

BUSINESS DAY WEEKENDER

EDITION 291 | 9, MAY 2026

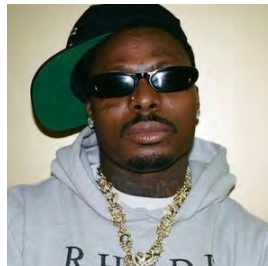


LAGOS ON A PLATE: BIG MOMENTS FROM THE 2026 GTCO FOOD & DRINK FESTIVAL



SPORTS

From Lagos to WrestleMania: How Nigeria's Oba Femi Conquered WWE



ENTERTAINMENT

Asake's 'M\$NEY' breaks streaming records in Nigeria

PUBLISHER/EDITOR IN CHIEF
Frank Aigbogun

EDITOR
Lolade Akinmurele

FOUNDING EDITOR BD WEEKENDER
Lehlé Balde

DEPUTY EDITOR BD WEEKENDER
Ifeoma Okeke-Korieocha

CHIEF SALES AND MARKETING OFFICER
Ijeoma Ude

ADVERTISEMENT MANAGER
Queen Nkwocha

COPY SALES MANAGER
Florence Kadiri

DIGITAL SALES MANAGER
Linda Ochugbua

HEAD OF DIGITALS
Nduka Asoh

DESIGN AND ART DIRECTION
Emmanuel Odo
(officialedenis@gmail.com)

CONTRIBUTORS

Linda Ochugbua
Chisom Michael
Feyisitan Ijimakinwa
Esther Emoekpere
Udy Osaro - Edobor
Anthony Udugba
Chinonye Isidienu
Anthony Nlebem
Charlse Ogwo

ENQUIRIES

weekender@businessday.ng

ADVERTS

Ijeoma Ude
+2348033225506

PUBLISHED BY

BusinessDay Media Limited
6A George Street, off
Mobolaji Johnson Street, Ikoyi
01-2799100
www.businessday.ng

LEGAL ADVISERS

The Law Union

BUSINESS DAY
WEEKENDER

C O N T E N T



5

LAUGHTER IN THE MIRROR-



12

INTERVIEW

How Adetoun Otepola is Shaping Africa's Future and Economic Growth Through ABLS



31

LIFESTYLE

The Art of Liquid Scents: Inside the Sensory Revolution at Lagos' Newest 'Senbar'

35

EDUCATION

Anambra, Imo, Enugu top unity schools' 2026/2027 quota-based cut-off marks

43

GLOBAL

How Crestal Group corporate upgrade bridges gap between African production, global markets

51

BRANDS

Differentiating Brand Strategy, Marketing Strategy and Comms Strategy

55

BOOK REVIEW

Pure Water: A Powerful Story of Hustle, Faith And African Entrepreneurship

59

MOVIE REVIEW

61

BD QUOTES



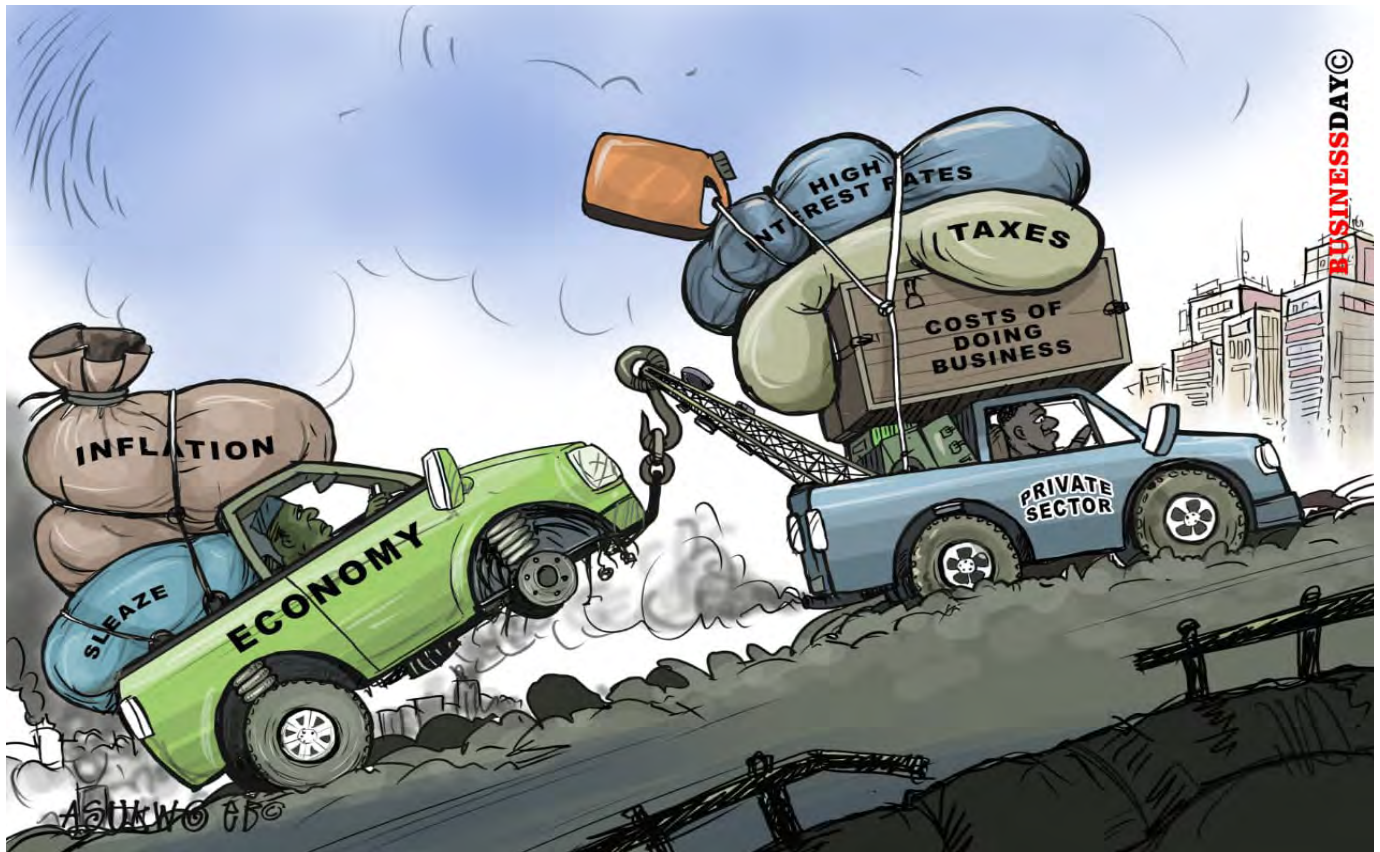


An increasing number of top Nigerian companies use Businessday group subscription to enhance performance and achieve corporate goals.

Gain unlimited access to our award-winning insights and analysis, and empower your organization with the political, economic, and business knowledge you need.

Subscribe to our corporate digital subscription package today to stay informed with trusted news wherever you go.

BUSINESSDAY©



LAGOS ON A PLATE: BIG MOMENTS FROM THE 2026 GTCO FOOD & DRINK FESTIVAL

IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA



For 72 hours, the air along Water Corporation Drive, Oniru, was thick with the scent of Thai spices, Chicago barbecue, and the aroma of home-grown Nigerian food.

The 9th GTCO Food and Drink Festival did not only feed the thousands who visited; it also nourished the creative spirit of over 200 vendors and connected Lagos to the farthest corners of the global culinary map.

The festival remains a strategic engine for Nigeria's MSME sector. Segun Agbaje, Group CEO of GTCO Plc, captured the event's essence:

"The festival is a living expression of innovation and enterprise that is accessible to all. What makes this platform special is its humanity—it breaks barriers and builds connections that extend far beyond the event itself."

Global Culinary Classroom

The festival's legendary masterclasses offered participants a "passport" to global flavors without leaving Lagos: The Foundations: The journey began with Dylan Eitharong

demystifying the architecture of Thai curries, while Begoña Rodrigo painted a "Mediterranean landscape" on the plate with her L'albufera session.

The Science of Taste

Day two saw Taiji Maruyama take a deep dive into dashi and umami, the invisible pillars of Japanese cuisine. Arbinder Dugal brought the immersive "Dum Pukht" biryani experience to life, while Saúl Montiel injected the bold, spicy energy of Mexico into the room.

The Master Technique

On the final day, the intensity shifted to the pits and the patisserie. Chicago-born pitmaster Dominique Leach shared the secrets of authentic American BBQ, while Jean-Baptiste Ascione demonstrated the surgical precision of classic French techniques.

Perhaps the most talked-about session was led by world-renowned sommelier and winemaker André Hueston Mack. Under the theme "Wine: A Condiment to Life," Mack shattered the "snobbery" often associated with the vine.

“Wine is merely grape juice with a compelling narrative,” Mack told a capacity crowd. From a humorous breakdown of fermentation—which he famously described as “yeast pooping alcohol”—to teaching the “swirl and smell” technique, Mack proved that whether a bottle costs \$3 or \$3 million, the goal is the same: pleasure and connection.

A Sensory Success

With free admission and a vibrant marketplace, the festival echoed the industry truth that we “eat first with our eyes.”

For the local bakers like Dera Oluyede and Kemi Anazodo, who taught the art of the perfect cinnamon roll, the festival was more than a fair—it was a launchpad.

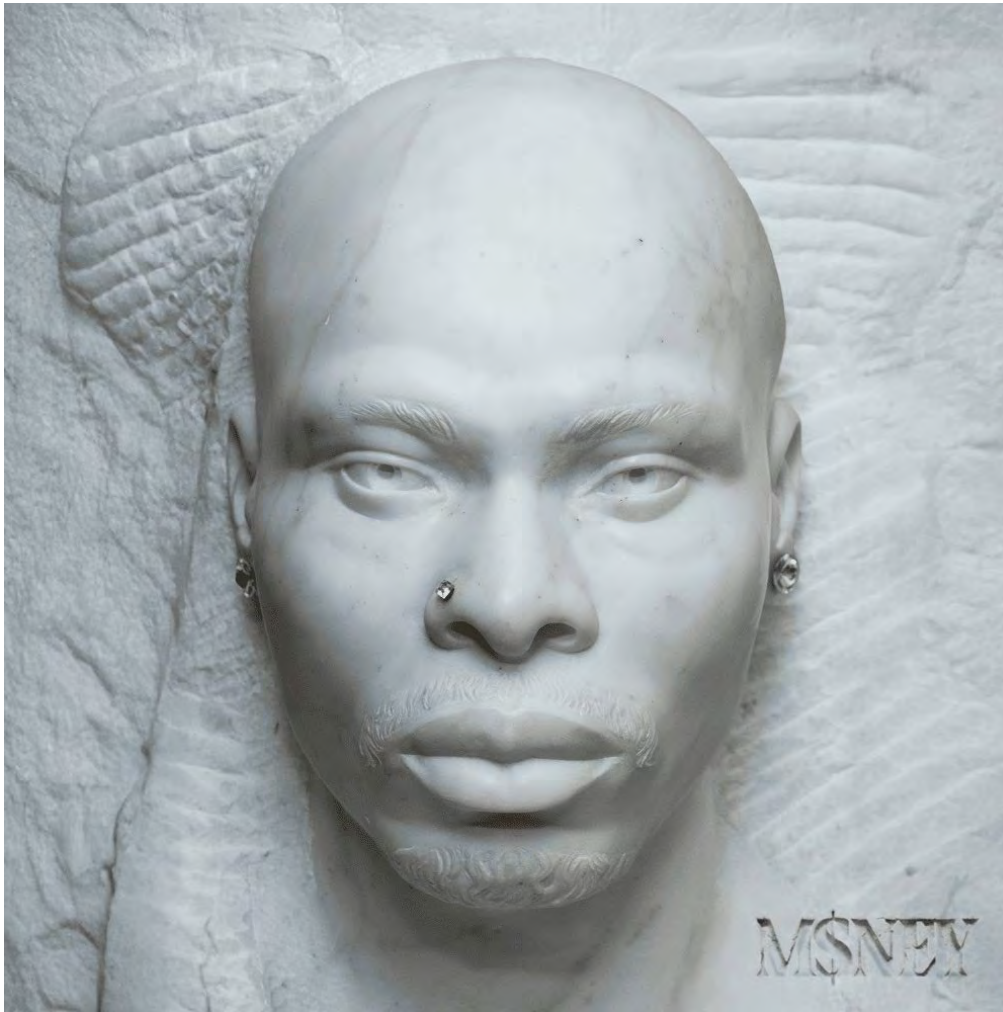
As the curtains fell on May 3rd, it was clear that GTCO has successfully turned a “food fair” into a cultural bridge, proving that in the world of business, there is no language more universal than a well-cooked meal.



ASAKE'S 'M\$NEY' BREAKS STREAMING RECORDS IN NIGERIA.

ANTHONY UDUGBA





M\$NEY has started at a higher level. Spotify Nigeria data shows it achieved 10 million streams within the first 24 hours of release. Globally, the album recorded more than 13 million streams on day one and reached number one on Apple Music charts in markets including the United Kingdom.

After two weeks, M\$NEY set a new record for the biggest streaming week for any album in Spotify Nigeria history, surpassing Wizkid's Morayo.

Asake has expanded his reach through international collaborations. On Lungu Boy, he worked with US artist Travis Scott on the track "Active", UK rappers Stormzy and Central Cee, and Brazilian singer Ludmilla. These features supported higher positions on UK Albums

Asake released his fourth studio album, M\$NEY, on May 1, 2026. The project has generated strong immediate demand, with listeners sharing reactions across social media platforms. The album builds on a steady rise in commercial performance.

Asake's 2022 debut, Mr. Money With The Vibe, entered at number one on the TurnTable aggregated chart in Nigeria. It recorded approximately 15 million streams in its first week and reached number 66 on the US Billboard 200. In 2023, Work of Art opened with more than 38 million streams in Nigeria during its first week, according to TurnTable Charts, indicating faster growth in his audience.

His 2024 album, Lungu Boy, marked a further step. It became the first African album to reach number one on the Global Spotify Debut Chart. The project recorded over 42 million streams in its first week in Nigeria and spent 15 weeks at the top of the domestic charts.

and Billboard charts.

On M\$NEY, he continued this approach with French producer DJ Snake, French-Congolese artist Tiakola, and South African producer Kabza De Small. The album combines Asake's Yoruba vocals with elements of hip-hop, EDM, and amapiano.

The consistent increase in first-week and opening-day numbers reflects growing demand for Asake's music both inside and outside Nigeria. Industry observers note his ability to maintain domestic dominance while broadening appeal in global markets through targeted features and genre blends.

M\$NEY arrives at a time when Nigerian artists are competing for larger shares of streaming revenue and international playlist placements. The early performance suggests the album is on track to rank among the most successful projects in the country's streaming era.

FROM LAGOS TO WRESTLEMANIA: HOW NIGERIA'S OBA FEMI CONQUERED WWE

ANTHONY NLEBEM



In the world of professional wrestling, legends are not merely born; they are forged under the unforgiving lights of the squared circle. On Sunday, April 19, at WrestleMania 42, the global audience witnessed the emphatic coronation of a new king.

Oba Femi, born Isaac Odugbesan in Lagos, delivered one of the most stunning performances in recent wrestling history, dismantling 10-time champion Brock Lesnar in under five minutes. The 6-foot-6, 310-pound powerhouse did more than win; he forced “The Beast” into a symbolic retreat, as Lesnar left his boots in the ring, a long-standing signal of retirement.

From Grace for a Legend

The victory carried both physical and symbolic weight. Executing his devastating “Fall From Grace” powerbomb, Oba Femi achieved what many deemed impossible: he humanised an athlete long portrayed as indestructible.

Days before the bout, Oba Femi, also called ‘The Ruler’, told CNN’s Larry Madowo: “I’ve idolised him, I’ve villainised him... at WrestleMania, I’ll humanise him.” Inside the ring, that declaration became reality.

For Oba Femi, “The Ruler” is more than a persona; it is a doctrine. His finishing move represents the stripping of an opponent’s standing, a decisive fall from favour. For Lesnar, that fall was swift, brutal, and historic.

A Generational Shift in WWE

Oba Femi’s triumph signals more than a personal milestone; it marks a clear generational transition within WWE.

In just three months on the main roster following a dominant run as NXT Champion, the Lagos-born Nigerian wrestler has rapidly evolved into a main-event force. His blend of raw power, athleticism, and ring intelligence has redefined expectations of a modern heavyweight performer.



That dominance was reinforced on Monday Night Raw, where he dispatched Otis with clinical efficiency, controlling the bout from start to finish before sealing victory with his trademark move.

Despite criticism from some quarters describing his matches as “one-sided booking”, Oba Femi’s undefeated streak in weekly open challenges continues to solidify his credibility. Each performance reinforces a narrative of controlled destruction, power fused with precision.

Analyst Drake Riggs described his latest outing as a “brilliant squash match,” noting that Oba Femi is already “a made man” whose aura requires little further validation.

Built in Lagos: The Making of ‘The Ruler’

Beyond the spectacle lies a deeper narrative rooted in resilience and identity.

Born and raised in Lagos, Oba Femi credits Nigeria’s demanding environment for shaping his mentality. “If you can survive there, you can survive anywhere,” he said, echoing the popular phrase “Naija no dey carry last.”

His Yoruba heritage has also played a defining role, instilling discipline, respect, and a sense of cultural pride that resonates with audiences worldwide.

Before stepping into wrestling, Oba Femi excelled in athletics at the University of Alabama, where he became a standout shot putter. He won multiple Southeastern



Conference titles and set a school record with a throw of 20.7 metres, credentials that underpin his explosive in-ring capabilities.

Though Olympic ambitions once beckoned, wrestling has provided a broader stage, one he is now commanding with authority.

From Idol to Conqueror

Oba Femi’s clash with Lesnar was as personal as it was professional. Having grown up idolising the WWE icon, he framed the encounter as a symbolic passing of the torch.

The Future of the Empire

At just 28, Oba Femi is already being positioned as the defining figure of WWE’s next era. Yet his ambitions extend beyond championships.

“I just want to be that symbol of emotional attachment for some young child watching right now,” he said. “So when they grow up, they can say, ‘I remember watching Oba Femi.’”

With a decisive victory over one of wrestling’s most decorated figures, an undefeated run, and a rapidly expanding global profile, Oba Femi is no longer just Nigeria’s biggest WWE export; he is emerging as the face of its future.

The reign of “The Ruler” has just begun.

HOW ADETOUN OTEPOLA IS SHAPING AFRICA'S FUTURE AND ECONOMIC GROWTH THROUGH ABLs





With over three decades of excellence in the real estate sector, Adetoun Otepolo has built a career on the principles of structure, value, and long-term vision. As the Founder of Solid Foundation Group, she has navigated the complexities of property development and facility management across Nigeria. However, her latest project—the Africa Business Leadership Summit (ABLS)—is designed to address a different kind of “structural defect”: the gap between high-level dialogue and actionable leadership transformation across the continent.

Otepolo recognizes that while Africa is rich in entrepreneurial energy, it often lacks the institutional systems required to scale beyond the founder. Through ABLS, she is convening a high-caliber intersection of policymakers, C-suite executives, and innovators to move beyond inspiration and into the “Dual Vision” required for continental success—balancing short-term survival with long-term strategic growth.

In this interview with IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA, Otepolo discusses how ABLS is bridging the gap in the current business ecosystem, the roadmap for institutionalizing African excellence, and why the next decade belongs to leaders who trade national boundaries for continental relevance.

Africa’s business landscape is evolving rapidly. How would you describe the current state of leadership across key sectors on the continent?

Africa is entering one of the most defining leadership transitions in its economic history, a shift from survival-driven leadership to transformation-driven leadership. Across sectors like fintech, manufacturing, agriculture, telecommunications, energy, and the creative economy, there is a growing class of leaders who are no longer thinking only within national borders but are building with continental relevance in mind.

What stands out today is resilience. African business leaders have had to navigate inflation, currency volatility, infrastructure gaps, policy inconsistencies, and global economic shocks simultaneously. That environment has produced leaders who are adaptive, resourceful, and highly innovative.

At the same time, there is still a noticeable gap between ambition and institutional capacity. Many businesses remain heavily founder-dependent, and leadership systems are often not yet strong enough to support sustainable scale. So while the continent is rich in entrepreneurial energy, the next phase requires stronger governance, succession planning, strategic execution, and cross-border collaboration.

The encouraging shift is that African leadership conversations are becoming more future-focused. Leaders are increasingly discussing digital transformation, regional trade, AI, sustainability, talent development, and long-term economic positioning, not just short-term operational challenges.

What macroeconomic or structural shifts is most influencing how African business leaders operate today?

Several major shifts are redefining how African leaders operate. First is the rise of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which is changing how businesses think about market access, regional expansion, and intra-African trade opportunities. Leaders are now being pushed to think continentally rather than nationally.

Second is the rapid acceleration of technology and digital adoption. Across industries, digital transformation is no longer optional. Businesses are being forced to rethink customer engagement, operations, payments, logistics, and workforce structures.

Third is demographic change. Africa has one of the youngest populations globally, which presents both an opportunity and a pressure point. Leaders must build businesses capable of creating meaningful opportunities for Africa’s growing youth population while remaining innovative and responsive to a younger, digitally native consumer base.



There is also the reality of economic volatility. Inflation, foreign exchange instability, debt pressures, and global supply chain disruptions are forcing leaders to become more agile and financially strategic.

Despite growing opportunities, many African businesses struggle to scale. What do you see as the underlying leadership or strategic gaps driving this?

One of the biggest gaps is the absence of scalable systems. Many businesses are built around the founder's personal capacity rather than institutional structures. That works at an early stage, but it becomes a limitation when growth demands delegation, governance, and operational consistency.

Another issue is short-term thinking. Because many businesses operate in unstable environments, leaders often focus heavily on immediate survival instead of long-term strategic positioning. That can limit investment in innovation, talent development, research, and market expansion.

There is also a gap in cross-border strategy. Africa has immense market potential, but many businesses still lack the operational readiness, partnerships, and regulatory understanding needed to scale across multiple African markets.

Access to capital is part of the conversation, but capital alone is not the problem. In many cases, businesses struggle because leadership teams are not adequately prepared for scaling complexities such as corporate governance, risk management, data-driven decision-making, or organizational culture management.

The next generation of African business growth will depend not only on visionary founders but on leaders who can build enduring institutions.

Do you think African business leaders are adequately prepared for global competition? Why or why not?

There is progress, but preparation remains uneven.

Many African leaders are exceptionally innovative because they have built businesses under conditions that require constant adaptability. In several sectors, particularly fintech, entertainment, logistics, and telecommunications, African companies are already competing globally and attracting international attention.

However, global competitiveness requires more than innovation. It also requires strong systems, policy alignment, infrastructure, research capacity, global partnerships, and leadership depth.

One challenge is that many businesses still operate reactively rather than strategically. Global competition rewards businesses that can scale efficiently, maintain standards, leverage data, and build internationally trusted brands.

Another challenge is talent retention and leadership development. Too many organizations still underestimate the importance of succession planning and executive capacity building.

That said, Africa is entering a critical moment. The continent has the talent, creativity, and market potential to become a major economic force globally. What is needed now is intentional investment in leadership excellence, regional collaboration, and long-term institution building.

What specific leadership competencies will be critical for navigating the next decade of economic uncertainty and innovation?

The next decade will demand leaders who are agile, technologically aware, emotionally intelligent, and strategically disciplined.

Adaptability will be essential because markets are changing faster than traditional business models can keep up with. Leaders must be comfortable making decisions in uncertainty.

Digital intelligence is also critical. Leaders do not necessarily need to become technical experts, but they must understand how technology, AI, automation, and data are reshaping industries.

Another major competency is strategic foresight. Leaders must be able to anticipate change rather than simply react to it. The businesses that succeed will be those that can identify shifts early and position themselves ahead of the curve.

Collaboration will also become increasingly important. No single organization or country can solve Africa's economic challenges in isolation. The future belongs to leaders who can build ecosystems, partnerships, and cross-sector alliances.

Finally, values-based leadership will matter more than ever. In an era of distrust and economic pressure, credibility, transparency, and purpose-driven leadership will become major differentiators.

How should business leaders balance short-term survival with long-term strategic growth in volatile markets?

Leaders must learn to operate with dual vision. They must manage immediate realities without losing sight of long-term positioning.

Short-term survival is important, especially in volatile economies, but businesses that remain permanently reactive often struggle to grow sustainably. Leaders must create operational resilience while still investing in innovation, talent, customer trust, and strategic expansion.



One practical approach is to separate operational urgency from strategic direction. A company may need to adjust pricing, reduce costs, or restructure in the short term, but it should still maintain a clear long-term roadmap.

Another key factor is disciplined prioritization. Not every opportunity should be pursued. Leaders must focus on areas with the strongest long-term value potential. Ultimately, sustainable growth requires patience, strategic clarity, and the ability to make difficult decisions without compromising the broader vision of the organization.

What gap is the Africa Business Leadership Summit (ABLS) designed to fill within the current ecosystem?

ABLS was designed to bridge the gap between conversation and actionable leadership transformation. Across Africa, there are many summits, conferences and networking events, but there is still a need for platforms that bring together high-level decision-makers, innovators, policymakers, and business leaders in a way that drives practical collaboration and long-term impact. ABLS is focused on creating a space where leadership conversations move beyond inspiration into strategy, partnerships, policy dialogue, and execution-oriented thinking.

The summit recognizes that Africa's future growth will depend heavily on the quality of leadership guiding its institutions, businesses, and economies. That is the gap ABLS seeks to address by convening leaders who are actively shaping the continent's economic future.

How is ABLS structured differently from other business or leadership events in terms of impact and outcomes?

ABLS is intentionally designed differently from a traditional conference. The focus is not simply on speeches, but on high-value engagement, strategic dialogue, and cross-sector collaboration.

The summit brings together visionary leaders, policymakers, innovators, and top executives across diverse sectors in Africa to discuss strategies for sustainable business growth, leadership excellence, and continental transformation.

Another difference is the emphasis on actionable outcomes. Participants leave with actionable networks, market intelligence, partnership opportunities, and practical insights around investment, leadership development, regional trade, innovation, and economic transformation.



ABLS also prioritizes access to decision-makers and influential stakeholders, which creates stronger opportunities for partnerships, collaboration, and real business engagement. The goal is for participants to leave not only informed, but positioned to act.

What kind of conversations or insights can participants expect at ABLS that they may not typically access elsewhere?

Participants can expect candid, future-focused conversations around the realities shaping African business today.

This includes discussions on leadership in volatile economies, the future of intra-African trade, innovation and AI, investment trends, sustainability, governance, youth leadership, and the evolving role of African enterprises in the global economy.

What makes these conversations particularly valuable is the diversity and caliber of perspectives involved. ABLS creates room for interaction between policymakers, CEOs, entrepreneurs, investors, and innovators who do not always occupy the same spaces.

The summit is also designed to encourage honest dialogue around the structural and leadership challenges slowing Africa's growth, while highlighting practical pathways for transformation.

What caliber of speakers and participants is ABLS bringing together, and why is that important for the quality of engagement?

ABLS is bringing together influential business executives, policymakers, industry leaders, innovators, entrepreneurs, and strategic decision-makers from across Africa and beyond. That caliber of participation is important because meaningful conversations require people who are actively shaping industries, influencing policy, driving investment, and building scalable businesses.

When leaders from different sectors and markets engage at that level, the conversations become more practical, more strategic, and more solution-oriented. It also creates opportunities for partnerships that extend beyond the summit itself. The quality of engagement improves significantly when participants are not only sharing ideas, but are also in positions to implement change.

Looking ahead, what long-term impact do you hope ABLS will have on Africa's business and leadership ecosystem?

The long-term vision for ABLS is to contribute to a stronger culture of transformative leadership across Africa. The summit aims to become a catalyst for deeper

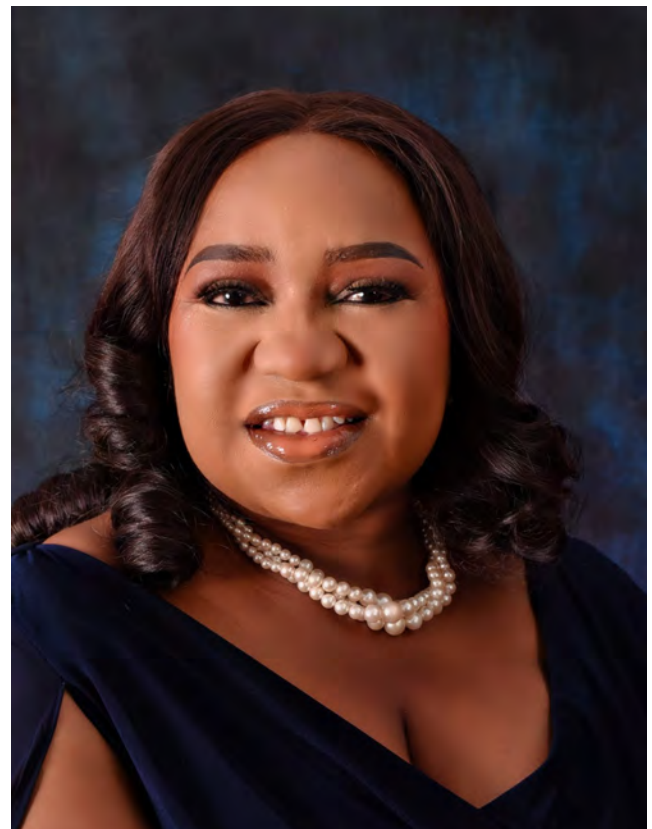
collaboration between business leaders, governments, innovators, and institutions working toward Africa's economic advancement.

Beyond the event itself, the goal is to help shape a network of leaders who are committed to building sustainable businesses, strengthening regional trade, developing talent, and positioning Africa more competitively on the global stage. Ultimately, ABLS hopes to influence not just conversations, but outcomes — stronger partnerships, stronger institutions, and stronger leadership across the continent.

For business leaders who are still undecided, why is this a timely moment to be part of ABLS?

Africa is at a defining moment. The continent is experiencing major shifts in technology, trade, demographics, investment, and economic integration. Leaders who wait passively for change risk being left behind by it. ABLS offers an opportunity to engage directly with the ideas, partnerships, and strategic conversations shaping the future of African business and leadership.

This is not simply about attending another event. It is about gaining access to perspectives, networks, and opportunities that can influence long-term growth and relevance. For leaders serious about navigating the future, building meaningful partnerships, and positioning themselves within Africa's next phase of economic transformation, this is the right time to be part of that conversation.



TODAY'S NEGLECTED BOY CHILD IS TOMORROW'S CORPORATE LIABILITY - MOGHALU-JOEL





To the Nigerian corporate world, Nkiruka Moghalu-Joel is a seasoned Growth Strategist and C-suite veteran with a track record of optimizing systems for giants like HYGEIA and FCMB. But behind her executive pedigree lies a deeper mission: a decade-long commitment to fixing what she identifies as Nigeria's most "broken talent pipeline"—the boy-child.

As the Founder of the Boy-Child Transformation Centre (BTC), Moghalu-Joel has spent the last five years applying rigorous corporate governance and behavioral KPIs to dismantle the "MACHO Box." This "faulty operating system," she argues, is the root cause of the leadership crises, ethical rot, and insecurity currently draining Nigeria's demographic dividend. With the launch of her execution playbook, UNBOXED, and the MANTRACK system, she isn't just offering parenting advice; she is reverse-engineering a generation for the modern boardroom.

In this interview with IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA, Moghalu-Joel discusses the "Social ROI" of saving our sons, why the pursuit of illicit wealth is a cultural virus, and how the BTC is functioning as the essential platform for Nigeria's future workforce.

You speak about engineering a generation for cognitive empathy and ethical grit. Can you walk us through the specific behavioral frameworks BTC uses to dismantle the 'MACHO Box' operating system in young boys?

We approach behavioral transformation the same way we approach corporate restructuring: by dismantling the faulty operating system. The 'MACHO Box' teaches boys that emotional suppression is strength. At BTC, and as detailed in UNBOXED, we replace this with the MANTRACK™ system. We guide boys through three distinct developmental crucibles - Harvey (ages 5-10: the foundation), Jay (ages 11-14: the crossroads), and Kal (ages 15-18: execution). By actively teaching emotional vocabulary and deploying our PRIMES value system, we stop telling boys to 'man up' and start teaching them to 'open up,' replacing toxic rigidity with true executive function and ethical grit.

As BTC marks five years, what is the roadmap for scaling these interventions beyond Lagos? Are there plans to institutionalize the BTC curriculum within private or public education boards?

Our ambition was never just to have a center established; it is to deploy a scalable blueprint. The launch of UNBOXED is the first major step in that national expansion. We are actively engaging policy stakeholders, which is exactly why having leaders like Mrs. Bisola Dkunmo-Adegbite from the Lagos Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education at our summit is critical. The long-term roadmap involves institutionalizing the MANTRACK frameworks into non-formal educational pipelines across the country, turning our intervention into a systemic national standard.

The pursuit of illicit wealth and cybercrime are listed as symptoms of this crisis. How does BTC's framework address the economic 'desperation' and societal pressure that drives boys toward these destructive coping mechanisms?

Economic challenges are a reality, but the glorification of illicit wealth is a cultural virus. The MACHO Box ties a boy's ultimate worth to his financial dominance, regardless of who has to bleed for him to get it. This is evidenced in the recent, tragic murder of 17-year-old Thompson Omokafe by two young men, and the many related cases we see every day. We address this by attacking the root value system. We teach boys that wealth built on structural rot will inevitably collapse.



SATURDAY 9, MAY 2026

By instilling ethical grit, we show them that sustainable power and genuine authority come from integrity, not the hustle trap.

The N1m WIMS UNBOXED Challenge uses a competitive, high-stakes ‘pitch’ format. Why is it important for the boys to lead the advocacy themselves, and how does this prepare them for the ‘ethical grit’ required in the business world?

You cannot solve a crisis by talking at the demographic; you must invite them into the boardroom or to the table. The Walk-in-My-Shoes (WIMS) UNBOXED Challenge 2026 forces these young men to identify a societal trap, formulate a peer-led solution, and defend it. By doing so, it creates an unforgettable, branded experience that permanently reinforces their mandate to be role models. It is a live stress-test of their critical thinking and cognitive empathy. We are teaching them that true leadership is not about complaining about the system; it is about having the grit to stand up and architect a better one.

Nkiruka, you are an acclaimed Growth Strategist with C-suite experience. How did you apply the same frameworks you use for business optimization at Avenu Growth Consulting to the ‘operational challenges’ of boy-child advocacy?

A demographic crisis is simply the ultimate operational failure. During my tenures at institutions like FCMB, AIICO, HYGEIA, Verdant Zeal Group, Red Slate Group, and Chain Reactions Africa, the mandate was always to optimize failing systems and drive sustainable growth. I looked at the boy-child journey as a broken talent pipeline. Instead of approaching it with traditional charity, I applied rigorous corporate governance, behavioral KPIs, and zero-defect tolerances, like the Zero Shock Policy in our households. We are not just hoping for better men; we are reverse-engineering them.

You describe the ‘MACHO Box’ as a toxic societal operating system. From a brand marketing and behavioral psychology perspective, how do we begin to ‘rebrand’ vulnerability for young boys so it is seen as a strength rather than a liability?

Currently, society brands vulnerability as a structural weakness. We must rebrand it as situational awareness and data collection. A leader who cannot process his own emotions cannot accurately read a room, navigate a crisis, or lead a team. We teach our boys that emotional lockdown is actually a massive liability. True strength is the capacity to process pressure without breaking yourself or the people around you.

In the corporate world, we speak about Return on Investment (ROI). What is the 'social ROI' for Nigeria's economy if we successfully intervene in the boy-child journey today?

The ROI of a rescued boy-child is a secured nation. Every boy we divert from the pipelines of cybercrime, substance abuse, rape, kidnapping, Yahoo-Yahoo, money rituals, murder, and toxic masculinity is a future ethical CEO, a present father, and a stabilized family unit. The cost of inaction is catastrophic: a collapsed economy run by broken, unethical, dangerous men. Our intervention today is the ultimate risk mitigation for Nigeria's economic tomorrow.

As a Fellow of the National Institute of Marketing, you understand market needs. Does the 'MACHO Box' produce the kind of leaders that modern Nigerian corporations actually need, or are we graduating boys with a 'toxic default' that hinders collaborative leadership?

The modern boardroom requires agility, consensus-building, and profound emotional intelligence. The MACHO Box produces dictators, not directors. We are graduating boys with a toxic default that equates leadership with fear and dominance. That model kills corporate culture and stifles innovation. The market desperately needs emotionally intelligent operators, leaders and role models who lead with respect, conscience, and purpose. Building that exact pipeline remains our vision at BTC.

Your upcoming summit targets C-suite leaders. Why should a CEO or a Corporate Director care about boy-child advocacy as part of their broader ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) or sustainability goals?

Because today's neglected boy is tomorrow's corporate liability, ESG cannot just be about reducing carbon footprints; it must be about securing human capital. If the societal pipeline is producing emotionally bankrupt men, your corporate pipeline will eventually be filled with them. Intervening in the boy-child crisis is the most direct way to secure the governance and social pillars of your corporate future.



Is BTC's work essentially an 'early-stage' intervention to ensure the next generation of Nigerian workers are emotionally intelligent and ethically grounded?

Exactly. We are operating as the R&D department for Nigeria's future workforce. At the recently concluded event, The Platform, hosted by The Covenant Nation, the CEO of Moniepoint highlighted the severe deficit of great talent in Nigeria, including male talent. The struggle remains to find individuals who are not just skilled, but culturally and emotionally fit for the roles being sourced. You cannot retrofit emotional intelligence into a 40-year-old executive during a weekend management retreat; it must be architected at the foundation. We are catching them in the crucibles of their youth so that when they enter the workforce, ethical grit is their default setting.

How does BTC measure 'transformation'? Is it through academic performance, behavioural shifts reported by parents, or the long-term career trajectories of your mentees?

While academic and career metrics are important indicators, true transformation is measured by a boy's choices under pressure. We measure how they navigate conflict, their retention in our mentorship programs, the behavioural shifts observed in their homes, and most importantly, their peer-to-peer influence. When a boy transitions from surviving peer pressure to actively dismantling it for the boys around him, as we see in the WIMS Challenge, that is a measurable transformation.

You've noted that boys are increasingly driven toward destructive coping mechanisms like cybercrime (Yahoo Yahoo). How does the UNBOXED playbook teach 'ethical grit' in a society where the shortcut to wealth is often glamorized?

By exposing the shortcut for what it is: a dead end. We do not just preach morality; we show them the end-stage reality of the hustle trap. UNBOXED deploys the PRIMES value system to give them a superior blueprint. We teach them that ethical grit is the capacity to delay gratification for a permanent legacy. We reframe ethical wealth as the ultimate flex, and illicit wealth as a sign of profound weakness.

Many C-suite leaders struggle with Emotional Intelligence (EQ). Do you believe the 'quiet collapse' of the boy-child you're seeing today is the root cause of the leadership crises we see in corporate boards and political offices later?

Without a doubt. We are currently paying the societal tax of some unhealed, insecure, and emotionally damaged boys occupying high offices. The quiet collapse of the boy-child inevitably becomes the loud collapse of the boardroom and the state. If you do not fix the boy, the man will break the system. Healing the boy-child today is the only way to ensure we are not fighting the same leadership crises twenty years from now.



3 AFRICAN CORN RECIPES WORTH MAKING THIS WEEKEND

ESTHER EMOEKPERE



Corn is everywhere in Nigeria. Big pots of it boiling on open flames, cobs turning slowly over roadside grills, the familiar smell hitting you before you even see the seller. It is one of those foods that needs no introduction and very little effort, you buy it, you eat it, and that is usually the end of the story.

But corn is not just a Nigerian roadside habit. Across the continent, it shows up in soups, porridges, fermented drinks, flatbreads and celebration foods, each country doing something entirely different with the same ingredient.

If you have been eating it the same way your whole life and are ready to try something new, here are three African corn recipes you can recreate in your kitchen this weekend.

Koki Corn — Cameroon

Koki corn is a steamed corn pudding from Cameroon, made from freshly ground corn, red palm oil and leafy greens, wrapped in banana leaves and cooked until firm. It is soft, moist and carries both sweet and savoury notes, often

compared to a West African tamale. The dish is naturally vegan-friendly and commonly eaten as a side or on its own.

Ingredients

- Fresh corn kernels
- Palm oil
- Spinach or any vegetable of choice
- Salt and spices
- Banana leaves or aluminum foil (for wrapping)

Directions

Remove the corn kernels from the cob

Blend the corn kernels with a little water until coarsely ground, not a smooth puree. If the mixture is too runny, add a small amount of cornmeal to correct the texture.

Mix in the palm oil, chopped greens and salt.

Soften banana leaves in warm water for 15 to 20 minutes, or pass them briefly over an open flame.

Trim out any remaining midrib without tearing the leaf.

Scoop roughly a cup of the mixture onto the edge of the leaf, roll it firmly a few times, then tuck in the sides to seal.

Line the base of your pot with banana leaves or corn husks before steaming.

Steam for 20 to 30 minutes until the dough is firm to the touch.



Makai Paka — Kenya

Makai Paka also known as Kenyan Corn Curry is a Swahili coastal dish of corn on the cob cooked in a spiced coconut milk sauce. It is creamy, mildly spicy and slightly sweet, with Indian spice influences that reflect the history of Kenya's coast. It is usually served with rice or chapati and comes together quickly enough for a weeknight meal.

Ingredients

3 to 4 ears of corn, cut into 2 to 3 inch pieces
 1 onion, chopped
 2 cloves garlic, minced
 1 teaspoon fresh ginger, grated
 1 green chili, chopped
 1 teaspoon turmeric
 1 teaspoon cumin
 1 teaspoon coriander powder
 1 teaspoon red chili powder
 1 can full-fat coconut milk
 Tomato puree
 Fresh coriander leaves and lemon juice to finish
 Oil and salt

Directions

Heat oil in a pan and fry the onion, cumin and whole spices until fragrant

Add the garlic, ginger and green chili and stir for one minute

Mix in the turmeric, chili powder, coriander powder and tomato puree

Add the corn pieces and turn them in the sauce until well coated

Pour in a little water and let it cook on medium heat for 10 to 15 minutes until the corn is tender

Add the coconut milk and simmer gently, stirring occasionally, until the sauce thickens

Squeeze in lemon juice and scatter fresh coriander on top before serving

Note: Ground peanuts or cashew nuts can be stirred in with the coconut milk to thicken the sauce further and add richness.





Oblayo — Ghana

Oblayo, also known as rocks or corn grits, is a creamy Ghanaian breakfast porridge made from hominy corn — dried maize kernels treated with an alkali solution to remove the outer hull, leaving them tender, chewy and slightly nutty in flavour. It is a popular street food staple, typically served hot and topped with evaporated milk, sugar and roasted peanuts. Simple, filling and easy to customise.

Ingredients

Hominy corn kernels (white or yellow)
 Water
 Salt
 Cornmeal (optional, to thicken)
 Evaporated milk
 Sugar or sweetener of choice
 Roasted peanuts
 Cinnamon or nutmeg to finish

Directions

Soak the hominy corn in water overnight

Drain, rinse and add to a pot with fresh water and a pinch of salt

Boil for up to 2 hours, stirring occasionally, until the kernels are soft and tender

If you prefer a thicker, creamier texture, mix a little cornmeal with cold water and stir it into the pot in the last 15 minutes of cooking

Serve hot, topped with evaporated milk, sugar and roasted peanuts

Finish with a dusting of cinnamon or nutmeg

Note: Hominy corn is available in most African grocery stores. If you cannot find it, dried whole corn kernels can be used, though they will need longer soaking and cooking time.

AFREXIMBANK, LAGOS STATE BACK DESIGN WEEK LAGOS GLOBAL TOUR

...Support African Designers at Milan Design Week 2026



Design Week Lagos (DWL), with the strategic support of Afreximbank and the Lagos State Government, has successfully presented a new generation of African designers at Salone Satellite 2026 in Milan.

This milestone marks a significant step in positioning African design within the global market as part of the “All Roads Lead to Lagos” global tour.

The Milan showcase featured a curated selection of emerging talents working across furniture, lighting, and product design. The featured designers include: Athanasius Johnson, Nicole Adaora Enwonwu, Odema Acacia Saleh, Richard A. Aina, Joan Eric Udorie, Olaoluwa AJ Durotoye and Myles Igwebuike. These designers presented works reflecting a sophisticated intersection of material intelligence, cultural identity, and production potential. Beyond the exhibition, the platform facilitated critical

conversations with international galleries and manufacturers, opening pathways for product acquisition, manufacturing partnerships, and entry into global retail markets.

“With All Roads Lead to Lagos, we are building a structured pathway for Nigerian and African designers to move from creativity into real industry and global markets. Over the past few years, our focus has not only been on showcasing design but on training, incubating, and preparing designers to engage with manufacturing, production, and international opportunities.

“This global tour, which began in Milan and will continue to London and Paris, is a natural extension of that work. It allows us to present a curated expression of Lagos to the world while providing our designers with direct access to global platforms. For us, this is not just about visibility.



It is about building a sustainable design economy and positioning Lagos as a serious global design capital.

What we are building is an ecosystem that connects talent development, manufacturing, culture, and international market access. The response in Milan has shown that African design is not only culturally relevant, but commercially viable on the global stage," Titi Ogufero, Founder of Design Week Lagos said.

"As part of Lagos State's broader vision for the creative economy, the Ministry introduced the Design Tourism initiative last year to position Lagos as a leading global destination for culture, creativity, and innovation.

"Design is not just an artistic expression; it is a key driver of economic growth, tourism, international engagement, and cultural exchange.

This year, through Design Week Lagos' All Roads Lead to Lagos initiative, we are extending that vision beyond

Nigeria by taking a curated expression of Lagos and African creativity to major global platforms, including Milan, London, and Paris, before welcoming the world back to Lagos in October 2026," Commissioner Toke Benson, Lagos State Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, said.

Benson noted that through initiatives like this, the Ministry of Tourism are not only showcasing the richness of our creative industry but also creating opportunities for our designers and creative businesses to connect with international markets while inviting the world to experience Lagos in a deeper and more meaningful way.

"We believe Lagos is emerging as one of the most exciting creative capitals globally, and Design Week Lagos continues to play an important role in that journey," Benson noted.





“The Milan showcase was supported by Afreximbank through CANEX (Creative Africa Nexus), its creative economy programme, underscoring the Bank’s broader commitment to growing Africa’s creative industries and connecting African talent to international markets.”

Through this activation, Afreximbank reinforces its commitment to developing Africa’s creative industries as a viable economic sector, connecting talent to trade and finance. Similarly, the Lagos State Government continues to demonstrate its vision of Lagos as a global capital for creative enterprise.

This global activation is a multi-city strategy. Following Milan, the tour will proceed to Paris and London, before culminating in Lagos in October 2026, where the focus will shift from exhibition to market integration and industrial scale.

By aligning design with manufacturing and investment, Design Week Lagos and its partners are laying the foundation for a new design economy, one that is African-led, globally relevant, and commercially viable.



LAGOS STUDENTS EMBRACE AGRICULTURE AS PATH TO WEALTH, INNOVATION AND FOOD SECURITY



Agriculture is increasingly being presented to young Nigerians not as a survival job, but as one of the country’s biggest economic opportunities, offering solutions to unemployment, food insecurity, and youth empowerment through technology, processing, logistics, and innovation.

That message took centre stage at the grand finale of AgriQuest, a Lagos-based students’ agriculture competition organised by Paradise Dynamic Farms Limited under the theme, “NextGen Farmers: Redefining Agriculture.”

Held in Lagos recently, the event brought together students from different secondary schools across Lagos to compete, learn, and explore how agriculture can create wealth and sustainable economic growth.

The competition, which moved through three stages across education districts in Lagos, was designed to revive young people’s interest in agriculture by exposing them to the industry’s expanding opportunities beyond traditional farming.

Speaking at the event, Oluwafemi Adejare, the managing partner, Fair Consulting and keynote speaker, described agriculture as Nigeria’s largest employer of labour, noting that nearly 90 million Nigerians depend on the sector for their livelihood.

According to him, Nigeria’s agricultural industry is already valued at more than \$100 billion, while Africa’s agribusiness sector could exceed \$1 trillion by 2030. “With Nigeria having 84 million hectares of arable land, Nigeria should be in the forefront of leading this revolution,” he said.



third positions received N350,000 and N250,000 respectively.

In the senior category, Fountain Heights Secondary School emerged winner with N1 million, while Angus Secondary School and Mictec International High School secured N500,000 and B250,000 respectively.

Beyond the competition, organisers also introduced Paradise Hub, a digital learning platform focused on agribusiness, technology, entrepreneurship, and personal development training.

Adejare explained that one of the biggest solutions agriculture offers Nigeria is its ability to absorb young talent through multiple industries linked to farming.

Rather than focusing only on crop cultivation, he encouraged students to explore high-value areas such as food processing, refrigeration, agricultural logistics, solar-powered irrigation systems, farm software development, and drone technology.

He noted that technology is helping to modernise agriculture and improve productivity.

“You can use drones to monitor your crops. You can use mobile apps to predict planting seasons from satellites and data,” he said.

He added that improving storage and refrigeration systems could help Nigeria reduce massive post-harvest losses caused by food spoilage.

For students at the event, the competition became more than an academic exercise. It also opened conversations around entrepreneurship and future careers.

KaosisoChukwu Ekwunife, one of the winning students from Fountain Heights Secondary School, said he now hopes to build a mechanized farming business in the future.

“The agriculture is important to the growth of nation and importance for the economy of nation,” he said. The competition rewarded outstanding schools in both junior and senior categories with cash prizes aimed at encouraging innovation and participation.

In the junior category, Topfield Secondary School won the top prize of N500,000, while second and

Favour Ebi Dakoru, executive assistant at Paradise Dynamic Farms, said the platform aims to make practical education more accessible and affordable for young Africans through online courses and reward-based learning.

She explained that the initiative was created to bridge the gap between knowledge and economic opportunity by helping young people develop skills relevant to today’s economy.

For many participants, the event reinforced a growing message that agriculture is no longer just about farming, but about solving problems linked to food supply, youth unemployment, technology, and economic development.

As Nigeria continues to search for sustainable industries capable of driving long-term growth, organisers said empowering young people to see agriculture as a profitable and innovation-driven sector may become one of the country’s most important investments for the future.





**THE ART OF LIQUID SCENTS:
INSIDE THE SENSORY REVOLUTION
AT LAGOS' NEWEST 'SENBAR'**



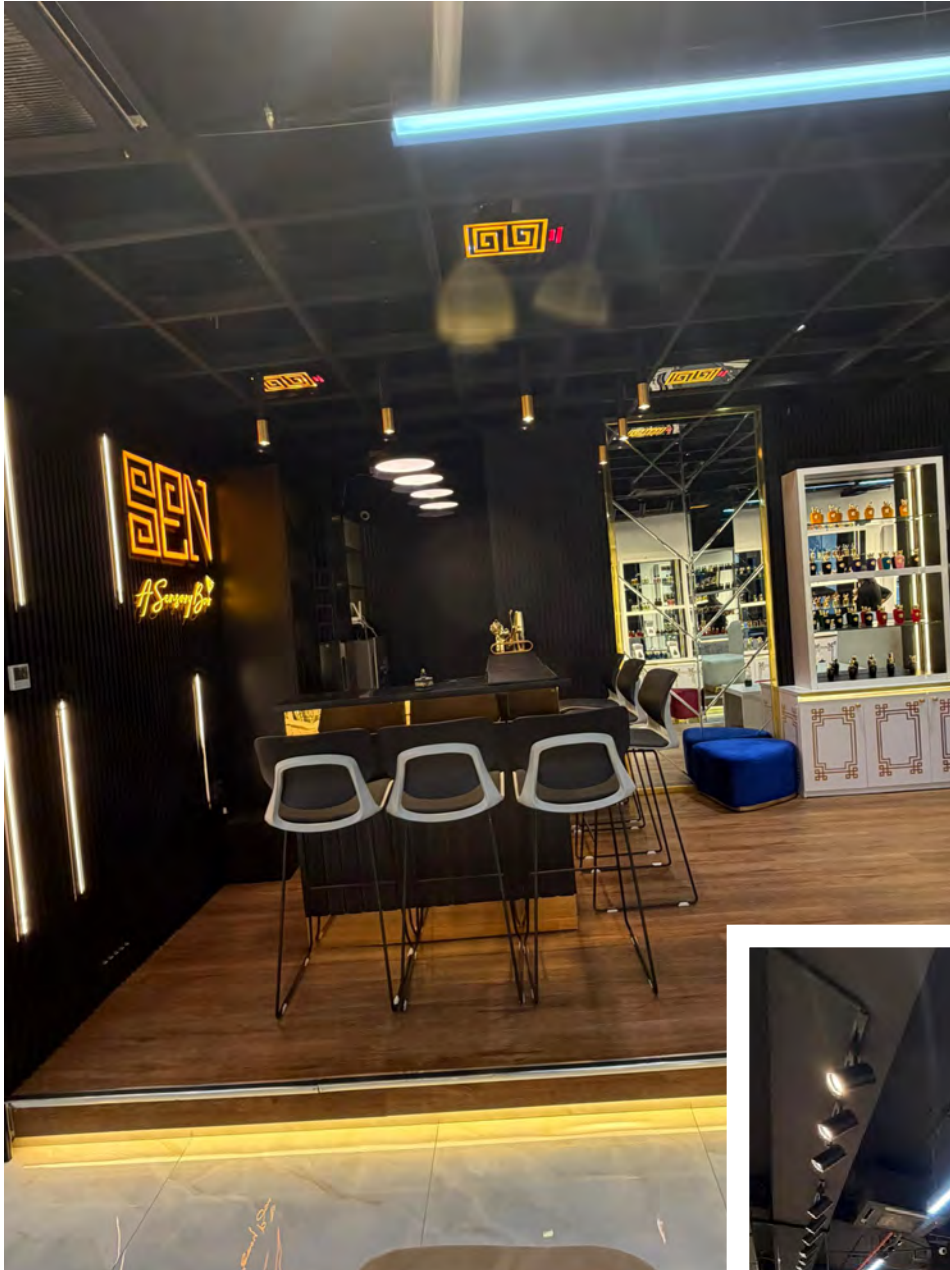
In a business of luxury fragrance, few names command credibility as Seinde Signature. But on the 6th floor of the exclusive Ikoyi Plaza, the brand is no longer just selling bottles of niche perfume—it is inviting you to drink them.

The recent unveil of the Lagos Senbar, marks the second chapter of a visionary “bar-within-a-store” concept that first captivated Abuja. This isn’t merely a retail outlet; it is a lifestyle destination where the olfactory world of high-end fragrance meets the craft of bespoke mixology.

The move is a response to a shift in consumer behavior. Olaseinde Olufemi Olusola, founder and CEO, is candid about the evolution of the luxury shopper. “Through the years, we realized that people don’t all walk in to buy perfume,” Olusola explained during the launch.

“They will tell you, ‘I have enough at home.’ We realized that perfume is an experience—you cannot just tell someone about it. But once they smell it, it becomes an issue for them. So, we created a space where you come to have a drink with a friend, watch a match, or wait for a guest, and in that moment of relaxation, you experience the scent.”

This “experiential” strategy is why the brand is expanding into unconventional spaces, including a recent partnership with iFitness. “For someone paying ₦70,000 to ₦80,000 monthly for a gym, they are my prospective customer,” Olusola added. “We are looking for that one percent who craves excellence.”

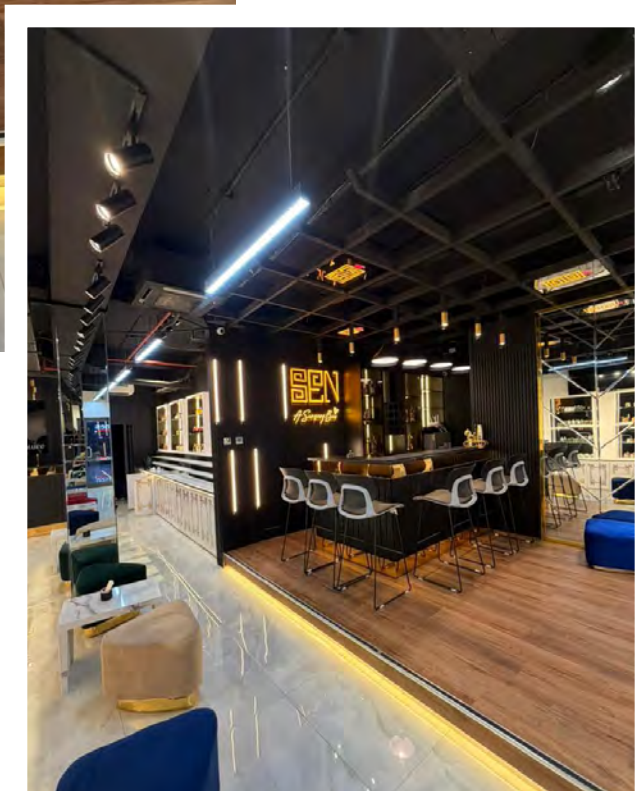


The result is a first-of-its-kind sensory journey where a guest might sample an Electimuss or Clive Christian fragrance and then sip a cocktail designed to mirror its exact aromatic profile. “The intention,” Marcus noted, “was to create a journey not just for the sense of smell, but for the taste as well.”

A Cultural Landmark

Led by General Manager Oreoluwa Olusola, the brand continues to curate over 40 of the world’s finest niche houses, including Sarah Baker and Sospiro. By blending the intimacy of a private sanctuary with the vibrancy of an upscale bar, Seinde Signature is doing more than opening a store—it is shaping the future of African luxury.

As the Lagos elite gathered on the 6th floor of Ikoyi Plaza this week, the consensus was clear: at the Senbar, you don’t just wear a fragrance; you live it, you socialise with it, and finally, you taste it.



Tasting Your Smell

The heart of the Senbar’s innovation lies in its menu, curated by Lola Marcus, the bartender and founder of Bartherapee. While most bars stick to a predictable menu of Mojitos and Margaritas, Marcus has deconstructed the world’s finest scents into liquid form.

“When I was called onto this project, it was for us to look at what the scents are, not just the alcohol,” Marcus shared. “Most perfumes are made with edible ingredients—cinnamon, cardamom, rosemary, cherry, and bergamot. We broke down those core notes to create signature cocktails for eight different scents.”

40% DROP IN CANADIAN COLLEGE ENROLMENT RAISES CONCERNS FOR NIGERIANS

CHARLES OGWO

Canada's college enrolment among Nigerians and other international students has dropped by 40 percent for the 2025–2026 academic session, according to a Statistics Canada report.

This expert says it reflects the impact of tighter immigration policies, rising costs, and shifting study preferences. Before the tight immigration policies, between the academic years 2003-2004 and 2023-2024, the number of full-time international students in public post-secondary institutions in Canada increased eightfold.

However, after the federal government pumped the brakes with a student cap in January 2024, the numbers started to dwindle, data shows, falling by one-third. "While there was only a slight decline in the year 2024-2025 (three percent), college enrolment plummeted by 40 percent in 2025-2026. This marks a 42 percent decline in international student enrolment in colleges since 2023-2024," the report indicates.

The report further revealed that international student enrolment in universities dropped 17 percent from 2023-2024 to 2025-2026, dropping to pre-pandemic (2019-2020) levels.

Ontario saw the steepest decline in international student enrolment, dropping six per cent in 2024-2025 and 36 percent in 2025-2026.

In 2023-2024, Ontario was home to six out of 10 international students in Canada. Last year, that share declined to 54 percent.

The purpose of the international student cap, which was introduced by the Justin Trudeau government and extended by the Mark Carney government, is to reduce the number of temporary residents in Canada to below five per cent of the total population by the end of 2027.

This year, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) expects to issue up to 408,000 study permits, including 155,000 to newly arriving international students and 253,000 extensions for current and returning students.

This number is seven percent lower than the 2025 target of 437,000 and 16 percent lower than the 2024 target of 485,000, IRCC said in November.

In 2025, the Canadian government announced new immigration cap, slashing the total number of temporary foreign workers and international students' visas to less than five percent of its population by 2027.

The government figures show a 64 percent year-on-year reduction in new study permits issued in 2025, as Canada welcomed fewer first-time international students than during the pandemic and the lowest total over the past decade.

According to IRCC data obtained by BorderPass, Canada approved approximately 73,800 new students in 2025, just 25 percent of its stated target of 305,900, wreaking havoc on institutions whose recruitment strategies were based on these aims.

In 2023, Canadian government issued 37,630 student visas to Nigerians, a substantial 133.7 percent jump, compared to the previous year in 2022.

But, under the new tightened plan, estimates show that the number of international students is expected to decrease to 305,900 annually from 2025 through 2027, while the Temporary Foreign Worker Programme will see a reduction, stabilising at 82,000 permits annually during the same period.

These reductions are part of Canada's broader strategy to address domestic challenges, such as housing shortages and strained public services.

Ebuka Nnaji, an education consultant, attributed the drop to the policy change of Canada, that is, the stricter immigration rules and higher financial commitments (tuition fees and visas), coupled with the increasing cost of living, which he said has, over time, discouraged prospective students.

Theresa Afolabi, a Nigerian student in Europe, emphasised that she had to drop the idea of going to Canada when she discovered the travel restrictions, and the opportunities that are obtainable in other regions, such as post-study work opportunities.

Many Nigerian students are going to countries that offer them clearer pathways to permanent residency, such as Germany, Finland, or other European Union countries.

European destinations have absorbed the most Nigerian student interest, pivoting away from Canada and the USA.

China has seen a significant boost in interest from Nigerian students, as well as from Australia. Students are favouring European nations with lower tuition and higher affordability, such as France (40 percent surge in interest), Italy (33 percent surge), Belgium, and Germany.

ANAMBRA, IMO, ENUGU TOP UNITY SCHOOLS' 2026/2027 QUOTA-BASED CUT-OFF MARKS

CHARLES OGWO



For many parents and pupils in Nigeria's South-East, gaining admission into federal unity colleges may become even more competitive following the release of the 2026/2027 quota-based cut-off marks.

Candidates from Anambra, Imo, and Enugu are now expected to score significantly higher marks than their counterparts in several other states, highlighting the continuing debate over fairness, merit, and equal access in Nigeria's admission system at federal government secondary schools.

In the newly released admission benchmarks, students from Anambra State are required to score 139, Imo State students must score 138, and Enugu State 134 to gain admission into the federal government schools.

Students from Abia State are to score 130, while Ebonyi State candidates are expected to score 112. In the Southwestern States, candidates from Lagos have a cut-off mark of 133, Ogun State 131, Osun State 127, and Ondo State 126, respectively.

Meanwhile, in the Northern region, states such as Yobe, a male student with 2 and a female student with 27 marks, respectively, can get admission in any unity school in Nigeria.

Similarly, a male child from Taraba State with 3 and a female with 11 marks, respectively, are deemed qualified for admission, and in Sokoto State, a male student with 9 marks can also get admission, while the female is expected to score 13 marks.

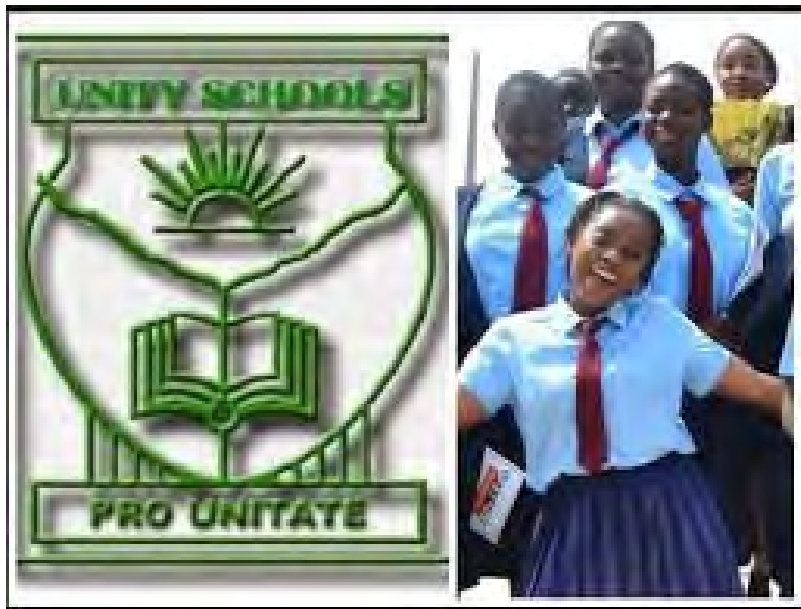
In the South-south region, Edo State candidates must score 127, Akwa Ibom State 123, Rivers State 118, and Cross River State 97.

This so-called quota system highlights significant disparities among Nigerian children from different states, with candidates from some states required to score considerably higher than their counterparts in some other parts of the country to secure placement into the prestigious secondary schools.

The development has once again sparked conversations about fairness and merit in the nation's education policy.

Isaiah Ogundele, an administrator, describes the quota system as part of the vices spoiling the present and future of Nigeria.

"This is a yardstick put in place for the so-called educational disadvantage states.



“Where is it done on earth, a group of learners would write the same examination in the same country under the same ministry, but the cut-off marks are varied?” he asked.

Ogundele emphasised that the system is very endemic because it is creating lots of problems, such as a knowledge gap, and that it is depriving the qualified learners of the opportunity to further their education seamlessly.

“Because of the quota system, the qualified students will not have the opportunity, whereas their counterparts in another state, called disadvantage state, will gain admission. ‘What an evil’

“This will drag Nigeria’s development backward because the same half-baked learners would graduate and also enter the public service with their so-called certificates. At the end, you’re going to have a round peg in a round hole,” he noted.

Stanley Alaubi, a senior lecturer at the University of Port Harcourt, frowned at the system, which, according to him, is geared toward encouraging mediocrity.

“Why would some candidates from certain states be given preferred treatment by issuing such ridiculous cut-off marks to them when all the schools in the country are using the same curriculum, and the students are meant to work in the same labour market?

“This is destroying our education system, and it is very dangerous. It is pointing out the rot in the country’s government,” he stated.

Emeka Onyejekwe, @OnyejekweEmeka, expressed his worries that children from the Southeast are made to score more than their counterparts in some other states.

“This is very unfortunate and worrisome. Imo State has 138 more than others. And some others are below 120, 90, 67, 80 marks.

“Which country on earth does this type of grading? Nigeria is never one country but different nations. This is a typical example; even school scores are different,” he stated.

Okangba Blessing @drOkangbaBC, said, “This is ludicrous! Cut-off 3 or 6 or 13 for some northern states, while someone with 110 will be denied admission because its from Southern states, especially the Southeast. But when it comes to government appointments and job recruitments in notable government ministries, these illiterates will get them.”

Stakeholders believe that the interplay between lower expectations, as evidenced in the quota-based cut-off marks for unity schools, and the systemic educational decay paints a troubling picture of the country’s academic future.

“Nigeria’s education standard has been in the doldrums for decades, and the decline is reflected in the failure rate at WASSCE and other examinations,” they say.

The wide gap in unity schools’ quota-based cut-off marks continues to raise concerns about fairness, equal opportunity, and national integration in Nigeria’s education system.

While the policy was designed to promote inclusion across all states, many stakeholders believe it should be reviewed to ensure that merit, access, and educational balance are properly maintained.

Industry experts advocate increased investment in basic education across disadvantaged states, improved learning facilities nationwide, and a gradual reform of the quota system to reduce disparities.

By strengthening educational standards in every region, Nigeria can create a more competitive and equitable admission process for all students.



NIGERIA'S ENGINEERING SKILLS CRISIS: HOW OMOLOLA'S ETIA IS DRIVING INDUSTRY-READY TRAINING

ANTHONY NLEBEM



When engineer Debbie Oreoluwa Omolola returned to Nigeria from the United Kingdom, she did not set out to start a movement. What began as a casual conversation with younger relatives studying engineering soon exposed what she describes as a “massive” gap in the country’s technical education system—one that continues to undermine employability and industrial productivity.

In an interview with journalists, the director of Emma-Tob International Academy (ETIA) and founder of the Engineering Your Tomorrow (EYT) Summit reflects on that pivotal moment and the journey that followed.

“I was just having a calm conversation with my cousins who are studying engineering,” she recalled. “From a practical standpoint, I started asking questions, and I saw that they were struggling. And it is not their fault.”

For Omolola, the issue was not a lack of intelligence or academic exposure, but a structural disconnect in how engineering is taught and applied.

“When I started probing further, I realised there is a massive skills gap, both in tertiary and private institutions in Nigeria,” she said. “Having worked in the industry and understanding what a global level of engineering experience looks like, it stayed with me.”

That realisation became the foundation for ETIA, a training academy designed to bridge the divide between theory and real-world application.

“The vision is not just to educate and give you a certification. Many universities do that,” she explained. “What we want to do is give you a career that can sustain you and your family.”

From Idea to Institution

The establishment of ETIA was not a solo effort. Omolola credits early conversations with her father, Pastor Emmanuel Omolola, Managing Director of Emma-Tob Engineering, as a turning point.

“I shared my ideas with him, and he said, ‘I’ve always wanted to do this. Let’s kick it off,’” she said.

Today, ETIA operates as a hands-on training hub focused on five key engineering disciplines, areas she argues are critical to industrial growth but often underemphasised in traditional curricula. The academy delivers both foundational and advanced training.

The annual EYT Summit, now in its second edition, extends that mission by convening students, professionals and industry leaders to exchange ideas and confront the realities facing young engineers.

“EYT is a place to inspire, innovate and create impact in people’s lives,” she said. “It is also about asking difficult questions: how do students get jobs? How do they sustain themselves? These are real concerns.”

Beyond Certificates: The Employability Gap

At the core of Omolola’s intervention is a shift from education as an endpoint to education as a pathway to employability and productivity.

“We are not just training engineers to pass exams,” she said. “We are preparing them to function in real industries, solve problems and add value from day one.”

This perspective aligns with concerns raised by employers, many of whom argue that graduates lack both technical and soft skills required in the workplace.

Human resource professional Afolarin Afolayan, who participated in the summit, was direct in his assessment.

“Organisations are frustrated,” he said. “Many graduates lack mindset, attitude, and even basic skills like Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint. They understand theories but have little or no practical experience.”

He also highlighted the impact of migration on workforce stability.

“The ‘Japa’ trend is affecting talent retention. Companies invest in training, and people leave without clear long-term plans,” he added.

Industry Reality Check

For industry leaders, the consequences of the skills gap are already evident. The chairman of the summit, Talla Fall, factory manager at Nestlé Nigeria, described the situation as a disconnect between knowledge and execution.

“It is not just what you know; what matters more is what you do with what you know,” he said. “Sometimes we receive engineers, but they cannot do anything.”

Drawing on nearly three decades of experience, Fall stressed the need for stronger collaboration between academia and industry.

“Education must not stop in the classroom. It must extend into workshops, industries and real-life environments,” he said.

He also pointed to Nigeria’s demographic advantage as both an opportunity and a responsibility.

“Our greatest resource is not oil. It is the young generation. If they are equipped properly, Nigeria and Africa will rise,” he added.

Technology as a Game-Changer

While the skills gap remains a pressing concern, rapid technological advancement is adding urgency. Keynote speaker Saheed Kareem, a factory engineering manager, underscored the growing influence of artificial intelligence (AI) in engineering and beyond.

“We are already living with AI, even if we don’t acknowledge it,” he said. “It is simulating human intelligence to solve real-life problems and reduce effort.”

From automated manufacturing processes to smart health devices and digital workflows, AI is redefining how work is done.

“It has become a mandatory skill for everyone to thrive. In the next five years, many processes will be fully driven by AI,” he said.

However, he also warned of associated risks, including cybercrime and ethical concerns, stressing the need for responsible adoption.

Students Seek Early Exposure

For students in attendance, the discussions validated lived experiences. Many acknowledged the limitations of classroom learning and called for earlier and more structured engagement with industry.

“We are grateful for platforms like this. But we need more opportunities to interact with industry early so we can be ready before we graduate,” one student said.

A Long Road Ahead

For Omolola, the challenge is significant but not insurmountable. What is required is deliberate collaboration and a willingness to rethink entrenched approaches to education.

“It is not enough to wish for change. We have to create it,” she said.

As Nigeria navigates youth unemployment, technological disruption and intensifying global competition, initiatives like ETIA and the EYT Summit are positioning themselves as part of the solution—through practical engagement rather than rhetoric.

“We are building engineers who are not just knowledgeable, but practical, innovative and globally competitive,” Omolola said.

Ultimately, the future of engineering in Nigeria will depend not just on what students learn, but on what they can do.

WHY SUBSTANCE ABUSE IS THE BIGGEST THREAT TO NIGERIA'S 'YOUTH BOOM'

OLUWABUNMI OLUWADOTUN



Behind the energy and promise of Nigeria's youth lies a troubling reality: the path to a bright future is being diverted by drug abuse, a crisis that is stealing dreams, weakening families, and leaving lasting scars on communities.

Johnson, a 300-level student of the University of Lagos, has just been sentenced to not less than 21 years in prison on account of armed robbery.

A student of mechanical engineering, Johnson, the only hope of his parents' dream, was cut short not because he was involved in armed robbery, but because he allowed codeine to destroy his life. He got introduced to codeine through a friend who told him that the drug would always keep him active. That was how Johnson became addicted to the drug, because he could not do without it for a day.

He would always go out of his way to ensure he had the drug around, even if it meant borrowing to get the drug.

In the face of this menace, Johnson dropped out of school because he used the money meant for his school fees to buy drugs, and the portal for registration was closed.

As if that was not enough, he became a pickpocket, and gradually graduated into armed robbery, all because of his addiction to drugs; and was arrested in one of his operations and charged in court.

Drug abuse is already a growing menace in Nigeria, which has eaten deep into the fabrics of many youth with substances such as cannabis, tramadol, and cocaine, among others, destroying their health and the society at large.

Experts express concerns that drugs such as cannabis and tramadol are weakening the immune system of many, making them vulnerable to infections, and damaging their vital organs like the liver, kidney, heart, and lungs, among others, rendering them bedridden with diseases.

Psychologically, drug abuse has also allowed users to experience depression, anxiety, paranoia, etc. Illicit drugs have also increased the high rate of memory loss and allow for slow decision-making.



contributing to social instability and insecurity.

Illicit drug consumption is obviously a serious threat to society, which, if left unchecked, would lead to human capital wastage and huge economic destruction.

According to the National Drug Use Survey, an estimated 14.6 million Nigerians engaged in non-medical use of substances such as cannabis and tramadol, among whom most are the youth.

To curb this menace, the government, as a matter of urgency, creates accessible rehabilitation services and a stronger law enforcement drive, while the non-governmental organisations should help increase awareness campaigns on the negative effects of drug abuse on the youth.

Many youths have been using drugs to cope with stress, unemployment, etc., and this often worsens their emotional state.

Drug Abuse has also contributed to the decline in the academic progress of the Nigerian youths, as drug abuse has helped to increase a high rate of reduced concentration and poor memory, increased absenteeism and truancy, higher likelihood of school dropouts. This limits future career opportunities and contributes to a less skilled workforce.

Illicit drugs have also affected Nigeria economically, reducing productivity and the ability to maintain employment, and fueling a surge in the quest to depend on others among the citizenry.

Besides, it comes with the national loss of human capital, which slows economic growth in a country such as Nigeria, where youth make up a huge portion of the population.

Nigeria's population exceeds 200 million, with over 60% of the population under the age of 30, making it one of the most youthful countries in the world.

This demographic presents a powerful opportunity for social, economic, and political transformation, if properly harnessed.

Unfortunately, drug abuse is sapping the country of its demographic dividend, putting pressure on law enforcement systems such as the Nigeria Police Force and NDLEA, as many addicted youth have embraced immoral lifestyles such as theft, fraud, cultism, and drug trafficking, among others, which is

Families, schools, and religious organisations can also play a vital role in educating young people about the dangers of drug abuse and promoting a healthy lifestyle. Without this decisive action, the future potential of many young Nigerians remains at risk.

Illicit drugs pose a serious threat to Nigerian youth, impacting their health, education, social relationships, and prospects.

Combating this issue is critical for the well-being of individuals and the overall development of nations. If this problem is not urgently addressed, the nation risks losing a generation that should contribute to its growth and development.



7 COUNTRIES SETTING THE STANDARD FOR GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY

CHISOM MICHAEL



Several countries across Europe and Central America are emerging as global leaders in sustainability by combining environmental protection with economic development.

Governments are expanding renewable energy projects, improving public transport systems and strengthening forest conservation policies while encouraging citizens to adopt greener lifestyles.

These initiatives are helping to cut emissions, preserve natural resources and improve the quality of urban life. From modern cycling infrastructure to investments in clean electricity, sustainability is becoming part of everyday living.

As climate concerns continue to shape global conversations, these countries are increasingly being viewed as models for how innovation, policy and public participation can support long-term environmental progress and economic stability.

Here are seven countries leading the way in sustainability and the measures driving their progress.

Denmark

Denmark has built a reputation as one of the world's leading countries in environmental action. The country has invested heavily in wind power, with offshore wind farms playing a major role in electricity generation.

In the capital city, Copenhagen, cycling has become part of daily life. Many residents use bicycles instead of cars to travel to work, school and public spaces. The city has expanded cycling lanes and improved urban planning to support lower emissions.

Denmark has also focused on energy-efficient buildings and waste management systems that convert waste into energy. Its long-term climate plans include reducing dependence on fossil fuels while supporting cleaner industries and transport systems.

Sweden

Sweden has combined industrial growth with environmental policies that support renewable energy and recycling. More than half of the country's energy supply comes from renewable sources such as hydropower, wind and bioenergy.

The country's recycling system has reduced the amount of waste sent to landfill sites. Households sort waste carefully, while local authorities invest in systems that reuse materials and generate energy from waste products.

Sweden has also introduced emissions policies aimed at reducing carbon output from transport and industry. Public transport systems in major cities continue to expand, helping residents reduce reliance on private vehicles.

The country's approach shows how government policy and public participation can work together in addressing environmental challenges.

Norway

Norway remains one of the world's largest oil exporters, yet it has also emerged as a leader in domestic sustainability efforts. Nearly all of the country's electricity comes from hydropower, giving households and businesses access to low-emission energy.

Norway has encouraged the use of electric vehicles through tax incentives, charging infrastructure and public awareness campaigns. Electric cars now make up a large share of vehicles on Norwegian roads.

The country has also introduced conservation measures aimed at protecting forests, marine ecosystems and natural landscapes. Its fjords and protected wilderness areas remain central to tourism and environmental policy.

Norway's model reflects the growing pressure on resource-producing nations to invest in cleaner domestic systems while managing environmental risks.

Finland

Finland has become known for its forest management policies and clean environment. Forests cover much of the country, and authorities have introduced systems designed to balance timber production with conservation.

Finland is also investing in circular economy policies that focus on reducing waste and reusing resources. Businesses and research institutions are working on projects linked to sustainable production, renewable materials and cleaner energy systems.

In cities, planners are encouraging eco-friendly construction and improved public transport systems. The country's environmental record is often linked to its quality of life, public health and outdoor culture.

Officials say long-term environmental planning remains important for both economic stability and future generations.

Switzerland

Switzerland is widely recognised for its clean cities, public transport network and environmental regulations. Waste

separation and recycling are part of daily life for many residents, supported by strict national and local policies.

Hydropower provides a major share of the country's electricity supply, helping reduce dependence on fossil fuels. Authorities have also introduced regulations aimed at protecting lakes, rivers and mountain ecosystems.

Swiss cities continue to invest in rail systems and cleaner transport options that reduce road congestion and emissions.

Tourism policies also place attention on environmental protection, especially in mountain regions that attract visitors throughout the year.

Switzerland's approach highlights how environmental protection can become integrated into both infrastructure planning and public behaviour.

Costa Rica

Costa Rica has gained international attention for its renewable energy policies and forest conservation programmes.

Most of the country's electricity comes from renewable sources including hydropower, geothermal energy, wind and solar power.

The government has also implemented forest protection measures that helped reverse years of deforestation.

National parks and protected reserves now cover a significant part of the country, supporting biodiversity and eco-tourism.

Costa Rica's environmental policies have strengthened its image as a destination focused on conservation and sustainable development. Officials continue to promote clean energy and environmental education as part of national policy.

Iceland

Iceland has used its volcanic geography to develop one of the cleanest energy systems in the world. Geothermal energy and hydropower provide most of the country's electricity and heating needs.

The use of geothermal resources has reduced dependence on imported fossil fuels while supporting households, businesses and public infrastructure.

Iceland has also introduced policies aimed at protecting natural landscapes and reducing environmental damage from tourism and industry.

Its environmental strategy reflects how countries can use local natural resources to support cleaner energy systems while maintaining long-term sustainability goals.

HOW CRESTAL GROUP CORPORATE UPGRADE BRIDGES GAP BETWEEN AFRICAN PRODUCTION, GLOBAL MARKETS

CHISOM MICHAEL





Across the world, the aspiration of owners of most thriving businesses is to stay relevant by adapting to new changes as the business grows. In keeping with this tenet, Crestal Group, the African-led investment firm, has announced a major corporate restructuring to consolidate its diverse holdings under a single global brand, JuWon Global Energy Company.

The move unifies the group's independent entities, including JuWonOil LLC (USA), JuWonEnergies (West Africa), and Cropyfy Ltd (Agro-processing), into one integrated platform.

Headquartered in Houston, Texas, the newly unified brand aims to streamline operations across North America and West Africa.

The principal architect behind the conglomerate, Juwon Razaq Lawal, is a Nigerian entrepreneur and Executive MBA graduate of the Quantic School of Business and Technology. Lawal, also an Associate Alumnus of Imperial College Business School, has transitioned the firm from a series of independent ventures into a multi-sector conglomerate.

The strategic consolidation of its energy and agricultural subsidiaries into a single flagship brand is not merely a rebrand, but a significant corporate structural upgrade designed to bridge the gap between African production and global markets. Crestal Group, by integrating previously independent entities into a single identity, JuWon Global Energy Company, has created a vertically integrated powerhouse. This unified structure aligns the North American petroleum operations with West African logistics and industrial processing.

"This is not a simple rebranding; it is a corporate structuring upgrade," a company spokesperson stated. "We are connecting supply, logistics, and processing across key markets to power global energy flows." The consolidation ensures that the group's North American expertise in petroleum trading is seamlessly linked with West African logistics and agro-commodity production. By moving "beyond trading into assets," JuWon Global Energy Company is positioning itself as a primary bridge for commodities between African markets and the rest of the world.

According to the company's spokesperson, Crestal Group, an African-led energy platform, unveiled the single identity to expand its cross-continental energy and commodity operations.

"This move is designed to strengthen operational efficiency, enhance global market positioning, and create a scalable structure for future investments across energy and agricultural value chains," said the spokesperson, adding that JuWon Global Energy Company will operate across North America and West Africa, focusing on petroleum trading, marine logistics, aviation fuel supply, and agro-industrial processing. "This consolidation reflects our long-term vision to build a globally integrated energy and commodities platform that connects supply, logistics, and processing across key markets," he stated.

With the consolidation, JuWon Global Energy Company is now the flagship energy and commodities platform of Crestal Group Ltd, operating across North America and West Africa, powering global energy flows and commodity supply chains. The new structure now unifies Crestal Group's North America, West Africa, and Agro-Commodity operations into a single global platform.

According to the statement, "The restructuring integrates previously independent entities, including JuWonOil LLC (USA), JuWonEnergies (West Africa), and Cropyfy Ltd (Agro-processing), into a single coordinated platform, while the key messaging pillars include integration, one platform, multiple markets. JuWon Global Energy Company is not a new business or name re-branding, it is a consolidation strategy, a corporate structuring upgrade, and a positioning move for global scale, evolving into stronger brand with one global identity."

The statement clarified further that JuWon Global Energy Company is the unified operating platform that consolidates the existing energy, logistics, and agro businesses under one global structure backed by Crestal Group, adding that the consolidation reflects Crestal Group's long-term vision to build a globally integrated energy and commodities platform that connects supply, logistics, and processing across key markets, the spokesperson declared. "Over the years, we have built multiple businesses across energy and commodities. We are now consolidating them into a single global platform to improve efficiency, scalability, and international positioning," he said.

Emerging from the strategic consolidation of multiple energy and commodity ventures previously operating under independent brands, JuWon Global Energy Global Company aims to build integrated supply chain solutions across global markets. The reorganisation was driven by the need to streamline global operations, strengthen brand identity, improve investor visibility, and to align energy and agro-commodity strategies under a unified platform, which ultimately positions the company as a vertically integrated energy and commodities group with cross-continental capabilities.

"This corporate structuring upgrade is a direct response to the need for better efficiency and stronger cross-continental ties. By housing North American trading and West African production under one roof, JuWon Global Energy Company is uniquely positioned to manage the entire value chain. From aviation fuel supply to agro-industrial processing, Crestal Group is ready to bridge the gap between global demand and vital supply," the statement concludes.

GEN-Z FINDS MORE HAPPINESS IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP THAN TRADITIONAL WORK - SURVEY

CHISOM MICHAEL

A new survey has shown that many members of Gen-Z in the United States are finding more satisfaction in running small businesses than working in traditional jobs, with young entrepreneurs reporting higher levels of happiness, optimism and purpose.

The findings came from VistaPrint's 2026 Small Business Happiness Report, which surveyed 610 small-business owners across the country. According to the report, 84 per cent of respondents described themselves as happy or very pleased with their work and personal lives. Among Gen-Z entrepreneurs, that figure rose to 94 per cent.

The report points to a growing shift among young people who are choosing entrepreneurship over corporate employment. Many respondents said owning a business gave them more freedom over their schedules, decisions and workplace culture.

More than half of the Gen-Z business owners surveyed said they were "much happier" now than in previous years. Many linked that change to the ability to shape their own careers instead of following fixed workplace structures.

The survey also found that younger entrepreneurs preferred "creative control over corporate ladders" when deciding to launch businesses. That preference reflects a wider trend among Gen-Z workers, many of whom have questioned traditional office systems, fixed working hours and management styles.

While Gen-Z recorded the highest level of happiness, older generations of entrepreneurs also reported strong levels of satisfaction. About 85 per cent of Baby Boomers described themselves as happy, followed by 84 per cent of Gen-X business owners and 81 per cent of Millennials.

The report further showed that business owners became more satisfied as their companies developed. Happiness levels rose from 74 per cent during the first three years of operation to 91 per cent between the third and fifth years of running a business.

Business growth also appeared to influence how entrepreneurs felt about their work. Owners with between 50 and 100 employees recorded the highest satisfaction level at 92 per cent.

Another key factor highlighted in the survey was the use of artificial intelligence tools. Many Gen-Z founders were among the strongest users of AI in small businesses.

According to the report, 74 per cent of respondents said they used AI tools every month, while 54 per cent said they used them daily or weekly. Business owners reported using the technology for writing, marketing, communication, analysis and problem-solving.

Many entrepreneurs said AI had reduced pressure and improved efficiency in their businesses. About 58 per cent of respondents said they had become much happier or somewhat happier since adopting AI tools.

The survey also found that 70 per cent of business owners believed they would be able to grow or expand their businesses within the next year. Half of those surveyed said changes in technology and workplace systems had left them "prepared to weather an economic downturn".

Dave DeSandre, VistaPrint senior vice president, said the findings showed that happiness plays an important role in business success.

"What this research makes clear is that happiness isn't just a byproduct of success for entrepreneurs; it's a driver of it," he said.

He added that small businesses were adopting new tools and workplace systems that allowed owners to focus on growth, staff and long-term plans.

The report suggests that for many Gen-Z entrepreneurs, running a business is not only about income. It is also about independence, flexibility and building a working environment that reflects their values and goals.

THE TAX YOU DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE PAYING

EKEMINI AKPAKPAN

You've built a career. You've earned a seat at the table. You've done everything "right." But somewhere, quietly, you're still paying a tax no government legislated.

Dr Tale Alimi calls it the Shame Tax. She says it is "the invisible cost women pay when we shrink, hesitate, or apologise before asking for what we're worth. It shows up in under-negotiated salaries, prices that don't reflect our expertise, and opportunities we talk ourselves out of". This tax doesn't appear on a receipt; it appears in your bank account, your career trajectory, and in the quiet voice that whispers: Who do you think you are?

Alimi's research first caught my attention not only as a professional woman navigating high-stakes moments but also as someone working closely with high-performing women. The founder of REAF Africa, and researcher focused on dismantling the psycho-social barriers to women's economic advancement, her work does not just describe the problem, it maps it. It names the internal programmes many high-performing women operate under: the Competence Doubter that convinces you you're not ready yet; the Moraliser that frames financial ambition as selfish; the Minimiser that reduces your achievements to luck, and the Invisible Wall that keeps your pricing and earning power below market value.

What the Shame Tax really points to

The idea of a "Shame Tax" is not about a single behaviour. It points to a cluster of deeply ingrained gender norms that reinforce each other over time. And this conditioning is precisely why it matters to me.

At the root is the norm that women should be agreeable and accommodating. From a young age, many girls are rewarded for being "nice," "easy," and not making others uncomfortable. The problem is that negotiation, whether for salary, fees, or opportunity, requires a level of friction. So when a woman asserts her value, it can feel like she's breaking a social rule.

That internal discomfort shows up as hesitation or over-apologising.

Closely tied to that is the expectation of modesty over self-promotion. Men are more socially permitted to signal ambition and confidence without backlash, while women who do the same can be perceived as "too much." So women often pre-empt that judgment by downplaying themselves, for example, charging less, qualifying their achievements, or talking themselves out of opportunities before anyone else does.

There's also a powerful norm around worthiness needing external validation. Many women are subtly conditioned to wait to be chosen. Picked for the role, invited into the room, or endorsed by authority, rather than claiming space proactively. That's where that inner voice ("who do you think you are?") comes from; it's less about capability and more about perceived permission.

Another layer is the penalty for non-conformity. Research consistently shows that women who negotiate assertively are more likely to face social or professional backlash compared to men. So the "Shame Tax" isn't imagined, it's partly a rational response to real consequences. Over time, though, that external risk gets internalised, and women begin to self-limit even in situations where the backlash may not occur.

And finally, there's the norm of self-sacrifice and over-responsibility. The idea that women should prioritise harmony, relationships, or collective well-being over personal gain. That can make asking for more feel selfish, even when it's simply fair. So the "Shame Tax" isn't just about confidence. It's about navigating a system where the rules for being liked and the rules for being rewarded don't always align, and women are often expected to choose.

7 Ways Financially Successful Women Are Still Paying the Shame Tax

1. You Are Operating Above Your Pay Grade, But Not Capturing It

What's happening: You consistently deliver beyond your role, take on invisible work, and assume that value will be recognised without articulation.

What it's costing you: Your output is compounding, but your compensation isn't. The gap widens over time. **Reframe:** Performance does not automatically convert to pay. It must be positioned and negotiated.

2. You Are Diluting Your Authority in High-Stakes Moments

What's happening: You soften your language. You say: "I think," "sorry," "this may be wrong," especially in rooms that matter.

What it's costing you: Your ideas land with less weight, which directly affects how you're evaluated, trusted, and paid.

Reframe: Authority is not just what you know, it's how clearly you claim it.

3. You Are Managing Perception at the Expense of Positioning

What's happening: You downplay your success or earning power to maintain comfort in your relationships or environment.

What it's costing you: You shrink your visible value, which limits how others benchmark and reward you.

Reframe: How you position your success shapes how it is valued, professionally and financially.

4. You Are Self-Selecting Out of High-Value Opportunities

What's happening: You opt out before applying, pitching, or putting yourself forward, waiting until you feel "fully ready."

What it's costing you: Missed step-change opportunities that significantly increase income, visibility, and trajectory.

Reframe: Access is often granted to those who signal readiness, not those who wait to feel it.

5. You Are Negotiating Against Yourself

What's happening: You hesitate to ask for more fees, salary, or equity because it feels excessive, uncomfortable, or "too much."

What it's costing you: You set a lower baseline for what you earn, and future increases build from that reduced starting point.

Reframe: Pricing and negotiation are not moral decisions; they are market decisions.

6. You Are Not Fully Leveraging Your Track Record

What's happening: You minimise your wins, attribute them to luck, or fail to translate them into clear, repeatable value.

What it's costing you: Your credibility doesn't compound, which weakens your ability to command higher pay or larger opportunities.

Reframe: Your track record is financial leverage if you know how to use it.

7. Your Pricing Does Not Reflect Your Market Value

What's happening: You underprice, over-discount, or avoid reviewing your rates against the market.

What it's costing you: Direct revenue loss and a positioning signal that keeps you in lower-paying brackets.

Reframe: Price is not just income; it is a signal of value in the market.

From Awareness to Wealth

The consequence of the Shame Tax is leakage: the cumulative impact of under-negotiation, underpricing, and self-exclusion on a woman's lifetime earnings and wealth trajectory. Because income does not simply reflect effort. It reflects positioning. And wealth is not built on potential, but on what you are able to capture, retain, and compound over time.

This is where the conversation must evolve. Increasingly, we are recognising that part of the equation to advance women's careers is ensuring that career growth translates into financial power, leadership, and long-term influence.

So I am taking it a step further from awareness — If you can recognise where the Shame Tax is showing up in your own decisions; how you negotiate, how you price, how you position yourself, then At WISCAR, we have partnered with Dr Alimi to bring this research to life by pairing her work on behavioural and psychological barriers with another leading expert in wealth and income building, whose work sits at the intersection of leadership, influence, and financial power. Because closing the gap between your value and your earnings is the first step, the real opportunity is ensuring that what you earn translates into influence and generational impact. And the greatest cost is not what you don't earn, but what you never claim.

WOMEN IN DEFI SUMMIT 2026 DRIVES AFRICA'S \$1.4 TRILLION OPPORTUNITY

CHISOM MICHAEL



The Women in DeFi (WID) Summit 2026 successfully concluded at The Zone Tech Park, Gbagada, marking a historic pivot from digital participation to sovereign ownership for African women.

Under the theme “Beyond the Bridge: African Women Leading the Future of Web3,” the summit convened over 500 builders and leaders to address the critical gender gap in the global decentralised economy.

Opening the summit with a high-energy session on Personal Branding, Bibi Eneje set the stage by declaring that “Visibility is power.” Eneje urged attendees to build authority through their unique perspectives, stating, “Know your season and build for the season ahead; the room is waiting for you.”

This call to action was amplified in a powerful keynote by Tejumade Tejuoso, who challenged the industry’s 94% male founder dominance. Tejuoso moved beyond the standard “access” narrative, identifying Ownership, Community, and Audacity as the pillars of the next decade.

“The DeFi market is projected to grow from \$37 billion today to \$1.4 trillion by 2033. We must ask: who will hold that wealth and who will build the products that unlock it?” Tejuoso stated. She reframed traditional African mutual aid networks, such as “Ajo,” as foundational blockchain logic. “Ajo is not a soft skill; it is a protocol. The women who built

the informal economies of this continent are the same ones who will help us build the decentralised economies of the next one.” In alignment with this vision, the Unstoppable Women of Web3 initiative announced a target to onboard 6 million African women by 2030.

In a candid Fireside Session, WID Founder Sarah Idahosa revealed the deeper mission behind the brand. “I chose the name ‘Women in DeFi’ because it represents independent finance,” Idahosa explained. “Coming into the space, I saw that it was open to everyone with no gatekeepers. You don’t need someone else to grow as long as you have a sound mind and ideas. DeFi made me financially independent, and since we are building financial inclusion for women, it makes sense to use a name that literally means independent finance.” She also cited rigorous time management as a non-negotiable for building a high-impact personal brand and community.

The summit’s commitment to tangible empowerment was solidified by Busha, one of the two SEC-licensed digital asset exchanges in Nigeria and a leading sponsor of the event. In a standout moment of tangible empowerment, Busha sponsored the WID Laptop Scholarships, awarding high-performance laptops to Hannah Kasali, Ebube Achusim, Emmanuela Adio, Peace Omosehe, and Marvelous Olatuga to facilitate their transition into technical engineering roles within the ecosystem.

FROM GAMING TO FINTECH: HOW DAMILARE ALABI BUILDS WHERE OTHERS SEE RISK

ANTHONY NLEBEM



Damilare Alabi co-founded Nigeria's first online sports gaming platform, scaled it into a household name, and exited in a landmark multimillion-dollar deal. What she built next, however, was an entirely different kind of bet.

There is a particular kind of entrepreneur Nigeria rarely celebrates. Not the founder who raises funding rounds and dominates headlines. Not the one with podcast appearances and TEDx speeches. But the entrepreneur who identifies a difficult problem nobody else wants to touch builds something real around it, and once the work is done, quietly starts all over again.

Turning Risk Into a Career Strategy

In 2009, online sports gaming in Nigeria was barely an industry. There was no established regulatory framework,

little consumer trust, and no guarantee Nigerians would stake real money on digital platforms they had never heard of. The risks were not only financial but also reputational, legal and existential.

What followed was more than a decade of building in uncertainty, navigating compliance in a regulatory environment still trying to catch up with the product, earning customer trust in a market conditioned to be suspicious, and scaling operations without the infrastructure that later entrants would eventually enjoy.

When Nairabet evolved into a household name in Nigerian sports gaming, it was not accidental. It was the compounded result of entering early, staying disciplined and understanding that in an untested market, the operator who survives long enough often wins.

In July 2021, after more than a decade of building, Alabi achieved what few Nigerian entrepreneurs ever do: a successful exit, completing a multimillion-dollar sale of the business she helped build from scratch.

“The people who build the foundations rarely get the credit,” she said. “But they carry the knowledge.”

The Gap She Had Lived Through

Most founders who exit a business after twelve years take time off. They travel, reflect and reassess their options from a position of comfort.

Alabi did reflect, but what stayed with her was not what she wanted next. It was what she had endured.

The experience that shaped her next move was not the startup struggle itself, but the challenge of scaling. By the time Nairabet gained traction and consistent revenue, the question was no longer survival; it was expansion.

That was where Nigerian commercial banks revealed their limitations.

The sector fell outside their appetite. The financing structures simply did not exist. Nairabet scaled regardless, relying on resourcefulness instead of institutional support. But the experience stayed with her.

After her exit, Alabi looked across Nigeria’s SME landscape and saw the same pattern everywhere: traders, importers and small manufacturers with real revenue, inventory and customers still unable to access the credit needed for growth simply because they did not fit the template commercial banks preferred.

The gap had not changed. Only now was she in a position to address it.

She founded Blue Credit Investment Limited.

Building Where Banks Won’t Go
Blue Credit Investment Limited is a Lagos-based non-bank financial institution providing structured credit facilities to traders, importers and SME operators who fall outside the traditional appetite of commercial banks.

Its facilities range from N1 million to N20 million.

The borrowers are not necessarily high-risk in the conventional sense. Rather, they are high-effort businesses requiring lenders willing to understand their operating models, cash-flow cycles and repayment realities.

That is precisely what Alabi built Blue Credit to do.

“We are not just in the business of lending money,” she said.

“We are in the business of understanding people. The lending is simply what good judgement produces.”

The experience gained from building Nairabet proved directly transferable. Operating in sectors where institutional frameworks are weak demands a particular type of operational intelligence, the ability to create structure where none exists, build trust without established norms, and grow deliberately rather than at the pace external pressure demands.

Those are not lessons business school teaches. They are earned through experience.

Though Alabi holds certification from the Wharton School, much of the education that shaped Blue Credit came from twelve years spent building in one of Nigeria’s most complex commercial sectors.

Formalising Private Capital

As Blue Credit’s portfolio expanded, so did its capital ambitions. Earlier this year, Alabi launched the Blue Credit Capital Circle, a tiered investor programme designed to provide high-net-worth Nigerians with a more structured and accountable pathway for deploying private capital into the SME market through a regulated financial institution.

The Pattern Behind the Pivot

Viewed together, the trajectory of Damilare Alabi’s career reveals a clear pattern. She does not pursue industries that are already validated, crowded or safe. Instead, she gravitates toward sectors requiring patience, operational depth, and a willingness to be misunderstood in the short term.

In 2009, that meant digital sports betting. In 2021, it became a non-bank finance for Nigeria’s underserved trader economy.

In both instances, she entered early, built deliberately and created institutions designed to outlast the moment they were born into.

“I am not interested in doing what has already been done,” she said. “I am interested in doing what needs to be done.”

For many women building quietly behind the scenes, navigating complexity without attention or applause, Alabi’s journey offers a different kind of reassurance: meaningful work compounds over time.

And by all indications, she is far from finished.

Damilare Alabi is the Founder and CEO of Blue Credit Investment Limited, a Lagos-based non-bank financial institution. She previously co-founded Nairabet, Nigeria’s first online sports betting platform.

DIFFERENTIATING BRAND STRATEGY, MARKETING STRATEGY AND COMMS STRATEGY

FEYISITAN IJIMAKINWA

Even the most seasoned marketers sometimes get brand terminology wrong. On the one hand, some terms are incorrectly used interchangeably (e.g., brand strategy and communications strategy), on the other hand, some concepts are being unnecessarily differentiated (e.g., brand strategy and brand positioning).

In this post, we make an attempt to clarify the most essential brand strategy-related definitions and explain the difference between the most commonly confused terms.

Brand vs. logo

Probably the most common misconception, in particular among people that are not brand or marketing professionals, is that brand is the same thing as logo (or visual identity in general). Even Investopedia defines brand in such a narrow way.

This is particularly dangerous (and not particularly uncommon) when senior management in an organisation has such an understanding of their brand. This could lead to a number of bad business decisions being made, like assigning inadequately low budgets to brand building or relying only on the marketing team to drive the brand's performance.

Our favourite definition of a brand is that coined by Amazon's former CEO, Jeff Bezos: "Your brand is what people say about you when you're not in the room." The reason why this explanation is so accurate is twofold.

Firstly, it assumes that brand is created by the entire experience your company delivers – from big things like your products, people, processes, your company's values, pricing policy, visual identity, and tone of voice, to smaller details like your leaflets or how you answer the phone. Secondly, it highlights the fact that what ultimately matters is what other people (your consumers, shareholders, employees etc.) think about your

company and your products, not what you say. In other words, whatever you do as an organisation, you are building a brand. Every single activity contributes to your brand's equity and influences the opinion people have about your business.

Brand strategy vs. comms strategy vs. marketing strategy

In the simplest terms, brand strategy summarises what your brand stands for.

Brand strategy can be captured using one of the popular positioning models explained in a form of brand guidelines or simply described in just a few words. The form doesn't matter as long as the content is understandable to all employees and easily applicable.

Who you are as a business and how you position your product is a high-level strategic decision. Therefore, at the most brand-centric companies, brand strategy constitutes part of the business strategy. What that means in practice is that brand strategy is being brought to life via all functions in the organisation, including product, marketing, legal, technology, HR and others.

However, even though implementation of the brand strategy should be a company-wide effort, most frequently it's the marketing department that is responsible for defining and executing it. As a result, marketing and brand strategies often get confused.

While the brand strategy should be a starting point for any marketing strategy, the scope of the marketing strategy is much wider. Marketing strategy focuses on how brand can be brought to life via product, price, communication and distribution (4P) in such a way that it will directly or indirectly generate revenue for the company. For different types of organisations marketing strategy means something different, but a commercial aspect of it is absolutely key.

A marketing strategy which doesn't help the company's top line should always be questioned. Communications strategy constitutes part of the marketing strategy. It defines the key messages of the brand, key audiences (e.g., end users, influencers, consumer press journalists, etc.) and key communications tools and channels.

Surprisingly, in many companies, comms and marketing departments are two separate entities, which often leads to working in silos and consequently, brand inconsistencies.

Ideally, the brand strategy should stay the same for years (e.g., Nike's and Coca-Cola's brand strategies have been the same for decades), while the comms strategy might change more frequently as the market evolves.

Let's use Red Bull as an example to clarify the difference between brand, marketing, and communications strategies.

Red Bull's brand strategy positions Red Bull as an energy drink vitalizing body and mind. Its marketing strategy focuses on building its brand awareness and creating associations between the brand and different consumption occasions: improving physical and mental performance, fighting fatigue and increasing concentration; thus making it a drink for a wide audience, rather than a narrow niche.

Its communications strategy is based on the main message related to the promise of an energy boost and "giving wings". It is executed through the brand's involvement in multiple extreme sports, as well as through TV advertising where it builds a more approachable image amongst mainstream audiences via humorous cartoons dramatising the idea of "giving wings".

Brand strategy vs. brand positioning

These are the same concepts. However, some people use the term positioning, when describing the brand's "position" in relation to its competitors. For example, if Coca-Cola is a timeless brand standing at the emotional level for optimism and happiness, Pepsi is into the here and now, focusing on younger people and promises of fun.

LAST LINE

It's impossible to have a strong brand identity without a brand. Likewise, you can't have a successful brand without a brand identity. To build a lucrative business, your branding and brand identity must work in harmony to create marketing campaigns that sell to new customers, win back lost customers, and drive business growth.



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. Feysitan 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. Feysitan advocates a pollution free and sustainable environment

WHY CREATIVE PR, STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS FIRM IS DRIVING PRODUCT INTEGRITY, QUALITY ASSURANCE

CHISOM MICHAEL





Beyond spending time behind the scenes and capturing audience attention, brands must focus on building trust and delivering consistent value by ensuring that the products and services they bring to market perform reliably, meet user expectations, and reinforce the promises made through their communications. This is where NUTPR steps in, setting the stage for strategic communications, public visibility, and product quality assurance.

The company is an execution-based PR and strategic communications company, delivering a full range of services including crisis management, corporate communications, quality assurance, product marketing and communications, and traditional media campaigns. Its approach goes beyond strategy; the focus is on implementation, ensuring that ideas are translated into measurable outcomes and real market impact. This ensures that brands are not only visible but also protected, well-positioned, and consistently represented across all touchpoints.

The firm has worked with a diverse portfolio of clients, helping them launch products and brands, evaluate offerings, and manage campaigns that drive both awareness and trust. One of its notable clients is the International Workplace Group, for whom they have successfully launched brands, coordinated traditional media campaigns, and led strategic communications efforts that supported market entry and brand positioning. This included brands such as Regus, HQ, and Spaces, where they ensured that corporate communication and each brand experience aligned with the global brand's reputation and market expectations.

The PR firm has also worked with QuickRemit, supporting their crowdfunding initiative through strategic communication, including founder-led marketing and visibility efforts that helped strengthen audience engagement and campaign traction. This reflects the brand's broader ability to support brands at different

stages of growth, from product launches to funding-driven initiatives, ensuring clarity of message and alignment with audience expectations.

In addition, the company has worked with Workplace Series Africa, providing product evaluation services to ensure their programs and digital platform functioned seamlessly and delivered measurable value to their users. This reflects their broader approach to stay grounded in strategy, ensuring the work is always practical and results-driven, and fully communicated and supported by what is delivered.

Across its engagements, the brand has led strategic communications initiatives, crisis management efforts, and traditional media campaigns that amplify brand visibility while safeguarding reputation. As an execution-focused firm, the work doesn't stop at planning; there is an active drive to implement, coordinate media, and ensure campaigns achieve their intended outcomes. By integrating quality assurance into the brand's workflow, this signals that campaigns do more than to build awareness; they strengthen user confidence and trust in the products and services promoted.

According to Ito Lawrence, the Communications and Strategy Partner, the three core principles that make the company a leading creative PR and Strategic Communications Company are execution-driven communications, where NUTPR thinks beyond just developing strategies and instead implements them across crisis management and media campaigns to ensure every plan is effectively executed with measurable visibility and impact.

The second principle is product-backed messaging, where communications are grounded in reality by aligning every message with the actual performance of the product or service so that what brands say matches what users experience.

The third principle is an integrated quality assurance approach, where product evaluation and quality assurance are incorporated into the process to identify gaps early and ensure that brands launch and communicate with confidence, credibility, and integrity.

This practical, hands-on approach benefits the broader ecosystem. Brands and consumers alike gain confidence when communications align with product performance. For clients, this has meant smoother launches, fewer post-launch issues, and stronger market credibility. For the industry, it raises the bar for how communications, public relations, and product quality can work together to drive tangible impact.

"At NUTPR, a brand message is as strong as the product and service behind it, and we ensure that the standard is met through our services. As an execution-based PR company, our mission is to ensure that every communication we craft, every campaign we run, and every product we evaluate meets the highest standards of integrity and performance".

"Whether leading communications and brand launches, supporting crowdfunding visibility efforts, or providing practical product evaluation and testing, our goal is always the same: to ensure what the brand says is what the brand delivers. We combine creative PR, strategic communication, and rigorous quality assurance to help brands build trust, credibility, and sustainable impact in their markets," Lawrence said.



From Broke to Driven-A Review of Adedayo Omotunde's Pure Water

Title: Pure Water: A Powerful Story of Hustle, Faith And African Entrepreneurship

Author: Adedayo Omotunde

Year of Publication: 2025

Number of Pages: 195

Category: Business Fiction

PURE WATER: A POWERFUL STORY OF HUSTLE, FAITH AND AFRICAN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

TITILADE OYEMADE

If a Nigerian sees the cover of Pure Water, the first thought is simple, someone is thirsty. But if you look closely, it tells a deeper story. The young man on the cover is not just thirsty; he looks tired, stressed, and worn out by the fast pace of Lagos life. From his posture to the busy street behind him, you can already sense the struggle.

The image draws you in and makes you curious. What is he going through? What has made him this exhausted? Even before opening the book, you already have an idea because his story reflects the everyday reality of many young Nigerians trying to survive, succeed, and stay hopeful.

Then the subtitle, A Powerful Story of Hustle, Faith and African Entrepreneurship, adds more meaning. At first, the subtitle sounds like a memoir, like the author is about to share his own life. But as you read, you meet Alex, a broke undergraduate trying to find his way.

Alex is not just tired physically, he is struggling financially. His life takes a turn when his girlfriend, Moji, tells him indirectly, "You can't be broke and be in a relationship." That moment changes everything. The breakup is painful, but it pushes him to decide that he will never remain poor.

This part of the story feels very real. Many young men can relate to the pressure of money in relationships. It may even make some readers uncomfortable because it reflects what happens in real life. While some readers may disagree with Moji, others may understand her point of view.

What stands out is that Alex believes she will come back immediately, like in the movies where love always rewinds itself. But this is not a movie, it is real life (winks, or at least, a fiction that feels that real). People move on, and choices leave marks that don't fade easily... though if you stay patient enough, you might just find out whether she came back or not.

As you read on, you realize that the "thirst" in the story is not just about water. It is about the desire for success, respect, and a better life. That is what makes the book powerful, it tells a common story in a very Nigerian way.

The writing is simple and easy to follow, which makes the story flow well. The title Pure Water becomes more meaningful when Alex decides to go into the sachet water business, connecting the story to his journey.

However, one thing feels a bit unrealistic. For someone new to business, Alex seems to know a lot. His confidence and understanding sometimes feel too advanced for a beginner, which may make readers question how he learned so quickly.

Still, the book is an easy read. It is clear, direct, and practical. It is especially helpful for undergraduates and young people interested in starting a business. It also gives useful insight for anyone considering the pure water business.

The author presents the hustle in a very honest way. The stress, the setbacks, and the small wins that feel big. At the same time, there is a strong message of resilience throughout the story.

Towards the end, the book becomes more serious and reflective. It teaches important lessons about business, like the need for clear agreements to avoid problems later. It also touches on failure, betrayal, mentorship, and starting again.

Overall, this is a valuable and motivating read. It is inspiring for young people and practical for anyone thinking of starting something of their own.

Pure Water is more than just a story, it is about mindset. It shows the true spirit of African entrepreneurship: creating opportunities from nothing, staying strong during tough times, and believing in a better future even when the journey is hard.



Titilade Oyemade is a business executive in a leading organisation and holds a degree in Russian Language. She's the convener of the Hangoutwithtee Ladies Event and the publisher of Hangoutwithtee magazine. She spends her weekends attending women conferences, events and book readings. She loves to have fun and to help other women have the same in their lives. Email: titi.oyemade@gmail.com
Social: [@tiipreeofficial](https://www.instagram.com/tiipreeofficial)

A WEB OF LIES

UDY OSARO-EDOBOR

I had gone to Abuja for an official assignment. I was supposed to stay at the Hilton, but I changed my mind and decided to stay with Becky, my very good friend from way back who had just returned to Nigeria after a long sojourn in Europe. She was in Abuja for work, away from her family.

We both had very busy schedules. I was off to my meetings in the mornings while she went to work but we spent the evenings catching up. There was just so much to talk about because we had not seen each other since we left secondary school.

One Friday evening, a phone call came in. It was her neighbour upstairs. She mentioned that just like her, his family lived abroad but he lived and worked in Abuja. His name was Zuwie.

They got on quite well. Becky described him as a brilliant engineer, an incredible tech guru, generous to a fault, the life of the party and an all-round jolly good fellow.

But his weakness was the opposite sex. He changed his women every Eke market day. He had no preference and entertained all kinds.

I mentioned to Becky that on a few occasions, while stepping out, I had seen different women leaving the apartment upstairs and had often wondered what sort of person her neighbour was. Becky didn't like his lifestyle but she said it was none of her business as long as it didn't affect the respect he had for her.

She also said that Zuwie had a family abroad and kept a young Ishan wife in Lagos, yet his love for women was insatiable.

From time to time, they hung out together when work allowed. So when he called that night, Becky told him about her friend who was visiting. He promised to take us out the next day and said he would be coming with a plus one. According to her, it was always a different girl.

Saturday evening came. Becky and I dressed up and waited. It had been a long week and we were ready to relax and have some fun. There was a knock at the door and without waiting for a response, he let himself in. Of course, it was Zuwie.

The moment I set my eyes on him, I felt a rush of emotions. Shock came first, then disbelief and then I laughed... long and hard.

He saw me and his eyes widened in shock. He took a step back as though he wanted to leave but he stood there, completely thrown off.

I was the last person he expected to see. Becky noticed the confusion and asked if we knew each other. Of course, I knew him.

Zuwie was Osazuwa—my older sister's husband.

I had never liked him. I had always felt there was something about him that wasn't right. He had a way of manipulating situations and I believed he did the same with my sister. She was too good for him.

There was a particular incident that confirmed my fears. I had gone to visit a friend of mine who worked at a hospital. It was meant to be a quick visit, just to say hello and catch up. As I walked past one of the consulting rooms, I heard raised voices. A young woman was shouting, almost crying, refusing to leave.

"I said I'm not going anywhere! You people should do what I came here for!"

The nurses were trying to calm her down, explaining that the hospital did not carry out such procedures. But she was stubborn, loud and causing a scene. Curious, I stepped closer. And then I saw him. Osazuwa.

Standing beside the girl like a man who had been dragged into trouble he couldn't talk his way out of. My heart dropped. I couldn't believe it. My own brother-in-law, in a hospital, with another woman, trying to arrange an abortion. He saw me too but I walked away, shocked and disgusted.

Later, he went home and twisted the entire story. He told my sister that he had gone to see a doctor friend at the hospital and happened to meet me there. He claimed that I was the one who had come for an abortion. He added that his doctor friend said it was not my first time, that I had come there several times in the past and that I was always turned away but kept coming back.

Instead of asking me what really happened, my sister believed him. She took his side and she called me names I still struggle to forget. She called me a disgrace. A corporate prostitute. A woman hiding behind ambition while sleeping her way to the top. She said I rejected decent men because I preferred a life of sin. Every word cut deep. That day, I lost my sister. We stopped talking. Completely.

Her words were painful, and it was obvious they had been fed to her. Those words were not hers. That incident destroyed our relationship. That day broke something between us.

Years passed and we stopped speaking to each other. I later got married but my sister did not attend my wedding. She believed I had tried to ruin her marriage so she wasn't going to be part of mine in any way.

Despite everything, I never stopped caring about her children. I had her account details and always sent gifts to them on their birthdays and at Christmas but she never acknowledged any of them.

When I had my twins, she did not reach out. Family members tried to bring us back together but she refused. To her, anyone who came between her and her husband was an enemy.

We were the only two surviving daughters of our parents and we used to be very close. But Osazuwa ruined everything.

And now, here he was, standing before me like a child caught with his hands in the cookie jar. The room fell into a heavy silence. For a few seconds, no one spoke.

Osazuwa recovered first. That was his nature. He straightened up, forcing a smile, trying to regain control of the moment. He greeted Becky casually, as though nothing had happened, as though I was just another stranger in the room.

Becky's confusion deepened but before she could process it, Osazuwa quickly stepped in, attempting to take charge of the narrative as he always did. He brushed it off as a family misunderstanding. A minor issue blown out of proportion. He spoke lightly, almost dismissively, hoping to shrink me.

That was when I stopped him. There was no room for his usual manipulation this time because this time, I was not the young girl he could silence with lies.

I reminded him, without raising my voice, of the hospital incident. He tried to deny it. Then he tried to twist it. Then he tried to laugh it off. But none of it held.

Osazuwa grew defensive. His tone sharpened. He accused me of holding grudges. Of trying to create problems where there were none. He spoke too fast, too much. But the more he spoke, the more he exposed himself.

I did not argue. I simply told him that his lies had cost me my relationship with my sister. That he had twisted a situation to protect himself and painted me as something I was not. And that no matter how far he ran, the truth would eventually catch up with him.

That was all. There was nothing else to say.

The evening ended without the outing we had planned. The mood had shifted.

Osazuwa left with his pride and I went back to my life. I never bothered to explain anything to my sister.

Not because I didn't want to, but because I had been shut out for years. Blocked, ignored, misunderstood and I had learned to live with it.

Time passed. Then one day, out of the blue, my phone rang. It was Onome. For a moment, I just stared at the screen. Eventually I answered. She apologised...then she told me how she had found out about her husband.

The cracks she had ignored for years became impossible to overlook. The patterns, the lies, the inconsistencies, they all began to connect. How the stories no longer added up. How she discovered he had another family in Nigeria. Piece by piece, the truth had unfolded before her. Everything she once believed began to fall apart. And with it came regret.

For my sister, it was a painful realization.

For me, it was a quiet vindication.

And for Osazuwa, it was the beginning of the end of a life built on deception.

In the end, the truth did what it always does. It surfaced.



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".
udy1717@gmail.com

WEEKENDER

MOVIE REVIEW

GLADIATORS II (2024)

If you enjoyed Gladiators first edition, then this will be totally worth your while, I absolutely enjoyed every bit of this movie, the action scenes were impeccable and amazing. Lucius fought tirelessly with his wife against the tyrannical emperors who lead Rome, in the process of the attack his home was conquered, he lost the wife and was taken hostage to Rome. Sixteen years after Marcus Aurelius's death, Rome is ruled by the corrupt twin emperors Geta and Caracalla, their reign was brutal, ruthless, aggressive, heir rash rules, policies and wickedness spread across the city of Rome like a wild plaque.

Lucius must fight and survive all the ruthless and wicked acts placed on his path to stay alive. You will need to go check out this fantastic action movie to discover if Lucius saved his life, if he saved his people and if the city of Rome was conquered or destroyed. The 149m military films, drama, action movie was directed by Ridley Scott, they featured actors like Denzel Washington, Paul Mescal, Pedro Pascal, Connie Niesen, Joseph Quinn, Fred Hechinger, Dior Raz, Derek Jacobi and many more.



APEX (2026)

After seeing the trailer, I was certain that I was going to be in for a super bumper ride with this movie. The movie kind of reminded me of hunger game or maze runner, if those kinds of movies excite you, then this would be worth your time. In this movie Sasha went up the mountain with her partner and suddenly there was a bad storm that caused stones to hit him badly and he fell off the cliff. 5 months after his burial Sasha wanted to move on and decided to embark on another trip. This was supposed to be a very easy therapeutic trip to help her move on, but this became her worst nightmare. On arrival at the Australian mountain and waterfall, what was supposed to be a nice holiday to enjoy the weather and nature became a case of her fighting for her life, as a wired creepy guy began to hurt her down, just to kill her and use her for ritual. The 95m Action, gritty, dark, movie was directed by Baltasar Kormaku, they featured actors like Charlie Theron, Taron Egerton, Eric Bana etc.



CRESCENT CITY (2024)

If you enjoy thriller/crime movies, then you might want to check out this one quickly. You know how they say that sometimes your enemies are closer than you think, that was the case in this movie. In this newly added movie "Little Rock" was seeing a high rise of murder cases and the police department couldn't resolve the case. The murder rates were rising so fast and everyone became a suspect, even the officers in the case. Brain was one of the detectives on the case, Brain had gone through some issues in the past that kept coming up and affecting his daily life, but framed and set up as the killer, but honestly he knows nothing about all these case, here is how he will prove his innocence and keep his happy home, as his past activities were brought up. The 102m crime, drama, thriller, suspenseful, sex and language movie was directed by R.J Collins, they featured actors like Terren Howard, Esi Morales, Nicky Whelan, Alec Baldwin, Michael Sirow, Maria Camula Giraldo, Weston Cage, Reema Sampat, Anjul Nigan and many more.



WEEKEND QUOTES



1

Our memory stores events.
Children never forget; be
careful what you do to them
.....WhispersbyTEN

2

Don't loose your steeze to anger
.....WhispersbyTEN

3

Correction with love is more
impactful. Don't ignore it
.....WhispersbyTEN

4

You really don't claim victory
if the person that hurt you
is not pointed to Christ. Just
sow the seed!
.....WhispersbyTEN