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Editor's Note

Innovating At This Time Is Critical

he future truly belongs to the bold and to stand out, for ward-thinking organisations need to constantly innovate, study trends and take advantage of opportunities. Creating profitable new ideas is also one of the strategies to survive in Nigeria or any other market.

New technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), machine learning, blockchain, and others are making life better than before. Innovative organisations should not be left out to leverage them to boost their business.

Exploring the blue ocean and red ocean strategy will be vital at this time of economic uncertainty. Blue ocean strategy denotes venturing into industries, not in existence, the unknown market space, untainted by competition. Red ocean strategy is when companies try to outperform their rivals to grab a greater share of existing demand.

With the two strategies in mind, if businesses or brands can create something different from what everyone else is doing or add extra value to what already exists, or simply turn ordinary things into extraordinary experiences then it will help them stand out.

It is beyond thinking new things, it is

about doing new things. Theodore Levitt, a marketing scholar, popular quote supports the assertion when he said, "Creativity is thinking up new things. Innovation is doing new things".

With the reality of doing new things, the Brand Times brand has been an online news platform for seven years delivering excellent reportage of industry stories. We are also ranked as a leading platform for brands, business, marketing, and tech news in the country. There is no better time than now to dive into the world of magazine publishing as an extra offering to give our readers rich and insightful content that is world-class, different from what exists but truly insightful and entertaining, and something we can all call proudly made-in-Nigeria exported to the world.

It is a new chapter in our history and in this edition; we beamed the spotlight on the fintech industry as our cover story. The industry has transformed the world of business and drawn a lot of investment to the country and Africa.

We also dissected some of the issues in the manufacturing sector, shared insight on the beverage industry in Africa, interviewed a company leveraging on tech and experts shared their thought on some industry topics. You shouldn't miss pages such as



women behind brands, industry tidbits, and sustainability. Others will also excite you.

On a lighter note, we looked at the Big Brother Naija brand and some of the stars the TV reality show has produced on our entertainment page. On our sports marketing page, we beamed the spotlight on top Nigerian footballers and their brand endorsement deals. Sit back, relax, and read this special maiden edition, it is specially made for you.

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INDUSTRY TIDBITS



By Azeez Disu

he recent announcement of GlaxoSmithKline (GSK), a British multinational pharmaceutical and biotechnology company, exit from Nigeria after 51 years of operations is a source of concern for stakeholders in the manufacturing sector, considering that many other businesses in recent times have had to shut down due to harsh operating environment in the country.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) between 2018 and 2020, 1.9 million micro, small and medium enterprises shut down operations leading to the rise of unemployment. The unemployment rate had increased to 37.7per cent in 2022 and KPMG, a global audit firm, in its recent report tagged 'KPMG Global Economy Outlook report, H1 2023' said that it would further rise to 40.6per cent in 2023 due to the inability of the economy to absorb the 4-5 million new entrants into the Nigerian job market every year.

Industry experts fear that more manufacturing companies may soon shut down if something is not done urgently even as the issues of forex, rising cost of transportation, power, raw materials, multiple taxation, and others still lingers.

The removal of fuel subsidy by the federal government and the Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) hike has further worsened the cost of living of consumers whose purchasing power has declined. Manufacturers and service providers have had to increase their prices to meet up with rising costs of production, distribution, and declining profit.

The President of the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN), Francis Meshioye said, "Manufacturers provide almost every infrastructure by themselves. Outside the major roads, you find out that manufacturers provide water, power, security, etc. So, when you look at it, you find out that the cost of doing business is so huge."

Buttressing the point, the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) said that the "Factor cost, as an integral element of the profit

equation, is viewed with utmost seriousness by businesspeople. In the face of rising costs, businesspeople will likely search for cost-friendlier locations"

Given the challenges, NBS in its capital importation report for 2023 Q1 revealed that foreign in vestments to the manufacturing sector dropped by 35 percent from \$392.5m in the fourth quarter of 2022 to \$256m in the first quarter of 2022.

Despite the challenges the sector is facing, it still contributes significantly to the growth of the

economy. In the first quarter of 2023, NBS reported that the Company Income Tax that manufacturers paid rose by 29 percent to N62bn from N44bn in the same period of 2022.

Government Plan

President Bola Tinubu disclosed recently that his administration will provide financial support to manufacturers to cushion the effects of the petrol subsidy removal and naira devaluation.

In his words, "We are going to spend N75 billion between July 2023 and March 2024. Our objective is to fund 75 enterprises with great potential to kick-start sustainable economic growth, accelerate structural transformation and improve productivity.

"Each of the 75 manufacturing enterprises will be able to access N1 billion credit at 9.0 percent per annum with a maximum of 60 months repayment for long-term loans and 12 months for working capital.

"Our administration recognises the importance of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises and the informal sector as drivers of growth. We are going to energise this very important sector with N125 billion."

Recommendations

Industry stakeholders have applauded the federal government's decision to support the sector to actualise its potential. Director



General of MAN, Segun Ajayi-Kadir however called for proper implementation of the initiative, he said "It is, however, very important and critical that the vehicles for the delivery of these loans should be carefully selected and the implementation diligently monitored. The Bank of Industry has shown excellent performance as an appropriate transaction structure for such facilities."

In another vein, MAN tasked the government to promote the use of local content by mandating the patronage of Made-in-Nigeria products by all government parastatals, agencies, and ministries; revisit executive orders 003 and 004; create a special window for forex allocation to the manufacturing sector; and identify and break the powerbroker militating against the completion of the Ajaokuta steel complex to make available raw materials for the steel and automobile industries.

LCCI on its part tasked the government to put measures in place to help businesses grow. "The Chamber is inclined to suggest the government take a holistic view or review of the business environment and take steps to make the nation's business clime more competitive for growth."

Beyond government support, manufacturers need to constantly innovate to survive in the highly competitive and changing manufacturing industry.



By Azeez Disu

orried by the country's creative advertising agencies' inability to win international awards, years back at an industry forum, Nigeria's foremost advertising practitioner and Chairman of Troyka Holdings, Biodun Shobanjo gave some hints that today have helped revolutionalise the industry and changed the narrative.

"I wonder if our friends in the creative agencies in Nigeria understand that part of the reasons they have not won awards at international creative fora is because they have not done well at storytelling.

"Storytelling, in a compelling manner, which sometimes elicits laughter, joy, a tear, annoyance, or applause, tends to make more impact and leave a lesson in the mind of the audience".

"They get people talking, and getting people to talk about your brand is the most powerful strategy of all. Just like Nollywood stories do, well-told stories leave lasting impressions," he said.

From when the statement was made and now, the story has changed as agencies now focus on telling better stories which have earned them international recognitions and have given some of their professionals opportunity to speak at global events, make jury lists, and network with top industry players.

For instance, in 2012, a work from DDB Lagos won Luerzer's Archive Print Ad of the Week and since then other agencies' works have been featured.

Nigerian agencies have also won at the Loeries Creative Week held in South Africa and the African Cristal Advertising Festival, held in Marrakech, Morocco, and among other notable awards outside Africa.

In 2018, Noah's Ark's Chief Creative Officer, Lanre Adisa, emerged as the first Nigerian to make the list of Juries for the



world's biggest Advertising Festival, the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity.

In 2019, X3M Ideas' Chief Creative Officer, Steve Babaeko also made the festival jury list. Babaeko, Adisa, and others have also made the jury list of other international awards such as the New York Advertising Festival, The Loerie Awards, and others.

The Jinx

X3M Ideas broke a seven-decade jinx to emerge as the first Nigerian agency to win at Cannes Lions International Festival for Creativity.

It won in the health category for the public health advocacy called "Scoot Life Expectancy" which was done to tackle the menace of soot in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

"The Soot City Life Expectancy" campaign was officially launched in Nigeria in February 2023. The 360° campaign embraced the essence of public interest, NGO, and public utility sectors. Its compelling message and innovative execution captivated audiences including the Cannes Lions jury.

Babaeko expressing his excitement about the award said "It feels great to finally break the 70 years jinx for Nigeria. I feel the win is not just for X3M Ideas alone, it is for the Association of Advertising Agencies of Nigeria (AAAN) and most importantly, it is for our beloved country Nigeria."

Way Forward

No doubt, X3M Ideas' win at Cannes Lions is a win for the entire advertising industry and the country as a whole. It has also shown that any Nigerian agency can win any international awards because the county has unique stories that are yet to be told

It has also put the spotlight on the Nigerian marketing and advertising subsector which currently contributes over 20 percent to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) based on the current advertising spend of the multinational companies.

As agencies come up with new creative for clients' campaigns, they must ensure their stories are engaging and resonate with the consumers.

As a reminder, the advice of Media and lifestyle entrepreneur, Familusi Akin Babajide, popularly known as Mr. FAB about four years ago, is still vital today same as that of Shobanjo. He urged creative agencies to change their storytelling approach and focus more on telling Nigerian stories through Nigerian perspectives in their campaigns.

"The more we tell our stories, the more they will appreciate the context of our work and maybe then they will take note and Nigerians may begin to win the coveted Cannes Lions Awards," he said.

Beyond winning awards, the goal of good advertising should not be lost. Also, stakeholders need to work for the good of the industry by focusing on collaboration, not competition.

Marketing In Nigeria Preparing For The Changes Ahead

By Prosper Mene

The marketing landscape is changing; consumers are becoming more deliberate and more demanding than ever. Marketers are constantly striving to win in a competitive and challenging economy like Nigeria and a changing world where technology is disrupting the industry.

To win in this competitive marketing environment, experts at the National Institute of Marketing of Nigeria (NIMN) Ikeja Chapter Annual Public Lecture held in Lagos recently charted a new course for marketers. They tasked marketing professionals to leverage new technologies, trends and rethink their strategies.

The Chapter Chairman and CEO of Procon Group, Adebayo Oke advised marketers to deploy new strategies in order to win customers' loyalty and remain relevant in today's world.

According to him, "There will be a need for re-tooling and re-engineering strategies and standard operating procedures by all

stakeholders to ensure that new wine is put into new wine bottles."

Speaking on the event theme, "The Future of Marketing: How to Prepare for the Changes Ahead" Idorenyen Enang, President/Chairman of Council, NIMN, and keynote speaker urged marketers to leverage technology but ensure they use it ethnically.

"I appreciate the age of technology, it's going to help efficiently but as artificial intelligence (AI) helps us improve operations, there are some disadvantages due to the fear of jobs being taken over but marketers must strike a balance in the implementation of these technologies. It is that balance that is necessary, ensuring that it is ethical. With ethics, everything will work well," he said.

He added that "Automation is great as it drives efficiency, but we are going to lose a lot of brain power because this generation wants everything fast, short, and simple. You must follow the process. Speed thrills, but it kills. Automation is going to give you efficiency, but it

is going to take something, which is your knowledge and capacity to have capability."

On his part, Dr. Bamidele Wale-Oshinowo, Senior Lecturer, Entrep & Strategy, University of Lagos in his presentation titled 'Applying the Blue Ocean Strategy for 2023' a d v i s e d marketers to create a new

value curve. In his words, "Create a new value curve for yourself by looking at the substitute industries to the industry that your company currently functions in. These are industries that offer products or services that could perform the same functions as yours. Explore the ones that attract more volume of customers and also generate more economic returns."

He explained further that Apple for example changed the computing, telephone, and music landscapes by introducing new and different products within these industries that attracted a completely different set of customers.

Kolawole Oyeyemi while speaking on the topic 'Growing Your Customer Base: Evolving Strategies to Attract, Convert and Retain Your Customer' said consumers have more power over companies' success or failure than ever before.

"A revolution in technology has created the devices and interfaces that allow people to interact with companies anywhere and anytime. This has enabled customers to influence a global audience with their comments or likes," he said.

He, therefore, urged marketers to put in place strategies that would help them gain customer loyalty which includes building communities and generating interactivity.

Speaking on "Marketing Transformation: A Roadmap to Success", Ifeoluwa Esther Obafemi, Head Sub-Saharan Africa Digital Media & Insights, Friesland Campina WAMCO Plc said continuous innovation and marketing transformation is an essential process for organisations looking to remain competitive and relevant in today's business environment.

The event also had panel session which had Sola Oke, MD, Pernod Ricard Nigeria/West Africa; Dr. Tola Bamisaiye Elatuyi, Marketing Director, Pladis Global; Nwabuike Gloria, Head of Category Dairy Products, Chi Nig Ltd and Onome Odili, Managing Consultant, Ezulwini Consulting Limited who spoke on the theme and also re-emphasised some of the points mentioned by the speakers.







EXMAN Awards: 10 Glamorous Cheers For Excellence



t was a night of Gold, Silver, and Bronze. The music, the colourful attires, the personalities in the hall, the smiles on the faces of the guests, the wins, and the standing ovation would never be forgotten in a hurry for winners. True to say, "Hard work, creativity, and innovation pay".

The above explained what went down at the 10th anniversary of the EXMAN Awards and Gala night held in Lagos recently. The award organized by the Experiential Marketers Association of Nigeria (EXMAN) recognizes and celebrates excellence in experiential marketing by rewarding outstanding agencies and individuals for their contributions to the growth of the industry.

Winners emerged in fifteen categories clinching Gold, Silver, and Bronze.

EXMAN is a sectoral trade body for forward-looking experiential marketing communications agencies, which exists to support, promote and defend the interests of over 45 member agencies, with total billing of over thirty billion naira through comprehensive core services and platforms. It is headed by Tolulope Medebem, the first female president of the association, who was elected at the Annual General Meeting held before the awards.

Winners

1. Best Activation of an Entertainment Property

Award	Agency	Campaign
Gold	Maxx Connection	Abinbev Flying Fish
Silver	Town Criers	Maltina Happiness Arena at
		Wonderland
Bronze	Astemil	BBN Dare Activation

2. Best Event B2B

Award	Agency	Campaign
Gold	Ideas House	Maggi Rural Women
Silver	Ideas House	Maggi food and everything else
Bronze	BrandLife	HP Intel Beach Discourse

3. Best Event B2C

Award	Agency	Campaign
Gold	Connect Marketing	NBA X Hennessy – Spirit of NBA
Silver	ID8	Jameson Black Barrel
Bronze	GDM	Orijin Osun Osogbo Festival

4. Best Mechandising Solution (Open Market)

Awa	ra	Agency	Campaign	
Gold	l	Link Point	Dettol Mega Bang buy, display and w	in

5. Best Mechandising Solution (Modem Trade)

Award	Agency	Campaign
Gold	Lilvera	NB One Stop Shop
Silver	GDM	PZ Cussons Instore

6. Shopper Activation (Modern Trade)

Award	Agency	Campaign
Gold	Emporium	Amstel Malta Rafael Nadal
Silver	Emporium	Heinekan UCL 2022
Bronze	First Katalyst	Guinness Christmas

7. Shopper Activation (Open Trade)

Award	Agency	Campaign
Gold	EXP	Mega-Growth Pop-Up Salons
Silver	EXP	Sunlight Be More, Do more
Bronze	GDM	Baileys Delight Sales Campaign

8. Best Trade Activation Award Agency Campaign Gold Linkpoint Top Tea and Cowbell Milk Maisha Activation Silver Livespot Maggi Market Ambassadors Bronze First Katalyst Hollandia Milk Maisha Activation

9. Best Use of Actionable Data and Insights

Award	Agency	Campaign
Gold	Connect Marketing	Mastercard Shoppaspree
Silver	GDM	Kimberly Clark Outlet Merchandising
Bronze	Maxx Connections	1960 Roots Do Good Campaign

10. Best Use of Digital in An Activation

Award	Agency	Campaign
Gold	GDM	Rick Ross in Lagos
Silver	Keskese	MTN 5G Launch
Bronze	Brandlife	Intel EVO Influencer Campaign

11. Best Use of Technology in An Activation

ı	Award	Agency	Campaign
	Gold	Keskese	MTN 5G Demo Launch
	Silver	Keskese	MTN 5G Governors Forum-Hologram
ı			Showcase
ĺ	Bronze	Connect Marketing	Marriott Hotel AR Launch

12. Best Use of Props in An Activation

Award	Agency	Campaign
Gold	Maxx Connection	Abinbev Flying Fish (Fly High)
Silver	Keskese	MTN 5G Launch
Bronze	Emporium	Heinekan UCL 2022

13. Best Activation (Consumer Experience)

Award	Agency	Campaign
Gold	Maxx Connection	Abinbev Flying Fish
Silver	Town Criers	Happiness Arena
Bronze	AsterML	BBN Sing to Check Out

14. EXMAN Grand Prix

Connect Marketing

15. Lifetime Achievement Award

Mr. Kunle Onime Dr. George Thorpe









INDUSTRY TIDBITS

Stronger Together: Women In Out-Of-Home Advertising Found A New Voice



By Olaide Arowolo

The need to create an inclusive environment for women in all sectors can't be overemphasised judging by their contributions to society. Women have always advocated for an industry that fosters equality and ensures equal opportunities for them.

Within the Out-Of-Home (OOH) advertising industry in Nigeria, few women are at the helm of affairs or the top executive level. For example, the Outdoor Advertising Association of Nigeria (OAAN) has only two executive council members and two Board of Trustees (BOT) members out of 12 and seven (7) respectively.

"It is not exaggeration that women have all its takes to thrive, lead, and shape the direction of our Out-of-Advertising in Nigeria" Adeola Odesanya, Coordinator of Women in Out-Of-Home Advertising in Nigeria (WOHAN), said at the inaugural meeting of the association held in Lagos recently with the theme "stronger together".

WOHAN, a sub-group of the OAAN, aims to champion women in OOH by providing resources, mentorship, and networking opportunities for women to promote their professional growth through advocacy, education, and collaboration. It also strives to break barriers, foster equality, and ensure equal opportunities for women to excel in the industry.

Odesanya explained that the initiative seeks to create a supportive and inclusive environment for women to thrive in the OOH advertising industry.

"As we march forward on this course, I challenge us to always learn, unlearn and relearn in order to acquaint ourselves with different initiatives that would form part of our planned activities, seminars, workshops, and special events where we would all be able to join in and get hands-on experiences. This will help facilitate sustainable growth and assist us in achieving our mission," she stated.

Similarly, the President of OAAN, Emmanuel Ajufo, said "Women have come a long way in this line of business, while some were born into it; others have worked their way to the top echelon of our industry. Today, we have some female CEOs. At the association's management level, we have had female council members. Presently, we have two female executive council members and two female BOT members. In all the positions where women have in charge, I can state with all sense of duty that they have discharged themselves very creditably."

He added that "I am a strong believer that women are better managers, and it is, therefore, safe to say that OAAN will be better organized if WOHAN is strong. We should all then support this special group to develop to their full potential."

The CEO/ Lead Consultant of Ladybird Advertising Limited and Past President of the Association of Advertising Agencies of Nigeria'(AAAN), Bunmi Oke explained that the inclusion of more women in the OOH sector will significantly lead to its growth, judging by the value that female bring to the table.

In her words, "Women in Out-of-Home have a powerful medium they created by coming together in such a way that they can take it to the next level of showing how outdoor advertising can be used creatively.

"They can also use it for social change. No manner how it is, we all go outside and that medium will always be important. They need to start using creativity to remodel their platforms, leveraging on digitalization because clients are looking for more value for less," she said

The event was packaged with a lot of activities from the unveiling of the logo to the thought leadership session, entertainment, networking, and others. Also, it was well attended by industry stakeholders and experts.









frican beverage trends are driven by innovation and culture. From the cherished rituals of traditional tea and coffee to the emerging popularity of carbonated soft drinks (CSD) and fruit juices. Africa's beverage market is evolving rapidly, reflecting changing consumer preferences and the impact of various socio-economic factors.

Smollan representing some of the world's most loved FMCG and commerce brands, gives a glimpse into Africa's dynamic beverage consumption landscape - the driving forces, and the cultural significance they hold.

Multiple factors shape the evolving beverage consumption patterns in Africa. Economic growth has led to an expanding middle class with increased purchasing power, allowing consumers to explore a wider range around choices. The influence of social media and exposure to global trends have also played a pivotal role as consumers are now more aware of new products and flavours. Furthermore, Africa's cultural diversity has resulted in a mosaic of preferences, with regional variations shaping beverage consumption trends.

Rich and robust teas from Kenyan purple to North African mint and Red Rooibos down south, capture a unique market with deep African roots steeped in ancient traditions and rituals. This market is projected to reach a CAGR of 5.5% between 2022 and 2027 according to a recent Mordor Intelligence report. So too, coffee holds an entrenched space from the cultural significance of the Ethiopian coffee ceremony to the birth of café culture in countries like Kenya, one of the world's most prolific producers, and Morocco with Arabic coffee as their national drink. Africa is certainly holding its own - from gaining recognition for their superlative teas to robust coffee production and rising consumption levels. These beverages go beyond mere flavours and act as social lubricants, fostering community bonds, and embodying the spirit of hospitality.

So too, with the global fruit juice market valued at US\$ 147.5 Billion in 2022 according to the IMARC Group, Africa significantly contributes to this growing sector, with brands such as Nigeria's Chivita 100%, a "no added sugar, no preservatives, and no artificial colours

or flavours" - recently awarded brand of the decade at the 'West African Brand Awards'. While further south, Ceres Fruit Juices, are widely consumed in Africa and imported to over 80 countries with the U.S., as their largest market.

Global beverage giants have keenly observed the continent's immense potential and invested in expanding their presence – for example, testament to the surge in consumption of carbonated soft drinks. Local bottling plants and efficient distribution networks have been established, making these beverages readily accessible to a larger population. Urbanisation, improved living standards, and growing disposable incomes have significantly driven African consumers' escalating demand for these types of drinks. So too, the rise of locally manufactured brands offering a quality taste at a fraction of the cost has created a competitive environment for global brands.

Warren Brett Cluster Executive, SEA Region, Smollan Tanzania said, "The fusion of traditional and international beverages reflects the dynamic nature of African consumption, with a blend of a much-loved heritage on the one hand and innovation on the other. We are seeing large-scale growth across multiple markets, with Coca-Cola and Pepsi in the carbonated sector, and Diageo, Heineken, and ABInbev driving alcoholic beverage growth."

Alcoholic beverages are prominent in African culture and are enjoyed during social gatherings and celebrations. Traditional beverages like Nigerian palm wine, sorghum beer from Zambia, and tchapalo millet beer from Côte d'Ivoire have been cherished across the continent for ages.

With globalisation and urbanisation at play Western alcoholic beverages, including beer and spirits, have entered the market. "Manufacturing is generally done locally, and while they have the strength of that and brand building on their side, we bring the expertise to deliver on execution through enabled technology. Ultimately creating a line of sight for the decision-makers to be able to pivot the business around sustaining volumes and low margins. An evolving, dynamic landscape that is set to keep us on our toes with a long-term picture in mind, and that really drives us," said Brett.







INSIGHTS

Media Performance Analysis Report For Subscription-Based Streaming Services, Telecommunications Brands, And Insurance Companies

The Nigerian media sector is experiencing rapid growth and facing strong competition as it continues to evolve. P+Measurement Services, a leading media intelligence consultancy, analyzed the top media performers in the Nigerian subscription-based streaming services, telecommunications, and insurance sectors for the second quarter of 2023. This analysis aims to provide a comprehensive overview of each industry's media share, considering the advancements in subscription-based streaming services, the telecommunications sector's expansion, and the insurance sector's consistent performance. The media analysis monitors over 1.3 million online publications in the local and global media space, including blogs, news sites, forums, and digital media, as well as approximately 1,380 print publications (including daily, weekly, and monthly publications), from which various meta-data were harvested.

In the Nigerian subscription-based streaming industry, Netflix Nigeria emerged as the top performer, out of the five brands monitored, capturing a significant media share of 47%, followed by Amazon Prime Video and Showmax Nigeria with 29% and 24% respectively.

The Nigerian telecommunications industry saw a competitive landscape with several key players. The top media performers, out of the five brands monitored, in terms of media share: MTN Nigeria and Airtel tied for the top position, each capturing 30% of the media share. Globacom secured 25% and 9Mobile 15%.

Out of the ten leading in surance brands monitored, five insurance companies stood out as top media performers, with

Leadway Assurance maintaining its position as the top performer in Q2, capturing 39% of the media share. Coming in second was AIICO Insurance with 19%, AXA Mansard Insurance ranked third with 18%, NEM Insurance came in fourth with 15% and Mutual Benefits Assurance with 9%.

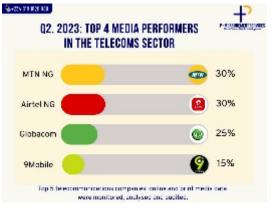
Analysis of Top Reputational Drivers in Q2, 2023

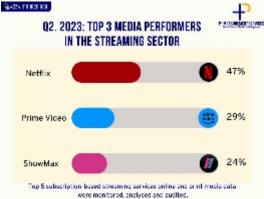
During the second quarter, noteworthy media drivers in the subscription-based streaming services sector in Nigeria included Netflix Nigeria's innovative approach of reimagining folktales with African filmmakers, transforming them into dark fantasy dramas. Amazon Prime Video achieved a significant milestone for the brand with Jade Osiberu's 'Gangs of Lagos' setting a new record. Additionally, Showmax Nigeria collaborated with Upbeat to host a special screening party for children on Children's Day, where they had the opportunity to hang out with Jay Jay Okocha.

The Nigerian telecommunications industry witnessed several significant PR drivers during the period. One noteworthy development was MTN Nigeria's securing approval from the Nigerian Communications Commission to lease NTEL's spectrum, which greatly









influenced the industry. Airtel Nigeria experienced a boost in its brand recognition and reputation following the appointment of Carl Cruz as MD/CEO. Similarly, Globacom garnered attention and media coverage as Chief Executive Officer Mike Adenuga celebrated his 70th birthday. Furthermore, 9Mobile made headlines with its announcement of a substantial N70 billion investment in network modernization, driving its presence and impact in the market.

Leadway Assurance garnered significant attention by achieving a groundbreaking milestone as the first insurer to surpass N100 billion in premium income within the insurance sector. In a notable display of Corporate Social Responsibility, AIICO Insurance directed its investments toward the healthcare industry. AXA Mansard Insurance experienced remarkable growth of 13% in revenue during the first quarter, contributing to an increased level of media engagement for the brand. NEM Insurance demonstrated its commitment to policyholders by disbursing a substantial sum of N12.3 billion in claims during the 2022 financial year. Additionally, Mutual Benefits Assurance witnessed Dr. Akin Ogunbiyi, the chairman, offering valuable insights to the younger generation about the significance of making favorable first impressions during the launch of his book.





Rise Of Nigeria's Fintech Brands And Changing Business Landscape

By Azeez Disu

Inancial Technology known as FinTech is revolutionizing the financial world, changing the way businesses now operate. In Africa, it is regarded as the 'new oil' as more businesses and investors are turning to the sector.

It is growing rapidly and is forecast to reach \$698.48 billion by 2030 globally, according to Allied Market Research. Africa is also forecast to reach \$65 billion by 2030, a report titled "Global Fintech 2023: Reimagining the Future of Finance" revealed. Within the continent; South Africa, Egypt, Nigeria, and Kenya are identified as the markets that will accelerate the growth.

Nigerian start-ups are said to have gotten more funding than any other start-ups on the continent. For example, between January and September of 2021, fintech brands raised \$1.4 billion, with Nigeria accounting for over \$800 million of that total.

Today, more fintech brands are springing up in the country, reaching more people from the convenience of their homes irrespective of location. We are now in the era of branchless banking, no more queuing at the banks like it was in the past. Fintechs are constantly innovating to meet the need of their customers and this has paid off with the growth they have recorded.

To tap the opportunity of a fast-growing market, traditional banks and telecommunications companies had to set up their fintech units or brands. Today, the sector is more competitive as players make their way into the market adopting new marketing strategies and techniques.

The Gap and Drivers

To close the wide gap of the unbanked

population and ensure financial inclusion for all, fintech brands have emerged, offering services such as mobile payments, digital banking, merchant solutions, and personal finance, to wealth tech and others; leaving customers to choose from many available brands

The use of smartphones for mobile banking, investing, borrowing services, and cryptocurrency are some of the revolution fintech has brought to our world.

Only 67.5 million (64%) of the 105.5 million adult population were financially included in 2020, according to a report by Enhancing Financial Innovation & Access, tagged 'New data from EFInA.'

To bridge the gap, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) set a target to achieve 95% financial inclusion by 2024 in the county and fintech is helping in that regard.

Noteworthy, 2020 saw the launch of new fintech brands, aimed at enabling people who were at home to do financial transactions seamlessly, without physical contact due to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Importantly, the growth is also accelerated by growing Smartphone and internet penetration in the country.

The adoption of digital payments by merchants and customers across industries, manufacturing, distribution, and consumption value chain are also key drivers of growth.

On another note, more customers moved to the digital banks owned by fintech firms in the first quarter of 2023 due to the scarcity of cash in circulation. CBN had introduced a new naira note during the run-up to the 2023 general elections but faced a cash shortage after many had deposited their old notes. In line with its cashless policy, it encouraged

Nigerians to go cashless and that boosted mobile transactions but digital banks owned by fintech firms benefited more as most traditional banks' digital banking service had countless network challenges.

Another driver of the sector is collaboration and deemphasizing competition. For example, Paga opened up all its APIs for not just other FinTech players but the entire technology community.

Funding and Unicorn Status

"Unicorn" is used to describe firms that received a \$1 billion or higher valuation. Interestingly to note, six (6) out of the seven (7) unicorns in Africa are fintechs. The fintechs are Interswitch, Flutterwave, Wave, OPay, Chipper Cash, and MNT-Halan.

Remarkably, Interswitch became a unicorn in 2019 as a result of Visa's \$200 million investment, which gave Visa a 20% stake in the Nigerian company.

In 2018, Flutterwave raised \$20 million in Series A fundraising, followed by \$35 million in Series B funding in 2019. In March of 2021, it concluded its Series C investment round, raising a total of \$170 million, and this made it a "unicorn" with a valuation of one billion dollars. Also, investors valued the company at roughly \$3 billion, based on its projected annual revenue of \$100 million in 2021.

Wave, the first unicorn in Francophone Africa offering peer-to-peer money transfer service, raised \$200 million in a Series A round.

Opay, operating in agent banking, became a unicorn in 2021 when it raised \$400 million in a Japan-based SoftBank Vision Fund's 2-led funding round.

Chipper Cash, a peer-to-peer money transfer platform, in November 2020 raised

piggyVest

































\$30 million Series B led by Ribbit Capital and Jeff Bezos fund Bezos Expeditions. This was after closing a \$13.8 million Series A round from Deciens Capital and other investors in June 2020. It has gone through three rounds totaling \$143.8 million in a year. Also, when the \$8.4 million raised in two seed rounds back in 2019 is included, this number increases to \$152.2 million.

MNT-Halan was able to get \$400 million in equity and debt funding at a valuation of \$1 billion in a tough market for VC funding in 2023.

The Brands & Competition

Fintech brands are transforming individual banking experiences and unlocking new opportunities for businesses.

With more players entering into the sector from microfinance banks to commercial banks and telecoms companies, the competitive landscape is becoming intense by the day as they deploy their marketing campaigns to attract customers providing services such as money transfer, credit facilities, Buy Now Pay Later (BNPL), savings including using the ajo (thrift) scheme method, PoS, eCommerce and others

Some of the notable fintech brands in Nigeria are Interswitch, Opay, Chippercash, Flutterwave, Piggyvest, Paystack, Bankly, Remita, Moniepoint, Lidya, Carbon, Kuda Bank, Risevest, Trove App, Bamboo, Paga, eTranzact, Credpal, V bank by VFD, Eyowo, Fint, Fairmoney, VoguePay, Decagon, Wallet Africa, Sofri, Migo, Cellulant, NowNow,

Jumia Pay, Konga Pay, and others.

For traditional banks, some of their fintech brands or units are Quick Credit and Squad by GTBank (now GTCO), Quickbucks and Hydrogen by Access Bank, Firstmonie Wallet by FirstBank, VULTe by Polaris Bank, Credit Direct by First City Monument Bank and Stanbic IBTC Financial Services by Stanbic IBTC Holdings Plc.

The big four in mobile network providers; MTN (Momo PSB), Airtel (SmartCash PSB), Moneymaster PSB, a subsidiary of Globacom, and 9PSB, a subsidiary of 9mobile are now big players in the fintech space.

Consumers' Frustration

One of the concerns of consumers including the government is the activities of some digital banks, mobile money, or loan apps as regards their method of loan recovery. They offer high-interest rates and short repayment periods which has made many default.

Popularly known as 'loan Sharks', they resort to unethical practices, 'Name and Shame' defaulters on social media and even call their family and friends because they have access to customers' contacts and photos. This has made some go into depression and some have died in the process.

However, the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (FCCPC) have condemned their activities and sanctioned some operators.

Excitingly, Google recently updated its policy; the new policy would prevent the

loans app from accessing customers' contact and photos.

According to the company, "We are updating our personal loans policy to state that apps aiming to provide or facilitate personal loans may not access user contacts or photos."

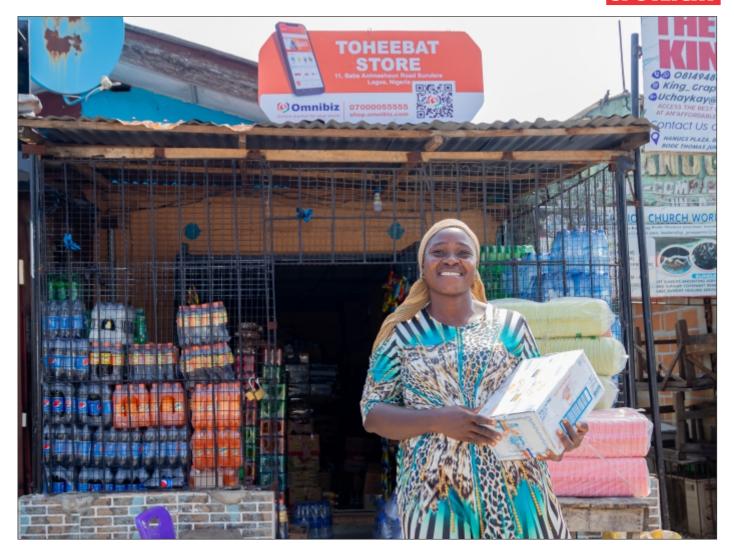
Future

The future is bright for Nigeria and Africa's fintech brands as the opportunities are enormous. They also have a lot to do in the areas of resolving customers' complaints prompting, using ethical means to recover loans, training and hiring professionals to handle their customer care unit, customer data protection, and improving service delivery.

Also, they need to offer innovative products which will meet the need of customers whether in the rural or urban areas while focusing on inclusion for all.

Experts have predicted that six trends will define the future of the fintech industry in 2023 and beyond. The trends are AI & Machine Learning, Embedded Finance, Software as a Service (SaaS), Open Banking, IoT, and Blockchain. Some fintech brands are already leveraging these trends to help customers have a better experience but they need to continue to innovate.

They have also advised that to achieve the long-term sustainability of Nigeria's cashless ecosystem, regulators and other stakeholders need to regularly assess the efficiency, security, and accessibility of digital payment platforms.



OmniPay: OmniBiz Embedded Payment System Disrupting Retail-Tech Industry

"Technology is solving deeply entrenched problems, and informal retail isn't an exception, "Deepankar Rustagi, Founder, OmniBiz once said.

By Olaide Arowolo

t is a well-known fact that leveraging technology to develop solutions to problems in line with the above quote brings about improved service delivery, operation effectiveness, consumer acceptance, strong brand equity, and amazing customer experience for any brand.

The retail sector is also leveraging the power of technology to make buying and selling exciting, seamless, and engaging. Retail brands now automate their processes to make consumer and retailer journey memorable as they constantly strive to eliminate all barriers to reaching

them by introducing innovative solutions.

Today, most retailers who constitute a large percent of the business population and contribute significantly to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) have to travel far to the open market to buy goods to sell to the final consumers, in the process incur transport costs than they bargained for, spend valuable time looking for affordable goods and experience other stress.

In the first quarter of 2023 in Nigeria, most retailers and businesses faced one of the most challenging times ever due to the issue of cash crunch that surfaced in the country, worse than what was faced when they were in lockdown due to the spread of COVID-19, some business owners

lamented

However, during the cash crunch, some businesses were flourishing, conducting buying and selling with ease, and their customers were also making payments without challenges, thanks to an innovative company called OmniBiz, a leading B2B e-commerce platform.

Reaching the Unbanked

More than 600,000 small shops and open-air markets dominate the retail landscape in Nigeria, accounting for 97% of national sales of food, beverages, and personal care products, this is according to a report by Boston Consulting Group (BCG) in 2022 titled 'The Future of

SPOTLIGHT





Traditional Retail in Africa'.

Interestingly to note, the world has a large percentage of retail brands that contribute to the sustainability of many economies.

The report also revealed that African consumers on average buy about 70% of their food, beverages, and personal care products from small shop owners

compared to supermarkets, convenience stores, and others.

However, in Nigeria with millions of retailers, thousands are already enjoying the ease and convenience of e-commerce which comes with the immediate benefits of improved sales, prompt delivery, increase profit, and savings. Interestingly, about 90 per cent of Nigerian consumers shop at small informal retail stores.

Surprisingly, about 55% of the entire retailers in the country remain unbanked. The reason for this according to research is, nothing motivates them to get banked. They also don't see any benefits in it and the eventual cost of bank charges involved in making transactions are a good enough demotivation for them especially for businesses that are trying to thrive in an economy that's continuously getting hit by devaluation and continuously shrinking the value of their working capital.

So, why is it now the right time to move toward digital banking? OmniBiz in one of its blog posts explained "The new Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) policies which restrict the amount of money that can be withdrawn at a time will push retailers towards digital banking".

But it's not just about the right time, they need the right solution. For the shopkeepers, collecting funds in bank accounts is crippling without the owners being in sight to confirm the receipt of the funds. On the other hand, if the owner is maintaining funds in several bank accounts, they are making multiple payments to pay for a single order of stock, and getting charged multiple transaction fees.

The bigger question is: how can this change in how they collect and transfer funds change their lives forever?

Simply, OmniBiz is leveraging technology to change the lives of retailers by making collections and transfers of funds to stock their stores seamless.

Leveraging on Technology

"It is a well-known fact that bringing in technologies in the retail sector is good for customers," N. R. Narayana Murthy, co-Founder, of Infosys said in his popular quote.

With customer-focused goals and strategies, OmniBiz is leveraging technology to offer innovative products and solutions to retailers.

Deepankar Rustagi, Founder, OmniBiz said, "Technology is solving deeply entrenched problems, and informal retail isn't an exception. By embracing a technology-driven approach, OmniBiz is digitising the informal essential goods ecosystem in Africa. OmniBiz collaborates with supply chain stakeholders, from manufacturers to distributors, logistics providers, and retailers. We are building the future of African retail."

Speaking on the goals of the company, Adewale Adisa, Chief Operations Officer (COO), OmniBiz said "We believe that if we can create a positive impact at the national level, it will eliminate many of the challenges faced by retailers. It will help rid Nigeria's cash-heavy sector of the many problems associated with it and digitise the process."

Embedded Finance in Retail-Tech

"People are always going shopping. A lot of our effort is just how do we make the retail experience a great one?" Phillip Green, Chairman, of Arcadia Group once said.

SPOTLIGHT





As part of an effort to make the retail experience a great one for retailers as stated in line with the above quote, OmniBiz developed embedded finance for its supply chain stakeholders.

What does this mean for distributors and retailers? According to the company, Digital wallets don't just solve their problems. By enabling their access to embedded finance, they are set on the right path for long-term growth. The first step in this is the inclusion of these retailers. It is important to create an enabling platform that makes it super easy to collect and pay so their everyday transactions can be digitized.

OmniBiz offers Buy Now Pay Later (BNPL) services and other financial services to retailers. In an earlier publication, OmniBiz had hinted that the next step is to give these retailers access to working capital (BNPL) based on their transactions since it reflects the volume of their turnover -a boon for businesses operating in an economy that's continuously hit by devaluation. This also makes them eligible for many other financial services, insurance being a great value add.

It stated further that adopting financial technology opens up another 'avenue for revenue' for retailers who can add another stream of income to their business. For instance, they can serve as cash collection

points (POS agents) and other Value-Added Services.

"The bigger difference is that they step into the 'real' business of retail: something much larger than just margins on buying and selling. Retailers in other countries are not just dependent on margins from buying and selling. They provide a larger service to the consumer goods ecosystem by charging for shelf space, merchandising, in-store promotions, and target-based rebates. The biggest strength of a retailer is that they are the backbone of any manufacturer and it's time for this strength to pay off," it explained.

For distributors and manufacturers, cash handling comes at a cost. Before the introduction of the digitized workflow, the retailer receives cash from their customers and pays the wholesaler or distributor. Now, with the new embedded finance from Omnibiz, customers can pay directly into the account of the retailer and retailers can place orders, track their sales, apply for credit, and get approved without leaving the App. This embedded banking feature shortens the retailer's journey, making it easier for them to buy, and increases the likelihood of making future purchases. With these services, the bank is no longer the only option for a credit facility.

In a nutshell, the process significantly cuts out the risks of long-distance cash

handling and the tedious daily reconciliation of accounts. Furthermore, OmniBiz allows retailers to upgrade the same accounts to fully functional status and offers incentives for more cashless behaviour, such as the lowest cost for funds transfers, airtime purchases at a discount, and credit lines linked to the account activity.

Introducing OmniPay

OmniPay is the brainchild of OmniBiz. With the launch of the OmniPay embedded finance solution in collaboration with its partners, retailers on the OmniBiz network can afford to go completely cashless. The virtual wallet reflects in the OmniBiz app and allows retailers to buy, sell and access other retail services.

Explaining how it works, OmniBiz stated that the new embedded finance solution is one of the ways it is creating a cashless world which is in line with the policy of the CBN to encourage cashless transactions.

It said "Simplifying inclusion: No queues, no long paperwork, just a wallet (digital/ virtual account) that is ready to use. Since OmniBiz already 'Knows the customers' – we have activated several virtual accounts that enable easy transactions for all customers.

"An app and a simple QR code for





anyone to scan and pay at different outlets directly into the retailer's wallets – retailers don't have to spend an extra minute or Naira trying to convert cash to digital money.

"Ready to use digital 'avenue for revenue' – retailers can simply fund their wallet and sell other Value-Added Services on the go."

On its LinkedIn page, it posted "Allow us to re-introduce you to OmniPay. With the launch of the OmniPay solution in collaboration with our partners, retailers on the OmniBiz network can afford to go completely cashless. The virtual wallet reflects in the OmniBiz app and allows retailers to buy, sell and access other value-added retail services."

The Evolution

Founded in June 2019 by Deepankar Rustagi, OmniBiz allows retailers to place orders at their convenience and have goods delivered to their doorstep with zero delivery costs.

Basically, it is a B2B e-commerce platform that aggregates end-to-end retail operations to help manufacturers, distributors, logistic partners, and retailers achieve their business goals through a seamless supply chain framework. It also provides over 90,000 retailers with the convenience to buy over 900+ products from its website/app. OmniBiz ensures retailers get better Return on Investment (ROI) and distributors/manufacturers grow volume and reach more retailers through its wide distribution network.

The startup in 2022 raised \$15 million in a pre-Series A equity and debt investment led by Timon Capital. Out of the total, \$5 million came in as equity and \$10 million was in the form of debt. Others who participated in the round include Ventures Platform, Lofty Inc, Chapel Hill Denham, Chandaria Capital, and Musha Ventures. Recall, in 2021, the company secured \$3 million in seed funding for expansion.

The company has grown rapidly into a leading B2B e-commerce platform, connecting retailers in Nigeria and Kenya with over 200 brands delivered by a network of more than 70 logistics partners. Utilizing the insights provided by the platform, retailers can view inventory stock in real-time and avoid purchasing SKUs that they may struggle to sell. More than 3,000 retailers use Omnibiz every day.

Partnerships

To bring manufacturers, distributors, and retailers together in one platform, OmniBiz embarks on partnerships as its core strategy.

Remarkably, in 2022, OmniBiz signed deals with more than 12 companies doing business in Nigeria — Coca-Cola, Nestle, Unilever, and Procter & Gamble among others — who will use its platform, which tracks sales from distributors to retailers.

"The manufacturers are making more revenue because they are able to see the movement of their goods and can increase the supply at a lower cost," said Rustagi in an interview with Bloomberg. "We are in the business of making retail simple."

Similarly, through its partnership with other financial service providers, OmniBiz has not only helped manufacturers and distributors of FMCG products to reach retailers in the last mile but also made it possible to deepen financial inclusion and cashless behavior in the retail distribution chain.

The OmniBiz structure benefits everyone on the supply chain from manufacturers and distributors to retailers, and now consumers, since they no longer have to worry about carrying cash, and have access to a wider product assortment.







Opay: The Untold Story Of Nigeria's 20.3% from 2021 to 2030, according to Allied Market Research. **Fintech Brand**

By Prosper Mene

"With a Nigerian population of 211 million and 133 million of which are poor, 63% of our people are poor and are probably not being served by our commercial markets who will find them unprofitable. From our classic Kotler's definition of Marketing, a population segment that cannot be served at profit is not a worthy market. Essentially, we can conclude that our high rate of social exclusion in Nigeria also translates to a high rate of commercial exclusion. That our businesses and our marketers are only serving and relevant to just about 40% of the Nigerian population or at best 50%," Olu Akanmu, former Co-CEO, and President, OPay Nigeria once said at an industry forum recently where he urged marketing professionals to develop a mechanism to reach more Nigerian consumers who are yet to be reached.

The point in the above quote is relatable to various sectors of the economy and beams the light on the high rate of consumers yet to be reached by many brands and marketers. The financial industry is a typical example with a huge unbanked population and according to a report by Enhancing Financial Innovation & Access, tagged 'New data from EFInA', only 67.5 million (64%) of the 105.5 million adult population were financially included in the year 2020 in Nigeria.

Despite this, the sector is contributing to the global financial technology (fintech)

market size valued at \$110.57 billion in 2020 and is projected to reach \$698.48 billion by 2030, growing at a CAGR of

Today, the financial inclusion gap is closing up thanks to the activities of some fintech brands that are leveraging on the growing young tech-savvy population, smartphones, and internet penetration to reach more consumers while delivering innovative solutions.

In essence, speaking or writing about the evolution of payment solution companies or financial services in Nigeria cannot be complete without mentioning Opay.

Turning Tough Times to Money Times The title of the popular book "Tough

Times Never Last, But Tough People Do!" by Robert H. Schuller has become a quote to many and resonates with many individuals and organisations that have been able to weather the storm, overcome challenges, evolve, innovate, and become champions.

The COVID-19 period was a typical example of a tough time for many businesses globally but before that, some businesses had faced tough times that would have led to their extinction but were able to overcome them through their resistance and today they can stand to tell their success stories.

The story of OPay, one of Nigeria's leading mobile money (MMO) and financial technology platforms is not different. It literarily swam into the 'red ocean' and competed favourably with other players who together built what is today one of the continent's fastest-growing fintech markets.

Remarkably, it currently boasts over 23 million registered app users and 500,000 agents in Nigeria who rely on its services to send and receive money, pay bills, and

many more. It is also one of the leading African unicorns with a \$2 billion valuation.

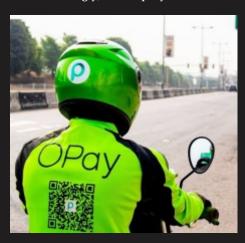
It commenced operation at a time when the unbanked population was very high. Digging into memory lane, OPay was founded on August 1, 2018, but many became aware of its operations in 2019 when a bike-hailing service, ORide, under its parent company, Opera Norway AS Group, was launched. ORide drove visibility for the OPay brand as a payment platform. ORide entered the market with various discounts, promotions, and the deployment of affordable pricing techniques as a strategy. For example, on its Twitter page, it posted "Get over NGN 2350 coupons for free rides when you book an ORide, on the OPay app. Download now...'

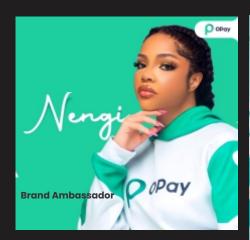
Sadly, government policy disrupted the success of ORide following the ban on bikes in Lagos which technically saw the end of the brand. Thereafter, it added a tricycle-hailing service to its list of ventures with the launch of OTrike in Aba but before that, it had launched OFood, an on-demand food delivery service. One single thing that can be drawn from the brand is that it keeps evolving, taking opportunities irrespectively of challenges. It never gave up and continues to offer customers fast and reliable financial services

Today, its app has become a 'super app' where you can buy airtime, and data, subscribe to pay TV, pay your electricity bill, order food, save with high interest, transfer money, pay with QR, receive money by QR, get a quick loan, and make an investment.

In addition, it also operates in the POS space and also provides banking solutions such as cash-in, cash-out, and OPay USSD Withdrawals; making it more convenient for customers to complete withdrawals with an OPay merchant. OPay also introduced its instant debit card targeted at bringing the underbanked into the financial rail hence, anyone can visit an OPay agent to request for an instant debit and activate the debit card in less than two minutes.

Interestingly, the company also offers





an offline banking service through which users that don't have smartphones can still carry out transactions.

Today, it has expanded its footprints to emerging markets across Asia, Africa, and Latin America in countries like Mexico, Nigeria, Egypt, and Pakistan.

With a value of over \$1 billion, in 2021 it raised \$400 million in a new financing round led by SoftBank Vision Fund at a staggering \$2 billion valuation. Five other venture capital companies were also part of the funding round namely Sequoia Capital China, DragonBall Capital, which is the venture arm of Chinese food-delivery giant, Meituan, Redpoint China, Source Code Capital, SoftBank Ventures Asia as well as 3W Capital.

With this raise, OPay entered the league of those called unicorns, emerging fourth in Nigeria and fifth in Africa.

Consumer-Centric Initiatives

It is able to reach more consumers through various initiatives like marketing campaigns, partnerships, innovative solutions, and others to make the consumer journey worthwhile.

On May 19, 2022, it embarked on a strategic partnership with MasterCard to enable its consumers and merchants across the region (including Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Kenya, Pakistan, South Africa, and the United Arab Emirates) to be connected to brands and businesses across the globe through the OPay wallet. The move opened the door to digital commerce for millions of people in the Middle East and Africa, driving wider financial inclusion and economic prosperity. It has also embarked on other partnerships.

One of its notable reward programmes targeted at consumers was the "OPay Lucky Cash Rain Promo!" The company partnered with superstar and winner of the 2020 Big Brother Naija Season 5, Laycon, to launch the promo and urged everyone to participate to become a winner like Laycon.

It offered users a total of N10 billion in the promotion and ran daily on the OPay app where customers won up to N1 million daily. Individuals were only allowed to participate 3 times a day (10:00 am, 5:00 pm, and 8:00 pm).



From 'P' To 'O': What is in Opay's New Logo?

OPay recently unveiled a new logo to mark its 5th anniversary in the Nigerian market. According to the company, the new brand identity is expected to consolidate its position as the most prominent last-mile payment service provider in Nigeria for both consumers and businesses.

It also represents its promise into a new era with enhanced services, technological advancements, and the aim to solidify its position as the most reliable financial platform in Nigeria.

Additionally, it incorporates a square element that indicates the newly launched OPay debit card, enabling over 40 million users to link their cards to their wallets, making payments easier.

Over 5 years, OPay has expanded its range of products and services to provide easy-to-use financial and lifestyle services for individuals, agents, and all kinds of businesses across the country.

The new brand identity is expected to

consolidate its position as the most prominent last-mile payment service provider in Nigeria for both consumers and businesses.

The future is promising for OPay and many others who are consistently innovating, putting consumers at the centre of their strategy, and keep striving to make a difference irrespective of challenges.





VULTe: Redefining Fintech Industry With Bespoke Digital Banking Solution



By Prosper Mene

he financial world has been disrupted by the emergence of digital banks which further gives customers the freedom and convenience to manage their finances seamlessly and at any time they desire.

Digital banks are changing the financial technology (fintech) industry rapidly, contributing to the economic growth of Africa and helping to reduce the over 57% unbanked population in the

Interestingly to note, more brands are springing up in the digital banking marketing space, a market that was valued globally at USD 20.8 billion in 2021 and is expected to expand at a CAGR of 20.5% from 2022 to 2030 according to Grand View Research.

Most digital banks are either founded by a fintech company or an existing commercial bank, microfinance bank, or others who have an app for their digital bank different from their main app or business

Remarkably, digital banks are also on the rise in a country like Nigeria which has about 64 million unbanked population in 2021 according to the World Bank. The growing demand for the service can be attributed to the increased penetration of smartphones, computers, internet connectivity, IoT devices, and Artificial Intelligence (AI).

To grab a valuable size of the market share, new brands usually come up with innovative financial products and services that excite consumers. These innovative brands are invariably contributing to bridging the financial inclusion gap in the country and the continent. One of such brands is VULTe, a brand from the stable of Polaris Bank.

Use Case and Customer Experience
Since the launch of VULTe, the bank has remained committed to deepening financial inclusion and enabling seamless banking while

improving customer experience.
A typical example of how VULTe is helping the financial ecosystem with its bespoke services was

It is almost normal that only those having issues may give reviews, have seen a very good significant amount of improvement in both the speed- and sign-up process. Well done to the team, I hope to see better improvement."

displayed during the first quarter of 2023 when there was cash crunch in the country. Many financial institutions were unable to meet customers' needs as they were faced with network challenges, inability to issue loans and transactions error. Customers were frustrated, and banking halls became a 'war zone' as customers struggle to gain entrance each day to log their complaints of transaction failure and others but surprisingly, VULTe came to the rescue for many customers at that critical time according to Brand Times' survey.

Basically, VULTe offers numerous services from saving, paying bills, investments, loans, and among others to customers bringing convenience and making their lives better.

It also offers five categories of loan, which aims at providing an amazing customer experience, without stress. They are a Term Loan that offers up to N20 million for businesses, an Overdraft Loan, an Auto Loan, Polaris Salary Advance, and Polaris Lite loans for personal needs such as medical bills, and school fees among others.

Some of the benefits of using VULTe include; no bank visits, no collateral or paperwork needed before loans are approved in minutes, and it is convenient to use on all devices (android, IOS, and

web). Consumers can visit www.vulte.ng to get started

Recall at the launch of the digital bank in 2021, the Chairman of the Polaris Bank, M.K Ahmad said, "This is not another mobile App, but one with a world of difference, a mobile digital bank. This is your Bank in your hand, affording you total control of your financial service needs. With VULTe, you serve yourself, the way you want to be served.

Today, more customers applaud the company for its innovation and how it has been very helpful. One of the customers who recently wrote about her experience with the app, Esther Asuquo said "It's one of the best banking apps I have experience. I feel my money is very secure with the bank.

Another customer, Taiwo Adegite, stated that "it is almost normal that only those having issues may give reviews, have seen a very good significant amount of improvement in both the speed- and signup process. Well done to the team, I hope to see better improvement."

Breakthrough

In 2022, VULTe clinched two prestigious awards as the Best Digital Bank at both BusinessDAY's Banks And Other Financial Institutions (BAFI) Awards and The Nigerian Fintech Awards 2022 respectively. It won the prestigious BAFI Awards back-to-back having won the same award the previous year. Also, it has won other numerous awards for its contribution to the industry and outstanding performance.

In another vein, KPMG Nigeria said VULTe has been a game changer, making life seamless for personalised and business offerings. It added that between October 2022 and February 2023, over N1.5 billion in loans were disbursed through VULTe to individuals and SMEs to aid personal and business growth in the country.

The firm also said VULTe's performance surpassed its competitors and earned recognition from the Nigerian Interbank Settlement Systems (NIBBS).

How Innovation From MarkHack 2.0 Is Set To Change Media, Marketing Industry

"Innovation is the ability to see change as an opportunity – not a threat." Steve Jobs Co-founder, Apple Inc. once said.

In line with the above quote, innovation is needed to transform and unlock the potential in any industry including the media, marketing, and the creative industry. We live in a fast-changing world, consumer behaviour is changing and technologies are evolving, professionals are always in a 'marathon race to meet with reality.

Specifically, Nigeria's marketing and media industry needs to constantly innovate to fully take advantage of the opportunities in the market. For example, according to Market Report World, the global MarTech market size is expected to expand at a CAGR of 8.17% between 2022 and 2028, reaching USD 559398.18 million by 2028 while the global advertising revenue is forecast to hit US\$952.6 billion, representing a 4.5% CAGR from 2022 to 2027 according to PwC. Also, the global Creative Industries market is expected to reach USD 3434322.0 million in 2028, according to Market Watch and the Nigerian market is expected to generate \$ 15 billion by 2025 according to Mustard Insights.

"We are yet to experience notoriety for a homegrown technological breakthrough at a remarkable scale in the Marketing Industry," Victor Afolabi, the curator of MarkHack and Founder of Eko Innovation Center and Art of Technology Lagos once said.

To bridge the gap, MarkHack powered by Eko Innovation Centre and supported by GDM Group and other partners was launched in 2022.

MarkHack stands for Marketing and Media Hackathon. It is the first of its kind in the country and aims to provide media and tech solutions that can disrupt marketing in key focus areas such as consumer experience, media consumption, consumer interaction, trade and retail engagement, analytics and metrics, events marketing, media monetization, and content creation.

MarkHack 2.0, the second edition held recently raised the bar. The grand finale was a gathering of innovators, techies, entrepreneurs, policymakers, media mavens, marketing professionals, and corporate moguls who collaborated to create innovative solutions to real-time marketing and media challenges. It was characterized by igniting imaginations, unleashing tech's potential, crafting creative marvels, illuminating the media sphere, and revolutionizing innovation.

Themed 'Unlocking the Power of the Creative Economy', with focus areas on Immersive Experience (XR), Content Creation, and Robo Marketing, recorded over 1,365 applications from 92 locations across Europe, Asia, and Africa, all of which were judged by 22 industry experts according to the organizers.

With MarkHack 2.0, GDM Group, a leading marketing and media technology company, and Eko Innovation Center have yet again reaffirmed their purpose of supporting enterprises by leveraging innovation and technology at the heart of businesses.

The Winners

The event climaxed on a disruptive note with 10 startups engaging in an innovative pitch contest of ideas



Winners of MarkHack 2.0 with the curator of MarkHack and Founder of Eko Innovation Center, GDM Group and Art of Technology Lagos, Victor Afolabi (4th from right) at the grand finale of MarkHack 2.0 in Lagos recently.



Tosin Adelowo, Founder of AREMU, Winner of the grand prize of \$5000 at the grand finale of MarkHack 2.0 in Lagos recently.



Tosin Adelowo, Founder of AREMU, Winner of the grand prize of \$5000 at the grand finale of MarkHack 2.0 in Lagos recently.



Top 10 finalists and their team members on stage at the grand finale of MarkHack 2.0



Team Ozi, winner of the second prize of \$3000 at the grand finale of MarkHack 2.0

before industry experts at the grand finale held at Oriental Hotel, Lagos.

The top 10 startups that spiced up the evening with their innovative pitch sessions were Aremu; Ozi; Zander; Weeshr; Markett AI; VirtualX; Contenting; Shopalz; ShopXR and GetSeen.

It was an unforgettable evening of discovery, collaboration, and boundless excitement as industry experts such as Chris Wulff-Caesar, Marketing Director of FrieslandCampina WAMCO; Lanre Adisa, Founder and Chief Creative Officer of Noah's Ark and others delivered an insightful presentation about the theme of the event.

Afolabi disclosed that the participants had gone through three months of innovative pitch sessions, workshops, masterclasses, and mentorship sessions aimed at helping them develop skills and providing them with the resources needed to transform their ideas into market-ready products.

The top 5 finalists at MarkHack 2.0 will undergo a 3-month incubation program at the Eko Innovation Center, and receive a seed capital of \$50,000 at the end of the program.

Also, mentorship and free working space at the Eko Innovation Center and other consolation prizes also await the other finalists.

Aremu, a robot-marketing tool that helps businesses run experiments to improve their product metric and conversion rate, beat nine (9) other startups to clinch the grand prize of \$5,000.

Ozi, a web application that helps businesses acquire, engage and manage customer conversions all from one place emerged as the first runner-up, carting away the sum of \$3000 while Zander, a webenabled and user-customized response AI tool for automating social media marketing/management and all brand campaign processes emerged as the second runner-up with a prize of \$2000.

Tosin Adelowo, co-founder of Aremu stated that the win serves as a validation of the enormous potential in Nigeria's creative sector, and commended Eko Innovation Center for the MarkHack platform. "Indeed, this win is a validation that team Aremu can bring this great idea and vision to life with the potential of becoming a global brand in a few years", Mr. Adelowo remarked.

He further expressed appreciation to the organizers of MarkHack for creating the platform that provides an opportunity for new ideas to be birthed in the creative space.

Azeez Adejumo, co-founder and Chief Executive Officer of Ozi.ng, the second prize winner lauded the Eko Innovation Centre for promoting a culture of excellence in the



Victor Afolabi, Curator of MarkHack and Founder of GDM Group, Eko Innovation Center and Art of Technology Lagos.

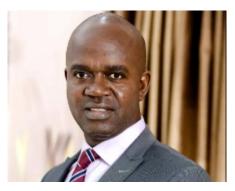
discovery of new talents and ideas that will shape the future. "Getting into incubator programs has not been easy for us as entrepreneurs in Nigeria; however, MarkHack has set a pace by opening the doors of opportunity for entrepreneurs to pitch their ideas on a level playing field and get mentorship on how to scale their businesses", Adejumo said.

The innovations from the hackathon if explored will help grow the marketing and media industry. It also shows that the country has abundant talents which a platform like MarkHack is showcasing. All hands must be on the desk to support platforms organizing hackathons like this and also innovators to boost our creative economy.

VIEWPOINT

Digital And Data Usage: What Needs To Be Done Differently Experts Share Their Views

The use of data has helped transform many businesses over the years. According to Forrester, a global market research company, "Firms make fewer than 50% of their decisions based on quantitative information as opposed to gut feeling, experience, or opinion." However, today many companies gather data but don't optimally use them to grow their business. In line with this, experts shared their views on the importance of data in a digital age and what brands need to do differently.



Dr. Emmanuel Agu, Marketing Professional

"The digital age has brought an explosion of data that can be leveraged to inform advertising planning and execution. Data analysis can provide insights into customer behaviour, preferences, and purchasing habits, which can be used to develop targeted, personalized ad campaigns."

He added that "Digital has not only come to stay; it has come to move us to places that we never thought existed. While most of the other platforms outside of digital (Radio, TV, experiential) have primarily struggled to re-invent themselves, digital seems to be in a constant revolution happening everywhere, with everything, all at once."





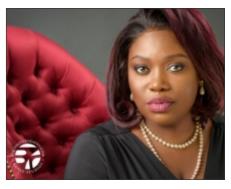
Yinka Adebayo, Executive Director, Media Investments of OMG WeCa

"Data can only show you the direction. Always seek to understand the stories behind the numbers. So that you can speak to and use them confidently, creatively, convincingly, constructively, and collaboratively."



Rasheed Bolarinwa, President, Association of Corporate Affairs Managers of Banks in Nigeria (ACAMB)

"Unlike before when PR sources of information and data collection were limited to press releases and published newspaper/magazine articles, digital tools help PR professionals to access and analyse larger and more complex sets of data from multiple sources."



Tosin Adefeko is the Founder/ CEO of AT3 Resources Limited

"Digital technology has democratized access to information and practically given a voice to all and sundry. We all know this has its pros and cons; small businesses are now better empowered with tools to help them communicate on a small budget and scale whilst bigger brands just have to find creative ways to cut through the noise.

It is quite an interesting time we live in."



Tosan Omagbemi, Managing Director, Interaction Channel Limited

"What data does is, it gives you the opportunity to appreciate value because what everybody is looking for whether SMEs or big corporation is value. If they can see value they won't mind to advert (on out-of-home advertising platforms or others)."

INTERVIEW

'We Have Proactively Addressed Mobility Challenges By Leveraging On Technology, Emphasizing On Sustainability'- Trucks Transit Parks MD

On February 27, 2021, Trucks Transit Parks Limited officially started the electronic truck call-up system, Eto. Since then, it has changed the mobility and maritime industry by helping to solve decades of endemic challenges with traffic gridlock by leveraging on technology.

In this interview with BRAND TIMES, the Managing Director of the company, JAMA ONWUBUARIRI shares insight on trends that would shape the industry in Nigeria and Africa including how his company is disrupting the industry by leveraging on technology to proffer solutions to challenges and its consistency in delivering on its sustainability agenda which has further endeared stakeholders both in the private and public sector to it. Excerpt:





JAMA ONWUBUARIRI, Co-Founder/Managing Director, Trucks Transit Parks Ltd.

What is your assessment of the mobility and maritime industry in Nigeria and Africa?

Having studied the industry and worked in it for some years, my assessment of these industries is that they hold immense potential for growth and development in our country

When it comes to mobility, Nigeria and Africa as a whole face unique challenges. With the rapid urbanization, increasing population, and growth in trade, however, there is limited supporting infrastructure which poses significant obstacles to efficient transportation. However, these challenges also present opportunities for innovation and the adoption of tech-driven solutions. We have witnessed a gradual shift towards smart mobility solutions, such as ride-sharing platforms, electric and hybrid vehicles, and intelligent tech-driven traffic management systems.

These advancements have the potential to transform the way people and goods move in our cities, improving efficiency, reducing congestion, and minimizing environmental degradation.

In terms of the maritime industry, Nigeria and Africa are strategically positioned with vast coastlines and abundant human and natural resources. The maritime sector plays a crucial role in international trade, as well as domestic transportation of goods. However, there is still significant room for growth and improvement. Investments in port infrastructure, efficient logistics, mobility assets (vehicles), and streamlined regulatory processes are essential for maximizing the potential of the maritime industry. Furthermore, leveraging technology and digital solutions can enhance operational efficiency, increase safety standards, and reduce the costs associated with maritime

To unlock the full potential of mobility and the maritime industry in Nigeria and Africa, it is crucial to foster partnerships between the public and private sectors. Collaboration with international organizations and technology companies can bring valuable expertise, knowledge sharing, and investment opportunities. Additionally, governments should prioritize policies that promote innovation, provide incentives for sustainable practices, and create an enabling environment for businesses to thrive.

What are some of the challenges facing the industry and what opportunities are there for stakeholders to take advantage of moving forward including trends to watch out for?

There are several challenges currently facing the maritime industry in Nigeria, some of which include infrastructure deficiencies;

inadequate port infrastructure, including outdated facilities and limited capacity, hampers the efficient movement of goods and increases costs. Investment in port modernization and expansion is crucial to address this challenge.

Also, poor coordination and integration of logistics processes contribute to delays, congestion, and increased costs. Streamlining logistics operations through technology-driven solutions can improve efficiency and reduce bottlenecks.

Regulatory and Administrative bottlenecks also pose a challenge. Cumbersome bureaucracy, complex regulatory frameworks, and inconsistent enforcement, including border policies, impede the smooth operation of maritime businesses. Simplifying procedures, enhancing transparency, and promoting regulatory harmonization are necessary to facilitate trade and investment.

Despite these challenges, there are several opportunities for stakeholders in the maritime industry to capitalize on moving forward such as embracing digital technologies, including blockchain, Internet of Things (IoT), and artificial intelligence (AI). These can revolutionize maritime operations, and improve efficiency, transparency, and security.

Again, stakeholders could leverage Green Shipping Initiatives. The global push for sustainability presents an opportunity for stakeholders to adopt eco-friendly practices and invest in cleaner maritime technologies. This includes the use of alternative fuels, energy-efficient vessels, and waste management systems.

Promoting regional cooperation, such as the African Continental Free Trade Area



(AfCFTA), can equally unlock the potential for increased intra-African trade, leading to higher demand for maritime services and logistics.

Human Capital Development should also be given attention. Investing in training and capacity-building programs can address the shortage of skilled personnel in the maritime industry. This includes developing specialized skills in areas such as maritime law, port management, and maritime technology. In addition, adopting deliberate employment practices that ensure the African workplace remains attractive to its people will help curb the rattling trend of human capital flight from the continent.

As we try to implement all these, there are several trends to watch out for in the maritime industry including sustainable practices, integration of digital technologies, automation and data analytics, E-commerce, Last-Mile Delivery, and of course, cybersecurity to protect sensitive data and critical infrastructure from cyber threats.

How will you describe the first quarter of 2023 and its impact on your industry?

The first quarter of 2023 presented a mixed landscape for the mobility and maritime industry and indeed almost all industries in the country. While challenges such as inflation, exchange rate fluctuations, and supply chain disruptions persist, opportunities arising from economic recovery, technology adoption, and sustainability have emerged. At Trucks Transit Parks Ltd, we have proactively addressed these dynamics, leveraging technology, emphasizing sustainability, and investing in our workforce to position ourselves for growth and success in this evolving industry landscape.

Traffic congestion is one of the issues stakeholders usually complain about, how is your organization making a difference in this regard amid challenges like government policies, economic uncertainty, and competition?



The Eto electronic call-up system is primarily a smart traffic management system because it aids in the scheduling and movement of trucks. Trucks are scheduled to move at specific times and are allowed to park at designated parks instead of parking indiscriminately on the roads and causing traffic congestion.

How have we done in this regard? There is clear evidence that since the introduction of the Eto call-up system, traffic has drastically reduced around the port corridors in Apapa and TinCan. With eto, we have been able to solve decades of endemic challenges with traffic gridlock, leading to massive improvement in the average turnaround time for port-bound trucks from an average of 2 weeks to 3 days and a significant improvement in cargo evacuation cost and speed from the ports.

Is there room for improvement? Certainly. For one thing, the road infrastructure needs to be fixed, bad roads tend to cause traffic and slow down the movement of trucks and other road users. On our end, we continue to leverage intelligent traffic management systems and real-time data analysis that allow us to optimize traffic flow and suggest alternative routes to reduce congestion and strategic collaborations that enable us to cater to all stakeholder groups.

Our goal is to create a more efficient and sustainable mobility ecosystem, improving the quality of life for commuters and businesses while making a difference in addressing traffic congestion.

You leveraged technology to decongest Nigerian ports and ease traffic challenges with the introduction of a proprietary booking app known as Eto, what inspired it and how does it work?

Eto was conceived based on the desire to provide a solution to the incessant truck traffic experienced around the country. The founders discussed the gating of stationary trucks across Nigeria and releasing them based on scheduled business needs. Following thorough research, they also engaged public and private stakeholders to translate the research into service.

They then commenced research into truck parking regulations in Nigeria. They also visited rest stops along the Autobahn in Germany, between Berlin and Munich in September 2013. They continued to research and engage stakeholders, Federal and State governments on how this idea could be executed.

In April 2018, we began a series of engagements with the Nigerian Ports Authority to deploy our electronic portal for integrated management of port-bound truck traffic.

TTP was then selected by the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) as the preferred bidder for the management of the NPA's Lilypond Truck Park and the operation of the electronic truck call-up system. On February 27, 2021, the company officially started the electronic truck call-up system, Eto.

Ètò is an electronic truck call-up solution used to manage truck movement between various controlled facilities. Ètò connects a network of truck parks, holding bays, warehouses, and port terminals, ensuring smooth movement of traffic from point to point. Ètò is Trucks Transit Park's flagship product. Ètò means 'to schedule' in the Yoruba language.

Ètò's value proposition includes control of truck movement to ensure the free flow of traffic on all port access roads; electronically linking and connecting parks, & holding bays for the needs of terminal operators, and increasing throughput and efficiency of trucks transiting in and out of the port and the industrial hubs. It is presently deployed for Apapa and Tincan port metropolis and has helped to reduce traffic gridlock, improve the turnaround time for the movement of trucks, improve safety for residents and improve revenue for stakeholders.

Since the introduction of Eto, what has been the success or failure in the area of your operations?

We are proud of the progress that our solution has made over the past two years. It has received positive feedback from our customers, and we have seen a significant improvement in addressing the challenges it



was created for. While there is always room for improvement in any solution, we are confident in the impact that our solution has had, and we are continually working to enhance it even further.

In addressing the challenges for which Eto was created, we can say that we have done very well to a large extent. Take, for instance, the cost of evacuation of cargo from the ports before eto, that cost has significantly reduced by over 65%. No money needs to exchange hands illegally nor do you need to know anyone special before you can conduct your business at the ports. All that is required is to book a call-up ticket and your truck will be scheduled accordingly to access the ports.

Traffic that was common to the Apapa and TinCan corridors before the launch of eto has also now become a thing of the past. Businesses and residents can now carry out their various activities without the fear of getting stuck in horrendous traffic jams. Our solution has gained us recognition as one of the fastest-growing companies in the industry and we've leveraged this to go into partnerships with major companies to integrate our technology into their offerings.

We continue to collect feedback from our customers and stakeholders to continually improve, resolve pain points and ensure customer satisfaction.

What is your relationship currently with the Nigerian Port Authority (NPA), Lagos State Government, haulage owners, drivers, and transport union since your app may have reduced the jobs and source of income of

some of these stakeholders?

It's incorrect to say that the e-call-up system reduced jobs and sources of income. On the contrary, it's created jobs for software and hardware engineers, park and holding bay owners, parking pilots, customer service people, and several others. What has happened is that the call-up has gotten rid of illegal collections that prioritized port entries for people who had the wherewithal to jump queues.

As far as our relationship with our various stakeholders goes, we're very cordial and professional. We have physical and virtual engagements with different stakeholder groups from time to time.

Beyond the Eto app, what other innovations or initiatives come from the stable of your company and what plans do you have to expand to other businesses leveraging on technology including expanding your presence to other ports?

So far, we have deployed two products into the market, Ètò for scheduling the movement of trucks, presently deployed for Apapa and Tincan port metropolis that help to reduce traffic gridlock, improve the turnaround time for the movement of trucks, improve safety for residents and improve revenue stakeholders.

In 2022, we introduced another product called Tafiyah. Tafiyah is a Hausa word for movement, or, to move. We created it out of a local need identified when we compared the end-to-end, last-mile trend in the global logistics industry with our manual, intermediary-dependent haulage industry in

Nigeria. There are a lot of inefficiencies when a cargo owner and a truck owner rely on 'man know man' to get new business.

Tafiyah is an electronic marketplace, where the closest truck to a cargo location can be seen on a dashboard by the owner of the cargo, the parties can then negotiate the cost of the haulage, make payment and then proceed to fulfil the service. This cuts out the need for trucks to queue endlessly on the road waiting for jobs, and for trucks that have already gotten jobs to lose them because they are too far away from the cargo location and unable to meet pickup timelines

Beyond these two products, our services cover a spectrum of traffic management, port access control, mobility design, smart parking solutions, terminal traffic management and park management & design. Next will be to expand the electronic call-up to other ports across the country.





By Gaston Taratuta, Founder and CEO of Aleph Group, Inc

HE world of work has always changed and evolved in line with technological advances and major consumer shifts. Did you know, for example, that in Victorian Britain people were paid to wake factory workers up by tapping on their windows? Called knocker-uppers, they were a common sight until alarm clocks rendered them obsolete...

In recent months you may have seen articles predicting that, thanks to the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT, prompt engineering will become an important and necessary career skill in the near future. Some experts even suggest that the field, which boils down to giving AI tools the best possible inputs, is so critical that it may even become a career path in itself.

But that's just one example of where the world of work is headed. If you really want to future-proof yourself, it's worth having a much broader view. And on that front, you could do a lot worse than keeping a close eye

on the digital marketing sector.

An industry unafraid of change

Digital marketing has a long history of adapting and embracing big technological and societal shifts. From the early days of website banner ads through to innovative products on social media and streaming platforms, each advancement has required people in the sector to build up new skills to ensure that they're providing the best possible service to their clients.

That's unlikely to change in the near future either. According to LinkedIn, the "Digital Marketing Specialist" role is among the top 10 most in-demand jobs, with 860 000 job openings. The fact that the most requested experience in digital marketing includes social media, content strategy, SEO, analytics, also shows how broad the field has become.

Even those specific areas of experience are



changing all the time. Take online communities, for example, before 2016, when the likes of Facebook and Twitter were well established, no one had any expertise in marketing on TikTok. Today, the platform has more than a billion users and is an increasingly important part of any organisation's digital marketing strategy. As a result, people in digital marketing have had to build up the skills necessary to market on the platform.

The same is true for every new product a social media platform launches. Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, and Spotify, are all unique in its form. It's also worth remembering that a user's experience on

By certifying yourself on all the platforms you can (this can usually be done for free). Learn things like Google Adwords, how to do marketing on Instagram, and as many other products as you can.

TikTok has nothing to do with their experience on Twitter. You seldom meet someone who understands all the platforms very well. Additionally, there are changes all the time, so to be successful in digital marketing you have to be able to learn new things and be flexible all the time.

These are also the qualities that you need to succeed in the rapidly changing world of

Acquiring the right skills

So, how should you go about acquiring the skills necessary to thrive in the world of digital marketing and beyond?

There is no doubt that formal certification can be incredibly helpful, especially when you're starting out on your journey. It's part of why we launched our free Digital Ad Expert community. The 12 week course covers the basics of strategy and analytics, as well as platform specific advertising methodologies for all the major social media platforms.

Once you have those basics in place though, self-exploration becomes critical. You have to be curious. You have to want to learn. You have to commit. By certifying yourself on all the platforms you can (this can usually be done for free). Learn things like Google Adwords, how to do marketing on Instagram, and as many other products as you can.

Getting to that point won't take long, for some people it can take as little as six months. From there, practice and keep practising. If you don't have a client to practise on, market yourself. Soon enough you'll learn that, in such a fast-changing world, years of experience matter less than your ability to deliver results.

Powered by the present, ready for the

It's something that's been true of digital marketing for a while now. It's also something that's becoming increasingly true of the world of work in general. So, if you want to be ready to face the future, look to an industry that already has a strong track record of adapting to epoch-shifting changes.

CSR / SUSTAINABILITY

Water Relief NG: Championing Sustainable Clean Water In Nigeria



ater is vital to human existence. The very human body is 60% water and drinking of unclean water has obvious damaging health implications. This necessity is articulated in the sustainable development goals (SDGs) which countries including Nigeria have committed to. The SDGs, also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030.

To make these goals a reality requires universal support This is why several not-for-profit organizations have moved to supplement government efforts by championing the cause. Brand Times writes on how Water Relief NG, not-for-profit organization, which was formerly known as Water Aid NG is championing the SDG- 6 (clean water and sanitation for all) with its social intervention initiatives.

Water Relief NG has been championing this course in Nigeria in a bid to bridge the obvious clean water deficit, help to promote good health and support humanity at all levels. Basically, Water Relief NG is a homegrown not-for-profit social scheme which provides drinkable water to the most rural and underserved communities.

Meeting SDGs And Water Deficit

Some stakeholders consider that the 2030 deadline to reach the SDGs may be far, but considering that the provision of safe

water, sanitation and hygienic conditions are essential to protecting human health during all infectious disease outbreaks, including the COVID-19 outbreak, there is a present urgency for a concerted effort at meeting them to start now.

The 17 SDGs are integrated—that is, they recognize that action in one area will affect outcomes in others, and that development must balance social, economic, and environmental sustainability. According to United Nations Foundation, having clean water and sanitation, means being able to avoid exposure to countless diseases. The Foundation reports, also, that every year, millions of people die from diseases caused by inadequate water supply, sanitation, and hygiene. Other than pneumonia, diarrhea is the main cause of death in children under age 5. In addition, poor sanitation, and unsafe water cause nearly 20% of workplace deaths. It costs around \$260 billion in lost productivity

It is also important to note that many communities are without water supply and surprisingly globally at least two billion people use a drinking water source contaminated with feaces according to World Health Organization (WHO). The sad result is that contaminated water increases transmission of diseases such diarrhea, cholera, dysentery, typhoid, and polio. Contaminated drinking water is estimated to cause 485 000 diarrheal deaths each year.

Needless to say, therefore, but health experts are clear in the view that provision of



safe and hygienic water is essential in protecting human health during any infectious disease outbreak including the coronavirus pandemic. This notwithstanding, investment in water supply sector is still low in many countries and communities despite call from several quarters. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the critical importance of sanitation, hygiene, and adequate access to clean water for preventing and containing diseases.

The rising cases of cholera outbreak across the country and the alarming death rate are source of concern for the health ministries, government, and the public. Cholera, typhoid, diarrhea, dysentery, and other waterborne diseases are connected to unclean and contaminated water which



CSR / SUSTAINABILITY

many communities are prone to. Even in cities the rate of patients of these diseases are increasing, and this shows that much still needs to be done to meet SDG - 6.

Water Relief NG like many other not-forprofit organizations has set its own goal to support the realization of the SDGs with a focus on providing drinkable water.

Social Interventions

The Founder, Water Relief NG, Khadijah Okunnu-Lamidi revealed that the not-for-profit organization was started in 2020 with the aim of bridging the clean water deficit in the country and so far, it has impacted a lot of lives, helping to reduce the spread of diseases, relief the hardship of many communities to get clean water, supported government effort in combatting the spread of Covid-19 among other notable initiatives.

"The initiative which commenced in 2020 was born out of the need to bridge the clean water deficit in the country, considering that over 86 percent of Nigerians lack access to a safely managed drinking water source- according to UNICEF research. The lockdown and stayat-home order brought about unforeseen hardships for many marginalized communities and we supplied clean water to them," she explained.

Water Relief NG also aims to prevent waterborne diseases like diarrhea, cholera, and others to a bid to save lives. During the lockdown, the charity organization distributed drinkable water to communities in Lagos to serve as palliative and help in the fight against the pandemic and other diseases. Some of the communities that benefited from the scheme are Oworonshoki, Shomolu, Makoko, Lagos Island, Ikotun, Alimosho, Iju Ishaga, Ibeju-Lekki, and Egbeda among others. Even after the pandemic, the organization intensified its effort of providing drinkable water to more communities and in turn saved more lives.

Speaking on Its mode of operation, Okunnu-Lamidi said, "Our main goals remain public participation, focus on fragile communities, promotion of CSR compliance trends, building of data networks and creation of volunteer welfare packages with accountability and transparency."

Water Relief NG Founder and her team hope to champion the course of SDG- 6 till it is no longer needed in Nigeria and Africa as a whole.

Interesting to note that the United Nations estimates that every Swiss franc invested in water and sanitation leads to four francs in economic returns – which is why investing in social intervention is such an effective way of creating stronger, more resilient communities we all will be proud of. So, organizations championing the course of the SDGs need to be supported to further help them reach more people and communities in the interest of achieving the goals and making the world a better place.







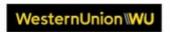
Receive Transfers from abroad in US Dollars



Receive your transfers from abroad in US Dollars at any of our branches, even if you do not currently bank with us.

You can also open a domiciliary account, have funds credited directly into it and withdraw your US Dollars when needed.





















WOMEN BEHIND BRANDS



By Morohunmubo Alabi

"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." – Eleanor Roosevelt.

s more women strive to get to the top of their careers or achieve their dreams, they must be ready for the sacrifice ahead because there is more to every success story. Behind every success story is a story of dedication, consistency, and determination.

We live in a world where more women are breaking barriers, gaining global recognition, and contributing to industry growth and humanity.

In the technology and financial technology (Fintech) space, Dr. Cherry Eromosele, a renowned marketing and communications professional, is a typical example and her story continues to inspire both young and old to

strive for excellence and understand that gender is not a limitation.

Career

Throughout her illustrious career spanning over 25 years, Eromosele has amassed versatile and multi-industry functional and leadership experience. She has excelled in product and marketing innovation across various sectors, including FMCG (alcoholic beverages), telecommunications, fast-moving consumer healthcare, and most recently, fintech/e-payments across key African markets. Her ability to consistently deliver exceptional results when venturing into new territories has set her apart as a dynamic and performance-driven professional.

She currently holds the position of Executive Vice President, Marketing and Communications for Africa at Interswitch Group, where she plays a pivotal role in the company's senior leadership team. Her creative vision, deep understanding of company values, and exceptional business leadership skills have been

instrumental in driving brand differentiation, market leadership, and maximizing returns on marketing investments.

Specifically, before joining Interswitch, Eromosele worked with Diageo where she progressed through the ranks to become Marketing Manager, Guinness Brands. She later joined MTN as Senior Manager, Segment Marketing, and later GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) as Head of Marketing for Nutritionals.

"You can do whatever it is you set your mind to do despite your gender. As a professional who has successfully moved between industries, functions, and even countries, there has been a myriad of challenges that require quick flexibility and with the right dose of personal commitment to learning and development, there is so much value you can add. I have always seen myself as an intrapreneur within all the organizations I have

worked, by challenging the status quo and taking hands-on responsibility for influencing and creating innovation to move the businesses to the next level," she revealed the philosophy that has worked for her.

Professional Development

In 2023, she was awarded an Honorary Doctorate degree - Doctor of Philosophy in Business Administration (Honoris Causa) by Prowess University, Delaware, USA. The recognition is a testament to her exceptional transformational leadership, immense contributions to humanitarian efforts, and remarkable dedication to national development.

Eromosele has consistently pursued professional growth and development. She holds a bachelor's degree in Biological Sciences Education from the University of Benin. She has also participated in executive,

functional, leadership, and management programmes offered by prestigious institutions such as Cranfield School of Management, Columbia Business School, Wharton Business School, Kellogg Business School (Northwestern University), and the Oxford Fintech Program at Said Business School.



Eromosele's significant contributions to the marketing landscape in Nigeria have garnered widespread recognition. In 2015, she was honoured as the Marketing Personality of the Year in Nigeria by Marketing Edge. Additionally, she was named one of the top 50 Marketing Professionals in West Africa at the 7th edition of the annual Marketing World Awards held in Accra, Ghana in 2019. In 2020, she received the Most Outstanding Marketing Professional of the Year award in the Financial Technology category at the Women in Marketing & Communications Conference/Awards (WIMCA). Furthermore, she has been consecutively named

among the Global Top 100 Marketing Leaders in Technology by Hot Topics in 2021 and 2022

Alongside her recent doctoral conferment, she was certified as a Fellow of the Ecolerite Institute for Peacebuilding (FEIP). This prestigious certification acknowledges her deep commitment to fostering peace, justice, and sustainable development within communities. As a Fellow of the Ecolerite Institute for Peacebuilding, she joins a distinguished group of global leaders dedicated to promoting peace and fostering understanding among diverse populations.

Her passionate support for women empowerment and girl child development has also seen Eromosele named one of the 100 Most Inspiring Women in Nigeria by 'Leading Ladies Africa', a compendium honouring phenomenal Nigerian women.



Three Influential Female Marcom Pro in Banking

By Morohunmubo Alabi

There exist many women breaking the glass ceiling and changing the industries where they operate. They often make awards and special recognition lists for their extraordinary performance.

Similarly, in the field of marketing communications (Marcom), there exist exceptional individuals who are changing the narrative and transforming the banking and financial industry.

These game changers are passionate about promoting gender inclusion and their contributions to their organisations have opened doors for more women to be given opportunities within the industry at men have a higher percentage in the boardroom. Today, women both young and old see them as inspiration and look up to them for mentorship.

In no particular order, below are some of the influential women in the banking industry in Nigeria:

Folake-Ani-Mumuney

Global Head Marketing & Corporate Communications, First Bank Limited



Tolake Ani-Mumuney is a seasoned marketer and communicator; she doubles as Global Head Marketing & Corporate Communications, First Bank Limited.

She previously served as Chief Marketing and Communication Officer for the Dangote Group, the largest conglomerate in Africa. Prior to this, Folake had responsibility for Brands, Policies, and Communications for British Airways PLC across the Europe & Africa region.

Folake holds a first degree in Philosophy and a second degree in Law, and a Diploma in Business Computing Systems Analysis and Design. She is the first female President of the Advertisers' Association of Nigeria (ADVAN) and was also the Executive Council Member of the World Federation of Advertisers. She is also an honourary member of the Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria, a member of the Chartered Institute of Marketing UK, a member of the National Institute of Marketing Nigeria (NIMN), and serves in an advisory capacity to many organisations on strategy and marketing communications issues.

An alumna of the prestigious Harvard Business School, Folake chairs or co-chairs a handful of private sector and NGO Boards, and her appointments to select committees, such as the Presidential Committee on Efficiency, enable her to contribute meaningfully to the public sector.

Bola Atta

CEO at UBA Foundation and Executive Director, REDTV



Producer of REDTV since 2015. REDTV is a channel associated with United Bank Africa (UBA), of which Atta is the CEO of UBA Foundation and was the Group Director for the Marketing & Corporate Communications department. Alongside this, she is also the Executive Producer of the show Africa's Next Top Model (ANTMafrica), which premiered in 2012.

In her 30 years of work experience in diverse fields ranging from Banking, Business, Communications, Publishing, Entertainment, and the Media, she has received various accolades and achievements. She was named as one of the 40 top Nigerians under 40 in 2008, listed as one of the 100 most influential women in Nigeria in March 2015, and crowned Best Marketing Professional in West Africa in 2017.

Bola also played a pivotal role in pushing for more channels specifically dedicated towards Nigerian movies during her time working as a Program Manager for M-Net (Electronic Media Network) West Africa.

Her push led to the creation of the channels colloquially referred to as 'Africa Magic', which is now one of the most-watched channels across the African continent.

Bola graduated from the University of Sussex with Bachelors in Economics and completed her M.B.A., majoring in Marketing, at Duquesne University.

Bridget Oyefeso-Odusami

Head, Marketing and Communications for Stanbic IBTC Holdings PLC



ridget Oyefeso-Odusami is currently the Head, Marketing, and Communications for Stanbic IBTC Holdings PLC. She is a multifaceted marketing professional with more than 22 years of global experience in brand strategy, sponsorships, digital marketing, data analytics, and all elements of communications.

She has a proven track record in running internal and external corporate communications as well as products Integrated Marketing Campaigns (IMC) across various countries and sectors including aviation, NGO, and financial services.

Bridget holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Botany from Lagos State University and a Post Graduate degree from the University of Leicester, UK.

She is also a member of the Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (ARCON), the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM), UK, an associate member of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR), and a member of WIMBIZ (Women in Business and Management). She has participated in various global business and economic summits.

Her achievements in the course of these include: receiving the highest ratings for creativity, innovation, and dedication for functional responsibilities at British Airways Plc; the best of British Airways community volunteering award whilst she effectively managed the brand, corporate image, and reputation in Nigeria, Tanzania, Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, Zambia, Mauritius, and Uganda.

GLOBAL REPORT

Ages Of Values:

New Research
Reveals Consumers'
Top Values, Concerns,
And Why Brands
Should Act Now!





By Olufemi Somotun

s businesses globally strive to engage consumers, they must understand the values they hold in high esteem. This will help them reach consumers with bespoke campaigns that will resonate with them.

If brands, marketers, or communicators speak to people's values, they can move them, to purchase, advocate, embark, or vote. Also, they must look at the world differently, understand people differently, and communicate differently.

New research tagged 'BCW Age of Values 2023' gives insight into how people prioritize values. The research was produced by BCW's business accelerator for clients, the Movatory, in partnership with leaders in the field of values and cross-cultural research.

The research was gleaned from an analysis of more than 36,000 people across 30 countries which yielded more than 30 million data points and enabled the agency to identify seven archetypes that cut across geography, income, and generations, shattering the commonly held perception that Generation Z, Millennials, Generation X and Baby Boomers are homogeneous groups that can be marketed to as monoliths. The seven value archetypes identified by the research will help businesses understand their customers better.

Meet the seven Values Archetypes

Meet the seven

The seven

values
archetypes
include Success
Seeker,
Adventurer,
Good
Neighbour,
Conformist,
Visionary,
Protector, and
Traditionalist.

The Success Seeker is drawn by a desire for power and personal achievement: The Adventurer seeks stimulation and new experiences; The Good Neighbour prizes the welfare of friends, family. and community; and The Conformist wants to fit in



and avoid confrontation. **The Visionary** is someone who prizes personal freedom and creativity. **The Protector** prioritizes people and the planet; and **The Traditionalist** focuses on safety, stability, and harmony.

Key Findings

The study revealed that across the world, people are struggling with a 'values-behaviour gap' with only 46% of people being able to live according to their values daily.

This is especially pronounced when it comes

to governments and their citizens, with only 25% of people globally believing that their values align with that of the governments and their programmes. Perhaps because of this, people have great expectations of businesses when it comes to values-driven issues.

The vast majority of people agree that businesses must act now to respect data and privacy online (82%), build a more diverse, inclusive, and equal society (82%), provide support through the cost-of-living crisis (80%), and do more to combat climate change (81%).

The top values by cultural region especially in Africa are stimulation, achievement, and self-direction. "Achievement is very important in Africa and definitely in Nigeria. It has to do with the fact that, traditionally, you earn a lot more regard and respect when you're a high achiever. It is a thing of pride, either for an individual or a family to achieve certain levels – socially, educationally, financially, academically, and so on." Yomi Badejo- Okusanya, BCW Nigeria disclosed.

The top three values globally are benevolence, universalism, and stability. Precisely, according to the study, security, self-direction, and universalism(s) are the top three for Nigeria and the same for South Korea.

Takeaways

It stated that if brands, businesses, and organizations root their communications in values, not only will they gain attention, drive engagement, and build trust, but they will also be able to move people efficiently and effectively, today and tomorrow.

First, takeaway, it urged brands not to be distracted by the noise, but to focus on values. "By using values as a constant guide, you will show up consistently and authentically in all your communicators. They will be able to navigate the changing context and conversation, rather than being derailed by it."

On a second note, it tasked brands to use values as the foundation for audience insight. "Values give communicators the key to moving people. They explain our motivations, attitudes, and behaviors in any given situation.

"By rooting strategy in an understanding of audience values, communicators can better predict how people will think, feel and act."

The third point is brands should define their values to align them with others. It explained that "In communications, as in life, good relationships are built on shared values. Knowing and articulating corporate or brand values will enable communicators to target and connect meaningfully with the consumers, stakeholders, partners, and talent who share them. This collaboration will enable businesses and brands to better achieve their goals."

The fourth point is brands should use values to manage competing expectations. "Businesses, brands, organizations, and governments constantly have to manage many competing demands, e.g., on climate change; diversity, equity, inclusion; and online safety. Aligning corporate values with audience values and expectations can be a critical filter to help determine priorities."

Lastly, it pointed out that "The business, brands, and organizations that make it possible for people to shop, live, vote, and work according to their values, will flourish. Those that look forward, anticipate, identify, and close the values-behaviour gap for people, will lead."

GLOBAL REPORT





By Olufemi Somotun

echnology brands continue to dominate the annual ranking of the 100 most valuable brands in the world and command the largest share of brand value.

Apple took the one-number spot as the world's most valuable brand, for the second consecutive year in the Kantar BrandZ Most Valuable Global Brands Report 2023. Google, Microsoft, and Amazon took the second, third, and fourth positions respectively on the table.

Other brands that made the top 10 spots are McDonald's, Visa, Tencent, Louis Vuitton, MasterCard, and Coca-Cola.

According to the report, the total brand value of the world's top 100 brands now stands at \$6.9 trillion for 2023. Despite a 20% drop in the overall index vs 2022, the Kantar BrandZ Top 100 retains its long-term growth trajectory, posting 47% growth compared to the pre-COVID (2019) level.

"With a brand valuation of \$880bn, Apple has proven resilient in the face of testing market conditions, justifying premium prices with positive perceptions, and proving that meaningful, different and salient brands are best placed to weather global economic disruption," it stated.

It also pointed out that the lessons for brand owners and marketers remain clear; effective marketing investment and long-term thinking are vital to their business growth, adding that they must consistently invest in establishing strong emotional connections with their consumers.

2023 Success Stories

According to the report, Food & Beverage brands demonstrated the most resilience as an overall category, declining just 3% year-on-year. Doritos proved the value of its superior taste messaging, ranking No.19 in this category, with

Rank	Brand	Country of Origin	Brand Value 2023 (\$Mil.)	Brand Value 2022 (\$Mil.)
1	Apple	US	880,455	947,062
2	Google	US	577,683	819,573
3	Microsoft	US	501,856	611,460
4	Amazon	US	468,737	705,646
5	McDonald's	US	191,109	196,526
6	Visa	US	169,092	191,032
7	Tencent	China	141,020	214,023
8	Louis Vuitton	France	124,822	124,273
9	MasterCard	US	110,631	117,253
10	Coca-Cola	US	106,109	97,883

a brand value of \$5.4bn – one of many brands in this year's report that shows functional benefits can be the key to outperforming competitors. Pepsi's brand value has soared 17% year-on-year, reaching a total value of \$18.8bn and taking Pepsi back into the global ranking at No.91. Defined by great advertising, the brand has grown its price premium positioning in the US while being considered a 'value' brand across the rest of the world. Coca-Cola (No.10) showed great resilience, increasing its brand value by 8% and breaking back into the Top 10 for the first time in seven years.

Fast Food was the second-highestperforming category. Brands that outperformed in this space include Burger King, Chick-Fil-A, and Starbucks.

Resilience in the industry is being fuelled by greater exposure and better experience. Burger King, for example, cut drive-thru times with menu simplification and digital boards and invested more heavily in brand communications. The brand has been rewarded with a 2023 value of \$7.7bn, an increase of 8% compared to last year.

Luxury brands retained their allure even with steady, incremental price increases. Louis Vuitton is the only luxury brand in the global Top 10, rising two places to No.8, with a brand value of \$124.8bn. Dior is the fastest-growing brand in the category, increasing its brand value by 9% to \$11.4bn. The category's strong overall performance highlights the excellent job luxury brands are doing at leveraging their distinctive assets to drive higher demand and pricing power, despite economic challenges.

TikTok (No.41) is still perceived as the second most disruptive brand in the Top 100, behind Tesla (No.25). Tesla continues to be considered a true game-changer, ranking No.1 in the automotive category, with a 2023 valuation of \$67.7bn.

Outside the Top 100, Ferrari makes its debut in the Top 10 Automotive brands with a valuation of \$7.8bn, increasing demand and perceived value to consumers even through the most challenging market conditions. Emerging brands competing in the EV space, and which are likely to gain value in the future, include Polestar, Li Auto, and Genesis.

Crepaway Nigeria: Entertainment Dines With Exotic Foods







ooking for a unique experience? Try a casual dining restaurant and you will be glad you did. A casual dining restaurant is a full-service restaurant with a fun, comfortable, laid-back atmosphere and affordably priced menu. Typically, it provides a more relaxed ambiance with a friendly environment and surroundings.

One of the trusted brands in the county known for its superb experience is Crepaway Nigeria. It is an exquisite and casual dining restaurant where you experience a mix of entertainment and exotic food. The environment allows you to relax and refresh while you experience world-class music and other entertainment.

It recently relaunched with a fusion of fine dining and entertainment event tagged 'Crepaway All-Star Weekend'.

Crepaway All-Star Weekend is an invitation to party with nollywood celebrities, business leaders, entrepreneurs, guests, friends, and family seeking a fun escape, to experience a fine mix of entertainment and exotic food with the finest ingredients in an elegant ambience with exceptional service delivery.

NashairaBelisa, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Crepaway Nigeria said that Crepaway stands out from other restaurants

because its offerings entail personalized experiences for each diner with its exceptional service delivery. "What we offer at Crepaway Nigeria is a personalized experience where diners get to interact with the head chef, host as well as waiter/waitresses during their visit", she stated. The CEO further added that its fusion of music, comedy, and exotic food adds to the delight of guests and visitors at Crepaway.

MC Shakara flagged off his Comedy Club at the Crepaway All-Star Weekend event where he performed with other comedians like Akpororo, KennyBlaq, Gordons, Acapella, Klint da Drunk, and others. Other celebrities who stormed the event are E-Money, BBNaija housemate Saga and guest appearances from influencers.

Crepaway Nigeria operates from a cosy getaway spot in the business district of Lagos, where it offers a unique personalized experience for all demography. It has a Crepaway Kids Corner where kids host birthday parties with lots of educational and extra-curricular activities to create memorable experiences for kids, as well as a SKY GARDEN LOUNGE, its exquisite rooftop lounge offering Hookah, cocktails, mocktails, bottle service, etc. From appetizers to entrees, desserts, and drinks, Crepaway has something to satisfy everyone's taste buds. Whether you're in the mood for a hearty meal or a light snack, its menu has got you covered.









ENTERTAINMENT



any have described the Big Brother Naija show as the Super Bowl of Africa because of its massive following and the excitement it brings across the continent.

It is important to note that of the numerous African shows that are aired on television, Big Brother Naija (BBN) is the most watched and the most engaging content online. Season 7 recorded more than one billion votes cast by fans.

Big Brother Naija is the Nigerian version of the reality TV series created by John de Mol Jr's Endemol, a Dutch TV network. It is a popular reality show in which contestants live in an isolated house and compete for a large cash prize. It is always packed with lots of activities, including parties and group tasks and the winner gets all the cash.

It not only has massive fans and followings but advertisers who are in large numbers and see the show as a viable platform to reach their consumers. Beyond the tasks, games, and exciting memories that come with the show, stars are born every season. Some of the big names we have in the entertainment industry today are products of the show.

The Journey

The first-ever season was known as Big Brother Nigeria. It was hosted by Michelle Dede and Olisa Adibua from 5 March to 4 June 2006. Katung Aduwak emerged as the winner, smiling home with \$100,000 prize money.

A decade later the show returned as Big Brother Naija. It was themed "See Gobe" and premiered in January 2017 and saw 22

contestants vying for the N25 million grand prize. Ex-housemate Ebuka Obi-Uchendu from season one hosted the show and Efe Ejeba emerge as the winner, clinching a brand new Kia Sorento SUV and N25 million naira cash prize.

The show returned for its third season on

28 January 2018 and was themed "Double Wahala". At the end of the season, Miracle Igbokwe from Imo state received \(\frac{\temp}{4}\)45 million worth of prizes.

The fourth season was launched on 30 June 2019 and dubbed "Pepper Dem". Mercy Eke emerged as the winner and became the first female to win the reality TV show winning N60 million grand prize.

Remarkably, the "Lockdown" edition which was season 5 saw Laycon clinching the grand prize of ₹85 million. Whitemoney emerged as the season 6 nicknamed "Shine ya eye" winner and carted home ₹90 million prize while Phyna won season 7 nicknamed "Level up" smiling home with ₹100 million.

The Superstars

Over the years, the organisers of the show, MultiChoice through BBNaija has continued to churn out talents taking over the creative scene. They are either acting, singing, behind the production scene, hosting shows, influencing, or bagging brand ambassador deals among others.

Truly, the show is changing lives, changing the entertainment landscape, and the stories of Ebuka Obi-Uchendu, Bisola Aiyeola, Katung Aduwak, Tobi Bakare, Laycon, Adekunle, Alex, Angel, Cee-C, Kiddwaya, Neoenergy, Pere, Seyi, Soma, Tolanibaj, Uriel, Venita, Princess, and many others tell it all.

For example, Katung Aduwak, the winner of the first edition of Big Brother Nigeria (now Big Brother Naija), after the show proceeded to New York to further his education at the Digital Film Academy, graduating with a directorial degree and going into filmmaking. Since then, he has produced and directed movies such as Unwanted Guest (2011), PUNEET!TV (2012), When Love Happens (2014), Heaven's Hell (2019), and Not Supposed to Be Here (2020). He has also directed several music videos for

Chocolate City, Styl Plus, Gabriel Afolayan and starred in EbonyLife TV's 'Desperate Housewives.'

Another exciting story is that of Ebuka Obi-Uchendu, after he left the Big Brother House in 2006, he clinched numerous endorsement deals with notable local and international brands. He has also been hosting the show since the "See Gobe" edition.

He has received several award nominations and won awards which include Outstanding TV Presenter of the Year at the Nigerian Broadcasters Merit Awards in 2015 and Most Popular Media Personality (Male) at Net Honours in 2021.

In 2011, he was selected as a Global Shaper - an exclusive group of young emerging leaders across the world - with the World Economic Forum.

Another interesting story is that of Bisola Aiyeola, a Nigerian actress and singer, she was the first runner-up in the Big Brother Naija "See Gobe edition in 2017. In 2018, she won the AMVCA Trailblazer Award at the 2018 Africa Magic Viewers Choice Awards. In 2021, she was one of the investors of Amaze, an app that makes endorsement deals easier for celebrities.

Tobi, the finalist in Big Brother Naija (season 3), has signed numerous brand ambassador deals and acted in many movies such as Fix Us, Sugar Rush, Mokalik, The Blood Covenant, Brotherhood, and Gangs of Lagos. He also emerged as 'Best Actor in a Drama, Movie or TV Series' at Africa Magic Viewers' Choice Awards 2023.

Laycon, a rapper, singer, songwriter, and media personality who emerged winner of season 5 is currently the youth ambassador of Ogun State, Nigeria since 6 October 2020. He also emerged as the Artist of the Year at the 2020 Naijatraffic Awards. Some of his singles are Fierce (2019), Senseless (2020), HipHop (2020), Fall for Me (2021), Wagwan (2021), New Dimension (2022), and 2000 (2022).



Top Nigerian Football Stars And Brand Endorsement Deals







By Prosper Mene

ith the abundant talents displaying their skills on the pitch and millions of football followers, football remains one of the most valuable sports in the world.

From pitch to viewers at home, fans' love for the beautiful game is immeasurable. Brands have come to be part of the showcase from stadium branding to players' kit branding, sponsorship, and advert placement during a live game, running a marketing campaign around a championship, and signing endorsement deals with players.

Remarkably, Nigerian football stars both retired and those still playing are clinching numerous local and international juicy brand endorsement deals for their spectacular performance. We beamed the spotlight on the endorsement deals of Nigeria's superstars; Victor Osimhen, Asisat Oshoala and football legend, Augustine Azuka Okocha popularly known as Jay-Jay Okocha.

Victor Osimhen

Victor Osimhen is currently one of the world's most valuable players.

He began his football career at the Ultimate Strikers Academy in Lagos. In 2015, he was selected to represent Nigeria at the Under-17 World Cup and was instrumental in helping the country win the tournament, scoring ten goals in the process and earning the Golden Boot and Silver Ball awards for his efforts.

He relocated to Germany in 2016 to enroll in the Wolfsburg Academy. He pre-signed with VfL Wolfsburg in the Bundesliga in January 2017 and joined French club, Lille in 2019 where his performances earned him the Marc-Vivien Foé Award for the best African player in Ligue 1

In July 2020, he was signed by Napoli for a reported fee of €70 million, making him the most expensive African footballer in history at the time. He scored important goals in both the Serie A and Europa League.

Osimhen became a hero in Naples following an outstanding and historic campaign with his club Napoli. He led the club to glory scoring 26 goals to end the club's 33-year wait for the Serie A title.

Osimhen has signed multi-millions of naira endorsement deals with some different companies like Nike, Coca-Cola, Dettol Soap, SportyBet, and others.

Asisat Oshoala

Oshoala remains fans' favourite and top Africa's most celebrated female footballers and one of the best in the world.

Her spectacular performance on the pitch has earned her both local and international awards and recognitions, winning Africa's Women's Footballer of the Year award five

The Super Falcons striker was born and brought up in the Ikorodu suburb of Lagos,

Nigeria. She began her career at a local club in Mushin called FC Robo before she moved to Rivers Angels where she broke out as the best player in the Nigeria Women Football League.

Oshoala currently plays in Spain with Barcelona Femini. So far, she has won Liga F, UEFA Women's Champions League, Supercopa de Espana Femenina, the Copa de la Reina, and the Pichichi League top scorer award.

Before joining Barcelona Femini, she played for Liverpool, Arsenal during which the club won the 2016 FA Women's Cup; while at Dalian Quanjian, the club clinched the league title and Women's Super Cup as well as winning the league's Golden Boot award.

In 2019, she established the Asisat Oshoala Foundation, a philanthropic organisation aimed at empowering female footballers across Africa.

Undoubtedly, Oshoala is regarded as the face of Nigerian women's football. She has earned the attention of several corporate organisations that see her as someone they should partner with to grow their brands. Some of the deals she has signed include Emzor, Nike, MultiChoice, Payporte, Capital Oil, Lagos State Sports Ambassador, Kwesé Free Sports, and others.

Jay-Jay Okocha

Nigerian football legend, Jay-Jay Okocha is one of the greatest football players from Africa.

He won 73 caps for the Nigeria national team between 1993 and 2006, scoring 14 goals, and was a member of three FIFA World Cup squads.

To date, he is still respected and appreciated by football lovers around the world for his unique style of play before retirement.

Okocha born in Enugu, Enugu State began playing football on the streets just like many other football stars, usually with a makeshift hall

He played across multiple leagues, starting his career at Enugu Rangers in 1990 in the Nigerian Professional Football League before moving to Borussia Neunkirchen in Germany. Basically, he played with Borussia Neunkirchen from 1990 to 1992; Eintracht Frankfurt from 1996 to 1996; Paris Company Frankfurt from 1996; Paris Saint-Germain from 1998 to 2002; Bolton Wanderers from 2002 to 2006; Qatar SC from 2006 to 2007 and Hull City from 2007 to 2008.

To honour him, a stadium in Ogwashi-Uku, Aniocha South, Nigeria was renamed after Okocha in June 2008. The Jay Jay Okocha Stadium is currently the home stadium of Delta Force F.C.

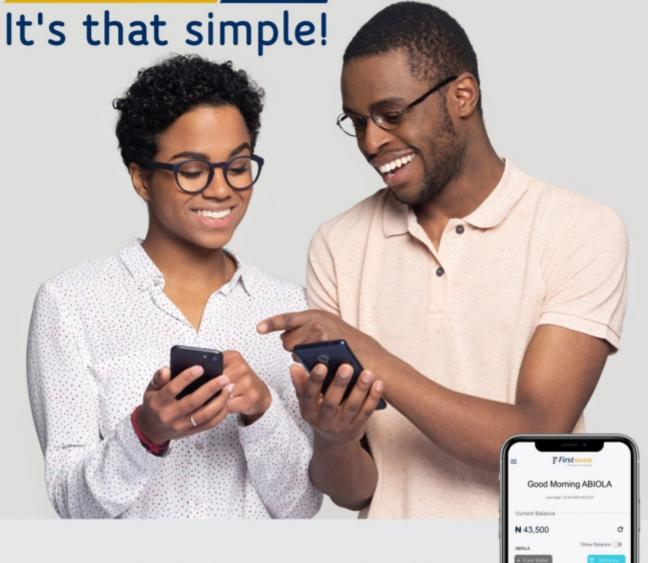
Brands such as BetKing, Coca-Cola, Nike, Heineken, Xiaomi, Glo, Bajaj, '33' Export Lager Beer, Bullet Energy Drink, New Age Chargers, Showmax, kwik, and others have him as their brand ambassador.

Recently, Showmax premiered its first Original animated series, 'Jay Jay: The Chosen One' telling the story of the legend.





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