



ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNICATION SCHOLARS & PROFESSIONALS OF NIGERIA

... the future is here

COMMUNIQUÉ AT THE END OF THE 10TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE, ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNICATION SCHOLARS & PROFESSIONALS OF NIGERIA (ACSPN) HELD SEPTEMBER 6-7, 2023

PREAMBLE

The Association of Communication Scholars & Professionals of Nigeria (ACSPN) held its 10th Annual Conference with the theme “Digital Communication Agenda and Nigeria’s Transformation”, at Kanem Suites in Abuja. It was attended daily by over a hundred and fifty individuals, representing communication scholars, media professionals and representatives of professional bodies within and outside Nigeria. The welcome address was delivered by the ACSPN President, Prof. Umaru A. Pate, and the keynote address “Nigeria’s Evolving Digital Engagements and Nationalism” was delivered by Dr. Monday Ashibogwu (CEO, Billbox Services). This was followed by Prof. Muhammad Danladi Musa’s (Al’Ain University, UAE) review of the critical academic and professional contributions of the founding President of the Association, late Prof. Muraina Olayiwola Oso to media and communication practice and scholarship in Nigeria and globally; and a Lead Paper titled: “The Rise of Open AI: Opportunities, Ethical Issues and Policy Challenges of AI in the Global South” by Prof. Hopetun Dunn of the University of Botswana, (and former General Secretary, International Association for Media and Communication Research, IAMCR). Goodwill messages came from the UNESCO Regional Office in Nigeria, Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR), Nigerian Communication Commission (NCC), and African Council for Communication Education (ACCE, Nigeria Chapter). Scholarly and professional papers covering various aspects of the conference’s theme were presented in nine syndicate sessions across the two days of the conference.

The conference deliberated that:

1. Evolving global digital trends in journalism, particularly emerging technologies have significantly changed journalism practice.
2. The Association's drive at mainstreaming contemporary global realities into teaching and training in tertiary education have been supported by the National Universities Commission (NUC) and led to a total overhaul of tertiary education policy formulation and implementation in Nigerian universities.
3. Communication scholars must continue to enhance their capacity to be able to train future digital communication professionals in the face of the dynamics in the sector.
4. ACSPN will continue to collaborate with the leadership of professional bodies in the sector to eliminate imposters and sanitise the profession.
5. Proliferation of digital technologies and social media provides opportunities for transnational engagements and promotion of cultural heritage in online communities
6. The citizenry over relies on information from online sources which are often unreliable, and this continues to misinform and disinform the citizenry.
7. The citizenry have become impatient in consuming and sharing information online, which is a major contributor to the virulent circle of unverified information.
8. There is a prevalent unethical use of digital communication technologies to violate the rights of minors, especially on social media.
9. Social media regulation is challenging, and the government has yet to device a means of social media governance.
10. Social media behavioural patterns are triggered by frustration with developments in the country.
11. Digital revolution has empowered FinTech and Entrepreneurship Innovations
12. Digital engagements are impacting on Nigeria's nationalism and has created a vibrant online community that is showcasing its diversity, including the Diasporans who are leveraging on digital platforms to showcase our culture
13. There is a pandemic of ethnic vituperations and weaponisation of ethnic diatribes in Nigeria's digital engagements, and this is destructive for national development.
14. Most African countries have not yet developed AI legislation, except Kenya, Egypt and Mauritius.
15. AI is replicating global disparity in digital divide
16. The NCC supports research in relevant areas that include digital communication technologies.
17. Digital technologies have revolutionized production, distribution and consumption of contents, and led to the emergence of *proconsumers*.

18. Resources are a major challenge for communication education and training institutions.
19. AI provides opportunities to build new ethical guidelines and develop new creative skillsets

The Conference adopted the following resolutions:

1. Communication scholars and practitioners should offer relevant and significant contributions to guide government in terms of policy formulation and implementation in the area of digital communication.
2. The ACSPN and other communication and media related associations shall coexist and collaborate to promote communication professionalism and scholarship in Nigeria and globally.
3. Ethics and quality of research and publications should be prioritized to enhance the contributions of scholars and professionals to media and communication practice.
4. Communication scholars in Nigeria should increase their visibility on the digital space through research in high quality journals and other digital publications.
5. African countries should be proactive in developing AI Legislations to address emerging challenges associated with AI as a global trend.
6. Nigeria should develop an evolving AI Legislation while striking a balance between regulating digital environments and ensuring freedom of speech.
7. There is need to bridge the gaps between scholars and media practitioners in terms of experience on emerging digital technologies and developments to enhance training, teaching and capacity building.
8. Ethics and quality should be prioritized in research and publications.
9. ACSPN will partner with the relevant professional bodies in the media and communication industry to ensure that only duly certified persons shall practice as experts in their respective fields
10. African countries should integrate their indigenous cultural materials into AI.
11. Actors in the digital space should ensure that digital engagements are devoid of misinformation and disinformation.
12. The media industry should adopt new technologies to enhance professionalism and explore opportunities as apprehension towards new technologies is normal.
13. Educational institutions and other stakeholders in the media and communication industry should provide resources for communication educators to enhance teaching and productivity in scholarship and media practice.
14. Communication training institutions should develop new mindsets by using AI for teaching assessments, virtual tutoring, teaching evaluation, and other opportunities.
15. Stakeholders in the Nigerian digital space should not prioritize aesthetics over accuracy and correctness of information in the digital media space.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nosa Owens-Ibie', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Prof Nosa Owens-Ibie

General Secretary,

ACSPN.

September 15, 2023