintage cars from India and abroad, with global motoring icons as judges.

Udaipur continues to blend royal heritage with renewed contemporary appeal, creating a balance between preservation and progress.

DONS ADVOCATE VARSITY STAFF GO BEYOND BASIC PROFICIENCY TO DIGITAL LITERACY

...as UNILAG holds maiden registry week lecture

CHARLES OGWO



In today's rapidly evolving academic landscape, the growing digitalisation of higher education demands more than surface-level familiarity with technology, as experts advocate university staff should embrace digital literacy to become professionally competent to streamline operations.

University dons who spoke at the University of Lagos' (UNILAG), Akoka, maiden registry week lecture emphasised the need for every staff member, especially those in the administrative unit to move beyond basic proficiency to embrace true digital literacy, the ability to think critically, adapt to new platforms, and leverage technology for innovation and impact.

Akinwunmi Lewis, former registrar at Lagos State University (LASU), speaking on "Excellence in University Administration: The Imperatives of

Professionalism and Digital Literacy", emphasised that beyond speaking good English, university administrators should have outputs that reflect professionalism in the contemporary era, which entails digital literacy.

"Digital literacy is a foundational competence for administrators. It is going to shift our role from support to strategic leadership.

"It also enables us to move from manual processes to transparent, efficient, and data-driven systems. Digital literacy also includes foundational technical skills and capacity to generate innovative ideas," he said.

Folasade Ogunsola, vice-chancellor of UNILAG, in her remarks said that professionalism and digital literacy is the foundation of moving the university to the next level.



“The disruptions, opportunities, and transformations that once seemed distant have arrived in real time, thereby reshaping the landscape of the university administration.

“As registry staff, you can occupy a pivotal role in the machinery of the university. It is indeed stating the obvious that the registry serves as the engine room of the university operations, from records to admissions office, which is the busiest at this point in time,” he said.

Chukwu encouraged the staff to embrace and leverage

technology wisely.

“Don’t let ChatGPT take over your critical thinking skills. The University of Lagos is technologically driven, through its Future Ready Agenda, has deployed technology innovatively for upskilling and reskilling of staff aimed at improved work ethics and professionalism,” he emphasised.

Abosede Wickcliffe, the registrar at UNILAG, explained that the maiden registry lecture is the culmination of activities that commenced on Tuesday, November 4 with an awareness walk, and a financial literacy seminar the following day.

Wickcliffe emphasised that the digital transformation sweeping through the university signals that the institution is not waiting for the future.

“The University of Lagos is living in the future, and as the custodians of administrative structure, the registry must lead this change.

“We must embrace innovation, uphold integrity and deliver service with excellence and empathy. The time for routine, resistance to change is over. The time for creativity, agility, proactiveness, and accountability is now,” she said.

The event witnessed the unveiling of UNILAG’s Registry Sentinel Magazine, and awards to many deserving staff of the institution.

“Everything good starts with the people and stops with the people. University of Lagos is not brick and mortar, it’s the people within the community, that are making the systems run.

“The registry is about the systems, and record keeping; and professionalism is both a very selfish thing. It’s about you as well as about the institution,” she stressed.

Ogunsola reiterated that people are what they do constantly, hence, she admonished the university staff to embrace good habits in their discharge of duties.

“We’re our habits. So if we form bad habits, when we retire from here, it will come to bite us.

“Professionalism is simply the behaviour and attitude of someone in a work or business environment, and that’s characterised by competence, reliability, and respect,” she noted.

Lucien Chukwu, the immediate past deputy vice-chancellor in charge of management services at UNILAG, and the chairman of the occasion, applauded the registry unit of the university for the theme; “University Administration: The Future is Now”, which he described as a timely and thought-provoking.

He said the theme is a reminder that the future once anticipated is already here.

NIGERIA'S ACCOUNTING PRACTICE, EDUCATION BUNGED BY TALENT RETENTION, COMPETENCE GAPS

CHARLES OGWO



The accounting industry in Nigeria is grappling with a twin crisis, the exodus of skilled professionals and persistent gaps in technical competence.

The profession in Nigeria stands at a turning point, as a growing wave of talent migration, popularly known as “brain drain” or the “Japa” movement, combined with widening skill gaps has created a significant threat to the industry’s future.

Both public and private institutions are feeling the impact, and the consequences go far beyond staffing challenges.

These challenges, experts say, are undermining the quality of financial reporting, weakening institutional

capacity, and exposing deficiencies in accounting education across the country.

Olusegun Vincent, a senior lecturer at Pan Atlantic University (PAU), speaking at the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN) public lecture, held at the University of Lagos (UNILAG), emphasised that talent retention and competence gaps is two critical issues confronting the accounting ecosystem in the country.

“Talent retention is the ability of an organisation to keep a skilled and high-performing employee over time.

“In the accounting profession, it involves ensuring that qualified accountants, auditors, and finance



practitioners remain within the firm, institutions, or the public sector rather than migrating to other industries or countries,” he stressed.

Competence gap refers to the mismatch between skills accountants currently possess and those required to perform effectively in today’s complex business environment.

According to Ekpamfon Akraasi, the financial controller at DormaSigns Limited, many firms face shortages of accountants and financial experts.

“When an organisation lacks talented and competent staff, minimisation of cost becomes impossible,” he said.

“In accounting, we have different branches, reporting, fiduciary, internal control, auditing, taxation, software, and forensic, among others, the ability of the organisation to retain an experts will cost the organisation even more,” he added.

Vincent pointed out that younger professionals seek flexible, self-driving careers leading to high labour turnover in traditional accounting firms.

However, continuous professional development is often lacking, especially in non-professional practice companies. This, he said, is a major issue confronting practice.

“If you go to any firm that is very active, you will be told that the major crisis currently is lack of

manpower. People will weep that we operate a medium firm when data skills are in the hands of people. As we are claiming, after two years the guy is leaving.

For either CWC, Ernst & Young, Deloitte, or KPMG. Because they want them to take them abroad and start running. And we have wasted, we have spent resources on these firms.

“And this is to attest to the fact that currently there is a competence gap in this profession. The Spanish agribusiness talent. As we do for exactly several million firms that have trained themselves,” he said.

Nonetheless, the university don believes that the accounting profession is still a very lucrative profession, provided one has the experience, capabilities, and skills.

Sanmi Akintunde, an accountant, speaking on the effects of talents exit from organisations, said, “When experienced staff exit, firms lose institutional knowledge, leading to weaker audit quality and higher risks of errors.”

Akintunde emphasised that skills fall behind because of obsolete curriculum, lack of investment on technology and over focus on compliance, among others.



“Accounting education in many tertiary institutions and even some professional training programmes are slow to update their content to cover critical modern fields like data analytics, cybersecurity assurance, and environmental, social, and governance reporting.

“Training often prioritises rote memorisation and compliance with existing standards over developing higher-order skills such as critical thinking, risk assessment, strategic communication, and complex problem-solving,” he noted.

In addition, he said, “Many firms and businesses, particularly SMEs, do not invest in advanced accounting software, enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems, or data visualisation tools, leaving their staff technically underdeveloped.”

Akrasi reiterated that the possible reasons for talents retention and competence gaps include poor reward and compensation system, poor succession plan, and advancement opportunities.

Others are toxic work environment, unbearable workload, and poor technological advancement. The way forward

Akrasi urges organisations to make the reward and compensation system competitive, encourages flexible work arrangement, and introduction of a remote system.

Besides, he advocates for a well explained and implemented promotion procedures and structure.

“Training should be encouraged at all levels, and on the job assessment should also be encouraged,” he noted.

For Akintunde, organisations should create workplaces where young professionals can thrive, equipping practitioners with digital-age skills, and promoting a culture of innovation and ethics,

“We can reposition the accounting profession as a cornerstone of Nigeria’s economic future,” he said.

THE MEMORY LOOP: WHY BRANDS KEEP TALKING

FEYISITAN IJIMAKINWA

In an ever-increasing competitive market, continuous advertising reinforcements cannot be underestimated in building brand recognition. It's a strategic approach that ensures consumers are constantly reminded of the brand's existence, benefits, and unique features. This continuous bombardment of advertising and promotional messages increases the probability of the brand being top-of-mind when the consumer reaches the buying decision stage.

Continuous advertising reinforcements refer to the regular and consistent presentation of brand messages through various advertising channels. It could be through traditional media like television, radio, print, and billboards or through digital channels such as email marketing, social media, search engine marketing, content marketing, and more. The goal is to create consistent and repeated exposure to the brand's messaging, thereby imprinting the brand in the minds of the consumers.

This strategy provides a competitive edge for brands in several ways. First, it builds brand familiarity and recognition, which is crucial in crowded marketplaces. Maintaining a consistent presence in the consumer's environment makes the brand easily recognisable. This recognition is often a significant factor in consumers' purchase decisions, as people tend to choose brands they are familiar with. Secondly, continuous advertising reinforcements help to communicate and reiterate the brand's unique selling proposition (USP). Each ad allows the brand to remind consumers why it is better than its competitors – whether due to superior quality, innovative features, better prices, stellar customer service, or other differentiating factors. By continuously emphasising these points of difference, the brand can stick in the minds of consumers, increasing the chances of selection at the point of purchase.

Thirdly, this advertising strategy fosters stronger emotional connections with the brand. The more consumers are exposed to brand communications, the more they develop feelings and attachments toward the brand. These emotional connections can motivate consumer behavior and drive brand loyalty.

Every brand lives inside a loop of memory. People notice, remember, forget, and rediscover. It is not a straight line from awareness to loyalty; it is a circle that must be completed over and over again. Most brands assume that once people know them, the work is done. In truth, that is when the real work begins.

Memory is not permanent. It is fragile, slippery, and deeply emotional. We remember what matters to us, not what merely exists. The brain filters out most of what it sees each day. Think about how many logos, ads, and taglines you encounter in a single morning. Maybe a hundred. By lunchtime, you have forgotten ninety-five of them. The few that stick are the ones that managed to connect meaning to repetition.

This is the essence of the memory loop. Every time a brand advertises, it reclaims a spot in the mental landscape. It reminds people that it still exists and still matters. The more often that message appears, the more likely it is to become instinctive. You do not think about which beverage brand to buy or which search engine to use; the answer rises automatically because your brain has been trained to supply it. Advertising is the rehearsal that keeps that reflex alive.

Coca Cola knows this. Nike knows it. Apple knows it. They do not advertise to inform; they advertise to reinforce. Each time Nike tells us to "Just do it," it is not about shoes—it is about identity. Each time Apple shows a photo taken on an iPhone, it is not about pixels—it is about creativity and belonging. Each repetition deepens the groove in memory, carving out space that competitors cannot easily enter.

Even the most powerful brands cannot rely on history alone. Attention is a living thing, and it constantly moves toward what feels new. That is why advertising never really stops; it evolves. It is the process of translating old familiarity into fresh relevance. When Coke updates its holiday campaign, when Nike launches a new athlete story, when Apple releases a minimalist spot that feels nothing like last year's, they are performing maintenance on the same loop. They are polishing the memory so it stays bright.

Silence, on the other hand, lets dust settle. The loop does not freeze; it weakens. Without repetition, the emotional bond begins to loosen. People may still recognise the name, but it no longer occupies a clear place in their minds. Recognition without recall is the slow death of a brand. Once the loop breaks, rebuilding it costs far more than maintaining it ever did.

Advertising, then, is not an act of persuasion—it is an act of preservation. It keeps the brand's meaning active in culture and in consciousness. It keeps the story moving so that when a person reaches for a product, the choice feels natural rather than forced. Brands that understand this do not shout endlessly; they simply keep the conversation going.

Last line

In the end, the brands that talk the most are not insecure. They are awake. They understand that memory is a garden that must be tended. Stop tending it, and it overgrows with someone else's story.



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

THE ECONOMICS OF ART: CAN AFRICA BUILD A CREATIVE INDUSTRY?

Africa's creative economy is booming, but many wonder if it is sustainable. Across the continent, artists are redefining what it means to create, sell, and live off their craft. From bustling art fairs in Lagos and Cape Town to digital creators in Nairobi and Accra, the art scene is alive and ambitious. Yet, questions linger: can Africa turn creativity into real economic power?

For decades, art was seen as cultural expression, not economic value. That mindset is shifting fast. The global art market is worth over \$65 billion (Statista, 2024), and African artists are finally claiming a share. Auction houses like Christie's and Sotheby's now showcase African talent. International collectors are investing heavily in African art.

But for this growth to last, Africa must build a structured, sustainable creative industry. The continent needs investment, policy support, and local art ecosystems that value artists as entrepreneurs, not hobbyists. In this digest, we will discuss the rising value of African art, the challenges and opportunities in the art industry and how we can build a sustainable art economy.



This digest is brought to you by Patrons MCAA. Think African art, think Patrons. Patrons is Africa's leading art advisory and dealership firm with deep expertise in African art, helping private and corporate art collectors diversify their wealth through art collection, appraisal, packaging & transportation, storage, insurance, maintenance, and restoration. Purchase or general inquiry? Reach out: art@patronsmcaa.com.

TOP PICKS FROM OUR COLLECTION



Title: Visionary
Artist: Aza Mansongi
Medium: Acrylic & oil painting on cotton canvas, collage
Dimensions: 12 x 12 in | 30 x 30 cm
Available on Request



Title: Grain de folie
Artist: Falhonne Ogoun
Medium: Acrylic and pastel oil on canvas
Dimensions: 27.56 x 27.56 in | 70 x 70 cm
Available on Request



Title: Horn of Time
 Artist: Adeola Balogun (PhD.)
 Medium: Mixed media sculpture
 Dimensions: 27 x 14 x 6 in | 69 x 36 x 15 cm
 Available on Request

The Rising Value of African Art

African art is no longer confined to galleries. It's in tech, fashion, music, and film. Countries like Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya, and Ghana are leading this new cultural wave. Art fairs such as Art X Lagos and Investec Cape Town Art Fair attract international audiences and investors. But economic success depends on more than talent. Infrastructure, fair markets, and intellectual property protection are crucial. Many African artists still struggle with access to global platforms, reliable pricing systems, and copyright laws. Without these, profits flow abroad while artists remain underpaid. Governments and private investors must build frameworks that help creative industries grow locally.

Challenges and Opportunities

One major challenge is funding. According to UNESCO's Creative Economy Report (UNESCO, 2023), Africa contributes less than 1% to the global creative economy. This low figure isn't from a lack of creativity—it's from limited investment. Banks and investors rarely see art as a viable business.

However, digital platforms are changing that. Online galleries, NFT marketplaces, and social media have opened new opportunities for African artists. The rise of creative hubs in Lagos, Nairobi, and Kigali shows that young Africans are ready to innovate. These hubs provide training, access to markets, and collaboration spaces that encourage entrepreneurship.

Building a Sustainable Creative Economy

For Africa to build a true creative industry, collaboration is key. Governments must support art education, creative funding, and copyright laws. Private sectors should invest in cultural infrastructure—galleries, art schools, and tech incubators. And artists themselves must treat creativity as both passion and business.

If these systems align, Africa's creative economy could rival global giants. The continent doesn't lack talent—it needs structure, access, and belief in its creative worth.



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

X-RAYING THE 2025 THE BEST FIFA FOOTBALL AWARDS NOMINEES

ANTHONY NLEBEM



FIFA has announced the shortlist for The Best FIFA Football Awards 2025, celebrating the standout players, coaches, and goalkeepers in both men's and women's football.

The awards honour achievements between August 11, 2024, and August 2, 2025, across six categories: The Best Men's Player, Men's Coach, Men's Goalkeeper, Women's Player, Women's Coach, and Women's Goalkeeper.

Fans around the world can now cast their votes to determine the winners, alongside national team captains, coaches, and journalists.

Last year, Real Madrid forward Vinícius Júnior was crowned The Best FIFA Men's Player, ahead of Manchester City midfielder Rodri and Jude Bellingham from Real Madrid. The women's categories also promise fierce competition this year, with a mix of established stars and rising talents.

The Best FIFA Men's Player

The 11-player shortlist features a blend of global icons and emerging stars:

Kylian Mbappé (Real Madrid), Harry Kane (Bayern Munich), Mohamed Salah (Liverpool), Lamine Yamal (Barcelona), Cole Palmer (Chelsea), Pedri (Barcelona), Ousmane Dembélé (PSG), Achraf Hakimi (PSG), Vitorinha (PSG) and others.

The Best FIFA Men's Coach

Leading tacticians nominated include:

Mikel Arteta (Arsenal), Enzo Maresca (Chelsea), Luis Enrique (PSG), Hansi Flick (Barcelona), Roberto Martínez (Portugal), Javier Aguirre (Mexico), and Arne Slot (Liverpool).

The Best FIFA Men's Goalkeeper

A competitive field of shot-stoppers featuring:

Alisson Becker (Liverpool), Thibaut Courtois (Real Madrid), Emiliano Martínez (Aston Villa), David Raya (Arsenal), and Manuel Neuer (Bayern Munich).

The Best FIFA Women's Player

Headlined by world champions and elite performers:

Aitana Bonmatí (Barcelona), Alexia Putellas (Barcelona), Lauren James, Lucy Bronze, Alessia Russo, Leah Williamson (England), Temwa Chawinga (Malawi), and Kadidiatou Diani (France).

The Best FIFA Women's Coach

The nominees include some of the game's most influential minds:

Sarina Wiegman (England), Sonia Bompastor (Chelsea), Renée Slegers (Arsenal), Jonatan Giráldez (Washington Spirit/Olympique Lyonnais), and Seb Hines (Orlando Pride).

The Best FIFA Women's Goalkeeper

Nigeria's Chiamaka Nnadozie makes history with her nomination after a stellar season with Paris FC and Brighton.

Other nominees: Cata Coll (Barcelona), Ann-Katrin Berger (Gotham FC), Hannah Hampton (Chelsea), and Christiane Endler (Lyon).

The winners of The Best FIFA Football Awards 2025 will be unveiled at a gala later this year, celebrating excellence, consistency, and impact across the global game.



THE PRICE OF RAGE

UDY OSARO-EDOBOR



Mark Bello was a man who had everything that made life beautiful... a thriving business, a fine home and a family many envied. But behind the gates of his grand mansion was a storm called Agatha, his wife of twenty-five years.

Agatha was not an easy woman. Her temper could light up an entire city and her words were sharper than a sword. She had a way of turning peace into chaos. Every little disagreement became a full-blown war. Mark endured it for years until endurance itself became a burden.

Then came Tiana, young, graceful and kind hearted. She wasn't just a breath of fresh air; she was a whole new season of love and light. She made Mark laugh again, gave him peace and reminded him what it meant to be happy. Even his children, tired of their mother's endless drama embraced Tiana. For the first time in a long while, Mark looked alive. His friends even said he looked ten years younger.

But happiness came with a price. Agatha's fury was nothing short of thunder. She called Tiana a home wrecker, a gold digger, a child who thought beauty could buy her class. She wanted to reap where she did not sow. She swore to deal with both of them and she didn't care who heard her. Some neighbors even said they heard her threaten to "burn them with acid."

The last straw came when Mark handed the COO position of one of their companies, a company Agatha had helped him build from scratch to Tiana. That betrayal cut deeper than any insult ever could. Agatha saw it as war and she wasn't one to lose battles easily.

Tiana on her part, was caught between love and fear. She never wanted problems; she just wanted peace. But peace was impossible when Agatha was breathing. The older woman's rage grew daily and so did the tension around Mark's home.

Then tragedy struck.

One night, Mark was found in his car, bleeding from gunshot wounds. Neighbors rushed him to the hospital but he died before they got there. The city went cold. The news spread like wildfire. And everyone had one name on their lips... Agatha.

The police wasted no time. She was arrested, questioned and paraded as the jealous wife who had finally lost control. Every threat she ever made came back to haunt her. Even her children turned their backs, believing their mother had finally done the unthinkable. But Agatha's alibi was solid and when the evidence didn't hold, the case was dropped. Still, the stain on her name remained.

Tiana inherited the company Mark had left her and for a while, it seemed she would honor his memory. But as months passed, power began to corrupt her. The sweet, soft-spoken girl turned arrogant and reckless. She fired staff without cause, humiliated people in meetings and spent the company's money on luxury bags, wigs, vacations, and parties.

People started whispering again. Maybe she had killed Mark after all. Maybe that was her plan all along. But the police could prove nothing. Eventually, her empire collapsed. Within three years, she was broke, bitter and forgotten.

Meanwhile, Agatha rebuilt her life. She was still fiery but her pain had carved wisdom into her soul. Her children however, never forgave her. They still believed she killed their father. When they stopped visiting, she told herself, "Children are not only those you birth. Sometimes love births new ones." So, she adopted two little girls who filled her house with laughter and her heart with peace.

Then, five years later, her past came knocking again. One afternoon, Agatha was relaxing with her adopted daughters when her housekeeper announced that the police were at the door. Fear gripped her chest — not again. She asked them to come in, her voice calm but trembling.

The officers apologized for coming unannounced. Then they shared a story that made her knees weak.

A young lady had reported her violent boyfriend. During his drunken rants, he had threatened to kill her if she left him, then he boasted about killing a rich man years ago, he was his ex-girlfriend's lover. He would brag that he got away with murder once and he would do it again. When he finally mentioned the names "Mark Bello and Tiana," the girl realized it wasn't just drunken talk. It was a true story she had read in blogs. She ran straight to the police.

The young man was arrested and after hours of interrogation, he confessed. He had indeed killed Chief Mark Bello in a fit of jealousy and greed. He thought Tiana would come back to him if Mark was gone. But things didn't play out the way he thought.

When Tiana was brought in to identify him, she was shocked and scared when she saw him. She confirmed he was her ex, the same man who had once threatened her life. She wept as the truth about her late lover finally came out.

Agatha was cleared once and for all. The man was charged to court, found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment. The news spread like wildfire again but this time, it washed away years of suspicion. It turned out Agatha was all bark and no bite. Loud and full of threats but she never had it in her to harm anyone. And Tiana on the other hand was a poor child... too young and foolish to handle the world that had landed in her lap.

And in her carelessness, she had mismanaged everything.

Agatha's children came back to her one by one. Each apology was heavy with tears. They had judged her too quickly, condemned her without proof and they were very sorry. Agatha forgave them, but not without her signature sharp tongue.

"I forgive you," she said, "but I'll punish each of you, one after the other."

They laughed through their tears, knowing it was just another one of Mommy's harmless barks.

Life finally gave Agatha what it had long denied her — peace. She had lost, she had suffered but in the end, the truth had spoken for her.

The world now saw her differently, not as the villain but as a woman whose loud voice was only a cry for love in a world that misunderstood her.

Agatha lived the rest of her days with her two adopted girls, smiling again and content.

Sometimes, what sounds like chaos is just a heart fighting to be understood.



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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WEEKENDER

MOVIE REVIEW

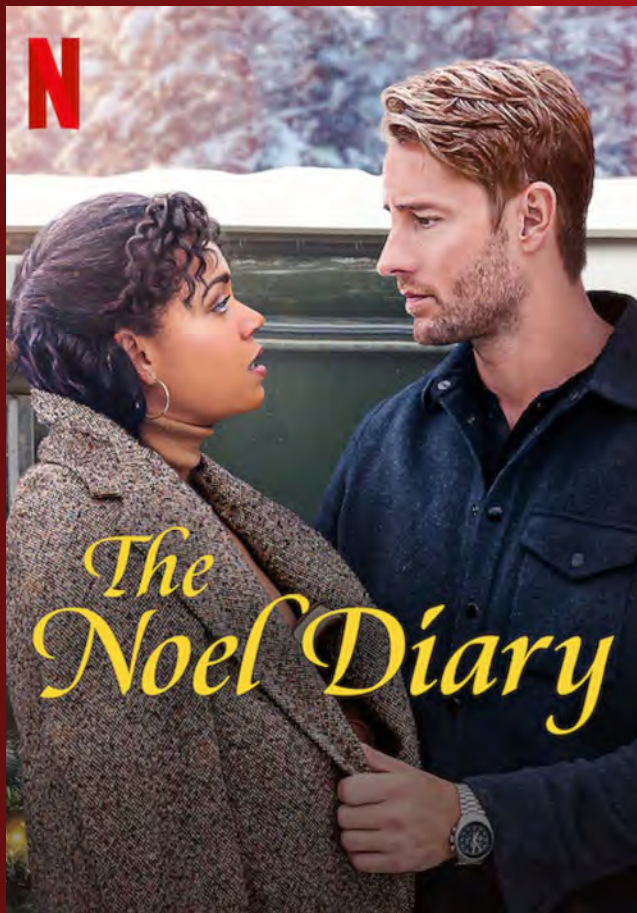
BALLAD OF A SMALL PLAYER (2025)

Lord Doyle was a slick, ambitious, greedy gambler, he actually didn't know when to stop, he had gambled everything he had to the point of living in debt, he owed everyone, the hotel, the car companies, his debt was running into thousands almost millions and yet Doyle kept believing his big win will still come. Doyle was going to stop at nothing till he wins, Doyle decided to borrow more funds, by acquiring a new credit card from Dao Ming. You will need to watch his movie to find out if this loan was able to save Lord Doyle, was he able to use the funds appropriately, did he win or lose and how was he able to manage all the debt collectors who were after him? The 101m crime, drama, thriller movie was directed by Edward Berger, they featured actors like Colin Farrell, Fala Chen, Deanie Ip, Alex Jennings, Tida Swinton etc.



THE NOEL DIARY (2022)

Welcome to my first Christmas movie for 2025, like many of you reading this and wondering where 2025 went to, I hate to break to you, you are not alone, I feel the same way too, I can't believe how fast 2025 have gone by, and just like yesterday, we are winding down this year and the major way to know that the year is ending, is by new the new Christmas movies on Netflix and Christmas decorations on the streets. Well to the movie just like every other Christmas movie this is also centered around love and romance. Jacob Tuner was a famous writer and a New York best Seller; he lost his only brother while he was 4 years old and this singular act cause a bad rift in his family driving his parents apart. One faithful day Jacob receives a call from his mother's lawyer, who called to inform him about coming to take over his mother's property, informing him of her demise, he had no clue that she was gone, as he was away from her for a long while, Jacob still in shock, must travel home right away to fix things. You will need to check out this simple, sweet movie to find out how his simple visit to his childhood home quickly transcends to another level as he meets Rachel who had come to his mother's house to look for her lost mom who was once their nanny 35 years ago. The 100m romance/comedy movie was directed by Charles Shyer, they featured actors like Justin Hartley, Barret Doss, Essence Atkins, Bonnie Betellia, James Remer etc.



27 NIGHTS (2025)

Martha is an 83 years old lady who was full of life, she loved to give, party and have fun, but this didn't really go well with her 2 daughters, her daughters felt that she could have lived a better life, calm, quiet and even more conversative but that didn't occur. In order to gain possession of the family assets, funds and properties the two sisters must prove that their mother wasn't of sound mind, so that she could be hospitalized and control given to them, the two daughters will go to any length to win this case even if it meant making things up about their mom. Martha must prove that she was of sound mind to continue to have control of her hard-earned wealth. This story was based on a true-life event as the main character in reality went on to live to 104 years old. The 108m Argentinian, drama, comedy, social issues, Film based on a book was directed by Daniel Hendler, they featured actors like Daniel Hendler, Marilu Marini, Humberto Tortonese, Julieta Zylberberg, Paula Grinszpam. Carla Peterson etc.



WEEKEND QUOTES



1

Trying is an act of faith.
Demonstrate faith!
.....WhispersbyTEN

3

Bury the shame and aim for what you
desire. You just may hit the target
.....WhispersbyTEN

2

Anything, absolutely anything can be
amazing. Invest time and demonstrate
resilience!
.....WhispersbyTEN

4

Family is important and everything they
say. Connection within a family is the life
wire
.....WhispersbyTENTEN