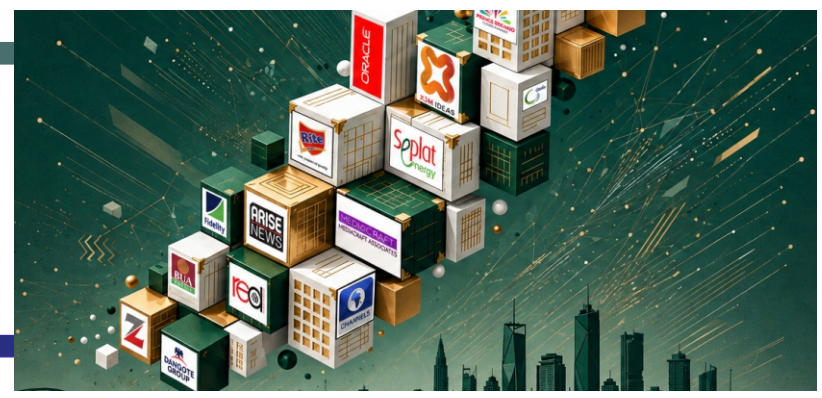
Meet top 50 Nigerian companies building resilience,driving growth



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OUR TEAM

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Goddie Ofose
08028424987
goddie2fose@gmail.com

EDITOR
Adedayo Odulaja

GENERAL MANAGER
Kikelomo Salam-Oyenuga

CORRESPONDENTS
Kate Oboho
Temmy Emmanuel
Oyindamola Shoetan
Opeyemi Olayiwola - Intern

PHOTO JOURNALIST
Adewale Akinbuwa 07069504904

OPERATIONS / LOGISTICS
Princewill Okike

FRONT DESK
Funmi Oleghe

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Daniel Obi
Akin Adewakun
Raheem Akingbolu
A. Lukman Ishau
Godwin Anyebe
Ralph Tathargata

EDITORIAL ADVISERS
Dr. Felix King-Chairman
Dr. Onyekachi Onubogu
Mr. Mojeed Jamiu
Mr. Akin Fadeyi
Mr. RichardAkinola II
Nkechi Ali-Balogun

CONTACTS
ADDRESS:
7, Jollystar close off Wemi Akinsola
Off Allen Avenue, By First Bank Bus-Stop,
Ikeja Lagos
TEL:
08028424987, 08099400139, 08116759746

WEBSITES:
www.theindustryng.com
www.789marketing.ng
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Building Resilience, Driving Growth: Nigerian companies shaping the next decade

Nigeria in 2026 is a story of contradictions. On one hand, we face forex volatility, rising inflation, infrastructure deficits, and policy uncertainty. On the other, we are witnessing a quiet but deliberate emergence of Nigerian companies that are not just surviving – they are redefining how business is done.

This year's Top 50 Companies of Impact feature is anchored on one theme: "Building Resilience, Driving Growth." It is not a slogan. It is the reality playing out across manufacturing, tech, advertising, finance, energy, healthcare and mobility.

Resilience today is no longer about enduring hardship. It is about innovation under pressure. Take the advertising and marketing communications sector. For decades, it was treated as a cost center. Today, it is a growth engine. Nigerian agencies are no longer just buying media space. They are building data platforms, creating content studios, and advising boards on reputation and crisis. They are helping brands navigate a consumer that is more skeptical, more digital, and more value-conscious than ever.

Yet the sector itself must confront its own resilience test. Client budget cuts, delayed payments, talent migration, and the rise of in-house teams have forced agencies to rethink their models. The ones thriving are those investing in tech, training, and specialization. They are moving from "execution vendors" to "business partners." That shift is what will determine who shapes the next decade. Beyond advertising, Nigerian companies across sectors are doing three things differently.

First, they are localising solutions. From MainOne building data infrastructure to power the digital economy, to Libra Motors rethinking mobility and after-sales service, businesses are solving Nigerian problems with Nigerian ingenuity.

Second, they are embedding sustainability. Not as CSR, but as strategy. Energy efficiency in data centers, greener supply chains in manufacturing, and financial inclusion in fintech are no longer optional. Investors, regulators, and consumers are demanding it.

Third, they are investing in people. The companies that will lead the next decade understand that talent is their true infrastructure. Upskilling, mentorship, and creating decent jobs are how they are securing a future workforce.

The economic impact is already visible. These companies are creating jobs, paying taxes, exporting services, and giving young Nigerians a reason to stay and build. The social impact is deeper. They are expanding access – to internet, to credit, to healthcare, to mobility.

As we celebrate this year's Top 50, the message is clear: growth will not come from waiting for perfect conditions. It will come from companies bold enough to build despite the odds.

Nigeria's next decade will be shaped not by policy alone but by enterprises that choose to innovate, to be sustainable, and to be accountable. Those are the companies we are spotlighting. And those are the companies Nigeria needs.

FEEDBACK

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MARCOM

"I said no to a blank cheque": X3M Ideas CEO Steve Babaeko reflects on 14 years of independence and conviction

■ *The advertising leader shares the pivotal decision that shaped X3M Ideas and challenges founders on vision vs ego*



Fourteen years after walking away from a corner office and turning down a blank cheque for 51% of a company that did not yet exist, Steve Babaeko, CEO/Chief Creative Officer of X3M Ideas and President, IAA Nigeria Chapter, is sharing the story behind one of Nigerian advertising's defining acts of conviction.

In a widely shared reflection, Babaeko recalled June 2012, when he resigned as Business/Creative Director at a leading agency to pursue his own dream. The move attracted immediate attention from one of the continent's biggest advertising entrepreneurs, who flew him to Nairobi with an offer to lead a new Nigerian operation as Executive Creative Director with 10% equity. Babaeko declined.

"He was not a man used to no," Babaeko wrote. "So he came to Lagos, sat across from me, and offered a blank cheque for fifty-one percent of the dream. Before we had opened a single door. I said no again. Very politely, of course."

The decision, he explained, was not about the money. It was about control, culture, and the space to learn.

"I had seen the agency in my mind, whole and finished, and I knew what it would take to get there. It would take room. Room to make our own mistakes. Room to be wrong in the morning and find our way back by night. You cannot course correct a car when someone else is holding the wheel."

Babaeko was candid about the cost of that choice. There were years when the funds he turned down could have solved pressing problems. There were seasons of doubt.

"I did not sleep easy on that decision... Had we gone under in year three, nobody would call it conviction. They would call us a fool who could not read a good offer."

Today, X3M Ideas operates across Lagos, Lusaka, Johannesburg, Brazzaville, Nairobi, and Dubai, and remains independently owned. The agency has grown to become one of Africa's most awarded and influential marketing communications firms, with Babaeko also serving as President of the International Advertising Association, IAA Nigeria Chapter.

"That we are still independent, still stubbornly chasing the exact dream we drew up before we owned a single desk," he said, "is the reason I can tell this story today."

Read more on www.theindustryng.com

In ESG, the 'S' is the licence: Ini Abimbola calls for measurable social risk reporting in Nigeria

■ *Governance advisor says host-community relations, not carbon, are the binding constraint for Nigerian businesses*



As mandatory sustainability disclosures approach for Nigerian companies, Dr. Ini Abimbola, Governance & Institutional Reform Advisor and Author, is calling for a fundamental shift in how ESG is measured locally — putting the "S" for Social at the center of risk management.

In a widely discussed commentary, Dr. Abimbola argued that while Nigerian companies are learning to report carbon emissions to global standards, they are neglecting the factor most likely to shut down operations: the social licence to operate.

"In Nigeria, what stops a plant, mine, pipeline, or factory is rarely its carbon footprint; it is a host-community dispute," he stated. "A perceived injustice over jobs, land, compensation, or environmental damage can turn into a blockade, a shutdown, or worse, as we have seen in many cases."

Dr. Abimbola noted that current reporting is unbalanced in a specifically Nigerian context. While the 'E' receives precise metrics, the 'S' often gets only narrative.

"Companies quantify their emissions to three decimal places and describe their community relations in a paragraph of goodwill. The E receives metrics, and the S receives adjectives, but the thing measured in adjectives is the thing that actually determines whether the business can operate."

Read more on www.theindustryng.com

AYODEJI RAZAQ: Leadership is about building institutions that outlive you

■ *RED | For Africa Group CEO featured by Pan-African Voice on building Africa's global brand narrative*

Ayodeji Razaq, Group CEO of RED | For Africa and Co-Founder of The People Company, has been spotlighted in a new leadership profile by Pan-African Voice for his work in shaping Africa's communications landscape and building institutions designed to endure.

The feature, titled around "ownership and institution building," examines how Razaq has helped position RED | For Africa as one of the continent's most influential communications ecosystems, supporting governments, global brands, and African institutions to turn communication into measurable business, reputational, and social outcomes.

On Building for the Long Term

In a reflection shared alongside the feature, Razaq said leadership is less about personal career milestones and more about creating structures that last beyond any single leader.

"Over the years, I've come to believe that leadership is less about building a successful career and more about building institutions that can outlive you. Titles change. Markets evolve. Technology disrupts. But institutions built on trust, great people, and a clear purpose endure," he stated.

At RED | For Africa, he noted, the focus has been on helping clients communicate with greater clarity, strengthen reputations, and drive impact across Africa.

Africa and The AI Moment

Razaq also highlighted the opportunity presented by AI for the continent's communications and reputation sector.



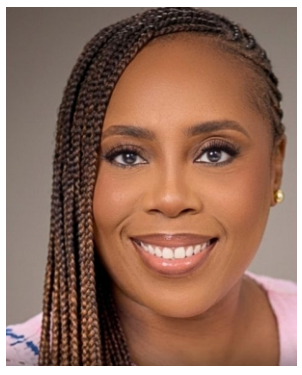
"As AI reshapes our industry, I believe Africa has a unique opportunity, not just to adopt the future, but to help define it. The next generation of African institutions will be built by leaders who combine technology with culture, creativity and human insight," he said.

Pan-African Voice noted that ownership "is more than equity. It is the power to build institutions, shape narratives, and create influence that endures," and profiled Razaq's "playbook" for using cultural intelligence and strategic communication to transform a career into an institution."

Read more on www.theindustryng.com

The Coca-Cola Company appoints Osato Evbuomwan as Senior Marketing Director for Nigeria

■ *Veteran brand leader with 16+ years at Unilever, Diageo, and Moët Hennessy to drive growth in one of Coca-Cola's key African markets*



The Coca-Cola Company has announced the appointment of Osato Evbuomwan as Senior Marketing Director for Nigeria, effective immediately. In the role, she will lead the company's marketing strategy and brand portfolio in one of its most important markets in Africa.

Osato brings over 16 years of experience building and scaling some of the world's most recognized consumer brands.

Before joining Coca-Cola, she served as Marketing Director at Moët Hennessy Nigeria. Her career also includes more than a decade at Unilever and a leadership role at Diageo, where she was recognized for combining deep consumer insight with bold brand leadership to drive consistent growth.

"Osato's track record of building iconic brands and understanding African consumers makes her the right leader to accelerate our marketing agenda in Nigeria," the company said in an internal announcement.

She succeeds Yusuf Murtala, who has transitioned into a broader Pan-African marketing leadership position within The Coca-Cola Company.

Osato's appointment has been widely celebrated across the industry as another milestone for women in senior roles at global organizations.

Nana Kwadwo Adu-Boateng, Business Executive and Market Expansion Leader, commented: "Her career journey demonstrates that exceptional marketing is built on a deep understanding of consumers, strategic thinking, and the ability to consistently grow iconic brands.

Read more on www.theindustryng.com

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ADVERTISING

ADVAN plots reset under Ogra: Institute, data report, and peace talks with regulators

Barely a few days after his election as President of the Advertisers Association of Nigeria, ADVAN, Mr. O'tega Ogra, Senior Special Assistant to the President on Digital/New Media, has outlined a bold agenda focused on dialogue, data, capacity building, and stronger collaboration with key stakeholders across the marketing ecosystem.

In his first major address since assuming office, Ogra said ADVAN under his leadership will prioritize engagement over confrontation, while working to quantify the industry's contribution to Nigeria's economy.

Describing marketing communications as "life," Ogra noted that from roadside traders to multinational brands, every business must communicate with stakeholders and sell its products and services.

"ADVAN, as Nigeria's premier body for advertisers, advocates on behalf of brands, institutions, small businesses, and even those yet to be registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission," he said. "Our goal is to create a situation where we can begin to measure our contributions to Nigeria's GDP and the economy."

To achieve this, ADVAN will commence the annual publication of the State of Marketing and Advertising Report for Nigeria starting this year. The report will document the sector's economic impact, highlight what makes Nigeria's marketing landscape unique, and showcase local lessons that can inform global practice.

Acknowledging long-standing challenges with regulators, particularly the Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (ARCON), Ogra said ADVAN will adopt a dual-track approach of legal due process and constructive dialogue.

"We know there have been challenges in the past. If we have tried something for a couple of years and it has not worked, maybe it is time we looked at other avenues of engagement with the regulator," he stated.

"That is not capitulation. It is about seeking other avenues to sit down with the regulator and see how we can work together in the best interest of advertisers and the entire marketing industry."

He clarified that ongoing court matters will not prevent dialogue. "Two things can coexist. The court case can continue, while we also pursue dialogue in an atmosphere of mutual respect and collaboration. If the regulators are ready, we are ready."

The new approach, he added, is aimed at creating an enabling environment where the industry is better operated, the regulator is better supported, and the outcome is a win-win for all.

Ogra outlined four key priorities for his tenure: Back to Basics: Creating a central platform where members can bring issues, problems, and ideas for resolution and scale.

Capacity Building: he said, "Institutionalizing ADVAN's training through the establishment of an Institute of Marketing and Brand Leadership under the ADVAN Business School is essential". The framework is expected within the next few months.

On Stakeholder Engagement, "Deepening relationships with regulators, government, media, and other sectoral groups to drive policy and industry growth is high on our agenda".

Finally, on Data and Insights, Ogra said, "Leading research that positions Nigerian brands and marketing practices on the global stage would be activated."

Ogra, who also serves in government, said ADVAN members have always balanced professional roles with voluntary service to the association.

"Every member of ADVAN already has a role. We have traveled and met on behalf of ADVAN. We have put in our personal time, resources, and energy. If the



founding fathers of ADVAN could do it, why can't we?" he asked.

He commended the ADVAN Secretariat, led by CEO Mrs. Ediri Ose-Ediale, for over a decade of service in managing the association's operations.

With this new direction, ADVAN says it is ready to lead conversations that shape policy, build talent, and position Nigerian advertising as a critical contributor to national development. ***Read more on www.theindustryng.com***

"The risk is no longer losing a pitch; it's losing relevance," AAAN President tells agencies at 53rd AGM

.....Big Media Cabal CEO, Tomiwa Aladekomo says "Clients No Longer Need Ads. They Need Problem Solvers"

The Association of Advertising Agencies of Nigeria, AAAN, has called on member agencies to move beyond traditional advertising and reposition as business problem-solvers in the AI era, as it opened its 53rd Annual General Meeting and Conference in Lagos.

Speaking at the event held at Providence Hotel, GRA Ikeja, Mr. Lanre Adisa, President of AAAN, said the biggest threat facing agencies today is not competition, but irrelevance. "Not too long ago, one of the biggest anxieties for an advertising agency was losing its pitch. We worried about winning the next account, retaining our clients, and staying ahead of the competition," Adisa said.

"But today, a far more fundamental question confronts us. What if the bigger risk is not losing a pitch, but losing relevance? In a world where AI is transforming creativity, where consumers are changing faster than brands can adapt, where creators are becoming media companies, and where technology is reshaping every aspect of communication, the greatest threat is that the business itself changes, and we fail to change with it."

He urged agencies to embrace technology without losing humanity, invest in talent, and stand together to "define, not just respond to" the future of African creativity.

Delivering a keynote on "Advertising in the AI Era: Solving Business Problems Beyond Traditional Ads," Mr. Tomiwa Aladekomo, CEO, Big Media Cabal, said the traditional agency model built around TV, print, and outdoor is rapidly coming to an end.

"Advertising has never been about creating advertisements for their own sake. At its core,



advertising is about solving problems," Aladekomo stated. "Clients no longer need agencies simply to produce a television commercial. They need partners who understand their businesses deeply and help solve their most pressing challenges."

He identified three major disruptions reshaping the industry, including: Fragmented Media and AI Platforms. According to him, brands must now optimize for Facebook, Google, creator channels, and AI-powered search. "There are now agencies whose sole business is ensuring that brands are recommended by AI systems," he noted.

On the creator economy, he stated that Influencers now compete directly with brands for attention and shape consumer behavior in ways unimaginable a few years ago.

For AI democratization, Aladekomo said, "Tools like ChatGPT now allow small business owners to produce copy, visuals, and campaigns that rival professional work, forcing agencies to rethink their value."

Aladekomo warned that ignoring AI is not an option. "If you choose not to embrace it, you risk being left behind," he said. However, he stressed that technology must serve human needs. "Technology is only valuable when it solves a genuine human problem."

While AI can analyze and generate content, Aladekomo said creativity, trust and relationships remain uniquely human.

"AI systems are trained on what already exists. They cannot originate genuinely new ideas the way humans can. Fresh thinking and imagination will continue to distinguish people from machines," he said.

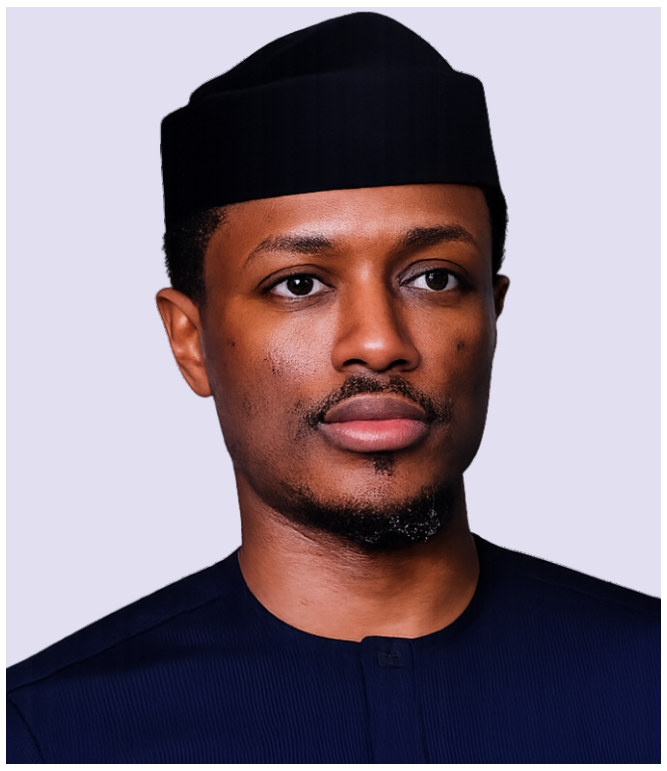
He also highlighted the renewed importance of trust and in-person connection, citing how his company's physical conference grew from 2,000 to 6,000 attendees post-COVID. "People ultimately want to do business with other people, not with machines."

Aladekomo concluded that agencies that thrive will be those known for creating digital experiences, helping brands navigate fragmented markets, and turning creator attention into sustainable growth.

"Continuous learning is no longer optional — it is essential. Success will belong to those who continue to do what humans do best: think creatively, build trust, form meaningful relationships and develop ideas that no machine can replicate," he said.

We need dialogue, not just litigation', ADVAN President unveils agenda for brands

■ Goddie Ofose



Barely a few days after his election as President of the Advertisers Association of Nigeria, ADVAN, Mr. O'tega Ogra, Senior Special Assistant to the President on Digital/New Media, has laid out an agenda focused on dialogue, data, and capacity building.

In this exclusive interview with The Industry Newspaper, Ogra speaks on ADVAN's relationship with regulators, plans for a marketing institute, and why the association must begin to measure its contribution to Nigeria's GDP

As the new President of ADVAN, how do you define the role of marketing communications in Nigeria today?

Marketing communications is life. From the woman who sells tomatoes or akara on the roadside to the big brands, you must communicate with the public — your stakeholders — and you must sell your products and services to them.

ADVAN, as Nigeria's premier body for advertisers, advocates on behalf of brands, institutions, small businesses, and even those yet to be registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission. Our goal is to create a situation where we can begin to measure our contributions to Nigeria's GDP and the economy.

There have been long-standing challenges with the regulator. What new approach will ADVAN take?

We know there have been challenges in the past, and these are not limited to our issues with the regulator. If we have tried something for a couple of years and it has not worked, maybe it is time we looked at other avenues of engagement with the regulator.

That is not capitulation. It is not about abandoning our members' demands. It is about seeking other avenues to sit down with the regulator and see how we can work together in the best interest of advertisers and the entire marketing industry.

We cannot keep litigating for years while hoping the regulator or the brands will listen. Our job as advertisers is to create the right enabling environment for real conversations — conversations rooted in common sense that take everyone's interests into account. That way, the industry is better operated, the regulator is better supported, and we have a win-win for everyone.

Does this mean ADVAN is offering an olive branch and may withdraw from court?

I won't comment on any case in court because that would be sub judice. What I am saying is that two things can coexist.

The court case can continue, while we also pursue dialogue in an atmosphere of mutual respect and collaboration. Collaboration and partnership are at the heart of marketing. As practitioners, we should put our practice to bear by sitting with the regulator to ask: What are your issues? Are you willing to listen to us?

Decisions ADVAN has taken in the past were in the best interest of our members and aligned with the laws and Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. What we are saying now is that we are not shutting the door to dialogue. If the regulators are ready, we are ready.

What should ADVAN members expect under your leadership?

Four key things. First, we are going back to basics. Members need one place to bring their issues, problems, and ideas. We will solve those problems and scale those ideas into initiatives that make an impact for Nigeria.

Second, we will institutionalize our training. We plan to set up an Institute of Marketing and Brand Leadership under the ADVAN Business School. We hope the framework will be ready in the next few months.

Third, stakeholder and regulator engagement. As I said, we cannot keep litigating every time. We need approaches that deliver results in a win-win manner.

Fourth, and most importantly, data. Starting this year, we will begin publishing the State of Marketing and Advertising Report for Nigeria. We need to know: What is the contribution of this space to our economy and GDP? What makes Nigeria's marketing and advertising space unique? What lessons can the world learn from us?***Read more on www.theindustryng.com***

OAAN flags policy inconsistencies, political interference, and debts as key threats to Out-Of-Home advertising ahead of 2027 campaigns

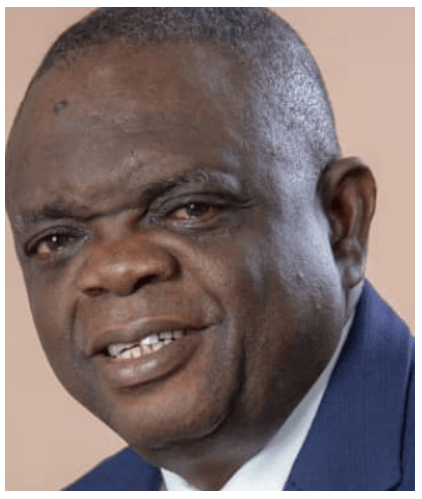
■ ***Association calls for harmonized regulation, fair access, and self-regulation to protect industry integrity and democracy***

By Goddie Ofose

The Out-of-Home Advertising Association of Nigeria (OAAN) has identified policy somersaults, political interference, exorbitant fees, post-election debts, and vandalism as the most pressing challenges threatening the sustainability of Nigeria's out-of-home advertising industry during political campaign seasons.

The concerns were raised at OAAN's 41st Annual General Meeting held at Park Inn by Radisson in Abeokuta, Ogun State.

Delivering the keynote address on the theme "OAAN in Political Campaign Season: Policies, Politics, and Fair Practice", guest speaker Chief T.O.E. Ekechi urged the industry to uphold ethics while advocating for regulatory reforms.





Speaking to members, regulators, and stakeholders, Ekechi noted that outdoor advertising remains the leading communication channel in Nigeria's political environment, with a 2019 study recording up to 94% voter exposure in some states.

However, he listed five critical issues undermining the sector, including exorbitant and discriminatory permit fees: State signage agencies are imposing prohibitive, non-negotiable levies targeted at political advertising. "In practice, these fees disadvantage the opposition while ruling parties self-account," he stated.

Inconsistent enforcement of campaign timelines: Despite provisions in the Electoral Act, premature campaign deployments go unchecked for some parties while others are sanctioned, creating an uneven playing field.

Post-election debt burden: Agencies are routinely left with heavy unpaid debts by politicians and ruling parties after elections, with fear of regulatory victimization preventing recovery efforts.

Vandalism and security risks: Defacing, destruction, and illegal replacement of opposition materials, coupled with harassment of field crews by political thugs, weaken contractual confidence and raise operational risks.

Regulatory overlap and visual clutter: Conflicting powers between federal regulator ARCON and state/local authorities, plus indiscriminate pasting of posters on public infrastructure, create uncertainty, urban blight, and space scarcity that favors incumbents.

"The challenge is not the absence of laws," Chief Ekechi said. "It is wrongful, selective, and inconsistent implementation. When policies change arbitrarily during an election cycle, it is like changing the goalpost while the match is in play."

OAAN restated its commitment to professionalism, neutrality, and industry self-regulation as the path forward. The Association proposed the following solutions:

Harmonization of Regulation: Advocate for clear collaboration between ARCON, state signage agencies, INEC, and local governments to eliminate conflicting directives and arbitrary levies.

Transparent and Equal Access: Ensure advertising inventory is allocated on transparent commercial principles. "Every qualified party must have equal opportunity. Selective enforcement undermines public confidence," the Association emphasized.

Strengthened Self-Regulation: Deepen adherence to OAAN's codes on pricing transparency, contract administration, environmental responsibility, and prevention of inflammatory messaging.

Stakeholder Education: Lead a sustained awareness campaign to educate government officials on existing advertising laws and the economic role of OOH in democracy and job creation.

Corporate Governance Reform: Empower OAAN's secretariat with executive authority to engage regulators without fear of reprisal, and shield individual members from selective sanctions.***Read more on www.theindustryng.com***

ADEOLA AMOSUN: The visibility architect set to rebrand ADVAN's voice

In an industry where perception is currency and reputation shapes influence, the ability to tell the right story has become just as important as the work itself. For the Advertisers Association of Nigeria (ADVAN), that responsibility now rests with Adeola Amosun, Group Head, Media at Tolaram Group, following his election as Publicity Secretary of the association's Executive Council.

His election is not the beginning of a new journey – it is a continuation of one. Having served in the immediate past Executive Council, Amosun played a central role in delivering what many consider one of ADVAN's most visible periods in recent history. Now, under the leadership of newly elected President O'tega Ogra and a council he describes as "contemporary and modern in thinking," his mandate is clear: strengthen ADVAN's visibility, deepen industry engagement, and position the association as the definitive voice of advertisers in Nigeria.

A Record of Delivering Visibility

Speaking exclusively to The Industry after ADVAN's Annual General Meeting (AGM), Amosun reflected on the achievements of the previous administration, highlighting visibility as one of its defining successes.
"A good example is the level of visibility ADVAN enjoyed during the 2025 and 2026 ADVAN Awards," he said.

"We secured over 20 LED screens across Lagos where ADVAN creatives ran for about two weeks. If you quantify that, you will understand the value. A single LED screen in Lagos costs a lot of money."

The campaign extended beyond outdoor advertising. His team also secured airplay across 15 radio stations in Lagos and select TV stations while coordinating media appearances for the outgoing President, the CEO and other key leaders, ensuring ADVAN maintained a strong presence across multiple platforms.



Beyond media exposure, Amosun also spearheaded initiatives designed to strengthen industry knowledge-sharing. One of the flagship programmes introduced during his tenure was the CMO Perspective Series, where leading marketing executives shared personal leadership journeys, strategic thinking and practical career insights with professionals across different levels.

"These are insights you won't get on the internet," he noted. "Hearing directly from the CMOs on how they got to that level."

For an association representing organisations that invest billions of naira annually in advertising and media, the objective was simple: ADVAN should occupy the same level of visibility as the industry it represents.

Building on Momentum, Not Starting Over

For Amosun, the new Executive Council is entering office with a solid foundation already in place.

He describes the incoming leadership as a blend of experienced professionals who have risen through ADVAN's ranks alongside respected industry leaders bringing fresh perspectives. He also described the AGM as "instructive and eye-opening," pointing to presentations by Dr. Biodun Salami on Nigeria's evolving consumer landscape and Crystal I. Berger on AI and Trust as evidence that the association is aligning itself with the realities shaping modern marketing.

Rather than introducing an entirely new direction in the Publicity Director's office, Amosun believes the focus will be on scaling what already works.
"This time around, we are not reinventing the wheel," he said. "We are strengthening what we started and doing it better on a larger scale."

A Two-Pronged Strategy

As Publicity Secretary, Amosun says his priorities will revolve around two key areas.

Amplifying ADVAN's Advocacy

With President O'tega Ogra also serving as the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Digital and New Media, Amosun believes ADVAN now has greater opportunity to contribute meaningfully to conversations around advertising regulation and industry policy.

According to him, the communication team's responsibility is to ensure that this increased access translates into consistent public engagement around issues affecting advertisers,
Read more on www.theindustryng.com

Emeka Obia on what Vaseline's Cannes Lions win signals for African strategy

On a stage in Cannes where billion-dollar budgets and global production houses usually dominate, a story about a "Nigerian Prince" took home 1 Gold Lion and 4 Bronze Lions.
The campaign, Vaseline and The Real Nigerian Prince, was led by Leo Singapore, with regional support and collaboration from Publicis West Africa and other Publicis Groupe partners. Helping shape that regional contribution was Emeka Obia, Regional Head of Strategy for Central and West Africa at Publicis West Africa.
For Obia, the win was never about chasing trophies. It was about proving a point: that African strategy, when rooted in culture and discipline, doesn't just participate in global conversations. It can shape them.

Out-Thinking, Not Out-Spending:
Cannes Lions is advertising's Olympics. The briefs are bigger. The budgets are heavier. The competition is ruthless. So how did a campaign built around trust, counterfeit skincare, and a decades-old internet stereotype break through?
"Clarity," Obia said. "It did not try to outspend global brands. It out-thought the problem."
The insight was disarmingly simple. The world already knew the "Nigerian Prince" email scam. In Nigeria, consumers also knew another kind of scam: fake Vaseline in the market. Two forms of fakery. One human problem: trust.
Instead of decorating the culture, the team used it as a way into the problem. "Culture was not just a reference point," Obia explained, "It became the strategy."

That decision made the work travel. Specific enough to feel true to Nigeria. Human enough for a jury in Cannes to understand instantly.
It is the kind of thinking Obia has championed at Publicis West Africa: strategy that starts with how people actually live, not how decks say they should.

The Insight: When Fake Becomes Normal, Real Gets Questioned:
As Regional Head of Strategy, Obia's role was to help validate the insight behind the work and sharpen how it connected to the Nigerian market reality. "The thought was simple: when fake things appear often enough, even the real begins to get questioned," he said. "That was true of the 'Nigerian Prince' stereotype, and it was also true of counterfeit products in the market."
So the campaign connected two kinds of fakery. Fake emails. Fake products. From there, Vaseline had a credible role: to help people know what is real. It wasn't a manufactured purpose. In skincare, counterfeiting is not just a business loss.
It's a safety issue. "People want to trust what they buy, especially in categories that touch the body and skin," Obia noted. "The campaign made that trust issue visible in a way people could immediately understand."
That is Obia's signature as a strategist. He hunts for cultural tensions that sit on top of real consumer truths. Then he makes the brand's role impossible to ignore.

West Africa and the New Standard:
The Cannes win does more than add metal to a shelf. It signals a shift in how the world sees African agency talent.
"For me, it says African strategic and creative talent is not just aspiring to join global conversations. We are already contributing to them," Obia said.
Markets like Lagos, Accra and Abidjan force a different kind of intelligence. "They force you to understand how people actually make decisions, how trust is built, how aspiration works, and how informal systems shape brand choices," he explained.
That market intelligence is now an export. The campaign was Leo Singapore-led, with Publicis West Africa helping ground the work in market reality and cultural understanding. Insight Redefini's All Seasons Zenith and Quadrant MSL added media and PR muscle.
The result is a blueprint: global craft, regional collaboration and local truth can create world-class work.
For Publicis West Africa, the Lion is validation. "It shows that the region can help shape work that competes at the highest level when cultural intelligence, strategic discipline and creative ambition come together," Obia stated.



Purpose That Didn't Feel Forced:
Award-winning purpose campaigns often fail because they feel bolted on. This one didn't. "The purpose was not forced onto the brand.
It came directly from the product problem," Obia says. Counterfeit Vaseline is a trust issue, a protection issue, and potentially a health issue.
The "Nigerian Prince" stereotype gave the campaign a familiar entry point. The strategy flipped it. From fraud to authenticity. From suspicion to protection. "That, for me, is the sweet spot: specific enough to feel true to Nigeria, but human enough for anyone to understand," he said.

It is also a lesson for brands across West Africa. Purpose works when it is the byproduct of solving a real business problem, not the starting point.
Read more on www.theindustryng.com

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COMPANY FEATURE

Cardinal Torch: Born in lockdown, built for export

· How a 6-year-old Nigerian agribusiness turned COVID disruption into a $4.5m processing bet

By Goddie Ofose | The Industry Newspaper

March 2020. The world shut down. Borders closed. Planes grounded. For most businesses, it was a signal to pause. For Cardinal Torch Company Limited, it was the month it was supposed to open shop.

"We had started putting things in place. We were talking to our international partners. And then COVID came," recalled Mr. David Olurin, MD/CEO of Cardinal Torch, speaking at a press conference at the company's Victoria Island head office on Friday, July 31, 2026.

"Everything we had put in place before COVID had to come to a stop. But like everybody else did in the world, we went on by truck. We did not stop. We were having virtual weekly meetings. As an entity, we did not waver."

Six years later, that stubbornness has become a strategy. Cardinal Torch has grown from a trading desk started in a pandemic into a fully integrated agribusiness and commodities company now investing $4.5 million in a cashew processing plant in Ogun State.

The first break: buying when everyone sold:

COVID crashed commodity prices. For many, it looked like the end. For Cardinal Torch, it looked like inventory.

"When prices of commodities went flat, we bought 100 tons of cashew during COVID at a flat price. Physical products," Olurin said. "People thought the world was going to go to an end."

Six months later, vaccines arrived. Airspace reopened. Markets picked up. Prices rebounded. "That was the first break for this company. And that was our first export," Olurin added. "It was a regret that we could not do 500 tons. But we made some decent money out of it."

With banks also offering interest-free concessions, Cardinal Torch had what few others couldn't: stock, at zero cost, when demand returned.

"It was as if I bought something at zero and I kept it. And several months later, everybody was down looking for it to buy and I had it."

Building a supply chain, not just a company:

From day one, Cardinal Torch chose to see itself differently.

"90% of people see operations as just a truck on the highway," said Mr. Bamitale Akindele, Executive Director, Operations & Logistics. "But nobody sees the work behind that. The work involves thousands of people."

That "behind the scenes" became Cardinal's backbone: aggregators at farm gates, warehouse staff, logistics partners, and cooperatives. Today the company works with 150 to 200 farmers and runs warehouses at farm gates to guarantee raw material flow.

"We have the infrastructure. We support them with incentives. So there is a good level of loyalty," Akindele added.

The company now moves 5,000 MT of maize, 3,000 MT of husked brown rice, 3,000 MT of millet monthly, plus beans, sorghum, and a growing import portfolio. Staff strength has grown to 40, and will hit 150 when the new factory starts.



From left: Mr. Emmanuel Mshelia, Chief Technical Officer; Mr. David Olurin, MD/CEO; Ms. Ndutimobong Sunday, Head of Business Development & Commercial; and Mr. Bamitale Akindele, Executive Director, Operations & Logistics, all of Cardinal Torch Company Limited, at the Cardinal Torch Media Parley held in Victoria Island, Lagos

Risk, governance, and the ICE hedge

Agribusiness in Nigeria is volatile. Prices swing. Investors need assurance.

"To build a globally sustainable business, we instituted strong governance principles,"

.Read more on www.theindustryng.com

Babaeko tasks media agencies on local intelligence, future growth



Players in Nigeria's media and communications industry have been reminded of the global transition in the business space as a result of technological revolution, which is rapidly changing advertising planning, buying and delivery.

Speaking at the 2026 Annual General Meeting of the Media Independent Practitioners Association of Nigeria, MIPAN, the Chief Executive Officer of X3M Ideas, Steve Babaeko dwelled extensively on artificial intelligence, programmatic systems and self-service platforms and the advantages they have over traditional approaches. He challenged media professionals to wake up to the new trend as they are losing a major chunk of their jobs automated processes.

Babaeko urged agencies to build their own audience intelligence, deepen their understanding of local consumers, and work together in areas where individual firms may lack the required scale.

According to him, Nigerian agencies should not shy away from the fact that the pressure is already evident.

He said, "Global technology companies control substantial audience data and increasingly provide advertisers with tools for targeting, placement, optimisation and measurement. As these platforms take on more functions, the traditional media buying model is coming under pressure, leaving agencies to reconsider what clients will continue to pay them for."

The AGM, themed "Monetizing Tomorrow: Outpacing Disruption, Capturing Growth in the Next Era of Media," provided the setting for Babaeko's keynote, "Whose Tomorrow Are We Monetizing?" He argued that technology companies are extending their influence across the advertising value chain, from audience data and campaign planning to placement, optimisation, and measurement.

For agencies that remain heavily dependent on media buying and execution, he said the implications could be significant. As routine functions become automated, practitioners would have to demonstrate value through judgement, consumer understanding, and strategic interpretation. "You cannot out-run the algorithm at arithmetic. It does arithmetic for a living," he said.

Babaeko, however, sees knowledge of the Nigerian consumer as an advantage local agencies can develop further. Purchasing decisions are influenced not only by digital platforms but also by radio, markets, commercial transport, WhatsApp groups, religious institutions, neighbourhood networks and word-of-mouth communication, much of which may not be adequately reflected on conventional dashboards.

These influences shape how consumers make choices and how brands gain acceptance across communities. With a large part of Nigeria's economic activity taking place in the informal sector, Babaeko argued that what remains outside conventional measurement could become valuable intelligence for local agencies. ***Read more on www.theindustryng.com***

New MIPAN executive pledges to "Build the Future" and capture value for members

…Brenda Nwagwu emerges as President as Association Sets 4-Pillar Agenda for 2026–2028



The Media Independent Practitioners Association of Nigeria (MIPAN) has inaugurated its 2026/2028 Executive Committee following its Annual General Meeting held last week, with a renewed mandate to "Build the Future" and drive exponential growth for media independent agencies in Nigeria.

Brenda Nwagwu was elected President to lead the new Exco, succeeding Dozie Okafor and the outgoing executive.

In an appreciation message to members, President Nwagwu thanked members for the trust and mandate given at the 2026 AGM and honoured the outgoing leadership for laying a strong foundation under the theme "Engineering Growth."

"We honour the outgoing President Dozie Okafor and the Past Exco for the foundation of 'Engineering Growth,' particularly evident in our growth in industry collaborations, good financial health, and growth in the number of member agencies," Nwagwu stated.

She also gave special appreciation to the Education Committee, AGM Organizing Committee, and the Publicity Secretary's teams for their work on Patrons Day and the Health Walk, noting that "Your dedication strengthens our brand, unity, and visibility."

On the four strategic pillars to "capture value", the new leadership has outlined a 2-year agenda focused on "Capturing Value for every member" through four strategic pillars:

Growing Our Voice and Influence: Stronger advocacy with regulatory authorities and increased representation on key industry platforms.

Enhancing Member Value: Delivery of masterclasses, policy advocacy, and member benefits designed to directly boost agency bottom lines.

Ensuring Sustainability: A renewed drive to secure a permanent MIPAN Headquarters and advance the Building & Housing Initiative for members.

Strengthening Governance: A comprehensive constitutional review and the activation of Ethics Committees to uphold professional standards.

The new Exco called for industry-wide collaboration to achieve its goals. "We cannot do this alone," President Nwagwu said, quoting the African proverb: "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

Read more on www.theindustryng.com

ADVERTISING FEATURE



ADVOLUTION: Advertising as we knew it is dead, here's how Nigerian agencies can win what's next

From Goddie Ofose, who was in the room

On July 24, 2026, inside Providence Hotel, Ikeja GRA, the most senior voices in Nigerian advertising gathered for the 53rd Annual General Meeting of the Association of Advertising Agencies of Nigeria (AAAN). The theme on the wall was blunt: "ADVOLUTION: The End of Advertising as We Know It and How to Win What Comes Next."

It was not a eulogy. It was a brief. From Dr. Meksley Nwagboh, Divisional Head, Brand & Communications, Fidelity Bank Plc, to Lanre Adisa, newly elected President of AAAN, to a panel of agency and client leaders, one message kept repeating: the job description has changed. The tools have changed. The power has changed.

Advertising is not dying. But the version we grew up with — 30-second spots, big budgets, agency-as-gatekeeper is.

The end of "Awareness-Only" advertising:

For decades, the brief was simple: get the brand known.

Dr. Nwagboh says that era is over. "People no longer buy familiarity alone; they buy confidence," he told the room. "A flashy campaign may open a door, but experience keeps the customer inside."

He used banking as proof. A few years ago, no one thought customers would trust digital-only banks with salaries and savings. Today, those banks have tens of millions of users globally. Why? Because trust was built through uptime, speed, fair fees, and quick issue resolution.

"In the mind of the customer, operational issues are brand issues," Nwagboh said. "The ad must match the product. The promise must match the delivery." The panel agreed. Oluwatobilola Beckley-William, Creative Director, 7even Interactive, said agencies must drop the belief that "every campaign is just to drive awareness."

"It needs to be effective enough to drive searches and actually pick that consumer and put them on the ad," she argued.

Seun Adaramola, Marketing Director, VISA Nigeria, put it from the client side: AI now gives clients speed. "Agencies come to me and say, I can give you a casket in 24 hours because I have AI tools." What clients now expect is not just fast execution, but "core human insights" that AI cannot generate.

The takeaway: creativity without utility is noise. Campaigns must now move from awareness to engagement, to conversion, to loyalty, to advocacy — seamlessly.

The rise of participation: Customers as co-creators

The second big shift, according to Nwagboh, is that the audience is no longer just watching.

"The customer is now a collaborator, a critic, a content creator, a distributor, and sometimes the competitor," he said.

He cited Spotify Wrapped. Instead of telling people what Spotify stands for, Spotify lets people tell their own story through the brand. Millions share their stats every December. "Every user becomes a creator; every post becomes an endorsement."

Rotimi Ade-Onojobi, Creative Director, Spice360, echoed this: "We no longer control the audience's attention. The audience controls the remote. They want to be co-creators with us."

We see it locally too. Nwagboh pointed to Big Brother Naija. What started as TV is now an ecosystem: watch on Showmax, vote digitally, debate on X, create memes, join fan communities, respond to brand activations in real time.

For agencies, this means media planning must become "behavioral marketing." Don't just ask where the consumer is. Ask what they are doing, feeling, solving, and who is influencing them at that moment.

Media reinvented: From channels to behaviors

"Media is no longer a set of channels. It is an ecosystem of behaviors," Nwagboh said. Television now lives with streaming and TikTok commentary. Outdoor is programmatic and location-aware. Radio competes with podcasts. Social media is entertainment, commerce, customer service, and reputation management all at once.

Citing the Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2025 and PwC's African Entertainment & Media Outlook, he noted that digital and social now break news ahead of traditional media, and ad spend is shifting faster than ever.

The implication for agencies: the best ideas cannot live in one format. "They will travel across screens, streets, stores, conversations, communities, and experiences."

Daramola R. Salvador, MD/CEO, DigiSplash Limited, warned that agencies are still stuck in old toolsets. He recounted interviewing creatives who listed Photoshop and After Effects, while the best candidate used only phone apps he'd never heard of. "Invest more in tools that stimulate people's creativity than in tools that do things," he advised.

Trust: The new currency

If participation is the opportunity, trust is the risk.

Nwagboh devoted an entire section to it. In an age of deepfakes, AI voices, and misinformation, "Trust will become one of the most important, valuable currencies in communication."

He referenced the Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria's 2025 warning about AI ads using Pastor Enoch Adeboye and Seun Okinbaloye without consent. "Technology borrowed credibility from the personas it used and redirected it toward deception."

The question for consumers is no longer "is this clever?" It is "Is this real? Is this safe? Is this brand responsible?"

This puts a new duty on agencies. "We must become guardians of credibility," Nwagboh said. "Disclose where necessary that this is AI. Avoid manipulative personalization. Build campaigns that can survive scrutiny, not just campaigns that can win attention."

Lanre Adisa, President of AAAN, framed it as a leadership challenge: "If we embrace technology without surrendering our humanity… then we will not merely respond to the future; we will define it."

How to win what comes next: 8 Imperatives for agencies

Nwagboh closed his keynote with a playbook. The panel and Adisa's address filled in the gaps. Together, they form the AAAN agenda for "Advolution":

Build AI Literacy Across the Org

"AI cannot remain the exclusive reserve of one digital specialist in a corner," Nwagboh said. Strategy, creative, account, media, CEO — everyone must understand it.

Invest in Data Capabilities

Agencies must "read dashboards and read culture; connect numbers with narratives." As Adaramola noted, data is good for analysis, but "the real creative juice is going to come from humans."

Deepen Consumer Insights

"The Nigerian consumer is not a single audience," Nwagboh said. "There are many Nigerians within Nigeria." Agencies that understand income, region, language, and aspiration will win.

Become Experience Partners, Not Campaign Vendors

Clients need help with journey mapping, employee advocacy, crisis response, and reputation. "Agencies that remain campaign vendors may struggle; agencies that become great partners will survive," Nwagboh warned.

Protect Originality

In a world of AI sameness, "the big idea is not dead. It is more necessary than ever," he said. It gives technology direction and gives brands memory.

Redesign the Team

The future agency includes copywriters, strategists, analysts, technologists, behavioral scientists, community managers, and ethics advisors. "The next generation will be trained to think across creativity, commerce, culture, and code."

Collaborate Broadly

"The problems are too complex for isolated thinking," Nwagboh said. Partner with fintech, data firms, creators, universities, and clients. Ecosystem thinking will win.

Measure What Matters

Celebrate creativity, but prove business value. "Show how communication drives trust, consideration, adoption, loyalty, advocacy, and sales."

The bigger fight: Respect and relevance

Not everyone agreed data is king. Beckley-William pushed back: "We overemphasize the importance of data. Creativity shows you what can be done that has never worked." She argued data can make teams rigid.

Ade-Onojobi went further, saying the industry's real problem isn't AI. It's respect. Using the Snickers "You're Not You When You're Hungry" campaign, she noted that in Nigeria it was reduced to a BRT billboard. "Are we respected enough for us to demand the same kind of payments that the international market is demanding?" she asked. "Our problem is that we have an inferiority complex."

Adisa echoed the urgency in his welcome: "The biggest risk is not losing a pitch, but losing relevance… The business itself changes, and we fail to change with it."

Become the time

Nwagboh ended with a challenge to AAAN: "We must move with the times. More importantly, we must help shape the time, and in fact, we must be the time."

He believes Nigeria has the edge: culture, music, humor, resilience, storytelling. What's needed now is to match that with "new systems, with new skills, with new standards, with new courage."

The future, he said, "will not belong to the biggest spender; it will belong to the clearest thinker… to the most trusted voice… to those who turn disruption into leadership."

Advertising as we knew it — separate from product, separate from data, separate from the customer — is over.

What comes next is harder. It demands technologists who understand culture, creatives who understand business, and agencies who act as custodians of trust.

But as Adisa told the room: "_We will not simply participate in the next chapter of African creativity; we will help write it." That is the invitation of Advolution.

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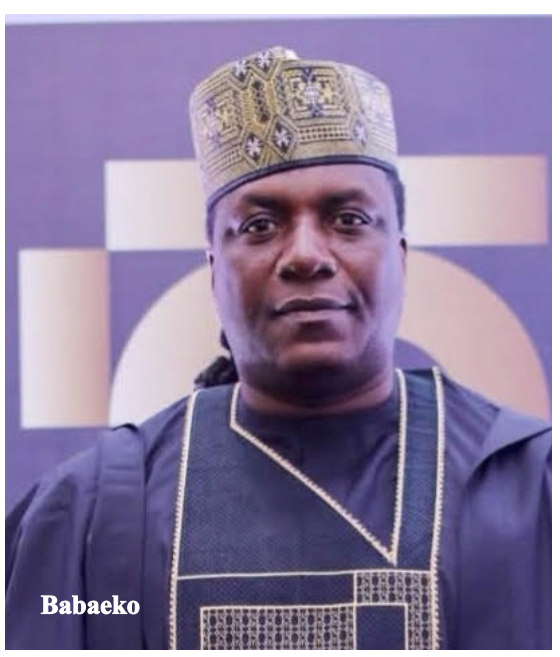




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MONETIZING TOMORROW: Why Nigerian media must stop renting the future from Silicon Valley

Inside the MIPAN AGM 2026 debate on outpacing disruption, owning data, and capturing growth in the next era of media

By Seddie Ofose

The room at the Media Independent Practitioners Association of Nigeria [MIPAN] Annual General Meeting 2026 did not feel like a typical industry gathering. There were no victory laps. No forecasts dressed up as certainty.

Instead, there was a question, asked out loud by Steve Babaeko, Group CEO and Chief Creative Officer of X3M Ideas, and left to hang in the air for two hours:

"Whose tomorrow are we monetizing?"

The theme for the year was bold, even urgent: "Monetizing Tomorrow: Outpacing Disruption, Capturing Growth in the Next Era of Media." But Babaeko's keynote reframed it. Before we chase growth, he argued, we must decide if we are building a future we own, or renting one back from platforms built in Menlo Park.

What followed was not a eulogy for media buying. It was a blueprint for a second independence. And it drew sharp, pragmatic responses from three of the industry's leading voices: Abisoye Oruye, Media Manager, Sub-Saharan Africa; Stephen Oluwatoyin Onaivi, MD, mediaReach OMD Nigeria, and newly elected VP MIPAN; and Emmanuel Adediran, Executive Director at Plus Acuity Ltd.

Together, their contributions at MIPAN 2026 sketched the contours of what Nigerian media must become if it intends to be alive, profitable, and relevant in ten years.

The end of the transaction era

Babaeko began with history, because history is where MIPAN's courage lives.

Founded in 1999 by seven companies, MIPAN was born to turn media planning from "guesswork and long-table relationships" into a science. That was the first independence: independence from gut feeling. For 25 years, the industry built businesses on that discipline. On the buy. On negotiation, volume, relationships, and the placement.

That model paid for schools, cars, and offices.

But Babaeko was blunt about the second half of the story. "The transaction is being eaten," he told the room. Programmatic took the first bite. Self-serve platforms took the second. Now, AI agents are taking the third: planning campaigns, choosing audiences, setting budgets, optimizing while you sleep.

"When the platform owns the road, the vehicle, and the driver, what exactly is the tollgate collecting for?" he asked.

If your business rests on being "the fastest, cheapest hand between the naira and the impression," he warned, you are monetizing a shrinking thing. "You cannot outrun the algorithm at arithmetic. It does arithmetic for a living."

Abisoye Oruye picked up the thread from the advertiser's side. For her, the core problem is that we have been measuring the wrong thing.

"Reach told us who saw the ad. It never told us who bought, who stayed, or who came back," she said.

The panel she moderated at the AGM landed on a clear consensus: impressions are a proxy, not a result. In a fragmented world of TikTok, YouTube, and direct-to-fan channels, a single reach number is losing meaning. Advertisers are already reallocating budgets toward what converts. Disruption, she noted, "isn't coming — it's already reallocating budgets."

Emmanuel Adediran put it even more directly: "The transactional era of media buying is dead, swallowed by global algorithms. If agency survival depends on playing middleman to Silicon Valley dashboards, the battle is already lost."

The gap the machine cannot see

If the transaction is dying, what survives? Babaeko's answer was unexpected and deeply Nigerian: the gap.

He asked the room to imagine the real consumer. The woman in Bodija market with a radio on tomatoes. The danfo conductor's playlist. The WhatsApp broadcast list that moves an estate. The barber who is a one-man influencer network. The church announcement. The aunty who "saw it on TikTok."

"Now go and open the global dashboard and try to find those people," he said. "You will not find them. Not fully."

He backed it with numbers. More than 57% of Nigeria's GDP sits in the informal economy. Over 90% of jobs are informal. Roughly 40 million small enterprises trade largely in cash, making them largely invisible to attribution models. Yet by 2029, 84% of ad spend in Nigeria is projected to be digital — higher than the global average — chasing a view of Nigeria built on roughly 38 million social media identities.

"There are close to a hundred and eighty million active mobile lines in this country, and the platforms can only richly profile some thirty-odd millions of them," Babaeko said. "We are pouring our budgets through the one window that shows us the smallest room in the house, and calling the view 'insight.'"

That gap, he argued, is not a problem. It is the treasure. "The machine can only optimize what it can see. And there is an entire Nigeria it cannot see… and the only people on this earth who can read that map fluently are sitting in this room."

Adediran agreed. "Algorithms deliver reach, but context drives conversion. That context cannot be outsourced to foreign platforms with zero understanding of the informal African economy."

For Oruye, this is also a measurement problem. The industry must move from vanity metrics to outcome metrics that hold up "across a fractured media landscape." Attribution, she said, "has to travel with the media plan, not sit outside it."

The second independence — owning thought, not just the buy

Babaeko called for a "second independence." The first was independence from guesswork in 1999. The second must be independence of thought.

"We Yoruba have a saying. A kì í fi ọwọ́ òsì júwe ilé baba ẹni. One does not point to the house of one's own father with the left hand," he said. "For too long we have been describing our own market with borrowed hands. Borrowed metrics. Borrowed definitions of what is 'premium.'"

He termed it an "Original Africa orientation": the idea that African cultural systems are not a rough draft of Western ones. They are architecturally different.

To be continued on page 14

...Why Nigerian media must stop renting the future from Silicon Valley


Okafor


Oruye


Onaivi

And in an era when the machine has globalized transactions, local meaning becomes the last scarce thing on earth.

"The independent's future is not in the insertion. It is in the interpretation. Not in the buy. In the meaning. Not in reach. In resonance," Babaeko said.

Stephen Onaivi, speaking as the new VP of MIPAN, framed this as a leadership imperative. Nigerian agencies, he said, must "lead industry evolution rather than merely respond to disruption." That starts with owning the local narrative and integrating AI "as a force multiplier" of human ingenuity, not a replacement.

Onaivi outlined three strategic imperatives:

Outpacing Disruption: Lead through innovation and local intelligence.

Monetizing Tomorrow: Shift from tactical execution to measurable business contribution — linking media to revenue, market share, and brand equity.

Capturing Growth: Balance immediate ROI with long-term investment in human capital, ecosystem collaboration, and evolved performance metrics.

"Agencies should operate as growth partners," he said. "Sustainable growth depends on transparent, collaborative, and outcome-focused relationships."

Five moves for Monday morning

Babaeko did not leave the room with philosophy alone. He gave a floor plan. Five concrete moves:

Own the data layer. "Right now we make our decisions using a mirror the platforms hold up for us," he said. MIPAN, as a body, must aggregate African audience intelligence. Build our own measurement. Our own currency of attention. "The moment we can describe the Nigerian consumer better than Google can, the conversation changes, and so does the invoice."

Move the fee from insertion to interpretation; Stop pricing the hand that places the ad. Price the mind that decides where, why, and how it lands in Warri versus Kano. "The machine will always undercut you on placement. It cannot undercut you on judgment, because it has none."

Make the machine your junior; Use AI for arithmetic, optimization, and scale. Free humans to do what machines cannot: understand a people. "That is not a threat to jobs. That is a promotion for every media person in this room."

Stop letting someone else define 'premium.' When platforms call their inventory premium and local radio "cheap," that is a pricing strategy, not a fact. Babaeko cited radio ad revenue growing at over 30% a year. "The market woman's radio moves more real product in this country than a lot of the premium we import. Price our own media honestly."

Do it together. "In this new world, your competitor is a trillion-dollar platform that does not know your competitor's name or yours. Against that, MIPAN itself is the moat. The unity is the asset."

Adediran echoed the urgency around data sovereignty: "proprietary measurement systems and aggregated consumer insights built, owned, and controlled locally." He also pushed for agencies to stop treating creators like billboards and start building micro-influencer networks that own distribution at the street level.

Oruye added the advertiser's mandate: treat media spend like a growth investment. "Constantly tested, tracked, and reallocated toward what converts." Brands that build measurement in from day one, she said, are the ones who can defend budgets at renewal.

Capturing growth — from clicks to culture

If the transaction is commoditized, where does the money live? The panelists agreed: in business outcomes and cultural IP.

Onaivi called for agencies to anchor on business outcomes and capitalize on retail media networks — the fast-growing space where media meets the point of purchase. That, he said, "will unlock new revenue streams and strengthen the link between media investment and sales impact."

Adediran went further. "Capturing growth demands building defensible cultural IP. Knowledge of the African consumer remains the most defensible asset in media." He argued agencies must move "away from short-term client campaigns and focus on owning original formats, platforms, and culturally grounded intellectual property." ROI, in this view, is not clicks. It is "deep cultural resonance and long-term brand equity."

Oruye summarized the room's mood: "Outpacing disruption isn't about spending more. It's about spending in a way that is evident in driving volumes and value."

The confession and the charge

Babaeko closed with a personal story. In 2012, he was offered money to sell X3M Ideas. He said no. Not out of ego, he said, but because "they were trying to buy my tomorrow at yesterday's price."

That, he said, is what independence is: "A bet that the value you are about to build is worth more than the comfort somebody is offering you today to stop building it."

It is the same bet MIPAN's seven founders made in 1999. And it is the bet the industry must make again now — against the comfort of becoming "a cheap, efficient, forgettable pair of hands for the platforms."

He ended with a proverb: "When a child falls, he looks ahead. When an elder falls, he looks back.

"Look back and see clearly what tripped the old model," Babaeko said. "Then look forward, because the next era of media does not belong to whoever executes fastest. The machine already won that race."

"The next era belongs to whoever owns meaning in a world drowning in transaction. And I will say this to you as plainly as I know how. Nobody on this planet understands the Nigerian consumer, the African consumer, better than the people in this hall. Nobody."

Whose tomorrow?

MIPAN 2026 did not answer every question. But it asked the right one.

The consensus in Ogere was clear. The future will not be imported. It will be built.

It will be built on data we own, not rent. On judgment machines cannot replicate. On measurement tied to business, not just eyeballs. On media that reflects the Nigeria the dashboard cannot see — the 57% informal, the 40 million MSMEs, the radio in Bodija, the danfo playlist.

As Onaivi put it, MIPAN must "set the agenda for this transformation by fostering industry collaboration, building technical capability, and establishing progressive standards."

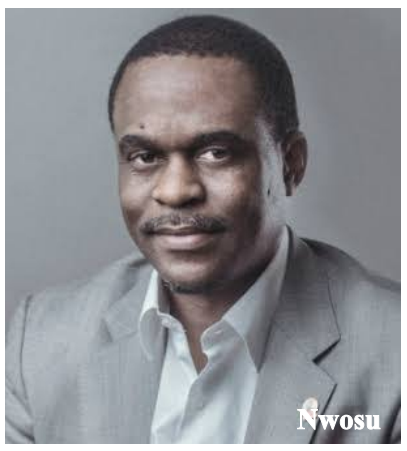
As Oruye put it, advertisers must demand proof that media drives "sale, sign-up, or repeat customer."

As Adediran put it, success belongs to "those who build sovereign data infrastructure, master local creator networks, and trade short-term ad placement for long-term ownership of cultural context."

And as Babaeko put it, the question is not whether we can outpace disruption. It is whose tomorrow we choose to monetize. "Ours. If we have the nerve to build it." In a world where algorithms can buy faster than any human, that may be the only moat left. And it lives right here.

THE MACHINE AND THE MARKET: How AI is rewriting Nigerian creative advertising

Agencies aren't being replaced. They're being redefined. Here's what top agency leaders say about talent, insight, and the new business model. Goddie Ofose writes.


Nwosu


Akinwunmi


Fadolapo


Ebatamehi


Atimomo

Two years after ChatGPT walked into every creative room in Lagos, the question is no longer "Will AI take our jobs?"

The question Nigerian agency leaders are answering is sharper: "What kind of agency do we become now that the machine can draft, design, and deliver in minutes?"

Across boardrooms at TBWA/Concept Unit, Prima Garnet, Up In The Sky, and Bluebird Communications, the answer is remarkably consistent. AI has not emptied seats. It has changed what sits in them.

Augmented, Not Replaced

In 2023, entry-level copywriters and designers worried their first job was a prompt away from extinction. In 2026, those same juniors are being hired — but with a new line on the JD: "AI literacy required."

Kelechi Nwosu, Former MD/CEO at TBWA/Concept Unit, is direct: "We have not swapped out any roles yet for AI, but we have hired a Creative Technologist to help with AI and technological transformation. We are still hiring entry-level copywriters and designers because we need trained talent with good skills to prompt well and even evaluate the outputs from Generative AI."

Lolu Akinwunmi, Group CEO, Prima Garnet, calls it augmentation. "Some routine and repetitive tasks have clearly been automated. Early-stage copy drafting, basic visual explorations, mood boards, and even first-level media analysis can now be done faster with AI tools. What used to take hours can sometimes be achieved in minutes."

But the flip side is elevation. "Strategic planning, brand thinking, creative direction, and client advisory have become even more important. The ability to interpret, refine, and apply AI outputs intelligently is now a core skill."

New titles have appeared that didn't exist in 2023: AI prompt specialists, content curators, data interpreters, and "creative technologists" — people who sit at the intersection of creativity and code.

At Up In The Sky, Co-Founder/COO Idiare Atimomo says they haven't automated roles. "AI is a tool that our copywriters and art directors use to get their ideas approved easily approved by the clients."

Kayode Ebatamehi, GMD/CEO, Bluebird Communications, puts it in terms of expectations. "At the strategy level, AI supports data analysis, visualization, and thought structuring. In copywriting, AI is useful as a starting point. In design, AI has been a visible efficiency booster. Overall, roles have been elevated rather than replaced. What has changed is the expectation: creatives today must be both conceptually strong and AI-literate. The career ladder is evolving, not disappearing."

The ladder is steeper. Prima Garnet is "more selective, and expectations are higher. Young creatives are now expected to come in not just with talent, but with AI literacy and strategic thinking from day one."

No one is declaring the death of the junior. They are declaring the death of the junior who only executes.

Can The Machine Feel Papilo?

If there is one place where Nigerian agency leaders agree without hesitation, it is here: AI cannot yet do "Papilo."

Great Nigerian advertising is not built on demographics. It is built on lived truth. Peak Milk's grandfather. Indomie's "Like No Other." The proverb in the radio jingle. The shared memory in a market.

"Great Nigerian advertising... is rooted in lived cultural experience, emotional nuance and societal context," says Akinwunmi. "AI, as powerful as it is, does not live culture. It processes data. It recognises patterns. It can remix what already exists."

Nwosu agrees: "Currently, the AI campaigns tend to be generic and conventional. It is felt that deep human insights and creative twists can only, for now, be achieved by the real creative minds that understand the audience and the cultural context."

Atimomo is blunter: "I don't believe such insights can come up from scratch by AI. Maybe as a byproduct of research carried out using AI, you can gain clarity on an issue and then have an 'aha.'"

Ebatamehi frames AI as "collective intelligence, a synthesis of data, perspectives, and experiences that exist online. The depth of insight it can generate is therefore limited by the depth and authenticity of the data it has access to."

The consensus: AI is a research assistant, not the author. It can surface trends, cluster conversations, and flag patterns. But the spark — the intuition that a Nigerian mother buying seasoning is tasting her grandmother's kitchen — still comes from humans immersed in the culture.

That said, the gap is closing. Ebatamehi notes: "As more of human behavior, expression, and culture becomes digitized, AI is gaining richer context about how people think, feel, and behave. In time, AI will get better at surfacing deeper human truths. However, translating those truths into compelling, culturally resonant ideas will still require human instinct, judgment, and creative interpretation."

For now, the formula across agencies is the same: Data tells you where the people are. Culture tells you why they move. AI can do the first. Nigerians must do the second.

When Clients Bring the First Draft

The most immediate disruption isn't inside the agency. It's in the client's inbox.

"Clients are now coming with AI-generated materials, decks, scripts, even rough animatics," says Akinwunmi. "That is already happening."

What does that do to scope, time, and money?

Scope: It has shifted from pure creation to curation and correction. "What they bring is often unrefined, inconsistent, or strategically weak. Our role has shifted from just creation to evaluation, refinement, and strategic alignment," Akinwunmi explains.

Ebatamehi sees the same problem from the other side. "Briefs generated through AI are either too broad or misaligned with actual business needs. Because these inputs are not always properly interrogated, agencies end up responding to expanded or inaccurate scopes, deploying significant man-hours on directions that may not ultimately be required."

There's also the "sameness problem." Nwosu tells a small story: "Three agencies were briefed somewhere in Africa by a Client, and they all produced the same BIG IDEA. Coincidence or great minds thinking alike? How will brands be differentiated — the core of marketing — in that scenario."

Timelines: Expectations have collapsed. "AI has accelerated expectations. Clients assume things can be done faster, and in some cases, they are right," says Akinwunmi. Atimomo confirms: "In some specific areas with respect to timelines, there is an expectation that you can turn work around faster because of AI."

But speed without depth is dangerous. Agencies now spend time pushing back, adding rigor, and ensuring the fast output is also the right output.

Fees: This is where the model is breaking and rebuilding. "The traditional 'time and output' model is under pressure. We are gradually moving towards a value-based model, where clients pay for thinking, judgment, and impact, not just production," says Akinwunmi.

Ebatamehi notes the disconnect: "There is now a demand for faster turnaround and increased output. However, this has not yet translated into a corresponding increase in fees. For now, agencies are adapting by becoming more time-efficient, optimizing internal processes, and reallocating saved time to maintain value."

In short: AI is commoditizing execution. It is making the premium on strategic intelligence and creative leadership more expensive.

How Nigerian Agencies Are Leveraging AI for Greater Output

If AI cannot originate Papilo, what can it do? Leaders point to four leverage points:

Speed to Insight: AI can analyze thousands of social conversations, sales data, and cultural signals in hours. That gives strategists rawer material to find the human truth faster. It doesn't replace immersion, but it accelerates it.

Production Scale: Design teams use AI to generate tailored visuals, reduce asset sourcing time, and produce multiple executions for TikTok, radio, WhatsApp, and TV from one core idea. "It makes us more flexible, faster, and often more precise in execution," says Ebatamehi.

Read more on www.theindustryng.com

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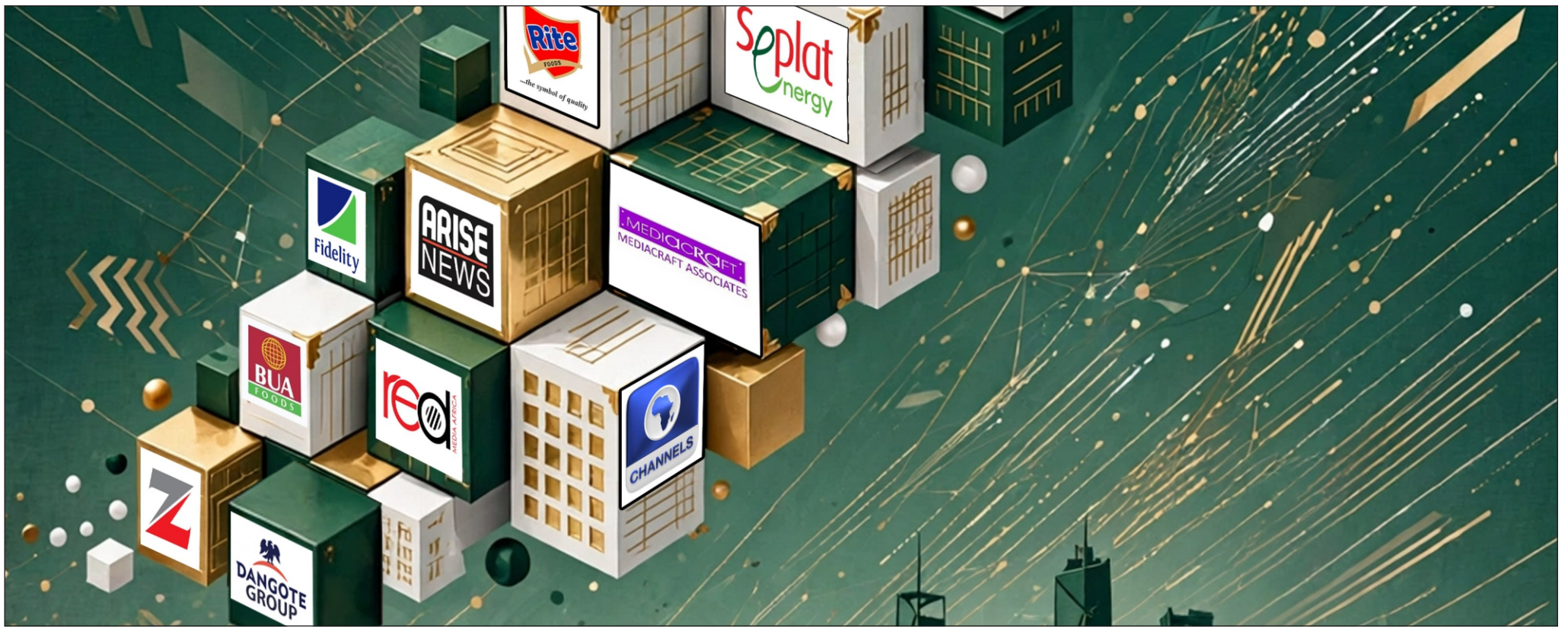
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COMPANY OF IMPACT



THE INDUSTRY TOP 50 NIGERIAN COMPANIES OF IMPACT 2026

· *Building Resilience, Driving Growth: The companies shaping Nigeria's next decade*

In an economy defined by volatility, currency pressure, and rapid technological change, one question has mattered more than any other over the last 12 months: Who is still building?

Not just building profit. Building trust. Building jobs. Building industries. Building the Nigeria of 2030.

That is the question behind The Industry's Top 50 Nigerian Companies of Impact 2026.

This annual list is not a ranking of the biggest by revenue alone. It is a barometer of influence. Of resilience. Of companies that, despite inflation, FX volatility, policy shifts, and global disruption, have chosen to invest in people, in innovation, in communities, and in the long-term idea of Nigeria.

The 50 companies named in this supplement represent the backbone of Africa's largest economy. They cut across manufacturing, financial technology, consumer goods, energy, infrastructure, media, communications, healthcare, education, and the creative economy. What unites them is impact — measurable, human, and economic.

No conversation about impact in Nigeria can begin without Dangote and BUA. These industrial giants continue to anchor national self-sufficiency. From cement to sugar, fertilizer to refined petroleum, their investments have reduced import dependence, created thousands of direct and indirect jobs, and redefined what scale means on the continent. In a year when FX and logistics threatened supply chains, their commitment to local production kept prices stable and factories running. They are proof that nation-building is still industrial.

If industry is the body, then technology is the nervous system. Interswitch remains the quiet infrastructure powering Nigeria's digital economy. From enabling bank transfers to powering merchants and government collections, its rails move billions daily. Its impact is not always visible, but it is everywhere — in the SME that gets paid instantly, in the student who pays school fees online, in the investor who sees a payments ecosystem mature enough to trust.

Impact also lives in everyday products. Vitafoam has spent decades turning rest into productivity, employing thousands across manufacturing and retail while innovating sleep solutions for a growing middle class. Meyer Paints has done the same for shelter and aesthetics, moving from local paint producer to a brand shaping Nigeria's construction and design narrative with sustainability and quality at its core. These companies remind us that impact is tactile — it is the roof over your head and the bed you wake up in.

Nigeria's next decade will not be won on factories alone. It will be won on ideas, culture, and trust.

Oracle Experience has redefined experiential marketing, turning brand moments into cultural events that drive sales, loyalty, and jobs across production, logistics, and creative talent. Cardinal Torch has built a reputation for commodity trading and, most recently, local production of cocoa-based products.

In the communications industry, two names stand out for professionalizing the craft and exporting Nigerian thinking globally:

Insight Redefini and Chain Reactions Africa. Insight Redefini, the continent's largest marketing communications group, has shown how Nigerian creativity can scale across borders while incubating talent and building integrated solutions for the biggest brands.

Chain Reactions Africa has moved PR from press releases to predictive influence, using AI and human intelligence to shape reputation, investor confidence, and public policy. Both have proven that Nigerian agencies can compete on global awards stages while solving local business problems. WHY "BUILDING

The theme for 2026 — Building Resilience, Driving Growth: Nigerian Companies Shaping the Next Decade — was deliberate. Resilience in 2026 looks like:

Commercial discipline — doing more with less as budgets tighten. Talent investment — training the next generation when brain drain is real. Innovation — using AI, data, and digital tools not to replace people, but to amplify them; and Purpose — connecting business growth to ESG, community development, and national priorities.

The companies in this list have done all four. They have created jobs not just in Lagos and Abuja, but across supply chains in Kano, Port Harcourt, Onitsha, and beyond. They have attracted investment by telling credible Nigerian stories to the world. They have paid taxes, supported SMEs, and built platforms for young Nigerians to learn, earn, and lead.

The Top 50 is not an endpoint. It is a mirror.

It reflects a private sector that refuses to wait for perfect conditions. A sector that understands that in uncertain times, communication builds confidence, manufacturing builds independence, technology builds access, and creativity builds culture.

From the cement that builds our roads, to the foam that supports our sleep, to the code that moves our money, to the ideas that shape how we see ourselves — these companies are in the business of nation-building.

As you turn the pages of this supplement, you will meet CEOs, founders, and teams who made hard choices. Who chose to expand when others contracted? Who chose to train when others downsized. Who chose to tell the truth about Nigeria's challenges while also telling the truth about its opportunities.

They are not perfect. No company is. But they are present. They are building. And in 2026, that is the definition of impact. Welcome to The Industry Top 50 Nigerian Companies of Impact 2026.

COMPANY OF IMPACT

ORACLE EXPERIENCE at 20:

Building Nigeria's economy one experience at a time

How the experiential marketing leader is redefining creativity, creating jobs, and earning a spot among The Industry's Top 50 Nigerian Companies of Impact 2026

Twenty years ago, experiential marketing in Nigeria meant "tents, sound, and girls in T-shirts." Today, it is a multi-billion-naira industry that moves products, changes behavior, and shapes culture.

At the center of that evolution is Oracle Experience.

As the agency marks two decades of operations this year, it has also been named among The Industry Newspaper's Top 50 Nigerian Companies of Impact 2026 — a recognition that places it alongside banks, telcos, manufacturers, and tech firms for its contribution to commerce, culture, and community.

For Dr. Felix King Eiremiokhae, GMD/CEO of Oracle Experience, the milestone is both validation and responsibility.

"This dual milestone says two things," he explains. "First, experiential marketing has moved from 'side activations' to being recognized as a core business growth driver. Second, it proves that Nigerian agencies can build institutions that last, set standards, and shape culture."



From logistics to legacy: A 20-Year Journey

Oracle's growth, according to Dr. Eiremiokhae, came through three pivots.

From Logistics to Strategy: "We started executing events. We learned clients don't pay for tents. They pay for outcomes — sales, perception, loyalty."

From Scale to Resilience: The 2016 recession and COVID-19 forced reinvention. "We diversified into digital, hybrid, and smaller format activations, and invested in data to prove ROI."

From Campaigns to Culture: "Nigerian consumers don't buy products; they buy meaning. We embedded music, language, and community into every campaign."

That philosophy remains the agency's compass: stay curious, stay close to the consumer, and never outsource creativity.

Innovation: Culture + technology + insight

What differentiates Oracle Experience is the blend of data and empathy.

The agency pioneered mobile roadshows that took brands into markets and campuses unreachable by traditional media. It also introduced data capture at ground activations long before it became standard.

In the last five years, the model has gone hybrid: AR filters, live-streamed concerts, gamified sampling, and QR engagement now allow a consumer in Kano to participate in a Lagos event in real time.

"But the core innovation is empathy," Dr. Eiremiokhae insists. "We design experiences that feel Nigerian first."

The results are measurable: FMCG sampling drives trial and repeat purchases, telecom campus activations drive data adoption, and financial literacy tours build trust. Campaign data shows up to 40% lift in brand recall and 20-30% sales increase during activation periods.

"Experiential marketing is behavior change at scale," he notes. "When people experience a brand, not just see an ad, they remember it."

Speaking Nigeria's language

Nigeria has 250 ethnic groups and 500 languages. Oracle's creative process starts with "what are the streets saying?"

Teams reflect Nigeria's diversity — Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Pidgin, and Gen Z slang. Music is the shortcut: Afrobeats for youth, Fuji for the Southwest, Gospel for faith-based audiences. Stories are drawn from owambe, football viewing centers, market days, and "Japa" conversations.

"When a campaign feels like it was made by Nigerians for Nigerians, it travels," Dr. Eiremiokhae says. That fluency has made Oracle the partner of choice for brands going national.

Digital transformation: Physical to hybrid at scale

COVID-19 accelerated a permanent shift. Oracle invested in three areas: tech infrastructure, data, and content.

Every activation now tracks KPIs: scans, sign-ups, social mentions, and sales uplift. An in-house content team turns one physical event into 30 pieces of digital content.

"Today, a brand can launch in 5 cities physically and reach 5 million digitally," Dr. Eiremiokhae says. "That hybrid model is the future."

An economic engine: Jobs, skills, and the creative economy

Beyond campaigns, Oracle has become a talent factory.

Over 20 years, the company has directly employed 200+ full-time staff and created thousands of indirect jobs for promoters, vendors, creatives, and logistics partners.

Through its internal academy, young Nigerians are trained in production design, stage management, and experiential strategy. Many alumni now lead teams at other agencies and in brand marketing departments.

"Every roadshow in 30 states, every campus storm, every government campaign creates work for fabricators, printers, DJs, and transporters," he adds. "In an economy with high youth unemployment, that matters."

Landmark work that moved the industry

Five projects define Oracle's legacy:

Gulder Club Ultimate, 2011 – A sailing entertainment experience with a hand-built ship as venue, redefining premium events in Nigeria.

Peak 1 Million Signature, 2016 – A national consumer activation that linked product fortification to lifestyle benefits.

Nescafé 'Air Up There', 2016 – Nigeria's first coffee mug-shaped hot air balloon, creating a once-in-a-lifetime student experience.

Gulder NCP, 2015 – The biggest consumer promo in Gulder's history with over 4 million prizes, designed to drive volume and brand excitement.

Heineken Green Light Party, 2015 – Elite clubbing events promoting responsible drinking, raising the bar for professionalism and measurement.

Each pushed the industry forward in scale, professionalism, and accountability.

Trust, sustainability, and resilience

Longevity with clients comes from "trust, results, and evolution," says Dr. Eiremiokhae. Some FMCG, telecom, and finance clients have stayed for 17-20 years.

P&G for 20 years, FrieslandCampina WAMCO for 18 years, and Nigerian Breweries Plc for 17 years.

On sustainability, the agency has adopted reusable structures, LED lighting, digital ticketing, and "leave no trace" protocols. It also prioritizes hiring local talent and vendors in every city.

Operating challenges remain: inflation, logistics, and insecurity have increased costs by up to 30%. The response is earlier planning, smarter budgeting, and using technology to reduce physical footprints.

Navigating a tough operating environment

The last few years have tested everyone. Inflation has doubled production costs. Insecurity affects movement. Power and logistics still add 30% to budgets.

"The 3 biggest are cost, logistics, and unpredictability," Dr. Eiremiokhae admitted. The response: plan earlier, budget smarter, diversify locations, and use technology to reduce physical footprint.

"Resilience in this sector is about planning for the worst and creating for the best."

Despite new competitors, Oracle's differentiation remains. "Heritage: 20 years means we have seen cycles. Integration: we do strategy, creative, digital, content, and measurement under one roof. Insight: we are obsessed with the Nigerian consumer. We test ideas in the market before they go live."

Oracle expands with Oracle production

In line with its 20th anniversary, Oracle Experience has launched Oracle Production — a specialist production and technical services company serving the wider events and live-production industry.

To be continued on page 19



BEYOND DSTV: How MultiChoice Nigeria's first female CEO plans to build jobs, talent and a creative economy

· CEO Kemi Omotosho on affordability, women in leadership, CANAL+ partnership, and building Nigeria's creative economy

When Kemi Omotosho was named the first female Chief Executive Officer of MultiChoice Nigeria, she made history. But in the conversation, she is quick to shift the focus from the milestone to the mandate.

"It is a significant milestone, and I'm incredibly proud of it," Omotosho said in a recent interview with THISDAY. "I certainly hope I won't be the last. I've never looked at leadership as something that belongs to men or women. It is about competence, hard work, courage, delivering results, and being ready to seize the opportunity when it comes."

Her message to the next generation of women is direct: "Don't put a ceiling on your ambition. Work hard, back yourself, and when the opportunity comes, be ready for it."

That same pragmatism now guides MultiChoice Nigeria, a business that has spent more than three decades becoming part of the fabric of Nigerian homes.

Affordability Meets Choice

Nigeria remains one of MultiChoice's largest and most demanding markets. With rising inflation and shifting consumer behavior, the company's priority is clear.

"Nigeria is a critical market for us, and we remain very committed to it," Omotosho said. "The reality is that the Nigerian consumer is under pressure, and our focus is clear: continue to deliver great content while making our products more affordable, accessible and flexible."

The action has already started. MultiChoice reduced the entry price for DStv and GOtv to N15,000 for a full set, with monthly packages starting from N6,000. It also launched DStv Stream, allowing subscribers to watch without a dish or installation.

"Customers can now enjoy DStv without a dish or installation, giving them more choice in how and where they watch," she explained.

But price alone isn't the play. Content and technology are the twin engines. And with MultiChoice now part of CANAL+ since September 2025, the company says it has new tools to scale.

"Being part of CANAL+, a truly global media and entertainment group, opens up significant opportunities for Nigeria, from content and technology to innovation, scale and best practices from markets around the world," Omotosho noted.

"And there is more to come. We will continue to innovate around affordability, flexibility and accessibility; building not just for how Nigerians consume entertainment today, but for how they will consume it tomorrow."

From Broadcaster to Ecosystem Builder

After 30+ years, MultiChoice's role has evolved far beyond pay-TV.

"Generations of Nigerian families have grown up with DStv, watching football, enjoying their favourite local and international shows, and sharing some of the country's biggest entertainment moments," Omotosho said.

"Nigeria has changed enormously over that time, and we have evolved with it; investing, building local partnerships and remaining committed through different economic cycles. We are still here, still investing and still excited about Nigeria's future."

Today, that investment is measured in jobs, skills and stories. MultiChoice supports thousands of livelihoods across its ecosystem: employees, production crews, dealers, installers, and small businesses.

"We also invest significantly in Nigeria's creative industry, sports, technology and infrastructure," she says. "Importantly, our approach is not simply to create jobs within MultiChoice, but to help create opportunities beyond MultiChoice."

The flagship example is the MultiChoice Talent Factory. The program fully sponsors young Nigerians to gain practical skills in film and television production in partnership with Pan-Atlantic University, with hands-on experience on real productions.

"The goal is to equip them to build careers, create businesses, employ others and tell more Nigerian stories," Omotosho said.

"For us, sustainable impact is about creating opportunities that continue to multiply: creating economic value today while investing in the people and industries that will drive Nigeria's growth tomorrow."

It is that pipeline of talent that has helped Nigerian content travel. "Nigerian stories are not only being watched at home; they are increasingly travelling across Africa and beyond."

Global Scale, Nigerian Heart

Since joining CANAL+, questions about ownership and control have surfaced. Omotosho addresses them head-on.

"It's actually quite straightforward. Since September 2025, MultiChoice has been part of CANAL+, a global media and entertainment group headquartered in France, with operations across 70 countries. MultiChoice Nigeria operates as part of that global group, but our business here remains firmly focused on Nigeria: our customers, our people, our partners and our local creative industry."

She described it as "the best of both worlds": local execution backed by global scale, technology and content.

On autonomy, Omotosho is clear: Nigeria calls the shots on the ground. "We have significant autonomy to run the business in a way that responds to the realities of the Nigerian market... Decisions around our products, pricing, distribution and customer experience have to reflect how Nigerians live, buy and consume entertainment. Some of the solutions we have developed here are unique to Nigeria."

That balance of global and local is most visible in content. "Being part of a global group and being distinctly Nigerian are not contradictory. In fact, our strength comes from combining the two," she says. ***Read more on www.theindustryng.com***

…Building Nigeria's economy one experience at a time

Oracle Production provides stadium-scale sound, LED ....screens, lighting, staging, multimedia, and full technical support as a third-party platform to agencies, brands, and promoters.

The philosophy: give the industry access to world-class production infrastructure without requiring every organization to own it. Oracle Experience:

Creates the experience.

Oracle Production: Powers the production.

Together, they strengthen Oracle's position across the experiential value chain.

As Chief Operating Officer of Oracle Experience, Andrew Eiremiokhae puts it: "The hardest part of an event is rarely the design. It's execution. At Oracle, we take pride in the work nobody sees, so our clients can be proud of the work everybody sees. We make it happen."

Going Pan-African

"Nigeria is the test market for the continent," Dr. Eiremiokhae argues. Oracle sees the country as the continent, operating in all the regions seamlessly, and is now exporting its model to Ghana, Kenya, and Côte d'Ivoire through local partnerships.

The goal: build Africa's first truly Pan-African experiential network.

Why Oracle made the TOP 50

Oracle qualifies for The Industry's Top 50 because it has:

Built an industry – Moved experiential from activation to boardroom strategy.

Created jobs – Direct and indirect employment across the value chain.

Driven commerce – Measurable lifts in sales and adoption for local and multinational brands.

Shaped culture – Campaigns rooted in Nigerian identity

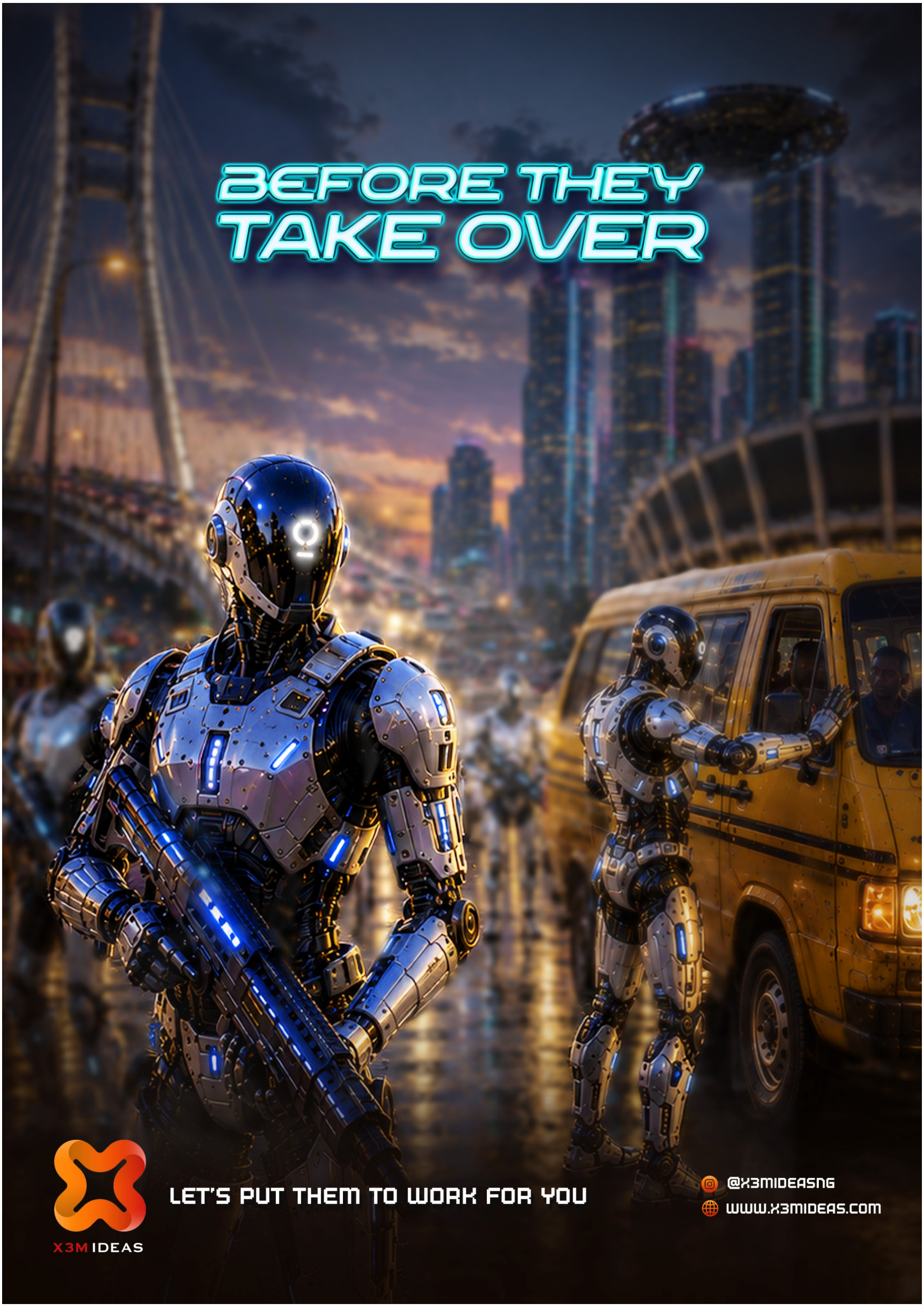
Invested in the future – In tech, data, sustainability, and talent

The next decade: humanize brands at scale

Looking ahead, Oracle's vision is clear: use AI, data, and immersive tech without losing the human touch.



"We want to build Africa's most trusted experiential company — one that creates jobs, shapes culture, and helps brands grow responsibly," Dr. Eiremiokhae says. "20 years in, we are just getting started."


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BUA FOODS:
Feeding a nation, outpacing a crisis

How Dr. Ayodele Abioye is using efficiency, scale and sustainability to drive BUA Foods' next decade of growth

By Goddie Ofose



Nigeria's food economy in 2026 is unforgiving. Inflation has bitten deep. Forex volatility has wiped out margins. Consumers are stretching every naira.

Yet in the middle of this storm, BUA Foods Plc just posted a Profit After Tax of ₦142.3 billion for Q1 2026. That's a 14% year-on-year jump.

For Dr. Ayodele Musibau Abioye, Managing Director of BUA Foods, the result was not an accident. It was engineering.

"We closed Q1 with a 14% year-on-year increase, despite a softer top line and a still-evolving operating environment," Abioye says. "The key drivers were disciplined cost management and improved operational efficiency across the business."

He is quick to note what did not drive the numbers: price hikes.

"Our focus was not on price-led growth, but on efficiency-led margin expansion — and that is clearly reflected in the results."

With moderating inflation and a more stable FX window, pricing normalized. But BUA Foods chose to fight the crisis inside its own factory walls first: procurement, energy, product mix. The outcome: stronger margins, healthy cash generation, and a balance sheet that got even stronger.

"It demonstrates that our strategy is working," Abioye said. "We can sustain profitability and improve earnings quality even in a dynamic environment."

Growing without bleeding: the margin playbook:

Across FMCG, margins are under siege. The easy response is to cut back — on capacity, on people, on distribution. BUA Foods did the opposite.

"Our approach is not to pull back on growth — it is to fund growth more efficiently," Abioye explained.

That means attacking waste. Improving energy efficiency. Optimizing how raw materials are sourced. Running continuous operational improvements.

But it also means doubling down on the future: expanding capacity, widening distribution, and investing in people.

"We are becoming more efficient, more deliberate, and better positioned to grow sustainably even in a tighter margin environment," he said.

In a sector where many are retreating, BUA Foods is choosing to advance — but with a calculator in one hand.

Affordability as brand DNA:

If there's one pressure point Nigerians feel daily, it's the price of food. As a producer of flour, pasta, sugar and other staples, BUA Foods sits at the center of that conversation.

Abioye frames affordability not as charity, but as strategy.

"Our first line of action is always internal," he revealed. "We prioritise scale-driven efficiencies, continuous capacity expansion, and disciplined cost management to absorb as much cost pressure as possible without passing it on to consumers."

That shows up in energy optimization, tighter supply chains, and smarter sourcing. When pricing must adjust, it's "measured and data-driven."

The company is also using pack-size innovation so that a student, a family, and a bulk buyer can all find a BUA product within their budget.

"The guiding principle is balance," Abioye notes. "We aim to protect consumer affordability while ensuring the long-term sustainability of the business."

De-risking the Naira problem:

No conversation about Nigerian manufacturing in 2026 can ignore FX. Most of BUA's inputs are dollar-linked. So how do you build a food business when the Naira won't sit still?

"Accelerating localisation," Abioye says. "Where feasible, we continue to increase the share of locally sourced inputs."

Second: diversify suppliers across geographies to avoid being trapped by one currency corridor.

Third: get smarter about procurement planning and inventory, so the company isn't forced to buy at the worst rate. This isn't crisis management. It's long-term architecture.

"As foreign exchange conditions continue to stabilise, we are well positioned to manage residual volatility more effectively," he said.

Sustainability that pays the bills:

For BUA Foods, sustainability is not a report. It's a P&L line.

Energy efficiency, lower greenhouse gas emissions, reduced water use, material recovery and reuse — these are all built into plant operations.

"Importantly, these initiatives deliver tangible financial benefits," Abioye says. "Improvements in energy efficiency and waste reduction translate directly into stronger gross margins."

The company is also deepening localisation of raw materials, which cuts both carbon exposure and FX risk.

In short: green is profitable.

The big bet on pasta — and why it's working:

Walk into any Nigerian market, and you'll see it: pasta is no longer a luxury. It's a staple. Cheap per serving, long shelf life, and easy to cook. BUA Foods saw the shift early and is now expanding capacity aggressively.

"Our Q1 2026 performance provides strong validation," Abioye stated. "Pasta was the single largest contributor to our growth in the quarter, accounting for approximately 18% of total revenue and delivering a 70% year-on-year increase."

Demand, he argued, is structural — not cyclical. Households are permanently reallocating toward cost-efficient meals.

The expansion is about getting ahead of that curve: "ensuring consistent product availability, maintaining quality, and supporting price stability for consumers."

Enter noodles: same chain, new battle:

Next up: noodles. It's a crowded, noisy category. So why jump in? "Three clear points of differentiation," Abioye said.

First, nutrition — fortification and ingredient quality.

Second, value — BUA's scale gives it a unit-cost advantage for competitive pricing.

Third, distribution — the company already reaches deep into the open market.

"Noodles sit along the same value chain as pasta," he explained. "Strategically, this expands our staples portfolio and strengthens our ability to serve the Nigerian consumer across multiple consumption occasions and income tiers."

With all this new capacity, what happens if consumers pull back?

Abioye's answer is four-fold: base expansion on real demand signals, keep costs largely variable, offer flexible pack sizes, and rely on a diversified portfolio to balance cycles.

"We are scaling capacity with a high degree of operational flexibility and commercial discipline," he says. "Ensuring that utilisation remains strong, even in a constrained consumer environment."

Big, but also better:

Scale alone doesn't win. Efficiency does.

"Our recent capacity investments have significantly strengthened our position as a leading food manufacturer, not just in scale, but in competitiveness," Abioye said.

That means cost leadership, consistent availability, and the ability to innovate faster on new formats. Q1's margin improvement is proof the capacity is being used well.

"Our competitiveness today is not just about being bigger; it is about being more efficient, more responsive, and more resilient."

The road ahead: risks, opportunities, reality:

Looking to the rest of 2026, Abioye sees both headwinds and tailwinds. Energy and distribution costs remain volatile. FX still matters. Consumers are price-sensitive.

But the plan is set: complete capacity projects, defend market share, invest in sales and marketing, and hold the line on costs.

On the upside, structural demand for staples remains. Portfolio diversification is opening new revenue streams.

What should investors and consumers expect?

"Steady, sustainable growth rather than short-term spikes," Abioye said. "We are confident in our ability to continue improving margins through efficiency gains, while maintaining relative pricing stability by leveraging our scale and cost advantages. Innovation will also remain a key lever."

The bottom line:

BUA Foods is not trying to out-shout the crisis. It is trying to out-engineer it.

Through cost discipline, localisation, sustainable operations, and bets on foods Nigerians actually eat every day, the company is positioning itself as more than a manufacturer.

It wants to be infrastructure — the reliable backbone that keeps food affordable, available, and profitable even when the macroeconomics disagree.

As Dr. Abioye puts it: the ambition is to keep "feeding Africa sustainably." In 2026, that starts with feeding Nigeria efficiently.

COMPANY OF IMPACT

LAPO MFB:
Banking the last mile, building the economy

How Nigeria's leading microfinance bank is financing resilience, jobs, and growth for over 6 million Nigerians

When a market woman in Kano needs ₦50,000 to restock tomatoes, or a young welder in Port Harcourt needs capital to buy new equipment, they rarely walk into a conventional bank.

They walk into LAPO Microfinance Bank.

With over 600 branches, millions of clients, and more than ₦1.7 trillion disbursed to low-income households and businesses, LAPO MFB has become the financial backbone of Nigeria's informal economy.

Nominated among The Industry's Top 50 Nigerian Companies of Impact 2026, LAPO is being recognized for a simple but powerful idea: that economic opportunity should not be determined by income level, gender, or geography.

"For more than three decades, LAPO MFB has focused on people and businesses that traditional financial systems have historically struggled to reach," says Cynthia Ikponmwosa, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer.



Digital Inclusion: Technology That Meets People Where They Are

Microfinance has always been about access. In 2026, that means both branches and bytes.

LAPO's strategy is clear: digital transformation must complement, not replace, its physical network. Through mobile banking, agency banking, cards, POS solutions, and fintech partnerships, the bank is extending financial services beyond the branch model.

"This is particularly important for customers in underserved and rural communities, where proximity, affordability and convenience remain critical," Ikponmwosa explains.

The goal is not just to digitize forms. It is to build a connected ecosystem where customers can save, borrow, make payments, and manage their businesses with greater convenience. Data is now central to this model. LAPO is strengthening the use of customer and transaction data to improve credit assessment, understand repayment behavior, and personalize products.

"The ultimate goal is twofold: make access to credit faster and more convenient while ensuring that lending remains responsible," Ikponmwosa says. "Better data should help us lend to the right customer, at the right level, for the right purpose."

Product Innovation: Financing the Real Economy

LAPO has moved far beyond the traditional group lending model. Its 2026 portfolio reflects the realities of Nigerian entrepreneurs at every stage.

The offerings now include SME financing, savings and fixed deposits, digital banking solutions, POS and card services, and specialized products like SUFEN for women entrepreneurs. The bank is also expanding into climate-resilient livelihoods and WASH financing.

"Our product philosophy has evolved with the needs of our customers," Ikponmwosa notes. "We now serve customers across different stages of their economic journey, from micro-entrepreneurs and informal businesses to growing MSMEs."

Innovation at LAPO is not about products for their own sake. It is about designing around cash flows, business cycles, gender, geography, and the specific risks customers face. Whether it's a farmer needing seasonal credit or a youth startup needing working capital, the product must fit the business.

Financial Sustainability: Impact That Lasts

Microfinance operates on thin margins. For LAPO, long-term sustainability is what allows it to keep serving vulnerable Nigerians year after year.

"Our approach is built around operational efficiency, responsible portfolio growth, strong risk management, digitalisation and disciplined cost management," Ikponmwosa says. Technology plays a key role by reducing process inefficiencies and enabling scale. But affordability matters too.

"Our responsibility is to continually improve efficiency so that we can provide competitive and responsible financial solutions while maintaining the strength required to remain a dependable financial partner," she adds.

In a period of inflation and rising cost of funds, resilience has meant strengthening risk and liquidity frameworks, diversifying partnerships, and deepening customer engagement — all without pulling back from the communities that need credit most.

Green and Responsible Banking: Financing Climate Resilience

For low-income households, climate change is not abstract. A failed harvest or flood can wipe out income and repayment capacity.

LAPO is responding by embedding climate resilience into its financial inclusion agenda. Through partnerships, the bank is supporting access to clean energy, clean cooking, and climate adaptation solutions. It is also exploring financing models that help micro-businesses adopt sustainable technologies.

Its work with WSBI under the Scale2Save platform is advancing climate adaptation finance. Beyond lending, LAPO's environmental initiatives include tree planting and clean cookstove interventions.

Operationally, sustainability means digitizing processes to reduce paper, improving energy efficiency in branches, and practicing responsible lending — ensuring customers receive financing appropriate to their capacity.

"Sustainability at LAPO MFB is increasingly being treated as an institutional responsibility rather than a standalone CSR activity," Ikponmwosa says.

Measurable Impact: Jobs, Poverty Reduction, and Women

The true measure of LAPO's work is what happens after the loan is disbursed.

With over ₦1.7 trillion disbursed, the bank has financed entrepreneurs to start and expand businesses, purchase inventory, invest in assets, and stabilize household incomes.

"Keep a business open, employ another person, send children to school, expand a farm, or move from subsistence to sustainable enterprise," Ikponmwosa lists. "That is our impact."

That impact is especially visible in women's economic empowerment. Approximately 70 percent of LAPO's loan portfolio is dedicated to female entrepreneurs. But credit alone is not enough.

"Sustainable empowerment requires financial literacy, business knowledge, market access, and the confidence to make long-term economic decisions," she says.

For youth, LAPO combines scholarships, skills acquisition, and youth-focused financial inclusion programs to build both financial and human capital.

By financing over 6 million micro and small businesses, LAPO directly contributes to job creation. When a tailor buys equipment or a trader restocks, the effect ripples — more workers hired, more suppliers paid, more income in the community.

"The informal and micro-enterprise economy is one of Nigeria's most important sources of employment," Ikponmwosa says. "Our role is to provide the financial infrastructure that allows these businesses to grow."

Financial Literacy: From Access to Capability

LAPO believes inclusion without capability is incomplete.

The bank integrates financial education and business development into its customer engagement. Training covers savings, budgeting, responsible borrowing, cash-flow management and business planning.

"Our objective is to help customers move from simply accessing financial services to becoming more confident and capable financial decision-makers," Ikponmwosa explains.

This is how a loan becomes an investment, and a business becomes sustainable.

Building Resilience, Driving Growth

The theme for Top 50 Companies of Impact 2026 is "Building Resilience, Driving Growth." For LAPO, it is both a strategy and a responsibility.

Resilience means adapting to regulatory changes and economic shocks without abandoning purpose. It means financing productive economic activity rather than just increasing loan volumes.

"Scale without resilience is not sustainable; resilience without inclusion defeats the purpose of microfinance," Ikponmwosa says.

The next chapter for LAPO is about going deeper with technology, data, partnerships, and sustainable finance. The ambition is to make inclusion smarter and more resilient, so that customers can withstand shocks and grow.

Read more on www.theindustryng.com

COMPANY OF IMPACT

CHAIN REACTIONS AFRICA:

Engineering Impact at the intersection of AI and human intelligence

How Nigeria's leading communications consultancy is redefining PR, driving national development, and building resilient brands for the next decade

Fifteen years ago, public relations in Nigeria meant press releases, event coverage, and media clippings. Today, at Chain Reactions Africa, it means changing behavior, building investor confidence, and measuring what changed because a story was told.

Nominated among The Industry's Top 50 Nigerian Companies of Impact 2026, Chain Reactions Africa has moved far beyond the traditional PR firm model. Under the leadership of Israel Opayemi, MD/Chief Strategist, the consultancy has positioned itself at the center of what it calls "the Age of Convergence" — where strategy, creativity, data, AI, and human insight fuse to solve business and reputation challenges.



Innovation: From Publicity to Prediction

The biggest shift, Opayemi says, is in purpose. "We have seen PR evolve from generating publicity to influencing reputation, behaviour, stakeholder confidence and business outcomes."

That evolution is visible in Chain Reactions' service stack: strategy, creative communication, PR, reputation management, digital, influencer marketing, experiential, and public affairs — all managed as one campaign, not separate silos.

The firm's boldest bet came in September 2025 with the launch of "Ara by Prophet", a proprietary AI tool that interrogates audience behavior, cultural trends, and emerging signals.

"Ara, the robot, and our human workforce now work seamlessly in an exciting way," Opayemi explains. AI automates research, media monitoring, content development, and workflow. Humans focus on strategic thinking and creative problem-solving.

"It is what we call the intersection of Artificial Intelligence and Human Intelligence," he says.

Crucially, measurement has also changed. The agency has abandoned vanity metrics. "We have shifted completely from measuring communications by volume to measuring what changed because we communicated," Opayemi states. Using global frameworks like AMEC and Barcelona Principles 3.0, the focus is now on awareness, sentiment, stakeholder action, behavioral change, and commercial outcomes.

Integrated Communications: One Idea, Every Channel

Nigeria, Opayemi argues, was late to a global shift. As far back as the early 2000s, the world entered the Age of Convergence. Walls between advertising, PR, digital, and experiential began collapsing.

In 2014, Chain Reactions hired its first expatriate Creative Director. "Some industry watchers were bewildered, thinking we were planning to venture into advertising," he recalls. "But audiences don't experience brands in silos, so communications shouldn't be built in silos either."

Today, the agency's model is simple: Insight, Strategy, Integrated Execution, Measurement, Optimisation. Traditional media provides credibility. Digital enables real-time participation. Influencers bring cultural relevance. Experiential creates emotional engagement. AI improves targeting.

The result is campaigns that operate across earned, shared, owned, and paid ecosystems, all connected by one strategic idea.

Innovation in Practice: Citizens Connect

A standout example is Citizens Connect, a strategic communications campaign developed with the Presidency to amplify Nigeria's economic reform agenda.

"The challenge was not simply awareness. It was creating a more participatory relationship," Opayemi says. The team used audience insight to understand what mattered to citizens, translated complex policies into accessible narratives, and created channels for dialogue.

Technology was the enabler, not the idea. The result: a shift from "what government was doing" to "how citizens understood and participated."

The campaign won a SABRE Diamond Award and was a contender for Platinum SABRE — global validation that insight plus creativity plus technology can change public conversation.

Sustainability: Proof, Not Promises

For Chain Reactions, sustainability communication cannot exist without credibility. "You cannot communicate your way out of a credibility gap," Opayemi says.

The agency's approach is "Promise to Proof" storytelling — connecting ESG commitments to tangible human outcomes and making them visible across earned media, digital, and community platforms.

A prime example is Customs Cares with the Nigerian Customs Service. Instead of broad claims, the program demonstrated interventions on the ground. It targeted over five million people across 12 states and the FCT, ultimately reaching 5.7 million citizens. The work won Gold at the Commonwealth Environment & CSR Awards in Glasgow.

Internally, sustainability means culture and ethics. The firm operates on A.C.O.R.D: Audacity, Creativity, Ownership, Responsibility, Respect and Discipline. With historically 66% female representation and a very young workforce, diversity is built in.

"We see our role as providing objective counsel, not simply telling clients what they want to hear," Opayemi adds. "That means challenging briefs, protecting credibility, and ensuring claims can be substantiated."

Professionalising the Industry

Chain Reactions is also investing in the ecosystem. Through its annual Youth Trends Reports — ÀRÁMÀNDÀ — the firm codifies how Africa's young population thinks, consumes media, and engages with brands.

"Africa's youth are not simply a target audience; they are shaping culture, technology, consumption, and the future of brands," Opayemi notes.

The consultancy also convenes Africa Global PR Week, creating a platform for knowledge exchange. By pushing for outcome-based measurement and ethical practice in an era of AI and misinformation, Chain Reactions is helping raise the standard of African PR.

The firm's global recognition backs this up. It is the highest-ranked African PR firm and the lone Nigerian firm with multiple honours at the SABRE and World PR Awards.

Impact on Nation Building

Opayemi is clear: strategic communication is an economic tool. "Confidence attracts investment, reputation influences choice, and strong brands create demand."

For government, Chain Reactions translates policy into human narratives. For business, it builds brands that drive preference and growth. The multiplier effect is real — as clients grow, they create jobs across employees, suppliers, distributors, creators, and media.

In the public sector, programs like Citizens Connect and Customs Cares show how effective engagement builds trust. "Public trust grows when government action is visible, understandable, participatory and accountable," he says.

On talent, the firm invests deliberately. Teams are trained across strategy, data, AI, and creativity. The goal is not just better PR practitioners, but African communications leaders capable of shaping the continent's narrative globally.

Building Resilience, Driving Growth

In a volatile economy with inflation and shrinking budgets, resilience for Chain Reactions means doubling down on value. AI handles efficiency. Humans deliver judgment.

"The human advantage over the next decade will be understanding people," Opayemi says. "AI can monitor and optimize. It cannot feel culture, read context, or build trust."

As the firm approaches its 20th anniversary in March 2027, its legacy is defined in three parts: the global reputation it has built for Nigerian PR, the commercial value it creates for organizations, and the knowledge it contributes to the industry.

"Our impact is not simply the campaigns we have won awards for," Opayemi concludes. "It is the reputation we have built for Nigerian PR globally, the value we have helped organisations create, and the knowledge and ambition we continue to put back into the African communications ecosystem."

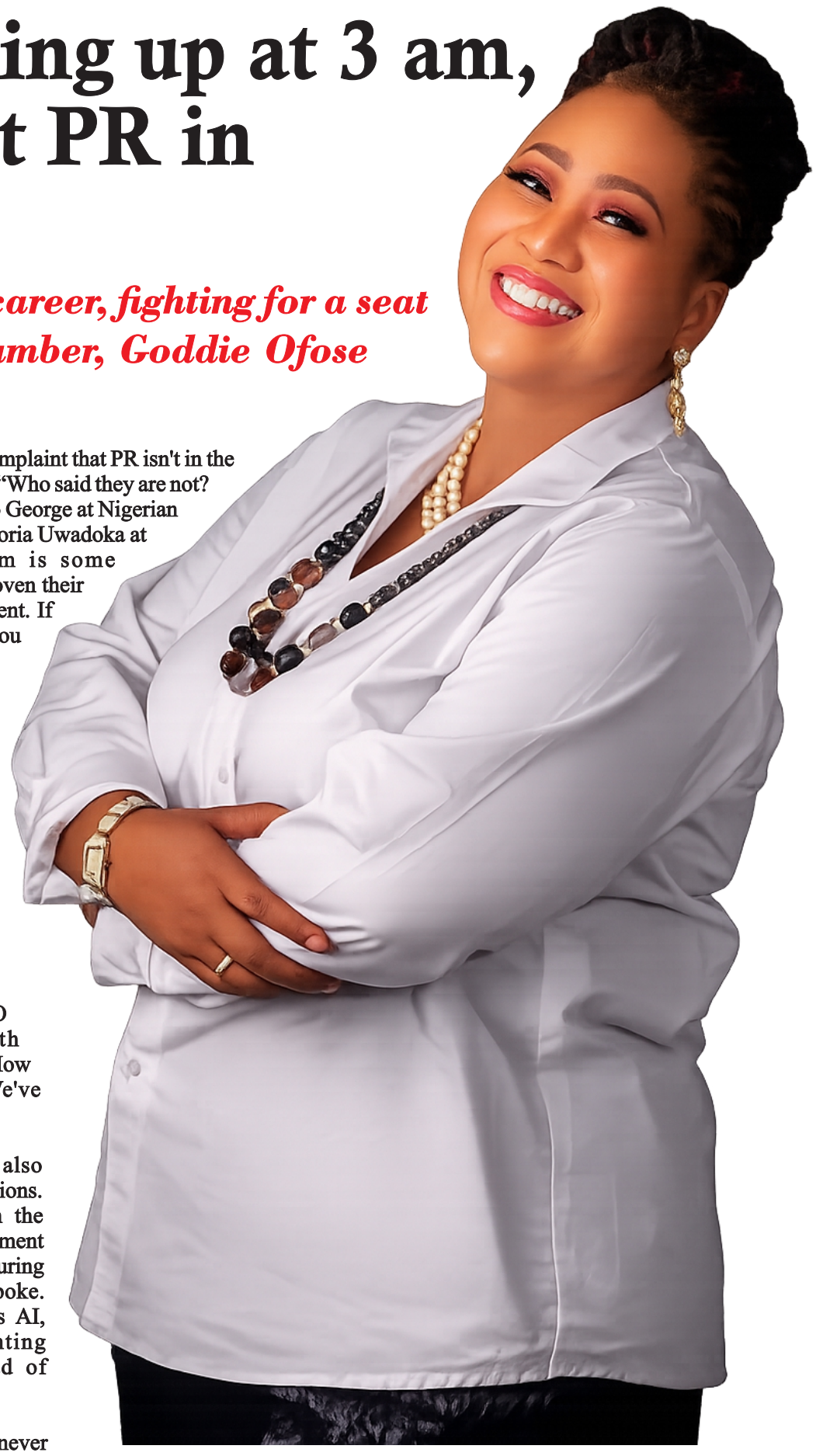
In an age where algorithms can distribute messages instantly, Chain Reactions Africa is proving that the scarce asset is still meaning. And meaning, when fused with data and delivered with integrity, is what builds resilient brands, trusted institutions, and a stronger economy.

That is impact. That is why Chain Reactions belongs among Nigeria's Top 50 Companies of Impact 2026.

COVER STORY

At 70, She's still waking up at 3 am, the woman who built PR in Nigeria speaks

The PR doyenne reflects on an accidental career, fighting for a seat at the boardroom, and why 70 is just a number, Goddie Ofose writes.



At 70, Dr. Nkechi Ali-Balogun still wakes up at 3 am to work. She still runs a consultancy, still mentors, still sets the agenda for Nigeria's PR industry. And she still doesn't feel 70.

"I think people are the ones making me feel 70," she said with a laugh. "I don't feel anything. God gave me my youth, my strength. I service my Lamborghini so the engine doesn't knock."

An Accidental Career

Her journey into PR was never planned. As a young girl, she wanted to be either a journalist or a lawyer. "Journalism didn't have that reputation for women then. And everyone called me 'small lawyer' at home."

Life, however, had other plans. She taught for 13 years in Lagos State, got an NCE, then a degree in English. While waiting for the government to recall her as a teacher, fate intervened. A chance meeting in Ikoyi led to a job as a producer at NTA.

"I couldn't get into news because they said my voice wasn't 'right'," she recalled. "So I went into programs. I worked under the late Mr. Ate. He taught me documentaries, scriptwriting, and production. I owe him a lot."

The next pivot came at NEXIM Bank. With the support of then CBN Deputy Governor Victor Odunsi, she pioneered the Public Relations Department. She built the brand from scratch — including the logo that lasted nearly 20 years.

"I was green, but I knew I needed to be professional," she said. She joined NIPR in 1995, trained at Lagos Business School, and later at the Frank Jefkins School of PR in the UK.

PULL QUOTE:
"PR is a management function. You cannot be in the boardroom if you yourself do not know you are supposed to be in the boardroom, and you have not proven yourself."

From 'errand boys' to boardroom

When Dr. Ali-Balogun started, PR was misunderstood. "For CEOs, PR was media relations. Get the boss on the front page. Branding? Strategy? Crisis counsel? They didn't get it."

Being a woman added another layer. "Most CEOs preferred male PROs. After AGMs, they thought men were better at organizing parties. I was very strict. My job was my job. Anything outside that, I didn't do it."

She remembered resigning from NEXIM without a plan. "My MD was giving me stress. I came to Lagos and resigned at CBN. People said, 'Are you crazy?' I said no. My parents raised me not to be anybody's slave for a job."

The industry has since metamorphosed. "Today, Nigerian PR is strategic, global. We're hosting the World PR Congress. That alone tells you how far we've come."

On the long-standing complaint that PR isn't in the boardroom, she's blunt: "Who said they are not? Look at Dr. Soromidayo George at Nigerian Bottling Company, Victoria Uwadoka at Nestlé. The problem is some practitioners haven't proven their mettle. PR is management. If you don't know that, you won't get there."

The NECCI Roundtable Legacy

For over 20 years, her NECCI PR Roundtable has been the industry's signature thought-leadership platform.

"It's one of the initiatives that put PR on a pedestal," she said. "We brought PLO Lumumba in our 9th edition. People asked, 'How did you get him?' We've raised the bar."

The Roundtable has also shaped policy conversations. After their session on the 'Blue Economy', government agencies picked it up. During COVID, Peter Obi spoke. This year, the focus is AI, algorithms, and fighting misinformation ahead of elections.

"PR Roundtable will never die," she insisted. "It's not profit-making. I thank First Bank, Zenith, Stanbic IBTC, NIMASA and others who have supported us."

On succession, she's already grooming the next generation. "Turning 70 doesn't mean winding down. Retirement means changing how you do things. I'm not slowing down."

Restructuring PRCAN and the PhD drive

As head of PRCAN, she's leading a restructuring. "Past presidents did a marvelous job. But we need a new, improved PRCAN for new developments in consultancy. Elections will hold before year-end."

She also recently bagged a PhD — a childhood goal delayed by career and COVID. "It was personal. And honestly, at presentations, people with PhDs get prioritized. I wanted to self-actualize."

She supports the government's directive that honorary doctorates shouldn't be used as "Dr."
"I welcome it. If you want it, go and read for it. It's not fair to those who suffered for it."

Life, family and what's next

Her secret to looking and sounding 50 at 70? "God. And a supportive husband. He lets me fly. If I say, 'I'm going to Ibadan with Goddie tomorrow,' he says, 'go.' My daughter is my anchor. My home comes first."

Does she have new plans post-70? "I already run an NGO. I have two projects I'll unveil later. I will work till God calls me home. Age brings maturity. You choose your battles. I can come to work at 12 pm now because I own my business. I'm not trying to impress anybody anymore."

And the NIPR presidency? "No. At 70, why? There are young, brilliant people. We should be kingmakers and mentors. The current president, Dr. Ike Neliaku, has been a catalyst. He's disrupted the industry. My prayer is that someone will sustain it."

As she turned 70 a month ago, one thing is clear: Dr. Nkechi Ali-Balogun didn't set out to define Nigerian PR. But for more than three decades, she has.

INTERVIEW

From 'Errand Boys' to boardroom: Dr. Nkechi Ali-Balogun on how Nigerian PR earned its seat

At 70, Dr. Nkechi Ali-Balogun shows no signs of slowing down. The PR doyenne who pioneered corporate communications at NEXIM Bank, built the NECCI PR Roundtable into Nigeria's premier thought-leadership platform, and mentored a generation of practitioners is still waking up at 3am to work. In this wide-ranging interview with The Industry's Goddie Ofose, she speaks candidly about stumbling into PR "by accident," battling gender bias and the "errand boy" tag, and fighting for a seat at the boardroom. She also reflects on legacy, restructuring PRCAN, bagging a PhD at 70, and why Nigerian PR has finally earned global respect.

Let's begin with your journey. How did you get into the PR industry?

It was an accident. I had planned to be a journalist. But growing up, journalism didn't have the best reputation, especially for women. At the time, people saw journalists as "press agents" and didn't consider it a serious profession for a woman.

The other option was law. I even wrote JAMB for law. Everyone called me "small lawyer" at home. Those were the two professions I wanted. But life happened, and I found myself teaching.

That took me away from my planned career path. I went ahead to get an NCE, which I really had no business doing, given the circumstances at the time. Later, I returned to school and earned my first degree in English. Luckily, I got a job at NTA, and that came on a silver platter.

Before that, I had taught in Lagos State for 13 years. After getting my degree, I expected to be recalled into the system. But with government bureaucracy, delays, and other issues — my study leave wasn't approved — my 13 years felt lost.

While waiting, the NTA opportunity came. It was between teaching and working at NTA as a producer. The choice was obvious. How I got the NTA job is another story. I met someone in Ikoyi and told him I wanted to work at NTA. He said, "If you make a 2:1, I'll give you a job." I told him my GPA was already at first class level and I'd make a 2:1. I did. I almost forgot about it until I ran into him again. He said, "Come and resume."

That was how I entered the communications business. He became a mentor to me — a father and an employer. I couldn't get into news because they said my voice wasn't suitable. So I went into programs. I enjoyed it. I worked under the late Mr. Ate, who taught me production, documentaries, and scriptwriting. He was a huge mentor.

While at NTA, the opportunity came to join a bank. With the help of Mr. Victor Odunsi, then Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, I was employed at the Nigerian Export-Import Bank, NEXIM. That's how my career in public relations started.

> *"CEOs didn't really understand PR. For them, PR was media relations — getting the boss on the front page. They didn't understand branding, reputation management, or strategic counsel. Convincing management was a herculean task."*

I pioneered the Public Relations Department at NEXIM. Everything about their brand identity — even the logo they used until about 10 years ago — was developed by me.

I knew I needed to get professional. So I joined the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations in 1995. The late Bode Sanda endorsed my form, and the late Dr. Thiotem, who later became NIPR Registrar, also encouraged me. I went further to attend the Corporate Affairs Management program at Lagos Business School and studied PR at the Frank Jefkins School of Public Relations in the UK. That's how my life in PR truly began.

Before NEXIM, did you ever consider PR as a profession?

Did I even know about it? I knew I loved people and communication, but "public relations" wasn't on my radar. It was at NTA that I started hearing about PR. I thought it was related to journalism — my first love. I figured, if I couldn't do journalism, I could do PR.

Later, I realized there was a clear distinction. But I grew to love PR because I'm a people person. I enjoy relating with people, at home and outside. That's what cemented me in PR.

Let's talk about the industry. From when you started to now, how has PR in Nigeria progressed compared to places like Kenya or South Africa?

I could write a book on that. There's been tremendous progress. In 1995/1996, there was no social media. To send out a press release, I'd travel from Broad Street to Guardian, to Vanguard in Kirikiri. It was a whole day's journey.

We also didn't have many mentors then. You learned on the job. I was lucky. People like the late Bade Sanda took interest in me and guided me.

The biggest challenge then was being a woman. Most CEOs preferred male PROs. There was the perception that men were better at handling certain things — like post-AGM events. I was a strict professional. My job was my job. I remember having an issue with a CBN director who wanted me to do things outside my job description. Thankfully, someone bailed me out.



INTERVIEW



Another challenge was that CEOs didn't really understand PR. For them, PR was media relations — getting the boss on the front page. They didn't understand branding, reputation management, or strategic counsel. Convincing management was a herculean task.

Back then, PR practitioners were tagged "errand boys."

What's your advice to organizations that still treat PR professionals that way?
The problem started because CEOs weren't informed, and many PROs also saw themselves as press agents. Two months ago, a governor's aide said his job was to "protect the governor." That's not PR.

Many of those officers weren't "errand boys." That was their job description. HR didn't understand PR either. It was all about media.

Today, PR has evolved. It's strategic, multi-faceted, and global. For the first time, Nigeria will host the World Public Relations Congress. We won the bid against South Africa and others. That tells you how far we've come.

You've worked in media, corporate, and consultancy. Which has been most exciting?
All of them. Corporate exposed me to structure, which helps my business today. It also gave me opportunities to upskill and travel. I was lucky to have a certain Dr. Chris as a boss. He understood PR and gave me room to practice. The work we did at NEXIM even contributed to him becoming President of Afreximbank.

On the "boardroom" issue: PR people are in the boardroom. The problem is that some haven't proven their value. PR is a management function. In many multinationals today, no decision is made without the PR lead. Look at Soromidayo in Unilever or Victoria in Nestlé. They're making an impact.

NECCI Roundtable is your baby. Over 20 years, you've set the standard. What's the succession plan?
Let me correct something. Turning 70 doesn't mean winding down. Retirement means changing how you do things. I'm not slowing down.

On succession: I'm grooming people to take over the PR Roundtable. I won't announce names yet.

The Roundtable has made a huge impact. It put PR on a pedestal. We brought in PLO Lumumba for our 9th edition — the first time he was coming to Nigeria. People asked, "How did you get him?" We've raised the bar.

We've also brought issues to the front burner. After we did "Blue Economy," everyone started talking about it. We hosted the ADB President on social media and agriculture. During COVID, Peter Obi spoke.

This year we're focusing on AI, algorithms, propaganda, misinformation, and disinformation ahead of elections. It's early warning and education.

Age brings maturity. You learn to choose your battles. I can decide to come to work at 12 pm now because I own my business. I don't have to impress anyone anymore.

PR Roundtable will not die. Many summits today copied the model. It's not profit-driven. I thank sponsors like First Bank, Zenith, Stanbic IBTC, and NIMASA who have supported us over the years.

PRCAN has been quiet. What's happening?
PRCAN is alive and well. We're restructuring. Past presidents like Jaiye Opayemi did a marvelous job. PRCAN represents the elite consultants. But it's time for a new, improved PRCAN.

We've reviewed the bylaws and produced an operating manual. Elections will hold before the end of the year. There was no "systemic problem." It's just that new developments in consultancy needed to be incorporated.

You recently got a PhD. What drove that?
It was always a personal goal. I got distracted by work. I finally did my master's in 2011. I started my PhD in 2016. COVID and ASUU strikes delayed it.

Part of it was also professional. At presentations, people with PhDs get prioritized. I wanted to self-actualize.

The government says honorary doctorates shouldn't be used as "Dr." What's your take?
They should enforce it. I welcome it. Growing up, we were taught you don't use honorary titles. Today people pay for them just for the title. It's not fair to those who earned it.

If you want it, go and read for it. There's no way to tell who suffered for it and who paid. Let's follow protocol.

You'll be 70 this month. How do you feel?
People are the ones making me feel 70. I don't feel it. I thank God for long life. He gave me my youth and strength.

Like a Lamborghini, you have to service it. I do my bit. My bones may complain, but I'm good.

My family has been supportive. I have a wonderful husband who lets me be who I want to be. My daughter is my anchor. My home is important to me.

What's next after 70? Any foundation or new project?
I already run an NGO. I have two projects I'll unveil later. I'm not changing. I'll work until God calls me home.

Age brings maturity. You learn to choose your battles. I can decide to come to work at 12 pm now because I own my business. I don't have to impress anyone anymore.

Any plans for your 70th?
You journalists should plan it for me. At 70, you expect a surprise. My birthday is on Tuesday. By God's grace, we'll celebrate.

Last one. Do you still aspire to be NIPR President?
*No. At 70, why? There are ca*pable young professionals. I'm past that. We should be kingmakers and mentors now.

The current NIPR President, Dr. Ike Neliaku, has been impressive. He's a catalyst. He's disrupted the industry. His vision to establish a University of Public Relations — I doubted it at first. I was wrong.

He's passionate, strategic, and has aligned with the right people. My prayer is that someone will sustain what he's started.

COMPANY OF IMPACT

SO&U:
36 years of building brands that built Nigeria

How Africa's homegrown IMC group earned a place on The Industry's Top 50 Companies of Impact 2026

In 1990, SO&U started with six people in a single-unit advertising agency. Today, it is an integrated marketing communications group with over 200 staff across six subsidiaries and a portfolio that has shaped how Nigerians see some of the country's biggest brands.

That journey from six staff to an industry institution is why SO&U has been named among The Industry Newspaper's Top 50 Nigerian Companies of Impact 2026.

"It means that the past 36 years have truly been years of value creation," says Udeme Ufot, Group Managing Director.



Brand Building with a Blank Canvas

What sets SO&U apart, Ufot says, is how it approaches a brief.

"We first seek to understand the product, understand the consumers, and also understand how they relate to the brand," he explains. "We approach the brief with a blank canvas, seeking territories that have been hitherto unexplored to give the communication a distinctiveness that will deliver real brand differentiation."

The goal is not difference for difference's sake. "We are different in ways that offer meaning to the consumer in their relationship with the brand or in the context of the problem the business needs to solve. For us, it is about creativity that works by solving business or consumer problems.

That philosophy is why Nigerian companies have kept coming back to SO&U to compete locally and globally. It is also why clients "stick with us, refer us to others, and offer us enhanced compensation." In an industry where retention is earned, that is the ultimate scorecard.

The approach — local insight delivered through world-class strategic frameworks — is how SO&U balances authenticity with global standards. "We think local to connect with our audience, and act global to deliver well-targeted world-class communications."

Growing the Creative Economy, One Person at a Time

The creative industry is now a major contributor to Nigeria's GDP. SO&U's contribution has been to professionalize it and grow the talent pipeline.

From six staff, the group now covers brand strategy, creative concepts, audio-visual production, media planning and buying, digital, experiential, events, PR, and OOH. But the bigger impact is human. "Many practitioners have passed through the highly disciplined professional corridors of SO&U, moving on to other endeavours where they have risen to leadership. The Agency has been a great source of capacity building for the industry," Ufot says.

To formalize that, SO&U established The Hatch Academy — hands-on practical training on live briefs for young graduates seeking careers in marketing communications. Management also facilitates industry training, and Ufot himself serves as Chairman of the Advisory Board of the School of Media & Communication, Pan Atlantic University.

At the policy level, he has spent over five years as public sector co-Chair of the NESG Policy Commission responsible for developing a framework for Nigeria's creative economy.

"We are nurturing young graduates with professional skills in advertising, exposing them to live briefs within the agency environment," he notes. "I am also a mentor to many young professionals within and outside the marketing communications industry."

That investment in people is why SO&U is described in agency circles as a "finishing school" for Nigerian marketing talent.

Innovating Through Digital, Data and AI

Two years into mainstream generative AI, SO&U is not fighting the tools. It is using them to work faster and smarter.

"Digital, data and AI tools have created capacity that was unimaginable a few years ago," Ufot says. "AI has also proven invaluable in terms of tools that make it easier to sell ideas and concepts to clients or enable new levels of creativity. New levels of thinking, new approaches to execution, and the capacity to execute what once took hours or even days to deliver are now possible in minutes with AI. It's a whole new world of efficiency, and still unfolding."

The strategy is clear: use technology for speed and scale, but keep human judgment at the centre. That combination is how SO&U delivers measurable impact for clients in a media landscape that changes by the week.

Resilience Built into the Foundation

The last few years tested every Nigerian business with inflation, FX volatility, and shifting consumer behaviour.

SO&U weathered it because, according to Ufot, "the company was built tough to withstand trials and tribulations."

"SO&U was built on a sound foundation that was future- and sustainability-focused. The company's challenging startup experience established an inbuilt capacity for resilience... But even in the worst of times, the Agency has always bounced back."

That resilience shows up in how the group looks for opportunity in adversity. "Every experience of adversity arms us with experience to navigate the next storm. We are aware that behind most clouds will be a silver lining of opportunity. We look for it, grab it, and ride the rainbow to new levels of growth."

Communication for Social Good

For SO&U, impact goes beyond billing. Every December for over 15 years, the agency runs its Give Love initiative, donating food, clothes, and household items to its neighbouring community. Before that, the team did charity walks to raise funds for the disabled.

Ufot's personal commitments mirror the agency's ethos: nearly 10 years on the board of LEAP Africa, three as Board Chair; over 15 years on the board of Special Olympics Nigeria, chairing the media and publicity sub-committee; board member of NESG; and Chair of the Policy Innovation Centre, focused on insights-driven policy with attention to gender and inclusion.

"These are all voluntary engagements and are various ways that I give back to society," he says.

Why SO&U Made the Top 50

The Industry's Top 50 Companies of Impact 2026 recognizes businesses shaping Nigeria's next decade. SO&U qualifies on four fronts:

Industry building: Professionalizing IMC and supplying leadership talent across the ecosystem.

Brand impact: Helping Nigerian brands achieve differentiation that works in business terms.

Job creation: From 6 staff to 200+, plus hundreds more trained through Hatch Academy and industry programs.

Future readiness: Adopting data, digital, and AI while staying rooted in Nigerian culture and storytelling.

The Next Decade

Looking to 2030, Ufot sees a market "bound to grow in sophistication and complexity."

"There will be abundant opportunities for professional agencies that are collaborative and open to the use of data and AI tools to deliver more precise engagement of their audiences."

The challenge will be the same as it has always been: staying relevant by solving real problems. The opportunity is bigger — a more sophisticated Nigerian consumer, a more connected Africa, and tools that let great ideas travel faster.

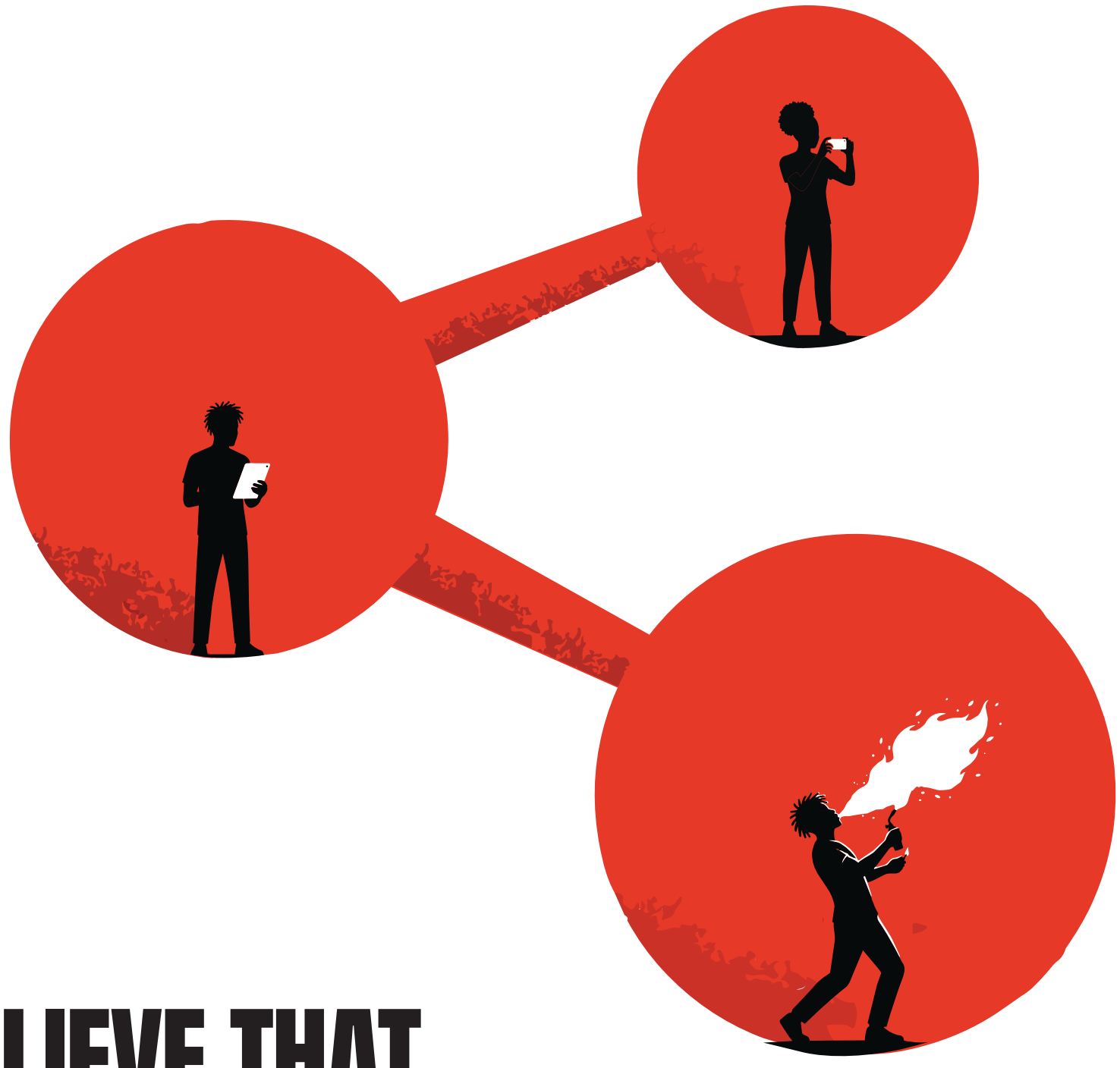
For young entrepreneurs, his message is direct: strategic communication is not a cost. It is how businesses are built, how trust is earned, and how national growth is driven.

The Impact

Thirty-six years ago, six people set out to build an agency. Today, SO&U has helped build brands, careers, and an industry.

The Top 50 recognition is not for one campaign. It is for a body of work — for turning a blank canvas into brands Nigerians relate to, for turning graduates into professionals, and for proving that Nigerian creativity can meet global standards without losing its local voice.

As Ufot puts it: the years have been about value creation. The next years will be about scaling that value — with data, with AI, and with the same discipline that built SO&U in the first place.



WE BELIEVE THAT CREATIVITY IS MOST EFFECTIVE WHEN IT'S CONNECTED

In a world as diverse as ours, developing communications that resonate means working closely with partners, clients and our audience to tell stories that resonate. It means going beyond the rational to creating meaningful emotional connections. It means building communities that support, challenge, inspire and, ultimately advocate for our point of view. Because when we collaborate with the right people, nothing is impossible.

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COMPANY OF IMPACT

NOAH'S ARK COMMUNICATIONS:

Building ideas, jobs, and culture at the heart of Nigeria's economy

How The Ark Group moved Nigerian advertising from local campaigns to global respect, and why it belongs among the Top 50 Companies of Impact 2026

In 2012, a Nigerian agency walked onto the Africa Cristal stage and took Agency of the Year. Fourteen years later, that same agency — Noah's Ark Communications — is on a different stage: named among The Industry's Top 50 Nigerian Companies of Impact 2026 for its role in building creativity, jobs, sustainability, and economic value.

For Mr. Lanre Adisa, MD/CEO of Noah's Ark, the recognition is not about awards. It is about what those awards represent: proof that world-class creative work can be conceived, produced, and scaled in Nigeria, and that it can move culture, businesses, and people in the process.

Global-Standard Creativity, Rooted in Nigerian Truth

Noah's Ark made history as the first West African agency featured in Lürzer's Archive and as a Cannes Lions diploma winner. Those milestones matter, but Adisa says the real work happens earlier — in the insight.

"Our philosophy is to go where the idea takes us," he says. "Ideas rule the world, and we believe in telling authentic African stories rooted in relatable insights relevant to the target audience and the brands we support."

That approach produced one of Nigerian advertising's most enduring campaigns: Airtel's "Data is Life."

The line came from a focus group. Asked what they felt like without data, a respondent said: "Without data, I'll be dead." At the time, data had become essential for work, communication, entertainment, and relationships.

"If data is essential to how we live, then data isn't just a utility; it is life itself," Adisa explains. "The best advertising doesn't manufacture a truth; it finds a truth people already live, gives it a name, and communicates it in a relatable way."

That is the Noah's Ark formula: collaborative, insight-led, and culturally fluent. The agency stays plugged into global best practices and effectiveness reports, but the ideas are always Nigerian first.

From Ads to Ecosystems: Redefining the Agency Model

Noah's Ark stopped seeing itself as "just an advertising agency" early. The result is The Ark Group — a full marketing communications group built to meet clients across every touchpoint.

The structure now includes: Integrated Indigo for PR and events; The RedWolf Company for digital and influencer marketing; Underdog Productions for audiovisual content; MediaKites for media planning and buying; and Gidan Aku, a Northern-focused agency for culturally relevant campaigns.

"The thinking is simple: we want to be at the heart of our clients' businesses, not just at the end of a brief," Adisa says.

This diversification is redefining advertising in Nigeria. Instead of handing off a TVC and disappearing, the group stays with the client from strategy to content to media to public engagement. In an era where audiences experience brands across WhatsApp, radio, TikTok, and the streets, that integrated model is no longer optional. It is survival.

Building the Creative Economy: Creative Safari and Beyond

Adisa argues that agencies have a responsibility beyond selling products. They must help grow the industry and the economy.



That conviction birthed Creative Safari, Noah's Ark's platform that convenes advertising, music, literature, and comedy.

"We created the platform because we believe the advertising industry has a bigger role to play than simply telling brand stories," Adisa says. "We need to create work that matters, work that resonates with people, influences culture and ultimately contributes to the growth of businesses and the wider Nigerian economy."

Creative Safari forces the industry to look up from briefs and pitches to ask: What is happening in culture? What are consumers responding to? How can creativity create a meaningful impact?

When advertising moves culture, Adisa notes, businesses grow, brands become relevant, and the economy benefits. That is the link between creativity and GDP.

Sustainability: Storytelling That Drives Behavior

For Noah's Ark, ESG is not a slide in a deck. It starts with action.

In partnership with Lagos State Government, LAWMA, and LASTMA, the agency mobilized staff and Ikeja residents for a 5km walk and clean-up. Beyond the optics, they educated residents on waste separation, targeting plastics and sachet-water nylon — a direct response to drainage blockages during the rainy season.

"It reflected our conviction that sustainability is a shared civic responsibility," Adisa says.

The agency has applied the same thinking to social issues. With the HACEY Health Initiative, it built the STOP CUT campaign against Female Genital Mutilation — translating complex human rights issues into communication that drives behavioral change.

Through The Young Bookworm, a non-profit focused on basic education in Northern Nigeria and underserved communities, the group has impacted over 1,300 students, equipping them with skills for social mobility.

"We hold ourselves to a broader standard of creativity," Adisa says. "The work we do doesn't just shape how audiences perceive brands, but also shapes how they see, engage with, and take responsibility for the world around them."

Talent, Jobs, and Economic Value

Advertising is often dismissed as a "soft" industry. Adisa disagrees.

"Every campaign we develop creates activities across a wider ecosystem," he says. Strategy, creative, media, production companies, printers, photographers, event vendors, tech partners, SMEs — all get work when a campaign goes live.

And when the campaign works, it drives demand and sales for clients, which supports their own workforce and supply chains. That is advertising as an economic enabler.

Internally, Noah's Ark retains and grows talent through the 5Cs: Curiosity, Courage, Candour, Camaraderie and Compassion. "They create an environment where people feel safe to challenge ideas, take risks, speak honestly, collaborate and feel supported," Adisa explains.

Young talent is given real responsibility — leading projects, engaging clients — with mentorship from experienced leaders. That culture is why the agency has consistently produced some of Nigeria's most sought-after creative leaders.

As President of AAAN, Adisa is also pushing industry-wide reform around Relevance, Excellence and Value. His focus: frameworks for AI, IP, data and creator partnerships, and continuous learning to prepare the next generation.

"The biggest reform is making sure we remain relevant," he says. "AI and the creator economy are transforming how we create, distribute and measure ideas."

Resilience in a Volatile Economy

Nigeria's current climate — inflation, FX volatility, shifting client budgets — demands a new kind of agency resilience.

"For us, resilience means being commercially disciplined, understanding our clients' realities and finding smarter, more effective ways to deliver impact," Adisa says. It also means agility, continuous learning, and embracing technology without compromising idea quality.

"Resilience shouldn't simply mean surviving difficult economic conditions. It should mean using those challenges to become more efficient, more innovative, and more valuable to our clients."

The Uniquely Human Advantage

With AI now generating copy, visuals, and even strategy, what keeps an agency indispensable?

Adisa's answer is immediate: human understanding.

"AI can generate copy, visuals, and even analyse data incredibly quickly, but it doesn't experience the culture we are creating for," he says. "It doesn't have the human intuition to know why an idea will resonate with a Nigerian consumer."

At Noah's Ark, AI is a tool to get faster. The human work — insight, strategic thinking, cultural intelligence, judgment — is what connects brands to people meaningfully. ***Read more on www.theindustryng.com***

COMPANY OF IMPACT

CHANNELS TELEVISION:
30 years of trust, truth, and transformation

■ ***How Nigeria's most-watched newsroom became a pillar of democracy, innovation, and resilience***

At 7 pm on any weekday, millions of Nigerians do the same thing. They turn to one channel. Not for entertainment. Not for drama. For answers.

For more than 30 years, that channel has been Channels Television.

Nominated among The Industry's Top 50 Nigerian Companies of Impact 2026, Channels is being recognized not just for ratings, but for what it has built: the infrastructure of credible information in a democracy still finding its voice.

"We see this recognition as another affirmation of the quality of our work, the consistency and professionalism we have demonstrated as a trusted television station," says John Momoh, Founder and Chairman of Channels Media Group.

In an era of noise, algorithms, and misinformation, Channels has chosen a different path: to stay boringly accurate, relentlessly independent, and constantly evolving. That is why, three decades in, it remains Nigeria's most trusted broadcast news brand.



First to Broadcast, First to Adapt

Channels Television did not wait for the future. It built it.

Launched in 1995, it was Nigeria's first 24-hour independent news channel. In 2000, it launched a website. In 2012, it released its first mobile app. It was also the first Nigerian media organization to stream its news and programmes live.

"That early investment has allowed the brand to evolve from Television to Website to Mobile to social media to Live Streaming to Multi-Platform Digital News," Momoh explains.

The philosophy is simple and stubborn: technology must serve journalism, not replace it.

"We have never regarded technology as a substitute for journalism. We have regarded technology as an enabler of better journalism," he says.

From 24-hour broadcasting to audience analytics and data-informed reporting, Channels has moved with the audience. The result: over 1.75 billion views on YouTube, millions of followers across Facebook, X, Instagram and TikTok, and a presence on Smart TVs via Roku, Apple TV and Android TV.

"We adapt broadcast content into shorter, mobile-friendly videos, live streams, podcasts and on-demand content designed to engage younger, digitally native audiences, while maintaining the same editorial standards," Momoh notes.

That digital expansion has also taken Channels to the diaspora through programmes like Diaspora Network, which profiles Nigerians making an impact abroad

The Newsroom as a Public Square

If there is one place where Channels' impact is most visible, it is during elections.

Through flagship programmes like Politics Today, town halls, and live debates, Channels has created a space where politicians face direct questions from journalists and citizens.

"Channels Television has played a significant role in deepening Nigeria's democracy by creating a credible platform where politicians, policymakers and citizens can engage directly on issues that matter," Momoh says.

"Our democratic responsibility goes beyond broadcasting the news. It is about creating space for citizens to question power, participate in public discourse and demand accountability," Momoh adds. "That is how the media contributes to a stronger, more informed, and more participatory democracy."

In a country where power is often opaque, that role is not ceremonial. It is constitutional.

Trust as Infrastructure: Fact-Checking in the Age of Fake News

In 2026, the biggest threat to journalism is not censorship. It is misinformation.

Channels' response has been to double down on process.

"We sustain public trust by making accuracy, fairness, editorial independence and accountability the foundation of our journalism," Momoh says.

The station's editorial policy mandates rigorous review, verification of facts, balanced presentation, and right of reply. The same standards apply to TV, website, and social platforms. Sensationalism is avoided. Errors are corrected publicly.

That discipline has not gone unnoticed. The Reuters Institute's Digital News Report consistently identifies Channels TV among the independent Nigerian media brands that remain credible to audiences.

"Trust is not claimed; it is earned every day through verified facts, responsible journalism, transparency and an unwavering commitment to giving Nigerians accurate information and diverse voices," Momoh says.

Powering 24-Hour Truth

Running a 24-hour newsroom in Nigeria comes with one constant challenge: power.

"The energy demand for a 24-hour television operation is enormous," Momoh acknowledges.

Channels has responded by strengthening energy efficiency, exploring more reliable power solutions, and building operational resilience. But sustainability goes beyond generators.

The station has accelerated digital transformation to make the newsroom more agile and data-driven. It has also invested deliberately in people.

"Equally important is the deliberate investment in talent development through continuous training, upskilling and career development, particularly in digital journalism, emerging technologies and new production techniques," Momoh explains.

Together, these efforts reduce vulnerabilities, keep the station technologically competitive, and ensure the human capital exists to sustain leadership.

Jobs, Skills and The Economy of Stories

Behind every broadcast is an ecosystem. Reporters, producers, engineers, editors, camera operators, digital specialists, and administrators.

Channels Television has been a major employer across that value chain. But its deeper economic contribution is in capacity building.

Through Channels Academy, established in 2017, the station trains young Nigerians in journalism, news production, anchoring, digital and mobile journalism, data journalism, AI, leadership and newsroom management.

The Academy also partners with universities, with faculty spending over a month on campus to mentor mass communication students. Internships, mentorship, and newsroom immersion are built into the model.

"We are helping to build a new generation of skilled, ethical, and technologically equipped media professionals capable of meeting the evolving demands of Nigeria's broadcast industry," Momoh says.

That pipeline matters. A healthy democracy needs not just free press, but a competent press.

Public Service Beyond the Headlines

Channels uses its reach to do more than report problems. It convenes solutions.

Through special reports, town halls and forums, the station brings together policymakers, experts and citizens to discuss health, education, security, youth development and national unity.

"Our Youth Forum has focused on skills gaps, education, employment, health and youth empowerment, while our citizen dialogues have promoted inclusive participation and conversations around peace, security and national development," Momoh says.

The goal is to move from commentary to conversation, and from conversation to civic action.

Resilience in a Tough Economy

The media business globally is under pressure. In Nigeria, the pressures are compounded: inflation, forex volatility, rising operational costs, and declining advertising yields.

Channels' strategy has been discipline and diversification.

"We have strengthened financial and operational resilience by maintaining disciplined cost management, investing strategically in technology and digital platforms, and diversifying revenue streams beyond traditional advertising," Momoh says.

At the same time, the station has not cut corners on quality. "We continue to prioritise talent development, efficient workflows and quality journalism, enabling us to manage rising costs while sustaining the high editorial and production standards that audiences expect."

Read more on www.theinthedustryng.com

COMPANY OF IMPACT

VITAFOAM:

Building Nigeria's comfort economy, one factory at a time

How 63 years of manufacturing, innovation and ESG leadership earned Vitafoam a place on The Industry's Top 50 Companies of Impact 2026

In most Nigerian homes, "Vitafoam" is not just a brand. It is a noun for a mattress.

That level of trust was not built by marketing alone. It was built in factories, in labs, in distribution trucks, and in the thousands of jobs that sit behind every bed, sofa, and car seat the company makes.

For that reason, Vitafoam Nigeria Plc has been named among The Industry Newspaper's Top 50 Nigerian Companies of Impact 2026 — a recognition that Taiwo Adeniyi, Group Managing Director/CEO, says "underscores the critical role of manufacturing in driving sustainable industrial growth."

"It reflects how locally made solutions can create jobs, deepen value chains, support innovation, and improve quality of life," Adeniyi says. "For Vitafoam, the recognition reinforces our commitment to resilient manufacturing, continuous innovation, and delivering products that contribute meaningfully to Nigeria's economic development."



The Economic Engine: Manufacturing That Multiplies

Vitafoam's story starts with foam, but its impact runs through the entire economy.

The company supports nearly 1,000 direct jobs across production, R&D, sales, and administration. The indirect impact is far wider: a nationwide network of distributors, retailers, transporters, suppliers, and SMEs that depend on Vitafoam's factories to stay in business.

"Through local sourcing, nationwide distribution and partnerships with small and medium-sized businesses, the company creates economic opportunities beyond its factories," Adeniyi explains. "This multiplier effect strengthens local enterprise, supports livelihoods, and demonstrates how a strong domestic manufacturing sector can drive inclusive economic growth."

That matters in a country where manufacturing is under pressure. By producing mattresses, pillows, furniture components, automotive seating, and building materials locally, Vitafoam saves foreign exchange, retains value, and supplies industries from hospitality to healthcare with inputs they can count on.

The company has also taken Nigerian manufacturing across borders. With exports to Ghana, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea, and a factory in Sierra Leone, Vitafoam is "leveraging product quality, competitive pricing, strong distribution partnerships, and local market knowledge" to deepen regional trade and earn foreign exchange.

From Mattress Maker to "Comfort Solutions Provider"

The biggest shift inside Vitafoam has been strategic. The company no longer sees itself as only a mattress business.

"Vitafoam has evolved from a traditional mattress manufacturer into a diversified sleep solutions provider," Adeniyi says. Through Vitapur, Vitavisco and Vitablom, the Group has expanded capabilities beyond mattresses — hence the tagline "much more than mattress."

This diversification is powered by deliberate investment in people, R&D, technology, and product innovation. On the consumer side, that means orthopedic and contour-cut mattresses like the flagship Galaxy range, designed for "targeted support, improved posture and enhanced sleeping comfort." It also means cool-foam and ventilated technologies adapted for Nigeria's climate, and product lines for kids, hotels, and institutions.

On the industrial side, it means supplying foam for automotive seating, furniture, and building applications — moving Vitafoam up the value chain into technical markets with higher standards.

The innovation is not just in what is made, but how. Continuous investment in technology and quality systems allows the company to compete on consistency, not just price.

Quality as a Growth Strategy

Vitafoam was the first foam manufacturer in Nigeria to achieve NIS ISO 9002, and today maintains ISO 9001:2015 certification. Adeniyi says that commitment to global standards has been "fundamental to its growth and competitiveness."

"It has strengthened customer confidence, enhanced operational efficiency and positioned Vitafoam to compete effectively in regional and international markets."

In practice, ISO certification means documented processes, traceability, and continuous improvement on the factory floor. For export markets in ECOWAS and beyond, it is the entry ticket. For Nigerian hospitals, hotels, and schools buying in bulk, it is proof that the product will perform.

Quality also builds resilience. When raw material costs rise, a quality brand can hold pricing and customer loyalty better than a commodity player.

Sustainability: Foam with a Lower Footprint

Foam manufacturing is energy- and chemical-intensive. Vitafoam's answer has been to embed ESG into operations rather than treat it as a report.

The clearest example is the launch of an ozone-friendly polyurethane system house through Vitapur, developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and UNDP. The project supports the Montreal Protocol and reduces the environmental impact of production.

Beyond that flagship, Adeniyi outlines a broader approach: "responsible manufacturing, resource efficiency and the adoption of environmentally friendly technologies." That includes stronger energy efficiency, waste management, occupational safety and sustainable supply-chain practices.

On energy, Vitafoam has made "significant investments in sustainable energy across its factories." The goal is twofold: cut dependence on expensive diesel and grid power, and reduce emissions. "These investments are helping to improve energy efficiency, optimise production costs and reduce emissions. More importantly, they strengthen the resilience of our factories by supporting reliable and sustainable manufacturing," Adeniyi notes.

Waste is also being tackled. Off-cuts and scrap foam are reprocessed into carpet underlays and other products, moving the business toward a more circular model.

Resilience in a Tough Macro Environment

The numbers tell the story of that resilience. In 2025, Vitafoam recorded a 1,751% surge in pre-tax profit to N21.2 billion.

Adeniyi attributes it to "strategic discipline, improved operational efficiency, effective cost management and the resilience of demand for its products." The Group also benefited from portfolio diversification, stronger pricing, and supply-chain optimization.

But the context matters. Nigerian manufacturers today face forex volatility, rising raw-material and energy costs, logistics constraints, and infrastructure deficits.

Vitafoam's response has been pragmatic: disciplined cost management, strategic sourcing, better inventory planning, and continuous efficiency drives. The company is also "strengthening local and regional supply capabilities, diversifying our product portfolio and investing in technology and energy efficiency to build a more resilient and competitive business."

That is the essence of industrial impact in 2026: not just growing in good times, but adapting when the environment is hardest.

Health, Community and The Social License

Vitafoam's products are now positioned at the intersection of comfort and health. With orthopedic and specialized mattresses, the company is responding to "growing consumer expectations for healthier, more personalized, and high-quality comfort solutions."

The company also measures its role by what it gives back. From upgrading academic infrastructure at UNILAG to initiatives in education, healthcare, and community development, CSR is judged by "tangible, sustainable outcomes."

"Our objective is not simply to make contributions, but to create measurable improvements in lives, strengthen host communities and build lasting partnerships that support inclusive development," Adeniyi says.

Read more on www.theindustryng,com

COMPANY OF IMPACT

SIFAX GROUP:

Building Nigeria's trade backbone and creating jobs that outlast the cycle

■ *Why the indigenous conglomerate made The Industry's Top 50 Nigerian Companies of Impact 2026*

In a decade where global supply chains broke, forex swung, and infrastructure gaps widened, one Nigerian group chose to keep building.

That conviction is why SIFAX Group has been named among The Industry Newspaper's Top 50 Nigerian Companies of Impact 2026 — a list curated around companies "building resilience and driving growth" in the next decade.

For SIFAX, the recognition is not just about scale. It is about who owns the assets that keep Nigeria's trade moving.

"Being counted among fifty companies of impact in the country is a great feeling. We see such accolades as a reward for our years of investment, dedication, and resilience," says Olumuyiwa Akande, Group Head, Corporate Communications.

"Nigeria's trade infrastructure runs on assets somebody has to buy, maintain and keep working. Indigenous groups like ours now carry a large share of that responsibility, and they carry it with a permanent stake in the outcome. Our capital is committed here. Our workforce is here. When conditions tighten, we adjust and continue rather than withdraw."



An Intentional Conglomerate: One Chain, Multiple Impacts

SIFAX Group's footprint reads like a map of Nigeria's trade: maritime, aviation, haulage, hospitality, and financial services. But according to Akande, it is not random diversification.

"Our businesses are not a collection. Our investments are intentional. Our investment strategy thrives on complementary businesses that provide room for cross-selling and maximising revenue across the value chain."

The logic is visible at Tin Can Port: "A container that berths needs stevedores, a truck, a warehouse, and cargo clearing. An aircraft landing in Lagos needs ramp handling, cargo handling and a bed for the crew. Once the chain is visible, the logic of the Group is obvious, and so is its resilience."

That chain now stretches beyond Nigeria to Ghana, Guinea, Sierra Leone and the United States, with West African growth and financial services flagged as priorities for 2026.The economic effect multiplies because the businesses are not siloed. Terminal operations sustain trucking, haulage and clearing agents who are not on SIFAX payroll but depend on its gates opening on time. Aviation ground handling absorbs technical and semi-skilled labour. Hospitality supports tourism and local suppliers.

"Spreading across sectors protects the Group, and it spreads the economic effect further than any single business could," Akande notes.

Jobs, Skills, And Local Capacity

SIFAX directly employs several thousand people across five countries. SAHCO, its aviation subsidiary, operates at every commercial airport in Nigeria with its own technical workforce.

The indirect jobs are larger still: truck drivers, clearing agents, freight forwarders, chandlers, security personnel, and small logistics firms all trade off the activity SIFAX terminals generate.

"Local content sits underneath all of it," Akande says. "Our terminal, marine and ground handling operations are run overwhelmingly by Nigerians, including at senior operational level, and our procurement and service contracting draw heavily on Nigerian suppliers. Capacity in this sector is not imported. It is trained."

Training is deliberate. Internally, it means technical certification and safety training. Externally, the Ajoke Ayisat Afolabi Foundation runs social impact programmes, while the Taiwo Afolabi Annual Maritime Conference, now in its 10th edition, brings young Nigerians into careers in the blue economy. This year's theme charged them "to prepare to lead it."

Investing in Hard Infrastructure

While many firms paused during economic volatility, SIFAX doubled down. That is a core reason for its selection.

Four investment lines are active:

Ports: Ports and Cargo's 2026 capex covers crane upgrades, forklifts, and terminal trucks to lift capacity and cut reliance on hired equipment.

Marine: SIFAX Marine is acquiring seagoing barges, creek vessels and offshore support vessels to access higher-value oil and gas contracts.

Aviation: SAHCO has invested in modern ground support equipment and workforce development, helping it handle rising passenger and cargo volumes through 2025 without service drops.

Hospitality: MacFolly Hospitality is building a 100-room Courtyard by Marriott beside the N45 billion Lagos Marriott Hotel, Ikeja, adding capacity in the airport corridor.

"Four different assets, one principle. Capacity has to exist before demand arrives, not after it," Akande states.

That principle showed in financials too. SAHCO's 2025 results reported revenue of N44.46 billion against N28.94 billion in 2024, and profit before tax of over N12 billion, driven by higher volumes and sustained investment.

Easing Congestion, Connecting SMEs to Global Trade

In ports and logistics, SIFAX is betting on technology and efficiency over brute force. The group is integrating systems to know "precisely when a vessel berths, precisely where a box sits in the yard, and precisely when a truck should arrive." Better visibility, Akande says, removes waiting hours "that no amount of equipment can recover."

For SMEs, the impact is direct. SIFAX Shipping's direct LCL export service to the UK, launched with Netcargo UK, removed the need for small exporters to consolidate through transhipment hubs. Trial shipments began June 2025, and bonded warehouse capacity was upgraded to match. On imports, arrangements from India and China through SIFAX bonded facilities give smaller importers access to infrastructure they could not build alone. The 2025 berthing of the terminal's largest general cargo vessel — carrying steel, vehicles and power equipment — underscores its role in feeding manufacturing.

Partnership as Policy

SIFAX itself was born from PPP. Ports and Cargo began at Terminal C, Tin Can Island in 2006 after port concessions. SAHCO emerged from privatisation in 2010 and later listed on the Exchange.

"Private capital took on underperforming assets, invested in them, and today they employ thousands of Nigerians and return value to Nigerian shareholders," Akande says.

Daily collaboration continues with NPA, Customs, NIMASA and aviation regulators. Earlier this year, the Western Naval Command visited SIFAX HQ to reaffirm cooperation on waterway surveillance — "security is foundational to our operations."

Why Sifax Made the Top 50

The Industry's Top 50 looked for companies shaping Nigeria's next decade. SIFAX qualified on three counts:

Resilience through investment: It kept deploying capital into equipment and assets when the market retreated.

Jobs and skills: Thousands of direct jobs, a wider ecosystem of indirect livelihoods, and deliberate training.

Infrastructure that enables trade: From reducing port waiting times to creating export routes for SMEs, it is removing friction from Nigeria's supply chain.

Akande frames it simply: "This year's list was curated around building resilience and driving growth... That framing describes the choice in front of every Nigerian business over the past two years: whether to retreat or keep building. SIFAX Group kept building."

The Road Ahead

The vision is pan-African. "We plan to become Africa's global conglomerate. Trusted, resilient, ethical, and genuinely useful to the economies we operate in," Akande says.

That means regional expansion in West Africa, deeper technology adoption across maritime and logistics, and continued investment in owned assets.

"A recognition of this kind is a marker along that road rather than the destination."

For Nigeria's economy, the marker matters. Because when trade infrastructure works, manufacturers produce, exporters ship, and thousands of Nigerians get to work. And that work, SIFAX argues, is what real impact looks like.

INTERSWITCH:
The invisible rails powering Nigeria's economy

■ *Why the fintech pioneer was named among the Top 50 Nigerian Companies of Impact 2026*

In Lagos traffic, you won't see them. In a market in Kano, you won't hear them. In a state government revenue portal, you won't notice them.

But every time a student pays school fees on Quickteller, a trader accepts a Verve card, a government agency reconciles tax receipts in real time, or a fintech launches a new wallet, there's a good chance Interswitch is underneath it.

Twenty-five years after it launched Nigeria's first electronic payment switch, Interswitch has evolved from a payments processor into the operating layer beneath Nigerian commerce. It is that quiet, foundational role — and its deliberate push into sustainability, inclusion and talent — that earned it a spot in The Industry Top 50 Nigerian Companies of Impact 2026.

In an interview with THE INDUSTRY, Tomiloju Ogunlesi, Divisional Head - Brands, Communications, Content & CSR, explains why infrastructure, not headlines, is the real measure of impact.



Building the Runway

"Nigeria didn't just adopt digital payments — it actually leapfrogged into them, and Interswitch built much of the runway that made that leap possible," Ogunlesi says.

That runway started with Verve, Africa's first domestic card scheme, and the Interswitch Payment Gateway, which powers commerce for businesses of every size. The goal was never just transactions.

"Our mandate has never simply been to process transactions; it has been to build trust into every exchange of value," he says.

In 2026, that trust is being stress-tested by new consumer habits, new rails, and new competitors. Interswitch's response is interoperability and depth. "Whether a Nigerian is paying via card, USSD, QR, or an emerging digital rail, the experience remains seamless, secure, and truly African in its design," Ogunlesi explains. "We're also deepening our infrastructure to support the merchants, fintech innovators, and financial institutions building on top of what we've laid down, because Africa's fintech revolution was never going to be won by one company - it is won by ecosystems."

The philosophy is deliberate restraint. "What keeps us at the forefront isn't chasing every new trend in payments. It's staying anchored to the original insight that built Interswitch: that infrastructure is invisible when it works and transformative when it's built right. Twenty-five years on, we're still building for the transaction Nigeria hasn't imagined yet."

Beyond Payments: The Operating System for Commerce

If payments were chapter one, Interswitch is now writing the entire book.

"Payments were always meant to be the beginning of the story, not the whole of it," Ogunlesi says. "When a business can only move money but not manage it; collect from customers, lend to grow, sell across new channels — it is still operating with one hand tied behind its back."

Today, the group spans switching and processing, collections for schools and state governments, enterprise lending infrastructure for financial institutions, and Quickteller, which has grown from bill payments into a full commerce and lifestyle ecosystem.

"We don't think of ourselves as a payments company anymore. We think of ourselves as the operating layer beneath Nigerian commerce. The infrastructure businesses build on without having to think about it, and consumers rely on without having to notice it."

That breadth is intentional. "Resilience, for any economy, comes from infrastructure that solves more than one problem at a time."

AI, Data and The Quiet Defense

At millions of transactions daily, data is not a byproduct. It's the nervous system.

"We deploy AI and machine learning to detect fraud in real time, spotting anomalies in the milliseconds between a transaction's initiation and its completion, long before human oversight ever could," Ogunlesi says. Cloud infrastructure provides scale. Big data analytics moves services beyond one-size-fits-all.

But the real test is invisibility. "Technology in payments only earns trust when it works quietly and relentlessly in the background, protecting value, learning patterns, and personalizing service without ever asking the customer to notice the complexity behind it."

Sustainability and Responsible Tech: The Green in The Code

Fintech is rarely discussed in climate terms. Interswitch argues it should be.

"Every naira that moves electronically instead of physically is a small but real act of environmental stewardship," Ogunlesi says. "One less cash run across Lagos traffic, one less bundle of notes processed, counted, and transported by road, one less sheet of paper generated to reconcile it."

At Interswitch's volumes, those small acts compound: fewer cash-in-transit vehicles, less currency printing, reduced logistical emissions.

"Whilst we don't yet have the luxury of a fully mature carbon-accounting framework for financial infrastructure in Nigeria, the direction of the impact is unambiguous: every transaction we digitize is one Nigeria's economy no longer has to move, store, guard, or emit carbon transporting."

The sustainability mandate starts internally. In data centers and offices, energy efficiency is treated as an operational discipline. E-waste is tracked so retired hardware doesn't become "someone else's environmental burden." Procurement now asks not just "what's cheapest" but "what's most responsible."

Financially, the company is navigating the same volatility as everyone else. The strategy: absorb complexity so customers don't feel it.

"We diversify revenue across switching, processing, lending, and commerce rather than leaning on any single line; build efficiency into our own cost structure before ever adjusting pricing; and take a long view of value creation," Ogunlesi says. "Financial sustainability, for an infrastructure company, isn't just about protecting the balance sheet; it's also about staying present and dependable for the next transaction, the next business, the next decade."

Social and Economic Impact: Who Gets to Participate

The true impact, Ogunlesi argues, is in expanded participation.

"Think about the market trader who can now accept a card payment, the school that can collect fees without a queue at a bank, the state government agency that can track and reconcile revenue in real time," he says. "Interswitch's infrastructure was never built to serve only the largest players; it was built to lower the barrier to participation for everyone else."

That shows up in three ways:

MSMEs and Government: Digital collections make government revenue "more transparent and harder to leak." For small businesses, accepting digital payments levels the playing field. "That is the quiet power of infrastructure done right: it doesn't just process an economy's transactions; it expands who gets to take part in that economy."

Financial Inclusion: The inclusion fight is won outside bank branches. Verve gave millions their first card. Quickteller Paypoint agents turned shopkeepers into financial touchpoints.

"Inclusion truly doesn't always require a bank branch; sometimes it just requires trust and proximity," Ogunlesi says. "Financial inclusion isn't charity work bolted onto a payments business; it is the business, done at the scale and with the intentionality Nigeria's underserved communities have always deserved."

Jobs and Talent: Beyond direct staff, Interswitch sustains livelihoods through agents, merchants, and partners. But the deeper legacy is human capital. Engineers and product managers who started at Interswitch now lead fintech across Africa.

"Nigeria doesn't have a shortage of talent alone; it has historically had a shortage of platforms bold enough to trust that talent with real, complex problems," he says. Through graduate programs, internships, university partnerships, and engineering mentorship, Interswitch is trying to be that platform.

"Capacity building isn't measured only in headcount, but in the industry a company quietly seeds around itself."

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54, Warehouse Road, Apapa, Lagos, Nigeria.
info@sifaxgroup.com

@sifaxgroup @officialsifaxgroup

COMPANY OF IMPACT

ARISE NEWS:
Building a global Nigerian brand that employs, informs, and drives growth

Why the broadcaster is named among The Industry's Top 50 Nigerian Companies of Impact 2026

Thirteen years ago, a Nigerian media entrepreneur set out with a simple but audacious idea: that Nigeria could own a global news platform with a Nigerian voice and a world-class standard.

Today, that idea is ARISE News Channel, and its inclusion in The Industry's Top 50 Nigerian Companies of Impact 2026 is recognition not just of ratings or reach, but of economic contribution, job creation, and nation-building through journalism.

"Being listed among the Top 50 Companies of Impact says that we are no longer just participants in the global media conversation. We are shaping it," said Mr. Nduka Obaigbena, Chairman and Editor-in-Chief of THISDAY Media Group & ARISE News Channel. "From our studios in Lagos, London and Washington, we have shown that it is possible to build a Nigerian brand that competes with CNN, BBC and Al Jazeera, while remaining rooted in the realities of our people. That is impact."



Investing in infrastructure, setting a new technical standard

ARISE's impact starts with infrastructure. The company made a deliberate decision to invest ahead of the curve at a time when many local broadcasters were still catching up to digital.

"We operate one of the most advanced broadcast facilities in Sub-Saharan Africa — 4K-capable studios, virtual sets, IP-based newsrooms, and cloud-first workflows," Obaigbena explained.

But the technology is only half the story. ARISE integrated "digital first" into its DNA. Content goes live simultaneously on linear TV, YouTube, social platforms, and ARISE Play. The newsroom uses data analytics to track audience behavior and AI tools for gathering and verification.

"The goal is speed without sacrificing accuracy, and scale without losing quality," he says. "That combination is what has set a new benchmark for news delivery in Nigeria and Africa."

That investment has had a ripple effect. By raising the technical bar, ARISE forced the entire ecosystem — vendors, production houses, freelancers — to upgrade, creating a new market for broadcast technology and post-production services in Nigeria.

A talent factory for the creative economy

Perhaps ARISE's most tangible economic contribution is people.

"ARISE is a talent factory," Obaigbena said. "We directly employ over 500 professionals in Nigeria across editorial, production, engineering, sales, and digital. Indirectly, through vendors, freelancers, and content partners, we support thousands more."

The company runs an internal academy to train young graduates in broadcast writing, on-air presentation, video editing, and digital journalism. It pairs them with veterans and sends them on international assignments through bureaus in London and Washington.

"Today, ARISE alumni are leading in other networks, agencies, and production houses," he noted. "We have also created a pipeline in broadcast technology, graphics, and digital media — areas that were scarce 10 years ago. That is our contribution to the creative economy: building capacity that outlives any single broadcast."

In an industry often accused of poaching the same small pool of talent, ARISE is expanding the base. "My commitment is that in the next 10 years, the faces and voices leading African media will have passed through ARISE," Obaigbena added.

Business journalism as nation-building

ARISE has become the go-to platform for business and policy conversations in Nigeria. Programs like Global Business Report and The Market serve as a bridge between government, investors, and entrepreneurs.

"Business coverage is nation-building," Obaigbena argued. "If investors don't understand Nigeria, they won't invest. If entrepreneurs don't see opportunity, they won't build."

During periods of economic reform, ARISE provided context to help markets react with understanding, not panic. It also deliberately spotlights SMEs and startups.

"When you tell the story of enterprise, you create confidence. And confidence drives growth," he said.

That focus has helped position Nigeria's private sector for global capital, while giving local businesses a platform to scale.

Democracy, governance, and public trust

Beyond the economy, ARISE has carved out a role in strengthening Nigeria's democracy. Through The Morning Show, ARISE News Prime Time, and extensive election coverage, the channel created what Obaigbena calls "a town hall for leaders, policymakers, civil society, and citizens."

"We hold government to account, we amplify the voices of the governed, and we insist on evidence-based debate," he says. "Our role is not to take sides. Our role is to ensure that power is questioned and the public is informed. That is how you strengthen democracy."

In an era of misinformation, that commitment to trust has become a commercial asset. "Resilience comes from clarity of purpose. Our purpose is trust," Obaigbena states. The newsroom doubled down on fact-checking and transparency, while diversifying revenue early into digital, events, and partnerships to survive changing advertising models.

Sustainability: business, environment, and people

ARISE's approach to sustainability is three-pronged. On business, it has moved aggressively into YouTube monetization, streaming, and branded content. Environmentally, its Lagos and Abuja studios run hybrid power systems to reduce diesel use, and workflows have been digitized to cut paper and physical distribution.

But the core is people. "A sustainable media house is one that constantly renews its talent. Our goal is to build an institution that will be here 50 years from now, not just 5," Obaigbena revealed.

Exporting culture, shaping narrative

The impact goes beyond news. Through ARISE Fashion Week and ARISE Play, the company is exporting Nigerian culture and creativity. During COVID-19, it ran public health campaigns. Its documentaries focus on education, unity, youth, and heritage.

"Media has a responsibility beyond headlines," Obaigbena said. "Journalism should not just report the problem. It should also highlight solutions and celebrate what is working. That is how you build social cohesion."

That philosophy — "Global context, African lens" — is why diaspora and international audiences now turn to ARISE. "We adhere to the highest international standards of journalism. But we refuse to filter Africa through someone else's prism," he explained.

The next decade: A truly global African media company

Looking ahead, Obaigbena's vision aligns with the 2026 theme: "Building Resilience, Driving Growth: Nigerian Companies Shaping the Next Decade."

"Our vision is simple: to build the first truly global African media company," he said. The plan includes expanding bureaus across Africa, investing in AI for journalism while keeping humans at the center, and growing ARISE Play to reach 100 million Africans.

"But beyond business, we want to shape the narrative. For too long, Africa's story has been told by others. In the next 10 years, we intend to ensure that Africa tells its own story — accurately, proudly, and to the world."

Why ARISE made the Top 50

ARISE News is nominated among The Industry's Top 50 Nigerian Companies of Impact 2026 because it has moved beyond media to become an economic and cultural institution.

It creates direct and indirect jobs. It trains the next generation of professionals. It invests in technology that lifts an entire industry. It drives investment conversations. It promotes social cohesion. And it puts Nigeria on the global stage on its own terms.

In Obaigbena's words: "That is how Nigerian companies will build resilience and drive growth. And ARISE News intends to lead that charge."

COMPANY OF IMPACT

X3M IDEAS:
Proof that creativity is economic infrastructure

How Nigeria's first Cannes Lions-winning agency made The Industry's Top 50 Companies of Impact 2026 by building brands, jobs, and a culture-native future

When Steve Babaeko walked away from a comfortable job in 2012 to start X3M Ideas with eight people and "a lot of faith," the advertising business in Nigeria was still treated like decoration.

Thirteen years later, that bet is on The Industry Newspaper's Top 50 Nigerian Companies of Impact 2026 list. Not because X3M bought billboards. Because it helped build factories, move product, and keep people employed.

"Honestly, when recognition like this comes, we do not read it as a pat on the back for X3M alone. We read it as a sign that Nigeria has finally started to see creativity for what it is: economic infrastructure, not decoration," Babaeko says.

That reframing is why X3M made the list.



From Children's Table to Boardroom Table

For years, Babaeko argues, marketing communications "sat at the children's table. You called us when you wanted something to look nice."

But the numbers tell a different story. Advertising builds the confidence a brand needs to raise capital. It turns a small business into a household name. It moves product off the shelf, which keeps a factory running, which keeps people employed.

"That is real money moving through the economy because of an idea," he says.

When X3M was named among the Top 50, Babaeko took it as the whole industry being "invited to sit at the grown-up table." The message to young Nigerians is clear: a career in creativity is no longer a side hustle. It is a driver of growth.

The proof is in the trophies that moved business. X3M became the first agency from Nigeria and West Africa to win a Cannes Lions. It has been named African Agency of the Year more than once. The Loeries ranked it the number one agency in Nigeria and seventh among independent agencies in the entire world. The Financial Times named X3M among Africa's fastest-growing companies.

"We grew a Nigerian independent to that level inside the same tough economy everybody else is complaining about, on the strength of ideas alone," Babaeko notes. "If it can do that for us, it can do it for the brands we build."

The X3M Formula: Data + Culture

Every agency claims to be "data-driven" now. X3M's difference is what it adds to the data.

"Data tells you where the people are. Culture tells you why they move. If you only have the first one, you can find your audience, but you cannot make them feel anything," Babaeko explains.

He describes Nigeria's media landscape as "scattered like a broken calabash." The same consumer is on TikTok in the morning, radio in traffic, WhatsApp all day, and TV at night. You cannot chase them with a different message in every corner. What works is "one strong cultural idea, one truth that travels, and then you dress it correctly for each platform."

Data can tell you a 28-year-old in Surulere buys a seasoning brand. It cannot tell you she is trying to taste her late grandmother's kitchen when she cooks.

"Our job, and where we invest through X3M Intelligence, is to marry the numbers to the human truth and build work that people carry around in their chest, not just in their feed."

That marriage of insight and storytelling is what X3M takes to clients across banking, telecoms, FMCG, and government. The playbook doesn't change by sector because "underneath every brief is the same thing, a human being with a hope or a fear." What changes is precision — compliance for financial services, national responsibility for public sector work.

Taking Nigerian Brands Global by Being More Nigerian

The conventional advice for going global is to "shrink the local until it fits some foreign idea of polish." X3M does the opposite.

"We amplify the local until the world has no choice but to lean in," Babaeko says.

The Cannes win did not come from work that looked like London or New York. It came from being "unapologetically ours."

"The world is not tired of Africa. The world has simply never been shown Africa properly by Africans. Most of what people abroad know about us was narrated by other people. We are taking the pen back."

The strategy: root the brand in something true about Nigeria, then execute to a standard "that leaves no room for anybody to call it small."

"When a Nigerian brand shows up on the international stage looking world-class and sounding authentically African at the same time, that combination is unbeatable. Ordinary to us, unbelievable to the world. That is the door we walk our clients through."

For Babaeko, culture is not a costume. "It is the source code. We are steeped in the language, the proverbs, and the deep philosophy of our people."

The most celebrated work, he argues, is "fiercely local. Nobody wins the world by being generic. You win it by being so specifically, confidently yourself that you become universal." When "a market woman in Balogun and a juror in Cannes both feel the same work, you have done your job."

Jobs, Ecosystems, and Job Creators

X3M started with eight people. Today the group operates across several countries with businesses including Media 100, Zero Degrees, and Radar. Every seat is "a livelihood, a rent paid, a family fed, a young person who found their purpose."

But the impact is wider. A single campaign pays photographers, editors, sound engineers, illustrators, production houses, digital vendors, influencers, caterers. "One campaign puts money in dozens of pockets that never appear in our staff list."

The bigger mission is capacity building. "This industry has a talent hunger, and we cannot import our way out of it."

Inside X3M, training is done "like a workshop, not a factory." Young creatives are put "close to the pitches, close to the failures, because that is where the learning actually happens."

Externally, X3M works with institutions like Henley Business School and through IAA Nigeria, where Babaeko serves as President, to raise professional standards across Africa.

His ambition is explicit: "The young people we train today go on to build agencies that one day compete with ours. That is not a threat to us. That is the point."

If the Top 50 recognition convinces "one more young Nigerian creative that they do not have to leave to be great, then it has already done its most important work."

Purpose that is not Paint

X3M is cautious about "purpose" as a trend. "You cannot take a brand that harms, splash a nice cause on top of it, and call yourself purpose-led. People can smell that from a mile away."

Instead, purpose must solve a real problem. Blood Sacrifice for the Red Cross was about getting Nigerians to donate blood. It won craft gold at the Loeries. Welcome Home, Not Back for NIHOTOUR was about dignity for repatriated Nigerians and redirecting them to opportunity at home.

"These were not causes we borrowed to look good. They were real," Babaeko says. Commercially, he sees no contradiction. "A brand that stands for something meaningful earns a loyalty that no discount can buy."

Building a Culture-Native AI Future

The next frontier is technology. But X3M is not just importing tools trained on other worlds.

"The temptation with AI is to import the tools wholesale and start pushing buttons. The problem is that most of these tools were trained on a world that does not fully see us. Ask many of them to imagine a Nigerian market or a Yoruba naming ceremony and watch them stumble."

So X3M is building X3M AI Creative Studio, described as "Africa's first culture-native creative and technology lab." The goal: intelligence that understands Nigerian languages, proverbs, humour, and context. "The whole point is to make sure the machine speaks our culture fluently, not just our English."

Day-to-day, data analytics now leads planning. It is used to understand audiences, test ideas faster, and measure what works across new platforms. But the principle remains: "The technology handles speed and scale. The human handles soul."

The Hard Truths

Babaeko is blunt about the industry's challenges.

First, perception of value. "Too many clients still see agencies as a cost to be squeezed rather than an investment that grows their business." That drives brutal procurement and payment terms that can "strangle a good shop."

Second, talent flight. "We train some of the brightest young creatives on the continent, and then japa comes calling, and we lose them to markets abroad that pay in stronger currencies. We have to make staying attractive."

Third, the economy. When the naira is under pressure, marketing is the first budget cut — even though brands that keep investing through downturns usually come out stronger.

X3M's response: do work that "visibly moves business," invest in talent, and use its voice on industry boards to push for a healthier ecosystem. ***Read more on www.theindustryng.com***

COMPANY OF IMPACT

RED MEDIA AFRICA:

21 Years of redefining communication, building youth culture, and driving Nigeria's creative economy

Why the indigenous media group is named among The Industry's Top 50 Nigerian Companies of Impact 2026

For 21 years, RED MEDIA AFRICA has been doing something that many said was impossible: building a proudly Nigerian, youth-focused media and communications company that competes at home, exports culture across the continent, and stays commercially sustainable without waiting for foreign funding.

Today, that persistence has earned recognition. RED MEDIA AFRICA has been named among The Industry Newspaper's Top 50 Nigerian Companies of Impact 2026 — a list that places it alongside banks, telcos, manufacturers, and multinationals for its contribution to Nigeria's economy, culture, and public discourse.

For Ayodeji Razaq, MD/CEO of RED MEDIA AFRICA, the nomination is both validation and responsibility. "Recognition is an opportunity to get validated by external people who don't sit with us, who are watching what we do," he said.

"Being named one of the top 50 companies of impact in Nigeria, it's a validation of the incredible work that we've done at RED. RED is over 21 years now.

And if people are looking back and saying in our 21 years of work, we are currently one of the companies to look out for, that's a thing to note. It also means that people younger and younger who are building platforms can look at us as an example of what it means to do correct work."



From agency to ecosystem: The RED model

What started as RedSTRAT two decades ago has evolved into a full ecosystem: RED MEDIA, Branded by RED, Zed Company, Statecraft, The Future Project, The Future Productions, and more.

"It's very rare to find an ecosystem that robust in this market," Razaq explained. "We have a production team in-house. We have a content team, we have a digital team, we have a PR firm. We have a government-facing firm, Statecraft, who does government liaisons and CSR projects. We have The Future Awards, so an event team. For young people, internally, we are more than just an agency — a training ground for the next level of media professionals."

That structure is deliberate. RED didn't wait for advertising to collapse. It diversified early into events, PR retainers, brand partnerships, government projects, and content production so that "when government work is not coming, we have media work. When media work is not coming, we have our comms work."

The result: multiple revenue lines that don't rise and fall at the same time — a model that has protected the company through ad spend decline, macroeconomic pressure, and platform shifts.

Redefining communication: "We are the culture"

RED's core strength is cultural intelligence. The company built its reputation not by importing Western playbooks, but by sitting inside Nigerian and African youth culture.

"We know what the streets are saying," Razaq says. "We're not parachuting into a brief. We're not giving you some bogus playbook. You see people. They are young people. They are today's audience."

That insight powers RedSTRAT and RME Africa. The PR arms now do proactive narrative building, policy engagement, crisis response, and influence management. But the differentiator, Razaq argued, is that RED doesn't just study culture — it creates it.

"We understand what moves youth sentiments. The TFAI itself is exactly the tool for that. Young people are there doing incredible work. So at Red Media, we take all of that knowledge and leverage from the TFAI and bring them into our brand's play."

For brands and institutions trying to reach Gen Z and Millennials, that means campaigns rooted in authenticity, not optics. "The campaigns that work are the ones that are best grounded in something real. If a brand believes that this thing matters to them, how do we stay true to what you believe without distorting what the audience is saying? That's what makes us credible."

Building brands that built a generation: Future Awards and Y! Naija

If you are under 35 in Nigeria and you know what ambition looks like, chances are The Future Awards Africa and Y! Naija helped shape that vocabulary.

We didn't just cover youth culture," Razaq said. "For us, they've helped create the vocabulary that Nigerians talk about when it comes to ambition and goal-setting and excellence."

Winning a Future Award became a validation. Being nominated became visibility. But RED didn't stop there. It built the third layer: access.

"The Future Awards Africa allows a young person in Enugu to sit in the same room and share ideas with a young person in Botswana," he explained. "We spotlight these young people. We build alumni networks and mentorships and all the follow-on things that keep compounding their credibility long after the awards are done."

That philosophy is now going continental and hyper-local at the same time. This year RED is launching TFAI — The Future Awards Africa Independent — a distributed version of the awards in smaller cities: Oyo, Kano, Abia, and beyond. And it's going further: Malawi, Botswana, Accra, Nairobi.

"The plan is to take this even beyond Nigeria, beyond Africa, because Future Awards is an African platform," Razaq said. "We want to validate the people who are doing the work in the small spaces."

The production logic has also changed. TFAI is built around multi-host campaigns, multi-city rollouts, and data-backed storytelling. "We're investing in measuring and ensuring that the inclusiveness of our data, of people that we're capturing in all these markets. We're using AI generation and what is currently available to make sure that these stories are being told correctly."

Digital-first, platform-agnostic, data-driven

RED's survival through 21 years of media disruption comes down to one principle: treat digital as the penetration tool, not just a department.

"We treat digital-first as our basic principle," Razaq said. "Every platform we run is built on social-first connections, short-form video, reels. For websites, long-form content. For YouTube, the archive. We want to be more than just the primary discovery point — we are the entire discovery channel."

Internally, RED built measurement tools to track campaigns across social, web, radio, TV, podcasts — audio and video. "We are not guessing. We are telling you with accurate certainty. We measure it across all these channels and then say: where is the person to reach your audience?"

The team itself reflects that shift. "A lot of our people here are platform-native. They were born on TikTok and Instagram. Unlike the rest of us who were Facebook trained. They understand what virality and truth are. Because telling the truth doesn't mean you have to be viral. You must understand the difference."

Economic contribution: jobs, skills, and the creative economy

The numbers matter. RED directly employs hundreds across its group. Indirectly, it supports thousands through vendors, freelancers, event crews, and content creators.

But the bigger contribution is skills. Most of the team started as interns. "By the time they leave here, they leave with a portfolio full of skills. So I can do a lot of things," Razaq noted.

That's intentional. RED formalized onboarding, mentorship, and cross-deployment across the group so young professionals get exposure to journalism, PR, brand strategy, production, government relations, and events in one ecosystem.

"We try to make Red Media a place where people want to build a career, not just a job," he said. "We give people ownership of campaigns, ownership of high-profile projects. And our alumni network means that even when people eventually do move on, they become part of that network and they feed back into the business, either as partners or as clients."

In a market experiencing talent drain — "japa" — that alumni model keeps the pipeline alive.

Navigating the hardest challenges

Razaq is blunt about the pressures facing media companies today.

"Three major pressures stand out. Advertising revenue has become less predictable. Platform algorithms mean distribution can change overnight. Today you've got your content, tomorrow nobody's seeing it. And talent discovery is real. People are japaing."

RED's response: diversification, platform agnosticism, and culture.

"We have to become platform agnostic. Personally, I'm an Instagram boy. But for my clients, I'm everything. Today I'm on Twitter, tomorrow I'm on TikTok, next I'm on Snap. We're also going into audio podcasts and video podcasts because people are listening differently."

On credibility, RED treats editorial integrity as a product feature, not a checkbox. "Credibility is what we sell. Whether it's a news story, a brand launch, or an awards platform. We separate paid and earned content. We verify before publishing. We train our teams to be media-responsible. Because in a world where everybody's speaking, there's a lot of noise. Our job is to cut through the noise."

Read more on www.theindustryng.com

FOR THE IDEA, WE GO TO WAR AS ONE



NOAH'S ARK · REDWOLF · INDIG INTEGRATED INDIGO LIMITED · UNDERDOG PRODUCTIONS · Gidan Aku

COMPANY OF IMPACT

FROM OSOSA TO EVERY SHELF:
How Rite Foods built an indigenous FMCG powerhouse

How an indigenous FMCG champion is rewriting the rules of manufacturing, innovation, and impact

On a production floor the size of several football fields, bottles move at 60,000 per hour. Bigi Cola. Fearless Energy. Sosa Fruit Drink. Rite Sausages.

Ten years ago, few would have predicted that a Nigerian-owned company could build one of Africa's largest beverage plants and compete head-to-head with global FMCG giants. Today, Rite Foods Limited is doing exactly that.

Named among The Industry Newspaper's Top 50 Nigerian Companies of Impact 2026, Rite Foods is being recognized not just for growth, but for what that growth represents: proof that indigenous manufacturing can lead on quality, scale, jobs, and sustainability.

"This recognition extends beyond Rite Foods Limited as a single company," says Seleem Adegunwa, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer. "It is a statement about what indigenous FMCG manufacturers can build in Nigeria."

Redefining What's Possible

For decades, large-scale beverage and food manufacturing in Nigeria was seen as the preserve of multinationals. Rite Foods' trajectory challenges that assumption.

"We demonstrate that local companies can compete on quality, scale and innovation while remaining rooted in Nigerian ownership and values," Adegunwa says.

The numbers back it up. Rite Foods sources 75% of its inputs locally, a deliberate strategy of import substitution and value retention. The company's rapid rise with brands like Bigi, Fearless, Sosa, and Rite Sausages shows that world-class production, packaging, and brand-building are achievable in Nigeria.

"This recognition affirms the role indigenous companies play in import substitution, job creation, and the retention of value within the Nigerian economy," Adegunwa notes.

It also sends a signal to the next generation of entrepreneurs. "We see this award as both validation of the path we have taken and a responsibility to continue setting the standard for what a homegrown manufacturing company can achieve on the continent."

Innovation: "We Don't Do Me Too"

Rite Foods' portfolio reads like a response to Nigerian consumer life: Bigi for everyday refreshment, Fearless for energy and culture, Sosa for fruit and family, Rite Sausages for convenience.

How did they get there? By refusing to copy.

"Innovation is at the heart of everything we do. Indeed, it's one of our core values," Adegunwa says. "Rite Foods was built with clarity from day one. The vision was always clear – we just built it one product at a time. We don't do 'me too'; we either do it better or we create something new."

That deliberate approach, combined with deep consumer insight, has allowed the company to scale across categories while staying relevant. The team watches how Nigerians celebrate, work, commute, and unwind, then designs products, formats, and price points to fit.

It's why Bigi has multiple variants and pack sizes. Why Fearless has become synonymous with music and youth culture. Why Rite Sausages entered a category many avoided. Each launch is anchored in a need state, not just a gap on the shelf.

Manufacturing Excellence: Building for Scale



The engine behind the brands sits in Ososa, Ogun State. Rite Foods has invested heavily in infrastructure that matches global standards while solving for Nigerian realities. The plant features automated production lines, modern quality-control laboratories, and continuous equipment upgrades to meet rising demand.

But scale without control is a risk. The company benchmarks operations against internationally recognised standards and operates an Environmental Management System aligned with ISO 14001:2015. "This provides a clear framework for identifying environmental risks, setting performance objectives, and implementing controls across our operations," Adegunwa explains.

Capacity is not static. "As demand grows, we have consistently reinvested in capacity, technology and process efficiency," he adds. The result is availability at a national scale without compromising quality.

Local Sourcing: Growing the Value Chain

In an economy pressured by forex and inflation, Rite Foods made a strategic choice: build backwards.

"We source about 75 percent of our inputs locally," Adegunwa says. "We are motivated by the commitment to create value for the Nigerian economy, including job creation for the teeming population."

That means partnerships with Nigerian farmers, packaging suppliers, and logistics providers. It means treating the supply chain not as a cost center, but as a growth engine.

"We believe that the more value we add to the economy, the more consumers' purchasing power grows and the more they can purchase our products," he says.

This backward integration reduces exposure to import volatility and creates multiplier effects across agriculture and packaging — sectors that employ millions.

People: Jobs, Skills, and Culture

As one of Nigeria's major FMCG employers, Rite Foods' impact extends beyond the factory gate.

The company provides direct employment across manufacturing, logistics, sales, and corporate functions, and indirect employment through its distributor and supplier network nationwide.

But Adegunwa is quick to point out that headcount is not the full story. "Our people remain our most critical asset. People perform best when they feel valued. So, we create the right environment, and innovation becomes natural."

Through internal engagement and a focus on employee well-being, Rite Foods has built a culture where ideas are encouraged, and performance is sustained.

The company also invests beyond its walls. The National Academic Excellence Awards recognize outstanding Nigerian students, reflecting a belief that "human capital development for the manufacturing sector begins well before employment with a strong, well-supported education system."

It's a long-term view: building the technical and professional capacity Nigeria's manufacturing sector will need for the next generation.

Sustainability: Competitiveness Through Responsibility

Sustainability at Rite Foods is not a report. It's an operating principle.

The company's 2025 Sustainability Report outlines progress across water management, energy efficiency, waste reduction, and more responsible packaging. "Beyond operational efficiency, our CSR initiatives in education, healthcare, and economic empowerment have created a meaningful impact in communities nationwide," Adegunwa says.

The business case is clear. "We see sustainability not as a compliance exercise but as core to long-term competitiveness. Reducing resource intensity lowers cost and risk, while responsible practices strengthen the trust Nigerian consumers place in our brands."

Distribution: Reaching Every Corner

Nigeria's size and fragmented retail make distribution one of the hardest parts of FMCG. Rite Foods designed its route-to-market specifically for that reality.

"We move products from our manufacturing facilities through regional depots and an extensive distributor base into both urban retail chains and rural, informal trade," Adegunwa explains. "The open markets, kiosks and neighbourhood stores where most Nigerians purchase their everyday goods."

The goal is simple: Bigi, Sosa, Fearless and Rite Sausages should not just be available in Lagos and Abuja, but accessible in smaller towns and rural communities. That availability drives both volume and brand loyalty.

Brand Building: Culture First

How do you turn a new drink into a household name in under a decade? Rite Foods bet on culture.

"Sponsorship platforms such as the Soundcity X Bigi Music Tour have allowed our brands to connect with Nigerian consumers around passion points like music, culture, sport, community and everyday social moments," Adegunwa says.

These are not just ads. They are experiences that build affinity.

Alongside this, the company maintains an active digital and social presence to speak directly with younger audiences who discover brands online first.

Read more on www.theindustryng.com

COMPANY OF IMPACT

NIGERIA DISTILLERIES LIMITED:
Beyond the bottle

How the new NDL is redefining spirits through innovation, local value, and consumer-first growth

In a Nigerian market shaped by inflation, forex volatility, and shifting tastes, one homegrown beverage company is betting that the future of spirits will not be won by volume alone. It will be won by insight.

That is the story of the new Nigeria Distilleries Limited (NDL).



Nominated among The Industry's Top 50 Nigerian Companies of Impact and Influence 2026, NDL is no longer positioning itself as just a manufacturer of spirits. It is building what Gbemileke Lawal, Marketing Manager, calls "a highly powered, consumer-marketing-led beverage business."

The nomination, he says, "recognises the transformation taking place at Nigeria Distilleries Limited."

Recognition with Responsibility

For NDL, the Top 50 recognition is not just an award. It is validation of a deliberate pivot.

"Our legacy is important, but our future is even more compelling," Lawal says. "A stronger portfolio, a sharper understanding of consumers, a healthier ecosystem of employees, distributors, retailers, suppliers, and communities, and a business model designed to grow volume, improve margin quality, and deliver sustainable value."

That model starts with discipline: from brand strategy and innovation to route-to-market excellence, supply assurance, distributor alignment, and responsible consumer engagement.

For trade partners and investors, the message is clear: NDL is strengthening the full commercial engine required to win in a dynamic Nigerian beverage market.

Innovation Led by Consumer Needs

The biggest shift at NDL is philosophical. The company has moved from "selling products to managing consumer need states."

"We study how Nigerians celebrate, connect, entertain, gift, unwind, and express identity, then build brands and experiences that serve those needs responsibly," Lawal explains.

Today's consumer, he notes, is more discerning, experience-driven, and culturally connected. So NDL's innovation now extends beyond the liquid in the bottle to packaging, accessibility, brand experiences, and cultural platforms.

The strategy has two pillars: tradition and modernity. Many NDL brands are rooted in Nigerian heritage. The company is now finding new ways to present them for contemporary consumers through product extensions, packaging innovations, and culturally relevant activations in music, entertainment, fashion, and art.

"Convenience, accessibility, and lifestyle relevance are growing in importance," Lawal says. "Our innovations are therefore designed to meet consumers where they are."

Innovation at NDL is not treated as a campaign. "It is a continuous process of anticipating consumer needs, adapting to market dynamics, and delivering meaningful experiences that create value for consumers, trade partners, and communities alike."

Market Leadership Through Architecture and Execution

In a crowded spirits and ready-to-drink category, NDL says its advantage comes from three decisions.

First, consumer need-state management. The team now maps occasions, motivations, price points, formats, and emotional drivers, then designs propositions for specific roles — from heritage and status to celebration, connection, refreshment, and everyday accessibility.

Second, portfolio architecture. Each brand is being clarified around a sharper archetype, target consumer, and value role. "This makes our marketing more efficient, improves price-pack discipline, protects brand equity and gives the business clearer levers for volume growth, premiumisation and margin expansion."

Third, route-to-market as a competitive advantage. NDL is investing in distributor collaboration, supply visibility, channel execution, and retail availability so that marketing demand converts into sales and cash flow.

"Together, these decisions make NDL a stronger, more investable business: insight-led, execution-driven, locally rooted and positioned to capture value across both mainstream and premium opportunities," Lawal says.

Impact Beyond the Bottle: Jobs, Supply Chains, Communities

For NDL, impact starts with the consumer but does not end there.

Over the last three years, the company has focused on strengthening a healthy value chain. Its operations support direct and indirect livelihoods across manufacturing, procurement, logistics, sales, distribution, retail, hospitality, and adjacent services.

"Our distributor and retail partners are not just channels to market; they are growth partners whose enterprise, reach and local intelligence help us convert brand equity into commercial performance," Lawal says.

That ecosystem matters even more in today's economy. With foreign exchange pressure, inflation, and infrastructure constraints, NDL is prioritizing local manufacturing and stronger supplier partnerships.

"Local content and supply-chain resilience are central to protecting availability, improving cost competitiveness and creating value within Nigeria," he notes.

The company believes its success is "intrinsically linked to the growth and development of the Nigerian economy." By prioritizing local sourcing and supporting SMEs, NDL says it is contributing to industrial growth and enterprise development nationwide.

The cultural footprint is just as deliberate. NDL brands show up in moments of status, tradition, friendship, and celebration. To match that presence, the company invests in responsible marketing, consumer education, compliance, and moderation-led messaging.

"That is what impact beyond the bottle means to us: building brands that solve consumer needs, creating profitable opportunities for our partners, supporting local industry, and sustaining a responsible ecosystem," Lawal says.

Governance and Sustainability as Foundation

In a regulated category, governance cannot be an afterthought.

"Strong corporate governance and sustainable business practices are fundamental to how we operate," Lawal states. NDL is committed to integrity, transparency, accountability, and full compliance.

The governance framework is designed for responsible decision-making, risk management, and long-term value creation. On sustainability, the focus is twofold: operational efficiency and social value. This includes environmental stewardship, support for local communities, investment in local content, and the promotion of responsible consumption.

"Through sound governance and a commitment to sustainable growth, NDL remains focused on building a resilient business that delivers lasting value for both present and future generations," Lawal says.

The Road Ahead: Innovation and Deeper Reach

The Top 50 nomination is, in Lawal's words, "both an honour and a responsibility."

Over the next 24 months, NDL will concentrate on two priorities.

Priority one: Accelerate innovation. This means expanding the portfolio to meet evolving consumer needs while strengthening existing brands. Expect more formats, more occasions, and more culturally relevant brand experiences.

Priority two: Deepen market presence. That includes broader distribution, enhanced manufacturing capabilities, digital transformation, and stronger partnerships across the value chain.

The ambition is bigger than rankings. "We aspire to build one of Africa's most respected indigenous beverage companies, distinguished not only by commercial success but also by innovation, responsible business practices, sustainability, and meaningful contributions to economic growth and cultural development," Lawal says.

As the market continues to evolve, NDL is placing its bet on a simple idea: that a Nigerian beverage company can grow by understanding Nigerians first.

Read more on www.theindustryng.com

The Industry

ISSUE 23

COMPANY OF IMPACT

CHASTEST CONSULT:

Building the invisible infrastructure behind Nigeria's growth story

Named among The Industry's Top 50 Nigerian Companies of Impact 2026

In Lagos, Abuja, London, and across boardrooms in Accra and Nairobi, a quiet firm has been doing the heavy lifting that rarely makes headlines. Since 2009, Chastest Consult Limited has sat at the junction where strategy meets story, where a business plan becomes capital, and where a local brand becomes export-ready.



Okon-Williams



Archibong

This year, that work has earned national recognition. Chastest Consult has been named among The Industry's Top 50 Nigerian Companies of Impact 2026 — an acknowledgment of a company that treats advisory and communications not as a cosmetic layer, but as economic infrastructure.

For Principal Consultant, Anthony Okon-Williams, the recognition is welcome, but not surprising. "It confirms that outcomes are visible enough to be noticed independently," he says. "The standard the firm holds itself to across every engagement in Sub-Saharan Africa and Europe is that revenue, reputation, and investment attracted must follow."

From ambition to performance:

Nigerian businesses, Okon-Williams argues, rarely fail for lack of ambition. "They fail for want of strategy, positioning, and the ability to tell a credible story to customers, regulators, and investors."

That diagnosis has shaped Chastest's model for 16 years. The firm merges management consultancy with creative agency services. The same team that interrogates a client's business model also designs the campaign, builds the website, and measures the outcome.

"The traditional model separates the people who set strategy from the people who execute it, and clients pay for the gap between the two," Okon-Williams explains. "Our integrated model closes that gap. Nothing is lost in translation."

It was a structure built for disruption. When markets shifted online, Chastest clients did not need to commission a separate digital transformation exercise. The capability was already embedded. The firm has since extended this by building its own tools, including an AI-assisted media intelligence platform for multilingual press work and journalist relationship management.

"We adopt the technologies we advise on before we recommend them," Archibong notes. "That keeps the counsel honest."

Funding the real economy:

If there is one area where Chastest's impact is most tangible, it is in Nigeria's SME and startup ecosystem. Founders here, Okon-Williams says, do not need more motivation. They need "investor-grade documentation, defensible numbers, and a route to market."

Chastest provides exactly that. The firm prepares business plans, feasibility studies, information memoranda, and financial projections that meet the standards institutional funders actually apply. It has walked founders through equity fundraising processes on international platforms, translating local opportunity into the language global capital understands.

On market entry, the approach is deliberate, not speculative. "We help businesses sequence expansion rather than gamble on it," Okon-Williams says. Demand is tested. Pricing is validated. Distribution is mapped before capital is committed.

Mentorship runs through it all, drawing on Chastest's long association with UK higher education. The same frameworks taught to postgraduate and MBA candidates in business schools are applied directly with founders in Nigeria.

Commercialization is the final link: taking a capability a business already holds and structuring it into a product the market will pay for. Across manufacturing, health, maritime, energy, and the creative economy, that work has helped unlock the capital that creates jobs.

"The jobs that follow are created by the client," Okon-Williams is quick to clarify, "but the transaction that funds them is one we helped make possible."

Brand building with commercial consequence:

In an era where reputation can be made or broken in a tweet, Chastest starts from a simple premise: reputation is performance, communicated consistently over time.

That means brand work begins with business intelligence, not aesthetics. Before a website or campaign is built, the firm establishes what an organization can credibly claim, who needs to believe it, and what evidence will carry the claim.

For Nigerian companies looking outward, this has become critical. European buyers and regulators now demand substantiated sustainability and governance positions. Chastest has built a dedicated practice to help exporters meet emerging requirements such as the EU's carbon border rules.

"A Nigerian firm that can document its standing to a European standard does not merely protect its reputation," Okon-Williams says. "It opens markets that were previously closed to it. That is brand building with commercial consequence."

Sustainability as survival:

In Nigeria's volatile operating environment, sustainability at Chastest is not a reporting exercise. It is a discipline of survival.

Stakeholder engagement comes first. "In our markets the licence to operate is granted by communities, regulators, and host institutions as much as by shareholders," Okon-Williams says. The firm helps clients map those relationships honestly and invest in them before they are tested.

Resilience planning is equally practical. Currency movement, policy change, demand shocks — these are built into planning assumptions, not treated as surprises. Chastest encourages business models that do not depend on a single market, a single customer, or a single exchange rate.

The firm's own footprint reflects that principle. Registered and operational in both Nigeria and the United Kingdom, Chastest uses cross-border insight to help Nigerian businesses scale globally and attract investment. It has worked with organizations headquartered in the US, UK, and UAE, and delivered programs across Nigeria, Ghana, and Kenya.

That dual presence allows Chastest to translate in both directions: helping Nigerian businesses present themselves to international capital in the format that capital expects, and helping international organizations enter African markets without costly missteps.

A particular focus is diaspora investment. Informed by active academic research, the firm advises on the governance, documentation, and communication standards that convert diaspora interest into committed, patient funding — one of the most underused sources of capital for Nigerian enterprise.

Capacity that stays behind:

Impact, for Chastest, is also measured in skills transferred. The firm has designed and delivered executive training for Nigerian institutions in commercial contracting and procurement. More importantly, every engagement is structured to leave capability behind.

"We work alongside client teams rather than around them," Country Director SSA, Ini Archibong says. "So the capability remains in the organisation after we leave. That is the quieter form of job creation — making existing jobs more productive and more secure."

It is this philosophy — results over noise, structure over slogans — that has kept Chastest in "stealth mode" for most of its history. The firm does not chase awards. It chases outcomes.

What comes next

Being named to The Industry's Top 50 list, Archibong says, will not change how Chastest works. But it does reinforce confidence in the direction already set.

The priorities for the coming period are clear: deepening advisory support for SMEs and founders seeking capital, expanding the sustainability and compliance practice for businesses trading into regulated international markets, and continuing to build digital tools that make professional-grade communications accessible to African organizations.

"Nigeria's private sector does not lack talent or opportunity," Archibong concludes. "It lacks structure around both. Supplying that structure, quietly and to a high standard, is the work the firm intends to keep doing."

In a business environment often defined by volatility, Chastest Consult has chosen a different path: building the invisible infrastructure — the strategy, the story, the systems — that enables Nigerian companies to grow, export, and endure.

That is why, in 2026, it stands among the 50 companies shaping the next decade of Nigerian enterprise. Not with fanfare, but with results.

COMPANY OF IMPACT

MEDIACRAFT ASSOCIATES:
Turning reputation into an economic asset

How Nigeria's strategic communications leader is driving investment, jobs, and industry standards and why it's named among the Top 50 Companies of Impact 2026

In 2026, reputation is no longer a department. It is a balance sheet item. For Mediacraft Associates, one of Nigeria's foremost strategic communications firms, that shift has defined the last decade of work — and earned it a place among The Industry's Top 50 Nigerian Companies of Impact.

Under MD/CEO Mr. John Ehiguese, Mediacraft has moved PR far beyond press releases. It has positioned communications as a tool for business growth, investment attraction, crisis resilience, and national narrative-building.



Redefining PR: From Earned Media to Earned Influence

"The conversation has shifted from earned media to earned influence," Ehiguese says.

In a world where reputation is shaped in boardrooms, on LinkedIn, in regulatory filings and on TikTok, Mediacraft treats PR as a business-growth function. The press release is now the starting point, not the finish line.

The agency builds integrated reputation campaigns that align storytelling with commercial objectives: market expansion, investor confidence, customer trust. For companies navigating corporate milestones or repositioning brands, Mediacraft develops narratives that speak to investors as clearly as they speak to consumers.

A key innovation is its focus on executive thought leadership. Instead of chasing headlines, the firm positions CEOs as credible voices on finance, energy, technology, infrastructure, and economic development. "We measure success not only by media coverage, but by outcomes such as stronger stakeholder engagement, improved executive visibility, enhanced brand perception, investor confidence, and sustained public trust," Ehiguese explains.

That approach has made Mediacraft a trusted adviser during moments of scrutiny, helping clients communicate with clarity, consistency, and credibility when it matters most.

Innovation: Data, AI, and Insight-Led Campaigns

Over the last three years, Mediacraft has invested heavily in communications intelligence. The agency now combines AI-powered media monitoring, social listening, audience analytics, and interactive performance dashboards.

"AI-assisted analytics track media sentiment, share of voice, message penetration, and emerging conversations in real time," Ehiguese says. That allows the team to spot reputational risks early and refine messaging as conversations evolve.

Social listening tools map public sentiment and audience behavior across digital platforms. Instead of static coverage reports, clients now receive dashboards that merge earned media, digital engagement, and stakeholder metrics into one view of effectiveness.

The goal is simple: shift from reporting outputs to demonstrating outcomes — how communications influenced perception and business objectives.

Building Reputation Resilience in the Age of Misinformation

In an era of AI-generated content and viral falsehoods, Mediacraft has built its practice around reputation resilience: the ability to withstand misinformation and respond with speed and credibility.

The firm uses real-time monitoring to detect sentiment shifts and unusual spikes before they escalate. It helps clients build trust through consistent executive visibility, transparent stakeholder communication, and evidence-based messaging.

"When false narratives spread, we verify facts, coordinate cross-platform messaging, and help clients correct misinformation without unnecessarily amplifying it," Ehiguese notes.

In Ehiguese's view, communication is now a core resilience strategy. "When organisations do not communicate, other voices fill the vacuum. Customers speculate, employees become anxious, and misinformation gains traction."

Making ESG Credible

As Nigerian companies adopt ESG goals, Mediacraft's role is to turn commitments into credible stories backed by evidence.

"We help clients identify the human, economic and social outcomes behind their initiatives," Ehiguese says. Data, milestones, and community interventions are transformed into narratives that resonate with investors, regulators, employees, and communities.

Credibility is the currency. The agency works to ensure sustainability stories are tied to verifiable data and clear outcomes, avoiding exaggerated claims. It also connects ESG to broader business purpose, so sustainability is seen not as compliance, but as strategy.

Internally, Mediacraft practices what it preaches. The firm prioritizes continuous learning, mentorship, and well-being. It embraces digital workflows to reduce waste and invests in internships, graduate programs, and university engagement to build the profession's talent pipeline.

Economic Impact: Jobs, Investment, and Nation Building

Ehiguese is direct about PR's economic role. "Effective public relations helps organisations articulate their business proposition in a way that gives investors greater clarity," he says. That is critical in energy, infrastructure, technology, manufacturing, and financial services — sectors where large investments require stakeholder confidence.

A strong reputation influences customer acquisition, partnerships, and talent attraction. While PR doesn't hire in isolation, it enables the conditions for growth. When communication helps a company attract investment or enter new markets, that expansion creates demand for people, skills, and services.

This is especially important for SMEs. Through thought leadership, media visibility, and digital storytelling, Mediacraft helps emerging businesses move "from being relatively unknown to credible brands" that can access capital and customers.

At a national level, the agency sees communication as key to Nigeria's image. "Nigeria needs to communicate not only its challenges but also its opportunities, innovations, entrepreneurs, and investment success stories," Ehiguese says. A consistent, credible national narrative can counter outdated perceptions and attract international partners.

Capacity Building: Growing the Next Generation

Mediacraft has made talent development central to its mission. Young professionals work alongside senior practitioners on real client assignments — from media relations to stakeholder engagement and campaign execution.

Interns are not observers. They participate meaningfully. The agency runs regular training on AI, data analytics, and new content formats, and engages universities through career talks and guest lectures.

"The emphasis is increasingly on teaching young professionals to understand business, reputation, and stakeholder behaviour, rather than seeing PR simply as media relations," Ehiguese says. The goal: communicators who can sit at the boardroom table.

The Human Edge and a 10-Year Vision

With AI automating content and monitoring, what keeps Mediacraft indispensable?

"AI can produce content and analyse data at speed no human team can match," Ehiguese says. "But speed is not the same as judgement, trust or influence."

The human edge is understanding context, interpreting why a story is trending, and knowing whether to respond. "PR remains fundamentally a relationship business," he adds. Trust cannot be automated.

Looking ahead, Mediacraft's 10-year vision is ambitious: to become one of Nigeria's most respected strategic communications firms and a contributor to the industry's global competitiveness.

That means deepening investment in AI and data while keeping ethics and creativity at the center. It means telling a more balanced Nigerian story — one of entrepreneurship, innovation, and industrialization. And it means championing higher standards so PR professionals are recognized as strategic advisers.

"We want to demonstrate that world-class strategic communication can be conceived, developed, and delivered from Nigeria for Nigeria, Africa, and the world," Ehiguese says

Mediacraft Associates made the Top 50 list not for the volume of press releases it sends, but for the value it creates. By treating reputation as an asset, by building tools that measure impact, and by investing in people, the firm has helped Nigerian businesses navigate uncertainty, attract investment, and grow.

In an economy where confidence is currency, Mediacraft has proven that communication is not a cost center. It is a competitive advantage. And that is impact.

APPOINTMENTS

The Industry Newspaper unveils 2026 'Top 50' Nigerian Companies of Impact



The Industry Newspaper, Nigeria's leading publication on brands, business, marketing and impact, has announced the 2026 edition of The Industry's Top 50 Nigerian Companies of Impact – its annual authoritative ranking of organizations delivering measurable value to Nigeria's economy, people, and future.

In a statement signed by the Editor-in-Chief of The Industry Newspaper (Theindustryng.com), Goddie Ofose, the statement said, "Now in its 4th year, the 2026 list is curated under the theme "Building Resilience, Driving Growth: Nigerian Companies Shaping the Next Decade." It recognizes companies that have not only weathered macroeconomic headwinds but have also invested in innovation, infrastructure, people, and communities to secure long-term growth.

This year's honorees cut across Banking & Financial Services, Energy & Oil and Gas, Manufacturing, FMCG, Retail, Technology, Media, Healthcare, Logistics, Advertising, and Experiential Marketing.

Notable companies on the 2026 list include: Dangote Industries Limited, BUA Foods Plc, Zenith Bank Plc, Wema Bank Plc, Fidelity Bank Plc, Oracle Experience, X3M Ideas, Mediacraft Associates, Channels TV, Punch Newspaper Limited, Arise News, Red Media Africa, Quest Merchant Bank Limited, PremiumTrust Bank, Parallex Bank, Petrocam, Prince Ebeano Supermarket, Rite Foods, Seplat Energy, Red Star, and 30 other impact-driven organizations.

Read More on www.theindustryng.com

ADVAN announces newly elected executive council to drive growth, innovation and industry advocacy

The Advertisers Association of Nigeria (ADVAN) has announced the election of its new Executive Council, comprising leading marketing and communications professionals drawn from government, FMCG, telecommunications, financial services, and technology sectors.

The new council will serve for the next two years with a mandate to strengthen ADVAN's role as the voice of advertisers in Nigeria, deepen industry advocacy, drive marketing excellence, and support sustainable business growth in a rapidly evolving media and consumer landscape.

Announcing the council, ADVAN noted that the election reflects a deliberate mix of experience, sectoral diversity, and leadership capacity to position the association for greater impact.

The newly elected Executive Council comprises:

O'tega Ogra – President:
O'tega Ogra is the Senior Special Assistant to the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on Digital/New Media. With over 15 years' experience in brand strategy, corporate communications, and digital transformation, he has led communications for leading financial institutions and public sector organizations. At ADVAN, he will provide strategic direction to advance the association's advocacy agenda and deepen engagement with government and regulatory stakeholders.

Read More on www.theindustryng.com

Yusuf Murtala appointed Senior Marketing Director at Coca-Cola

The Coca-Cola Company has effected a major leadership realignment within its African marketing organisation, with exclusive information obtained by Brand Communicator revealing that foremost marketing leader, Yusuf Murtala has been elevated from his role as Senior Marketing Director for Nigeria to Senior Marketing Director, Stills (Juice & Water), Africa, while accomplished marketing executive, Osato Evbuomwan has been appointed to succeed him as Senior Marketing Director for Nigeria.

The appointments, which are understood to have taken effect internally, reinforce Coca-Cola's strategy of strengthening African leadership within its commercial and marketing organisation while positioning seasoned executives for broader regional responsibilities. Although the company had not publicly announced the changes as of press time, multiple industry sources familiar with the development confirmed the appointments to Brand Communicator.



Read More on www.theindustryng.com

Leo Burnett boss joins AAAN Executive Council, pledges commitment, professionalism

Oluwaseyi Layade, Chief Operating Officer of Leo Burnett Nigeria, has been inaugurated as an Ex-Officio member of the newly elected Executive Council of the Association of Advertising Agencies of Nigeria, AAAN.

The inauguration took place at AAAN's 53rd Annual General Meeting and Conference held in Lagos over the weekend, where a new leadership team led by Mr. Lanre Adisa, CEO/CCO of Noah's Ark Communications Ltd, was sworn in to pilot the affairs of the association for the next term.

Speaking on her appointment, Layade expressed gratitude to AAAN members for the confidence reposed in her and pledged to uphold the values of professionalism, collaboration, and excellence that the association represents.

"I am deeply honoured to serve on the AAAN Executive Council at this critical time for our industry," Layade said.

"This is a period where advertising as we know it is evolving rapidly with technology and AI. My



commitment is to work with the new President and council members to ensure that AAAN remains a strong voice for agencies...

Read More on www.theindustryng.com

Nigerian Breweries' Brand Media Manager called to the Nigerian Bar

Wasiu Ola Abiola, Head of Media, Digital, Brand PR and Sponsorships at Nigerian Breweries Plc, has been called to the Nigerian Bar as a Barrister and Solicitor of the Supreme Court of Nigeria.

The milestone marks a significant addition to Abiola's distinguished career, which spans more than a decade in media strategy, corporate communications, brand management, sponsorships, and public relations.

Abiola is widely recognised within Nigeria's marketing and communications industry for leading high-impact media, brand, and sponsorship initiatives at Nigerian Breweries.



His work has been instrumental in strengthening the company's reputation as one of the country's leading consumer goods organisations.

His admission to the legal profession comes at a time when corporate communications is increasingly intersecting with regulatory compliance, corporate governance, stakeholder management, and reputation leadership.

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Tayo Oyedeji takes over as CEO, AIKIDO Agency



One of Africa's most accomplished advertising and media leaders, with nearly three decades of experience across Africa, North America, and Europe, Dr Tayo Oyedeji, has assumed the role of Chief Executive Officer at AIKIDO Agency after serving for three months in an advisory capacity.

Throughout Oyedeji's career, he has led some of the industry's most respected organisations and advised brands across multiple sectors on strategy, media, communications, marketing, and business transformation. Most recently, Dr Oyedeji served as Chief Executive Officer of Insight Redefini/Publicis Groupe Nigeria.

Before that, he was Managing Director of Publicis Media Africa, based in Johannesburg, where he led media operations across the continent.

His career also includes senior leadership positions at OMD, Publicis Groupe, and leading independent agencies, giving him deep experience spanning both global best practice and African market realities. Dr Oyedeji is the founder of the agency...

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Zenith Bank named Africa's best bank , Nigeria's best bank at the 2026 Euromoney awards for excellence

Zenith Bank Plc has been named "Africa's Best Bank" and "Nigeria's Best Bank", the latter for the second consecutive year, at the prestigious Euromoney Awards for Excellence 2026, clinching the biggest and most coveted national and continental awards in banking.

The awards were presented to the Bank on Thursday, 16 July 2026, at The Peninsula London Hotel, London. This dual recognition is a testament to the Bank's sustained excellence in financial performance, customer service, digital innovation, and its contribution...

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TRIBUTE

At 70: Tony Agenmonmen — the marketing guru who built brands, institutions, and people

There is a kind of marketing leader who chases applause. And then there is Tony Agenmonmen, who chased responsibility. Goddie Ofose, Editor-in-Chief of The Industry Newspaper, writes as he turns 70 on Wednesday, August 5, 2026.



At 70, with decades in boardrooms, lecture halls, and industry forums behind him, Tony Agenmonmen' s name is woven into the story of modern Nigerian marketing. Not because he shouted the loudest, but because he stayed the longest, built the deepest, and insisted that the profession be taken seriously.

From the disciplined halls of Nigerian Breweries to the presidency of the National Institute of Marketing of Nigeria (NIMN), and to the founding of the Nigerian Marketing Awards®, his career reads like a blueprint for how to turn personal excellence into institutional impact.

Now in his 70th year or close to 70, he speaks with the clarity of a man who has seen cycles come and go — of media, of technology, of policy — and who has decided that what endures is character.

The foundation: Discipline at Nigerian Breweries:

Ask him about pivotal moments, and he does not hesitate. "Joining Nigerian Breweries was undoubtedly one of the most significant," he said.

It was there that the young marketer learnt the trade the hard way. Not just advertising, but the full architecture of brand building: consumer insight, product quality, distribution, cultural relevance, consistency over time. "Those years gave me a strong professional foundation," he reflects. "It exposed me to the discipline, strategic thinking, and consumer understanding required to build enduring brands."

The brands he helped build and strengthen would go on to become part of the daily lives of millions of Nigerians. That, he said, is still one of his proudest contributions. "These brands became part of the lives and experiences of generations of Nigerian consumers. It is deeply fulfilling to know that I contributed to their growth and enduring relevance."

But Breweries was more than a job. It was a school. And its most important lesson was about people.

Mentors, colleagues, and hard lessons:

The name he mentioned with reverence is Elder Felix Ohiwerei, former Chairman and Managing Director of Nigerian Breweries, widely regarded as the doyen of marketing in Nigeria.

"His integrity, discipline, humility and commitment to excellence made a profound impression on me," Agenmonmen stated. "From him, I learnt that leadership is ultimately about character, service and the ability to bring out the best in people."

Other mentors taught through standards and courage. Colleagues taught him that no one succeeds alone. And challenges — institutional resistance, difficult assignments, setbacks — taught him patience and resilience.

"Leadership often requires making difficult decisions without losing empathy or respect for others," he notes.

Three principles from those early years still guide him today: there is no substitute for preparation and hard work; respect the consumer; and leadership is not about position; it is about building people. "Talent may open doors, but discipline, integrity and consistency determine how far one goes," he said.

"At 70, I still believe that credibility is earned gradually through what one does consistently, especially when nobody is watching."

Building the profession, not just brands:

If Breweries shaped the marketer, his service to NIMN shaped the profession. Rising to become President, Agenmonmen broadened his lens from corporate marketing to the development, regulation, and advancement of marketing in Nigeria.

That period, he said, taught him that marketing must be seen as a strategic business function — not merely communications or promotion. He advocated for higher standards, stronger accountability, and continuous professional development.

His most visible contribution to the industry's infrastructure came with the Nigerian Marketing Awards®. The idea was simple but bold: Nigeria's marketing excellence deserved a credible, transparent, world-class platform.

"We created it to provide a credible platform for identifying, celebrating and inspiring marketing excellence in Nigeria," he says. Its growing acceptance by leading bodies and practitioners today suggests the industry agreed.

Through brands, NIMN, and the Awards, Agenmonmen has sought to professionalize a field often misunderstood.



Correcting a misconception:

That misconception persists: that marketing is just advertising or selling.

"Marketing is much broader and more strategic than that," he insisted. "It begins with understanding people and identifying unmet needs. It influences product development, pricing, distribution, customer experience, reputation and long-term business direction. Good marketing does not manipulate consumers; it creates value for them and communicates that value honestly."

He has spent his career arguing that marketing deserves a voice at the highest level of decision-making because it is the function that connects the entire business to the customer

Navigating disruption:

Mass media and limited data drove the industry he entered. Today, the industry is driven by AI, social media, real-time analytics, and an empowered consumer.

Yet for Agenmonmen, the fundamentals have not changed. "Understand people, create genuine value and communicate with clarity and relevance."

What must change is accountability. "It is no longer sufficient to celebrate visibility, impressions or creative appeal alone. Marketers must demonstrate how their work contributes to growth, customer loyalty, reputation and long-term value."

He also called for ethical use of technology. "AI offers extraordinary opportunities, but they must be used ethically and with proper respect for consumer privacy, truth and human dignity." And he urged cultural grounding. Global tools must serve Nigerian realities. "Relevance will belong to organisations that combine technology and data with genuine human insight."

Family, purpose, and the meaning of 70:

Turning 70, Agenmonmen said, brings gratitude, not fear.

"Earlier in life, success may be measured largely by career advancement, recognition and material accomplishment. With age, the definition becomes broader and deeper."

Now he thinks more about significance: the people he has helped, the values he has upheld, the family he has nurtured, and the institutions he has strengthened. Work remains important, but its purpose is clearer. "I want to devote my time to things that matter, share what experience has taught me, and continue building initiatives that can endure beyond my direct involvement. Above all, turning 70 fills me with gratitude to God for His goodness throughout my journey."

Family is central to that gratitude. While he keeps his private life guarded, he speaks of this season as one for devoting more time to family, to gratitude, and to the causes that give life its deepest meaning.

The legacy he hopes for:

Asked what he wants to leave behind, his answer is modest and deliberate.

"I would like to be remembered as someone who served with integrity, pursued excellence, and left people and institutions better than he found them."

Professionally, that means an elevated marketing profession in Nigeria, with standards and platforms that outlive him. Personally, it means being remembered by family, colleagues, and younger professionals as principled and dependable.

"Ultimately, impact is not measured only by what one personally achieves, but also by the people, brands and institutions that become stronger because one was there," he said. He takes particular satisfaction in seeing younger professionals he encouraged grow into leaders themselves.

Advice to the Next Generation:

For young people entering marketing today, his counsel is direct: build competence before chasing recognition.

"Learn the fundamentals, remain curious, and never assume that technology can replace sound judgement, integrity or a genuine understanding of people," he advised. "Be patient enough to develop mastery but bold enough to question established ways of doing things. Seek mentors, accept feedback and protect your reputation. Careers are built over many years, but credibility can be lost in a moment."

As for himself, retirement is not the word he uses. "I do not see myself as retiring from purpose; I see myself entering a season in which experience must be converted into lasting value."

He plans to continue strengthening the Nigerian Marketing Awards®, mentor younger professionals, contribute to industry conversations, and pursue entrepreneurial and community interests.

A life of responsibility:

Tony Agenmonmen' s story is not one of overnight fame. It is a story of showing up. Of accepting difficult assignments. Of choosing institutions over ego.

At 70, he stands as proof that marketing, when done right, is not about trickery. It is about service — to the consumer, the brand, the profession, and the next generation.

In an age of noise, he chose depth. In a culture of shortcuts, he chose standards. And in a profession often reduced to slogans, he helped build something that lasts.

That may be the most powerful brand he has built of all.

TRIBUTE

Victoria Ndee Uwadoka: 60 years of trust, purpose and the future of African communications

By Goddie Ofose, The Industry Newspaper

In October 2026, Victoria Ndee Uwadoka will clock 60. For most, that milestone signals a slowdown. For her, it signals multiplication.

As Head of Corporate Communications, Public Affairs, and Sustainability Team Lead at Nestlé Nigeria, Uwadoka has spent more than three decades shaping how Nigerian and African organisations talk, listen, and build trust. Across agency boardrooms, Microsoft's West and Central Africa operations, and now one of Nigeria's largest manufacturers, she has helped move public relations from the press release desk to the board strategy table.

Her career arc mirrors the evolution of the industry itself: from publicity to purpose, from outputs to outcomes, from messaging to meaning.



The Foundation: Trust, listening, and business outcomes

Uwadoka traces her leadership philosophy to three early lessons.

"Trust is earned through behaviour, listening is the beginning of influence, and communication must be connected to business and societal outcomes," she says.

The first lesson came from understanding that communication happens at every touchpoint. "It is about trust built through relationships, relevance and respect. Communication must therefore be authentic, intentional and consistent. People believe organisations whose words consistently match their actions."

The second was the discipline of listening. "Young communicators are often eager to speak, publish and promote, and that is good. However, effective communications begin with understanding stakeholders: what they value, what worries them, what they expect."

The third tied it all to value. "Creativity must solve a real business problem. I see our function as a business co-pilot."

That co-pilot mindset has defined her work across sectors.

Three chapters that changed everything

Uwadoka describes her career in three pivotal chapters.

Agency life was the boot camp. "It taught me speed, discipline, client leadership and the importance of linking creativity to commercial value," she recalls. "Public Relations is not simply about producing beautiful materials; it is about helping organisations understand their publics, anticipate issues and solve business problems through insight, relationships and trust."

Her second chapter at Microsoft West and Central Africa expanded her lens. There she worked on digital transformation, public policy, and the future of work across multiple markets. "It deepened my appreciation of technology as a development enabler and of communications as the bridge between innovation and human adoption."

The third began at Nestlé Nigeria, where she moved into sustainability leadership. COVID-19 accelerated that shift. "Business resilience is inseparable from people, communities, supply chains, governance and trust," she says. Leading Creating Shared Value helped her see communications "not only as a reputation function, but as a development function that can translate ESG priorities into stakeholder understanding, partnership and measurable impact."

That blend of business, technology, and development is now rare, and necessary.

Agency roots, corporate accountability

For young practitioners, choosing between agency and in-house, Uwadoka offers clarity no one told her early on.

"The biggest difference is that agencies advise, while corporate teams own the outcomes or consequences," she explains. In an agency, you compartmentalize across clients. In-house, "you live with the short-term and long-term consequences of your decisions every day. You must balance the expectations of the business, employees, customers, regulators, shareholders, communities, government, media and civil society."

Neither is superior. "Agency life accelerates versatility, speed and creativity rooted in strategy. Corporate life deepens business understanding, stakeholder accountability and long-term reputation stewardship."

She still carries the agency mindset into Nestlé: curiosity, agility, respect for timelines, and creativity anchored in strategy. "Creativity without strategy is merely activity, while strategy without creativity rarely inspires action."

It was that discipline that allowed Nigerian agencies in her early years to compete globally. "It took strategy, integrity, research, execution discipline and a strong understanding of the business environment," she says. "The method has always been to align global standards to local intelligence and context."

Evolving the function: From publicity to strategy

In the last 10 years, corporate communications in Nigeria has changed dramatically.

"Ten years ago, many organisations still viewed communications largely as publicity, event support or press releases," Uwadoka notes. "Today, the function sits much closer to business strategy."

The drivers are clear: macroeconomic reforms, inflation, digital transformation, and rising stakeholder activism. Leaders now rely on PR for reputation, ESG, crisis preparedness, public affairs, employee engagement, and regulatory risk.

The second driver is technology. "The explosion of generative AI amidst the digital transformation means communication is no longer periodic or one-directional. Stakeholders respond immediately, publicly, and sometimes emotionally."

The profession itself has professionalized too, with World Public Relations Day, the PR Power List, and the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations pushing standards higher.

Purpose, ESG, and the social license to operate

At Nestlé, Uwadoka' s portfolio includes sustainability. That work taught her a core principle: business and purpose are not in tension.

"Business objectives and purpose are not contradictory; when properly understood, they strengthen each other," she says. "Long-term business success depends on integrating social and environmental impact into business strategy, not treating them as separate philanthropic activities."

Through nutrition education, youth empowerment, agricultural value-chain development, water stewardship and community programs, she has seen how communications translates commitments into trust. "This is the heart of sustainability communications: helping stakeholders see the connection between responsible business, societal progress and shared prosperity."

Crisis in 2026: Preparedness over reaction

In a social media age, one tweet can become a crisis. Her philosophy is simple: reputation is built before it is tested.

"Be prepared. Everything rests on this. Readiness includes staying true to your brand promise. Be authentic, be consistent, be transparent, be present," she says.

Citing Edelman's 2026 Trust Barometer, she notes a global shift toward insularity and anxiety. "Economic anxiety, misinformation, and socio-political tensions affect how people interpret corporate actions. This makes listening, preparedness, transparency, and consistency more important than ever."

During a crisis, stakeholders ask three questions: "Do you understand what has happened? Do you care about those affected? What are you doing about it? Any response that fails those three tests will struggle to gain or restore trust."

Culture starts inside

Uwadoka does not separate internal and external communications. "Employees are powerful drivers of corporate reputation because their experience reflects the organization's reality. Employee ambassadorship is not created by asking people to repost content. It is created by building trust internally."

At Nestlé, she created an internal communications council with representatives from different teams. "It strengthened employee engagement and created a more participatory approach to communication across the organisation. When people feel informed, respected and connected to purpose, advocacy becomes natural and credible."

AI, data, and the next generation

As digital did to marketing 20 years ago, AI is reshaping PR now. At Nestlé, her team uses it for research, content development, monitoring, sentiment tracking, and campaign optimization.

"AI is a valuable part of our day-to-day, helping us gain speed and time to focus on what matters most," she says. "But technology does not replace judgement or responsibility."

Her advice to young Nigerian communicators: build five skills. "Strategic thinking, data literacy, digital fluency, storytelling and relationship management. Layer these on the foundation of strong ethics, because the more powerful the tools become, the more important responsible use becomes. The future will reward communicators who can combine technology with trust."

Women in leadership: winning the internal battle first

As one of the few women leading communications at the top of corporate Nigeria, Uwadoka faced assumptions. "I did notice assumptions about my capability, authority and capacity," she says carefully.

But the hardest barrier was internal. "One of the most important battles I had to win was self-doubt. It was internal. I had taught myself to shrink before anyone else did."

Her advice to young women is direct: "Keep your eyes on the goal, build depth, deliver value consistently, and be intentional about the reputation you are creating. Visibility matters, but visibility without substance is fragile. Let your work speak clearly, and then learn to speak confidently for your work."

"Do not wait until you FEEL completely ready before stepping forward. Evaluate your readiness with your head using real data of your achievements, not your feelings."

60 and thriving: From career to legacy

Turning 60, she says, is "both deeply humbling and energising. It invites gratitude, reflection and renewed purpose."

She counts her blessings: "God's love, joy, peace, health, courage, family, friends, mentors, cheerleaders, supporters, coaches, life's lessons, opportunities and dreams."

Professionally, it is an inflection point. "I have spent more than three decades helping people, organisations and institutions build trust, tell their stories and create opportunities. The next chapter is about multiplying that impact through sustainability and development communications."

Read more on www.theindustryng.com

Building brands in Africa: Why one size does not fit all

By Lolu Akinwunmi



One of the biggest mistakes global organisations make is assuming that successful branding strategies can simply be transplanted from one market to another. They usually cannot.

Brand building is never carried out in a vacuum. It is shaped by the realities of the society in which the brand operates. Economic conditions, culture, infrastructure, regulation, demographics, and consumer expectations all influence how brands are perceived and accepted.

This is particularly true in Africa, which is often spoken of as though it were a single market. It is not. It is a continent of more than fifty countries, thousands of languages, hundreds of ethnic groups, diverse religions, varying levels of economic development, and distinctly different consumer cultures. Even within a single country such as Nigeria, consumer behaviour can differ significantly across regions, cultures, income groups, and generations.

Building brands successfully in Africa therefore requires more than simply importing global campaigns. It requires local understanding.

One of the defining realities of many African markets is economic volatility.

Inflation, fluctuating exchange rates, changing consumer purchasing power, and periodic economic and political uncertainty all influence buying decisions. Consumers often become more value-conscious, forcing brands to demonstrate not only quality but also affordability, relevance, and practical value. Strong brands recognise these realities and adapt accordingly.

Another important consideration is infrastructure and distribution.

In many African markets, product availability can be just as important as advertising. A brilliantly executed campaign achieves little if consumers cannot easily find the product being advertised. Availability is part of branding. Every empty retail shelf weakens the brand promise. Every distribution failure damages customer confidence. Brand building therefore extends well beyond communication into operations, logistics, and customer experience.

Regulation also plays a significant role.

Advertising regulations, product standards, import policies, industry guidelines, and government interventions often change more frequently than in many developed markets. Successful organisations understand that compliance is not simply a legal obligation, it is an important contributor to corporate reputation and public trust.

Perhaps the continent's greatest opportunity lies in its youth population.

Africa has one of the youngest populations in the world. About 340 million Africans are adolescents aged 10–19, approximately 23% of the continent's population. Consumers are digitally connected, culturally expressive, socially influential, and often eager to embrace innovation. They shape trends, influence purchasing decisions, and increasingly determine the future direction of many product categories. Yet young consumers also demand authenticity. They quickly recognise communication that feels artificial or disconnected from their realities.

Brands that speak to young people without first understanding them often struggle to earn credibility. Brands that listen before they speak usually perform much better. And Culture remains perhaps the most powerful influence of all, and is reflected in:

Language.
Religion.
Music.
Family.
Community.
Tradition.

These are not peripheral considerations in Africa. They are central to how consumers interpret brands. Successful African branding therefore requires cultural intelligence.

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'Lolu Akinwunmi, Publisher, The MarCom Strategic Series (MSS)

CEO branding as organisation's touchstone and gemstone

By Ugochukwu Ugwuanyi

People are usually skeptical of organisations - a disposition that lingers until they've sized up and approved of the brain behind the business. The founder will be well advised to provide the raw material needed for this estimation.

How can a quick Google search on a business leader reveal no digital footprint beyond a dated LinkedIn profile and a conference bio from three years ago? It is akin to clapping with one hand when a company has a name, but its chief executive officer (CEO) is nondescript.

Given that they thoroughly know the business, the founder's voice is the most authentic and authoritative. Yet, this institutional knowledge has remained the least-leveraged communications asset in businesses. There's so much that corporate channels can deliver when it comes to telling the company's trajectory. But through personal branding, the founder says, "Here I am!" so that the market can echo, "There you are!"

Stripped of all technicalities, CEO branding is the founder being the face of the organisation. It's an executive presence geared towards earning the confidence of the public. Audiences are inquisitive about who's leading the company, their values, viability, and thought process, as well as their motivations for starting the journey. To this extent, invisibility can prove costlier than visibility.

The public perception of a visionary remains the gold standard by which their business is judged (touchstone) and bears the Crown Jewels (gemstone). This was succinctly summarised by the American serial entrepreneur Gary Vaynerchuk: "You can use your personal brand - who you are - to market your business, or your personal brand can actually be the business."

Influence Comes from Capability Being Seen

CEO branding is a high-impact public relations and inbound marketing strategy through wielded influence. It connects content to a clear commercial path without making every post feel like a sales pitch. At the heart of every organisation raking in compounding value is a visible leader. Their visibility creates familiarity. Familiarity facilitates trust. Trust accelerates business.

Founder-led marketing fosters feelings in audiences, and as Maya Angelou famously observed, "People will forget what you said. People will forget what you did. But people will never forget how you made them feel."

People buy into the person before buying into the company. Trust precedes transactions. A sale is first made in the mind before the customer can bring out their credit card. Investors assess leadership before the pitch deck lands in their inbox. Clients patronise leaders whose views they respect. Top talent join companies led by people they believe in. Partners settle for firms whose leaders have intellectual integrity.

Founders can ascertain the health of their personal brand by finding out if, within the past six months, they have:

· Spoken at an event.
· Made an engaging social media post.
· Appeared on a podcast.
· Been invited as an expert to top-tier TV niche programming.
· Been quoted in news reports and features.
· Published an article.
· Shared a professional opinion publicly.
· Participated in industry discussions.



Authority is Authentically, Not Algorithmically, Acquired

With everyone having access to the same artificial intelligence, trust that comes from CEO branding has become the differentiator. The ubiquity and parity of technology are now forcing founders to compete on authenticity, credibility, and trusted perspective, necessitating a recalibration of business strategy.

The shift from tech-first to trust-first redirects focus from your preferred AI tools to who you are and what you represent. Reputation cannot be synthesised but is built through consistent, authentic human interaction; hence the need for personal branding. Perspectives and trust are assets that cannot be replicated or commoditised.

The proliferation and democratisation of AI tools have paradoxically increased the value of human distinctiveness, making authenticity and earned trust true sources of sustainable competitive advantage. As advanced tech levels the playing field, the content creator becomes the primary mechanism for differentiation and market leadership.

While competitors are exposed to the same large language model, human voice in the form of unique storytelling, expertise, and trustworthiness remains the unparalleled edge that drives loyalty and impact. With everyone having equal access to the same AI capabilities, disproportionate influence and opportunities will flow to those with strong personal reputations and clear perspectives.

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Ugochukwu is a branding specialist, storyteller and media trainer who can be reached via nmiringwu@gmail.com

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Coca-Cola HBC

Culture, society and advertising: Identity and consumer behaviour

BY LOLU AKINWUNMI



As we conclude this series on Culture, Society & Advertising: Identity & Consumer Behaviour, one important reality stands out clearly: Advertising is not simply about selling products. It is also about understanding people. And people are shaped profoundly by culture.

Throughout this series, we have examined how language, social norms, values, habits, music, religion, taste preferences, and cultural identity influence consumer behaviour and advertising effectiveness.

From McDonald's adaptation across different countries, to Kellogg's struggles in India, to the Nigerian stout wars and the fascinating convergence between "Bàtà" and Bata, one consistent lesson emerges: Culture influences how consumers interpret brands long before purchase decisions are made. This is why successful advertising requires more than creativity alone:

Creativity without cultural understanding can become noise

Strategy without cultural insight can become disconnected, and

Branding without social relevance can quickly lose meaning.

Modern brands therefore face a major responsibility: they must learn to operate within increasingly diverse and culturally sensitive environments. Today's consumers are not passive audiences. They are:

Informed

Connected

Expressive

Socially aware, and

Culturally conscious

Digital technology and social media have amplified consumer voices dramatically. Audiences now react instantly to advertisements they consider insensitive, stereotypical, disrespectful, or disconnected from social realities. Campaigns can attract criticism globally within hours if brands fail to understand the cultural environment in which they operate. At the same time, culturally intelligent communication can create extraordinary emotional connection and loyalty. Consumers respond positively to brands that:

Understand them,

Respect their identity,

Reflect their experiences, and

Communicate in culturally meaningful ways.

This explains why local relevance remains important even in a globalized marketplace.

Globalization may have increased access to international products and ideas, but it has not erased local identity. In many cases, cultural identity has become even stronger as societies seek to preserve uniqueness within a rapidly changing world. For marketers and advertisers, this means one important thing: global consistency must be balanced with local sensitivity. The strongest global brands are usually those that maintain a clear overall identity while adapting intelligently to local cultural realities. This adaptation affects not only products, but also:

Communication style

Visuals

Language

Humour

Music

Symbols

Social representation, and

Emotional positioning.

Consumers want brands that feel globally credible but locally relevant.

The series also highlights another important truth: consumer behaviour is rarely purely rational. People often buy products not only for functionality, but for:

Identity

Belonging

Aspiration

Emotional satisfaction

Social acceptance, and

Cultural meaning.

And to this extent,

A beverage may symbolize lifestyle.

A fashion brand may communicate status.

A car may represent success.

A technology brand may signify innovation or modernity.

Advertising therefore succeeds best when it connects with the deeper meanings consumers attach to products and experiences.

Read more on www.theindustryng.com

'Lolu Akinwunmi, Publisher

The MarCom Strategic Series (MSS)

From marketing to commercial growth

BY OLUWAFEMI ADENIBA

"The greatest danger in times of change is not the change itself; it is acting with yesterday's logic." — Peter Drucker

Somewhere along the way, we started asking marketing to carry the weight of business growth.

When sales slowed, we looked to marketing.

When customer acquisition costs increased, we looked to marketing.

When customers stopped buying, we looked to marketing.

When margins shrank, we looked to marketing.

When investors demanded faster growth, we looked to marketing.

And when growth stalled, the first question in many boardrooms became: "What is Marketing doing?"

Perhaps we've been askin g the wrong question.

The question isn't whether marketing is working.

The question is whether marketing was ever designed to solve every commercial challenge a business faces.

The Problem Isn't Marketing. The Problem Is the System.

For decades, marketing has been one of the most powerful disciplines in business.

It has shaped iconic brands, opened new markets, influenced customer behaviour, and created billions in enterprise value.

Yet today's CEO faces a very different reality.

Growth no longer depends on advertising alone.

Nor is it driven solely by brand awareness, digital campaigns, pricing, sales incentives, or customer experience.

Growth now emerges from something much larger.

It is the outcome of an interconnected commercial system.

A system where pricing decisions affect customer acquisition.

Where customer experience influences lifetime value.

Where product innovation determines pricing power.

Where AI reshapes commercial productivity.

Where partnerships unlock entirely new markets.

Where finance, technology, operations, sales and marketing either amplify—or cancel out—each other's efforts.

The uncomfortable truth is this:

Companies don't grow because one function performs brilliantly. They grow because the entire commercial system works together.

The Boardroom Has Changed. Has the Growth Model?

Many boards continue to organize growth the same way they did twenty years ago.

Marketing owns demand.

Sales owns revenue.

Finance owns profitability.

Operations owns delivery.

Technology owns digital.

Customer Service owns retention.

Each function performs.

Each reports.

Each optimizes.

Yet sustainable growth remains elusive.

Because optimization is not integration.

As Peter Senge argued in The Fifth Discipline, organisations struggle not because individual parts fail, but because leaders fail to see the relationships between those parts.

Growth is no exception.

A business rarely suffers from a marketing problem.

More often, it suffers from disconnected commercial decisions.

CEOs Don't Buy Marketing. They Buy Growth.

Every CEO I have worked with eventually asks remarkably similar questions.

How do we accelerate profitable



growth?

How do we improve customer lifetime value?

How do we increase pricing power without losing customers?

How do we commercialize innovation faster?

How do we make AI create measurable business value?

How do we build resilience in uncertain markets. ***Read more on www.theindustryng.com***

The piece is written by Oluwafemi Adeniba, Growth Intelligence & Commercial Transformation Executive | Portfolio Performance & Value Creation | AI-Enabled Strategic Advisor | Board Advisor |