

...NOT IN THISDAY STYLE? THEN YOU'RE NOT IN STYLE

THIS DAY

# Style

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2025



**ASUQUO  
EKPENYONG**  
SERVICE, LEGACY, AND IMPACT



*Thank you*

From the first stride to the finish line, you proved that every step counts.

The **10th edition of the Access Bank Lagos City Marathon** was a celebration of endurance, spirit, and unforgettable moments, all made possible by you.

We can't wait to do it all over again next time.

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COVER NOTE



At just 38, Distinguished Senator Asuquo Ekpenyong is proving that youth is no barrier to impact. A man of sharp intellect, refined style, and unshakable determination, he has seamlessly navigated the worlds of business, governance, and public service—emerging as one of Nigeria’s most promising political figures.



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EDITOR'S LETTER



EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Skin Deep ?

I hope your Valentine's Day was everything you wanted it to be. I also hope it was filled with love—the real kind. Not just the grand gestures, the fancy dinners, or the shiny gifts (though, let's be honest, we love those too), but the kind of love that is kind, that is thoughtful, that extends beyond romantic relationships and into the way we treat people every single day. Because, in a world as chaotic as ours, love should never be confined to one day or one kind of relationship. And most importantly, love should never be conditional. As a matter of fact, choosing love is one of the most powerful things we can do.

That brings me to something else we need to talk about: how love—self-love, specifically—is under constant attack by the beauty standards we've been force-fed for far too long. Yup. It's all in the article Popular Beauty Standards You Shouldn't Care About (And Why You'll Be Happier for It)."

If you ask me, beauty standards have always been one of society's worst tricks—a con game designed to make us feel inadequate so that we spend our time (and money) chasing an impossible ideal. Take, for example, the deeply problematic and exhausting idea that fair skin equals beauty and dark skin—especially Black and brown skin—should be lightened, brightened, or, in some cases, erased altogether.

In general, beauty standards are built into the fabric of our societies and embedded in our consciousness. They dictate the images we see in magazines, the filters that dominate social media, the products that fly off shelves, and even the way we critique ourselves in the mirror. And the consequences are as damaging as they are far-reaching—anxiety, depression, body dysmorphia, eating disorders, self-harm, and self-esteem issues that take years, if not a lifetime, to undo.

It is terrible. And honestly, even the phrase "beauty standards" sets me off. How do you take something as immeasurable, fluid, and personal as beauty into a rigid little box labelled "standard"? Why? For what? To serve whom? Who decided these rules? And why have we, for so long, allowed ourselves to be ruled by them?

The good news is society is waking up. More people are seeing through the illusion. The idea that one body type, skin tone, hair texture, and look are superior to another is slowly losing its power, and we should all be celebrating that. Because beauty, real beauty, is found in individuality. In our differences. In the way we carry ourselves, how we light up when we're happy, and how we take up space in the world. Society has no right to dictate that for us, and it's time we stopped letting it.

So, if you've ever felt like you weren't enough because of some arbitrary, ever-changing beauty rule, let this be your reminder: you were always enough. You are enough. And this month of love is the perfect time to show yourself a little extra care, to reject the narratives that make you feel less than, and to redefine beauty on your terms.

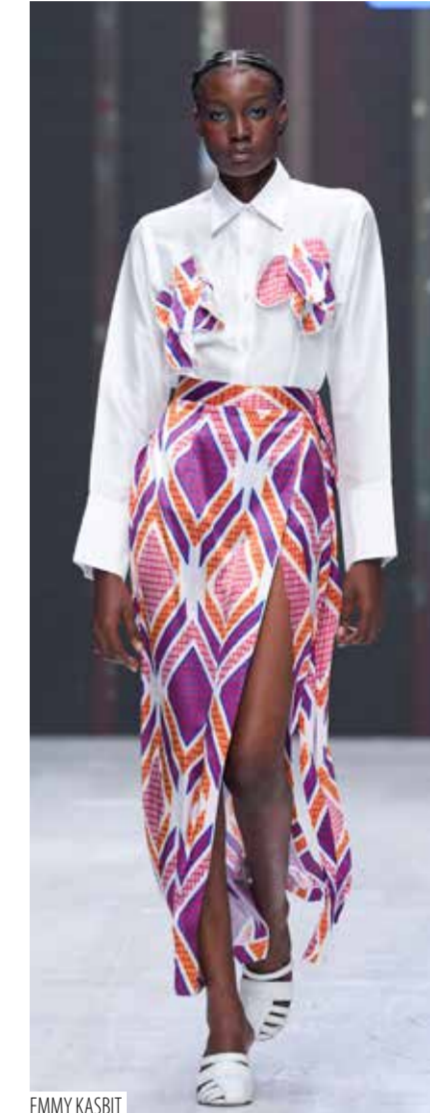
How's your February going so far? Whatever you've got planned for the rest of the month, make sure to include moments of joy, rest, and appreciation for the person you are—just as you are—wishing you a beautiful, love-filled week ahead!

Love,  
*Konye*

HOW TO SHOP MORE SUSTAINABLY WITHOUT COMPROMISING ON STYLE

Once upon a time, the idea of sustainable fashion conjured up images of drab, shapeless clothes made from itchy fabrics that felt more like a sacrifice than a style statement. Fast forward to today, and sustainability has had a major glow-up. From high-end designers to fast-fashion brands making conscious changes, looking good while doing good is now more accessible than ever. But let's be real—shopping sustainably isn't always easy. How do you balance ethics with aesthetics? Can you still have a wardrobe that turns heads without turning a blind eye to environmental impact?

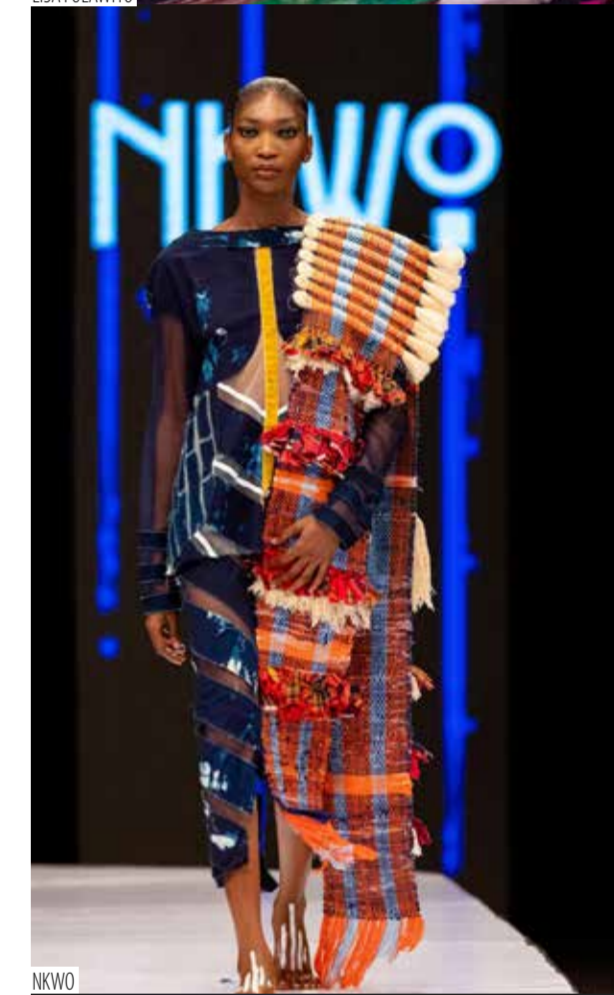
Yes, you can. Shopping sustainably doesn't mean giving up on style. It's about making smarter choices that let you express your personality while keeping the planet in mind. Here's how to make your closet more eco-friendly without compromising your fashion game.



EMMY KASBIT



LISA FOLAWIYO



NKWO



ADURE KNIT DRESS

1. Shop Quality Over Quantity (Yes, Even in a Sale)

We've all been there—the thrill of a sale, the rush of snagging something for a fraction of the price, and then the inevitable realisation that it was never really your style. Instead of impulse-buying fast-fashion pieces that will fall apart after a few wears, invest in quality items that stand the test of time. Well-made pieces not only look better but last longer, reducing the need for constant replacements.

2. Embrace Pre-Loved and Vintage Finds

Secondhand shopping is no longer just for thrift-store aficionados—it's a full-on movement. Whether you're hunting for a classic Chanel bag or a funky 90s Versace dress, shopping secondhand helps reduce waste and gives fashion pieces a second life. And let's be honest, there's nothing more satisfying than scoring a one-of-a-kind vintage find that nobody else has. That's fashion gold.

3. Support Sustainable and Ethical Brands

Many fashion brands now prioritise sustainability, using eco-friendly materials, ethical labour practices, and innovative recycling techniques. The trick is to look beyond the greenwashing (when brands make misleading claims about their sustainability efforts) and do some research.

4. Master the Art of Upcycling

Have a dress that doesn't fit quite right or a pair of jeans that have seen better days? Instead of tossing them, get creative. A good tailor can turn an ill-fitting dress into a chic two-piece set, and a little DIY magic (think iron-on patches, embroidery, or distressing) can breathe new life into old denim.

5. Build a Capsule Wardrobe

A capsule wardrobe is all about curating a small, versatile collection of high-quality pieces that mix and match effortlessly. Think classic silhouettes and neutral tones with a few statement pieces and items that transition seamlessly from season to season.

Not only does this make dressing easier (because, let's face it, decision fatigue is real), but it also reduces the urge to constantly buy new things. More outfits, less waste—it's the ultimate style hack.

6. Be Mindful of Trends

Trends come and go, but personal style is forever. Instead of chasing every micro-trend (looking at you, micro-mini skirts and extreme cutouts), focus on building a wardrobe that reflects your unique aesthetic. Invest in pieces that you truly love and can see yourself wearing for years rather than fleeting trends that will be out of fashion by next season.



# HOW SOCIAL MEDIA HAS REVOLUTIONISED THE WAY WE SHOP

In just over a decade, platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Pinterest have turned our smartphones into digital storefronts and wardrobes into curated virtual influence displays.

By **Konye Chelsea Nwabogor**

There was a time when shopping was a deliberate, sometimes ceremonial, activity. We'd browse racks in bustling markets or wander through boutique-lined streets. Today, that slow-paced, tactile experience has been replaced by a frenzy of instant gratification fueled by the ever-scrolling world of social media.

Social media has dramatically reshaped our relationship with fashion. Where we once relied on glossy magazine spreads and runway shows to dictate trends, we now turn to influencers, viral videos, and hashtagged posts. A single swipe can introduce us to a thousand outfit ideas, a million brands, and countless opinions on what's "in" or "out." The result? An entirely new way of engaging with style, driven less by designers and more by the people we follow from our living rooms. Our closets have become living mood boards. Social media has created a

space where personal style feels both personal and performative. Platforms like Instagram encourage us to share our outfits of the day (#OOTD), layering a sense of accountability into what we wear. Who hasn't wondered, "Did I already post this dress?" before stepping out? The pressure to showcase fresh, on-trend looks has given rise to the phenomenon of "micro-trends" — fleeting fads that dominate feeds for weeks before vanishing into obscurity. And it's not just trends; it's how we shop for them. Social media has blurred the lines between inspiration

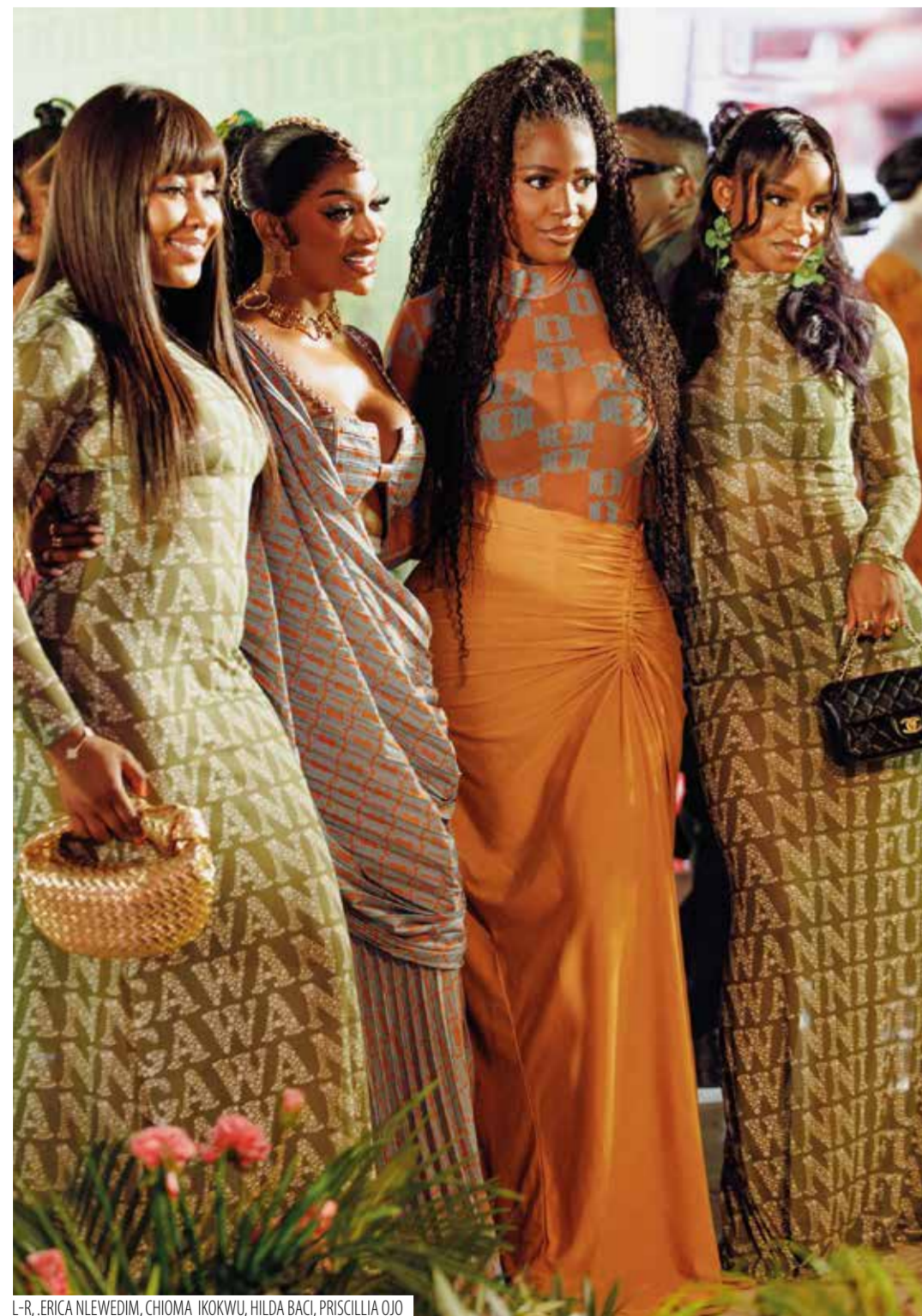


LALA AKINDOU

and purchase. See a dress you like in a video? There's a good chance you can tap a link and buy it without even leaving the app. TikTok's "Shop Now" button and Instagram's shoppable tags have turned casual scrolling into compulsive spending. That impulsive purchase, driven by a quick dopamine hit, often arrives on your doorstep days later, thanks to lightning-fast delivery options. What once required planning and patience now takes mere seconds — and a debit card. The democratisation of fashion is perhaps one of the most significant shifts. Social media has dismantled traditional gatekeeping in the industry, giving smaller brands, indie designers, and even hobbyists a global stage. Viral moments can catapult unknown brands into overnight sensations, as seen with upcoming fashion brands like Kai Collective, Hertunba and Desiree Iyama. In this space, everyone has a chance to shine, and fashion is no longer dictated solely by elite houses or glossy magazines. But the influence of social media isn't without its shadows. The quest for the

perfect feed has spawned a culture of overconsumption. Fast fashion giants thrive in this ecosystem, churning out low-cost replicas of viral looks at an alarming pace. We buy more than ever but wear our clothes less. A dress might make it to your feed twice before it feels outdated. This cycle of excess feeds into environmental concerns, with landfills overflowing with barely worn garments and carbon footprints ballooning from constant shipping. Despite its flaws, social media has also sparked important conversations about sustainability and ethics in fashion. Consumers are more informed than ever, with accounts and creators shedding light on the hidden costs of our clothing — from exploitative labour practices to the environmental impact of cheap materials. This growing awareness has given rise to the resurgence of thrifting and upcycling, both of which have found their champions online. Beyond sustainability, social media has also challenged narrow

definitions of beauty and style. The curated perfection of early Instagram has been replaced by more diverse, inclusive representations of fashion. Creators of all sizes, ages, and backgrounds share their takes on trends, reminding us that style is for everyone. We now see hijab tutorials alongside festival outfits and plus-size influencers modelling the same looks as their smaller-sized counterparts. This broadening of representation feels like a win, even as the algorithm continues to push certain aesthetics to the forefront. At its core, social media has transformed fashion into a dynamic, participatory experience. It's no longer just about what we wear but how we wear it, share it, and interact with it. Fashion has become a conversation, a collaboration between creators, brands, and consumers. Our closets are no longer static repositories of clothes; they're extensions of our digital selves, curated for likes and comments as much as for comfort or utility.



L-R, ERICA NLEWEDIM, CHIOMA IKOKWU, HILDA BACI, PRISCILLIA OJO



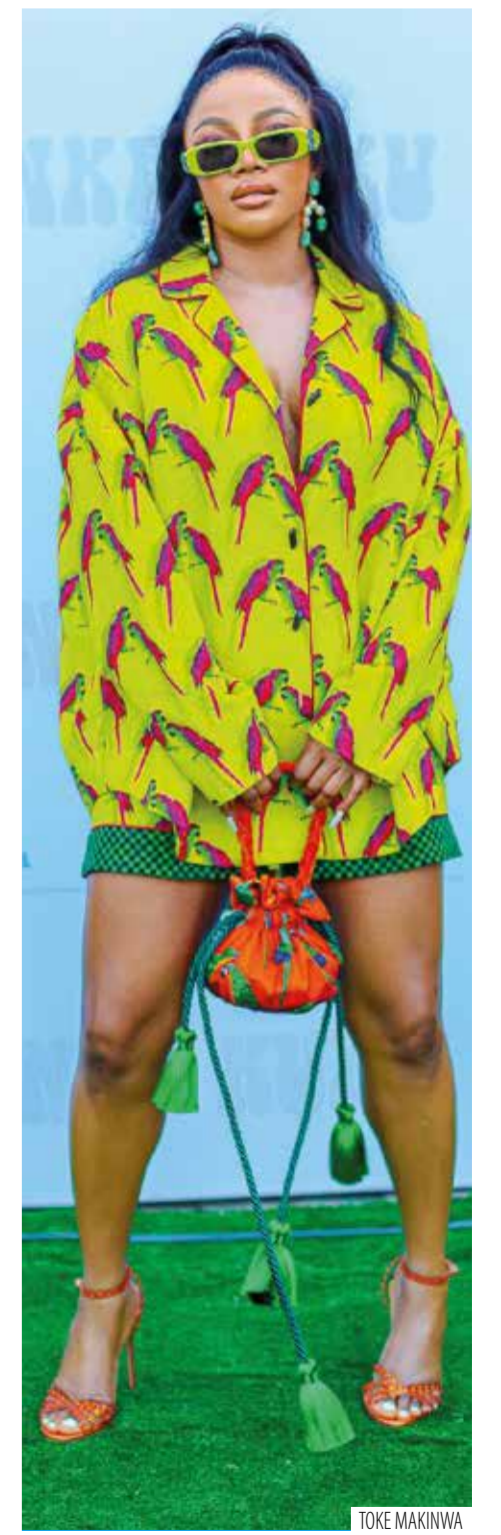
NICOLE CHIKWE



OSAS IGHODARO



OZINNA ANUMUDU



TOKE MAKINWA

# THE BIG W WITH MENA IMASEKHA

## WHY WOMEN NEED MONEY

In the spirit of the New Year, a time for reflection and prioritising what matters, I think it's apt to discuss the very salient topic of why women need money. More specifically, the necessity for increased funding for women-led businesses and why we need to close the gender wealth gap. As we all know, cash is king.

Over the past 100 years, women have made tremendous progress. Despite these advancements, there is still an astonishing 105 trillion-dollar wealth gap between women and men (Oxfam, 2024). At the current rate of progress, this gap will take 135.6 years to close (WEF 2021). I don't know about you, but I frankly can't wait that long.

Firstly, why the disparity? And secondly, what are the ramifications and how can we course correct? "Catch 22", a satirical war novel by Joseph Heller, is also the term given to a paradoxical set of circumstances from which it is difficult to escape. Women need money to make money. Without sufficient capital, they cannot scale their businesses adequately. Without businesses and the funds to scale those businesses, women cannot generate the wealth they need to advance economically, perpetuating an inequality hindering economic and societal growth. I hope you can see the conundrum.

Let us tackle the pink elephant in the room: the staggering wealth gap of US\$105 trillion. This significant disparity stems from several factors, including income inequality, career interruptions due to childbirth, most primary carers being women, limited access to financial resources, reduced investment activity and occupational segregation. Yes, women now have greater opportunities to work and achieve economic independence, but many systemic inequalities often hamper this progress.

One way to rapidly bridge this gap is to ensure that women-led businesses receive adequate funding. Africa has a vibrant community of women entrepreneurs, with 1 in 4 women in sub-Saharan Africa being entrepreneurs. If women-led businesses were to receive adequate funding, it would significantly boost Africa's economic development and, quite honestly, transform our continent. Entrepreneurship is a powerful catalyst for economic development. Not only does it fuel economic growth and innovation,



it also creates jobs and provides solutions to some of the more pressing challenges humanity faces, such as climate change, financial inclusion, and healthcare to the world's poorest and most vulnerable populations.

In 2023, African women-led start-ups received a mere 2% of total venture capitalist funding. In 2024, this was 1%. Male-led ventures received 98% of funding (Africa: The Big Deal, 2025), marking the lowest share of funding received by female founders to date. James Boorman of the Lioness Africa, a 1.8 million+ community of women entrepreneurs in Africa, highlighted this disparity in response to my previous article, *Where Are the Women?*, referencing the 2022 Pitchbook data that shows only 2% of VC and PE funding goes to women-founded businesses. Boorman also noted that high collateral requirements across Africa disproportionately affect women due to historical barriers in land ownership and inheritance, barriers that have also contributed to the wealth gap.

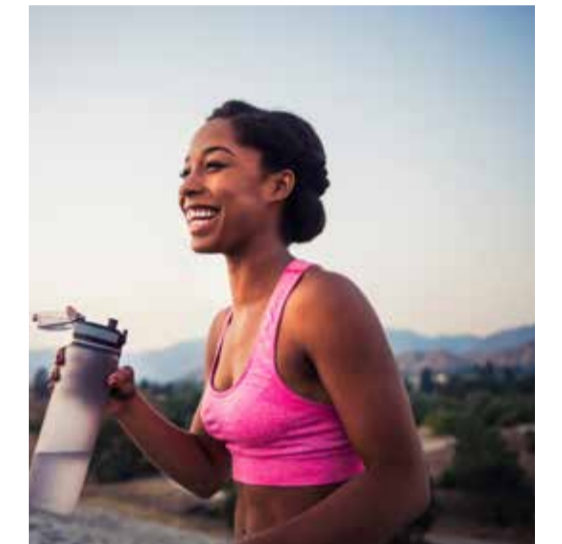
Women-led businesses remain critically stunted due to inadequate funding and access to capital. The African Development Bank estimates a \$42 billion financing gap for African women entrepreneurs, which explains why, although Africa has produced nine unicorns since 2019, none are solely founded by women. Catch 22: women need money to make money. Globally, this funding inequality isn't unique to Africa. In 2023, UK male-led businesses received 6.2 times more funding than female-led ones. In the U.S., women own 39.1% of businesses (Wells Fargo, 2024) yet receive just 2% of VC funding. Interestingly, when a female-owned company includes a male co-founder, the percentage of VC funds increases, as male investors tend to favour male-led companies.

Although the venture capital ecosystem has some way to go with gender equity, there has been a rise in women-led venture funds and angel investor networks globally. African women-led funds like Ajim, Janngo, Aruwa, and Alitheia Capital

work to close this gap by supporting women-led businesses. For instance, 56% of Janngo's, 73% of Alitheia's IDF and 77% of Aruwa's portfolios are women-owned/led ventures. The effects of gender lens funds are wide-reaching: more jobs for women, increased economic power for women, and more women in leadership both at the board level and management level. For example, Alitheia's website states the traction generated through its portfolio has created over six million jobs for women and access to essential services for 51 million women and girls.

When speaking with female entrepreneurs, a recurring issue often cited is the lack of funding. Akudo Iheakanwa, founder of Shekudo, a women's shoes, bags and accessories brand proudly showcasing a range of Nigerian craftsmanship, highlighted this challenge during my recent interview with her on Her Journal. Despite her brand achieving a 10,000% return on its initial investment and attracting thousands of global customers, she noted attracting funding is difficult for women-owned brands even when, like her, they have traction. She also spoke about the significance of funding, that without investment and structured support, many businesses face significant challenges in meeting growth milestones, leaving them struggling to scale effectively, an issue Shekudo is grappling with, a model that is neither sustainable nor conducive to long-term success.

The need for greater financial support for women is evident. By channelling adequate capital to women-owned businesses, we ignite innovation, empower communities, and foster a more sustainable future. Funding women-owned businesses also means economic empowerment for women, which means more financial independence, better education and career advancement, improved societal well-being, bigger businesses, more investments, particularly in women-led businesses, retirement security, and, of course, closing the gender wealth gap.



## DO YOU HAVE A SELF-CARE CALENDAR?

### Here's Why You Need One and How to Create It

If you had to list out your daily responsibilities, chances are you'd have a detailed schedule packed with work deadlines, meetings, errands, social obligations, and maybe even a gym session squeezed in between. But where does self-care fit in?

For many people, self-care is an afterthought, something they do only when they're completely burned out. Yet, just like any other important aspect of life, self-care deserves its own dedicated schedule. That's where a self-care calendar comes in.

A self-care calendar is a structured way to ensure you're consistently nurturing your body, mind, and soul—not just when things feel overwhelming. It's like an appointment with yourself, ensuring that you still have time for rest, joy, and personal growth amidst life's chaos.



#### Why You Need a Self-Care Calendar

Nigeria is a country that never slows down. Whether you're navigating Lagos traffic, dealing with NEPA wahala, or balancing multiple hustles, life can be overwhelming. The constant pressure to be productive leaves little room for rest, making burnout almost inevitable.

A self-care calendar helps you:

- Prioritise your well-being without feeling selfish.
- Create structure around rest and relaxation.
- Reduce stress and prevent burnout.
- Feel more in control of your life.

#### How to Build Your Own Self-Care Calendar

Your self-care calendar should be as unique as you are, reflecting your needs, lifestyle, and schedule. Below is an adaptable guide with self-care activities spread across different categories:

#### Beauty & Grooming

Daily: Hydrate, apply SPF and follow a simple skincare routine.

Weekly: Give yourself a DIY facial or deep condition your hair (especially important for natural hair in the Nigerian climate).

Monthly: Get a manicure, pedicure, or visit the salon for a fresh look.

#### Relaxation & Mental Health

Daily: 10 minutes of meditation, journaling, or simply sitting in silence.

Weekly: Digital detox—spend a few hours without your phone, especially on Sundays.

Monthly: Take a weekend break from stress, even if it's a staycation.

#### Fitness & Health

Daily: Stretch for 5 minutes every morning or take a short walk.

Weekly: Commit to at least 3-4 workout sessions (gym, yoga, or dance).

Monthly: Get a massage or visit a chiropractor if needed.

#### Fun & Social Activities

Daily: Laugh—watch a funny video or talk to a friend.

Weekly: Meet up with a friend or go on a solo date.

Monthly: Attend an event, concert, or cultural activity.

#### Making It Work for You

One of the easiest ways to stick to a self-care calendar is to integrate it into your existing schedule. For instance, if you're already at the salon every two weeks, add an extra 15 minutes for a scalp massage. If you usually unwind with Netflix, swap one episode for a quick workout or a relaxing bath.

Also, be flexible. Some weeks might be busier than others, and that's okay. The goal is not to make self-care another rigid to-do list but to cultivate a lifestyle that prioritises your well-being.



**1. Art with Attitude:** There's something undeniably captivating about walking into a room and being greeted by a piece of art that makes you pause and reflect. Whether it's a large-scale painting, a dynamic sculpture, or a vintage poster, art has the power to set a mood. Consider a vibrant abstract painting that pulls all the colours of the room into one focal explosion.



**2. Bold Lighting Fixtures:** Lighting can make or break the ambiance of a room. A dramatic chandelier or a quirky sculptural lamp not only illuminates spaces but also serves as a striking centerpiece. These are not just light sources; they're sculptural artworks that enrich your living space.



**3. Eclectic Furniture:** Furniture that tells a story can define a room. A vintage leather armchair, a modernist coffee table, or an ornate bookshelf can dramatically shift the visual dynamics of a space. These pieces don't just fill a spot; they create an ambiance and offer a visual break from the norm.



**4. Textural Tales:** Textures have a profound impact on the feel of a room. A shaggy rug, a nubby linen sofa, or velvet curtains add layers of tactile beauty that enhance the room's character. These elements invite touch and comfort, making the space more welcoming and lived in.

# STATEMENT PIECES THAT INSTANTLY ELEVATE ANY ROOM

When it comes to home decor, the magic often lies in the details. Specifically, those bold, eye-catching statement pieces that can truly transform a space from mundane to magnificent. Whether you're an interior design lover or a novice looking to spruce up your living quarters, integrating statement pieces into your decor can instantly elevate the aesthetic and vibe of any room. It's not just about size or colour; it's about impact. It's that splash of uniqueness that reflects your personal style and breathes life into a well-curated space.



**5. Mirrors and More:** Mirrors do more than just reflect; they amplify light, expand spaces, and can even serve as artful decor. A large, ornate mirror can anchor a room, while a cluster of smaller mirrors can add a playful element. Besides, mirrors can be strategically placed to reflect a beautiful view or an interesting piece of art, doubling the impact.



**6. Unexpected Elements:** Sometimes, the best statement pieces are those that defy expectations. A retro jukebox or telephone set in a minimalist space or a collection of hats on a wall can defy traditional decor rules and inject a sense of fun and whimsy into your home. These elements show off your unique style and make your space truly one of a kind.

A central image of a female runner in a black tank top and shorts, running forward. The background is a collage of newspaper text, including headlines like 'PTAs Set Yeakun', 'Hospital Going', and 'The...'. A thick, yellow ribbon graphic curves across the scene, passing behind the runner and the text.

# Thank you

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# ASUQUO EKPENYONG

## SERVICE, LEGACY, AND IMPACT

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Born on August 25, 1985, Senator Ekpenyong’s path to success has been nothing short of remarkable. From King’s College, Lagos, to earning a master’s degree with the only Distinction in his graduating class at the University of Reading, UK, his academic brilliance laid the foundation for his impressive career.

His entrepreneurial streak was evident early on when, upon returning to Nigeria in 2009, he founded Iquasu Limited, now the largest indigenous logistics provider in the South-South region. Yet, business alone wasn’t enough—his passion for knowledge-sharing saw him teaching Finance and Banking at the University of Calabar, where he inspired the next generation of leaders.

From steering the Tinapa Business and Leisure Resort to serving as Cross River State’s longest-serving Commissioner for Finance, Ekpenyong’s ability to balance governance, business, and public service is nothing short of masterful. Now, as the youngest Senator in the 10th National Assembly, he’s making waves as Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), driving conversations and policies that shape the future of the region.

This year, his stellar contributions were further recognised when he received the Young Global Leader of the Year award from THISDAY Newspapers, solidifying his place as a transformative force in leadership and governance.

In this exclusive interview with **Funke Babs-Kufeji**, Senator Asuquo Ekpenyong opens up about his journey into politics, his vision for the Niger Delta, and how his distinctive approach to leadership—and fashion—sets him apart.

**Congratulations on being awarded the Young Global Leader of the Year by THISDAY. What does this recognition mean to you personally and professionally?**

It’s always a great feeling to be recognised for all the hard work and sacrifices that have been made over the years. It’s especially surreal that the recognition is from an organisation such as Thisday. It was such a special feeling to be in the company of my fellow recipients, men and women whom I greatly respect. A truly fabulous evening made even more special with the presence of my lovely wife, Netanela, who has always been a pillar of strength. But there is also an increased sense of responsibility now that I realise the work my team and I have been doing is being recognised globally. It’s a daunting awareness, but we must strive to do more.

**You are now part of an elite group of young global leaders. What does it mean to you to be in this community, and how do you plan to engage with other global leaders to bring positive change?**

From my time as Commissioner for Finance in

Cross River State, and even more so in the Nigerian Senate, I have been privileged to be part of global platforms that enable me to express views close to my heart. The inter-parliamentary union, the ECOWAS Commission, and the United Nations annual parliamentary hearing are just some of the platforms that have enabled me to express my views on issues close to my heart, such as social development, the environment, achieving lasting peace in the Middle East, and policy reforms to boost economic growth in Nigeria. Being a part of this elite group of young leaders brought together by Thisday will enable me to broaden my horizon even further as my fellow recipients are specialists in diverse fields such as Energy, Power, Advertising, Music, Information Technology, and a lot more. I am very excited about the prospects that lie ahead.

**Your rise to prominence in Nigerian politics has been remarkable. What motivated you to pursue a career in public service?**

Upon graduating from the University of Reading in the United Kingdom with a Bachelor’s Degree in Economics and a Master’s Degree in International Banking and Financial Services, I knew all I wanted





to do was return back to Nigeria and deploy this knowledge for social development. I founded Iquasu Limited, which today has become the biggest indigenous logistics services provider in the South-South region of Nigeria. I have also been a lecturer in the Faculty of Management Sciences at the University of Calabar. I have served as the managing director of the CBN-licensed Chamley Bureau De Change Limited, finance director of Pearland Energy Limited, and member of the board of directors of Ekondo Microfinance Bank Limited. Having already gained extensive experience in the private sector, I confidently embraced the challenge of public service to broaden my expertise and experience.

**Having studied Economics and International Banking, how did you transition from a finance background into the world of politics, and what were some of the challenges you faced?**

My background in the private sector provided me with a strong foundation in finance and management. Recognising this expertise, His Excellency Prof Ben Ayade, the then Governor of Cross River State, appointed me as the Commissioner for Finance, a position I held for over seven years. One of the most daunting challenges I encountered was the stark contrast in decision-making processes between the private sector and government. In the private sector, efficiency and profit drive rapid decision-making when allocating resources, whereas in government, resource allocation often takes longer due to their far-reaching impact on people's lives and factors that go well beyond efficiency. In my view, public service carries a much greater burden of responsibility, as every policy choice directly affects communities and their well-being.

**From your experience in public service, what are some of the challenges you've faced as a young leader, and how have you overcome them?**

In addition to slow decision-making, another significant challenge in government is resistance to change. The entrenched culture of "this is how we've always done things" can make it difficult to introduce new ideas or reforms. Young leaders, in particular, often face scepticism about their ability to lead. Additionally, there is a widespread reluctance in public service to embrace technological advancements. Overcoming these challenges requires a strategic approach, along with patience, resilience, and unwavering dedication. Most importantly, it takes hard work to demonstrate competence and to earn the trust of colleagues. With persistence and the right approach, it is possible to overcome doubts and gradually win people over.

**You've held multiple influential roles, from Commissioner for Finance to Chairman of the NDDC Committee. How has each of these experiences shaped your leadership style?**

Each role comes with its unique challenges. In the executive branch, it is more about implementation, while the legislature focuses on representation, oversight, and law-making. Each has its unique leadership style. Decisions in the executive can be implemented in a more individualistic style, while in the legislature, it requires more debate and consensus building. I believe both experiences have made me more rounded from a personal and professional perspective.

**Your leadership has been widely regarded for its innovation in governance. Can you share some of the key projects or initiatives you're most proud of in your political career?**

The fundamental basis for which I operate is data-driven decision-making. Every decision I make, and implement must have a scientific basis for each action. One of my prouder moments was winning the Senatorial elections. I must be clear that I hold this position in trust and on behalf of the people of the southern senatorial district of Cross River State. But I must also admit that running a campaign that stuck 100% to the issues and winning the trust and confidence of the electorate of the Southern District against perhaps very formidable and entrenched political forces remains a humbling moment of my life. The opportunity to directly and positively impact the development of our people at this material time is a feat I am proud of.

**With Nigeria facing complex challenges, what are the most pressing issues you believe need immediate attention, and how are you working toward addressing them?**

Undoubtedly, tackling inflation and driving economic growth are among the most pressing challenges we face. I am working closely

with the Governor of Cross River State, His Excellency Senator Basse Edet Otu, the President of the Senate, His Excellency Senator Godswill Akpabio, and my esteemed colleagues in the Senate. Guided by the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Tinubu, we are committed to implementing policies and legislative frameworks that will provide much-needed relief to our people. While early signs of progress are emerging, there is still a great deal of work to be done to achieve lasting economic stability and prosperity.

**As the youngest senator in the 10th National Assembly, what unique perspective do you bring to the Nigerian political landscape?**

I believe I bring the energy and perspective of youth, the willingness to embrace new technology, and the realisation that every decision must be made from the lens of sustainability if we are to preserve our planet for future generations.

**You've made a significant impact as the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Niger Delta Development Commission. What reforms or initiatives are you most passionate about for the region?**

As a member of the Senate Committee on the NDDC, my role is to provide effective and innovative oversight, with a primary focus on addressing the longstanding issues of abandoned projects and systemic inefficiencies. I am deeply committed to infrastructure development in the Niger Delta, as our region has endured the consequences of poor infrastructure and environmental degradation for far too long. Through my oversight responsibilities, I strive to ensure that all programs and projects are not only fit for purpose but also fully implemented. My goal is to drive 100% execution and accountability, leaving a legacy of tangible progress. Fortunately, the current board and management share this vision, creating a strong foundation for meaningful change. The atmosphere of division and disagreement that previously existed in the commission has been completely eradicated, and this administration has entrenched a culture of harmony over the past 18 months. As we know, peace is a panacea for development, and this peace must first be present within the commission before it cascades into the region as a whole.

**You've been deeply involved in finance, including as Commissioner for Finance. How do you envision transforming Nigeria's economic policies to better serve its citizens?**

We must become a more productive economy. We must produce more locally, export more products, import less, and reduce our debt burden. We must look inward and rely less on foreign assistance and instead provide a climate for foreign investment in our country. We must empower our young entrepreneurs, especially those in tech, and create more jobs for our growing youth population, who must be repositioned to be assets and not liabilities to society. We have all the tools and ingredients to achieve these. All we need is the sincerity of purpose and visionary leadership.

**The Young Global Leader award recognises both your past achievements and future potential. What are your key goals for the next five years, both in your political career and in your broader contributions to society?**

I deeply enjoy the work I am doing in the Senate and would welcome the opportunity to continue serving. However, if I am to return, I must earn the trust and confidence of the people of my Senatorial District, proving that I am the best person to continue to represent them in the Red Chamber. My service is a privilege granted by my constituents, and they will determine my future. My commitment remains unwavering—to make a meaningful impact and contribute to a better world, starting with the Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State.

**Can you share any personal style icons or inspirations that influence the way you present yourself publicly?**

Nelson Mandela for leadership and love of country. Barrack Obama for his use of technology for youth engagement and the creation of a data-driven political movement. His Excellency Godswill Akpabio for his focus on infrastructure during his time in office as Governor of Akwa Ibom State, and Governor Basse Otu for his focus on the people and representation during his time in both the Senate and House of Representatives.

# ARE MICRO-MINI LUXURY BAGS USEFUL OR USELESS?

In recent years, ultra-compact bags have shifted from a quirky trend to a full-blown obsession. Brands like Balenciaga, Jacquemus, and Fendi have launched bags that seem almost absurdly small. Some are even tinier than your typical wallet, barely fitting a lipstick or a credit card. These bags are celebrated for blending luxury with a playful vibe, letting fashion enthusiasts enjoy high-end accessories while having fun with their size. But aside from their cute appearance, do they actually serve a purpose, or are they just trendy little eye candies?



At their best, micro-mini bags serve as high-fashion statement pieces. They are the ultimate in "less is more" design: sleek, bold, and often adorned with luxurious details like premium leathers, fine stitching, and signature logos. The allure lies in their rarity — when you wear one of these bags, you're essentially showcasing your ability to pull off the impossible. They're an emblem of exclusivity, made even more desirable because they defy the conventional expectations of a "useful" bag. For fashion enthusiasts and influencers, these bags are often more about creating a memorable look than serving a practical function. They elevate an outfit, adding a unique twist that captures attention. Just think of them as the modern equivalent of the statement necklace — only this time, it's a bag so small it almost feels like an art object.

Let's face it: When it comes to actually carrying things, micro-mini bags are more style than substance. With their petite dimensions, these bags can hold only the bare essentials — maybe a lip balm, a few bills, and a tiny phone. Forget about your car keys, sunglasses, or even a full-sized wallet. If you're someone who needs to carry more than just your phone and a credit card, then these bags could quickly become frustrating. For many, these bags raise a fundamental question: If I can't fit anything substantial inside, is it still worth the price? Micro-mini bags often carry hefty price tags, with some high-end versions costing millions of naira. Given the minimal utility, it can be hard to justify the splurge, especially when there are plenty of functional bags out there that combine style with real-world practicality.

Additionally, the micro-mini trend risks alienating those who rely on their bags to be more than mere accessories. For people who carry medication, baby items, or other essential items, these bags simply don't make the cut. It's an accessory designed for a very specific lifestyle — one that prioritizes aesthetics over function. The micro-mini bag is undeniably a statement piece. For some, it represents the peak of high fashion — a playful, whimsical, and exclusive accessory that adds an element of fun to any outfit. For others, it may seem like a glorified, overpriced toy that offers little in the way of functionality. Whether they are useful or useless depends on your priorities as a consumer.

If you're seeking an ultra-practical, everyday bag, micro-minis might not be for you. But if you're after a fun, collectible piece that stands as a testament to your fashion-forward mindset, the micro-mini could be just what you need. They may be small, but they pack a powerful punch in the world of luxury accessories.

Useful or Useless? The answer isn't so simple. Micro-mini luxury bags may be impractical for those who need a truly functional bag, but they're undeniably valuable as fashion statements, collector's items, and pieces of artistic expression. In the world of fashion, where the rules are often bent and twisted to create bold new ideas, the micro-mini bag is anything but useless — it's just a different kind of useful. Whether you love them or loathe them, there's no denying that these tiny bags are making a big impact on the fashion world.

# WHAT DETTY DECEMBER MEANS FOR NIGERIAN TOURISM AND THE NIGERIAN ECONOMY

In a year marked by economic turbulence, a depreciated naira, and record inflation, Detty December 2024 emerged not just as a cultural celebration but as a testament to the resilience of the Nigerian spirit and its economy.



ADENIKE ADELEKE AND IDIA AISIEN



AISHA ACHIMUGU, FLORENCE ITA GIWA, RITA DOMINIC



GENOVEA UMEH, ELOZONAM OGBOLU & JEMIMA OSUNDE



SANCHAN ELEGUSHI AND CHIDERA UDEH



DERIN ODUGBESAN

By Konye Chelsea Nwabogor

There's something magical about December in Nigeria. The air carries a kind of energy that feels almost electric, a blend of reunion, celebration, and uninhibited indulgence. This annual phenomenon, marked by back-to-back concerts, festivals, private parties, and a flurry of tourism activities, has in the past few years

reinforced Nigeria's position as a prime destination for both local and international revelers. 2024 was no exception. For many Nigerians earning in naira, international travel was less feasible due to the unfavourable exchange rate. But why travel when the world seems to converge on your doorstep? Lagos, Abuja, and even less obvious destinations in other parts of the country became melting pots of cultures, with returning diaspora Nigerians bringing fresh perspectives and deep wallets. Their presence wasn't just felt in the clubs or at the beach parties; it rippled through the economy. A London-based Nigerian professional who returned for the first time in five years described the experience as transformative. "I was shocked by how much there was to

do, how much talent is here," she shared. "I spent more here in two weeks than I would have in a month abroad. And I don't regret a single penny." For Nigerians abroad, the naira's decline means their pounds, dollars, or euros stretch further, creating an environment where spending is encouraged, even celebrated. Short-let apartments and hotels were fully booked weeks in advance, while airlines reported a significant surge in bookings on flights bound for Nigeria. Hospitality services flourished; restaurants and bars overflowed with patrons eager to indulge. Corporate Nigeria also took centre stage in the festivities. Banks, telecom giants, and multinational companies hosted end-of-year parties that ranged from grand

soirées to intimate gatherings. These events, often featuring A-list entertainers, served as celebrations and platforms for showcasing brand power and building corporate goodwill. In an economy where many are tightening their belts, these events provided temporary relief and moments of joy, reinforcing the importance of collective celebration in difficult times. For many billionaires and celebrities, December also became a stage for showcasing their wealth and influence. Lavish private gigs and exclusive yacht parties dotted Lagos' coastline, creating an aspirational allure that added to the city's vibrancy. Unverified statistics state that the December season saw an estimated 20% increase in domestic tourism compared to the previous year.

At this point, it is safe to say Detty December's significance goes beyond immediate economic gains. It's a cultural phenomenon that is reshaping Nigeria's global narrative. While we usually wrestle with stereotypes and negative perceptions, December offers an alternative story for Nigeria—one of vibrancy, creativity, and resilience. International guests leave with stories of unforgettable concerts, warm hospitality, and a Nigeria they never expected. These experiences ripple out, shaping perceptions and opening doors for future tourism and investment. The festive season also underscores the potential of Nigeria's creative economy. From music and film to fashion and art, the creative industries are among the nation's most successful exports. They are

also deeply interconnected with tourism. "When people come to Nigeria, they're not just coming for concerts," said an entertainment executive. "They're coming for the food, the culture, the people. This is why we need to invest in infrastructure and policy frameworks that will make it easier for tourists to explore and enjoy all that Nigeria has to offer." But for all its success, Detty December also highlighted some of the challenges facing Nigeria's tourism sector. Infrastructure remains a significant hurdle, with poor roads, unreliable electricity, and limited public transportation options dampening the experience for some visitors. Security concerns, though largely managed during the festivities, continue to cast a shadow on Nigeria's tourism potential. "We've

made progress, but there's still work to be done," admitted a government representative. "We need to ensure that tourists feel safe and supported at every step of their journey." Despite these challenges, the potential is undeniable. Detty December is a reminder that Nigeria has what it takes to become a global tourism hub. The music, the culture, the food—it's all here. What's needed is a concerted effort to build on the momentum, which brings us to the question of sustainability. How does Nigeria ensure that Detty December isn't just a flash in the pan but a year-round driver of economic growth? Some experts argue that the government must capitalise on this momentum by creating policies that support the creative and tourism industries. Reduced tariffs for event organisers, tax incentives for

hospitality businesses, and grants for artists could go a long way in solidifying Nigeria's status as Africa's cultural capital. The ripple effects of Detty December are undeniable. Beyond the immediate financial gains, it has created a sense of pride and possibility. With the festivities winding down, one can't help but reflect on what this means for the future. Will the lessons learned translate into long-term strategies that uplift the economy? If the smiles, the music, and the memories are anything to go by, the answer is a resounding yes. Nigeria's December glow-up isn't just a trend; it's a movement. And as the world watches – and joins in – one thing is clear: this is just the beginning.

# What Counts as Cheating?

**Cheating.** The word itself carries a weight that can shatter relationships, dissolve trust, and leave emotional wreckage in its wake.

Is it just about physical intimacy, or does emotional closeness with someone else cross the line? Does flirting count? What about following your ex on Instagram and liking all their pictures?

By **Konye Chelsea Nwabogor**

Relationships today operate in a more complex space than ever before. Social media has blurred traditional boundaries, making it possible to maintain connections that would have naturally faded in the past. The casual “good morning” text to someone you secretly find attractive, the slightly-too-long hug at a party, the inside jokes exchanged with a colleague—none of these seem outright harmful, but do they qualify as betrayal?

For many, the definition of cheating is clear-cut: any form of sexual intimacy outside the relationship is a violation. But for others, the betrayal starts long before that. “I was talking to this guy at work every day, sharing my frustrations about my relationship, and over time, I realised I was more emotionally invested in him than my actual partner,” says Tolu, a 34-year-old banker in Lagos. “There was no sex, but when my boyfriend found out, he was devastated. To him, I had cheated.”

The emotional affair is arguably the most insidious form of infidelity. Unlike physical cheating, which often happens in the heat of the moment, an emotional connection develops gradually, making it even harder to identify—until it’s too late. It starts with confiding in someone, then evolves into inside jokes, private conversations, and eventually, a bond that rivals the one with your actual partner. The danger here is that emotional infidelity can sometimes be more painful than a one-time physical encounter. A partner can forgive a meaningless fling, but knowing that someone else understands you in a way they no longer do? That’s a different kind of betrayal.

Of course, there’s also the murky world of digital cheating. Social media has given people a playground for subtle—and sometimes not-so-subtle—forms of unfaithfulness. Dapo, a 29-year-old photographer in Abuja, found himself in trouble with his girlfriend over his Instagram activity. “I didn’t think I was doing anything wrong,” he says. “But my girlfriend saw that I was constantly DMing this one girl, reacting to all her stories, and even sending flirty messages. She said it was cheating. To me, it was just harmless fun.”



This raises another crucial question: Does intent matter? If someone flirts with no intention of following through, does it still count as cheating? And what about situations where there’s no flirting at all, just secretive communication with another person? Some argue that secrecy itself is a betrayal—if you wouldn’t say or do something in front of your partner, then it’s probably crossing the line.

Yet, not all definitions of cheating

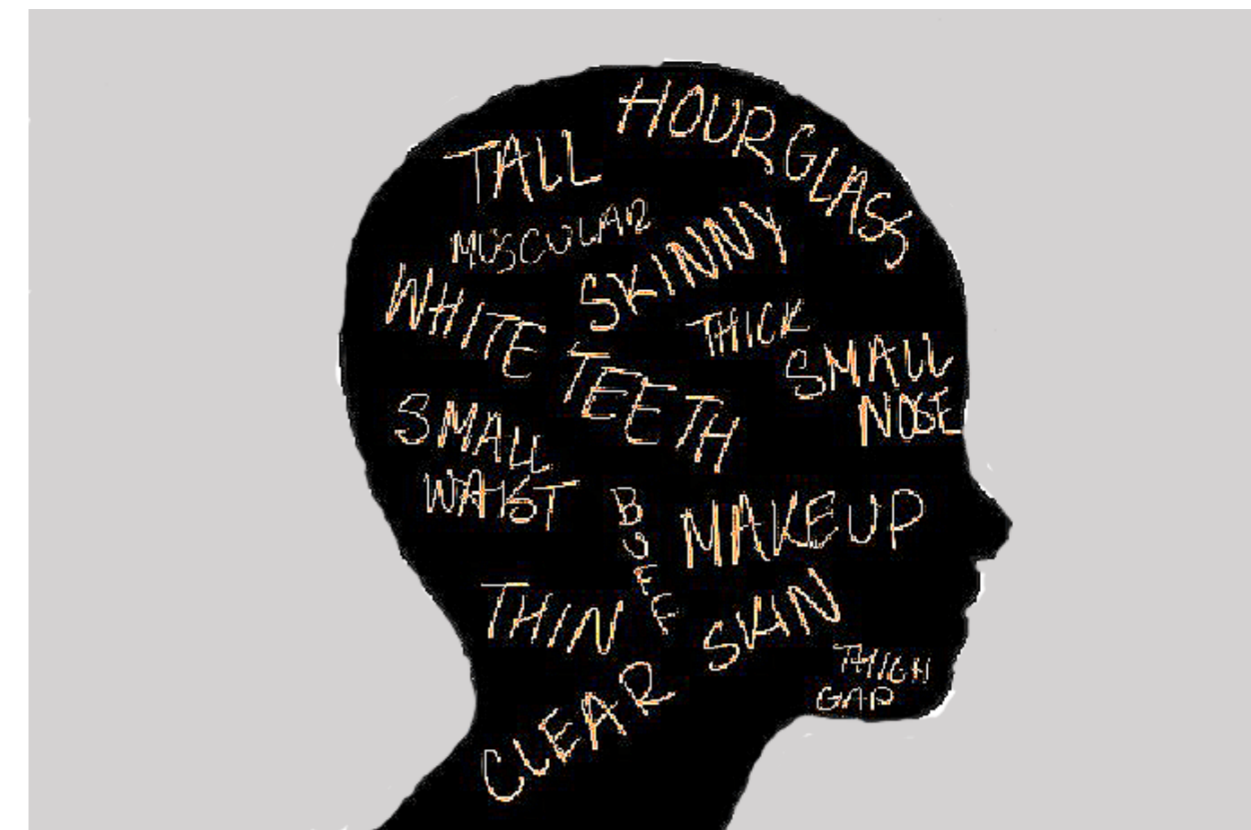
are universal. Cultural expectations also play a role. In Nigeria, for example, societal norms often place different expectations on men and women when it comes to fidelity. While a man’s “indiscretions” may be overlooked or excused, a woman stepping out of line—even in the slightest way—is often met with harsher consequences. A married woman having deep conversations with another man might be judged more harshly than a husband who is openly unfaithful. “When my husband cheated, they told me to be patient, that men will always be men,” says Kemi, a 42-year-old businesswoman in Ibadan. “But when he found out I had been texting an old friend, it was a disaster. To him, I had done something unforgivable.”

Ultimately, the real answer to what counts as cheating depends on the people in the relationship. Boundaries vary from couple to couple, and what might seem like an innocent act to one person can feel like a deep betrayal to another. This is why conversations about expectations are so important. Many couples operate on assumptions—assuming that their partner defines cheating the same way they do. But the truth is, without an honest conversation, those assumptions can lead to heartbreak.

Renowned relationship therapist Esther Perel once said, “Cheating is not so much about sex as it is about secrecy, about betrayal, about the violation of trust.” And that’s what it really comes down to. Whether it’s a hidden message thread, a lingering look, or a full-blown affair, cheating isn’t just about what’s done—it’s about how it makes the other person feel.

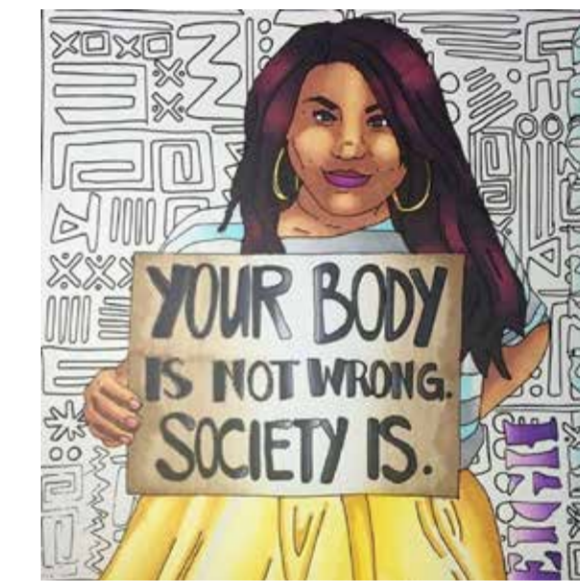
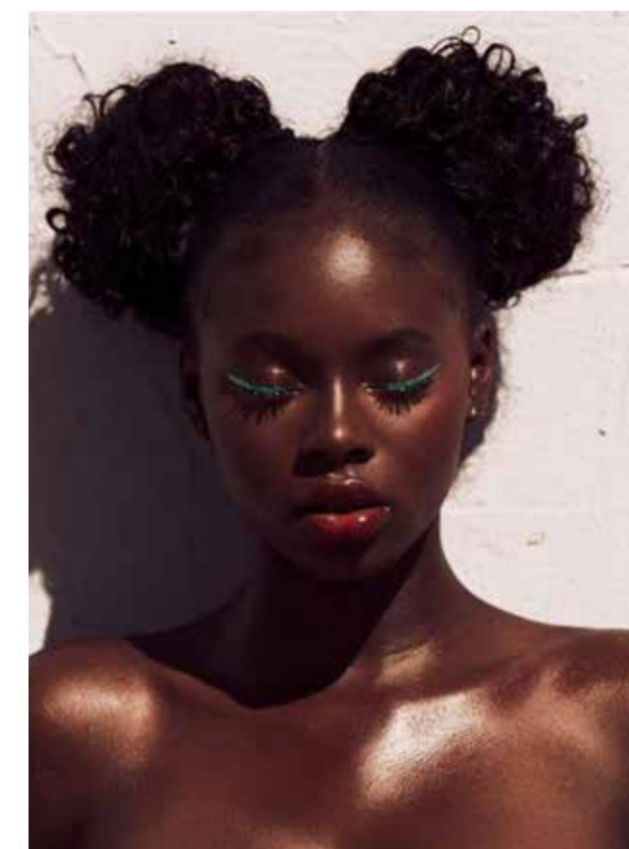
At the end of the day, the best way to avoid crossing the line is to ask yourself: if my partner saw this, would they feel hurt? If the answer is yes, then maybe—just maybe—you’ve already crossed it.

*The emotional affair is arguably the most insidious form of infidelity. Unlike physical cheating, which often happens in the heat of the moment, an emotional connection develops gradually, making it even harder to identify—until it’s too late.*



## Popular Beauty Standards You Shouldn’t Care About (And Why You’ll Be Happier for It)

We live in a world where beauty standards are thrown at us from every angle—on billboards, in glossy magazines, through social media filters, and even by that one auntie at every family gathering who insists you should “watch your weight.” The truth? Most of these beauty standards are arbitrary, unattainable, and, quite frankly, not worth your time. Here are a few of the biggest ones that you should absolutely stop caring about.



### 1. Flawless, Poreless Skin

Somewhere along the way, we were convinced that the perfect face is one that looks like it’s been airbrushed to oblivion. No pores. No fine lines. No imperfections. But let’s get real—skin has texture. Pores are a biological necessity, not a flaw. Wrinkles? They’re proof that you’ve laughed, lived, and experienced life. Even celebrities with access to the best dermatologists still have pores and breakouts. So why stress over something that is literally a sign that your skin is functioning properly?

### 2. The Hourglass Figure

Thanks to pop culture, society has romanticized the “perfect” body shape: a snatched waist, wide hips, and a perky bust. And while some people are naturally blessed with this silhouette, many are not. The problem? This beauty standard doesn’t account for genetics, body diversity, or, you know, actual human biology.

Bodies come in all shapes—rectangle, pear, apple, inverted triangle—and none of them are superior. Wearing a waist trainer for hours won’t rewrite your bone structure, and you shouldn’t feel pressured to achieve proportions that may not be natural for you. The key is to embrace your unique shape and wear what makes you feel confident.

### 3. Fair, Even-Toned Skin

Colourism is one of beauty’s ugliest, most deeply ingrained standards. Across many cultures, lighter skin has long been associated with beauty, privilege, and desirability, leading to an entire industry built around skin bleaching and “brightening” products. But melanin is magic, and the idea that lighter skin is “bet-

ter” is a colonial hangover we should have left behind centuries ago.

Hyperpigmentation, dark circles, and sunspots? They’re natural. The real goal should be healthy skin, not necessarily lighter or “flawless” skin.

### 4. The ‘Perfect’ Nose

If you’ve ever felt insecure about your nose, you’re not alone. Beauty standards have convinced us that noses should be small, symmetrical, and upturned—like a Disney princess. The rise of cosmetic surgery has made rhinoplasty one of the most common procedures worldwide, but let’s pause for a second.

Noses are deeply tied to our ethnic backgrounds. Your nose tells a story of where you come from, your heritage, and your lineage. A nose that doesn’t fit into Eurocentric beauty ideals isn’t wrong—it’s unique, and uniqueness is what makes beauty interesting.

### 5. Perfectly Sculpted Jawlines

No amount of jade rolling or chewing gum is going to give you a jawline you weren’t born with. Your face is yours—it doesn’t need to be filtered into oblivion. And considering how beauty trends change, obsessing over a jawline is a losing game.

### 6. The ‘Ideal’ Lips

One moment, thin lips were elegant and desirable; the next, plump, juicy lips became the ultimate beauty standard. Beauty trends are fickle, and lips are no exception. The overlining, the fillers, the obsession with a pouty mouth—it’s all designed to make you feel like you’re missing something.

But lips, like every other feature, are meant to be diverse. If we all had the same lips, beauty would be boring. Embrace yours, however they are shaped.

### 7. Smooth, Hairless Bodies

For decades, women have been told that body hair is unattractive, unhygienic, and even masculine. But the truth is, body hair is just hair. It grows. It’s normal. Yet, society makes women feel like they should be waxing, shaving, and lasering every inch of themselves just to meet an artificial standard. If you love being smooth, go for it. But if you’re tired of the constant upkeep, guess what? You don’t have to do it. Let your hair grow if you want. It’s your body, your choice.

### 8. Youth = Beauty

We live in an ageist world where the moment you spot your first wrinkle, people act like it’s a crisis. Ageing is treated as something to fight instead of a natural, inevitable process.

But ageing is a privilege. The alternative is, well, not ageing—which is far worse. Fine lines, grey hairs, and a few laugh lines aren’t signs of decline; they’re proof that you’ve lived, loved, and evolved. And honestly, confidence and wisdom are far more attractive than desperately trying to cling to youth.

### 7. Social Media Perfection

Let’s get one thing straight—nobody looks like their Instagram photos in real life. Social media is filled with filters, angles, editing apps, and sometimes even outright Photoshop magic. Comparing yourself to someone’s carefully curated and edited highlights is like comparing a behind-the-scenes moment to a movie premiere. Unrealistic expectations only lead to unnecessary self-doubt.

# Inside Lagos's Tourism Boom:

## A Conversation with Idris Aregbe

If you've ever been to Lagos, you know it's not just a city—it's a vibe, a movement, a living, breathing entity that refuses to be ignored. And if you were in town for Detty December 2024, you'd know exactly what that means. The world didn't just visit Lagos; it descended on it. Lagos was the stage, and the world was its audience.

But this wasn't just a moment—it was a statement. A declaration that Lagos isn't just Nigeria's economic powerhouse; it's Africa's ultimate destination. And if you think that's an exaggeration, just ask Idris Aregbe, the Special Adviser to the Lagos State Governor on Tourism, Arts, and Culture. He's not just witnessing this transformation—he's one of the key figures orchestrating it.

When I sat down with Mr. Aregbe, one thing was clear: Lagos's rise as a tourism juggernaut isn't happening by chance. It's part of a meticulously crafted vision that's turning the city into a global cultural hub.

Interview by Ayo Lawal



### Detty December 2024 was on another level. What made last year's edition so unique?

First, let me say this—I'm incredibly proud of what we achieved last December. It felt like Lagos was on the global stage, and we showed up big time. That's thanks to Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu, whose passion for Lagos is unmatched, and also to our President, a proud Lagosian, whose holiday visit further amplified the experience.

This year stood out for a few reasons. The media played a massive role, particularly digital content creators and entertainers who showcased Lagos's vibrant tourism, arts, and culture to a global audience. Lagos has long been a creative powerhouse, but now, more than ever, the world is taking notice.

Another key factor? Infrastructure development. Investments in modern infrastructure by this administration elevated the Detty December experience. Our collaborations with event organizers, entertainers, and the hospitality industry created a seamless and exciting festive season. It was the collective effort of Lagosians and the government that made this an unforgettable experience.

### Tourism is slowly becoming one of Nigeria's biggest GDP contributors. How crucial is Lagos to this transformation?

Lagos is leading this transformation—it's at the heart of Nigeria's tourism boom. Think about it: Lagos is a melting pot of cultures, creativity, and commerce, and we are taking bold steps to strengthen our position. The entertainment scene, cultural richness, and world-class attractions are shaping Nigeria's tourism landscape. We've also adopted a forward-thinking approach—working closely with stakeholders in hospitality, entertainment, and culture.

Every day, over 5,000 people are actively working in Lagos's tourism sector—that's how much we've built an enabling environment for this industry to thrive. Moving forward, we'll continue analyzing data, gathering feedback, and developing new ideas to keep Lagos at the forefront of African tourism.

### The Lagos Tour Bus was such a hit! How did this idea come about, and what's next for it?

We launched the Lagos Tour Bus to give people an immersive experience of Lagos. We wanted to showcase the city's hidden gems and encourage Lagosians to become ambassadors

of their city. And the response? Incredible.

Because of its success, we're making it a monthly program, but in a way that keeps it exclusive and exciting. So far, we've explored Lagos Island, Victoria Island, and Lekki, but future editions will take us to more local government areas. We're even looking at incorporating waterways into the tour experience. In Lagos, the possibilities are as vast as the Atlantic Ocean itself!

### You've often called Lagos the 'heartbeat of Nigeria.' What would you say is its soul?

The soul of Lagos is its people. We have an unmatched energy, a welcoming spirit, and an ability to make things happen against all odds. It's a land of opportunities—people come here and don't want to leave because they see potential everywhere. From the thriving entertainment and tech scenes to its modern infrastructure and commercial opportunities, there's always something new to discover.

Lagos is a creative hub. How are you working with musicians, filmmakers, and artists to position it as Africa's ultimate cultural capital?

We actively support both established and emerging creatives. We believe in their potential,



*Ultimately, I want to leave behind a transformed tourism sector, global recognition for Lagos's cultural exports, and a lasting legacy of innovation and empowerment. Lagos is already a powerhouse—the world is just starting to take notice*

and we create platforms for them to shine on a global stage. Through events like Entertainment Week Lagos, Flytime Fest, Dance Eko, Lagos International Theatre Festival, ArtX, Culturati Africa, and Greater Lagos Countdown, we're shaping future leaders in the creative industry. Our government is fully committed to building an enabling environment for creatives to thrive.

### Tourism thrives on accessibility. What's being done to make Lagos more tourist-friendly?

We're making major moves under Governor Sanwo-Olu's T.H.E.M.E.S+ agenda. The Purple Rail Line is now running, complementing the Blue Rail Line, making movement easier. Omni-bus ferries are improving water transportation, the BRT system is expanding, and LagRide is becoming a go-to transport option.

At the same time, we're upgrading tourist attractions like Freedom Park, ensuring Lagos is not just exciting but also convenient and accessible.

### Safety is a big concern for visitors. What's being done to ensure Lagos remains welcoming to tourists?

Security is a top priority. We're bringing together agencies like the Lagos TaskForce, Neighbourhood Safety Corps, Lagos Police Command, and Civil Defence. Lagos attracts global attention, so we cannot afford to compromise on security.

Beyond the government, safety is a shared responsibility. We all have a role to play in making Lagos a safe and welcoming destination.

### How is the government supporting local en-

### trepreneurs in tourism-related industries like hospitality, fashion, and entertainment?

We offer exhibitions, contracts, loans, grants, and empowerment programs. Initiatives like the Lagos Shopping Festival, Eko Flavours, Lagos Creative Vault, and the Lagos International Trade Fair connect entrepreneurs with key partners. Other bodies, like the Ministry of Commerce and the Lagos State Employment Trust Fund, play major roles in supporting SMEs. Our goal is to create an ecosystem where businesses thrive.

### When you think about Lagos in five to ten years, what's your ultimate vision?

I see Lagos competing with and even surpassing cities like Paris, Dubai, and Bangkok as a top cultural, business, and leisure destination. We have what it takes—Afrobeats, Nollywood, fashion, festivals, food, and art—to captivate the world.

As for my legacy, I want Lagos tourism to be synonymous with creativity, innovation, and excellence. I'm committed to empowering young people ensuring they lead and sustain this transformation. Ultimately, I want to leave behind a transformed tourism sector, global recognition for Lagos's cultural exports, and a lasting legacy of innovation and empowerment.



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