



PAPER DELIVERED AT THE PRE CONVOCATION LECTURE

OF THE

FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF KASHERE

Topic:

***"The Role of Digital Economy for National
Economic Development"***

Delivered by:

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Honourable Minister of Communications and Digital Economy

Venue:

Entrepreneurship and Service-Learning Center Auditorium, Permanent Site

Date:

Friday, 6th December 2019

Time:

4:00PM

All Protocols duly and respectfully observed.

May Peace, Mercy and Blessings be upon you!

It gives me great pleasure to be here to deliver this pre-convocation lecture on this important occasion of the combined convocation ceremonies at the Federal University of Kashere on the topic "***The Role of Digital Economy for National Economic Development***".

I wish to thank the organizers of this event for inviting me as a guest speaker. The topic is very appropriate as we just recently launched the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy to drive Nigeria's digital economy and development.

Economic development is one of the primary objectives of any government that wishes to enhance and improve the socio-economic well-being of its people. The digital age we are living in today has not only transformed the way economies function; from the nature of markets, how commodities are produce, how goods and services are delivered and paid for, human capital requirements etc, but it has also created new economic opportunities by boosting productivity, exposing businesses to new innovative ideas and technologies, and optimizing resources. We can, therefore, refer to Digital economy as 'Any aspect of the economy that is based on or driven by digital technologies.'

The digital economy has been defined in many ways by various individuals and institutions. The European Commission defines the digital economy as an economy that "encompasses businesses that sell goods and services via the internet, and digital platforms that connect spare capacity and demand".

The World Economic Forum and the Group of Twenty (G20) defines the digital economy as “a broad range of economic activities comprising all jobs in the digital sector as well as digital occupations in non-digital sectors”.

Phenomenons such as the penetration of internet access and components of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) have improved productivity and stimulated creativity where the rise of emerging technologies’ has provided a platform for developing countries like Nigeria to use digital technology to drive its economy. ICT which conveys the concept of the use of technology has been the catchphrase for technology for the last few decades. But, in recent years there has been a convergence of the sub-sectors of ICT, including information technology, telecommunications and broadcasting now regarded as Digital technologies.

The contribution from Digital technology sector has been one of the fastest-growing components of Nigeria’s GDP and is emerging as its most important long-term growth prospect. In the second quarter of 2019, ICT contributed 13.85% to the GDP calculations, as against Oil and Gas putting in 8.82% in comparison. With the right policies and strategy, the digital technology sector can double its contribution to the economy over the next five years.

Youths are the enablers of any digital revolution. Therefore, with a population having an average age of just over 18 years and with 60% of the country represented by youth, it indicates that Nigeria is ready to be the foundation of an African Digital Economy. Furthermore, seizing the initiative with the youth would make Nigeria the driver of a continent-wide digital economy under the new African Continental Free Trade Agreement (ACFTA). Nigeria also possesses an infrastructural advantage over its neighbours, and

this should also propel the nation to a position of digital leadership on the continent.

The redesignation of the Ministry of Communications as the Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy on the 17th of October, 2019 was incumbent upon the need to have a Ministry assigned the role of coordinating the activities related to Nigeria's Digital Economy. The change of name expanded the mandate of the Ministry to include a key aspect of the priority areas set for the Ministry by the Federal Government, which is the "Development and Implementation of a Digital Economy Policy and Strategy".

The name, Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy, gives a more holistic reflection of the mandate of the Ministry; communications addresses the channel, digital addresses the nature of the content and economy reflects the central focus of the activities of the Ministry, which is the development of the economy in line with the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) of President Buhari's administration.

The Digital Economic strategy focuses on addressing key objectives including

- i. Target 75% broadband penetration in 4 years;
- ii. To accelerate the digitalization of government processes and improve service delivery, transparency and accountability;
- iii. To improve trust, confidence and security around digital processes and activities;
- iv. To attract and grow digital jobs across all sectors of the economy;

- v. To develop the technology start-up ecosystem by actively promoting innovation and entrepreneurship;
- vi. To support the digital literacy of Nigerian Citizens, Business and Government workers and enable them to acquire cutting edge digital skills;
- vii. To develop a digital education curriculum to meet the current and future needs of the Digital Economy;
- viii. To ensure that indigenous technology companies are able to participate actively in government funded technology programmes; and
- ix. To ensure that the policy and regulatory instruments are fit-for-purpose and actually support the digital business environment.

To accelerate the development of a digital economy, the Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy is implementing the following pillars:

- i. Developmental Regulation (effective regulation of the ICT and digital sector in a way that enables development);
- ii. Digital Literacy and Skills (providing policy backing for massive training of Nigerians from all works of life in order to enable them to obtain digital literacy and other digital skills);
- iii. Solid Infrastructure (deployment of fixed and mobile infrastructure to deepen the broadband penetration in the country);
- iv. Service Infrastructure (support for Government Digital Services and the provision of robust digital platforms to drive the digital economy);

- v. Soft Infrastructure (strengthening public confidence in the use of digital technologies and participation in the digital economy);
- vi. Digital Services Development and Promotion (development of a vibrant digital ecosystem that supports Innovation Driven Enterprises (IDE) and Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in a way that engenders innovation);
- vii. Digital Society and Emerging Technologies (focus on tying the development of the digital economy to indices of well-being in the lives of the ordinary citizens; mentoring startups on emerging technologies and deploying their solutions);
- viii. Indigenous Content Promotion and Adoption (provision of a policy framework that gives preference to digitally skilled Nigerians for government funded projects in line with the Executive Orders 003 and 005 of the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR).

Under the guidance of President Muhammadu Buhari GCFR, the Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy and its Agencies with My supervision have since embarked on the journey of positioning Nigeria as a leader in the league of Nations in leveraging the Digital Technology for rapid Economic Development, through the implementation of the approved Digital Economic strategy.

Once again, I want to appreciate the Federal University of Kashere for inviting me. On that note, I wish to congratulate all the graduating students and wish them all success in their future endeavours. Thank you for your kind attention.