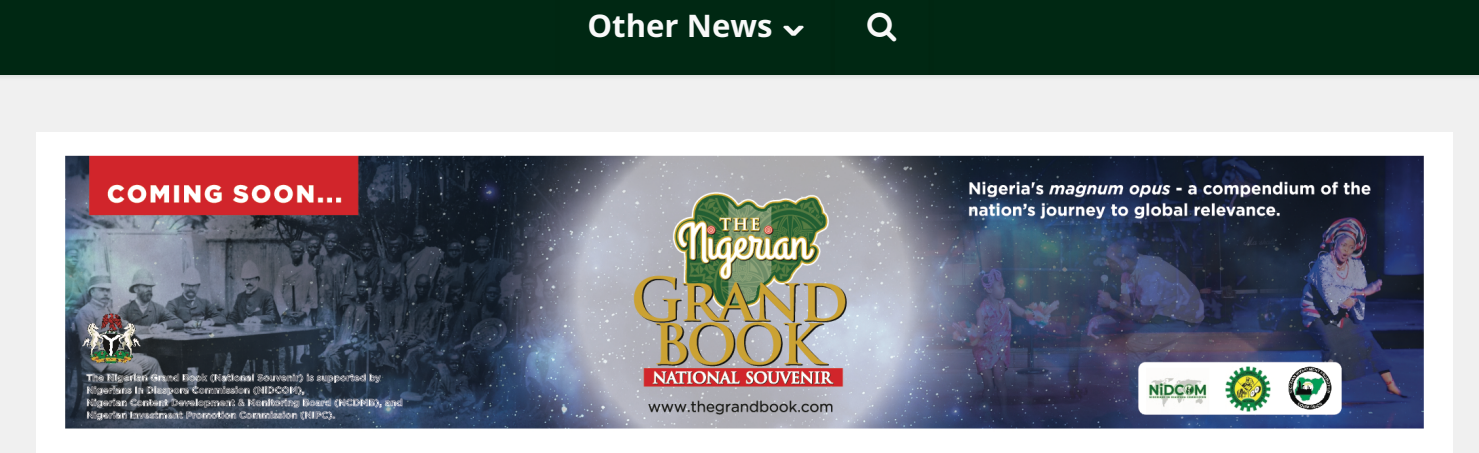
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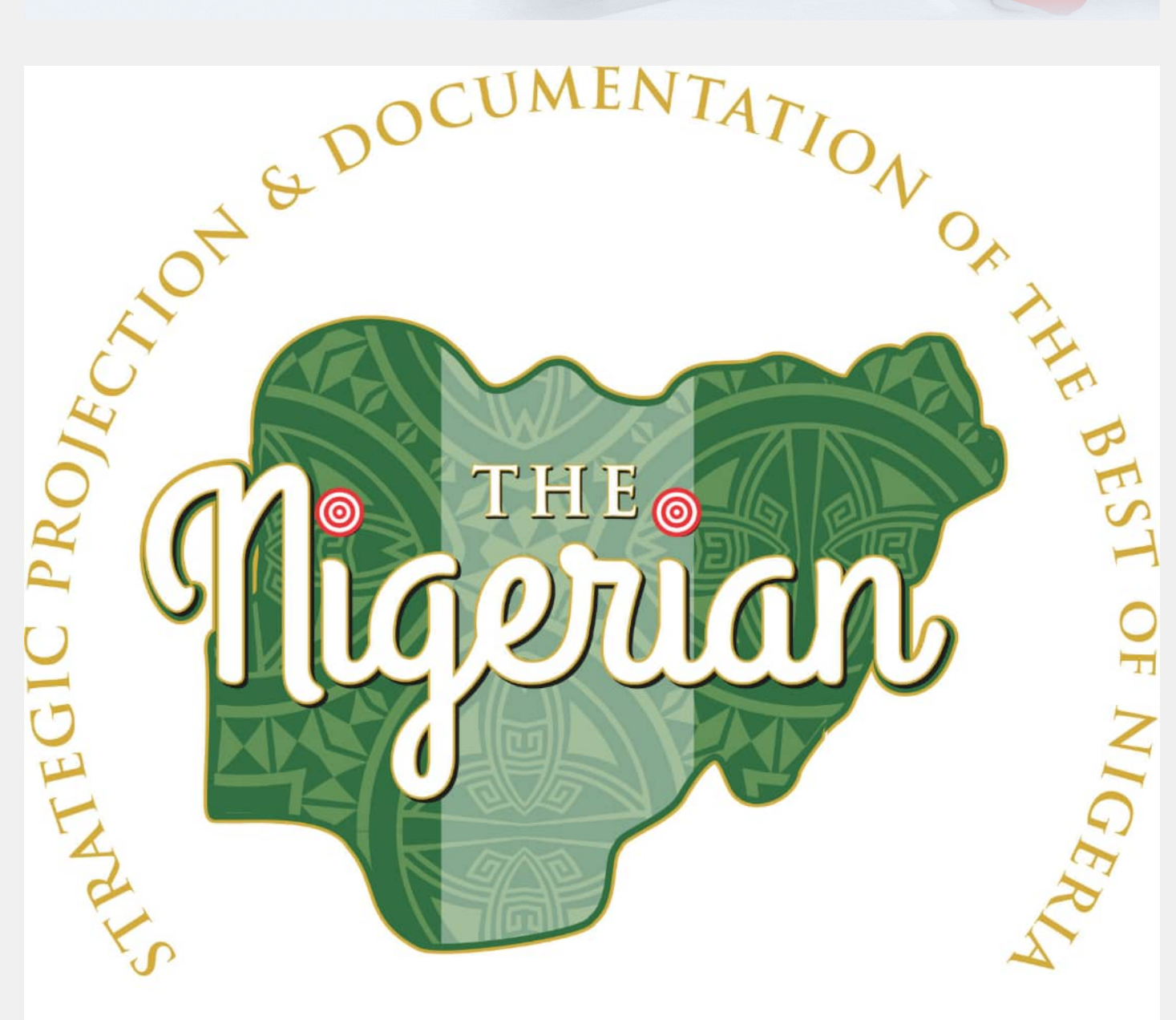
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Home » Latest » Navigating supply chains bottlenecks in Nigeria

News

Navigating supply chains bottlenecks in Nigeria

4 September 2022 • by Ada Ada • 13 min read

As the business matures, we are looking to focus on consolidating our operations and optimizing our processes to improve efficiency and effectiveness, Harold Nwariaku, managing partner at Harold & co Consulting, in this interview speaks about what he offers in value in the procurement consultancy space.

Harold & Co Consulting is a supply chain consulting company, how has the journey been?

The journey of a supply chain consulting business typically involves several key steps which include conducting market research and developing a solid business plan which outlined the company's goals, target market, and strategies for success.

We secured funding, built a team, and established relationships with suppliers, partners, and other stakeholders. Once the business was up and running, we focused on building a client base and growing the business.

This involved marketing and sales efforts, as well as developing a strong reputation for delivering high-quality consulting services.

As the business grew, we looked to expand into new markets and diversify our services to meet the changing needs of our clients.

We built new partnerships, entered new sectors, and are offering new types of consulting services.

As the business matures, we are looking to focus on consolidating our operations and optimizing our processes to improve efficiency and effectiveness. We hope to implement new technologies, streamline our operations, and invest in training and development for the team.

Finally, the goal for many supply chain consulting businesses is to sustain success over the long term so we will continue to adapt and innovate in response to changing market conditions and build strong relationships with our clients and partners.

How do you address the multiple facets of supply chain operations?

It is important to have a holistic view of supply chain operations, considering all the different processes and stakeholders involved.

We use tools such as supply chain mapping to understand the end-to-end flow of goods and information within the supply chain.

Another key strategy is to identify bottlenecks and inefficiencies within the supply chain and implement solutions to address them, streamlining processes, improving communication and collaboration, and investing in new technologies.

It is also important to manage risk and uncertainty within the supply chain, to avoid disruptions and ensure the free flow of goods and services.

We implement contingency plans, build resilience into the supply chain, and work with suppliers to manage risks.

Enhancing collaboration and partnerships within the supply chain can also be critical for success, working with customers, suppliers, and other stakeholders to identify and address common challenges, and align strategies and goals.

Also, leveraging technology and data analytics can help to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of supply chain operations, using tools such as logistics software, automation, and data analytics to optimize processes, reduce costs, and improve decision-making.

How do you intend to bridge the gap between people, processes, and technology to drive productivity, and deliver value?

I usually employ strategies like aligning goals and objectives to drive productivity and deliver value. This involves setting clear, measurable targets and using data and analytics to track progress toward those targets.

Enhancing communication and collaboration between people, processes, and technology is also critical for success. This may involve establishing clear channels of communication, promoting teamwork and collaboration, and using tools such as project management software to facilitate communication and coordination.

Providing training and development opportunities for people to bridge the gap between people, processes, and technology. Investing in skills development programs, such as training in new technologies, or providing mentorship and coaching to support employees in their roles.

Integrating technology into processes helps to drive productivity and deliver value, but it is important to ensure that the technology employed is aligned with the needs and capabilities of the people using it. We conduct assessments to identify gaps in technology adoption and usage and implement strategies to bridge those gaps.

It is also important to ensure that processes are efficient and effective to drive productivity and deliver value.

How were you able to develop your career over the years?

A strong foundation in supply chain management is gained through obtaining a degree in a related field, such as logistics, business, or engineering.

Many institutions offer programs specifically in supply chain management, and there are also a variety of professional certifications that can be obtained, such as the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (CIPS) qualification.

I am proud to say that I attained the highest award available, and I am a fellow of CIPS. In addition to education and training, it is also important to gain practical experience in the field. This can be done through internships, co-op programs, or entry-level positions in supply chain management.

I have worked with top multinationals like Procter and Gamble, Guinness Nigeria, and MTN Plc in different roles. Building a strong network of professionals in the supply chain industry can be helpful for career development.

This can be done through networking events, professional associations, and online communities. I belong to the leading associations in my field. Staying current with industry developments will advance a career in supply chain management.

I have done this through education, attending conferences and events, and staying up to date with industry news and best practices.

As one gains experience and expertise in the field, it can be helpful to seek out leadership opportunities, such as managing a team or taking on additional responsibilities within an organization. This helped to demonstrate my ability to contribute to the success of the supply chain and positioned me for advancement.

How have you been able to apply best practices and lessons from previous challenges encountered running the business?

Our approach is to review the successes and challenges of our projects and consider what contributed to each. This helps us identify areas that are working well and areas that need improvement.

We use the lessons learned to inform changes to business processes and systems. For example, if a particular service delivery method was successful, we incorporate it into the business's standard operating procedures.

We document and share the lessons learned with team members and relevant stakeholders to ensure that others in the organization are aware of the business's experiences and can apply them to their own work.

The lessons learned are used to inform decision-making, both in the short term and long term. This ensures that the business is making informed, data-driven decisions that are based on real-world experiences.

We recognize that operating a service business is an ongoing learning process and we strive to continually learn and improve.

We seek out new training opportunities, stay current on industry trends, and seek feedback from clients and team members.

We analyze the procurement processes and identify any issues or challenges that may be impacting business performance and help them to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of these processes.

We have helped businesses to identify and manage risks in the procurement process by developing and implementing strategies to mitigate those risks, finding alternative sources of goods or services, and developing contingency plans to respond to potential disruptions.

We have supported businesses to adopt best practices in procurement by providing guidance on processes, tools, and technologies that can improve efficiency and effectiveness, and we have fostered open and effective communication and collaboration with suppliers and other partners in the supply chain to identify and address any issues or challenges that arise.

Have you been able to employ measures to mitigate risk for your clients?

In managing and mitigating risk, we always begin with identifying the potential risks that a client may face.

We conduct a risk assessment to identify potential vulnerabilities within the supply chain, such as bottlenecks, weak links, or exposure to external risks such as natural disasters or political instability.

Once risks have been identified, we develop strategies to manage and mitigate those risks; we develop and implement contingency plans, diversify suppliers, and build resilience into the supply chain to minimize the impact of disruptions.

It is also important to implement systems for monitoring and managing risk on an ongoing basis using tools such as risk management software or establishing regular risk assessment and review processes which help to identify and address emerging risks in a timely manner.

We also help clients build strong relationships with key stakeholders, such as suppliers and customers, to better manage and mitigate risk.

We work with clients to develop risk management protocols and communication channels to facilitate collaboration and coordination.

We provide training and education to clients on risk management best practices and techniques. We conduct workshops and seminars and provide ongoing support and guidance to clients as they develop their risk management capabilities.

How are you able to identify trends in the market in which you operate?

We gather and analyse data on key indicators such as sales, market share, and customer feedback, using tools such as market research, customer surveys, and data analytics software.

We monitor industry news and developments to identify trends in the market. read industry publications, attend conferences and events, and follow industry leaders and professionals on social media or other online platforms.

We engage with customers and stakeholders, such as suppliers, partners, and industry experts, who provide valuable insights into trends in the market. We conduct focus groups, host customer roundtables, and participate in industry forums and conferences, support our clients to implement market intelligence systems – such as competitive intelligence software or market monitoring tools, and these have been helpful for identifying trends in the market.

These tools provide real-time data and analysis on key indicators, allowing my business to stay up to date on market developments.

We also conduct trend analysis to identify patterns and trends in the market over time using data and analytics tools to identify trends in areas such as sales, market share, or customer behavior, and use this information to inform business strategy and decision-making.

We train and empower employees to handle customer inquiries and complaints effectively and can improve client service.

We support our clients to develop a customer service strategy that outlines the company's goals and objectives, and how they will be achieved. We support our clients in implementing technology such as eProcurement, contract management, warehouse systems, inventory management tools, etc. which help to streamline and improve client service processes.

Lastly, we regularly monitor and measure the performance of clients to identify areas for improvement and adjust as needed.

How do you identify current problems and implement solutions within the African market?

One major challenge is the inadequate infrastructure in many parts of Africa, including roads, ports, airports, and storage facilities.

This creates bottlenecks and delays in the supply chain and increases costs. Possible solutions include investing in infrastructure development and improving maintenance and management of existing infrastructure, which are beyond the scope of the private sector alone.

Another challenge is the complex and often inconsistent regulatory environment in many African countries, which creates barriers to trade and hinders the smooth functioning of the supply chain.

Streamlining regulatory processes, harmonizing regulations across borders, and promoting transparency and accountability in the regulatory process may help to address this.

Many businesses in Africa also face challenges in accessing financing, which hinders their ability to invest in the resources and capabilities they need to grow and succeed.

Expanding access to financing for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through initiatives such as microloans, grants, and investment funds is a possible solution.

Limited technology adoption is another challenge in the supply chain in many parts of Africa, which reduces efficiency and effectiveness.

Investing in technology infrastructure and training and promoting the adoption of technology by businesses is one way to solve this.

The supply chain in Africa is also often exposed to a range of security risks, such as theft, fraud, and terrorism. If security measures are improved, such as implementing secure transportation and storage systems, and collaboration with law enforcement and security agencies is strengthened, this may help secure the Supply Chain routes.

What are your challenges with sourcing for new clients?

The most common challenge is competition from other businesses that are also seeking to attract new clients. We all compete on price, quality, or other factors, to stand out in the marketplace.

There is the constraint of limited resources, such as time, budget, or personnel, to devote to client acquisition efforts. This makes it difficult to reach and engage with potential clients internationally, or to offer the level of service that is needed to win their business.

In some cases, we struggle to attract new clients due to a lack of awareness or understanding of what we do or what we have to offer, so, we spend time developing marketing and communication strategies to raise awareness and educate potential clients about our business.

Our kind of business also faces challenges in sourcing new clients if we lack access to networks or connections that can help to introduce us.

We, therefore, make effort to build relationships with industry partners, join professional associations, and leverage social media and other online platforms to connect with potential clients.

Sometimes there is the issue of complex sales processes within the client organizations e.g., long sales cycles, multiple decision-makers, or complex negotiation processes.

How are you able to collaborate training workshops with your role as managing partner for Harold & Co Consulting

The first step in collaborating on training workshops is to identify the target audience and determine their learning objectives and needs.

We conduct market research, survey potential participants, and work with clients to identify the skills and knowledge that need to be addressed.

Once the target audience and learning objectives have been identified, we then develop a workshop outline that covers the key topics and themes that will be addressed.

We create a list of learning objectives, identify the key takeaways that participants should be able to apply after the workshop, and outline the structure and flow of the workshop.

Identifying workshop facilitators is the next important step in collaborating on training workshops.

We identify internal experts within the firm who can lead the workshop, or we work with external experts or trainers who have specialized knowledge or skills related to the workshop topic.

Planning logistics is also critical for the success of training workshops. Securing a venue, arranging for catering and refreshments, and organizing any necessary materials or equipment. Promoting the workshop can help to attract participants and ensure that the workshop is well-attended.

This involves creating marketing materials, such as flyers or email announcements, and using social media and other online platforms to reach potential participants.

Our training workshops are designed to meet specific client needs. We engage with the client organization to understand and assess the skill level of their team, determine the gaps, then put together a bouquet of topics from our rich suite of courses.

These workshops are interactive and allow for questions and contributions at any time during the session.

This way, the participants are fully engaged. We also request that they bring up projects from their current work that they require input in.

As facilitators, we were once employees in the fields we are now consultants in, so we may have tackled similar problems in our work experience.

The exercises and assignments we task our participants with require that they apply them to the actual work they are doing, so the learning is both academic and relevant. We share stories that are relatable and have a twenty-minute inspiring talk to set the tone for the day.

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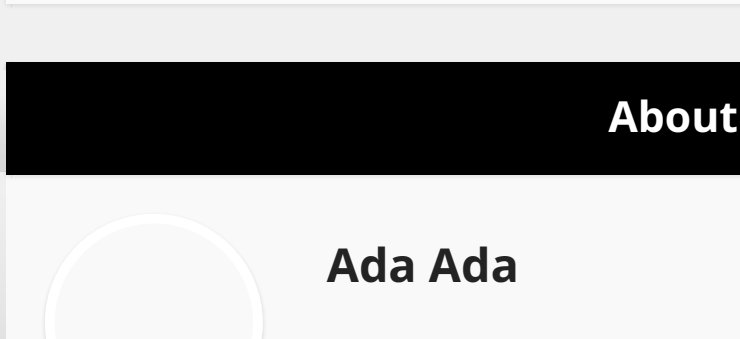
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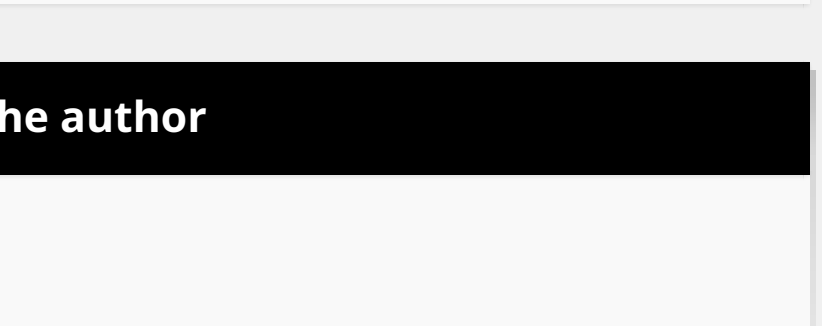
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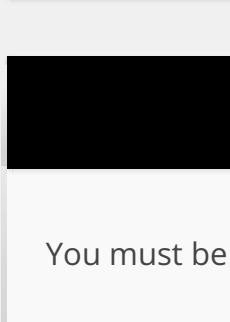
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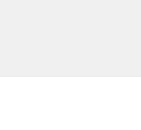
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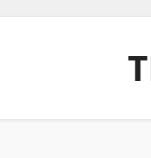
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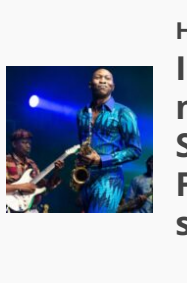
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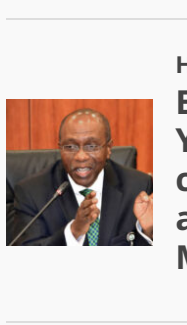
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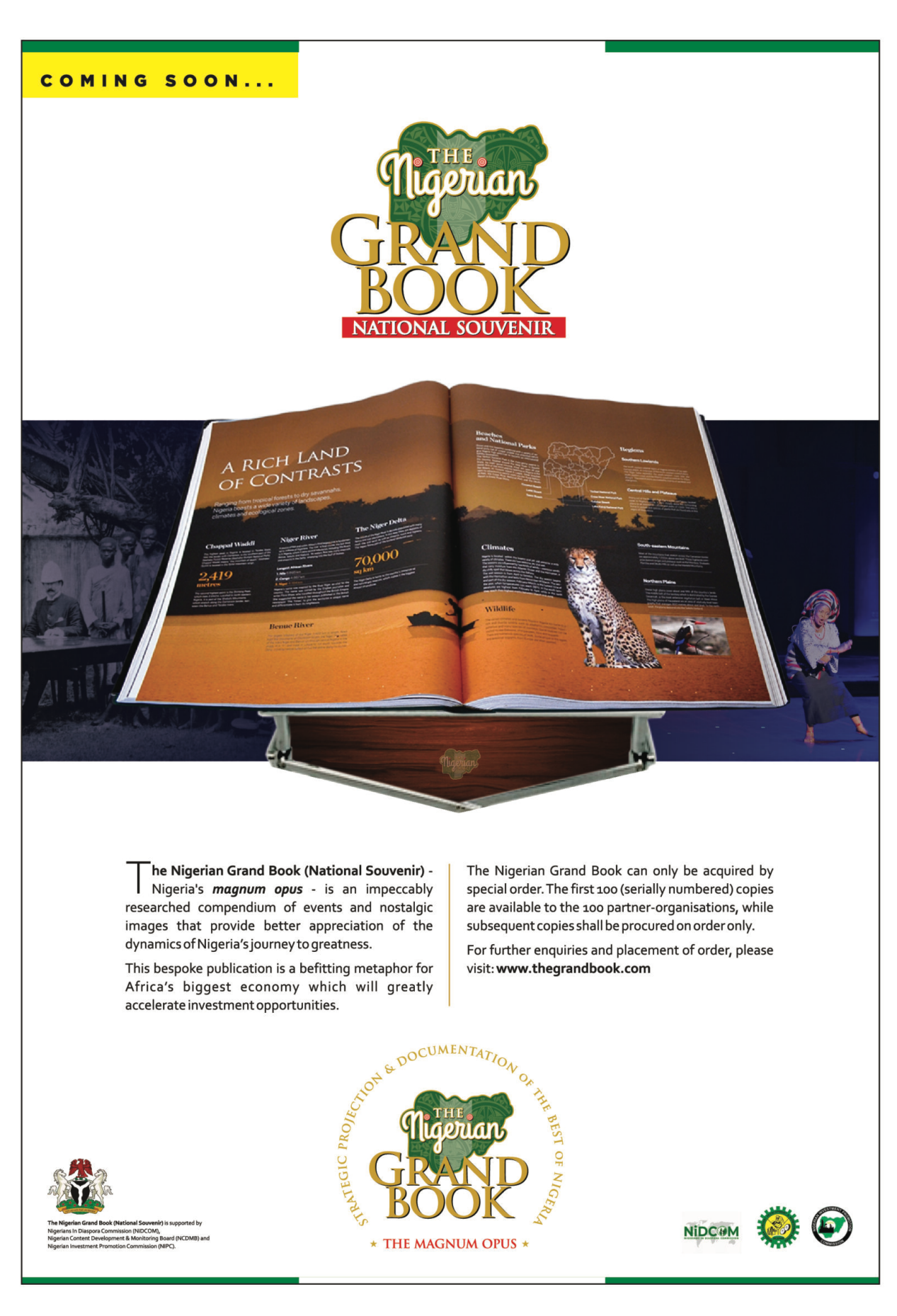
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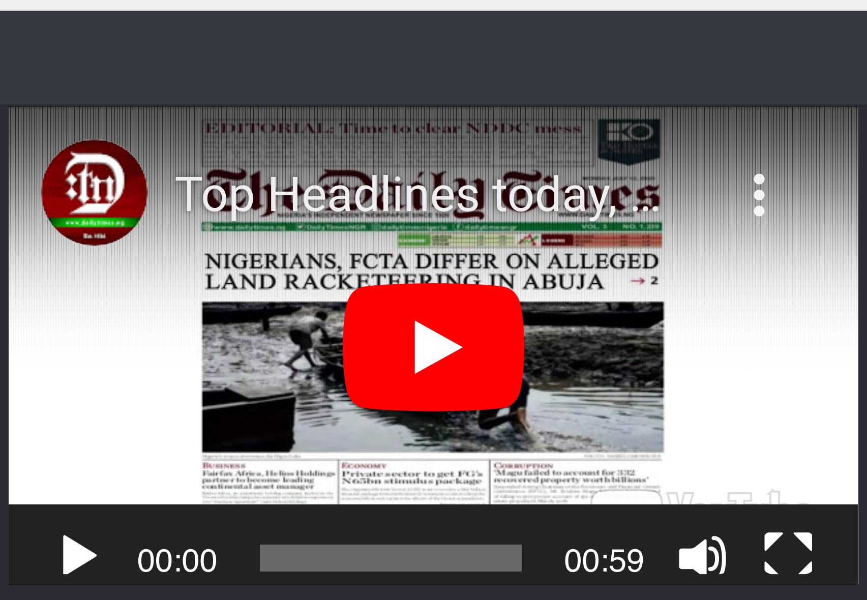

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