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Nigeria.

info@uniccongroup.com
www.uniccongroup.com
+234 9 292 9326
+234 9137160837

The Nigerian Data Protection Act is Milestone Progress at Balancing Privacy and Innovation

President Bola Tinubu has signed the Nigeria Data Protection Bill, 2023 into law. The Nigeria Data Protection Act, 2023 provides a legal framework for the protection of personal information, and the practice of data protection in Nigeria.

The new Act is a progressive march by Africa's most populous country of over 200 million to foster a national culture of data protection beginning with the introduction of the Nigeria Data Protection Regulation (NDPR) in 2019 to set the stage for the work on the Nigeria Data Protection Bill which made its way to the Senate and House of Representatives in April 2023 and finally became An Act of Parliament in June 2023.

The new law establishes the Nigeria Data Protection Commission and replaces the Nigeria Data Protection Bureau (NDPB) established by President Buhari in February 2022. The Commission will be led by a National Commissioner with the responsibility for regulating the processing of personal information.

A new era has been ignited to legally accommodate the unprecedented increase in data generation and utilization, all of which pose significant challenges for the protection of individuals' privacy. The Act is recognizing the need for comprehensive legislation in this domain, Nigeria embarked on the path of enacting the Data Protection Bill. This editorial aims to critically analyze the key aspects of the Nigerian Data Protection Bill, highlighting its potential impact on privacy, innovation, and the broader digital ecosystem.

Protecting Privacy Rights

The Nigerian Data Protection Act demonstrates a commendable commitment to safeguarding individuals' privacy rights in the digital age. The law establishes clear principles for the lawful processing of personal data, requiring consent and ensuring transparency. It also introduces provisions for data subjects to exercise their rights, such as the right to access and correct their personal information.

Furthermore, it imposes strict obligations on data controllers and processors, including the implementation of appropriate security measures and the obligation to report data breaches. These measures provide a strong foundation for privacy protection, aligning Nigeria with global data protection standards.

Fostering Trust and Accountability

One of the crucial aspects of the Data Protection Act is the establishment of a Data Protection Commission (DPC), which will serve as the regulatory authority responsible for overseeing compliance with the legislation. The DPC's role in monitoring and enforcing data protection regulations is pivotal in fostering trust between individuals, businesses, and the government.

By introducing mechanisms for accountability and enforcement,

such as penalties for non-compliance and the ability to conduct audits, the bill aims to create a culture of responsible data management. This proactive approach can enhance Nigeria's reputation as a trusted destination for data-driven business activities, attracting local and foreign investments while protecting individuals' rights.

Promoting Innovation and Economic Growth

While prioritizing privacy, it is essential to strike a balance that does not stifle innovation and impede economic growth. The Data Protection Act recognizes this by providing provisions that accommodate legitimate data processing activities. It includes exceptions for processing personal data for purposes such as national security, prevention of crime, and research, where appropriate safeguards are in place.

These provisions ensure that businesses, particularly in sectors reliant on data analytics and artificial intelligence, can continue to innovate and leverage data-driven technologies while adhering to privacy principles. By fostering a favorable environment for responsible data-driven innovation, Nigeria can position itself as a regional hub for digital entrepreneurship and attract investment in emerging technologies.

Challenges and Future Considerations

Implementing comprehensive data protection legislation is not without challenges. Adequate resources, infrastructure, and expertise will be necessary to ensure effective enforcement and compliance. It is crucial for the government to allocate sufficient funds and provide training and support to the Commission to fulfil its duties.

Additionally, as technology evolves, policymakers must continuously assess and update the legislation to keep pace with emerging risks and challenges. Regular consultations with industry experts, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders can help identify areas of improvement and ensure the Data Protection Act remains relevant and effective in the long term.

Conclusion

The Nigerian Data Protection Act represents a significant step toward safeguarding privacy rights, fostering trust, and promoting responsible data-driven innovation. By striking a balance between privacy and innovation, Nigeria can establish itself as a regional leader in data protection and leverage this advantage to attract investments and drive economic growth. It is crucial for all stakeholders to collaborate in the successful implementation and ongoing evolution of the legislation, ensuring Nigeria's data protection framework remains robust and adaptable in the rapidly evolving digital landscape.

Olusegun Oruame,
editor@ITEdgeNews.Africa

Knowhow Media & Market Intelligence International Limited – KMMIIL
IT Edge News. NG, eT Edge News.Com, West Africa Convergence Conference, Knowhow Natives

Editorial

Editor

Olusegun Ohimeh Oruame

In-House Writers

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Aanuoluwapo Omotosho
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Consultants- Marketing
Bamikole Aregbeyen

Partners
ReachMedia PR Limited
Qitech Technologies Limited

Production
Real Designs

Offices
8A, Oje Imianvan Street, Julie Estate,
Oregon, Ikeja, Lagos State, Nigeria

54, Murtala Muhammed Way, Jos,
Plateau State, Nigeria

Contact us
Corporate – info@itedgenews.ng
Editorial: editorial@itedgenews.com
Phone Nos: +234 8034005006
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/itedgenewsNg>
Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ITEdgeNewsNg>
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“We have made tremendous strides in Nigeria's tech ecosystem in **over 25 years**”

- COURE's Onwudiwe

Chief Executive Officer of COURE Software and Systems, Uche Onwudiwe discusses the company's journey from the USA to Nigeria and how it has delivered solutions across Africa in the last 25 years. In this conversation with Anthony Nwosu, the CEO delves retrospectively into the evolution of the Nigerian IT ecosystem as well as COURE's significant contributions in the areas of fraud prevention, KYC, and call routing in the fintech, telco and public sectors. Onwudiwe also shares insights into the company's expansion across Africa.



COURE has always been an IT firm for years. How has the journey been?

COURE Software & Systems Limited ('COURE') is a platform services provider with a focus on the provision of accurate, secure and relevant data to improve its clients' business processes and operations. We started out in the US in 1998 at a time when the internet and

modern technology, as we know it, were taking off. At that time, we were focused on networking and physical systems integration. Over the years, the shifts in technology and the need to be scalable beyond billing for individual man hours caused us to migrate our technology services first to web and application development, then to what we currently provide today, which are platforms that leverage standardized and aggregated data to enable and enhance the operational efficiency of our clients.

It has been an exciting 25-year journey of change and transformation! Our flagship solutions, ANQ and HUB, have been enabling the telecom, fintech, banking and various other sectors to increase their value and service provision to their customers. Our development teams consist of analysts, UI/UX experts, programmers, product managers and network engineers all of whom have many years of experience in the design, development and support of clean, functional and aesthetically appealing applications and solutions.

Do you think that the Nigerian IT space is evolving in terms of digitization?

The IT space is constantly evolving with the advancement of digital technology such as cloud computing, AI, IoT, blockchain, etc. Nigeria has not been left out of this. The trend towards digital transformation, automation and artificial intelligence is accelerating, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the past, there were a lot of manual processes in business, and while automation was being implemented via IT, the pace was average. The pandemic accelerated digitization in Nigeria and across the world as businesses and people had to survive without close contact. Many businesses were forced to shut down. For those that were better prepared, their adoption of digital technology and new ways of working became an advantage, and customers embraced online and digital service delivery. The IT industry continues to develop innovative solutions to make life easier for people and to help businesses harness the power of digital technology to improve operations, products, services, and customer reach.

Can you consider yourself as a fintech firm?

COURE is a platform services provider with key partners in the telco, financial, and technology space. Through our platforms, we are able to aggregate various types of data, analyze the data, and create services that provide value to these organizations and generate revenue for them. This makes us an enabler of fintech firms as



Celebrating 25 years of providing innovative digital solutions across Africa

This year, **COURE Software & Systems Limited (COURE)**, an indigenous IT firm located in Lagos, will be marking 25 years of existence. About 15 of those years have been spent deploying IT solutions and services in Nigeria and other African countries.

From telecoms to financial to the public sector, the company has made tremendous strides in various sectors of the economy. Speaking to the media, COURE's CEO, Uche Onwudiwe described the company as, "a platform services provider with a focus on the provision of accurate, secure and relevant data to improve its clients' business processes and operations."

He reflected on the journey so far, noting that the company "started out in the US in 1998 at a time when the internet and modern technology, as we know it, were taking off. At that time, we were focused on networking and physical systems integration.

"Over the years, the shifts in technology and the need to be scalable beyond billing for individual man hours caused us to migrate our technology services first to web and application development, then to what we currently provide today, which are platforms that leverage standardized and aggregated data to enable and enhance the operational efficiency of our clients.

"It has been an exciting 25-year journey of change and transformation! Our flagship solutions, ANQ and HUB, have been enabling the telecom, fintech, banking and various other sectors to increase their value to their customers. Our development teams consist of analysts, UI/UX experts, programmers, product managers and network engineers all of whom have many years of experience in the design, development and support of clean, functional and aesthetically appealing applications and solutions."

On their strides in many critical sectors, Onwudiwe added that "COURE has established key partnerships in the telco, banking, fintech, payments and public sector spaces. Through our platforms, we are able to aggregate various types of data, analyze the data, and create services that provide value to these organizations and generate revenue for them. This makes us an enabler of fintech firms as opposed to being one ourselves."

He added: "Our ANQ (All Number Query) is a lookup platform that provides quick and easy access to information which enables our clients support their customers in areas such as Fraud prevention, Routing and KYC (Know Your Customer) using various number and data sources. Our partnership with data owners and access to large volumes of diversified data along with our processing capacity and intelligent algorithms enables us apply real-time analytics to data that is being searched against and provide information to businesses to aid their decision-making.

"Our HUB platform is what is called a CPaaS - Communication Platform as a Service. It enables aggregators and value-added service (VAS) providers in the telecom industry to integrate with the telcos, then safely and accurately deliver messages between the applications through the telcos and onward to the end customer and back. Message types include Bulk SMS,



USSD, Whatsapp and RCS (Rich Communication Services). It also addresses a number of industry issues and concerns such as the management of Sender IDs and Short codes. HUB is a ready-to-use platform for SMEs to create and manage their services, content, and subscriptions. It is convenient and requires no local installation."

Throughout the years, the IT organization has faced various challenges. Onwudiwe commented on some of these challenges, citing as an example, the loss of talented IT resources across the sector. He stated that due to the insecurity and economic hardships in the country, the technology sector has experienced a loss of talent, many of whom have fled the country in search of supposedly greener pastures. This has made it crucial for COURE to implement a proactive recruitment and talent retention strategy to prevent the negative effects of this trend from affecting its business.

The organization has grown in leaps and bounds, having extended its partnership reach to many African countries. Onwudiwe noted that, "Our routing services are present in most African countries including Nigeria, South Africa, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Côte D'Ivoire, Benin, Senegal, Tunisia, Morocco, and Egypt. Our 2023 roll-out plan includes expansion to key regions within the continent with a focus on Ghana, Uganda and South Africa."

In addition to its expansion plans, COURE will be adding a third platform to its suite, the OpenBanking platform, in alignment with the Open Banking Initiative of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN). The OpenBanking platform offers financial data owners the opportunity to monetize their data by making it available to third-party financial services securely and efficiently via APIs. He noted that they have already partnered with some banks to pilot the solution and are excited about the ease and convenience that customers will enjoy when they use applications that leverage these services. He expressed optimism about the future, noting that they "expect great times ahead."

opposed to being one ourselves.

Tell us more about your ANQ Platform?

Our ANQ (All Number Query) is a lookup platform that provides quick and easy access to information which enables our clients support their customers in areas such as Fraud prevention, Routing and KYC (Know Your Customer) using various number and data sources. Our partnership with data owners and access to large volumes of diversified data along with our processing capacity and intelligent algorithms enables us apply real-time analytics to data that is being searched against and provide information to businesses to aid their decision-making.

Tell us more about your fraud prevention solutions?

Our fraud prevention solution adopts strategies, technologies, and processes to protect individuals, businesses, and organizations from fraudulent activities such as payment fraud, account takeover, and identity theft. Using intelligent algorithms, we check and flag fraudulent transactions before approval. Our algorithm takes into consideration numerous data points and provides a risk level rating for the transaction, thus minimizing losses, optimizing efficiencies, and protecting customers from fraud. This service helps achieve a faster and more effective fraud detection process leading to reduced financial loss, increased customer retention, protection of brand and reputation.

Are they only for banks and fintechs?

Our solutions cater to a cross-section of organizations that provide services to end customers. This includes banks, fintechs, lenders, payment services companies, telco service providers, retailers and value-added service providers. Fraud can affect any organization that deals with sensitive data or valuable assets. Many businesses outside of the financial sector invest in fraud prevention solutions to protect themselves against financial losses, maintain customer trust, and avoid legal and financial



“HUB is very easy to use for SMEs as there is no local installation required and for most of the services, the clients can login via our web interface to enable management and delivery of their services.”

penalties. The same applies to KYC, Routing and Communication. These are all services that are relevant for

organizations that provide services to end consumers.

Your HUB Platform is unique. Can SMEs deploy it? If yes, how?

Our HUB platform is what is called a CPaaS – Communication Platform as a Service. It enables aggregators and VAS providers in the telecom industry integrate with the telcos, then safely and accurately deliver messages between the applications through the telcos and onward to the end customer and back. Message types include Bulk SMS, USSD, Whatsapp and RCS (Rich Communication Services). It also addresses a number of industry issues and concerns such as the management of Sender ID's and Short codes. HUB is a ready-to-use platform for SMEs to create and manage their services, content, and subscriptions. The platform allows for hosting, management, and delivery of VAS services to aggregators or operators on behalf of the service provider. HUB was specifically built to address some of our local and African peculiarities. It is easy

to use for SMEs as there is no local installation required, and for most of the services, the client can login via our web interface to enable management and delivery of their services. In the event the client already has a local system that they want to integrate into HUB, we have API's which they can leverage to be up and running in a short time. HUB enables them to integrate once and have access to all the Telcos and multiple aggregators based on their preference thus simplifying their onboarding process. HUB's messaging capabilities such as Whatsapp and RCS, help SMEs build better relationships with their customers, improve customer experience, reduce customer support calls, and improve communication security. They can also benefit greatly from using bulk SMS and USSD services as part of their marketing and communication strategies. These services offer a cost-effective and efficient way to engage with customers, provide information, and increase sales.

What are the challenges you face in Nigeria?

Given the insecurity challenges and the economic hardship in the country, we have witnessed the loss of talent across many sectors of the economy including

“Given the insecurity challenges and the economic hardship in the country, we have witnessed the loss of talent across many sectors of the economy including the technology sector.”

the technology sector. This has made it paramount that we adopt an aggressive recruitment and talent retention strategy in a bid to forestall the negative impacts of this trend affecting our business.

Do you have a presence in other ECOWAS countries?

Our routing service is present in most African countries including Nigeria, South Africa, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Côte D'Ivoire, Benin, Senegal, Tunisia, Morocco, and Egypt. Our 2023 roll-out plan includes expansion to key regions within the continent with a focus on Ghana, Uganda and South Africa.

How do you do your data monetization?

COURE partners with data owners in the telco, banking and payment service sectors to aggregate and centralize data that can be analyzed to extract Intelligent insights, and in an automated and real-time manner, provide those insights to service providers for decision-making. This offers data owners the opportunity to monetize their data which would otherwise sit idle. It also enables

users to gain secure access to their data across different service providers, making it easier for them to use third-party applications which require these data. This presents a mutually beneficial business relationship between COURE, a proven platform provider, data owners, and end customers. In providing these analytics, COURE is careful to adhere to global data privacy laws and security standards, being an NDPR-certified organization.

How can the public sector leverage your solutions?

COURE's services and solutions are relevant for public sector use. The HUB CPaaS (Communication Platform as a Service) offers an opportunity for such organizations to improve communication with citizens, enhance security, streamline billing, provide real-time transaction notifications, and gain valuable insights through data analytics. The service is currently used by a number of public sector entities including the CBN. Our fraud prevention solutions can also help public sector entities protect against fraud and cyber threats. This is especially important when handling sensitive information, such as personal data or financial information.

What do we expect from you this 2023?

This year 2023, COURE will be commemorating its 25th year of existence. This is a remarkable milestone for us and represents a pivotal point in our journey. We will also be expanding our services to other countries on the continent as well as adding a 3rd platform to our suite, the OpenBanking platform. The OpenBanking platform offers financial data owners the opportunity to monetize their data by making it available to third-party financial services securely and efficiently via APIs, and in alignment with the CBN's Open Banking Initiative. We have already partnered with some banks to pilot the solution and are excited about the ease and convenience that customers will enjoy when they use applications that leverage these APIs. Needless to say, we expect great times ahead!

Insights into Nigeria's Data Protection Act



Nigeria took an important step in June 2023 for the protection of personal information, and the practice of data protection with the signing of the Nigeria Data Protection Bill, 2023 into law to become the **Nigeria Data Protection Act, 2023** by President Bola Tinubu.

The Act sets the frameworks for privacy and data protection practices in Nigeria and is expected to set the tone for growth of Nigeria's digital economy as data protection and dependability are important issues in the digital age.

"The terms data protection and data privacy are often used interchangeably, but there is an important difference between the two. Data privacy defines who has access to data, while data protection provides tools and policies to actually restrict access to the data. Compliance regulations help ensure that user's privacy requests are carried out by companies, and companies are responsible to take measures to protect private user data," to go by the leaning of Cloudian, a Silicon Valley-based file and object storage company.

All the functional elements that combined to define privacy practice and the data protection industry are well captured

including statutory privacy guidelines concerning individuals and corporate entities; obligatory administrative and technical steps required for the purpose of ensuring data protection; and the responsibilities of the institutional ombudsman set up to regulate the sector.

The Act has set out to deepen the regulatory frameworks around "the data protection and privacy landscape in Nigeria which was before now, "largely regulated by the Nigeria Data Protection Regulation, 2019 (NDPR) issued by the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) as a subsidiary legislation to the NITDA Act, 2007 (NITDA Act).

With the creation of the Nigeria Data Protection Bureau (NBDP) in 2022, the duties of overseeing of overseeing the sector was taken over from the NITDA by the NBDP which has now become the **Nigeria Data Protection Commission as created by the new law.**

According to Ifeoluwa Ebiseni of Nenjom Asuk & Ademayowa Borokinni, the Bill (now an Act) seeks to establish an independent and effective regulatory commission to superintend over data protection and privacy issues and supervise data controllers and data processors

within the private and public sectors.” Structurally, “it deals with four core issues, amongst others: **the processing of personal data; protecting the rights of data subjects including a framework for such protection; the establishment of a Data Protection Commission; and the contribution to the legal foundations of Nigeria’s digital economy and an improvement of its appeal for participation in the global marketplace.**”

Independence of Commission in doubt

While the Act has set the country on new positive direction, all experts including those of Andersen and Aelix agreed that the independence of the Commission is in doubt as reliance is placed on the executive arm of government. The governing council shows the President as the appointing authority, while the Minister of Communications and Digital Economy is vested with the power to approve certain matters significantly diluting the independence of the Commission. The Act states: “the Minister may give to the Commission directives of a general nature or relating generally to matters of policy with respect to the objectives and functions of the Commission, and the Commission shall comply with the directives.”

What you should know about the new Data Protection Act

The Nigeria Data Protection Act, 2023 has a Transitional Provision that transfers all powers, agreements or contracts, actions, offices and officers of the former NDPB to the new Commission thus legitimately affirming the existing offices and actions of the officers in the current dispensation.

This means Dr. Vincent Olatunji; hitherto the **National Commissioner/CEO of the Nigeria Data Protection Bureau (NDPB)** is to continue as the **National Commissioner/CEO** of the newly established **Nigeria Data Protection Commission** established under the **Nigeria Data Protection Bill, 2023 signed into law by President Bola Tinubu to become the Nigeria Data Protection Act, 2023.** **actions, offices and officers of the former NDPB to the new Commission**



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Transitional provisions

The section in the Act states:

64. (1) A reference to the Nigeria Data Protection Bureau (in this clause referred to as “the Bureau”) existing before the commencement of this Bill, or a document issued in the name of the Bureau, shall be read as a reference to the Commission established under this Bill, and all persons engaged by the Commission shall have the same rights, powers and remedies as existed in the Bureau before the commencement of this Bill.

(2) For the purpose of subclause (1)

(a) a person who, prior to the commencement of this Bill, was an officer,

employee or member of staff of the Bureau shall continue in office, and be deemed to have been appointed under this Bill on such terms and conditions not less favourable than that enjoyed prior to the transfer of service;

(b) all existing agreements and contracts currently in effect by the Bureau, as it relates to the provisions of this Bill shall continue;

(c) all records and equipment previously belonging to or allocated for use to the Bureau shall become, on the effective date of this Bill, part of the records and equipment of the Commission;

(d) properties held immediately before the commencement of this Bill on behalf of the Bureau shall on the commencement of this Bill, be vested in the Commission established under this Bill;

(e) any proceeding or cause of action pending or existing immediately before the commencement of this Bill by or against the Bureau, in respect of any right, interest, obligation or liability may be commenced or continued, as the case may be by the Commission; and

(f) all orders, rules, regulations, decisions, directions, licences, authorisations, certificates, consents, approvals, declarations, permits, registrations, rates or other documents that are in effect before the coming into effect of this Bill and that are made or issued by the National

Information Technology Development Agency or the Bureau shall continue in effect as if they were made or issued by the Commission until they expire or are repealed, replaced, reassembled or altered.

A close source in the Presidency told IT Edge News.Africa: "Mr. President was well briefed on this matter before signing the bill into law. I can tell you that government has confidence in the people in that Commission as presently constituted. Now as a statutory body, they are expected to strengthen the team to become more formidable and align with the mission of this new government to deliver results across all sectors,"

Objectives of the new law

Objectives of the new law include to safeguard the fundamental rights and freedoms, and the interests of Nigerians as data subjects; promote data processing practices and strengthen the legal foundations of the national digital economy. Part of the objectives of the Act include:

- (a) safeguard the fundamental rights and freedoms, and the interests of data subjects, as guaranteed under the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999;
- (b) provide for the regulation of processing of personal data;
- (c) promote data processing practices that safeguard the security of personal data and privacy of data subjects;
- (d) ensure that personal data is processed in a fair, lawful and accountable manner;
- (e) protect data subjects' rights, and provide means of recourse and remedies, in the event of the breach of the data subject's rights;
- (f) ensure that data controllers and data processors fulfil their obligations to data subjects;
- (g) establish an impartial, independent, and effective regulatory Commission to superintend over data protection and privacy issues, and supervise data controllers and data processors; and
- (h) strengthen the legal foundations of the national digital economy and guarantee the participation of Nigeria in the regional and global economies through the beneficial and trusted use of personal data.

Establishment of the Nigeria Data Protection Commission, and its Governing Council

4. (1) There is established the Nigeria Data Protection Commission (in this Bill, referred to as "the Commission").

(2) The Commission

- (a) shall be a body corporate, with perpetual succession and a common seal;
- (b) may sue or be sued in its corporate name; and
- (c) may acquire, hold and dispose of its property.

(3) The Commission

- (a) shall have its head office in the Federal Capital Territory; and
- (b) may maintain other offices, in any part of Nigeria, for the purposes of achieving the objects of the Commission.

(4) Subject to the approval of the Council, the National Commissioner may acquire other offices and premises for the use of the Commission.

Functions of the Commission

5. The Commission shall

- (a) regulate the deployment of technological and organisational measures to enhance personal data protection;
- (b) foster the development of personal data protection technologies, in accordance with recognised international best practices and applicable international law;
- (c) where necessary, accredit, license, and register suitable persons



to provide data protection compliance services;

(d) register data controllers and data processors of major importance;

(e) promote awareness on the obligation of data controllers and data processors under this Bill;

(f) promote public awareness and understanding of personal data protection, rights and obligations imposed under this Bill, and the risks to personal data;

(g) receive complaints relating to violations of this Bill or subsidiary legislation made under this Bill;

(h) collaborate with any relevant ministry, department, agency, body, company, firm, or person for the attainment of the objectives of this Bill;

(i) ensure compliance with national and international personal data protection obligations and best practice;

(j) participate in international fora and engage with national and regional authorities responsible for data protection with a view to developing efficient strategies for the regulation of cross-border transfers of personal data;

(k) determine whether countries, regions, business sectors, binding corporate rules, contractual clauses, codes of conduct, or certification mechanisms, afford adequate personal data protection standards for cross-border transfers;

(l) collect and publish information with respect to personal data protection, including personal data breaches;

(m) advise government on policy issues relating to data protection and privacy;

(n) submit legislative proposals to the Minister necessary for strengthening personal data protection in Nigeria; and

(o) carry out other legal actions as are necessary for the performance of the functions of the Commission.

Powers of the Commission

6. The Commission shall have powers to

(a) oversee the implementation of the provisions of this Bill;

(b) prescribe fees payable by data controllers and data processors in accordance with data processing activities;

(c) issue regulations, rules, directives and guidance under this Bill;

(d) prescribe the manner and frequency of filing, and content of compliance returns by data controllers and data processors of major importance to the Commission;

(e) call for information from a person, or inspect any documents with respect to any thing done under this Bill;

(f) conduct investigations into any violation of a requirement under this Bill or subsidiary legislation made under this Bill by a data

controller or a data processor;

(g) impose penalties in respect of any violation of the provisions of this Bill or subsidiary legislation made under this Bill;

(h) acquire assets, and sell, let, lease, or dispose of any of its property; and

(i) perform such other acts as are necessary to give effect to the functions of the Commission.

Independence of the Commission and composition of Governing Council

8. (1) There shall be for the Commission, a Governing Council ... for a term of four years, and may be eligible for re-appointment for another term of four years, and no more;

Appointment of members of the Council

(a) a part-time Chairman, who shall be a retired judge of Nigeria;

(b) the National Commissioner;

(c) a representative, not below the rank of a Director or its equivalent, from

(i) the Federal Ministry responsible for Justice,

(ii) the Federal Ministry responsible for communications and digital economy,

(iii) the Central Bank of Nigeria, and

(iv) a law enforcement agency; and

(d) one representative from the private sector.

Appointment of the National Commissioner for the Commission

According to the Act, the National Commissioner shall serve for five years and be renewable only ones.

Directives by the Minister

60. Subject to the provisions of this Bill, the Minister may give to the Commission directives of a general nature or relating generally to matters of policy with respect to the objectives and functions of the Commission, and the Commission shall comply with the directives.

Regulations

61. (1) The Commission may make regulations for carrying out its objectives under this Bill.

(2) Without prejudice to subclause (1), the regulations may provide for

(a) the financial management of the affairs of the Commission;

(b) the protection of personal data and data subjects;

(c) the manner in which the Commission may exercise any power, discharge any duty or perform any function under this Bill;

(d) any matter that under this Bill is required or permitted to be prescribed;

(e) the forms of applications and related documents required for the purposes of this Bill;

(f) the procedures to be followed under this Bill in the submission of complaints to the Commission;

(g) frequency of filing and content of compliance returns by data controllers and data processors of major importance to the Commission;

(h) fees, fines, and charges prescribed under this Bill and such related matters; and

(i) any matter that the Commission considers necessary or expedient



to give effect to the objectives of this Bill.

(3) The regulations made under this Bill may

(a) create offences in respect of any contravention of the regulations; and

(b) impose penalty not more than that prescribed in this Bill.

(4) The Commission may, prior to making any regulation under this Bill, publish on its website, a draft regulation and a notice inviting comments to be submitted on the proposed regulation within a stipulated time.

The Act prevails when other law or enactment in conflict

63. Where the provisions of any other law or enactment, in so far as they provide or relate directly or indirectly to the processing of personal data, are inconsistent with any of the provisions of this Bill, the provisions of this Bill shall prevail.

Expenditure of the Fund

Commission, and 40% of the take-off grant shall be from the National Information Technology Development Agency.

19. (1) The Commission shall establish a Fund (in this Bill referred to as "the Fund") for the performance of its functions under this Bill.

(2) There shall be paid into the Fund established under subclause (1) (a) a take-off grant as may be appropriated by the National Assembly which shall be drawn in the following manner

(i) 20% of the take-off grant shall be from the Consolidated Revenue Fund of the Federation,

(ii) 40% of the take-off grant shall be from the Nigerian Communications Commission, and

(iii) 40% of the take-off grant shall be from the National Information Technology Development Agency;

(b) donations, gifts, loans, grants, aids, endowments, and voluntary contributions;

(c) returns on investments of the Commission;

(d) levies, fees, penalties, and fines collected by the Commission; and

(e) such other money or assets that may accrue to the Commission.

(3) 50% of the total amount of the take-off grant shall be provided to the Commission on the commencement of this Bill, and the remaining 50% of the take-off grant shall be provided on the anniversary of the date on which this Bill commences.

(4) Subject to any applicable law, the Commission may borrow such sums of money, as may be required in the performance of its functions under to this Bill.

Principles and Lawful Basis Governing Processing of Personal Data

24. (1) A data controller or data processor shall ensure that personal data is

- (a) processed in a fair, lawful and transparent manner;
 - (b) collected for specified, explicit, and legitimate purposes, and not to be further processed in a way incompatible with these purposes;
 - (c) adequate, relevant, and limited to the minimum necessary for the purposes for which the personal data was collected or further processed;
 - (d) retained for no longer than is necessary to achieve the lawful bases for which the personal data was collected or further processed;
 - (e) accurate, complete, not misleading, and, where necessary, kept up to date having regard to the purposes for which the personal data is collected or is further processed; and
 - (f) processed in a manner that ensures appropriate security of personal data, including protection against unauthorised or unlawful processing, access, loss, destruction, damage, or any form of data breach.
- (2) A data controller and data processor shall use appropriate technical and organisational measures to ensure confidentiality, integrity, and availability of personal data.

Registration and Fees

44. (1) Data controllers and data processors of major importance shall register with the Commission within six months after the commencement of the Bill or on becoming a data controller or data processor of major importance.

45. The Commission may prescribe fees or levies to be paid by data controllers and data processors of major importance.

Enforcement & Penalties

46. (1) A data subject, who is aggrieved by the decision, action, or inaction of a data controller or data processor in violation of this Bill, or subsidiary legislation made under this Bill may lodge a complaint with the Commission.

- (2) The Commission may investigate any complaint referred to it, where it appears to the Commission that the complaint is not frivolous or vexatious.
- (3) The Commission may initiate an investigation of its own accord where it has reason to believe a data controller or data processor has violated or is likely to violate this Bill or any subsidiary legislation made under this Bill.
- (4) The Commission may, for the purpose of an investigation, order a person to
 - (a) attend at a specific time and place for the purpose of being examined orally in relation to a complaint;
 - (b) produce such document, record, or article, as may be required with respect to any matter relevant to the investigation, which the person is not prevented by any other written law from disclosing; or
 - (c) furnish a statement in writing made under oath or an affirmation setting out all information, which may be required under the order.
- (5) Where any material to which an investigation relates, consists of information stored in any document, record, minutes, mechanical or electronic device, the Commission may require the person named to produce such material or give access to the Commission to conduct an inspection on the material.
- (6) For the purposes of subclause (5), the person shall ensure that



the information relating to the material under investigation is visible and legible, in a structured, commonly used and machine-readable format.

- (7) The Commission may, where necessary, make representations to
 - (a) the data controller or data processor on behalf of a complainant; or
 - (b) a complainant on behalf of the data controller or data processor.
- (8) The Commission shall
 - (a) establish a unit to receive and follow up on complaints from data subjects and conduct investigations; and or subsidiary legislation made under this Bill may lodge a complaint with the Commission.
 - (2) The Commission may investigate any complaint referred to it, where it appears to the Commission that the complaint is not frivolous or vexatious.
 - (3) The Commission may initiate an investigation of its own accord where it has reason to believe a data controller or data processor has violated or is likely to violate this Bill or any subsidiary legislation made under this Bill.
 - (4) The Commission may, for the purpose of an investigation, order a person to
 - (a) attend at a specific time and place for the purpose of being examined orally in relation to a complaint;
 - (b) produce such document, record, or article, as may be required with respect to any matter relevant to the investigation, which the person is not prevented by any other written law from disclosing; or
 - (c) furnish a statement in writing made under oath or an affirmation setting out all information, which may be required under the order.
 - (5) Where any material to which an investigation relates, consists of information stored in any document, record, minutes, mechanical or electronic device, the Commission may require the person named to produce such material or give access to the Commission to conduct an inspection on the material.
 - (6) For the purposes of subclause (5), the person shall ensure that the information relating to the material under investigation is visible and legible, in a structured, commonly used and machine-readable format.

- (a) the data controller or data processor on behalf of a complainant; or
- (b) a complainant on behalf of the data controller or data processor.
- (8) The Commission shall
 - (a) establish a unit to receive and follow up on complaints from data subjects and conduct investigations; and
 - (7) The Commission may, where necessary, make representations to

Compliance/ Enforcement Orders

- (2) An enforcement order made or sanction imposed under subclause (1) shall include
 - (a) requiring the data controller or data processor to remedy the violation;
 - (b) ordering the data controller or data processor to pay compensation to a data subject, who has suffered injury, loss, or harm as a result of a violation;
 - (c) ordering the data controller or data processor to account for the profits realised from the violation; or
 - (d) ordering the data controller or data processor to pay a penalty or remedial fee.
- (3) A penalty or remedial fee under subclause (2) (d) may be an amount up to the
 - (a) higher maximum amount, in the case of a data controller or data processor of major importance; or
 - (b) standard maximum amount, in the case of a data controller or data processor not of major importance.
- (4) The "higher maximum amount" shall be the greater of
 - (a) ₦10,000,000, and
 - (b) 2% of its annual gross revenue in the preceding financial year.
- (5) The "standard maximum amount" shall be the greater of
 - (a) ₦2,000,000, and
 - (b) 2% of its annual gross revenue in the preceding financial year.

Failure to comply with orders is an offence

49. (1) A data controller or data processor, who fails to comply with orders made under clause 47 of this Bill commits an offence and is liable on conviction to
- (a) a fine of up to the
 - (i) higher maximum amount, in the case of a data controller or data processor of major importance, or
 - (ii) standard maximum amount, in the case of a data controller or data processor not of major importance; or
 - (b) imprisonment for a term not more than one year or both.

Dr. Vincent Olatunji: Profile of a Technocrat

Olatunji, who recently joined the Forbes Technology Council for 2023, an invitation-only community for topnotch CIOs, CTOs, and technology executives, is a PECB Certified Data Protection Officer and a Certified Public Private Partnership Specialist (IP3 Specialist) who holds a doctorate degree in Geography and Planning from the University of Lagos.

With over 30 years of experience in the public sector, Olatunji has brought his wealth of knowledge and professionalism as a technocrat to bear in leading the NDPB now a statutory Commission.

Former acting Director General at the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), Olatunji is an



accomplished professional with proven track records of delivering impactful results thereby excelling in building strong relationships across sectors and achieving tangible outcomes. He has also successfully led teams, conducted extensive research, developed effective policies, and implemented strategic initiatives at all levels of government in Nigeria.

Olatunji joined the NITDA in 2002 and has worked in various departments thereby rising to the position of director in 2014 and acting director general in 2016.

Prior to his appointment in February 2022 as the NDPB's pioneer National Commissioner of NDPB, he worked as the Director of eGovernment Development and Regulations at NITDA where he led a formidable team to deliver various initiatives on Nigeria's digital transformation.

Since 2022, Olatunji has led his team at the NDPB to chart Nigeria's pathway in data protection gaining global recognition even as it awaited the legislative nod to become a statutory agency.

Nigeria's Top 50 Digital Economy Enablers

He has received several awards from both public and private sector organizations including the GNC Digital Hall of Fame Award of Lifetime Recognition for his outstanding contributions to emerging technology for development initiatives in Africa in 2023.

He is recognised as one of Nigeria's Top 50 Digital Economy Enablers by IT Edge News Africa in February 2023. In April 2018, he was listed among the 100 Leading Telecom and ICT Personalities in Nigeria by the Association of Telecommunication Companies of Nigeria.

In addition, he has received awards from the University of Lagos Alumni Association for Outstanding Commitment and from the Ekiti State University Alumni Association as an Eminent Personality. Furthermore, the Ekiti State University conferred upon him an honorary Doctor of Public Administration degree in June 2018.

Why digital technology could worsen mental health conditions

- Margaret Uddin-Ojeahere

Consultant Psychiatrist and a Fellow of the West African College of Physicians, Dr. Margaret Uddin-Ojeahere, says digital technology has helped in the management of mental health practice and helped to create awareness about improving how people accept mental health conditions. But there is still much more that technology and awareness creation can do to manage the entire spectrum of mental healthcare including emotional well-being, cognitive functioning, social connections, and overall psychological resilience. The challenges of tech on mental health are on the rise as digital enablement becomes a way of life for millions of people. For instance, 'infobesity,' an overload of information and systematic inability to filter info-consumption online in order to maintain mental balance is increasingly becoming a norm of digital existence. Uddin-Ojeahere, a mental health advocate, works at the Jos University Teaching Hospital (JUTH). She shared insights with Tracy Yekaghe of *IT Edge News.Africa*.

Could you share your own perspective on the impact of technology on mental health?

Looking at it broadly, technology in our present day and age is something we have to embrace. Increasingly, our world revolves around technology making it impossible to exclude the demands of our daily living from this reality. Nevertheless, it can have both adverse and positive effects on one's mental health.

It is no longer news that increasing engagement on the different social media platforms and prolonged screen time can lead to negative consequences on people's mental health in diverse ways such as sleep disturbances, exposure to cyber bullying, viewing people's glamorous lives on certain apps, especially considering the fact that most people share admirable events or parts of their lives and rarely post the negatives. These can result in feelings of inadequacies, low self-esteem and rejection to mention a few and may lead to mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression, addictions, substance use disorders, and suicide at the extreme.

There is also the risk of "infobesity" which has a lot to do with excessive consumption and overload of information in today's digital age that can lead to the mental breakdown of that individual particularly if the person has traits of being easily overwhelmed and anxious. So it is important that people are deliberate in filtering and regulating what they consume or are exposed to.

On the flip side, technology has helped mental health practice in advocacy, creating awareness about mental health conditions, improving how people accept mental health conditions. Before now, mental conditions were considered a punishment for misdemeanours, curses from gods or having supernatural aetiology. Not forgetting, how stigmatized people with mental health conditions were in our society and in some instances ostracized. But with advancing technology, there is a paradigm shift and better acceptance.

Technology has also improved the delivery of mental health care from screening, identifying, diagnosing, and management of people with mental health conditions. One area which technology is playing a vital role is tele psychiatry which is



“ Tele psychiatry ... is increasingly being accepted as an important means of delivering mental health care especially during and in the aftermath of COVID19. It has helped in the treatment of hard to reach patients and has yielded good results. ”

There are other useful apps that can help users de-stress and some that can guide users to appropriate helplines/centres. In addition, technology has aided the dissemination of information, monitoring and evaluation, training, education and research in the field of mental health.

Do you have a word of caution as regards technology and its impact on mental health?

There are a number of things that we can use technology for. But in my opinion, I think an important word of caution is that of moderation and regulation, especially in the development and usage of apps and technological devices.

It is important to have in mind the consequences (on mental health and other spheres of life) during the creation process so we do not develop what would eventually destroy us.

What would be your counsel to those who mostly leverage technology for necessities or gainful activities such as work and businesses?

I must state that technology is indeed necessary and something we need to embrace, we cannot throw away the baby

and the bathwater. No! It is something that is beneficial for our daily livelihood. However, we just need to understand our weaknesses and our strengths so we are

aware of those times we might need to Either pause or have some timeout or step back in order to maintain or improve not just our mental health but our overall health and wellbeing.

Would you encourage the usage of latest technological tools to drastically reduce human efforts used to get work done for the sake of sustaining mental health?

Absolutely! I am not against technology as it has made life very easy for me and many others working within my field of expertise. For instance, here in Nigeria I can manage a patient in the United States of America or Sudan or Mangu and many other locations outside of my current environment.

I will therefore encourage that we educate ourselves and get to know the most recent technologies available that may be easier to use, more user friendly and with less complications or adverse effects.

This is because it is important to ensure that it does not harm us more than it helps us.

Telecom sector adds N2.508 trillion, 14.13% to Nigeria's GDP in Q1 2023



Despite headwinds, Nigeria's telecommunications and information services sector added a remarkable N2.508 trillion in terms of financial value contribution to the country's gross domestic product (GDP), representing 14.13 per cent. in the first quarter 2023. Figures released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed that the sector recorded a 4.3 per cent increase from its performance in the last quarter of 2022 when it recorded 13.55 per cent. When compared on a year-on-year basis, the growth showed a positive progression from 12.94 per cent in the first quarter of 2022, to the 2023 figure

of 14.13, which is an approximate growth of 9.19 per cent. The percentage of telecom contribution to GDP was calculated from 46 distinct sectors of the economy, which constitute telecom and information services baskets.

Positive outlook based on innovative and predictable telecom regulatory environment, says NCC

The Nigerian telecom industry has continued its show of positive outlook, which is credited to the innovative and predictable telecom regulatory environment promoted, and implemented by the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), Director, Public Affairs, NCC, Reuben Muoka noted in a statement issued in Abuja.

One of the key highlights of the telecom industry performance within the period was the generation of \$820.8 million for the federal government from 5G spectrum licences fees paid by three eventual winning operators, MTN, MAFAB and Airtel.

Following the issuance of the licences in December 2021 to MTN and MAFAB, both companies have launched 5G services. Airtel, which received its licence in December 2022, is set to launch services this month, June 2023. Another major development in the sector was the launch of Starlinks broadband services, a satellite-based wireless broadband services with potential nationwide coverage. This followed the issuance of licence to Elon Musk-owned SpaceX by the Commission. The services are now available in different parts of the country.

Meanwhile, the growth statistics of the telecom industry are showing an impressive record of contributions to the economy. The number of phone subscribers as at April 2023, stood at 223.6 million subscribers, scoring a teledensity of 117 per cent. Internet subscribers for the same period were 157 million while Broadband subscriptions stood at 92 Million, translating to 48 per cent broadband penetration in the country.

Court to Buhari: Account for \$460m Chinese loan used for failed Abuja CCTV project



President Muhammadu Buhari must account for the spending of \$460 million Chinese loan to fund the failed Abuja Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) project, a Federal High Court in Abuja ordered last week.

The government must also publish the total amount of money paid to Chinese and local companies and contractors and specific details of the names of the companies and contractors and status of the implementation of the project,

Hon. Justice Emeka Nwite ordered last week, while delivering judgment in a Freedom of Information suit number: FHC/ABJ/CS/1447/2019 brought by Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP).

The suit followed the disclosure in 2019, by the Minister of Finance, Zainab Ahmed, that Nigeria was servicing the loan, adding that she had, "no explanations on the status of the project," [Thisday](#) reported.

She reportedly said, "We are servicing the loan. I have no information on the status of the CCTV project."

However, in his judgment, Justice Nwite agreed with SERAP that, "there is a reasonable cause of action against the government. Accounting for the spending of the \$460 million Chinese loan is in the interest of the public. It will be inimical for the court to refuse SERAP's application for judicial review of the government's action."

Justice Nwite also said that, "The Minister of Finance is in charge of the finance of the country and cannot by any stretch of imagination be oblivious of the amount of money paid to the contractors for the Abuja CCTV contract and the money meant for the construction of the headquarters of the Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB)."

N-Soft successfully delivered its mobile data governance system to Mali

- Mali becomes one of the first states in Africa to bring visibility to its digital sector.



N-Soft has delivered a new governance solution for mobile internet in Mali enabling the country to enhance transparency and oversight of its domestic policies. The testing of the new data solution was officially approved recently by the experts of AMRTP, the regulatory authority for telecoms, TICS, and, mails from the Malian state and N-Soft.

With the implementation of these advanced digital governance solutions, Mali emerges as one of the pioneering nations in Africa to enhance transparency and oversight of its domestic policies. This development offers a significant advantage for global financial institutions

and investors who seek clear visibility into specific sectors of the economy to make informed investment decisions and provide loans within a trustworthy business environment.

N-Soft has been managing mobile voice, SMS, and mobile money in Mali since 2019. For example, they are overseeing USD 3 billion in mobile money transactions per month.

As a vote of confidence, N-Soft was granted an extension of the initial contract and now provides real-time visibility on Mobile Data service with regards to volume (download/upload), and the bandwidth per application (OTT, Web, Streaming, etc.)

This service extension also aims at overseeing mobile internet and calculating, in real-time, volume usage, the bandwidth generated by Androids' mobile apps, apple, etc. to bring visibility over the effective bandwidth.

"N-SOFT is highly honored by the trust bestowed upon it by the AMRTP, reaffirmed by the signing of this project.

This project aims to provide Mali with a precise regulatory tool, giving it complete visibility into the internet volumes consumed by its nationals. It is not about controlling how Malians use the internet, but rather measuring the overall bandwidth used by the country, classifying OTT applications (e.g., WhatsApp, YouTube, Netflix, Spotify, etc.) based on their adoption by the population, and addressing a multitude of similar questions.

Mali is now among our privileged partners, and we will continue to mobilize all our resources to provide it with complete visibility into its digital environment." Explains Alex-Ariel Tchetgnia, VP of services at N-Soft. Since N-Soft has been a Digital Sector Supervisor for more than ten years, its governance solutions stand out in the GovTech sector as tried-and-true and reliable. They can assist any government in tackling the informal economy and tax avoidance by providing full visibility into the mobile data industry.

Lusaka, Zambia to host 10th Africa Fintech Summit

The Africa Fintech Summit is pleased to announce that its 10th edition will be hosted in Lusaka, Zambia on November 2-3, 2023. The summit will bring together entrepreneurs, investors, regulators, and other stakeholders to explore, debate, and pave the future of the financial technology industry across the African continent and the globe.

This November's summit comes after the 9th AFTS which took place in Washington DC this past April where the 'Tech for Trade Alliance' was launched by the US government's Prosper Africa initiative along with several US-Africa partners focused on supporting cross-border trade and e-commerce innovation on the continent.

Since its inception in 2017, the Africa Fintech Summit has become the premier bi-annual summit of Africa's fintech industry. The summit has been held in several cities across the continent, including Lagos, Addis Ababa, Cairo, and Cape Town, and has attracted thousands of participants from over a hundred countries across the world.

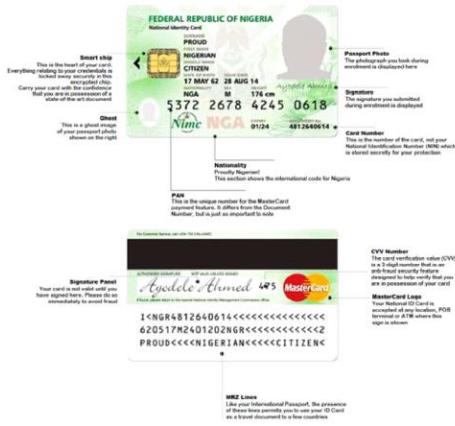


This November's summit will feature Africa's largest annual financial technology exhibition, keynote addresses, panel discussions, networking opportunities, and will feature an array of industry topics, including digital payments innovation, blockchain use cases, lending for individuals & MSMEs, commodity supply chain, and fintech regulation.

Zambia is an ideal location for the 10th edition of the summit, as the country has a rapidly growing fintech ecosystem and sits at the crossroads of several key industries and economic communities

such as COMESA. According to a report by the Ministry of Technology & Science and the UNCDF published in 2022, mobile money penetration in Zambia reached 69.4% in 2020, up from 53.3% in 2015. Despite this, there is still much room for growth and innovation within Zambia, particularly in the areas of financial services, connectivity, commerce, and digital infrastructure. Hon. Felix C. Mutati, Minister of Technology & Science for Zambia stated, "We are excited that the Africa Fintech Summit team has selected Lusaka, Zambia as the host of this November's edition. This summit comes at an important moment in Zambia where the Ministry of Technology & Science continues to work diligently to implement our national digital transformation strategy. The summit's focus on the advancement of financial inclusion and sustainable economic development via the fintech industry will play a key role in driving digital transformation not only here in Zambia, but across the African continent."

Nigeria approves integration of National ID with debit card; automated system for NIN-SIM linkage



The Nigerian government has approved a memo from the National Identity Management Commission (NIMC) that will allow commercial banks to issue customers with debit cards that double as national identity cards at no extra cost.

The government also approved a memo proposing the deployment of an automated system to integrate NINs with individual SIM cards.

The Federal Executive Council (FEC)

gave the approvals in what will be its last meeting as the country's highest decision making body. A new government is expected to be sworn in next week Monday 29th of May.

"It is going to be a form of multipurpose card where it will serve as your national identity card on one hand and also your bank card on the other hand, either MasterCard, Visa or any other kind of card," said Minister of Communication and Digital Economy, Prof. Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami to the media after the meeting.

His words: "The bank is permitted to print the card along with either MasterCard or Visa card. It is going to be a form of multipurpose card that will serve as your national identity card on one hand and also your bank card on the other. And based on the agreement, it is without any additional costs on our citizens.

"So when you apply for a card at your bank, you can indicate that 'I want this card to be multiple purpose whereby it will serve as my bank card and also my

national identity card'. Both of them are going to be printed on the same card and it is going to serve the same purposes without any additional costs. So that memo has also been approved by the Federal Executive Council."

Adding: "NIMC has partnered with the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) so citizens who are interested in having a card at hand can easily go to the relevant banks.

"When you apply for the card, the bank will apply online to the NIMC through their database. When they verify and confirm that your record in the database is in alignment with your record in NIMC database, it will be permitted and the card is going to be printed for you immediately."

Describing the approved NIN-SIM integration memo as a consolidation of the implementation of the NIN-SIM linkage, Pantami said the automated system would sanitise the database and ease the process of SIM replacement for Nigerians or legal residents.

Diving into the future of finance: How Blockchain battles are defining our tomorrow

Picture this. You are standing at the edge of a grand precipice, peering into the realm of the unknown, and yet knowing that a single step could send seismic waves through the global financial landscape. That's the reality of the blockchain revolution we find ourselves in today – a seemingly mythical frontier, a battlefield of technological prowess, and a defining moment in finance.

"There are two blockchain crazes in finance today. One is the decentralized, permissionless version that is going from strength to strength, driven mostly by young people working outside traditional financial institutions. The second blockchain craze, called the 'permissioned' version, involves finding every conceivable way to keep blockchain within the control of licensed institutions in finance. One will succeed.



The other will fail," says Emmanuel Daniel, global thought leader on the future of finance.

Blockchain technology is not just a fleeting sensation; it's a revolution in the making. This groundbreaking technology holds the potential to rewrite the financial playbook, enabling a profound shift in transaction validation and execution. At its core, it represents the metamorphosis of data from its

inception within isolated systems to today's shared ledger reality. But where does this journey lead us? What transformations can we anticipate as finance becomes increasingly personalized, embedded into every corner of our lives? Daniel, a global thought leader in the future of finance, in his new book, "The Great Transition: The Personalization of Finance is Here," has already received rave reviews from Barney Frank and Richard Sandor on his insight into the personalization of finance.

Daniel is listed as a top 10 global influencer in the "Fintech Power50" list for 2021 and 2022. He is also a global entrepreneur, the founder of platforms such as The Asian Banker and Wealth and Society, through which he has had extensive contact with leaders in banking and finance around the world.

NITDA in partnership with SMEDAN to secure SMEs in Nigeria



The National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) and the Small and Medium Scale Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) are to work together to secure Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the country.

The two government agencies will work on a common framework to ensure business sustainability for Nigeria's mass of SMEs seeking mentorship, funding and tech-innovation support.

"We see startups as our babies, while for you anybody trying to start any business you see them as your babies. We have startups solving problems in agric, commerce, education, and logistics and so on," said NITDA's Director General, Kashifu Inuwa Abdullahi at a recent meeting in Abuja with the Director General of SMEDAN, Mr. Olawale Fasanya. The meeting held inside NITDA's corporate headquarters.

According to the NITDA's boss, supporting the SME through a joint framework would serve as a catalyst for creating wealth and prosperity, adding that, "we have between 60-90 per cent of our businesses under SMEs, but operating informally, how can we formalise them so that even the

government can benefit by collecting taxes and have a structure in place to capture the GDP correctly."

Fasanya agreed with Abdullahi. He said SMEDAN would want to leverage the support for digital enablement that SMEs across the country could benefit from within the framework.

SMEDAN wants SMEs to take advantage of the emerging digital opportunities to enhance business sustainability, he added.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the total number of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) as at December, 2017 stood at 41,543,028, with components as follows, viz: micro enterprises MEs: 41, 469,947 (or 99.8 percent), small and medium enterprises SMEs: 73,081 (or 0.2 percent). MSMEs are generally referred to as enterprises with up to 250 employees. micro enterprises: between 1 and 9 employees. small enterprises: between 10 and 49 employees. medium enterprises: between 50 and 249 employees.

According to experts, SMEs account for 48 percent of Nigeria's GDP, make up 96 percent of businesses and offer about 84 percent of employment in 2022.

SMEs solving a real life problem Startups that NITDA is dealing with are SMEs who are also trying to solve a real life problem, and because the world is moving to smart manufacturing where you can design anything on your system and print it using 3D printer, the dynamics for to support SMEs must deepen and change too, Abdullahi told the SMEDAN's boss. He said: "we have Digital Fabrication Lab in our Center (the National Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics NCAIR) where you can design all these and manufacture them or prototype them and do mass production."

He also announced that plans are underway to have facilities everywhere as the goal is for every Nigerian to have access to these kinds of facilities.

Already, NITDA has a number of initiatives it has undertaken through collaboration with some big techs.

These initiatives include the Learning Management System Online Academy and to which SMEs will be on-boarded so as to benefit from the programs and be part of the Gig economy.

"We are also looking beyond SMEs today; we have what we call IDEs (Innovation Driven Enterprises) which is a process where you start with a mindset that you are solving the immediate problem but the bigger picture is to go global and Information Technology is making it possible for you to reach anywhere in the world," he said.

Citing a recent research conducted by the Lagos Business School, Abdullahi said SMEs were benefitting from the Gig economy with over two million Nigerians already earning a living through the Gig economy.

To be active in the Gig economy requires training that capacity to work from anywhere using IT whether as a Bolt driver or a digital marketer.

"IT is pervasive, anywhere you think of today you need IT to enable it. Our lives revolve around technology. This kind of collaboration is what can help us have structure to even protect the Gig economy as well", Abdullahi added even as he Fasanya of NITDA's readiness to work with SMEDAN.

Dangote Refinery is smart and marks Nigeria's entry into Industry 4.0

By Olusegun Oruame



The **Dangote Refinery** is a monster smart enterprise designed as an advanced refinery project that signposts Nigeria's entry into **Industry 4.0**; an intelligent tech-driven industrial setting.

Launched in May 2023 with financing in excess of US\$19 billion, the facility is prepped to play strong in the extremely "competitive, capital- and asset-intensive oil and gas industry".

The **Dangote Refinery** is Africa's biggest oil refinery and the world's single-train facility. A 650,000 barrels per day (bpd) integrated refinery and petrochemical project in the Lekki Free Zone near Lagos, the **Dangote Refinery & Fertiliser Projects** will significantly reduce Nigeria's reliance on imported energy and bring with it more than 30,000 jobs.

There's more. The infrastructure facilities include a pipeline system, access roads, tank storage facilities, crude and product-handling facilities; a marine terminal, including a breakwater, jetty and harbour, has also been developed as part of the project.

The refinery complex will house a fertiliser plant to utilise the refinery by-products as raw materials. Supportive facilities include an administrative building, guardhouses, fire station, and pump stations among others.

Dangote enterprise is an intelligent refinery

All of these are woven together through expansive digitalization. The entire Dangote enterprise is an intelligent refinery that fully leverages emerging technologies including "IoT for data gathering, cloud computing infrastructure for hosting this data, artificial intelligence and machine learning models to process this data and



provide actionable insights,” MSME Africa noted. Adding: “With digital infrastructure, greenfield refineries like those being built by the **Dangote** and **BUA Groups** will have visibility throughout the value chain, helping them to accurately learn about impending changes and take decisions to adapt quickly.”

A team of technology experts led by **Head of IT, Dangote Refinery & Fertiliser Projects, K.V. N Rao** will be implementing a host of IT practices, including the latest in assistance software, and leveraging data for operational intelligence. The team will be managing the advanced production and operation technology; and believes the enterprise is kitted intelligently enough to drive the portfolio of expectations as Nigeria's most 'technology-driven factory.'

With its heavy investment in technology, the profile of **Dangote Refinery & Fertiliser Projects** comes out readily as having “capabilities such as predictive maintenance, remote operations centers, dynamic power selection mode, omnichannel retail, and connected service fields” all of which are associated with smart refineries.

The refinery hopes to drive efficiency at least 40 times over non-smart factories and save production cost by well over 55%, exceedingly ahead any of Nigeria's four moribund refineries when at optimum production.

Production design details

The integrated refinery and petrochemical project will process a variety of light and medium grades of crude to produce Euro-V quality clean fuels including gasoline and diesel as well as jet fuel and polypropylene.

The geographical location of the refinery is ideal for easy transshipment of the refined petroleum products to international markets.

The design details of the complex also shows that the

processing facilities at the refinery include a crude distillation unit (CDU) and associated facilities, a mild hydrocracking (MHC) unit, a residual fluid catalytic cracking (RFCC) unit, a naphtha hydrotreater, and a gasoline hydrodesulfurisation (HDS) unit as well as alkylation units.

The refinery complex will also house sulphur recovery and hydrogen generation facilities and a polypropylene unit. Comprising two steam methane reformer (SMR) units, the hydrogen generation facility will generate 200,000Nm³/h of hydrogen and steam to produce sulphur-free fuels.

Smart factory is Nigeria's historical entry into Industry 4.0

Financed to be smart, the Dangote Refinery meets the criteria of a factory designed on Industry 4.0. According to IBM, “Industry 4.0 is revolutionizing the way companies manufacture, improve and distribute their products. Manufacturers are integrating new technologies, including Internet of Things (IoT), cloud computing and analytics, and AI and machine learning into their production facilities and throughout their operations.”

What does this mean for Nigeria's industrial landscape? The Dangote Refinery has completely altered the game for good. Apart from being the largest private sector investment, it is the most technologically advanced and has set the historical moment for Nigeria's entry into Industry 4.0. Only the **BUA Refinery** may make this exulted list when it is launched in the months ahead.

Smart means incorporating digital tools to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of refinery operations in a way that enhance productivity and greater optimization. This puts **Dangote Refinery** in the league of the Saudi Arabian national oil company, **Saudi Aramco**, known to leverage the most advanced IT systems to control, monitor and manage all of its upstream, midstream and downstream operations.

But smart also means an unexplored window. New opportunities for business and collaborations have been opened for local IT solutions and digital infrastructure providers who must deliver on the 24/7 requirements of the **Dangote Refinery**. In a way, the presence of this smart factory will steadily change the profile of the numerous IT support management solution companies not only within **Lekki axis** but all of Lagos and rest of the country.



Social media will bring more mental health challenges to Nigerians

By Tracy Yekaghe

More Nigerians will develop mental health issues as digital technology (notably,

Experts believe a national awareness on the increasing danger of unregulated exposure to online content or usage of digital tools and conscientious efforts by stakeholders including government to address the looming danger could help.

Internet access is improving rapidly and there are now opportunities to access thousands of apps all of which have very 'arresting appeal.' Millions of young people are staying more glued to social media apps spending thousands of hours in a way that both enthrall and exacerbate them with the consequence increase in mental challenges.

No doubt, digital technology is helping in the management of mental health in Nigeria. Most health practitioners including psychiatrists believe access

to digital tools have helped to expand the window of managing mental health issues including being able to manage patients from any location through tele-psychiatry, improving the awareness culture around mental health and leveraging certain apps to better address mental health needs. While many mental health practitioners have become more enabled with digital tools to help patients, there are increasing indices to show that more Nigerians are becoming susceptible to mental health challenges as a result of undue exposure to digital technologies..

Infobesity is impacting mental balance

There are no clear-cut statistics of the degree or nature of mental health breakdown from constant usage of social media platforms or how much of phenomenon such as 'infobesity,' an

overload of information and systematic inability to filter info-consumption online in order to maintain mental balance, is impacting on millions of young Nigerians perpetually connected to platforms that include Tiktok, Instagram, Facebook and the likes.

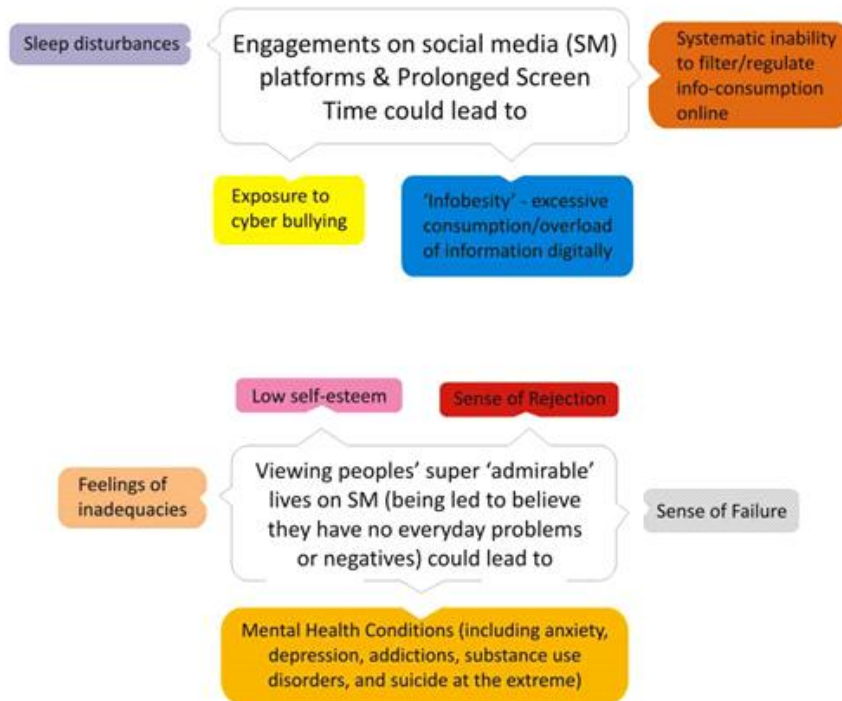
According to Statista, "as of January 2023, Nigeria had 31.6 million active social media users. WhatsApp is the most popular platform used in the country, with close to 95 percent of users." Other popular platforms are Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Tiktok.

Young people spend thousands of hours on these platforms in a way that challenges both their physical and mental wellbeing.

More apps = sleep disturbances, inadequacies



Tech hits on mental wellbeing



“It is no longer news that increasing engagement on the different social media platforms and prolonged screen time can lead to negative consequences on people’s mental health in diverse ways such as sleep disturbances, exposure to cyber bullying, viewing people’s glamorous lives on certain apps, especially considering the fact that most people share admirable events or parts of their lives and rarely post the negatives. These can result in feelings of inadequacies, low self-esteem and rejection to mention a few and may lead to mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression, addictions, substance use disorders, and suicide at the extreme,” said Dr. Margaret Uddin-Ojeahere, a psychiatrist and a Fellow of the West African College of Physicians.

Uddin-Ojeahere cautioned on the need for moderation in the use of digital tools.

“There is a need for awareness to help more people stay guided on best usage practices. We also need to understand and be informed about the age limits

attached to the usage of certain gadgets which would require the need for supervision and promotion of usage by critical stakeholders such as parents, schools and others where applicable,” said Uddin-Ojeahere, a mental health advocate who also works at the Jos University Teaching Hospital (JUTH).

“An example is cutting down on screen time for instance; not everyone might be aware that blue light from their electronic devices can affect their sleep to the extent of disturbing their sleep cycle and may lead to sleep disorders or forms of mental health conditions,” she added.

Many stakeholders agree with her. Dr. Amupitan Emmanuel Tope who is also a Member of the West African College of Physicians told IT Edge News.Africa that the mental health of the growing population is seriously affected. He is also of the opinion that one of the greatest impact of digital technology is the social isolation that it causes.

Social media and the end of social integration

According to him, families are no longer integrated like the way they used to be. He shared a typical example of husbands talking to their wives without being able to stay off their phones, thereby resulting into little or zero attention given to each other. Many families no longer share close ties like they used to. he added.

“You can live your whole life on the internet without needing the person that is close to you. This is one of the reasons why we have people coming down with all sorts of mental illnesses that are not picked early,” said Dr. Amupitan Emmanuel Tope who is also a Senior Registrar in the Department of Psychiatry at the Jos University Teaching Hospital.

However, he noted that the fact that digital technology is able to give more users an opportunity to expand their range of impact is an added advantage to mental health.

Jack Roberts, who is a content marketing specialist, shared some best practice regarding digital technology and mental health services on www.nationalhealthexecutive.com where he explicitly stated that The impact of mental health is rapidly increasing, with data showing that nearly one in five adults are diagnosed with a mental illness in their lifetime, and only half of these people receive treatment.

Furthermore, it is predicted that by 2030 depression will be the second largest cause of disease burden across the world.

Roberts also believe that with the impact of mental health continually increasing, continued research, training and postgraduate study can truly make a difference in the future of mental health, for patients and professionals alike.

Despite the cons, an increasing body of research suggests that digital technology has great potential to facilitate mental health promotion, education, and treatment for indigenous people of various ages.

eLearning Africa 2023 stresses how education and technology can secure Africa's future prosperity



This year's edition of **eLearning Africa** kicked off in Dakar, Senegal focusing on among others, how African economies are growing rapidly, driven by the development of the **African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)**, and how the continent can leverage on the growing opportunities to build the needful skillsets through eLearning.

The session stressed the 'vital role of education in securing Africa's future prosperity; how technology is enabling the spread of education's benefits across the continent, facilitating the sharing of African knowledge with the world;' and equally important, why policies and actions are required across boards achieve Africa's potential through technology and education.

The speakers at the opening plenary included the **Prime Minister of Senegal Amadou Ba**; founding chairman of Zenith Bank-The Gambia, also serving as Vice President for Academic Affairs & Provost, Professor of IT & Computing at American University of Nigeria, **Prof. Muhammadou M.O. Kah**; **Madame Caroline St-Hilaire**; **Pierre Goudiaby Atépa**, a distinguished architect, entrepreneur and tech-education enthusiast; and **Lady Mariéme Jamme**, Senegalese-born French-British educator, businesswoman and technology activist.

A new African model of learning

Prime Minister Amadou Ba told the audience including attendees at the

eLearning Africa 2023 workshops and conference as well as exhibitors that technology diffusion and a dynamic approach to education will help to close the knowledge and skill gaps for millions of people on the continent.

He highlighted the need for a new African model of learning, equipping individuals with the skills to compete and cooperate. He

Amadou Ba, who commended the organisers of the event, said Senegal remains committed to promoting education using technology as a tool for development and welcomes collaborations within and outside the continent to drive this goal.

The eLearning Africa 2023 featured pre-conference workshops, exhibition hall, and two captivating plenary sessions allowing for full exploration of potentials of eLearning on the continent, the major individual and corporate drivers of eLearning, and the sharing of innovative ideas around the major themes of eLearning Africa 2023.

"We hope that every participant had the opportunity to network, meet fascinating individuals, and engage in thought-provoking discussions, paving the way for a brighter future in African education," organisers posted.

Speakers at eLearning 2023

The event featured high level speakers,

some of whom were Candice Sankarsingh, common sense eLearning, Austria; Francisca Oladipo, Thomas Adewumi University, Nigeria; Satu Järvinen, University of Eastern Finland, IMPDET, Finland; Jimena Pereyra, UNESCO IIEP, France; Matthew Ames, University of Global Health Equity, Oluwakemi Olurinola, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Nigeria; Emmanuel Abba, Logeak Solutions LTD, Nigeria; Christopher Addo, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana; Adewale Adesina, NOUN, Nigeria; Morakinyo Akintolu, UNESCO Chair on Open Distance Learning, University of South Africa, South Africa; Tutaleni Asino, Oklahoma State University & United States International University, USA; Abir Guettiti, ETS Global, The Netherlands; Ghada El Khayat, Alexandria University, Egypt; and André Dietrich, Technische Universität Bergakademie Freiberg, Germany

Others were Isso Bayala, Quincy College, USA; Sheila Jagannathan, World Bank, USA; André Chateau Akue Asseko, IMT Nord-Europe, France; Rwanda; Ndung'u Kahihu, CAP Youth Empowerment Institute (CAP YEI)/CAP Workforce Development Institute, Kenya; Joshua Lange, Digital Financial Aid Corporation, USA; Michael Onyango, Distributed Ledgers & Artificial Intelligence TaskForce, Government of Kenya, Kenya; Donald Clark, Wildfire Learning, UK; Alexandra Bohra Ruhr West University of Applied Science, Germany; Rachida Ajhoun; Tom Wambeke, ITCILO, Italy; Dayn Amade, Fundação Tablet Comunitario, Mozambique; Anna Amft, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, Ethiopia; Trina Angelone, GlobalED, USA; and Mohammed-V University, ENSIAS, Morocco.

Among the sponsors and partners were **atingi, British Council, Avanti, catalyst, class Technologies Inc, didacta, Institute of La Francophonie for Education and Training (Institut de la Francophonie pour l'éducation et la formation (IFEFF), Checkpoint eLearning, Nomad Education, IT Edge News. Africa, Orange, and UNESCO** among others

Research: 56% of businesses experienced LinkedIn scams this year



Cybersecurity expert advises businesses on how to avoid LinkedIn scammers/swindlers

More than half of businesses (56%) experienced at least one LinkedIn scam this year, according to the newest research by NordLayer, a network security solution for businesses. The most affected tend to be big companies (65%), requests to connect from an unknown person with a suspicious link in the message is the most popular scam they encounter (47%), and damaged reputation (48%) was the leading outcome of LinkedIn scams.

“Like in every social media platform, attackers and scammers seek information and money or ruin reputations. We know that employees are considered to be the weakest link in the cybersecurity chain, and LinkedIn has millions of professional accounts, making it an even more appealing target for scammers. So no one should let their guard down, no matter how professional a message might look,” says Carlos Salas, a cybersecurity expert at NordLayer.

What size companies are the most affected by LinkedIn scams?

According to the research, 65% of big companies have been contacted by a scam/fake account on LinkedIn at least once. Furthermore, 58% of medium and 31% of small companies have experienced it at least once.

Carlos Salas says, “Cyberattacks are a

major threat to businesses of all sizes. However, big companies are often the most targeted due to their data and value. They also have larger networks and databases, making them vulnerable to attack if their security measures are not up to par. Hackers will often focus their efforts on these targets to maximize their rewards.”

Most common types of LinkedIn scams and employees' response to them

Data revealed that a fake job offer (47%) is the most prevailing LinkedIn scam among businesses. Moreover, they also receive phishing attempts (47%), requests to connect from an unknown person with a suspicious link in the message (41%), and fake tech support (38%).

Surprisingly, almost half of companies (45%) are also aware of a scam on LinkedIn using their organization's brand name. This type of scam was the most prevalent among big companies (53%), but it's also common among medium ones: 53% of these businesses indicated that this type of scam also happened to them. Only small companies noted that they almost never experience such scams (13%).

Research also shows that the most popular employee action against these scams was to contact the LinkedIn administration (71%). Also, publish a post on social media about the scammers (71%), as well

as report it to the police (51%).

Damaged reputation is the leading outcome of LinkedIn scams for big organizations

As the leading outcome of LinkedIn scams, big companies named damaged reputation (48%) as well as stolen/damaged data and high financial loss (40% each). Medium enterprises were hurt the most by damaged reputation (47%) and stolen/damaged client contacts (45%). Lastly, small companies that experienced any kind of scam indicated that financial loss (67%) as well as interruption to operations and stolen intellectual property (58% each) were the most common damage.

“One of the best ways to protect your business from LinkedIn scams is to educate your employees about the types of scams that exist and how to recognize them. Also, encourage your employees to use two-factor authentication (2FA) on their LinkedIn accounts as well as verify requests for information.

“Finally, regularly monitor the activity on your business's LinkedIn account. Look for any suspicious activity, such as unauthorized logins or changes to account information. If you notice signs that your business has been targeted by a LinkedIn scam, report the activity to LinkedIn immediately and take steps to secure your accounts and data,” says Salas.

Methodology: NordLayer surveyed 500 companies in 3 countries: the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada. The external agency SAGO conducted the surveys between March 15 and 25, 2023. Respondents were asked a set of questions about LinkedIn scams in the B2B industry. The samples were taken from non-governmental organizations operating in the services industry, and the target respondents were decision-makers (sole or partial) for IT-related acquisitions. Companies were divided into 3 main groups regarding size: 1-10 employees (small), 11-200 employees (medium), 201+ employees (large).

The social media addiction new report shows people now spend 876 hours per year on social media



Ever found yourself endlessly scrolling through Instagram, refreshing your Twitter feed, or getting lost in the latest Facebook updates? A new report shows an increasing social media addiction; and the trend is global.

According to the data presented by the Atlas VPN team, an average internet user now spends 144 minutes (2 hours and 24 minutes) on social media. This equates to an astonishing 876 hours or approximately 36.5 days per year.

The social media addiction

The report shows that:

- The average internet user spent 144 minutes (2 hours and 24 minutes) on social media.
 - It translates to 876 hours or approximately 36.5 days per year.
 - People in **Nigeria** devote 238 minutes (equivalent to 3 hours and 58 minutes) of their daily time to social media, surpassing users in other countries.
 - Next up are **Ghana** and **Brazil**, with 235 minutes (3 hours and 55 minutes) and 224 minutes (3 hours and 44 minutes) of daily social media usage, respectively.
 - People in the **Philippines** and **Kenya** devote 216 minutes (3 hours and 36 minutes) and 215 minutes (3 hours and 35 minutes) to social media daily, respectively.
 - In contrast, people in **Japan** spend only 50 minutes daily on social media the least of all surveyed countries.
 - The primary purpose of using social media is to **keep in touch with friends and family**, with 48.2% considering it their main activity.

These figures are derived from data provided by DataReportal. The data is based on a survey with internet users aged 16 to 64 about their social media usage habits.

Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya lead Africa's social media dependency rates

Emerging markets exhibit longer social media use. Despite only 14.3% of **Nigeria's** population being active social media users, individuals in the country devote an average of 238 minutes (equivalent to 3 hours and 58 minutes) of their daily time to social media, surpassing users in other countries examined in the study. Internet users in **Ghana** are not far behind, with 235 minutes (3 hours and 55 minutes) of daily social media usage.

Brazil occupies the third spot on the list. People there spend 224 minutes (3 hours and 44 minutes) on social media daily. However, the country ranks number one in the number of social media platforms used each month, with the country's internet users actively engaging with 8.1 social networks monthly.

Next up are the **Philippines** and **Kenya**. People in the countries devote 216 minutes (3 hours and 36 minutes) and 215 minutes (3 hours and 35 minutes) to social media daily, respectively.

In contrast, people in **Japan** allocate only 50 minutes of their daily time to social media the least of all surveyed countries. Neighbors in **South Korea** are also not keen on spending time on social media, with 66 minutes (1 hour and 6 minutes) devoted to it on a daily basis. Both countries also rank in the bottom five based on the overall time spent on the internet. The internet usage trends in Japan and South Korea could be influenced by its aging population.

The primary purpose for most individuals using social media is to **keep in touch with friends and family**, with almost half (48.2%) considering it their main activity.

Another significant motive for social media usage is to **fill spare time**, with 36.8% of people indicating it as a reason. Meanwhile, 34.5% employ social media platforms to **stay updated on news stories**.

The Tezza Academy Story: A software academy promoting Nigeria as the world's skill factory

By Jide Modele, Managing Partner, Tezza Business Solutions

Tezza Academy started in November 2020 and it evolved from what was known as Tezza Boot Camp. We set up a boot camp to help introduce young IT professionals to the field of software testing.

The objective was that, by training them to become certified software testers, we will place them in a Mentoring Program where they shadow experts for about two months of professional field experience; and then they start their careers as testers.

However, in our bid to grow our consulting practice in software testing and product development, we realized that all our clients were faced with the same problem, being the dearth of highly skilled professionals leaving the country for emerging opportunities abroad. At this point, we figured that the boot camp will just not cut the demand, as our clients need highly skilled professionals.

So my partner and CEO Roland Omoresemi decided what we needed was to evolve the boot camp into an academy, where we have a more robust and multidisciplinary curriculum that looks beyond just the software testing skill set but one that comprises IT domains that we specialise in and ensure we build a team of well-focused competent professionals who can serve our clients in all our operating regions in Africa and the US. It was this vision that gave birth to Tezza Academy in November 2020.

Tezza Academy is currently training the second set of professionals to be admitted into the Academy. The first set which was a mix of trainees from Nigeria and Kenya completed a three-month training program in multiple domains such as Software Quality assurance, Customer Experience management, Test Automation, Software Development Engineering in Test, Performance Testing, Test Data Management, Agile practice, Java Script development, The Consultant Mindset, essential pillars of leadership amongst others. Our goal was to ensure that all our trainees were exposed to about the same level of training, then they now chose their areas of specialization.

Strategic Placements Addressing the 'unemployability' challenge

In terms of success stories, every single

one of the 20 trainees who went through that first class has been fully engaged at a client site as a practicing consultant. As a matter of fact, their placements occurred before they graduated from the academy. We have consultants from that class solving problems for clients in the US, Kenya and Nigeria with exceptional client

At Tezza Academy, we breathe our core, value system, standard operating procedures into our trainees, and make sure they they Learn It, Know It, and Own It. This becomes a fundamental aspect of their professional practice.

feedback.

One of the significant value propositions, of Tezza Academy is to make sure all our trainees live, breath, eat, learn and develop within the same facility under one roof. This creates an environment where they challenge and develop themselves and create a harmonized culture. Part of what we do at the Academy is not just train them on technology skills, but expose them to the core ethos of how we do business at Tezza and promote a healthy curiosity mindset which is valuable in helping our clients attain optimal value. At Tezza Academy, we breathe our core, value system, standard operating procedures into our trainees, and make sure they they Learn It, Know It, and Own It. This becomes a fundamental aspect of their professional practice.

Through this, everyone in the academy knows his or her own strengths and weaknesses. They all know how to back up and compensate for each other when it comes to executing their work. This helps us develop a fused multi-disciplinary team capable of providing immediate redundancy for every consultant engaged with our clients. This practice has keenly



accelerated the competence levels of our trainees such that we have multiple instances where our graduates start outperforming the people that they were shadowing only a month ago. We have trainees who in less than three months after completing their program, have stepped into managerial roles with our clients.

Those are some of the more fundamental testaments that we have from the Academy. We also have testaments from clients in Nigeria and in the US, who have spoken about the quality of the people who came through the Academy and how they have engaged and created real value for them at their various projects. These are written testaments from our clients attesting to the quality of the people that have come out from the Academy.

Tezza is focused on skill development and professional placements

Tezza Academy has largely focused on just the development of highly skilled professionals and working on placing them with valued clients that need these skill set. In recent times, we started speaking to parties willing to partner with the Academy. People who found out about what we are doing and got interested in helping to develop this vision, expand and scale it, such as the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN). The PFN led a leadership team to the Academy to meet with us and find out what we are doing. They have met with the trainees inside the Academy and they have already made a commitment to partner for the growth and development of the objectives of Tezza Academy, starting this year.

The core importance of the Academy is to develop highly skilled professionals across multiple domains, and have professionals who have multiple competencies. The essence is for us to have a team that can help address the skill gap that we have in Nigeria now and will keep evolving in the years ahead. We also develop custom curriculum to address specific client requirements.

The Academy is less than a year old and we are happy with the quality of professionals that we have been able to develop, the level of engagement, their commitment, and drive towards establishing this vision for building a highly competent subject matter experts here in Nigeria. One of the fundamental aspects of what we are trying to do at Tezza Academy is not limited to developing competence skill gap, but to build, and address some of the social challenges that lead to the exodus of highly skilled professionals in Nigeria.

One of these social challenges is decent, affordable accommodation and the basic infrastructure required to ensure our youths and highly skilled professionals can be truly engaged and able to practice their career here in Nigeria with stable electricity, internet access, decent and affordable accommodation. Part of what Tezza Academy is putting in place now is providing decent accommodation for those who have graduated from the Academy, such that whilst they are working for Tezza over the next two years after their graduation, they can be engaged and housed in such facilities in comfort.

All these are part of the next steps and the things that the Academy has made a priority. Before the end of the year, we expect that we should be able to get that kick-started.



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Africa cements status as a global leader in digital transformation as thousands flock to day one of inaugural GITEX Africa



Tech leaders from across the continent and the world collaborate and pledge their commitments to accelerate cross-continent investment opportunities.

Africa's rising status as a global leader in digital transformation was firmly cemented during day one of the inaugural GITEX Africa 2023, as tech leaders from across the continent and the world gathered to collaborate and pledge their commitments to accelerating cross-continent investment opportunities.

GITEX Africa, which runs until tomorrow (2 June 2023), in Marrakech, Morocco, welcomed thousands of attendees across its 45,000 sqm of exhibition expanse, with government ministers and private sector executives alike celebrating the collective achievements, and more importantly, advancing the future ambitions of a continent determined to elevate its entrepreneurial innovation economy.

Creating Africa's own Silicon Valley

Babajide Sanwo-olu, Executive Governor of the Lagos State in Nigeria, was among the keynote speakers at the GITEX Africa Digital Summit. Mr. Sanwo-olu explained how Africa is on the fast-track to become the next Silicon Valley.

He stressed the importance of investing in African youth, which makes up over 60 percent of the continent's population, while noting that, according to studies, around 30 percent of investment in Africa is dedicated to the digital economy.

Mr. Sanwo-olu also said Lagos is already home to some of Africa's largest data centres, while the state's Start-Up Act 2022 and Knowledge, Innovation, Technology, and Entrepreneurship (KITE) Project in the Yaba suburb are

propelling Lagos, and Nigeria into a hub of global innovation.

"The Yaba Start-Up policy will elevate Lagos as a city ready to become a global player," said Mr. Sanwo-olu. "In a few years, not only will Africa be supplying the bulk of professionals required (in the global IT industry) but it will also be creating a lot of jobs.

"In ten years, Africa will become the place where major global companies such as Microsoft and Meta, will come to recruit intelligent profiles trained in the technical fields in which Africa abounds."

In its debut edition, GITEX Africa features 900 exhibiting companies and start-ups eager to gain access to meaningful and valuable connections for



business development while learning about the vast opportunities in the world's rising digital economy.

TalentQL is one of 60-plus Nigerian start-ups this week looking to scale-up its operations and collaborate with fellow innovators and investors. Founded in 2021, TalentQL helps companies build top-tier teams by hiring, developing and managing tech talent remotely.

“The focus for us is to bridge the divide between demand and supply for tech talent in Africa,” said Ibrahim Conte, Director of TalentQL, which has operations in Nigeria, the UK, Rwanda, and the USA.

“We help companies hire engineering talent via our diverse and robust pool of data scientists, developers, software, cloud, and cybersecurity professionals, and technical support. We shorten the process that companies go through to hire talent, and even ensure a cultural fit of candidates so clients have the best possible talent to grow their organisations and scale their products.”

Conte said demand for African talent is now higher than ever: “The supply and the demand are higher now for African talent, and we help these companies access those talents,” he added. “We're participating at GITEX Africa to learn from other innovators and to celebrate collaboration to make things better for Africa.”

Promoting financial inclusion through

flourishing fintech

Africa's flourishing fintech sector meanwhile is estimated to reach revenues of US\$65 billion by 2030, growing at the world's fastest rate at 13 times over the next seven years.

This presents a unique opportunity for the continent to leapfrog outdated stages of technological development and move straight to more advanced solutions that are being debated and scrutinised at GITEX Africa's Fintech Summit, one of ten dedicated conference tracks at Africa's most comprehensive leadership conference programme.

Aalya Ghouli, CEO of DIGIFI and DIGISERV at BNP Paribas, a speaker at the Fintech Summit, said: “GITEX Africa is a unique opportunity to bring together the African ecosystem around a common goal: to accelerate digitalisation in Africa and position the continent as a key global player in the development of technological innovation.

“The number of participants and their backgrounds prove the current effervescence of the continent and its willingness of its states to position digital at the heart of their development strategy. GITEX Africa plays a major role to support this dynamic. BNP Paribas has been promoting for years now the financial inclusion and the digitalisation of financial services in Morocco and other African territories. It is natural to support such as a forum and initiative.”

Khalid Elgibaly, President of the Middle East and North Africa Division at Mastercard, will also speak on a fireside chat on GITEX Africa's Fintech Summit about Fintech as a building block of Africa's digital future: “Fintechs, with their disruptive and inclusive nature, have emerged as powerful enablers of financial services for previously underserved populations, overcoming traditional barriers such as limited access to banking infrastructure.

“By promoting collaboration and knowledge sharing among stakeholders, GITEX Africa unlocks new opportunities and drives the digital transformation necessary to address the continent's unique challenges while unlocking its vast potential.”

Supernova Challenge battlers take centre-stage for start-up supremacy

Today will also see some of world's most innovative start-ups take their next steps into potentially becoming the next African-borne Unicorn.

The GITEX Africa Supernova Challenge, Africa's most valuable start-up pitch competition with US\$100,000 in cash prizes, has pooled a shortlist of 70 disruptive start-ups from 31 countries to battle it out for supremacy across two days of live pitches in front of a 13-strong judging panel of global VCs, angel investors, and accelerators.

The shortlist of Africa's most coveted start-up pitch competition was selected from more than 300 applications, representing nations from across the globe, including Cameroon, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Gambia, Ghana, India, Israel, Kenya, Korea, Kuwait, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Africa, Switzerland, Tunisia, Uganda, UK, USA, and Zambia.

GITEX Africa is held under the High Patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, and hosted by the Digital Development Agency (ADD), under the authority of the Moroccan Ministry of Digital Transition and Administration Reform.

The hyper connector is organised by KAOUN International, the overseas events organising company of Dubai World Trade Centre, which organises GITEX Global in Dubai, UAE, the world's largest tech and start-up show, rated by tech executives as the world's best global tech event.

More information is available at www.gitexafrica.com.

Lagos state partners Dubai World Trade Centre to empower Nigerian startups for global success at GITEX Africa



The Lagos State government in partnership with the Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC) has proudly sponsored 25 exceptional startups to participate at [GITEX Africa](#), Morocco in a remarkable demonstration of its commitment to fostering innovation and entrepreneurship.

The startups include Pocket Food, Access Tech, Printivo, Startup Lagos, Eko Institute of Technology, Kirgawa, Qore, Imperial EdTech, Bunce, Etaps, and Innovia Labs.

[GITEX Africa](#) is the largest and most influential tech and startup event in Africa. The prestigious event, renowned for showcasing technological advancements, innovations, and digital transformation, provides a platform for these Nigerian startups to pitch their ideas, connect with investors, and network with industry leaders on a global scale.

The presence of the Executive Governor of Lagos State, Babajide Sanwo-Olu at the GITEX Africa Digital Summit, underscores the Lagos State Government's unwavering support for the startup ecosystem.

Governor Sanwo-Olu had a speaking session where he shared his vision for fostering innovation and driving the

digital transformation of Lagos State. He highlighted the remarkable growth of Africa's tech start-up sector and emphasized that Nigerian tech start-ups surpassed the \$4 billion mark in 2022, with Lagos playing a leading role in the continent's digital transformation.

The Governor emphasized that Africa's rise in technology is unstoppable. From Nairobi to Cape Town, and from Rwanda to Morocco, the continent is emerging as a global tech hub, attracting both local and international investments. He then called for continued collaboration between the public and private sectors to harness Africa's limitless potential.

Sanwo at GITEX Africa: Testament to government's commitment

His presence serves as a strong testament to the government's commitment to nurturing the growth of startups and positioning Lagos as a hub for technological advancements in Africa.

The event was also attended by Tunbosun Alake, the Special Adviser to the Governor of Lagos State on Innovation and Technology, who emphasized the government's dedication to driving technological advancements and fostering an innovation-driven

economy.

The Lagos State Government delegation, led by the Commissioner, Ministry of Science & Tech, Honourable Hakeem Fahm and Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Science and Technology, Engr. (Mrs) Ibilola Kasunmu provided guidance and support to the sponsored startups throughout their journey at GITEX Africa.

The maiden GITEX Africa technology conference and exhibitions held 31 May 2 June recording over 30, 000 attendees including exhibitors, conference speakers and trade visitors. It brought together over 450 tech innovators, in excess of 9000 entrepreneurs, about 200 government institutions and more than 300 investors from around the world to explore the rapidly advancing tech landscape in Africa.

With a focus on AI, cybersecurity, fintech, cloud computing, and connectivity, the event offered invaluable insights and opportunities to shape inclusive digital societies and drive technological advancements across various sectors.

The Lagos State Government's sponsorship exemplifies its unwavering commitment to empowering the local startup ecosystem and positioning Nigerian entrepreneurs on the global stage. By investing in these talented startups, the government aims to create a conducive environment for innovation to thrive, foster economic growth, and position Lagos State as a hub for technological advancement in Africa.

Supported by Eko Innovation Centre, an innovation hub focused on driving the growth of startups and promoting digital transformation in Nigeria, the chosen startups represent the forefront of innovation in Nigeria. These startups will have the unique opportunity to present their groundbreaking ideas, engage in interactive showcases, attend outcome-focused conferences, witness product launches, and network with industry experts. This exposure at GITEX Africa will undoubtedly accelerate their growth, opening doors to potential partnerships, collaborations, and investment opportunities.

At GITEX Africa, Sanwo-Olu lists Lagos pathway to digital economy



As GITEX Africa winds down today in Marrakech, Morocco, Lagos State Governor, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu, has listed some of the policy thrusts and projects the state has executed to make Nigeria's commercial capital of over 20 million people the hub for Africa's digital

economy.

"Lagos, Nigeria's bustling mega-city, is emerging as a thriving epicenter of tech entrepreneurship and innovation. Lagos is home to some of the most innovative and successful startups in Africa, including Andela, Paystack, Flutterwave, Kobo360, Kuda Bank and many others. These companies have not only transformed industries like fintech and e-commerce but have also inspired a new generation of entrepreneurs and investors across the continent," the governor said in a speech at the main stage to project the increasing value of Lagos to investors. He said his administration has committed fund, policies and willpower to advance the

tech sector and plans to speed up actions on infrastructure deployment, IT skill development and digital ID among others in the next four years to attract more investors.

IT Edge News.Africa has broken down the government's list below.

Lagos is committing fund, policies and willpower

1. "In deepening internet penetration, a key ingredient for start-up, we have deployed over 2,900km of fibre optic infrastructure that aims to connect public schools, government buildings, hospitals, and other points of interest.
2. "Along the same channels, we have

Nigerian startup Nearpays emerges winner at GITEX Africa Supernova Champion

Nigerian fintech Nearpays was voted the best of African startups at the just ended GITEX Africa Supernova Challenge Competition, one of the highpoints of the maiden Gitex Africa conference and expo organised by the Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC) in Marrakech, Morocco from 31 May 2 June.

Nearpays, a full-service financial payment platform that acts as an end-to-end financial service for all its clients, emerged winner in the Fintech and Blockchain Technology Category to grab the \$10,000 prize.

The Supernova had \$100,000 for grabs for five category winners (\$10,000 each) as well as one overall winner to take home \$50,000.

Overall GITEX Africa Supernova Champion

Proxgy (Everywhere as a Service P. Ltd.) was voted the overall GITEX AFRICA Supernova Challenge and took home the \$50,000 reward.

"Winning has heightened our enthusiasm and increased our opportunities at Nearpays and other startups in Nigeria," said Nearpays founder Victor Daniyan to IT Edge News.Africa.

He said the event has brought powerful exposure to mentors, prospective investors and partners that Nearpays could leverage on to further expand, and improve on its simplified and secured online payments.

Touted as the world's largest and most-inclusive startup event in Africa, the startup section of GITEX Africa hosted over 400 global startups, 250 leading investors & VCs, and 250 speakers all drawn from more than 95 countries. The main event itself recorded over 20,000 participants including conference delegates, exhibitors and trade visitors.

The Supernova Categories

Cybersecurity \$10,000, focusing on the startup's product or service with the best profile in incident response, security protocol implementation to mitigate cyber threats, cyberattacks and data breaches across the sectors of BFSI, telecommunications and government.

The AI and Digital Cities \$10,000, the winner is best at redefining Africa's public digital landscape, ensuring a brighter, more digitally inclusive future. The startup's product or service must explore the limitless possibilities of generative AI and be able to showcase how the technology can drive growth and development across the continent.

The Fintech and Blockchain \$10,000; for this category, the winner must be a fintech startup transforming the financial landscape in Africa, from mobile money to blockchain-based platforms Nearpays was voted winner in this category.

The Healthtech \$10,000; here, the winner must demonstrate a solution leveraging cutting-edge technologies such as AI, wearables, and telemedicine to revolutionize healthcare delivery and improve patient outcomes.

The Sustainability and Agritech \$10,000, the winner must be able to utilize technology to solve social challenges including energy and environmental fields, or showcase a product or service in tech-enabled sustainable development.

The Overall GITEX Africa Supernova Champion \$50,000; to clinch this, the winner must be voted as having the most innovative, creative and groundbreaking idea of all startups pitching at the GITEX Africa Supernova Challenge Proxgy emerged as the Overall GITEX Africa Supernova Champion. The technology aggregator works in the field of creative near World technology solutions which ease the day to day issues of its users and let them explore a whole new World of opportunities and possibilities. Proxgy is involved in IoT, AI and NLP to provide its customers a niche and innovative Experiential Discovery platform in a live and assisted manner.



deployed, in partnership with the private sector 3,000km of optical duct infrastructure. This will serve to de-risk infrastructure development in Lagos which will in turn increase connectivity.

3. “In the past one year, Lagos has attracted over one billion dollars in Data center investment. This will enable the local domicile of digital platforms as well as facilitate the proliferation of digital technology opportunities. The proliferation of these investments also presents 10 opportunities for talent development within this ecosystem.

4. “Our Smart City implementation has seen us deploy over 600 Smart Intelligent Video Surveillance Cameras as well as Intelligent Transportation Cameras for

Traffic monitoring and management. Over the past year, through our initial ITS pilot deployment leveraging our Automatic number plate recognition cameras, monitoring of violation infractions has reduced traffic warden in-person enforcement by 30 percent.

5. “We have also begun a significant identity management programme through our Lagos State Residents Registration Agency that will seek to identify all our inhabitants. Current projections state that Lagos will have 30 million inhabitants by 2035. It is imperative to drive the identity management ecosystem for a smarter city. This will lend to more efficient resource allocation and planning for the state. The Lagos Digital Identity

Project has undergone a fundamental restructuring of its operational model. With a new digital identification card that is capable of enabling access to benefits, electronic ticketing and so on, it further drives the digital inclusion benchmark for Lagos. Currently, about five million residents have been captured. We are targeting another 10 million within the next year.

6. “Through our Lagos State Employment Trust fund, we have funded digital skills training interventions for more than 4,000 beneficiaries. Courses include digital marketing, coding, and other innovation courses. These digital skills training are needed capacity interventions that lend positively to the development of the ecosystem.

NITDA stresses regional collaboration at GITEX Africa



This week at **GITEX Africa**, Marrakech, Morocco, the **National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA)** has reiterated the need for regional collaboration to accelerate digital transformation across Africa, provide opportunities that can propel a new digital era of innovation and inclusive development across the continent.

The agency expressed its position at the two panel sessions with the themes: 'Accelerating Digital Transformation in Africa: Strategies, Challenges and Opportunities' and 'Fast Tracking to an Integrated and Inclusive Digital Public Infrastructure' where **Director General, NITDA, Kashifu Inuwa Abdullahi**, discussed the role of technology in driving economic growth, job creation, and digital economy development on the continent.

Over 50 Nigerian startups at GITEX Africa

The maiden **GITEX Africa** technology conference and exhibitions holding 31 May 2 June is designed as meeting point for industry leaders, policymakers, entrepreneurs, and innovators across the globe to discuss and showcase advancements in technology.

More than 50 Nigerian startups are exhibition at the global event. Lagos state Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu who addressed a global audience on the investment potential of the continent and Lagos state particularly said the government had already taken steps to ensure Lagos becomes the continent's investors' hub in the digital economy.

Abdullahi, represented by **Dr. Aristotle Onumo, Director of Corporate Planning and Strategy**, highlighted the need for African countries to invest in digital infrastructure, skills development, and policy reforms in order to reap the full benefits of digital transformation.

He stressed the importance of collaboration between governments, academia, industry, venture capitalist, and the tech community in order to accelerate digital transformation in Africa.

“An example of such collaboration is in the development of the **Nigeria Startup Act** which the ecosystem regards as the game changer that will further catalyse the industry and make Nigeria a global startup destination”, he stated. According to him, African countries must work together to develop common standards and regulations for the digital economy, and to promote the adoption of digital technologies across all sectors of the economy.

Collaboration within the tech and innovation ecosystem is important to further making progress through **African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)** and **African Smart Alliance** as well to sustain the efforts at fostering a common digital identity for Africa, NITDA stressed.

The NITDA's boss offered insights into the development of **National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS)**, and **NITDA's Strategic Roadmap and Action Plan (SRAP 2021-2024)** as frameworks that drew from stakeholders' collaborations.

His words: “Technology is a key driver of economic growth and job creation in Africa. We need to invest in digital infrastructure and develop our own digital strategies in order to fully reap the benefits of the digital revolution. “Public-private partnerships are essential for driving digital transformation in Africa. We need to work together to create a more inclusive and sustainable digital future for the continent.”

The panel sessions were made up of experts and representatives from governments, businesses and the tech community from across Africa. The discussions incited a clear consensus among the participants that digital transformation is essential for Africa's economic development.

GITEX Africa: Sanwo-Olu pitches Lagos as Africa's digital economy hub, says continent on course to be next Silicon Valley

By Tracy Yekaghe



Lagos State Governor, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu, this week at GITEX Africa, Marrakech, Morocco turned the topnotch salesman for Lagos state and a canvasser for investments into the continent. Watch Video.

"I stand before you today not just as the Governor of Lagos State, a sub-sovereign state within Nigeria with a population of over 20 million people, but as an ardent believer in the vast and untapped potential that Africa holds within the realms of technology and digital innovation.

"As the Governor of Lagos State, a city that is at the forefront

of this transformation, I am committed to supporting the growth of the tech industry in Africa," Sanwo-Olu told the international audience of over 300 investors, 250 conference speakers, 30 ministerial delegations, 900 exhibitors and startups, as well as over 20,000 trade visitors all drawn from about 120 countries.

GITEX Africa made an historic debut from 31 May-2; broke all projections and sold-out with cross-continent support of the global tech community. It has turned out to become Africa's largest, most influential tech and startup event under the high patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI of the Kingdom of Morocco.

Lagos is home to most innovative and successful startups in Africa

"Lagos, Nigeria's bustling mega-city, is emerging as a thriving epicenter of tech entrepreneurship and innovation. Lagos is home to some of the most innovative and successful startups in Africa, including Andela, Paystack, Flutterwave, Kobo360, Kuda Bank and many others. These companies have not only transformed industries like fintech and e-commerce but have also inspired a new generation of entrepreneurs and investors across the continent.

"These success stories have been made possible, in part, by the fund raised from companies, unicorns, and venture capital firms that have flooded the Lagos tech ecosystem in

UNICCON Group leverages GITEX Africa to showcase new innovations

• Launches VR headset to deepen inclusion in VR metaverse

One of Africa's leading technology companies **UNICCON Group of Companies** launched its highly anticipated virtual reality headset at **GITEX Africa** which held May 31st to June 2nd, 2023 in **Marrakech, Morocco**.

The launch, a significant breakthrough for the African tech industry, headlined series of similar launch activities by the UNICCON Group at the event.

"The **UNICCON VR** incorporates cutting-edge technology and state-of-the-art design to create an immersive digital environment that seamlessly integrates with the real world," the company stated.

Adding: "By bridging the gap between physical and virtual realities, the VR headset offers a transformative experience that opens opportunities in education, entertainment, communication, and beyond."

The UNICCON Group foisted its presence



on a robustly-designed exhibition booth featuring groundbreaking products such as **Omeife AI, Smart Medicare, Baba Sky Drones, UNICCON VR, SmartAfri** and its other array of bespoke innovations.

UNICCON VR headset puts Africa at the forefront of VR innovation

According to the company, "the introduction of the UNICCON VR headset marks a significant milestone in the African tech industry, propelling the continent into the

forefront of Virtual Reality innovation. As the demand for immersive experiences continues to grow, UNICCON's groundbreaking device is set to redefine the way Africans engage with technology, unlocking endless possibilities and fostering a more connected and inclusive future.

"The potential benefits of the headset are manifold and extend to various sectors. In education, students can step into virtual classrooms, accessing interactive lessons from renowned educators worldwide. This technology has the power to democratize education, ensuring that quality learning experiences are accessible to students regardless of their geographic location or socio-economic background.

"Equipped with advanced optical sensors, high-resolution displays, and spatial sound technology, the **UNICCON VR** headset delivers unparalleled visual and auditory fidelity. Users can explore interactive 3D

recent years. More importantly, these investments have been attracted to the market size and the enabling environment that Lagos is becoming on the African continent,” Sanwo-Olu added even as he expressed his commitment to the growth of the tech industry in Africa.

He said: “The acceleration of Africa towards becoming the next Silicon Valley is not a mere aspiration; it is a reality unfolding before our eyes. It is a collective effort that requires the continued collaboration of governments, the private sector, academia, and civil society. It is a journey of transformation that sees Africa not just as a consumer of technology but as a creator, an innovator, and a leader in the digital age.”

Sanwo-Olu said his administration remains committed to fostering an enabling environment for startups and tech companies believing that they make up the real engine for economic growth with capacity to create jobs, and address various societal challenges.

Government will continuously seek for collaboration within and outside the country to grow the economy, the governor stressed in Marrakesh..

Sanwo-Olu: Seeking for “more potential investors into our shores”

He tweeted: “In a bid to attract more potential investors into our shores, I met with the leaders and organizers of the Gitex Africa Technology summit. Our partnership would ultimately see us increasing the focus and investment in new technology advancements, the governor tweeted.

Adding: “Artificial intelligence (A.I) is taking the technology space to a different level of advancement. It is redefining how people think, act and access data in a seamless way.

“At the GITEX Africa technology showcase, I met with the UAE

minister for Artificial Intelligence. Our discussion focused on A.I Development with a focus on Africa. The minister expressed his willingness to drive A.I partnerships with Lagos to foster beneficial A.I frameworks.”

Nigeria features strong government presence + over 50 startups

GITEX Africa attracted participation from across Africa and the rest of the globe, Nigerian participants included over 50 startups, Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), Galaxy Backbone, Unicon Group of Companies (creators of Africa's first humanoid robot Omeife), and the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), among others.

Lagos state is sponsoring a number of startups totaling over 30 in partnership with the Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC) to Gitex Africa in addition to hosting a business space managed by the state's ministry of science & technology to share the Lagos experience and spread the business case of why Lagos is an attractive investors' destination on the continent.

The event was inaugurated by the Moroccan Head of Government, Aziz Akhannouch, who said the event has demonstrated the readiness of the continent for the digital transformation.

His words: “In light of the economic turmoil and profound transformations the world is witnessing today, digital technology has become an essential and unprecedented lever for economic development both internationally, and in the African continent in particular.

“Africa has increasingly worked to consolidate its position as a dynamic environment that supports innovation, and in this regard, GITEX Africa is an occasion to highlight the promising potential of the African continent.”

environments, engage in realistic virtual simulations, and connect with others in the metaverse, transcending the limitations of time and space. The lightweight and ergonomic design ensure maximum comfort during extended usage, making it accessible to a diverse range of users.

The AR/VR headset is currently available for pre-order, and official sales will be announced soon.”

UNICCON: Showcasing Africa's inspiring innovations

Inside its exhibition space, the UNICCON Group showcased the region's potential and its commitment to technological advancement. It describes its participation as marking “a significant leap for both UNICCON Group and Africa within the technology ecosystem.”

Omeife AI, one of UNICCON's flagship offerings, took center stage. Powered by Artificial Intelligence and advanced machine learning algorithms, Omeife AI is an innovative solution that aims to bridge the gap and drive digital inclusion for all,

regardless of literacy levels. It also empowers businesses by streamlining processes and enhancing decision-making. Its real-time data analysis capabilities enable organizations to drive innovation and optimize operational efficiency, contributing to Africa's digital transformation journey.

Smart Medicare, another solution exhibited by UNICCON, demonstrated the transformative power of technology in the healthcare sector. By leveraging cutting-edge digital advancements, Smart Medicare revolutionizes patient care, enabling remote monitoring, telemedicine consultations, and personalized healthcare solutions. The integration of Smart Medicare with existing healthcare systems enhances service delivery and improves healthcare outcomes across Africa.

Baba Sky Drones, a division of UNICCON, captivated the audience with its advanced drone technologies. These unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) offer a wide range of applications, from aerial photography and surveillance to logistics and disaster

management. Baba Sky Drones provide innovative solutions for industries such as agriculture, infrastructure, and emergency services, contributing to Africa's progress in various sectors.

SmartAfri, an initiative by UNICCON aimed at driving digital transformation in Africa. With focus on bridging the digital divide, SmartAfri showcased innovative solutions tailored to the unique challenges and opportunities of the African continent. From e-commerce platforms to smart agriculture solutions, SmartAfri empowers individuals, businesses, and governments across Africa to harness the full potential of technology.

UNICCON VR, the virtual reality division of the conglomerate, transported attendees into immersive digital experiences. Showcasing interactive simulations, virtual tours, and training programs, UNICCON VR demonstrated the future potential of virtual reality technology in Africa. From gaming enthusiasts to professionals in diverse industries, visitors at GITEX were treated to a glimpse of the transformative power of VR.

GITEX Africa: PLATEC tasks Plateau government on partnering local tech companies to drive growth

By Tracy Yekaghe



The **Plateau Association of Tech Companies (PLATEC)** has tasked the state government on the need to partner private sector tech companies to drive social and economic growth within the state and across Nigeria.

“Private sector [players] are the engine room for any governmental development in the state or country which means that our government must be deliberate to work with all the private tech companies under the Plateau Association of Tech Companies (PLATEC) to provide more employable skills training, remote jobs, and IT solutions locally with Plateau state,” said **Chief Koppe Sylvanus Joseph**, president of PLATEC who is also the CEO & Founder at **A+ Computer Training Technology**.

Plateau Tech At Gitex Africa: Nearpays, NetAccess Communications and Topcity Enterprises Limited

According to him three Plateau tech indigenous companies are participating at the **GITEX Africa** currently holding in **Marrakech, Morocco** to showcase the potentials of local companies operating within **Plateau state** and also investment benefits of the state to prospective global investors.

“I am very happy that our effort is always keeping **Plateau** on the global map of tech space and this month, **Plateau tech indigenous companies** are currently

representing Plateau state at this year's **GITEX AI Tech Summit** in Morocco courtesy of PLATEC via private-sector support to its members,” Joseph posted. The three companies are **Nearpays, Topcity Enterprises Limited** and **NetAccess Communications**.

Topcity Enterprises limited, Topcity Agrihub, is an agritech startup providing postharvest solutions including post-harvest management, market linkage and agri products supply to help to boost agribusinesses in Northern Nigeria

NetAccess Communications Nigeria Limited, an IT services and consulting, company in Jos that provides a blend of flexible internet connectivity, software development, and fast track training solutions among others.

Nearpays, a full-service financial payment platform, acts as an end-to-end financial service for all its clients. The company has created various features to simplify online payments based on the principle that payments should be seamless. Nearpays made it to the final at the **GITEX AFRICA Startup Competition** as a **Supernova Finalist**.

The **GITEX AFRICA Supernova Challenge** is the biggest pitch competition in Africa, and offers startups opportunity to become the next unicorn. With \$100,000 total cash prize up for grabs, the **GITEX AFRICA Supernova Challenge** is the most

anticipated pitch competition for entrepreneurs displaying groundbreaking innovations and highlighting their value in front of the world.

Lagos stresses vision to be Africa's digital economy hub at GITEX Africa

He advised Plateau state to take a cue from the Lagos state government that has a powerful presence at the global event led by **Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu** who is using the event to canvass for investment into Lagos state. **Watch video**.

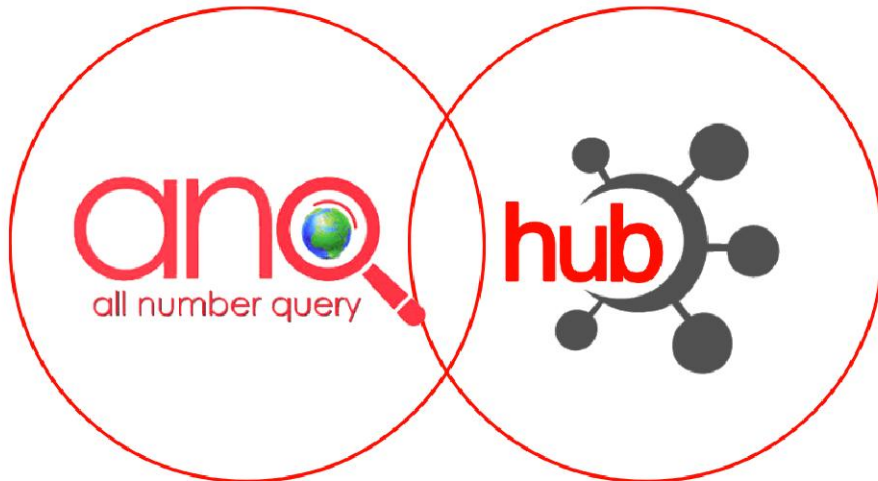
Lagos state is promoting over 30 tech and innovation startups at **Gitex Africa** in addition to hosting a business space managed by the state's ministry of science & technology to share the Lagos experience and spread the business case of why Lagos is an attractive investors' destination on the continent.

Sanwo-Olu himself took the global spotlight at the main stage **GITEX Africa** conference where he articulated on the vision of Lagos state to become Africa's digital economy hub even as he told the international audience including investors from over 90 countries that Lagos, and rest of Africa has become the **'go-to' place** for high return on investment (RoI).

“This year alone Lagos state government sponsored 30 tech hubs to represent Lagos state in Morocco and the governor accompanied them himself to Morocco to ensure international partnership for the tech hubs representing Lagos state,” the PLATEC president said..

Adding: “PLATEC calls on the state government to deliberately partner with all the tech companies within Plateau state to foster local content solutions that will boost human capital development, direct or remote employability of women/youths through tech skills in the state, boost investment opportunities that will lead to more revenues generation in the state from the tech space in Plateau state. We are committed to changing the narrative in this Fourth Industrial Revolution.”

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Transforming digital Africa

