

Tech as a tool for cultural evangelism

 By [Lauren Hartzenberg](#)

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Observing that children in his community displayed a disinterest in their African culture, Adebayo Adegbembo - along with his team at [Genii Games](#) - created the Asa brand. Asa (meaning 'culture' in Yoruba) is a growing collection of mobile apps dedicated to promoting and conserving indigenous African cultures in an engaging way, targeting kids in Nigeria and Nigerian diaspora.



 Adebayo Adegbembo

This is done through a growing range of interactive apps focusing on traditional languages, folktales, ethics and etiquette. We got in touch with Adegbembo - a self-proclaimed 'cultural evangelist' - soon after Genii's Mobile App and Game Award win at the West Africa Mobile Awards last month to learn about the inspiration behind the Asa brand.

What was the inspiration behind the Asa brand?

Genii Games' Asa brand was inspired by the need to make African cultural subjects fun for kids. This was first sparked by my niece who is now four years old and other young neighbours who I noticed found subjects relating to the culture - such as languages - boring. For some of them, there's even a misconception that peers who speak their native languages are unsophisticated.

You've described yourself as a cultural evangelist. Why do you believe it is so important to preserve one's cultural heritage?

I believe one's heritage is a reflection of one's true identity and I believe it represents a deeper understanding of who we are.

Tell us about your involvement with startup accelerator Co-Creation Hub Nigeria.

My involvement with the CCHub goes back to the founding of Asa. We emerged first runner-up in its Tech-In Education hackathon and got incubated into its community. During this time we received seed investment, network and infrastructural support.

Asa's most popular app, Yoruba101, is an interactive Yoruba language learning app.

■ ***Does the company have any apps or games targeted at adults?***

At the moment our apps are built with kids in mind. However, adults find them fun to use due to the simplicity of their design.

■ ***Congratulations on your recent West Africa Mobile Awards win. What's your view on the power of mobile technology in Africa?***

Thanks. The power of mobile technology in Africa is one that continues to unravel. With the growing number of smartphones and mobile data, more opportunities than we've seen have started to emerge providing value for both developers and consumers.



■ ***What are the main opportunities and challenges in Nigeria's tech space at the moment?***

The main opportunities are relative to the sectors involved. It helps to see technology as an enabler, hence tech cannot be examined in isolation. That said, opportunities abound in various sectors to tap tech for growth and creative use in their value chain. A challenge would be the gradual adoption of tech itself. However, I can attest to the fact that it keeps getting better over the course of this journey given the growing reception to our work.

ABOUT LAUREN HARTZENBERG

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