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WEEKENDER
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HOW TO STAY EFFORTLESSLY STYLISH IN NIGERIA'S HOT WEATHER



FASHION

Lagos Sets Stage as Afrique Femme, CANEX WKND 2026 Partner to Spotlight Francophone Fashion and Female



WOMEN

Nwanyibuife: Celebrating the Totality of Womanhood Amid Breast Cancer

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Mr. Ademola Adebise
Director, AIICO Capital
Today, we celebrate a remarkable milestone and honour a distinguished leader whose wisdom, experience, and exemplary leadership continue to inspire excellence.
As you mark six decades of life, we wish you continued good health, happiness, fulfilment, and many more years of meaningful impact.
From the Management of AIICO Capital, we wish you a wonderful 60th birthday and many more years of greatness!

WEMA BANK
RC 575

Statement to The Nigerian Exchange Group and Shareholders

On The Extract Of Unaudited IFRS Results For The Quarter Ended 30 September, 2026

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30TH SEPT, 2026

ASSETS	Bank 30-Sep-26 N'000	Bank 31-Dec-25 N'000
Cash and cash equivalents	1,559,977,205	940,806,710
Restricted deposits with CBN	1,047,478,042	919,820,095
Pledged assets	74,890,371	20,018,671
Loans and advances to customers	2,511,182,387	1,737,932,376
Investment securities:		
Fair value through other comprehensive income	25,425,571	15,815,126
Fair value through profit or loss	546,486,374	196,598,757
Held at amortised cost	1,478,984,232	1,122,978,680
Wema Funding SPV	1,000	1,000
Other assets	52,059,332	23,413,367
Right of Use	1,189,533	1,217,463
Property and equipment	115,581,701	79,683,157
Intangible assets	3,263,922	3,561,689
Deferred tax assets	10,449,319	10,449,319
TOTAL ASSETS	**7,426,968,990**	**5,072,296,410**
LIABILITIES		
Deposits from banks	57,294,568	-
Deposits from customers	3,862,072,364	3,289,532,364
Current tax liabilities	45,229,090	37,373,111
Long term liabilities	2,586,782,503	1,007,757,722
Other liabilities	3,753,676	3,532,476
Provisions	81,705,015	113,626,673
TOTAL LIABILITIES	**6,636,837,215**	**4,451,822,346**
CAPITAL AND RESERVES		
Share capital	20,059,438	20,059,438
Share premium	240,601,448	240,601,448
Regulatory risk reserve	37,200,938	37,200,938
Retained earnings	381,177,936	215,067,443
Additional Tier 1 capital	21,000,000	21,000,000
Other reserves	90,092,015	86,544,798
Attributable to equity holders of the bank	790,131,775	620,474,064
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	**7,426,968,990**	**5,072,296,410**

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30TH SEPT, 2026

	Bank 30-Sep-26 N'000	Bank 30-Sep-25 N'000
Gross earnings	**673,243,763**	**461,996,410**
Interest income	543,563,051	396,144,122
interest expense	(217,682,282)	(160,534,885)
Net Interest Income	**325,880,769**	**235,609,237**
Net impairment charges	(18,542,838)	(15,300,786)
Net interest income after impairment charges	**307,337,931**	**220,308,451**
Net gain on FVTPL investment securities	10,424,404	1,067,219
Net fee and commission income	55,135,713	42,927,089
Net trading income	46,080,790	10,664,526
Other income	18,039,806	11,193,454
	129,680,712	**65,852,288**
Operating Income	**437,018,643**	**286,160,739**
Personnel expenses	(69,097,460)	(50,329,437)
Depreciation and amortisation	(14,048,077)	(8,407,925)
Other operating expenses	(95,237,054)	(80,990,510)
Profit before minimum taxation	**258,636,052**	**146,432,866**
Minimum tax		
Profit before taxation	258,636,052	146,432,866
Income tax expense	(38,795,408)	(19,036,273)
Profit after tax	**219,840,644**	**127,396,593**
Other comprehensive income		
Items that will be subsequently reclassified to profit or loss		
Net change in fair value of debt instruments FVOCI (net of tax) during the year	(34,337)	5,125,005
Other comprehensive income for the period net tax	**(34,337)**	**5,125,005**
Total comprehensive income for the year	**219,806,308**	**132,521,599**

KEY RATIOS

Earnings per share (kobo)-Basic	730.63	738.48
Earnings per share (kobo)-Diluted	730.63	738.48

The Board of Directors is confident that barring unforeseen circumstances, this performance would be improved upon considerably in the 4th quarter of the financial year.

APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS ON 29TH OF OCTOBER 2026.

Johnson Lebile
Company Secretary
FRC/2019/NBA/00000019017
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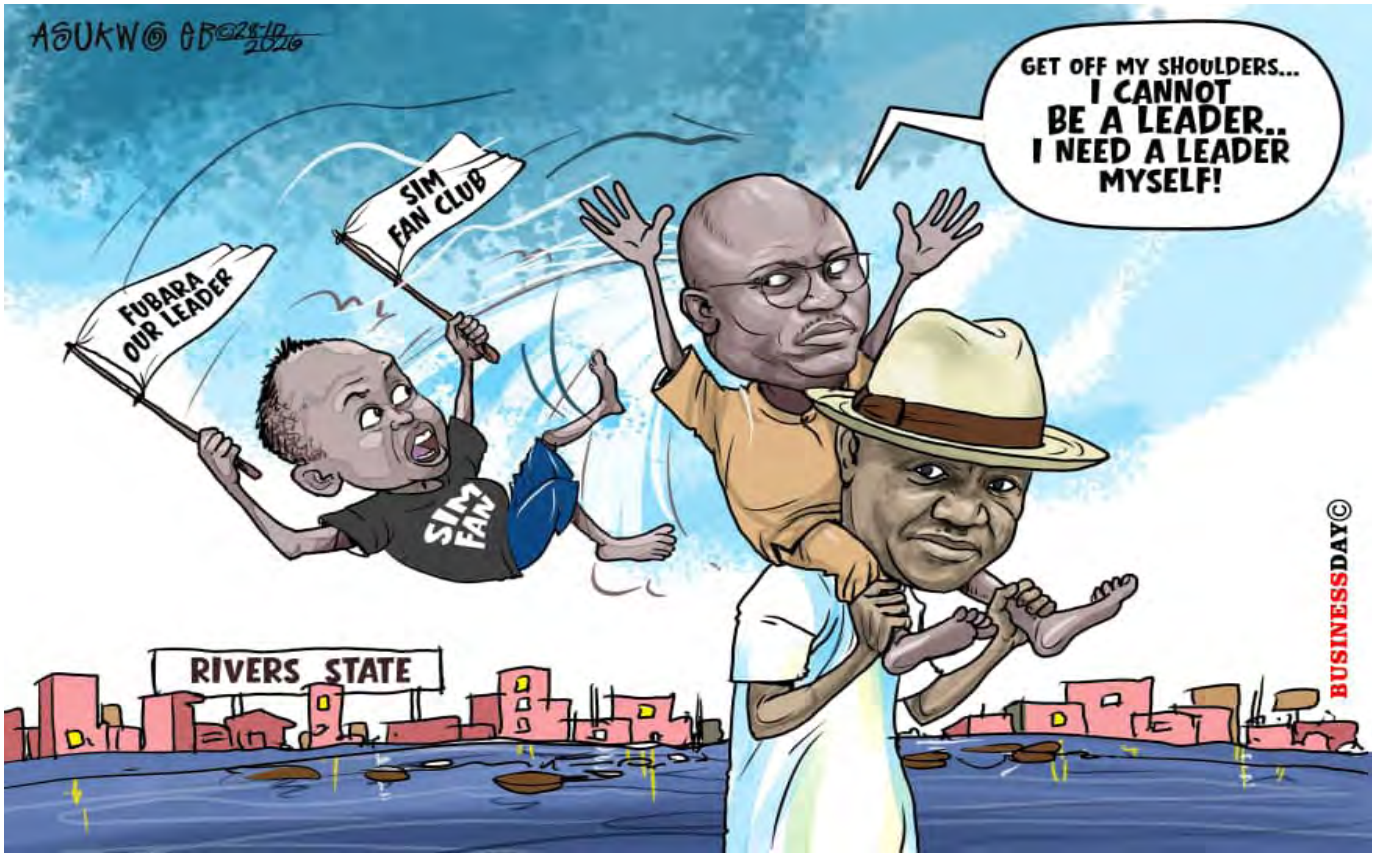
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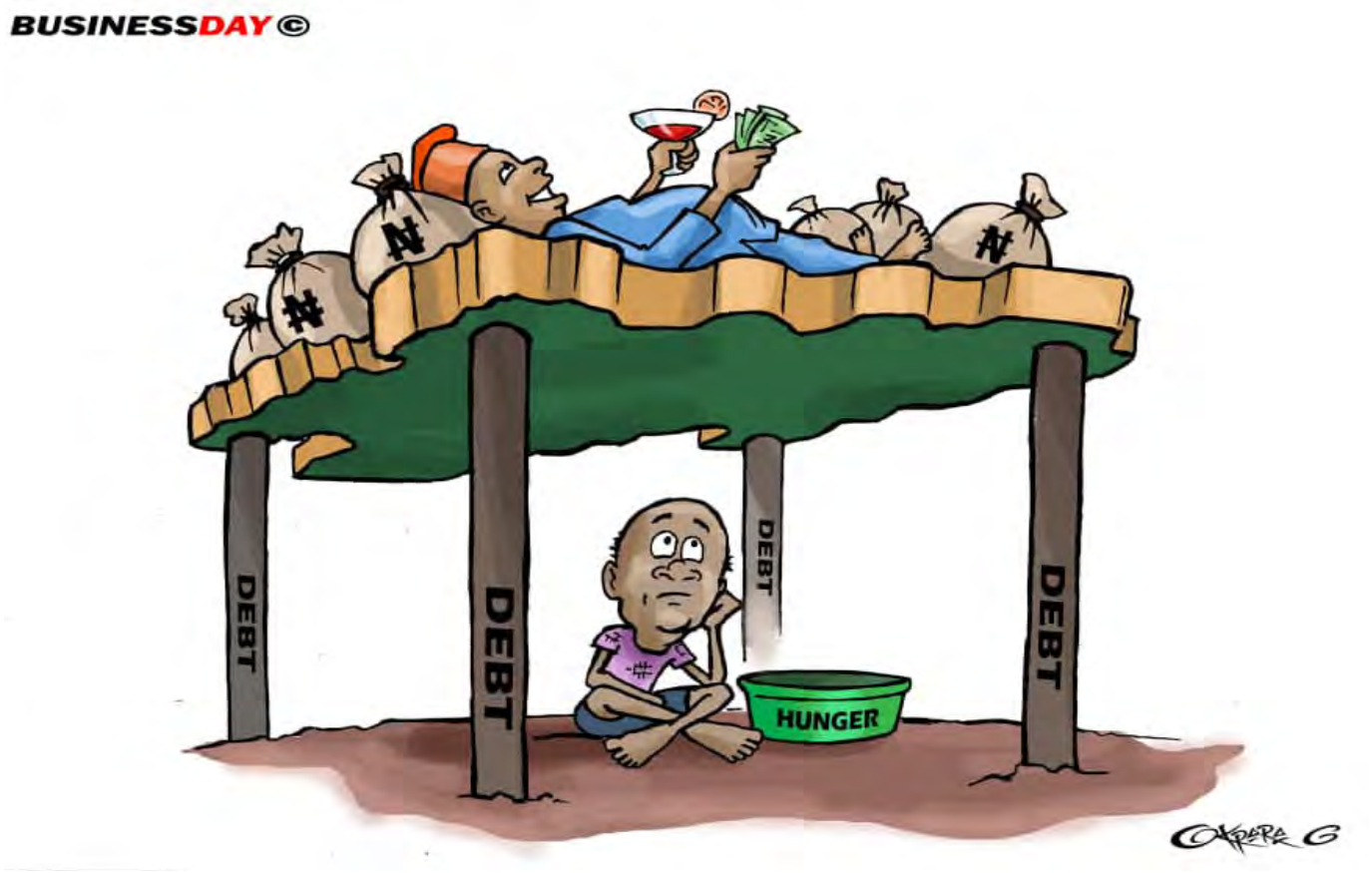
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HOW TO STAY EFFORTLESSLY STYLISH IN NIGERIA'S HOT WEATHER

IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA



As temperatures soar across the country, dressing up for work, events, or casual weekend outings without dissolving into sweat has become the ultimate fashion challenge.

Navigating Nigeria's current heatwave requires a smart pivot away from heavy fabrics and tight silhouettes toward light, breathable, and effortlessly sophisticated wardrobe choices.

Staying fashionable in intense heat is not about compromising on style; it is about mastering fabric choices, relaxed tailoring, and strategic layering. Here is your definitive guide to looking impeccably styled while staying cool under the blazing sun.

1. Prioritize Breathable, Natural Fabrics

The foundation of hot-weather dressing lies in your choice of textile. Synthetic fabrics like polyester, nylon, and heavy acrylic trap heat against the skin, intensifying perspiration. Instead, build your outfits around natural, moisture-wicking materials:

Linen: The undisputed king of warm-weather dressing. Linen allows maximum airflow, absorbs moisture rapidly, and dries quickly. Embrace its natural, slightly crinkled texture—it adds an effortless, relaxed luxury to co-ord sets, wide-leg trousers, and button-down shirts.

100% Cotton & Voile: Lightweight cotton variations like poplin and voile offer crisp structures without trapping heat, making them ideal for workday blouses and casual shirts.

Silk & Rayon: Smooth, lightweight fabrics that drape gently over the body without clinging, providing an elevated, fluid silhouette for evening outings.

2. Embrace Modern Adire and Loose Silk Kaftans

Traditional African textiles are having a major modern moment, offering built-in elegance and thermal comfort. Lightweight Adire silk or Adire cotton kaftans, boubous, and two-piece sets are current street-style favorites across Lagos and Abuja.



Opt for free-flowing cutlines that allow air circulation around the body. A floor-length silk boubou or a wide-sleeve Adire shirt paired with relaxed linen trousers provides instant sophistication for Sunday brunch, weddings, or corporate-casual settings, eliminating the need for restrictive waistbands.

3. Master the Art of Flowing Tailoring

Tight jeans, bodycon dresses, and heavy blazers should take a backseat during peak heat periods. Transition your daily wardrobe toward relaxed, modern tailoring:

Wide-Leg Trousers: Swap skinny trousers for high-waisted, wide-leg linen or crepe trousers. They look tailored and professional while allowing air movement with every step.

Short-Sleeved Camp Collar Shirts: A staple for both men and women, camp-collar (cuban collar) shirts in pastel tones or subtle prints offer a retro, polished vibe when paired with chinos or tailored linen shorts.

Shirt Dresses & Tiered Maxis: A crisp cotton shirt dress cinch-belted at the waist or a fluid, tiered midi dress provides a complete, sophisticated look in a single piece.

4. Opt for Light Neutrals and Earthy Tones

Color choice plays a significant role in heat management. Dark colors like black, navy, and deep brown absorb light and trap heat energy, while lighter shades reflect thermal radiation.

Refresh your daily color palette with crisp whites, creams, soft beige, sage green, icy blues, and warm terracottas. Light monochrome outfits—such as an all-white linen set or an all-cream kaftan—instantly communicate refined elegance while keeping your body temperature lower.

5. Smart Accessories: Sunglasses, Straw Bags, and Open Footwear

Finish your warm-weather look with functional accessories that protect you from the sun while elevating your overall aesthetic:

Statement Eyewear & Wide-Brim Hats: Protect your face with UV-blocking oversized sunglasses or a stylish woven straw hat for outdoor afternoon events.

Woven & Canvas Totes: Swap heavy leather bags for straw totes, woven raffia bags, or canvas shoppers that feel lighter and fit the seasonal mood.

Breathable Footwear: Ditch closed leather boots and heavy sneakers for leather slides, strappy sandals, open-toe mules, or woven loafers that let your fe et breathe throughout the day



NWANYIBUIFE: CELEBRATING THE TOTALITY OF WOMANHOOD AMID BREAST CANCER JOURNEYS



In a culture where serious illness is often met with quiet fear and social stigma, a unique collaboration in Lagos is reframing how Nigerians talk about health, self-worth, and survival.

On Friday, October 23, 2026, Nigerian fragrance brand Zora Manuel Scents hosted "Nwanyibuife: In Her Becoming," a dual fragrance launch and breast cancer awareness gathering held at His Dulce Apartments in Lagos.

Organized in partnership with the Enterprise Development Centre (EDC) and Lakeshore Cancer Centre during International Breast Cancer Awareness Month, the intimate event brought together healthcare experts, entrepreneurs, and advocates to honor the strength and totality of womanhood beyond a medical diagnosis.

The centerpiece of the evening was the unveiling of Nwanyibuife, an Igbo term translating to "A Woman is Valuable", a limited-edition, non-toxic fragrance created to celebrate women navigating complex health challenges while continuing to show up for their families and communities.

For Onyebadi Chiazor, CEO and Founder of Zora Manuel Scents, linking a luxury fragrance launch to breast cancer awareness was a deeply personal mission driven by loss and a desire to dismantle social stigma.

"October is a month that we usually use for Breast Cancer Awareness, and somebody very close to me passed on from breast cancer. She was a very special person to me," Chiazor shared on the sidelines of the event. "I understand that there are a lot of women going through this difficult health challenge who still show up for the people they love, still nurture, and still show up every day looking as though everything is okay."

Chiazor emphasized that the core message behind the Nwanyibuife perfume line is encouraging women to recognize their intrinsic value at every stage of their journey, rather than waiting for full recovery or conventional milestones.

"Even while we go through what it is we go through, we are still worthy of being celebrated, not only when we have achieved something," Chiazor noted. "Beyond the diagnosis, there are women who are mothers, daughters, friends, and sisters. They are worth celebrating too."

To emphasize the exclusivity and purpose of the cause, Chiazor revealed that only 20 bottle units of the Nwanyibuife fragrance were produced for the 2026 commemoration,

with plans to release specialized yearly editions to continually driver awareness.

As a proudly Nigerian brand whose existing product line features names inspired by local culture, such as Ijawele and Isaleko, Zora Manuel Scents is using the launch to champion health-conscious consumer choices.

Addressing the safety of home and personal fragrances, Chiazor highlighted the dangers of synthetic, toxic chemicals frequently found in imported diffusers and perfumes used in enclosed spaces.





"We are a very health-conscious brand, which is one of the reasons we decided to go into the health axis as well," she explained. "There are so many products out there that people don't even know what they are inhaling. All our products are toxic-free and 100 percent vegetable-based products. We do our formulations here in Nigeria, you can be sure of what you're buying."

Chiazor added that creating open, professional forums helps counter harmful local myths surrounding cancer care, such as instances where misinformed individuals resort to unverified home remedies like applying hot sand to breast lumps instead of seeking clinical help.

Reinforcing the medical side of the conversation, Oge Ilegbune, Consultant Family Physician and Medical Director at Lakeshore Cancer Centre, addressed the misconceptions that often turn a cancer diagnosis into an immediate psychological death sentence.

"When people talk about cancer, they always sort of think of a death sentence. But actually, when you talk about cancer, you also have to think about the stages," Dr. Ilegbune explained. "Was this cancer found at stage zero or stage one, when it's really early? In fact, it might have been found incidentally when the person went to the hospital for a scan or mammogram."

Ilegbune cautioned that symptoms extend beyond noticeable breast lumps, urging individuals to watch for changes in breast shape, inverted nipples, or abnormal discharge. She stressed that treatment plans, ranging from chemotherapy and immunotherapy to surgery and radiation, must be tailored by a specialized multidisciplinary team.

"Regardless of where you've been diagnosed, whether it was a surgeon or a family physician, once your investigation shows you have a cancer, you must come under an oncology facility," Dr. Ilegbune urged. "An oncologist is the specialist that looks after patients with breast cancer and decides which team to draw into treatment."

Reflecting on the unique atmosphere created by blending artisan perfumery with medical advocacy, Ilegbune noted that events like Nwanyibuife serve as a vital reminder for individuals to prioritize their health amid daily demands.

"This event is meant to make us pause," Ilegbune said. "As much as it's about the fragrance when you smell something good, it's also about saying to people: pause and think about the quality and richness of your life. We are in a season where we all have to be thinking about making choices, for life or for sickness."

LAGOS SETS STAGE AS AFRIQUE FEMME, CANEX WKND 2026 PARTNER TO SPOTLIGHT FRANCOPHONE FASHION AND FEMALE LEADERSHIP



Lagos is set to consolidate its position as Africa's creative nerve center from November 5 to 8, 2026, as media entity Afrique Femme joins forces with CANEX WKND 2026 to host the sixth edition of the Week-end des African Woman 2.0. The multi-day showcase will take place at the Wole Soyinka Centre for Culture & Creative Arts (formerly the National Theatre).

Conceived by Afreximbank in collaboration with the African Union and the AfCFTA Secretariat, CANEX WKND stands as the continent's flagship platform for creative and cultural trade.

Operating under the theme "One People, United in Culture, Creating for the World: From FESTAC '77 to CANEX '27," the 2026 gathering will convene creative entrepreneurs, institutional investors, policymakers, and cultural figures across Global Africa and the diaspora.

Spotlighting Francophone Craftsmanship and Regional Trade

A central feature of the collaboration is Afrique Femme's curated Exhibition Pavilion, designed to strengthen commercial links between Francophone and Anglophone creative industries.

The pavilion will host curated showcases, retail pop-ups, and private sales from West and Central African designers, highlighting signature collections from labels such as Makeda by AYA Konan, KUMI, KWELAKU, and Galipette Atelier.

Beyond retail, the pavilion aims to showcase the technical skill and commercial readiness of Francophone luxury brands seeking broader market penetration across Sub-Saharan Africa.







High-Level Dialogue on Female Enterprise

The programming will peak on Saturday, November 7, 2026, with the African Woman 2.0 VIP Networking Brunch. The invitation-only session expects to convene between 200 and 250 female executives, policymakers, and diplomats.

Structured around keynote presentations, panel discussions, and targeted business-to-business (B2B) networking, the session will address cross-border trade barriers, capital access, and strategic leadership for women in business.

“Bringing the African Woman 2.0 platform to Lagos alongside CANEX WKND 2026 allows us to bridge linguistic and economic divides in Africa’s creative economy,” stated Aïssata Sidibé N’DIA, Managing Director of RED Côte d’Ivoire and Afrique Femme. “This collaboration is structured to showcase Francophone fashion craftsmanship while unlocking actionable trade and investment pathways across regional corridors.”

Delegate participation for CANEX WKND 2026 is complimentary, though mandatory online pre-registration is required at wknd.canex.africa. Applicants selecting “Visitor / Delegate” are instructed to cite “Afrique Femme” as their referral source.



IN NIGERIA, SUSTAINABLE ARCHITECTURE IS NOT A LUXURY ADD-ON; IT'S A SURVIVAL STRATEGY

— Bayo Adalemo



Bayo Adalemo is a Nigerian architect, entrepreneur and educator whose work spans architecture, real estate development, hospitality and higher education. With a career rooted in design, business leadership and the built environment, he brings together a multidisciplinary perspective on how spaces are designed, businesses are built and people are empowered to realise their potential.

He is the Managing Director of Design Protocol, a Lagos-based real estate development and construction company focused on delivering thoughtfully designed, functional and sustainable spaces. Under his leadership, the company has undertaken residential development projects, including Admiralty Pearl, a residential development on Admiralty Road, Lekki Phase 1, Lagos. His approach to the built environment reflects an appreciation for the relationship between design, functionality, quality of life and longterm value.

Beyond architecture and real estate, Adalemo has interests in hospitality and experiential living through Zen Cafe, extending his entrepreneurial footprint into the food, beverage and lifestyle sector. His ventures reflect a broader interest in how the spaces people inhabit, the services they experience and the environments they interact with shape everyday life.

Adalemo also serves in academia at the University of Lagos, contributing to the development of future professionals through teaching and knowledge sharing. His connection to the institution is personal as well as professional: he studied Architecture there, having developed an early interest in drawing and fine art.

In an interview with BD Weekender, Adalemo speaks on balancing aesthetic design with commercial viability in Lagos, navigating the complexities of gentrification in high-density areas, and why sustainable architecture in Nigeria is a survival strategy rather than a luxury. He also discusses his transition into lifestyle hospitality with Zen Cafe, bridging the gap between classroom theory and real-world real estate site execution, and how homegrown materials and technology can redefine the future of Nigeria's built environment.

As an architect leading a real estate development firm like Design Protocol, how do you balance aesthetic design with commercial viability in a market like Lagos?

Many of our projects are partnerships with landowners, and their aim is clear: to realize the full commercial value of their property and make the most of every square meter the site and the planning regulations allow. In real estate terms, they want the land's "highest and best use." So the commercials are key; they are the reason the project exists. Our job is to balance that with aesthetic appeal. A plot packed to its limit with little thought and consideration for its occupants may look good on a spreadsheet, but it won't sell, let or hold its value. We put design effort into what people experience every day: light, ventilation, circulation and the arrival experience. We are ruthless about cost where it adds nothing. Every design decision has a return-on-capital question attached to it. That balance is a big part of why Design Protocol grew its annual revenue tenfold in under five years without sacrificing the quality our name stands for.

Projects like Admiralty Pearl on Admiralty Road sit in high-density, rapidly evolving areas. What unique architectural and structural challenges did you navigate during its development?

First, a quick update: the project formerly known as Admiralty Pearl is now Pleasant View Estate. Admiralty Road is a good example of Lekki's growing pains. It is being gentrified at an alarming rate, which is a subject close to my heart, as it forms the thrust of my PhD thesis at UNILAG on the impact of gentrification in emerging cities. So I am very conscious that a development is not just a building; it changes the character of a neighborhood and who can afford to live in it. Land is expensive, plots are tight, traffic is heavy, and the area changes almost month to month. The first challenge was fitting 20 units on a constrained plot while still giving each home the easements that guarantee a great standard of living. The second was the soil. Much of Lekki is reclaimed or high-water-table land, so foundations and drainage need serious engineering attention from day one. We used pile foundations, driving the load down past the loose upper soil to firmer ground, so the building stays stable for decades on difficult terrain. Then there was logistics: moving materials and labor in and out along a busy road without disrupting neighbors. Finally, we designed for where the area is going, not where it is today, with garage parking, home offices, solar water heaters, our own sewage treatment plant, jetties for waterfront access, and a large green area for recreation. The estate has been future-proofed against density that has not yet arrived.

What does "sustainable and functional living" mean in the context of Nigerian real estate, where infrastructure deficits often challenge long-term building maintenance?

In Nigeria, sustainability can't be a luxury add-on; it's a survival strategy. If public power, water and drainage are unreliable, the building itself has to do more of the work. To me, that starts with passive design: orientation, cross-ventilation, shading and natural light, which cut energy demand before you spend a kobo on equipment. Then comes resilience: solar and backup power, water harvesting and treatment, and drainage designed for our rainfall. Just as important is maintainability. A building is only sustainable if it can be cared for over the decades with locally available skills and materials. This forms a large part of my research focus. My MSc in Sustainable Development from the University of Sussex and my research at UNILAG are both about making green building practical for our context, rather than imported theory.

What inspired your transition into the food, beverage, and lifestyle sector with Zen Cafe, and how does your background in spatial architecture influence the guest experience there?

Honestly, it's less a transition than a homecoming. As a student at UNILAG decades ago, I ran a restaurant called QSS, and we pioneered the sale of chicken and chips within the university community. That was my baptism, so to speak, into entrepreneurship, and it taught me early lessons about people, process, quality and cash flow that I still use. So when the opportunity came to open Zen Cafe, it felt like a natural progression. Architecture has always been about how people feel in a space, and a cafe is the most immediate test of that. You know within a minute whether a guest feels at ease or not. At Zen Cafe, on Adebayo Doherty Road in Lekki Phase 1, the space does a lot of the hosting. We thought carefully about the flow from the entrance to the counter and on to your seat, the balance of light and shade, acoustics, and giving people both sociable and quiet corners. Greenery is central to the experience. There are plants and green spaces in and around the cafe, so guests feel surrounded by nature the moment they arrive. As the name implies, Zen Cafe is meant to be an oasis. In a city as intense as Lagos, people want a place where they can exhale. Designing that calm is an architectural problem as much as a culinary one.

How do you see the relationship between real estate, hospitality, and overall quality of life evolving for young professionals and families in urban centers?

The lines between them are disappearing. Young professionals in Lagos increasingly judge a home by what is within ten minutes of it: somewhere to work, eat, exercise and meet people. Long commutes have made the neighborhood part of the product. So developers can no longer just sell four walls; we have to think about the whole street and its urban context. I expect more mixed-use developments, more shared amenities and more hospitality-style services inside residential buildings. For families, it's about safety, green space and good schools nearby. The developers who succeed will be those who design for how people actually live, not just for floor area.

Your late father, Emeritus Professor Isaac Adalemo, and your mentor, Professor David Aradeon, played pivotal roles in your journey. How did their influence shape your perspective as both an architect and an educator at UNILAG?

I literally grew up on the UNILAG campus, so the university has never been just a workplace to me; it's home. My father taught me that knowledge only matters when it serves people. He was a respected scholar who also served as a visiting professor at several universities in the U.S. and as a consultant to both the World Bank and the United Nations. He moved fluidly between the lecture hall and real-world policy, and I saw early that the two should feed each other. The late Professor Aradeon, on the other hand, polished my architectural lens. He was a master of pedagogy who believed in one-on-one interaction with his students, and he always encouraged and supported me. I try to teach the same way. Between them, I learned that an architect has a responsibility to society, not just to a client. That's why, alongside running Design Protocol, I teach as a Lecturer II in the Department of Architecture while also pursuing my PhD there.



Through Design Protocol's EmpowerMD CSR initiative, children get to experience being "Managing Director for a Day." What has been the most fulfilling feedback or outcome you've seen from these young minds?

The most fulfilling thing is watching a child's sense of what is possible expand, and then seeing it last. Chimamanda Isiakpona was our very first child MD for a day. At the second edition of the event a year later, I was moderating the fireside chat, and she took over the entire conversation. She wowed the audience with her knowledge of leadership, sustainability and the environment, and she credited part of it to the confidence she had gained since becoming child MD the year before. For me, that moment said everything. Children ask the questions adults stop asking: "Why is it done this way?" "Why can't we do it better?" That is exactly the mindset I try to build in my own teams. The aim isn't to create future MDs overnight. It's to show children that leadership is something you practice, not something reserved for other people.

What is the biggest knowledge gap you see in today's architecture students when transitioning from the UNILAG classroom to the real estate site?

The biggest gap is the business side of architecture: entrepreneurial training. Our students graduate with strong design skills, but many have never seen a budget, a cash-flow forecast or a contract document. On site, they discover that every line they draw has a cost, a sequence and a person who has to build it. Those realities can make or break a project. The second gap is buildability and materiology: understanding how things are actually put together, and what's available locally. I'm in an unusual position, teaching in the morning and running a development company the rest of the day, so I try to bring the site into the classroom. I'd love to see more structured internships and more practitioners teaching alongside academics.

At the Blueprint Conference, you emphasized the need for closer collaboration between property developers and interior designers. Why do you feel this disconnect still exists in the local industry?

Mostly because of sequence and habit. In many Nigerian projects, the interior designer is brought in after the structure is finished, almost as a decorator. By then the ceiling heights, window positions, service runs and power points are fixed. The designer spends the budget working around decisions that could have been made better at the start. Developers sometimes see interiors as a cost to minimize rather than as the value that sells the property. I've been on both sides of this; I'm an architect, and I've served as Assistant Secretary General of the Interior Designers Association of Nigeria. The fix is simple: bring interior designers to the table at the concept stage. You get better spaces, fewer costly changes, and a product that sells faster.



With rising import costs and currency shifts, how can Nigeria's built environment sector lean more into local talent, homegrown materials, and indigenous solutions without compromising luxury or structural standards?

The currency crisis is painful, but it's also forcing a conversation we should have had decades ago. Luxury is not the same as imported. Some of the most beautiful buildings in the world use local stone, timber, clay and craft brilliantly. Nigeria has good materials, from laterite and stabilized earth blocks to local stone and timber, and a huge pool of artisans. What we lack is standardization, testing and certification, so developers can trust local products at scale. That's where industry, regulators and universities must work together. The encouraging news is that the demand is already there. As pioneer Chairman of the Board of CutStruct, a construction-technology company, I helped launch a B2B procurement platform that now has thousands of users across Nigeria and partners with homegrown manufacturers such as Dangote, African Foundries and Quantum Steel. What we see on that platform is clear: when local products are well made and reliably supplied, developers buy them. So leaning local doesn't mean lowering standards. It means investing in quality control so that homegrown becomes a premium choice, not a compromise.

How are emerging technologies (such as digital modeling, smart home tech, or sustainable building materials) reshaping how Design Protocol plans its future developments?

Technology is changing how we plan, build and sell. Digital modeling and BIM let us catch clashes and cost overruns on screen instead of on site, which in this economy is worth a lot. Smart home features, such as energy monitoring, security and access control, are becoming expected, especially by younger buyers, who tend to be more discerning. On the sustainability side, we're looking closely at solar integration, energy-efficient envelopes and alternative materials. Digital procurement is also bringing much-needed transparency and efficiency to building supply chains. Our rule is simple: we adopt technology that solves a real problem for the occupant or the project, not technology for its own sake.

Looking across your roles as an architect, developer, restaurateur, educator, and mentor, which identity feels closest to your core vision?

If I had to choose one, I'd say builder, in the widest sense. I build spaces as an architect and developer, experiences as a restaurateur, and people as a teacher and mentor. But if you pushed me, the educator sits closest to my heart. I am my father's son, and I grew up watching what a teacher can do for a nation. Buildings last decades; the people you train shape a country for generations. Everything else I do, from running Design Protocol to Zen Cafe, gives me real experience to bring back to the classroom. The roles feed each other, and I've stopped seeing them as separate.

What is the next major chapter or horizon for Design Protocol in shaping Nigeria's urban landscape?

The next chapter is about scale and responsibility. Nigeria's cities are growing faster than our housing and infrastructure can keep up with. We want Design Protocol to show that you can build well-designed, sustainable and financially sound developments at a larger scale. Concretely, that means putting more emphasis on green building, mixed-use communities and local materials, and continuing to invest in young talent, because the industry needs a new generation of builders. My long-term ambition is for Design Protocol to be known not just for what we built, but for how we raised the standard of building in Nigeria.



INTERVIEW



SHORT-TERM ATTENTION IS EASY TO GENERATE BUT CONSUMER LOYALTY IS BUILT ON HUMAN INSIGHT - FRANCIS OBIAJULU



In an era where brand messages flood every channel and consumer attention spans are fiercely defended, the line between transient noise and enduring brand loyalty has never been more critical. Building market resilience requires a deliberate blend of strategic discipline, deep human insight, and courage—qualities that Francis Obiajulu, Senior Brand Manager for Amstel Malta and Hi-Malt, has consistently brought to some of Nigeria's most iconic consumer brands.

Recently appointed as a juror for the prestigious Los Angeles International Film / Advertising Industry Framework (LAIF) Awards in the Print category, Obiajulu steps into a role tasked with defining and celebrating the benchmark for creative brilliant across the region. In this exclusive conversation, Obiajulu reflects on the sacred responsibility of jury objectivity, why resilience comes from being meaningfully different rather than simply louder, the power of balancing national brand consistency with hyper-local storytelling, and what it truly takes for Nigerian creativity to command attention on the global stage.

You were recently appointed as a juror for the LAIF Awards for the print category. What does this mean to you professionally, and what do you consider the most significant responsibility that comes with the role?

Being appointed as a juror for the LAIF Awards is both an honor and a significant responsibility. Professionally, it represents an opportunity to contribute to the advancement of creative excellence within Nigeria's advertising industry and to help shape the standards by which great work is recognized. The most important responsibility that comes with the role is objectivity. As jurors, we have a duty to look beyond brand size, agency reputation, or production scale and focus on the strength of the idea itself. Great creative work should not only be visually compelling; it should solve a real business or communication challenge in a meaningful way. My goal is to help identify and celebrate work that demonstrates originality, effectiveness, and genuine cultural relevance.

Your work involves making strategic decisions about how brands communicate, connect with consumers, and achieve business objectives. How do you think this experience will influence how you evaluate creative work from other brands and agencies?

Working on brands has taught me that creativity delivers its greatest value when it achieves a clear objective. As a result, I tend to evaluate creative work through both creative and strategic lens.

Beyond aesthetics, I look for the insight behind the idea, the problem it is trying to solve, and whether the execution strengthens the connection between the brand and its audience. Exceptional creativity is not just about attracting attention alone; it is also about creating meaning, driving consideration, influencing behavior, and ultimately contributing to brand and business growth. The strongest work usually achieves all of these while remaining simple and memorable.

You lead the strategic development of brands like Amstel Malta and Hi-Malt. What does it take to build a successful brand in a competitive market, and what do successful brands have over others that makes them more resilient?

Building a successful brand requires clarity, consistency, and a deep understanding of consumer needs. Markets are constantly evolving, but brands that remain focused on delivering a clear and distinctive value proposition are often the ones that endure.

Resilient brands know who they are and what they stand for. They adapt to changing consumer realities without abandoning their core identity. They invest in building emotional connections, maintain product quality, and create experiences that reinforce their promise at every touchpoint. In competitive markets, resilience often comes from being meaningfully different rather than simply being louder than everyone else.

In your experience, what separates a campaign that generates attention for a few days from one that creates lasting brand loyalty and contributes to business growth?

Short-term attention is relatively easy to generate; lasting impact is far more difficult. Campaigns that create enduring value are built on a strong consumer insight and reinforce the brand's long-term positioning.

The most successful campaigns go beyond impressions and engagement metrics. They consistently deliver a message that consumers can relate to, trust, and internalize over time. When consumers begin to see their own aspirations, challenges, or identity reflected in a brand's story, loyalty starts to form. Sustainable business growth comes when campaigns strengthen both immediate relevance and long-term brand equity.

Nigerian consumers are very diverse, with different cultures, aspirations, and expectations. How can brands develop campaigns that resonate with specific communities while maintaining a consistent brand identity across the country?

The key is to balance consistency with cultural relevance. A strong brand should have a clear central promise that remains consistent regardless of geography or audience segment. At the same time, execution must reflect local realities. Brands need to understand the cultural nuances, language, traditions, and aspirations of different communities and express the brand promise in ways that feel authentic to those audiences. When the core idea remains consistent, but the storytelling reflects local contexts, brands can achieve both national scale and local relevance.

With consumers now more exposed to multiple channels for digital advertising, what does it take for a brand to earn genuine attention rather than simply add to the noise?

Attention today is earned, not bought. Consumers are exposed to thousands of messages daily, so relevance has become one of the most valuable assets in marketing. Brands earn attention when they provide value, whether through inspiration, entertainment, education, or meaningful participation in culture. Consumers are quick to ignore messages that feel generic or intrusive. The brands that stand out are those that understand their audience deeply and communicate in a way that feels timely, authentic, and worth engaging in.

When assessing a work for the print category, what would make you stop and say, "This is exceptional work"? What qualities distinguish a powerful idea from one that is merely well produced?

Exceptional print work communicates a compelling idea almost instantly. It combines simplicity, originality, and clarity in a way that leaves a lasting impression. While high production quality is important, execution alone does not make an idea powerful. Strong ideas often create a moment of discovery, provoke thought, or reveal an insight in an unexpected way. When the concept is strong, every element within the execution has a clear purpose. The most memorable work is usually the work that makes you wish you had thought of it first.

How would you describe the current state of creativity in Nigeria's advertising industry? Where are Nigerian brands and agencies making meaningful progress, and where is there still room to improve?

There has been meaningful progress in integrated marketing, digital engagement, and content creation. However, there is still room to push creative boundaries further. As an industry, we can do more to produce ideas that not only resonate locally but also compete consistently on the global stage. Greater emphasis on innovation, effectiveness, and long-term brand building will help elevate the industry's impact even further.

As you take on this new responsibility, what would you like to see more of in the work submitted to LAIF this year seeing that you have managed successful brands like Amstel Malta?

I would like to see more work driven by strong human insights and bold thinking. The industry has no shortage of talent, but the most impactful work often comes from a willingness to challenge conventions and approach familiar problems from fresh perspectives.

I would also like to see work that clearly demonstrates the relationship between creativity and effectiveness. Great advertising should inspire, but it should also solve problems, influence behavior, and create measurable value for the brands it serves. The strongest entries will likely be those that successfully achieve both.

What advice would you give young marketers and brand managers who want to develop the strategic judgement required to recognise, commission, and champion exceptional creative work?

My advice would be to stay curious. Learn from consumers, culture, business, and great creative work. The best marketers understand that strategy and creativity work together, and they develop the confidence to champion ideas that make a meaningful difference.

FRENCH INVESTMENTS SCALE UP IN NIGERIA'S CONSUMER, HOSPITALITY AND AGRIBUSINESS SECTORS

....Carrefour, Accor expand presence as bilateral trade hits $4.7b



French companies are expanding their investments in Nigeria's consumer market, hospitality and agribusiness sectors, as businesses from both countries deepen commercial ties and explore new growth opportunities.

Retail giant Carrefour and hospitality group Accor are among the French brands expanding their Nigerian presence, while Nigerian agribusinesses are also strengthening their operations in France through investments in coffee production, cassava processing, animal feed and agro-industrial trade.

The developments come as bilateral trade between Nigeria and France reached $4.7 billion in 2025, with France's foreign direct investment stock in Nigeria standing at €8.1 billion in the same year.

The Consul General of France in Lagos, Laurent Favier, disclosed this ahead of the 2026 French Week, saying the growing relationship reflected a shift from diplomatic intentions to concrete business transactions, supported by engagement between both governments and private-sector organisations.

He described Nigeria as France's leading trading partner in sub-Saharan Africa, adding that more than 100 French companies currently operate in Nigeria across pharmaceuticals, agriculture, insurance, logistics, transport, infrastructure and hospitality, generating approximately 14,000 direct local jobs.

Favier said French companies, including TotalEnergies, CMA CGM, SPIE, Schneider Electric and Danone, continued to expand their Nigerian operations, while newer commercial developments were extending bilateral engagement into retail, hospitality and entertainment.

Canal+ has also strengthened its position in the entertainment industry through its acquisition strategy involving MultiChoice, further expanding French commercial interests in Nigeria's consumer-facing sectors.

According to Favier, the investments reflect the opportunities available to French businesses in Nigeria's large consumer market, while Nigerian companies are increasingly exploring access to French investors and European markets.



President of the Franco-Nigerian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI), Guillaume Niarfeix, said the chamber was working to convert growing business interest into concrete partnerships and investment opportunities.

He spoke ahead of the week-long French Week, scheduled to hold in Lagos from October 29 to November 6, 2026. The programme, described by the chamber as Nigeria's largest C-level business networking event, is expected to connect business leaders, investors and policymakers.

Agribusiness is emerging as another area of expanding commercial cooperation. Favier said Nigerian companies JR Farms and Babafood had established operations in France involving coffee production and exports, animal feed, cassava processing and the import-export of agro-industrial products.

He added that Flour Mills of Nigeria Group had expressed interest in developing its presence in the French market, signalling further opportunities for Nigerian businesses seeking to expand into Europe.

To support the expansion of agricultural trade, Nigeria participated in France's International Agriculture Show in 2026, marking its second appearance at the event after the 2024 edition.

Both countries have also established the Franco-Nigerian Agri-Business Club to encourage collaboration across the agrifood value chain.

The platform is expected to attract French agribusiness investors to support local capacity building, agricultural mechanisation and agro-processing, while helping reduce post-harvest losses and create growth opportunities for Nigerian agricultural producers.

Beyond consumer goods, hospitality and agriculture, French investments are also extending across energy, transport and logistics infrastructure.

Favier cited agreements concerning the development of the Gateway Deep Sea Port and the adjoining Ogun State Blue Marine Special Economic Zone as examples of expanding economic cooperation. The agreements were advanced in Paris in September 2026 in the presence of President Bola Tinubu, as both countries sought to attract investment and strengthen commercial links.

In the energy sector, Niarfeix highlighted TotalEnergies' 2024 final investment decision with the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) on the Ubeta gas field, which is expected to supply gas to Nigeria LNG's Train 7 project. He also referenced the more recent IMA project as part of continuing investment activity.

In Lagos, the Omi Eko project is expected to introduce 75 electric ferries, upgrade 25 terminals and establish 15 routes covering 140 kilometres of waterways.



The project is receiving support from France through the French Development Agency (AFD), alongside the European Union and the European Investment Bank. It is expected to improve urban mobility and expand water transportation in Lagos.

Niarfeix also cited the Leek Deep Sea Port, where CMA CGM has agreed to operate the container terminal. The port has a 14-metre draft and an annual handling capacity of 2.5 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs), positioning it as a major logistics asset for international trade.

Meanwhile, Nigerian financial institutions are strengthening their presence in France, providing another channel for commercial cooperation.

Favier said Access Bank had opened a French Desk in Paris, while Zenith Bank, United Bank for Africa and First Bank of Nigeria had established a presence in the country.

Technology is also creating new opportunities for Nigerian businesses in the French market. Favier said Gen-X60, an Internet of Things start-up, had established a research and development centre within the Orange Group incubator in Blagnac, France.

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Convexity, a consultancy specialising in blockchain and payment solutions for non-governmental organisations, is also preparing to establish its first European office in Paris.

Beyond attracting French investment into Nigeria, Niarfeix said the FNCCI was facilitating Nigerian businesses' access to French investors and institutions.

Earlier this year, the chamber extended its activities beyond Lagos through its first Executive Paris Leadership Training Programme and Business Mission, connecting Nigerian executives with French investors, institutions and policymakers.

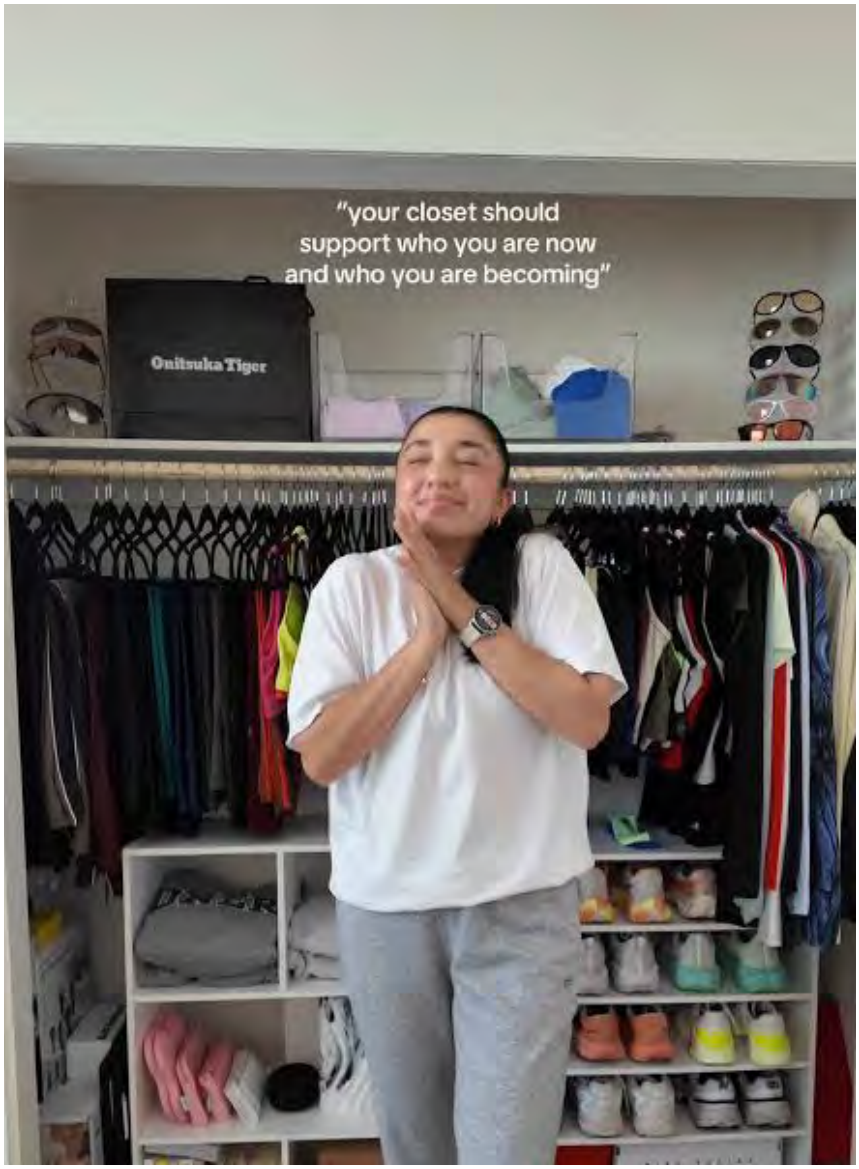
Niarfeix commended the Federal Government for its ongoing reforms and efforts to improve the ease of doing business, saying the measures were providing a firmer foundation for domestic and foreign investment.

He said French companies increasingly regarded Nigeria as a strategic economic partner rather than simply a market for their products and services.

The 2026 French Week is expected to showcase existing investments, strengthen business-to-business engagement and identify new opportunities across consumer markets, hospitality, agribusiness, infrastructure and technology.

THE CLOTHES WE KEEP FOR THE PEOPLE WE HOPE TO BECOME

DESTINY CHIEDU



There is a particular kind of confidence that comes with buying an outfit for an occasion that you are convinced is just around the corner.

It could be the elegant dress reserved for an invitation to an important event, a tailored suit bought in anticipation of a new job or the clothes purchased for a holiday that has remained on the wish list. At the time, the purchase made perfect sense. The clothes look good, the possibilities seem endless and there is every reason to believe they will soon have their moment.

Then weeks turn into months, and the clothes are still hanging in the wardrobe.

The dress has not been worn because the expected invitation has not arrived. The suit is waiting for a career move that is taking longer than planned, while the holiday outfit remains folded away. Yet, getting rid of them is another matter entirely. They are too beautiful to discard, too expensive to give away or simply too connected to an idea of life that still feels worth holding on to.

This is how wardrobes become filled with more than clothes. They hold ambitions, memories, expectations and sometimes the pressure of becoming someone different. Behind some of the outfits people struggle to part with is a version of themselves they have imagined: more confident, more successful, more adventurous or living a lifestyle that allows for a different kind of dressing.

The relationship between clothing and identity is not new. Fashion allows people to communicate how they see themselves and how they want others to see them. But the clothes people keep, rather than wear, reveal another side of that relationship. They show how much of dressing is connected not just to the present, but to the future people imagine for themselves.

The wardrobe of imagined occasions

Almost every wardrobe has an outfit that seems to be waiting for a special occasion. It may be a dramatic dress bought for a wedding, a pair of heels reserved for an evening out or a statement piece that feels too elaborate for an ordinary day.

The problem is that special occasions do not always arrive as frequently as the clothes are purchased. An outfit bought with excitement can remain untouched because there is no suitable event, the opportunity never comes or the wearer eventually decides it is too much for the occasion.

There is also the temptation to save good clothes for later. Some people hesitate to wear their favourite pieces because they want to preserve them for a more important moment. The result is that everyday dressing becomes an exercise in making do with familiar outfits while the more exciting pieces remain in storage.



This habit raises an interesting question: what exactly are people saving their best clothes for?

Sometimes, the answer is simply the belief that a better occasion is coming. But when that occasion remains uncertain, the wardrobe becomes a waiting room for a lifestyle that has yet to take shape.

When the clothes belong to another version of us

Not all unworn clothes are waiting for an invitation. Some are waiting for a different body.

A pair of jeans that no longer fits, a dress bought in a smaller size or a skirt kept in the hope of returning to a previous weight can become difficult items to let go of. Their owners may not wear them, but removing them from the wardrobe can feel like accepting that a particular body goal has not been achieved.

This makes clothing decisions more personal than they sometimes appear. A garment can become a reminder of how someone once looked, how they hope to look again or how they feel they should look.

Research has explored this connection between clothing, body image and the difficulty of letting go. In a study published in Consumption Markets & Culture in 2021, researchers Elias Mellander and Magdalena Petersson McIntyre examined why people retain clothes they no longer wear. Their findings showed that garments could hold memories and represent possible futures, making it emotionally complicated to discard them.

The researchers found that clothes were not always kept because they remained useful. Some were tied to the possibility of future weight changes, personal aspirations and the desire to preserve an earlier identity.

It is a reminder that clearing out a wardrobe can involve more than deciding whether a dress still looks fashionable. It can also mean confronting expectations people have placed on themselves.

The price of holding on

There is another reason some clothes are difficult to remove: the money spent buying them.

An expensive dress that has only been worn once can feel like an investment that has not been properly used. A designer-inspired bag bought at a considerable price or a pair of shoes purchased for a particular look may remain in the wardrobe because selling or giving them away feels like admitting that the purchase was unnecessary.

Discount shopping can create a similar problem. A garment may have been bought because the price was attractive, even when there was no immediate need for it. At the point of purchase, the discount makes the decision feel sensible. Later, when the item is still unworn, the buyer is left with something that has taken up both money and wardrobe space.



The difficulty is that keeping an item does not recover the money spent on it. It only extends the time the garment remains unused.

This can also affect how people shop. When wardrobes are already filled with clothes that do not serve their present needs, new purchases may still seem necessary because the available options do not feel right for everyday dressing. People end up buying more, even though they already own enough clothes to fill their wardrobes.

The issue, then, is not always a lack of clothing. It can be a mismatch between what people buy, what they imagine wearing and the lives they actually lead.

The difference between the wardrobe we want and the one we need

There is nothing wrong with dressing for the person one hopes to become. Fashion has always been closely connected to aspiration. A well-cut suit can make someone feel ready for a professional opportunity, while a beautiful dress can create excitement about an event or experience.

The problem begins when the imagined wardrobe becomes more important than the one that works for everyday life.

Someone who spends most of their week in casual clothing may continue buying formal outfits because they represent a lifestyle they admire. Another person may have a wardrobe full of statement pieces but repeatedly reach for the same comfortable trousers and shirts. The clothes are not necessarily unattractive; they simply do not fit into the rhythm of everyday life.

A more practical approach to building a wardrobe begins with understanding how clothes are actually used. This does not mean giving up on personal style or refusing to buy something special. It means being more deliberate about purchases and recognising the difference between an item that will be worn and one that only looks appealing in an imagined setting.

For clothes already taking up space, the decision does not have to be immediate. Pieces with sentimental value can be kept separately, while garments that still fit but are rarely worn can be reconsidered, restyled or reserved for occasions that genuinely exist. Those that no longer serve a purpose may find a better home through resale, donation or gifting.

Ultimately, a wardrobe should reflect more than the person someone hopes to become. It should also accommodate the person they are now, the places they go, the work they do and the occasions that make up their everyday lives.

The dress reserved for a future invitation may still have its moment, and the suit waiting for a career change may eventually be worn. But perhaps the most stylish wardrobe is not the one filled with clothes for every possible version of the future. It is the one that makes getting dressed for the present feel just as exciting.

GTCO FASHION WEEKEND EXPANDS HORIZONS WITH FASHION COLLECTIVE, DEBUT CRAFT FABRIC MARKET



For nine years, GTCO Fashion Weekend has proven that a financial institution can spark Africa's most vibrant enterprise-driven fashion movement.

As the event prepares for its ninth edition on November 7–8, 2026, at Plot 1, Water Corporation Drive, Oniru, Lagos, the platform is taking a major leap forward to expand its impact.

In a press briefing held on Thursday, Oyinade Adegite, Group Head of Corporate Communications at GTCO, revealed a monumental addition for this year's edition: the introduction of a dedicated Craft Fabric Market.

For the first time in the event's history, the fair is opening a direct spotlight and commercial arena for the grassroots artisans behind African fashion.

From Aso-oke weavers to Adire dyers, the craft fabric market ensures that the traditional makers who form the backbone of the continent's textile heritage share center stage with high-fashion runways.

Reinforcing this commitment to long-term industry sustainability, GTCO also unveiled the GTCO Fashion Collective—a year-round ecosystem designed to maintain commercial momentum, continuous dialogue, and strategic collaborations among designers, models, stylists, photographers, buyers, and creators long after the main event ends.

A core component of the new Collective will be a digital manufacturer and textile directory.







This permanent, searchable home will index indigenous artisans and producers, bridging the gap between local textile creators and global fashion brands.

“Over the past nine years, the GTCO Fashion Weekend has built Africa’s most exciting fashion experience,” Adegite noted, highlighting how the new platform will serve as an enduring foundation for creative enterprise.

Designed as a multi-sensory, consumer-focused fair, the two-day Lagos event boasts a packed itinerary:

The Debut Craft Fabric Market: A dedicated space honoring indigenous textiles and the artisans who create them.

Curated Pop-Up Stores: This will feature over 140 fashion, accessories, and lifestyle brands.

High-Impact Masterclasses: Led by global industry voices, including Renee Morris, Sherlina Nym, and Rachel Ojuromi. Presentation Stage: Spotlighting emerging brilliance from designers like Spectrum by Aisha, MSO Lagos, and Cisca Cecil.

12 Runway Shows: Showcasing standout collections from top African and international designers, including Sheye Oladejo, Meme Rocha, and Mide World.

By blending high-energy runway spectacle with practical support for indigenous textile crafters, GTCO continues to redefine how African fashion is showcased, sustained, and commercialized.

FROM LAGOS TO LONDON AND BACK: KIMONO KOLLECTION STUNS LAGOS IN MILESTONE FIRST RUNWAY SHOWCASE

JULIET ONYEMA



Under a constellation of dramatic runway lights in Victoria Island, 16 years of quiet mastery was displayed in a single, defining moment as Kimono Kollection staged its long-awaited debut runway show.

The Nigerian menswear label transformed the venue into a runway spectacle to unveil its 70-look Spring/Summer 2027 collection, titled Threads of Time. For a brand that has spent over a decade quietly shaping the contours of contemporary African menswear, the show was less of a simple fashion presentation and more of an emphatic, high-octane declaration of its enduring legacy and future direction.

The runway itself unfolded as a cinematic journey, carefully structured to balance sharp retrospective reverence with modern innovation.

The presentation swung through a palette dominated by deep black, rich cream, earthy brown, forest green, moody burgundy, and subtle grey.

Each look displayed founder Hakeem Balogun's signature approach of fusing structured British tailoring with traditional Nigerian attire. As models strode down the catwalk, the silhouettes demonstrated how far the brand has pushed the boundaries of traditional menswear, marrying crisp tailoring with fluid, culturally resonant forms.

The runway sequence was punctuated by moments of pure spectacle that captivated the audience.

During the all-black segment of the collection, singer Dipothevoice, Oladipupo Ogundele, emerged from the crowd to deliver a surprise performance that injected raw energy directly into the show.

The runway casting further elevated the experience, featuring a star-studded lineup that saw celebrated actors and personalities including Wale Ojo, Efe Iwara, Leo Da Silva, Cross Okonkwo, and Saskay taking to the catwalk alongside professional models, underscoring a commitment to diversity and broad cultural representation.

While the runway stayed at the center of the evening, the depth of the show was anchored by a broader reflection on the brand's origin story.

A documentary screened at the event traced Hakeem Balogun's trajectory from his early days absorbing the vibrant commercial energy of Lagos Island markets to expanding his skills through two years of intensive design training and styling experience in London before returning home in 2009.

His foundational philosophy, summarized by his statement that one only needs thread and needle to make history, served as the creative spine of the entire showcase.

The milestone event brought together an elite circle of the Nigerian creative and fashion establishment.

Hosted by actor Tobi Bakre, who added a personal touch to the night by gifting his very first custom Kimono suit to an audience member, the front row sparkled with industry heavyweights.

Renowned designers Mai Atafo, Vodi, and Lanre Da Silva joined lifestyle figures Dabota Lawson, Akin Faminu, Kiki Osibanjo, and Powede Awujo to celebrate the occasion. By translating sixteen years of craftsmanship into an immersive runway presentation, Kimono Kollection successfully opened its newest chapter, proving that true style only gains momentum with time.





WISCAR CHAMPIONS YOUNG WOMEN'S RISE TO LEADERSHIP IN LEGAL PROFESSION

... holds women in law mentoring programme, regional convening 2.0

CHARLES OGWO



The push for a more inclusive legal profession is gaining momentum as Women in Successful Careers (WISCAR) steps up efforts to equip young women lawyers with the mentorship, advocacy skills and institutional support needed to rise into leadership.

Through its Women in Law Mentoring Programme Regional Convening 2.0, the organisation brought together emerging women legal professionals, members of the bench and bar, and other key stakeholders to confront barriers to women's advancement and explore practical pathways to making leadership in the profession more accessible, transparent and inclusive.

Beyond mentorship, the convening underscores the need for deliberate action, stronger professional networks and institutional reforms that will enable more women to occupy decision-making positions and shape the future of the legal profession.

Amina Oyagbola, WISCAR's founder and chairperson, in her opening address, called on institutions to move from goodwill to concrete action in strengthening women's pathways to leadership in the legal profession.

"We must not confuse progress at the summit with progress across the entire leadership pipeline," she said, noting that women's presence in the highest offices does not by itself guarantee that the path to those offices is open to other qualified women.

WISCAR is calling on institutional partners to listen, commit and act by taking at least one practical step, with an owner, a timeline and a way of measuring progress.

"Meaningful change does not happen through goodwill alone," Oyagbola said. "It happens when goodwill is translated into decisions, policies, resources and sustained institutional practice."

She highlighted WISCAR's three-year Memorandum of Understanding with the NBA Women Forum, noted the encouraging recent engagements with the leadership of the Nigerian Bar Association, the Nigerian Law School and FIDA Nigeria.



Justice Oluwatoyin Ipaye, the Administrative Judge of the High Court of Lagos (Lagos Judicial Division), delivering the keynote address, titled “Beyond the Bench: Women Redefining Leadership in Law and Governance,” said, “Women’s leadership in law and governance is not merely about representation, but about transformation.”

She urged women in the profession to look beyond titles and milestones, stressing that “attaining a position is not the culmination of leadership. It is the beginning of a greater responsibility.”

According to her, the real measure of leadership is whether it has made institutions more open, accountable and effective, and whether it has widened opportunities for others.

The event held on Thursday in Lagos under the theme “From Learning to Leading: Networking, Leadership, and Advocacy for Women in Law,” brought together mentees, mentors, judges, senior lawyers, academics, policymakers and development partners.

The aim was to move from learning to leading: equipping young women lawyers with the networks, mentorship and advocacy skills to advance in their careers, while engaging the bench, the bar, academia and policymakers on practical steps to make leadership pathways in the legal profession more open, transparent and accessible to qualified women.

WISCAR’s approach to the programme is grounded in research. A WILMP needs assessment of 428 legal practitioners, 99 percent of them women, found that more than seven in ten regard patriarchal norms as a severe barrier to their advancement, while more than half reported limited access to mentorship, sponsorship and professional networks.

The findings point to a wider issue: women’s progress in the profession depends not only on individual talent and determination, but also on the opportunities available to them and the structures in which they work.

With the second cohort, WILMP is shifting its focus from preparing women to succeed within existing systems to working with the institutions that shape those systems.

The first cohort demonstrated the value of structured mentoring but also showed that mentoring alone cannot open the way to leadership if institutional pathways remain inaccessible.

To put this into practice, mentees across eight mentoring circles examined the challenges facing women in Nigeria’s legal profession and developed policy proposals to address them.

Following a review by the WILMP Steering Committee, the two leading proposals were presented at the convening, positioning the mentees not only as emerging leaders but as contributors to the reform of the profession.

The convening followed a round of advocacy visits in Abuja the previous week. On October 14-15, 2026, a WISCAR delegation led by Toki Mabogunje, WISCAR advisory member, comprising Ekemini Akpakpan, executive secretary, and other members of the WISCAR team, including WILMP mentees and alumni, met with the leadership of the Nigerian Law School, the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) and FIDA Nigeria.

At the Nigerian Law School, Olugbemisola Odusote, the director-general and the first woman to hold the office since the school was established in 1962, committed in principle to creating a pathway for students to join WILMP, including the WILMP programme to campuses in Nigeria.

Distinguished guests included Lawal Pedro, Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice, Lagos State, who joined virtually; Adejoke Oyewunmi, Dean, Faculty of Law, University of Lagos; Eliana Martins, National President, FIDA Nigeria; Uchenna Akingbade, chairperson, Nigerian Bar Association, Lagos branch; and Yewande Deji-Omotayo, Lagos State lead, NBA Women Forum.



RECIPE OF THE WEEK: UKANG UKOM

ESTHER EMOEKPERE



As we continue our journey through Nigeria, exploring the country's diverse cultures through food, this week takes us to Cross River State to discover Ukang Ukom, a traditional Efik plantain dish. The dish is often prepared for special occasions and family gatherings, making it an interesting part of the food culture of the Efik people.

Ukang Ukom has different variations, and the ingredients can depend on the household or the cook. Some preparations use palm oil, while others leave it out and use coconut milk or water as the cooking liquid. Vegetables may also be added, depending on the preferred preparation. One important part of making the dish, however, is scraping some of the plantain into the pot as it cooks. This helps thicken the pottage naturally, giving it a consistency that sets it apart from ordinary plantain porridge.

INGREDIENTS
Serves 4

4–5 fingers of unripe plantain
500g cow foot or beef, cut into pieces
1 medium onion, chopped
1–2 fresh scotch bonnet peppers, blended or chopped
1–2 tablespoons ground crayfish
1 small portion of dried fish, washed and deboned (optional)
1 cup coconut milk or water, with extra water as needed
1–2 tablespoons palm oil (optional, depending on the variation)
A handful of vegetables, washed and chopped (optional)
Salt to taste
Seasoning to taste

Method

1. Prepare the protein: Wash the cow foot or beef and place it in a pot with the chopped onion, salt and seasoning. Add a little water and cook until tender. If using dried fish, prepare it separately by washing and deboning it.

2. Prepare the plantain: Wash and peel the unripe plantain. Cut most of it into medium-sized chunks, but set aside a portion to scrape.

3. Start the pottage: Add the plantain chunks to the cooked meat and stock. Add the pepper, crayfish and dried fish, if using. Pour in the coconut milk or water, depending on the version you are preparing. Add more water if necessary, ensuring there is enough liquid for the plantain to cook.

5. Scrape the plantain: Using a grater or the edge of a knife, scrape some of the reserved plantain into the pot. Stir gently to distribute it through the liquid. As the mixture cooks, the scraped plantain will break down and thicken the pottage.

6. Add the oil and vegetables: If using palm oil, add it at this stage and stir. Allow the plantain to cook until soft and the pottage has thickened. Add the vegetables towards the end, if desired, and cook briefly until tender.

7. Finish and serve: Taste and adjust the seasoning. Stir gently, taking care not to break up all the plantain chunks. Remove from the heat and serve warm.

TOP 5 HOTELS IN THE WORLD IN 2026, ACCORDING TO TRAVELLERS

CHISOM MICHAEL



The Peninsula Hong Kong has been named the world's top hotel in 2026, leading a list of five hotels recognised in the 39th edition of Condé Nast Traveler's Readers' Choice Awards.

The ranking is based on votes from 798,867 readers who shared their experiences and identified their preferred travel destinations, hotels, resorts and other hospitality services.

The awards reflect travellers' choices across different regions, with the selected hotels recognised for their accommodation, hospitality, dining experiences, facilities and locations.

From Hong Kong to Italy, the United States and Japan, the list features hotels that have attracted visitors through their history, services and approach to hospitality.

Here are the five hotels that ranked among the world's best in 2026.

1. The Peninsula, Hong Kong

The Peninsula Hong Kong has taken the top position in the 2026 ranking. Located along the Kowloon waterfront, the hotel opened in 1928 and has remained part of Hong Kong's hospitality industry for almost a century.

Known among regular guests as The Pen, the hotel has built its reputation around its history, accommodation and services. Its entrance features a fleet of 14 Rolls-Royce Phantoms, which guests can use as part of their experience.

The property has nine bars and restaurants, offering visitors different dining and drinking options. Its spa also provides treatments, including the Margy's Monte-Carlo facial.

The guest rooms feature dark veneer finishes and champagne-toned interiors, with views across Hong Kong's harbour. The hotel also places emphasis on staff service, which has contributed to its standing among visitors.

Its position at the top of the ranking reflects the continued appeal of a hotel that has served generations of travellers and residents since the 1920s.

2. Passalacqua, Moltrasio, Italy

Passalacqua in Moltrasio, Italy, secured the second position in the 2026 ranking. The hotel is located on the shores of Lake Como and operates from a historic villa surrounded by seven acres of gardens and terraces.

The property opened in its current form in 2022 as a sister hotel to Grand Hotel Tremezzo. Both properties are owned by Paolo, Antonella and Valentina De Santis.

Passalacqua's accommodation is spread across three buildings. The original villa contains 12 suites, while the former stables have been converted into an eight-suite palazzo. A separate four-suite property, Casa al Lago, occupies a building near the lake.

The interiors feature painted glass, etched mirrors, leather furnishings and hand-blown Murano chandeliers. The property also incorporates marble, including Breccia Pontificia, a stone associated with the work of Italian sculptor Gian Lorenzo Bernini.

Outside, the grounds contain olive trees, mimosa, roses, magnolias and fountains. Terraces descend towards Lake Como, providing guests with views of the water and surrounding area.

With accommodation prices starting from $1,898, Passalacqua offers visitors access to the lake, gardens and facilities within a historic setting.



3. Park Hyatt Chicago, United States

Park Hyatt Chicago ranked third among the world's top hotels in 2026. Located on the Magnificent Mile, the hotel overlooks Chicago's historic Water Tower and provides access to several attractions within the city.

The property is known for its accommodation, dining facilities and wellness services. Its suites include open-air terraces, living areas and bathrooms with heated floors, rain showers and soaking tubs.

Some rooms offer views of Lake Michigan, while the DuSable and Lake Michigan Suites provide guests with opportunities to enjoy the waterfront from their accommodation.

The hotel has also updated its guest rooms with new furnishings, textures and Le Labo bath products.

For visitors interested in wellness, the property offers Wellbeing and Mindfulness Suites. These rooms include sound machines, while the Wellbeing Suite also features a private Tonal smart gym.

Dining is another part of the hotel's offering. NoMI, its signature restaurant, serves seasonal dishes and provides views across Chicago.

The hotel's location, accommodation and range of facilities have helped it secure a place among the five hotels recognised by Condé Nast Traveler readers.



4. Le Méridien Essex Chicago, United States

Le Méridien Essex Chicago occupies the fourth position in the ranking. Located opposite Grant Park, the hotel offers access to several attractions, including Museum Campus and the Art Institute of Chicago.

The 14-storey property has 274 guest rooms and combines a mid-century modern design with views of Chicago's skyline and Lake Michigan.



Its location allows guests to reach Museum Campus within a five-minute walk, while the Art Institute of Chicago is about 15 minutes away on foot.

The guest rooms include features such as bathroom mirrors with built-in speakers and Frette bathrobes. These details form part of the hotel's approach to accommodation and guest services.

Its fitness centre also provides Peloton bikes equipped with Hulu and Netflix, allowing visitors to access entertainment while exercising.

Guests can dine at Grant Park Bistro, the hotel's restaurant, which serves New American dishes with European influences. Its menu includes charred broccolini risotto and Iberico pork skirt steak.

The hotel's location, room facilities and dining options contributed to its fourth-place position in the global ranking.

5. The Ritz-Carlton, Kyoto, Japan

The Ritz-Carlton, Kyoto, completes the list at number five. Situated along the Kamogawa River, the hotel opened in 2014 as one of the first international luxury hotel brands to establish a presence in the Japanese city.

The property combines contemporary accommodation with elements of Kyoto's history and culture. Its location along the river also provides guests with access to the city's attractions while offering a place to retreat from its busy streets.

The guest rooms feature cherry blossom carpets, woodwork, calligraphic artworks and bathrooms designed to accommodate visitors seeking a private space during their stay.

The hotel offers several dining options, including Mizuki, which serves Japanese cuisine, and Chef's Table by Katsuhito Inoue, whose menu draws inspiration from Japan's 72 micro-seasons.

La Locanda provides Italian dishes for guests seeking another dining option.

Its wellness facilities include an indoor swimming pool and a spa offering treatments such as green tea massages. These facilities provide visitors with opportunities to relax during their stay in Kyoto.

With accommodation prices starting from $1,116, The Ritz-Carlton, Kyoto, brings together dining, wellness and accommodation within a setting that reflects the city's cultural heritage.



WHO DARES WINS: LPG, THE NEXT FRONTIER FOR AFRICA'S DOWNSTREAM

...LPG investment is Africa's defining downstream opportunity OVER THE NEXT TWO DECADES. THE WINDOW TO ACT IS OPEN NOW.

ANIBOR O. KRAGHA



At the IEA's first Summit on Clean Cooking in Africa in Paris in May 2024, Akinwumi Adesina, then African Development Bank President, recalled studying by smoky lamps and cooking fires, which he links to eyesight damage. Still today, nearly one billion Africans cook with firewood and charcoal.

Household air pollution kills about 815,000 Africans annually. Between 2022 and 2023, sub-Saharan Africa's population grew by 30 million while only 11 million gained clean cooking access.

For a decade, refining has dominated Africa's downstream story. But the next frontier is Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG): the continent's fastest-growing petroleum product, a backbone of clean cooking, and a market with an underbuilt supply chain. Investment is urgently required: from gas processing and import terminals to bottling plants, inland logistics and household cylinders.

Africa's next phase of growth will be shaped not simply by who has the resources, but by who invests first in the infrastructure that connects supply to demand.

The race to build Africa's LPG future

LPG accounts for 76% of people gaining clean cooking access in sub-Saharan Africa. Yet the region consumed 6.4 million tonnes in 2025, or 4.8 kg per person, against more than 50 kg in North Africa. Demand grew 12% last year, and CITAC Africa forecasts it will nearly triple to 17 million tonnes by 2045. By 2050, one in four people worldwide will be African.

The supply chain is not ready. The United States is Africa's largest LPG supplier, yet no sub-Saharan terminal can discharge a full Very Large Gas Carrier (VLGC) cargo of about 45,000 tonnes. Only about 20 LPG storage facilities on the continent hold 10,000 tonnes or more, and stocks commonly cover ten days of demand or less. Africa buys mostly on the spot market, in small, expensive cargoes, without long-term contracts or price predictability. Demand is not the constraint. Molecules, terminals, cylinders and trucks are.

In 2026, when the Strait of Hormuz closed, import prices in East and West Africa jumped 70–100% above their 2025 average. When refills double in price or depots run dry, households return to charcoal. Clean cooking scales at the speed of the fuel supply chain.

The value chain opportunity

Investment is needed across the chain: gas processing and refining to keep more African LPG at home, despite exports of around 10 million tonnes a year; VLGC-capable import hubs and strategic storage for long-term contracts; bottling plants and cylinder manufacturing to reduce household costs; inland logistics for landlocked markets; and last-mile distribution through cylinder recirculation, small 3–6 kg cylinders and pay-as-you-go.

The IEA estimates universal clean cooking in Africa will cost about $2 billion annually by 2040, less than 0.1% of global energy investment. Capital is not scarce; bankable structures are. Programmes too often fund just the stove rather than the entire chain.

The opportunity will not wait – and those who move first will help shape Africa's LPG future. Three questions are critical: who invests, where, and how to bring developers and financiers together.

Who should invest, and why

No single player can do this alone, but each has a role and reason to move. US producers supply most cargoes.

Long-term contracts, with formula pricing over 12 to 24 months or longer, can make import hubs bankable, ideally backed by minority equity. Producers secure a region where LPG demand will grow for decades. The US Department of Energy supports the Fueling Lives initiative that champions LPG access abroad.

International traders such as Petredec, Vitol and Trafigura have the shipping, risk management and balance sheets to operate multi-country hubs. Cargo aggregation and redistribution are their business; first movers can secure prime port positions.

Gulf partners, including national oil companies, sovereign funds and trade financiers, can provide capital and cargo financing while gaining downstream growth. Saudi Arabia's Oil Sustainability Program backs LPG clean cooking through Forward7, including the IGNITE challenge. Saudi trade financiers can fund cargoes. The next step is infrastructure capital.

Chinese investors are already at the table. In April, NNPC signed a memorandum of understanding with Sanjiang Chemical and Xinganchen (Fuzhou) Industrial Park on a potential equity partnership to restart and expand the Port Harcourt and Warri refineries, including petrochemicals and gas-based industrial hubs. Chinese firms can partner on gas processing, petrochemicals and cylinder manufacturing, provided cooking-grade butane is reserved for African kitchens.

African national oil companies contribute port land, concessions, domestic gas and host-country partnerships, while gaining energy security from gas now flared or exported.

African marketers such as Oryx Energies, Sahara, Ardova and Rainoil know customers, regulators and inland routes. Oryx, now African-led following the recent management buyout, is a leading LPG marketer. In Tanzania, it opened Zanzibar's first LPG import terminal in 2024. These marketers' last-mile investments have, to our knowledge, paid off.

The model is a regional-hub consortium: a trader as operator, US supply contracts as anchor, an African national oil company as host, Gulf or development finance as capital, and African marketers serving inland and last-mile markets.

Where to invest, and why
Anchor markets: scale today

Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, South Africa and Angola account for over half of sub-Saharan demand. Nigeria, at about 1.4 million tonnes, targets 5 million tonnes annually by 2030. As the Dangote refinery displaces imports, opportunities shift to gas processing, storage, bottling and distribution. Côte d'Ivoire grew 12% in 2025 and South Africa 15%; Durban is getting a 30,000-tonne terminal, with a rail hub planned for Gauteng. Angola, a net exporter with Africa's newest large terminal at Barra do Dande, can become a regional supplier.

Corridor hubs: one terminal, many markets

Coastal hubs can serve landlocked neighbours. Kenya (Mombasa) can supply Uganda, Rwanda, South Sudan and eastern DRC; Taifa Gas is completing a VLGC-capable terminal, while Kenyan consumption remains around half its 15 kg per person target. Tanzania can serve Zambia, Malawi, Burundi and the DRC; Petredec's VLGC-capable Tanga terminal is due in 2027. Angola can reach the DRC and Zambia through the Lobito Corridor. Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana are gateways to the Sahel; Ghana targets 50% LPG penetration by 2030.

Frontier markets: the largest upside
The Democratic Republic of Congo and Ethiopia have over 250 million people but consumed only 25,000 and 28,000 tonnes of LPG respectively in 2025, barely more than one VLGC cargo combined. Kinshasa runs on charcoal. Whoever builds supply routes into these markets will shape them for a generation.

How ARDA convenes developers and financiers

Multi-country investment needs a neutral platform for governments, regulators, companies and financiers. That is ARDA's role. In its 20th year, with around 85 members across Africa, ARDA can bring regional hub consortium partners to the same table.



Building the pipeline. The ARDA Investment Forum screens projects against five criteria (sustainability, regulatory support, economic viability, technical viability and execution capability) and matches bankable ones with financiers, including Afreximbank, the Africa Finance Corporation, Standard Bank and the Mauritius Commercial Bank.

Deploying capital. With the Global LPG Partnership (GLPGP), ARDA is progressing a US$1 billion fund for clean cooking. It is engaging African development finance institutions and members to build a pipeline, with VLGC-capable terminals the lead category.

De-risking the market. Through its annual LPG Forum, co-hosted this year with the World Liquid Gas Association, and work groups on LPG, regulation and sustainable financing, ARDA advocates harmonised safety rules, cost-reflective pricing, open access to shared infrastructure, minimum stock cover and model contracts. ARDA also advocates wider use of partial risk guarantees, which account for just 5% of international public clean energy finance to developing countries.

Sharing intelligence and partnerships.
With CITAC, Argus, S&P Global, the World Liquid Gas Association and the IEA, ARDA provides market data to size projects and avoid overbuilding where domestic supply displaces imports. It connects members with Fueling Lives and Forward7, shares case studies and links distributors and last-mile innovators with support.

Who dares wins

First movers are already staking their claims, and Chinese capital is circling Nigeria's refineries and gas. Washington and Riyadh, capitals of two of the world's leading LPG exporters, champion clean cooking in Africa, yet large-scale terminal investment has not followed. This gap is the opportunity.

Port sites, concessions and anchor customers are finite. Investors who move now can secure terminals, contracts and customer relationships in a market set to triple. Those who wait may find the best sites taken.

The fuel is available, and demand is certain. So, who will ensure the next generation can study by clean light and eat meals cooked without smoke?
Join industry leaders at ARDA's third LPG Forum in Dar es Salaam on 24–25 November 2026, under the theme "Unlocking Africa's LPG Potential: A Catalyst for Industrialisation, Energy Security and an Inclusive Energy Transition", to explore who will seize this opportunity – and turn Africa's LPG potential into investment, impact and a healthier future for all.
Who dares… wins. The time is now.

Anibor O. Kragha is the Executive Secretary, African Refiners and Distributors Association (ARDA).



TOP 10 HEALTHIEST COUNTRIES IN AFRICA IN 2026

CHISOM MICHAEL



Tunisia ranks as Africa's healthiest country in 2026, with a life expectancy of 76.7 years, ahead of Algeria and Seychelles, according to figures from the World Bank and United Nations for 2024.

The ranking places five North African countries and four island nations among the continent's top 10. It also highlights differences in life expectancy across Africa and the role of healthcare access, disease prevention and public health investment in improving population health.

Algeria follows Tunisia with a life expectancy of 76.5 years, while Seychelles takes third place at 76.3 years. The difference between the three countries is just 0.4 years.

Cabo Verde ranks fourth with 76.2 years, followed by Morocco at 75.5 years. Mauritius occupies sixth place at 73.8 years, while Egypt ranks seventh at 71.8 years.

Libya, Sao Tome and Principe, and Botswana complete the list with life expectancies of 71.1, 69.9 and 69.3 years, respectively.
The average life expectancy among the 10 countries is 73.7 years, close to the global average of 73.9 years.

The figures reflect the relationship between access to healthcare and life expectancy. Countries that provide public healthcare, invest in primary care and maintain vaccination programmes have recorded gains in population health.

Here are the 10 healthiest countries in Africa in 2026, based on life expectancy at birth.

1. Tunisia: 76.7 years

Tunisia ranks first among African countries, with a life expectancy of 76.7 years. The figure represents an increase of 0.2 years from 2023 and places the country 0.2 years ahead of Algeria.

Since independence, Tunisia has maintained a public healthcare system that provides free or subsidised services through government facilities. The country has also recorded low child mortality rates and maintained vaccination programmes to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

Its healthcare system, alongside access to medical services and dietary practices, has contributed to improvements in life expectancy.

Tunisia's position at the top of the ranking reflects decades of investment in public health and the provision of healthcare services.

2. Algeria: 76.5 years

Algeria ranks second with a life expectancy of 76.5 years, an increase of 0.2 years from 2023.

The government provides free healthcare to citizens through public facilities and has invested in hospitals, clinics and other medical services across the country.

Despite its large geographical area, Algeria has expanded access to healthcare to serve communities in different regions. Its life expectancy is only 0.2 years below Tunisia's, placing it among the countries with the highest figures on the continent.

However, the country faces an increasing burden of non-communicable diseases, including diabetes and cardiovascular conditions. Managing these diseases remains important to sustaining improvements in life expectancy.

3. Seychelles: 76.3 years

Seychelles ranks third, with a life expectancy of 76.3 years. Its figure increased by 0.9 years from 2023, representing one of the largest gains among the 10 countries.

The island nation provides free public healthcare to its citizens. Its population size also makes it easier to organise healthcare delivery and extend primary medical services to communities.

Seychelles has recorded progress in education, literacy and governance, alongside its health performance. These areas contribute to the country's development and influence access to healthcare and other public services.

With a life expectancy of 76.3 years, Seychelles is the third African country where people can expect to live the longest.

4. Cabo Verde: 76.2 years

Cabo Verde occupies fourth place with a life expectancy of 76.2 years, an increase of 0.2 years from 2023.

The Atlantic island nation has invested in primary healthcare through health centres across its inhabited islands. This arrangement allows residents to access medical services without travelling long distances for routine consultations.

Its healthcare delivery system has supported improvements in disease prevention and access to treatment.

Cabo Verde is also the highest-ranked West African country on the list. Its position places it just 0.1 years behind Seychelles and ahead of several countries with larger populations and economies.

5. Morocco: 75.5 years

Morocco ranks fifth with a life expectancy of 75.5 years, recording an increase of 0.2 years from 2023.

The country has been expanding health insurance coverage as part of efforts to improve access to medical services. The programme targets workers, self-employed people and other sections of the population who previously had limited insurance coverage.

The expansion is part of Morocco's wider healthcare reforms, which seek to extend medical protection to more citizens.

Its position also makes it the third North African country in the top five, following Tunisia and Algeria.

6. Mauritius: 73.8 years

Mauritius takes sixth place with a life expectancy of 73.8 years, representing an increase of 0.4 years from 2023.

The island country provides free public healthcare and has maintained investments in medical services, education and social development.

Its healthcare system allows citizens to access government-funded medical services, while its public health programmes support disease prevention and treatment.

Mauritius also performs well in other development indicators, including education and governance. Its life expectancy figure, however, is 1.7 years below Morocco's, which occupies fifth place.

7. Egypt: 71.8 years

Egypt ranks seventh with a life expectancy of 71.8 years, an increase of 0.2 years from 2023.

The country is implementing a universal health insurance system in phases across its governorates. The programme is intended to expand access to healthcare and replace the existing arrangement of multiple insurance schemes.

With a population exceeding 100 million, Egypt faces the challenge of providing medical services to a large number of people across urban and rural communities.
Its seventh-place position makes it the most populous country among the 10 nations on the list.

The expansion of health insurance is expected to play a role in improving access to treatment and supporting the country's public health objectives.

8. Libya: 71.1 years

Libya occupies eighth place with a life expectancy of 71.1 years. Its figure increased by 1.8 years from 2023, the largest reported rise among the countries in the ranking.

However, the country's health statistics require some caution because data collection has been affected by years of conflict and disruptions to public institutions.

Before 2011, Libya had developed a healthcare system that supported access to medical services and contributed to its health indicators.

The conflict has since affected hospitals, medical infrastructure and the delivery of healthcare across the country.

Rebuilding healthcare facilities and restoring access to medical services remain important challenges as Libya works to improve public health.

9. Sao Tome and Principe: 69.9 years

Sao Tome and Principe ranks ninth with a life expectancy of 69.9 years, an increase of 0.2 years from 2023.

The Central African island nation has made progress in controlling malaria, a disease that previously contributed to deaths across the country.

Government-led interventions, including the distribution of insecticide-treated bed nets and indoor spraying programmes, have supported efforts to reduce malaria transmission.

Its position makes it the only Central African country in the top 10 and the fourth island nation to feature in the ranking.

With a life expectancy of 69.9 years, Sao Tome and Principe is 0.6 years ahead of Botswana, which occupies the final position.

10. Botswana: 69.3 years

Botswana completes the ranking with a life expectancy of 69.3 years, an increase of 0.1 years from 2023.

The country's health record has been influenced by its response to HIV/AIDS, which contributed to a fall in life expectancy during the early 2000s.

However, the introduction and expansion of HIV treatment programmes have helped improve survival rates. The government provides free antiretroviral treatment to citizens, supporting access to care for people living with the virus.

Botswana's position reflects the progress made through public health interventions and access to treatment.

Although it ranks tenth, its experience demonstrates how sustained investment in disease prevention and treatment can help countries recover from public health challenges.

MENOPAUSE CONVO 2: FROM CONVERSATION TO CARE — WHAT HAPPENS AFTER WE RAISE AWARENESS?

EKEMINI AKPAKPAN

I know. Part Two has taken its time! Thank you for your patience. But perhaps there is something fitting about returning to a conversation we have waited far too long to have in the first place. In my last article, I asked why we wait until women begin experiencing menopause before preparing them for it. Now, I find myself asking a different question: once we have started the conversation, what happens next?

It is one thing for a woman to hear that brain fog, anxiety, poor sleep or changes in mood may be associated with menopause. It is another for her to know where to seek help, find a healthcare professional who understands what she is experiencing, or feel comfortable asking for support at home or at work.

Awareness matters. It can help a woman recognise what is happening to her body and realise that she is not alone. But awareness without access to care can leave her with a new vocabulary for describing her difficulties and very little help in addressing them. The real test of the menopause conversation is what changes in a woman's everyday life after it ends.

When understanding comes too late

At the Menopause West Africa Experience in Lagos, one story that stayed with me was that of Lauren Chiren, whose own experience led her into this work. While working in a senior role in financial services, Lauren began struggling with memory, concentration and sleep. She became so concerned that she thought she might be experiencing early-onset dementia. Eventually, she left a role she had loved, only to discover that menopause was behind what she had been experiencing. Her story is a sobering reminder of what happens when women lack the information to interpret changes in their own bodies — and when the people and institutions around them are not equipped to recognise what might be happening.

Lauren has since devoted her work to helping women and organisations understand menopause, including through workplace education and the development of standards for supporting women at work.

Imagine how differently her experience might have unfolded if menopause had been discussed more openly, if she had understood the possible signs earlier, and if she had felt able to seek support without fearing that her professional competence would be questioned.

Lauren Chiren's work offers a useful example of what it means to take the conversation further. Beyond educating women about menopause, she has contributed to the development of workplace standards through the British Standards Institution and the International Organization for Standardization. In September 2026, ISO published ISO 45010, guidance to help organisations develop policies and practices that support menstrual and menopausal health at work. The significance is not simply that menopause is receiving more attention. It is that organisations now have an international reference point for examining their policies, workplace environments, management practices and support systems. The question for employers is no longer only whether they understand menopause, but whether their organisations are equipped to respond.

The workplace is part of the conversation

This is where the workplace must become part of our understanding of menopause care. Women do not stop being professionals when they experience changes in their health. Many are at the height of their careers during midlife, carrying institutional knowledge, managing teams, making important decisions and mentoring younger colleagues. At the same time, they may be raising children, supporting ageing parents or navigating other personal responsibilities.

Yet a woman struggling with sleep, concentration, anxiety or other symptoms may worry that disclosing her difficulties will affect how she is perceived. She may fear being considered less capable, less reliable or no longer suited for leadership. So she says nothing, tries to manage on her own and hopes that things will improve.

The consequences are not only personal. Organisations risk losing experienced women whose knowledge, judgement and leadership they have invested years in developing. At the conference, the participation of HR and corporate health leaders helped bring this connection into focus. Menopause support cannot sit with healthcare professionals alone; it also requires organisations to examine how their policies, managers and everyday working practices affect women navigating midlife. What might this look like in practice?

It could begin with training HR teams and line managers to understand menopause, respond appropriately and signpost employees to credible sources of support. It could mean creating confidential ways for employees to discuss health-related needs without fear of stigma. Depending on the role and the individual's circumstances, practical adjustments might include greater flexibility around working hours, access to a cooler or quieter workspace, or temporary changes to work arrangements.

Organisations can also review their existing health, wellbeing, flexible-work and leave policies to establish whether they adequately respond to women's needs at different life stages. Where appropriate, employee assistance programmes and occupational health services can provide further support.

These measures do not require employers to assume that every woman will experience menopause in the same way. Nor do they mean lowering performance expectations. They mean recognising that good performance is influenced by the conditions in which people work, and that reasonable support can help experienced employees continue to contribute.

Progressive policies matter, but a policy that exists only in an employee handbook will not change much. Women must know that support is available, managers must understand how to implement it, and organisational cultures must make it safe to ask for help.

A workplace that supports women through menopause is not doing them a favour. It is creating the conditions for experienced women to remain healthy, engaged and able to contribute.

Care must connect the different parts of a woman's life
Work is only one part of the picture. Menopause may intersect with physical health, mental wellbeing, relationships, nutrition, movement, sexuality, financial security and the responsibilities women carry at home. The WHO has urged practitioners to respond as though these needs are connected, because at the moment, the support available to address them is often fragmented.

This is why the idea of care must go beyond simply telling women what menopause is. We need to make it easier for them to move from information to appropriate support.

Healthcare professionals have a central role in providing evidence-based information, assessing symptoms and guiding women towards suitable care. But this responsibility cannot rest on health professionals alone. Employers, mental health practitioners, wellness providers, community organisations and families can each help women find relevant information and support. The important thing is that these efforts connect rather than operate as isolated activities.

This also requires honesty about access. We cannot speak about care as though every woman can readily afford specialist consultations, take time away from work or travel to find the right service. As we build awareness, we must also consider affordability, availability and the practical realities of women's lives.

The goal is not to create another list of things women must do to manage themselves better. It is to make the support they need easier to find and use.

Why champions, communities and familiar voices matter
One of the encouraging developments at Menopause West Africa was the inauguration of 100 Menopause Champions, with plans to extend education and awareness into churches and other places of worship.

The idea of champions is important because not every meaningful conversation about menopause will happen at a conference or in a hospital. Some will happen between friends, among colleagues, in women's associations, at community meetings or after a conversation at church.

A champion can help make menopause less of a whispered subject. They can share credible information, challenge myths, encourage women to seek appropriate medical advice and point them towards reliable sources of support. They can also help bring the conversation to people who may not otherwise encounter it.

Champions, however, should not be expected to diagnose symptoms or replace trained healthcare professionals. Their role is to build understanding, create safer spaces for conversation and connect women to the right help.

Public figures can play a similar role. Patience Ozokwor's advocacy at the conference was a reminder of the influence familiar voices can have in making a subject more relatable. When respected public figures speak openly about menopause, they can help challenge the idea that it is something to be embarrassed about or endured in silence.

Imagine what it would mean for actors, media personalities, faith leaders, community figures and other trusted voices to make menopause part of ordinary public conversation. Imagine women hearing these discussions not only during an awareness month, but throughout the year, in the spaces where they already live, work and gather.

The value of celebrity advocacy is not simply that a famous person mentions menopause. It is that their voice can open a door for a more informed conversation — one that directs women towards credible information and appropriate care.

And that conversation must include women whose experiences are often overlooked: women in informal employment, women in rural communities, women with limited access to healthcare and women who may not have the language or resources to explain what they are experiencing.

Awareness should not be reserved for women who can attend conferences or follow health conversations online.

What happens next?

For me, this is the question that matters most. A gathering can bring together healthcare professionals, corporate leaders, advocates, community organisations and women who are eager to learn. It can make visible the different dimensions of menopause and introduce people who may be able to work together. But its lasting value depends on what happens when everyone returns to their everyday lives.

Do champions continue the conversation in their communities? Do healthcare providers make reliable information easier to access? Do employers examine their policies and equip managers to respond appropriately? Do public figures use their platforms to challenge stigma? Do women leave knowing where to seek help when they need it?

These are the kinds of questions that can help us distinguish awareness from progress. We should also pay attention to what we measure. We should also ask whether women understand their options better, whether they know where to find support, whether workplaces are becoming more responsive, and whether community education is helping women access appropriate care.

Menopause is a natural life transition, but that does not mean every woman will experience it in the same way or need the same support. Our response must leave room for those differences while ensuring that no woman is made to feel that she must figure everything out by herself.

Perhaps the next phase of this conversation is not simply about speaking more loudly. It is about building stronger connections between knowledge and care, between community awareness and professional support, and between progressive policies and the everyday experiences of women. We have waited too long to have this conversation. We should not have to wait just as long to see it make a difference.

The conversation has started. Now, let us make sure it leads somewhere.

SPORTS ESSENTIAL TO STUDENTS' GROWTH, DEVELOPMENT— SAWYERR

...as Igbobi College, Yaba, holds its 91st interhouse sports competition

CHARLES OGWO



Sports remain a vital pillar of students' all-round development, fostering discipline, teamwork, leadership and resilience beyond the classroom, Akintunde Sawyerr, the managing director of the Nigerian Education Loan Fund (NELFUND), has said.

Sawyerr, who is an old student of Igbobi College, Yaba, Lagos, made this observation during the college's 91st Inter-House Sports Competition, an event that brought together students, school authorities, alumni and other stakeholders to celebrate sporting excellence and the role of athletics in shaping young people's character and future.

He stressed the need for schools to sustain investment in sports as an integral part of education, noting that participation in sporting activities helps students build confidence, develop healthy competitive instincts and acquire life skills essential for success.

"Sports play a vital role in the development of every student. Beyond the medals, trophies, and applause, sports teach us lessons that remain relevant throughout our lives.

w"They teach us discipline, perseverance, courage, respect for others, and the importance of working together towards a common goal," he said.

Sawyerr, who was the chairman of the day, noted that on the sports field people will witness speed, strength, agility, determination, and perhaps a few surprises.

However, he reminded the participants that while winning is desirable, the true measure of success lies in the manner in which they compete. "Victory achieved with integrity is far more valuable than victory achieved through unfair means.

"Let us therefore compete honorably, respect the officials, encourage our fellow competitors, and accept the outcome of every contest with maturity and grace," he emphasised.

He encouraged all the athletes to give their very best, run with determination, jump with courage, and throw with precision, and compete with all their heart.

"Remember that every champion was once a competitor who refused to give up. Whether you finish first or last, your effort, attitude, and conduct make you proud.

"To the house captains, team coaches, and sports masters, I commend your leadership and dedication. You have a responsibility not only to prepare your teams for competition, but also to instill in them the values of discipline, unity, and fair play," he said.

Joseph Adediji, the principal of Igbobi College, Yaba, reminded the athletes that they were not gathered merely to compete for medals, trophies, and bragging rights, but to celebrate the enduring values that have sustained the institution for over nine decades.

"Discipline, perseverance, teamwork, courage, integrity, and excellence; ninety-one years is not a small number. It represents a remarkable legacy of educational excellence, character formation, leadership development, and savvy humanity.

"Since its establishment, Igbobi College has nurtured and continues to nurture young men who distinguish themselves in academics, sports, leadership, and service to society. Today's event is another opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to producing not only intellectually sound students, but also physically fit, morally upright, emotionally balanced, and socially responsible young men," he said.





Similarly, Adediji emphasised that sports are an essential part of education.

“Sports teach lessons that cannot always be learned within the four walls of a classroom. On the sports field, our boys learn that success requires preparation, discipline, sacrifice, determination, and willingness to work together.

“They learn to win with humility, lose with dignity, respect their opponents, and rise again after disappointment,” he noted.

Moreover, he emphasized that the education that comes from sports goes beyond academic achievement, and that the school remains committed to providing opportunities for the students to discover their talents, develop their abilities, and fulfill their God-given potential.

Besides, he noted that these lessons are invaluable, not only for sporting success, but also for the challenges of life.

“Indeed, the discipline required to cross a finishing line, the courage to attend a difficult event, and the teamwork needed to achieve a common goal are qualities that boys will need throughout their lives,” he emphasised.

He urged the athletes to give their best, compete with passion, run with determination, jump with courage, and play with integrity.

“Let your performance demonstrate the values for which Igbobi is known. We are always at the top. Remember, however, that the true measure of a champion is not only the number of medals won, but also the character displayed in the process of competing,” he said.

At the end of the competition, Aggrey House (Blue) emerged as the overall best, while Parker House (Purple) and Oluwole House (Yellow) took the second and third positions, respectively.

THE PSYCHOLOGY BEHIND BRANDS WE LOVE

FEYISITAN IJIMAKINWA

The reasons we love a certain brand of sneakers probably have more to do with our brains than our feet. As consumers, we like to think we favour a brand because of objective factors, such as product quality or price. But insights from psychology suggest that our feelings and identities may have a greater influence than we'd expect on which brands we choose.

So, what does that mean for brands and their approaches to communicating to their target customers? Are story-driven marketing campaigns that pack an emotional punch really the key to lasting loyalty?

Emotions: at the heart of brand choices

You might think you chose your brand of toothpaste because it's the best at preventing cavities or because it's the best value. But even if you didn't realise it, emotions likely factored into your decision.

Evidence suggests that emotions may influence our behaviour as consumers more than we'd like to admit. According to Peter Noel Murray, a consumer psychologist, research show that consumers evaluate brands mostly based on emotions rather than information or facts about the brand.

Granted, the role of emotions in consumer decision-making is hardly news to most businesses. From the long-established supermarket strategy of placing produce and flowers at the front of the store to generate a feeling of "freshness", to clothing retailers that play music that makes shoppers feel like they're at a hip nightclub (which actually makes shoppers move faster, without reducing sales), examples of businesses harnessing the power of emotion to sell are everywhere.

But when it comes to branding and their supporting customer experiences, marketers often exaggerate the practicalities, lauding the latest and greatest features and benefits of their products and/or services, while often neglecting the personal touch that will really resonate with the individual consumer.

With that in mind, today's brands would do well to master the art of storytelling that research has proven, time and time again, to be such an influential factor for much of our audience's purchasing decisions.

I am what I buy: how brands form identity

Far back in 2006, Apple launched its "Get a Mac" campaign. The campaign featured a series of commercials that featured a young, hip guy in a hoodie introducing himself by saying "Hi, I'm a Mac." A nerdy, older man wearing a blazer and glasses portrayed another tech brand (you can probably guess which one.) The campaign implied that the computer you use signifies the kind of person you are, and of course, you want to be young and cool, like a Mac.

Many of us may roll our eyes and feel like we're not so easily swayed to choose one brand over the other, because of something that tells us almost nothing about the actual products they're advertising. Yet the "Get a Mac" campaign turned out to be a huge success for Apple.

Over 15 years later, the emotional tropes displayed in the campaign still stick in our minds when we think about both brands. What Apple's ad campaign did so well was to associate their brand with an emotionally-charged and personable identity that remains connected to their brand to this day. As any psychologist will tell you, identity and the urge to belong is

a powerful social concept that relates to how we view and define ourselves and others. We use many elements of our lives (height, taste, political leaning, etc) to construct our identities—and brands are no different.

So how does this psychological phenomenon tangibly relate to the business world? Consumers construct their identities and present themselves to others through the brands they choose. For instance, you may love a certain brand of cars because you see yourself as sleek and polished, or because you want other people to view you that way.

Identity may explain why many of the best-loved brands communicate personality traits that consumers identify with or wish to emulate, such as being young, tech-savvy, wealthy, or sexy. If your brand doesn't resonate with your customer's real or desired identity, it's unlikely your brand will inspire love.

The power of social identity in branding

If you've ever felt a connection to people who use the same kind of smartphone or ride the same brand of car as you do, you've experienced social identity in branding.

Social identity, a component of personal identity, involves defining ourselves based on membership in certain social groups. Individuals might derive social identity from belonging to a fraternity, living in a particular neighbourhood, or being a member of a professional organisation. Social identity is relevant to brands because of the way social groups influence individuals' choices and preferences.

A study on solar panel installation demonstrates how the communities we live in can affect our purchasing decisions. Solar panels can be costly to install, so you might assume that only people who see themselves as wealthy or environmentally conscious might install them. But researchers discovered that the most predictive factor in determining where solar panels were installed wasn't wealth, but whether someone's neighbours had installed solar panels.

Many advertising campaigns rely on social identity, suggesting that other members of the target customer's social group—health-conscious mothers, for example—use a product. Some brands have created social networks exclusively for their customers, essentially forming a social group around their products. Consumers may be more likely to adopt a brand if their social group does, too.

LAST LINE

From powerfully emotive ad campaigns to personable social media posts, the digital experiences you promote online are integral to building a lasting emotional connection with consumers — maybe even more so than your actual brand's products/services.



FEYISITAN IJIMAKINWA

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

THE DIBIA AND HER FAITH

UDY OSARO-EDOBOR

For twelve years, Chinenye had lived with the pain of widowhood, the burden of raising three daughters alone and the relentless struggle to cater for her family. She knew what it meant to go to bed worrying about tomorrow and waking up with no guarantee that things would be better. But she persevered. Chinenye was a fighter.

For years, she struggled to keep her textile business afloat, buying fabrics in small quantities from Oshodi and Balogun market. Every little profit went towards feeding her children, paying bills and keeping the family going. Slowly, things began to look up. Her business grew, her customer base expanded and she could finally afford to travel to Aba to buy fabrics directly from importers.

The future looked promising. She was beginning to see the rewards of her sacrifices. After all the years of struggling, she was finally approaching the life she had always wanted for herself and her daughters.
Then came the night that threatened to destroy everything she had worked for.

Tragedy struck.

On one of her business trips to Aba, armed robbers attacked the night bus she was travelling in. In the chaos, Chinenye was shot in the head. She was rushed to the hospital, where doctors battled desperately to save her life. For eight hours, they fought to stabilise her and remove the bullets lodged dangerously close to her brain. By the time the operation was over, they had managed to remove three of the four bullets. The fourth remained and its position made further attempts at removal extremely dangerous. Chinenye survived but survival did not mean a return to normal life.

After the operation, she continued to suffer persistent headaches and dizzy spells.
For nearly two years, she lived with the fear and uncertainty of having a bullet lodged so close to her brain. Every headache and every dizzy spell left her wondering what might happen next.

Now, her condition has deteriorated and she is back in the hospital. After examining her, her doctors have recommended another surgery to remove the remaining bullet. The cost is approximately ₦40 million and they have also been brutally honest about the risks involved. The operation is possible but because of the bullet's position, she could survive the surgery only to emerge paralysed.

Even if she could raise the money, there is no assurance that she would walk out of the hospital and return to the life she knew.

Paralysis could mean the end of her business, the loss of her independence and a future in which her daughters must shoulder the burden of caring for their mother. After spending twelve years struggling to give them a better future, the thought of becoming dependent on them is almost unbearable. She wants to live but she is afraid of what survival might look like.

This is where her story takes a complicated turn. Chinenye has an uncle, a powerful dibia whose abilities she has witnessed firsthand. His reputation is not based on rumours or stories told by strangers. Her belief in his powers is rooted in events that happened within her own family.

Many years ago, Chinenye's mother sold okpa at a local market. It was a modest business through which she contributed to the family's upkeep. Unknown to her, a neighbour at the market had dropped a charm in front of her stall and Chinenye's mother had stepped on it.
Not long afterwards, she became terribly ill. One of her legs began to swell, decay and produce a foul smell. Her condition became frightening and the family watched helplessly as her health deteriorated.

It was Chinenye's uncle who intervened. Through a ritual he called "Back to Sender", he reversed the spiritual attack and her mother's condition eventually improved.

That was not the only incident. Years later, during the iwa ji festival, Chinenye's brother drank palm wine that was believed to have been poisoned. His condition became alarming and once again, their uncle intervened and her brother survived.

These experiences left a deep impression on Chinenye. To her, these were not distant stories.

Her uncle had urged her to return to the village. He believed he could remove the bullet through the same Back to Sender ritual. According to him, the bullet would be spiritually returned to the person responsible for shooting her, bringing that person to a terrible end while Chinenye recovered. But Chinenye was a born-again Christian.

Her faith was not something she had picked up when life became difficult. It was the foundation on which she had chosen to build her life. She believed in God, in the power of prayer and in trusting Him through difficult circumstances. Her uncle's practices stood in direct opposition to the convictions she had held for years.

Yet, for the first time in a long while, her faith was being tested in a way she had never imagined.

She had not been sitting idle or waiting for a miracle without seeking help. She had taken her fears to her spiritual father, hoping he would provide the direction she desperately needed. His counsel was that she should continue praying and fasting.

Chinenye had taken his advice seriously. She had been praying relentlessly, asking God to preserve her life and make a way where there seemed to be none. But fasting was another matter, she was on strong antibiotics so fasting wasn't an option but she continued to pray.

She prayed for healing, for provision and for the wisdom to make the right decision. She prayed for her daughters, who had already experienced the pain of losing their father and could hardly bear the thought of losing their mother too. She prayed for the ₦40 million she could not afford and for the courage to face the risks the doctors had explained.

She prayed...
But the medical bills remained.
The surgical risks remained.
The bullet remained in her head.
And her uncle's offer remained on the table.

To Chinenye, the spiritual option was not simply a tempting shortcut offered by someone she barely knew. It came from a man whose interventions she had witnessed.
On the other hand, pursuing medical treatment meant confronting a financial burden far beyond her means, alongside the possibility of surviving the surgery with permanent paralysis. In fact, she did not even know how she would raise the money.

Time was no longer on her side and every passing day brought more uncertainty.

For twelve years, Chinenye had been both mother and father to her girls. She had sacrificed, struggled and rebuilt her life so they could have a future. Now, just when her efforts were beginning to yield fruit, she was confronted with the terrifying possibility that she might not live to enjoy it with them.

She wanted to remain independent, continue working and give her children the opportunities she had never enjoyed. She wanted to watch her daughters grow, succeed and build their own homes. She wanted to see the business she had fought so hard to establish become more secure. Most of all, she wanted to live.

But what was she supposed to do when the option that seemed most accessible challenged the faith she had spent years holding on to?
And what did it mean to trust God when the answer she desperately needed had not yet come?

She had prayed through widowhood, financial hardship and years of uncertainty. She had trusted God through seasons when she had nothing and continued to believe even when life seemed unfair. She had prayed all those times and she got her miracles. But not this time.

Her uncle insisted he could help. Her spiritual father had told her to continue praying and fasting. Her doctors had explained the medical risks and the cost of surgery. Each option carried its own weight, yet she had to make a decision.

Chinenye stood at a crossroad between her Christian convictions and the evidence of her uncle's past interventions.
She was wrestling with her understanding of God's power and her desperate desire to remain alive for her children.

What would you advise Chinenye?

* Would you tell her to hold firmly to her Christian convictions?

* Would you tell her to pursue the medical treatment despite the enormous financial burden and the risk of paralysis?

* Would you encourage her to consider her uncle's offer?



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MAKING GOLF ACCESSIBLE IS KEY TO DEVELOPING YOUNG TALENTS – Meka Olowola

ANTHONY NLEBEM





Golf in Nigeria is gradually moving beyond its reputation as a leisure pursuit for the wealthy, with corporate-sponsored tournaments, private resorts, sports tourism and professional competitions creating new opportunities for growth. However, questions remain about accessibility, funding and the development of young players.

Meka Niyi Olowola, a passionate golfer, believes the sport needs a stronger development structure, wider access to facilities and sustained private-sector investment to realise its potential.

In this interview with Anthony Nlebem, he reflects on his journey in golf, the challenges facing Nigerian professionals, the commercial opportunities for businesses and the need to build a pathway for young talents to compete internationally. Excerpts:

How did you get involved in golf, and what has your journey in the sport taught you?

Golf began with a question that stayed with me for four years. In 2003, shortly after joining a new organisation, a colleague asked if I played. We had been invited to an international corporate golf outing, and I did not want to be left out. However, life took over, and it was not until 2007 that I joined Ikoyi Club in Lagos and picked up a golf club.

I thought I was learning a sport, but I was also learning about myself. Golf has taught me patience, resilience and the discipline to begin again after a bad shot. It has shown me that progress is rarely a straight line: you make a decision, live with the outcome and prepare for the next one. What began as curiosity gradually became a habit and, eventually, a passion.

What have been the biggest milestones in your golfing journey?

My proudest personal milestone is scoring 74 in a practice round and 75 in a tournament at Ikoyi Club. For those unfamiliar with golf, these scores represent the number of shots taken to complete the course; the lower the score, the better. They were particularly meaningful because Ikoyi is a challenging course.

I am also proud to be a single-digit handicap golfer, which reflects a high level of consistency and skill. Beyond personal achievements, I enjoy sharing what golf has taught me through my weekly column, The Long Game, where I explore the sport's lessons in leadership, judgement and character.

What are the major challenges facing Nigerian golfers who want to compete professionally at home and internationally?

Financing is the biggest challenge. Professional golfers must pay for travel, entry fees, equipment and coaching before any prize money comes in. Without sponsorship, many Nigerian players cannot afford to compete through a full season.

Opportunity is another challenge. Nigeria has not had enough competitive events to support professional careers, forcing players to travel abroad in search of ranking points. That is beginning to change. The Sunshine Development Tour has brought international competition to Lagos, while the Nigerian Open is expected to return in 2027 after nearly three decades.

The talent is here, but players need sustained backing to compete at home and take advantage of opportunities abroad.

How accessible is golf to young Nigerians, given perceptions that it is an expensive and exclusive sport?

The perception is not entirely unfounded. Unlike football or table tennis, golf can be expensive to take up. Clubs, lessons, green fees and membership all come at a cost, particularly in Nigeria. In Lagos, a city of more than 20 million people, there are only about four practical courses, which limits access. Time is another barrier. A full round can take several hours, making it difficult for young professionals to fit the game around work.



Still, golf may be more accessible than many people assume. I encourage people, especially those outside Lagos, to ask their local clubs about beginner programmes. Many clubs have weekly guest days, and there are shorter ways to play. You do not have to start with a full round; a lesson and a few holes can be enough.

Lakowe Lakes has also offered a more affordable option through its short par-three Marshie Course, although I am not sure whether that programme is still available. I also tell people to maintain an interest in the game. An opportunity to play may come later, as it did for me.

What needs to change in Nigeria's golf ecosystem to develop more players capable of competing internationally?

We need to make it easier for young people to discover the game and develop their talent. That means expanding junior programmes and equipment support, while investing in qualified coaches who can guide players from their first lesson through to competitive golf.

A structured pathway is the missing piece. Too many of our professionals turn pro through routes that were never designed to prepare them for international standards, and that becomes evident when they compete on bigger stages. We need more academies dedicated to producing professional-level players, with clear curricula, competition schedules, fitness and mental training, and a deliberate pathway from junior golf to the professional ranks.

Godwin Okoko is a good example. We are celebrating him now, but his success came from a deliberate plan, not luck. The academy that built that pathway no longer exists, and that is a real loss.

We also need a clear competition ladder, from junior events to domestic tournaments and recognised international tours. The return of the Nigerian Open, Sunshine Development Tour events and initiatives being considered by the Nigeria Golf Federation are useful building blocks.

However, these opportunities will make a lasting difference only if players and organisers receive sustained support.

How would you assess the commercial potential of golf in Nigeria?

The potential is real, but the sport's current commercial model has its limits. Sponsorship is concentrated largely around amateur golf, which offers valuable networking opportunities but may not provide the excitement needed to attract a wider audience. Many courses are not designed for spectators, and there is little serious television coverage.

As a result, Nigerian golf depends heavily on people who already love the game. That is difficult to sustain commercially because sponsors also look for visibility and audience reach.

The opportunity lies in growing participation, staging more professional tournaments and making the game easier to watch and follow. South Africa shows what a more developed golf industry can support, with around 420 courses and an estimated 40,000 jobs a year. Nigeria is still developing, but private sponsors are backing events and international tours are beginning to come here.

A few years ago, the Professional Golfers' Association of Nigeria approached me to support efforts to grow the sport. As part of that work, we met with an official from the European Tour to explore sponsorship from the International Olympic Committee to develop professionals in Nigeria.

We did not get very far, largely because multilateral bodies tend to work through national federations. In Nigeria, that responsibility sits with the Nigeria Golf Federation. I will leave that experience for another discussion.

The benefits of growing the sport extend beyond the course. They include opportunities in coaching, caddying, course maintenance, retail, hospitality and transport. With sustained investment and stronger media coverage, golf could become a more significant business platform in Nigeria.

What opportunities exist for investors, brands and businesses to use golf for marketing, networking and customer engagement?

The opportunities already exist, and some businesses are acting on them. Several established corporates support tournaments here. However, the lack of television coverage and spectator access limits the opportunities, with sponsorship concentrated mainly on events organised for recreational golfers.

Golf also gives businesses something few other settings can offer: hours of relaxed interaction with clients and partners. A round, a Pro-Am or a corporate golf day can build relationships in a way a conventional meeting cannot. That is why golf is widely used for networking and customer engagement.

More opportunities are emerging. We are in discussions with a leading international brand to bring a major competition to Nigeria next year. For a sponsor, an event of that nature offers visibility among an audience of decision-makers and an association with international-standard competition.

What can golf clubs, tournament organisers and governing bodies do to make the sport more attractive to sponsors?

Each has a role to play. Clubs can give professional golfers greater access to their courses for practice and host more professional events. Regular access helps players improve, while competitions give fans and sponsors more opportunities to see them perform.

Kenya offers a useful example. Through the Sunshine Development Tour, Kenyan players can earn ranking points and progress towards opportunities on bigger stages, including the Big Easy and the Sunshine Tour. They have created a platform for local golfers to compete, improve their rankings and gain access to higher-level tournaments.

I am pleased that this is beginning to happen here. The SDT Tour has launched, with the event at Lakowe Lakes already completed and Alpha-Bravo coming on board. We need more opportunities like these. They will encourage professionals to practise with greater purpose, improve areas of their game that need attention and gain the experience required to compete internationally.

Look at how Sunday Olapade and Epe Francis are making us proud. Imagine how much more they could achieve with adequate financial support, and how many more talents Nigeria could produce if the right structures were in place.



We must also take golf into schools, just as we do with football, swimming and basketball. That is how we can introduce children to the game early and build a stronger foundation for the future. I remember speaking to you three years ago about the need for a deliberate plan to develop golf. That plan must include a clear professional pathway and a sustained effort to grow the game from the schools upwards.

What role should the private sector play in developing golf academies, junior competitions and professional pathways?

The private sector can support every stage of the pathway, from introducing children to golf to helping professionals compete internationally.

The Awa Ibraheem Junior Open Championship deserves special mention. Now in its thirteenth year, the championship has done exceptional work developing young players from across Nigeria and giving them a platform to compete for world ranking points. That kind of sustained commitment is exactly what the sport needs.

Lakowe Lakes' junior programme is also introducing children to the game, while events such as the CIO Golf Classic and Alpha-Bravo Classic are helping strengthen the professional calendar. Major international brands are beginning to take an interest as well.

We are also in discussions with a major European brand about sponsoring a signature tournament next year. Such partnerships can help attract investment, improve the quality of competitions and create more opportunities for Nigerian players.

Are Nigerian golf tournaments doing enough to demonstrate measurable returns on investment to sponsors?

Yes, they are doing enough to connect brands with recreational golfers. The problem is that we do not have as many tournaments for professionals as we need as a country.

The challenge is to expand beyond the existing amateur-focused model. More professional events, better media coverage and greater spectator access would give sponsors wider visibility and help them measure the impact of their investment. We need to create an environment where supporting golf is not only about networking but also about reaching new audiences and developing the sport.

KNIGHT FRANK HOSTS 2026 GOLF CLASSIC IN LAGOS, STRENGTHENING STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS, CHAMPIONING MARKET EXCELLENCE



Knight Frank Nigeria, premier real estate consultancy firm, hosted corporate leaders, industry partners, and golf enthusiasts at the prestigious Ikoyi Club 1938 for the second edition of the annual Knight Frank Golf Classic.

Designed to transcend traditional corporate interactions, the tournament served as an exclusive platform to deepen professional relationships, foster high-level networking, and celebrate long-standing business partnerships.

Originally launched during Knight Frank's Diamond Jubilee celebrations to mark six decades of operations in Nigeria, the event has now been established as a cornerstone annual tradition.

Speaking on the objective behind the gathering, Frank Okosun, Senior Partner and Chief Executive Officer of Knight Frank Nigeria, emphasized the strategic importance of building connections outside the formal boardroom environment:

“We are here to enjoy a great day of golf, but more importantly, to celebrate relationships. The Knight Frank Golf Classic brings together our clients, partners, and friends in an environment where we can connect beyond the usual business setting. We value these relationships, and today is an opportunity to appreciate the people who have been part of our journey.”

Commenting on the evolving real estate landscape in Nigeria, Okosun highlighted Knight Frank’s commitment to raising advisory standards across the continent:
“The market is evolving, and clients need more than property information; they need sound advice, market intelligence, and professionals who can help them navigate uncertainty and make informed decisions. We will continue to focus on delivering value, deepening our expertise, and building relationships that make a difference. Our purpose remains Connecting People and Property Perfectly.”

The 2026 tournament attracted strong backing from major institutional partners, including co-sponsor Tatum Bank.

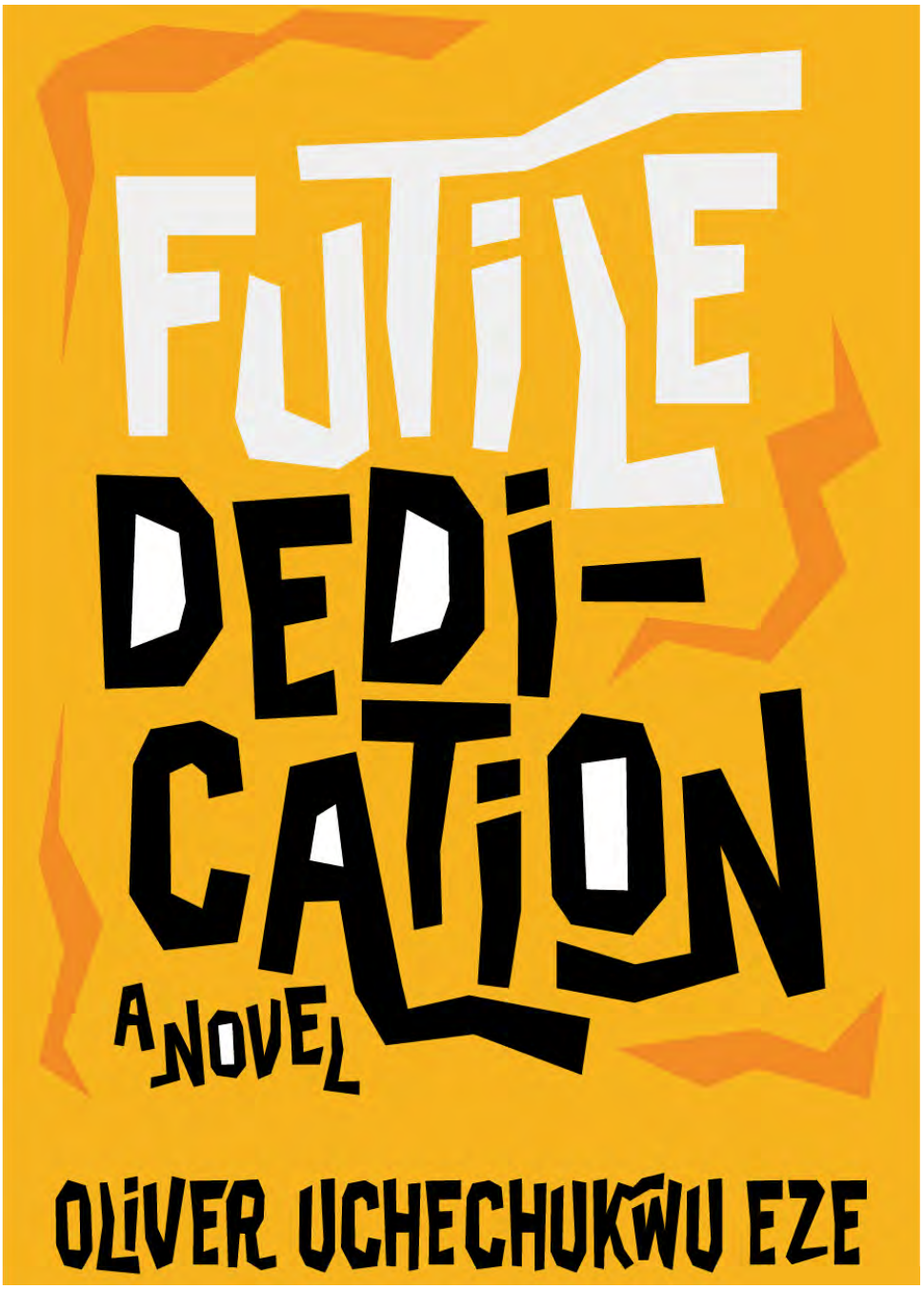
Highlighting the strategic alignment between banking, wealth creation, and golf, Niyi Adeseun, Managing Director of Tatum Bank, noted:

“As a commercial bank operating for about 18 months, our sponsorship is a deliberate strategy to connect with visionary wealth creators and leaders. Golf teaches strategic patience and uncompromising integrity, core values that mirror our operations at Tatum Bank.”

Corporate leaders across diverse sectors participated in the 18-hole tournament. Expressing her delight, Funmi Omo, an avid golfer, remarked:

“The tournament was intentionally curated to bring together friends and corporate colleagues across the Knight Frank family. My experience on the course was exceptional, the weather was ideal, the networking was seamless, and I look forward to participating in future editions.”

Beyond executive networking, the event spotlighted the growth potential of golf in Nigeria. Oluseun Sokefun, Managing Director of Milano Bespoke Limited and an avid golfer, dispelled common misconceptions surrounding the sport, pointing to grassroots youth developments and expanding infrastructure across Lagos and Ogun states as proof of the game’s increasing accessibility.



A Story of Unfulfilled Expectations-A Review of Oliver Uchechukwu Eze's Futile Dedication

Title: Futile Dedication
Author: Oliver Uchechukwu Eze
Year of Publication: 2026
Number of Pages: 169
Category: Fiction

FUTILE DEDICATION

TITILADE OYEMADE

Futile Dedication by Oliver Uchechukwu Eze is one of those titles that leaves you with questions before you even open the book. Futile dedication? Who was dedicated to what, and how did all that effort amount to nothing? The bright yellow cover catches your eye, but the title sends you searching for answers. After looking through the pages for clues, you may find yourself turning to Google. Apparently, futile dedication means commitment that produces no worthwhile result. Thank you, Google! Now that the mystery of the title is solved, the question is whether the story lives up to the curiosity it creates.

Set in Enugu, the novel opens with the birth of a baby named Ugwuja and quickly draws you into village life. Eze describes traditional childbirth practices and local customs in detail. There is so much happening in the opening pages that the book begins to feel like a Nollywood village epic. You can almost imagine the dramatic soundtrack playing in the background. However, with so many details and characters introduced at once, it takes a while to figure out where the story is headed.

The lives of Chidinma, Ike and Ugwuja form the heart of the novel. Through them, Eze portrays a community caught between its long-held traditions and the changes brought by Western education and Christianity. Not everyone welcomes these changes. Some characters express their resentment towards the white man, his religion and the education he introduced to their community. This raises an interesting question: must a community abandon its traditions to embrace progress, or can the two exist side by side?

It is a question worth examining, but Eze has many other issues he wants to bring to the table. Marriage, ambition, belonging, substance abuse, depression and even background checks feature in the story. The author clearly has a lot to say about society, but the number of themes sometimes makes it difficult for any one of them to stand out. Just when you begin to settle into one subject, another appears.

One of the book's strengths is its portrayal of village life. Eze uses idioms and traditional expressions that give the dialogue a distinctly local flavour. Readers who enjoy proverbs and the wisdom hidden in everyday expressions will appreciate this aspect of the writing. His descriptions also offer a glimpse into customs and practices that readers may not be familiar with, helping them understand the beliefs that shape the community.

The story becomes more interesting when the village invests in the education of Chidinma and Ike, twin siblings expected to become successful professionals. In the villagers' minds, the plan is simple: support the children through school, and they will eventually bring honour to the community. Unfortunately, the twins have ambitions of their own. What should have been a source of pride soon becomes a cause for worry and disappointment.

Here, Eze touches on an issue many families can relate to. When parents or a community invest in a child's future, does that give them the right to decide what the child must become? The novel highlights the tension between gratitude and personal freedom, showing how good intentions can become a burden when young people are expected to fulfil other people's dreams.

It is a valuable lesson about allowing children to find their own paths rather than measuring their success against other people's expectations.

Ugwuja offers a different view of success. Unlike his siblings, he shows little interest in formal education and prefers to contribute to his community. He eventually becomes the village king, challenging the idea that academic qualifications and prestigious professions are the only routes to success. His journey reinforces an important message: people have different strengths, interests and ways of making a difference.

As the story progresses, the villagers begin to accept some of the changes associated with Western influence, although they do not completely abandon their traditions. This gradual shift feels believable because changing long-held beliefs takes time. The novel shows that it is possible to make room for new ideas while still valuing one's cultural roots.

Ultimately, Futile Dedication offers an interesting glimpse into village life in southeastern Nigeria and raises important questions about culture, education, religion and personal ambition. Its rich cultural details and lessons about family and community expectations give readers plenty to reflect on. While the novel covers a wide range of themes, a more focused storyline and a more fully developed ending would have helped bring its ideas together and make the story even more engaging. Nevertheless, Eze offers readers valuable lessons about the meaning of success, reminding us that people have different aspirations and that everyone deserves the freedom to choose their own path.



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WEEKENDER

MOVIE REVIEW

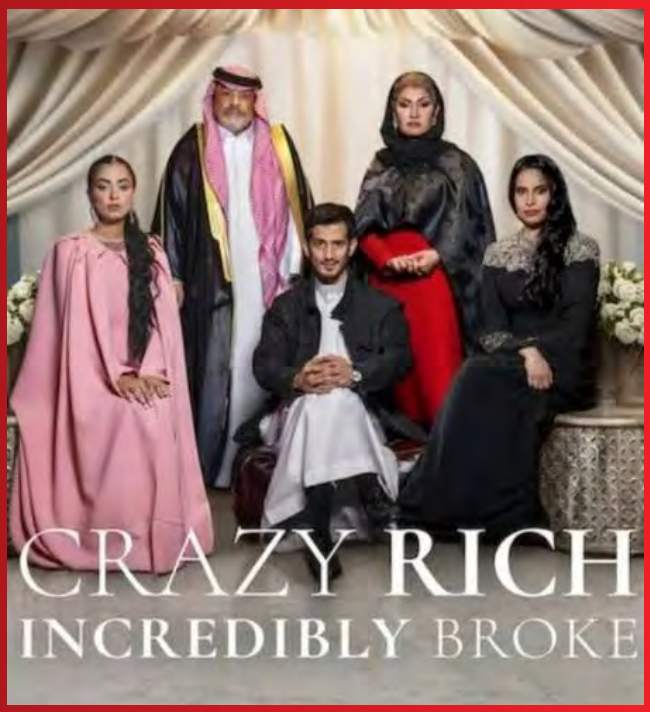
ARMORED (2009)

This movie got me thinking a lot, about how you will start a new job peacefully and decide to earn a truthful salary, despite all you are going through only to get tempted only few days after. Ty Hackett got a new job a guard for an armored truck on arrival, he meets the veterans on the job, who decide to teach him and assist him settle in well into the job, little did he know that they were up to something shady off their sleeves. Few days into settling in Mike Cochrane decides to inform him of their well thought of plan of robbing their own truck of $42m dollars and how that will settle them for life quietly and he can help his brother and pay off all their debts; Ty Hackett immediately refused and went home. Well, you will have to go check out this movie to find out if he joined them, if they succeeded and how things went down, the movie was packed with action and suspense from start to the vey end. The 88m crime, action movie was directed by Nimirod Antal, they featured actors like Matt Dillion, Jean Reno, Laurence Fishburne, Amaury Nolasco, Fred Ward, Milo Ventimiglia, Skeet Ulrich, Columbus Short and many more.



CRAZY RICH, INCREDIBLY BROKE (2026)

Honestly, I wasn't so sure what to expect from this Saudi movie, but I was glad I made it to the very end, it was so cool, with display of wealth, riches and affluence, but it seemed a bit slow for me, as I am a fan of action movie lovers. Sultan was a very wealthy man, with a growing company, fleet of cars and a mansion, suddenly he made a wrong movie with a business investment and lost everything. He didn't know how to relate this message to his wife and kids, but he had to. For them to survive they had to do some crazy things, the kids will have to give up somethings and sell their belongings to help their dad, one of the daughters will have to marry into another family to help save theirs. You will need to watch this movie to see the length they had to go to save their family, and how they all had to work together as a family. The 98m Saudi, middle Eastern, drama, comedies movie was directed by Ahmed El Gendy, they featured actors like Rashed Al Shamrani, Ida Alkusay, Adwa Bader, Ziyad Alamri, Ghada AlMulla, Fayez Bin Jurays, Fahad Albutairi etc.





SERIOUSLY SINGLE TOO (2026)

If you enjoy South African comedy movies, then you might jump on this, for the romantic movie lovers, then this might be worth your while. In the movie, there were 3 single ladies, who were besties, they had all planned to remain in the same city and remain friends, but along the line one of them gets engaged and didn't know how to inform her friends that she will be getting married in one month and relocating to Kenya after making a promise that they will all remain friends in the same city. You will need to go check out this movie to find out how they took the news, what they did when they heard and how this now affected their trip and their friendship. The 99m South African Romantic comedy films, comedies, romance, African movie was directed by Rethabile Ramaphakela, Katleho Ramaphakela, they featured popular South African actors like Fulu Modibedi, Tumi Morake, Buntu Petse, Keke Mphuthi, Yonda Thomas, Thabiso Rammusi, Motiatsi Mafashe, Harriet Manamela etc



Linda Ochugbua

WEEKEND QUOTES

1

Sharing a scripture is an act of love
.....WhispersbyTEN

2

Personalise it; “I bring value to the table
.....WhispersbyTEN

3

No matter what happens today, God is still in the midst of me. Hallelujah
.....WhispersbyTEN

4

Everything is under God’s control
.....WhispersbyTEN