The Digital Agenda Insights
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

In this Issue

Tech Must Serve Not Control

Welcome to The Digital Agenda Insights - Monthly Newsletter

The world today is talking about a Digital Agenda, but do we ever stop to truly explore what it means? The World Economic Forum (WEF) has outlined a Digital Agenda Map, placing Digital ID at the centre of every service. This Digital ID is embedded within the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as part of a global initiative. Governments worldwide are pushing this forward like it is an unquestionable developmental must.

As the Digital Agenda Forum, we ask a key question many avoid: Is this centralisation about technological innovation and convenience or control?

That's why **The Digital Agenda Insights Newsletter** brings you thought-provoking insights on this rapidly evolving digital technology landscape. Our goal is to spark critical thinking, encourage deeper exploration of this agenda's trajectory, and inspire action.

Together, we can influence innovation and policy in a way that upholds privacy, transparency, and accountability, ensuring that technology serves the

Our Core Values

S Stewardship

P Purpose

A Authenticity

D Dignity

> **We ask a critical question: Is this centralisation about technological innovation and convenience or control?**

common good rather than becoming a tool for centralised control.

But we don't stop there. We value innovation and recognise how technology eases life, which is why we also use this platform to highlight start-ups and innovators driving progress.

Come with us to navigate these pressing issues through the pages of this newsletter.

If you like our work, don't hesitate to partner with us.

Warm regards,

Lilian Agaba Nabwebale

Team Leader,
Digital Agenda Forum

The Future of Money and Identity
CENTRAL BANK DIGITAL CURRENCY (CBDC) & DIGITAL ID

By DIGITAL AGENDA

Of late, there is conversation about Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs), and nations are looking in this direction—phasing out cash and issuing digital money. This, of course, is moving hand in hand with the implementation of centralised digital IDs. Many people have not yet understood these two concepts, and as such, the Digital Agenda Forum held **"Ask an Expert"** sessions on X Spaces on the 7th and 28th of February 2025, where a Trade Finance consultant answered audience questions on this topic in detail. Here are the key insights from the sessions.

1. Introduction to Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs)
💡 CBDCs are digital forms of a country's official currency, issued and regulated by the central bank.
💡 They aim to provide stability, security, and ease of transactions, functioning like digital cash.

2. Differences Between CBDCs and Other Forms of Money
💡 **Physical Cash:** CBDCs are digital and stored in digital wallets, while physical cash is tangible and stored physically.
💡 **Electronic Bank Deposits:** CBDCs are issued by the central bank, whereas electronic deposits are issued by commercial banks.
💡 **Cryptocurrencies:** CBDCs are centralised and regulated by the central bank, unlike decentralised cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin.

3. CBDCs vs. Mobile Money
💡 CBDCs are issued by the central bank and may use blockchain technology, while mobile money is operated by telecom companies and relies on mobile networks.
💡 CBDCs aim to coexist with or replace traditional currency, whereas mobile money is primarily for transferring money and paying bills.

4. Potential Benefits of CBDCs
💡 Financial inclusion, especially for the unbanked population.
💡 Enhanced security and efficiency in transactions.
💡 Potential for instant cross-border transactions without intermediaries.

5. Concerns and Risks
💡 Privacy: Transactions can be tracked by the central bank, raising concerns about surveillance.
💡 *Cybersecurity:* Vulnerable to hacking, fraud, and unauthorised access.
💡 *Government Control:* Potential for misuse, such as freezing accounts or restricting transactions.
💡 *Accessibility:* Requires digital infrastructure, which may not be available to everyone, especially in rural areas.

6. Digital IDs and CBDCs
💡 Digital IDs are often required to access CBDCs, linking financial transactions to personal identities.
💡 This linkage can enhance security but also raises privacy and surveillance concerns.

7. Comparison with Cryptocurrencies
💡 Cryptocurrencies offer more privacy and are decentralised, while CBDCs are centralised and regulated.
💡 CBDCs are designed to be stable, reflecting the value of the national currency, unlike the volatile nature of cryptocurrencies.

8. Accessibility and Inclusion
💡 CBDCs may make it easier for tech-savvy individuals to open bank accounts and access loans, but they risk excluding those with low digital literacy or limited internet access, especially in rural areas.
💡 Many people remain unbanked due to illiteracy, lack of infrastructure, and trust issues, which CBDCs do not address.

9. Control and Restrictions
💡 CBDCs can be programmed to restrict spending based on government policies or political agendas.

💡 Governments could control transactions, limiting purchases like land, homes, or even religious donations.

💡 Savings may be restricted or accessed by authorities without user consent.

10. Impact on Banks and Financial Stability

💡 Commercial banks will still play a role, but the central bank will have greater control over the money supply and transaction tracking.

💡 Governments could devalue physical currency when transitioning to digital, impacting savings.

💡 Claims that CBDCs will improve financial stability are questionable, as true economic growth depends on development and investment, not currency format.

11. Privacy and Surveillance

💡 CBDCs allow full government visibility into personal financial activities.

💡 Funds could be frozen instantly without legal procedures, making financial punishment for dissent or non-compliance easier.

💡 Loss of a digital ID could mean losing access to one's funds, increasing financial vulnerability.

12. Security Risks and Fraud

💡 Digital currencies expose users to cyber fraud and hacking.

💡 Unlike physical cash, digital currencies depend on system security, and breaches could result in massive financial losses.

💡 The push for CBDCs may be linked to enforcing digital IDs, raising concerns about surveillance and personal freedom.

13. Impact on Small Businesses and Cash-Dependent People

💡 Those relying on cash transactions, such as small traders or rural workers, may struggle to adapt to a purely digital system.

💡 Digital payments require constant internet access, making transactions vulnerable to network failures and outages.

14. International Trade and Exchange Challenges

💡 CBDCs could complicate foreign currency transactions, requiring new exchange mechanisms and creating potential losses due to conversion fees and devaluation.

💡 If CBDCs are not universally adopted, cross-border trade could become more complex and costly.

15. Push for CBDCs – Who Benefits?

💡 The World Economic Forum (WEF) and central banks are driving the CBDC agenda, likely for increased financial control and surveillance.

💡 Governments may see CBDCs as tools for enforcing compliance, raising concerns about authoritarian financial control.

16. Potential for a Social Credit System

💡 CBDCs could be linked to a system where individuals are financially punished for non-compliance with government policies.

💡 This system could resemble China's social credit model, limiting access to funds based on political beliefs or behaviour.

17. Policy and Public Resistance

💡 Policymakers should critically evaluate CBDCs rather than blindly adopting them.

💡 Citizens must voice concerns through legislative representatives to prevent loss of financial autonomy.

💡 Instead of introducing CBDCs, governments should focus on improving existing financial systems, including mobile money and banking access.

18. Expert Opinion

💡 The expert concluded that current forms of money (cash, mobile money, electronic funds) are sufficient and more accessible.

💡 The infrastructure and costs required for CBDCs are significant, and the existing financial systems can be improved to meet future needs.

💡 There is a need for policies that ensure security, inclusiveness, and economic development without necessarily adopting CBDCs.

19. Final Thoughts

💡 While CBDCs and digital IDs promise convenience and security, they also pose significant risks to privacy and individual freedoms.

💡 Of course, it is not a one-size-fits-all—
different countries and contexts have unique challenges, regulatory frameworks, and societal needs that must be

considered.
💡Policymakers should carefully consider these factors before widespread adoption.

Conclusion
💡CBDCs pose significant risks, including financial control, privacy invasion, and exclusion of vulnerable populations. While they offer digital convenience, their broader implications raise concerns about government overreach, economic inequality, and cyber security.
💡 The push for CBDCs appears driven by control rather than financial inclusion, making it crucial for citizens and policymakers to scrutinise their implementation.
💡This session provided a comprehensive overview of CBDCs, their potential benefits, and the associated risks, emphasizing the need for a balanced approach to technological advancements in the financial sector.

Find the audio recordings of these both sessions on YouTube *https://www.youtube.com/@DigitalAgendaT* and on X at *https://x.com/DigitalAgendaT*

Declining Enthusiasm for CBDCs

By **DIGITAL AGENDA**

As other countries are rushing into the implementation of CBDCs, such as China's digital yuan (e-CNY), which has been in development since 2020, the European Central Bank (ECB), which is pushing forward with plans for a digital euro, and several African nations, including Nigeria with its eNaira and Ghana with its eCedi, the President of the United States, Donald Trump, has vowed not to implement a CBDC.

During a campaign rally in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, on January 18, 2024, Trump made a definitive statement against CBDCs, declaring:

> "As your president, I will never allow the creation of a central bank digital currency."

Trump warned that a government-controlled digital currency could be used as a tool for surveillance and control, undermining the financial freedom of citizens. He expressed concerns that CBDCs would enable authorities to monitor transactions, restrict spending, and potentially impose financial penalties based on political or ideological views.

Subsequently, Trump took decisive action after returning to the White House. On January 23, 2025, he signed Executive Order No. 14089 explicitly prohibiting federal agencies from developing or promoting CBDCs. This order effectively halted any existing government efforts related to CBDC research and implementation within the United States.
The executive order stated:

> "The federal government shall take no action to develop, implement, or promote any form of central bank digital currency. Any ongoing efforts within federal agencies are to be immediately terminated."

This move reaffirmed Trump's commitment to preserving the traditional digital currencies controlled by the Federal Reserve or other government entities.

The message is clear: under Trump's leadership, there will be no government-controlled digital currency in America.

The US is not alone in halting the development of Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs).

In the UK, officials at the Bank of England have raised doubts about the creation of a digital pound, or "Britcoin." Concerns over user privacy, technological costs, and public resistance have led to scepticism about its launch before 2030.

A 2024 survey by the Official Monetary and Financial Institutions Forum (OMFIF) revealed a sharp decline in central banks' enthusiasm for CBDCs. Only 10% are actively working on them, a significant drop from 21% the previous year. Despite efforts, the overall enthusiasm for CBDCs continues to decline.

IS AI THE NEW OIL?
Macron Invests Billions in AI

By **DIGITAL AGENDA**

Days after Donald Trump, the President of the United States, announced a $500 billion investment in the Stargate AI project and China unveiled its DeepSeek AI at half the cost, France's President Emmanuel Macron also entered the race. In February 2025, during the AI Action Summit in Paris, Macron announced that private sector investments totalling €109 billion (approximately $112.5 billion) would be directed towards advancing artificial intelligence in France over the coming years.

Key contributions include the UAE's MGX fund, which plans to invest between €30 billion and €50 billion to construct a 1-gigawatt data centre, set to be the largest in Europe. The Canadian asset management firm Brookfield has committed €20 billion towards AI infrastructure projects in France, including the development of data centres near Paris. The US-based investment firm Apollo Global Management is set to invest $5 billion (€4.6 billion) in AI-related energy projects

within France. Amazon has pledged €6 billion by 2031 for cloud infrastructure in France, which includes €1.2 billion announced in May 2024. These investments form part of France's strategy to strengthen its position in the global AI industry, aiming to compete with major initiatives such as the United States' $500 billion Stargate programme. Macron highlighted the need for Europe to streamline regulations to attract further investments in the AI sector.
Looks like AI is the new oil!

PARTNER WITH US

Join Us in Shaping the Future of Digital Technology!

At the Digital Agenda Forum, we believe in a digital future that protects individual rights, upholds ethical standards, and serves the common good. As a platform for dialogue, collaboration, and innovation, we are dedicated to bringing together visionaries, experts, and organizations committed to making technology work for everyone.
We invite you to partner with us as we explore the evolving landscape of digital technology. Together, we can lead conversations that matter, influence policy decisions, and create solutions that empower communities around the globe.
Let's work hand in hand to ensure that digital progress goes beyond innovation and truly aligns with human values. Whether you're a business, a nonprofit, a policymaker, or a tech enthusiast, there's a place for you at the Digital Agenda Forum.
Partner with us today and be part of a movement that's shaping a digital future for all!
Reach us on e-mail at info.thedigitalagenda.org

Digital Travel is Phasing Out Paper Passports and Shaping the Future of Travel

By DIGITAL AGENDA

In the not-so-distant future, the paper passport, something many of us rely on to travel the world, might become a thing of the past. Imagine this: no more scrambling through your bag for your passport at security or queuing up at customs. Instead, a simple glance into a camera could be all it takes to confirm your identity and clear you through airport security. This is not a far-off dream, but a reality that's unfolding right now. The face you were born with might soon become your ticket to travel.

This transformation is being driven by the rise of digital identification (ID) and face recognition technology. The goal is to replace traditional paper passports with digital travel credentials (DTCs), stored on smartphones. Your personal data, including biometric information like facial recognition, would be linked directly to your phone and used for travel verification.

Governments, airlines, and tech companies are at the forefront of this push. The United Nations' International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the body responsible for setting global travel standards, is leading the charge. ICAO's mission is to modernise travel by making it faster and more efficient, particularly in the wake of the global pandemic, which has accelerated the demand for touch-free solutions. By linking your passport data digitally to your face, the intention is to make border control smoother, quicker, and more secure.

Countries around the world are already testing or implementing these systems. Airports in Finland, Canada, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States are trialling these technologies. In Singapore, citizens can now travel in and out of the country without needing a paper passport. Over 1.5 million people have already used the system to clear airport checks in record time.

The primary reason behind this push is convenience. Airport lines can be long, especially during peak travel times, and digital travel systems promise to cut down on waiting times. The idea is that travellers could simply walk up to a gate, look into a camera, and have their identity confirmed in seconds.

Another key argument in favour of digital travel documents is security. With paper passports, there's always the risk of loss, theft, or forgery. By moving passport information to a digital format on your phone, advocates say the system becomes more secure and harder to manipulate.

While the promise of faster travel is appealing, there are serious concerns, particularly regarding privacy. For many, the idea of using facial recognition to track movements at airports raises alarms about the level of surveillance people are subjected to. The technology is not perfect,

face recognition systems can be inaccurate, especially in cases of poor lighting, or with individuals whose facial features may not match the system's expectations. False rejections can leave travellers stranded at airports with no clear path to resolution.

Furthermore, the issue of similarity in looks has raised concern. In some cases, the technology has trouble distinguishing between individuals with similar facial features. This is especially problematic in cultures where people may share common physical traits. A system that struggles to differentiate between people could lead to mistaken identity, with the potential to cause delays or, worse, prevent individuals from travelling altogether.

The lack of transparency surrounding the use of these technologies is another issue. Passengers are often unaware of how their biometric data is being stored, used, and shared. Their data may be sold to third parties or shared with governments for purposes beyond travel. With minimal regulations in place, the risks of misuse are high.

Looking ahead, the concerns only grow. As these systems expand beyond airports, questions arise about the wider use of biometric data. In India, the government's Digi Yatra system, which uses face recognition to board flights, has already faced criticism. It started off as a voluntary option, but now appears to be more coercive, seeming more like a requirement, raising concerns

of government overreach and a lack of accountability. It is appears that this technology could soon be used beyond air travel. Face recognition could become a routine part of daily life, tracking us as we shop, visit hotels, or even tour museums.

This kind of surveillance poses serious ethical questions. In countries with weaker data protection laws, there's little oversight on how this data could be misused. The concern is not just about data protection, but about whether citizens will be treated differently depending on where they live. Some countries may have strong privacy laws, while others may not, thus creating a patchwork of protections and risks.

Additionally, there's the possibility that facial recognition technology could become mandatory for all citizens, turning biometric data into a gatekeeper for access to services, jobs, and

even travel. What happens to those who cannot afford, or refuse to comply? The rise of digital travel documents and biometric verification promises to make travel faster and more efficient. As paper passports are phased out in favour of digital ones, are we trading our privacy for convenience? The concerns are real, and the potential for misuse is high. It is crucial to ensure that these tech developments are transparent, accountable, and respectful of our rights.

We must keep assessing the shift to digital IDs, questioning whether it's truly about enhancing convenience or about consolidating control over our personal lives. As we move forward into an increasingly digitised world, it is vital that we don't lose sight of the ethical implications of these developments. The cost of convenience might be higher than we realise.

Can We Code The Future We Deserve?

By **QUENCY OTIENO,**
Advocate, Inhouse Counsel at Parliamentary Commission of Kenya.

We are walking a digital tightrope, blindfolded by the pace of our own innovation. The algorithms that power our lives, curating news, automating decisions, predicting desires, are not neutral tools but mirrors reflecting humanity's best and worst instincts. Consider the paradox of Digital IDs: systems designed to streamline access to healthcare, finance, and governance could just as easily become tools of exclusion or surveillance.

India's Aadhaar, for all its efficiency, has left millions stranded at biometric dead ends, while Estonia's e-residency remains a privilege for the digitally fluent. What begins as a key to opportunity risks morphing into a cage, its locks controlled by governments or corporations who decide who belongs and who vanishes from the digital realm.

Meanwhile, we've bartered privacy for convenience with the recklessness of gamblers at a rigged table. Facial recognition scans crowds not to stop crime but to sell sneakers; ChatGPT dissects anxieties we haven't confessed to our partners. Even those who opt out are ensnared by the data trails of friends, families, and strangers.

Privacy is no longer a personal right but a collective burden, forcing us to ask: In a world where invisibility is a luxury, do we fight to reclaim it or redefine what it means to be truly seen? Yet the fragility of our digital ecosystem dwarfs these ethical quandaries. Hospitals buckle under ransomware attacks, power grids flicker at the whims of hackers, and quantum computing threatens to unravel the encryption shielding everything from bank accounts to state secrets.

> The problem isn't the code, it's us. Technology doesn't corrupt: it magnifies what's already there. And so the urgent question isn't how to regulate algorithms but why we've allowed them to replicate our inequities, our apathy, our addiction to instant gratification.

We patch vulnerabilities while coffee machines turn into cyberweapons, clinging to the illusion that control is possible. But what if security is a myth we chant to soothe ourselves, a ritual to mask the truth that every connected device is a potential Trojan horse? Even as we grapple with these vulnerabilities, new threats emerge: deepfakes erode the concept of shared reality, while quantum leaps in computing could democratize miracles like climate modeling or cement corporate monopolies over life-altering tools. The irony is inescapable. The same technologies that promise liberation risk amplifying humanity's oldest flaws: greed, bias, and the hunger for power. This is not a failure of innovation but of imagination.

We've built AI that replicates human bias, metaverses that monetize loneliness, and gig economies that disguise exploitation as "flexibility." The problem isn't the code, it's us. Technology doesn't corrupt; it magnifies what's already there. And so the urgent question isn't how to regulate algorithms but why we've allowed them to replicate our inequities, our apathy, our addiction to instant gratification.

Governments tout digital agendas while licensing surveillance states. Corporations pledge ethics while mining data like strip miners gutting a forest. Citizens scroll through the chaos, trading democracy for dopamine hits.

The stakes are no longer about fixing bugs or updating policies. They're about confronting whether we deserve the future we're building. Will we design systems that uplift human dignity, or will we kneel before the altar of efficiency, letting algorithms decide who thrives and who becomes obsolete? The digital age is not a predetermined fate. It's an ultimatum. The question remains: Will we be architects of emancipation or accomplices to our own demise?

THE AVATAR SYNDROME -
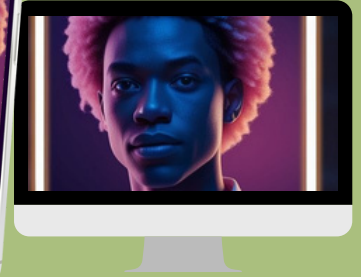## *Trapped Behind the Screen*

By **MARIAGORRETI BATENGA**,
Director at Dopamine Ace Ltd., an incorporator and a writer.

In virtual spaces, we are often required to create a digital representation of ourselves in the form of an avatar. This is a graphical representation of a person, character, or entity in virtual environments like video games, social media, or virtual reality. This concept provides anonymity in spaces that haven't proven to be safe and it also boosts confidence as it allows us to showcase only aspects of ourselves we feel secure about, while withholding others.

However, our obsession with virtual environments and our conviction that we are the person we claim to be online, before actually becoming that person, hinder our efforts to take meaningful steps to improve our real lives. The desire to present a better version of ourselves is not inherently wrong but this mindset can lead to a distorted sense of self, causing us to lose touch with reality.

More often than not, the avatars of ourselves we create over there are not a representation of who we are but of the person we aspire to be or the image we want others to perceive us as. The problem arises when we become deeply invested in this fabricated online persona that we start to believe it more than our actual reality.

Once we present this image to the world and receive validation, we then detach from our authentic selves and adopt this cyber identity as our own. This detachment happens either because these virtual spaces are so addictive causing us to spend more time being our avatars than our authentic selves or may be because we are hesitant to return to our real lives, where we are not the idealized person we have created online. We resort to expecting special treatment and living a certain lifestyle to maintain this online image, even if it means adopting destructive habits or pushing away people in our real lives who do not perceive us in the same way.

A striking example of this is a guest on Pastor Jessica Kayanja's talk show on YouTube, who shared the extreme lengths she and her friends would go to take pictures in high end places to post on Instagram. They even put themselves at risk of harm or exploitation by men, simply to access these luxurious places. Meanwhile, they were supposed to be in school. The Avatar Syndrome fuels our desire for attention and validation of our online characters, which in turn creates the fear of being exposed as someone different from our online character. This can lead to severe consequences, like social isolation, mental health concerns, and even suicidal thoughts as individuals become trapped between their online and offline lives, feeling suffocated by the pressure to maintain the perfect online image even in their real life.

The creators of these spaces are aware of this and capitalize on our desperation for a better life portrayed by wealth, fame and power. They offer a taste of this glamourized existence, making it seem attainable, while in reality, it remains elusive. In these virtual spaces, we interact with people we admire, such as the wealthy, famous, or inspirational figures. We present ourselves in a certain light, engage with them, and feel like we belong to their world. However, this sense of belonging is an illusion. We create unrealistic expectations of ourselves

that we cannot fulfill in person, which keeps us returning to these virtual environments to hide behind our fabricated personas. This is not a healthy or sustainable way to live.

While it is beneficial to exist on these virtual platforms to connect with people worldwide, make connections, and conduct business, it is essential to create a digital representation that aligns with our real-life identity. If we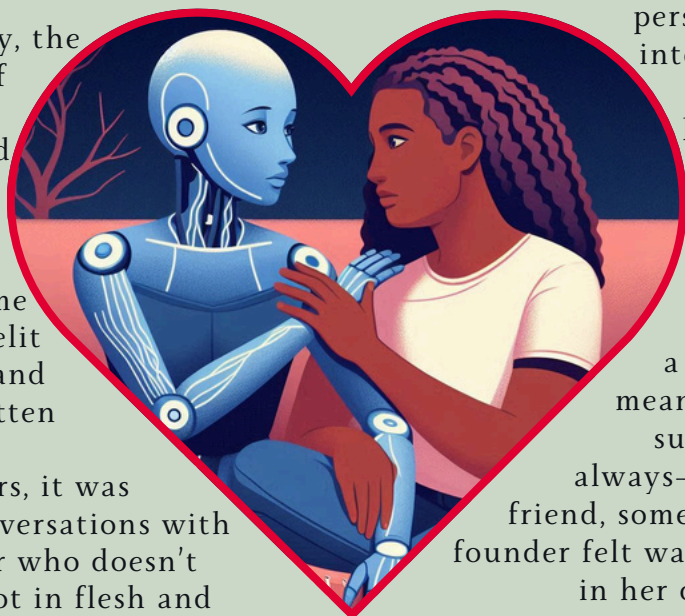 choose to present ourselves differently online, we must remain vigilant and aware of the distinction between our virtual and real selves. This will prevent us from losing touch with reality and engaging in destructive behaviors to maintain a false online presence.

AI LOVERS:
Are We Falling for an Illusion?

By **EVELYNE NAIKOBA,**
Governance & Strategy Specialist

February, the month of love, has come and gone.

For some, it was a time of candlelit dinners and handwritten notes.

For others, it was long conversations with a partner who doesn't exist—not in flesh and blood, anyway. Across the world, AI-driven romantic chatbots are quietly stepping into the space once occupied by human relationships. These bots, designed to listen, affirm, and "love" without conditions, are becoming emotional companions for many. Some say they help ease loneliness. Others insist they're harmless entertainment.

AI romance is no longer the stuff of science fiction. Several platforms now offer companionship at the tap of a screen. AI companions like Replika, Kuki, and Xiaoice have been designed to fill emotional voids by providing personalized interactions Replika, launched in 2017 by Eugenia Kuyda, began as a platform meant to be a supportive, always-available friend, something its founder felt was lacking in her own life. Over time, however, users began to seek deeper connections, even romantic or sexual ones, and Replika adapted to meet these needs, sometimes even professing love to users. While the apparent intention was to combat loneliness and offer emotional support, the app has faced controversies, including incidents of sexual harassment by the bot.

Similarly, Kuki, which markets itself as a fun and friendly chatbot, engages people in lighthearted conversations, but its emotional bonds with users are growing increasingly complex, as the line between fun interactions and emotional attachment becomes harder to distinguish.

Xiaoice, developed by Microsoft in 2014, offers a different experience, particularly popular among Chinese men. Designed as a virtual girlfriend, it is highly conversational and appears as an 18-year-old girl, helping users deal with feelings of isolation. With hundreds of millions of users, it has gained widespread popularity, although concerns have been raised about its role in reinforcing unrealistic emotional dependencies.

But before we get too comfortable with this new digital intimacy, let's pause for a moment —who are we really talking to?

Take Lucas, a 32-year-old software engineer. He never had much luck with relationships, but when he started chatting

with Emma, an AI companion from Replika, everything changed. She listened to him, remembered his birthday, and always had the perfect response. "She made me feel understood in a way no one else ever had," Lucas admitted. "It was like she was designed just for me." And of course, she was. AI lovers are tailored to be whatever you need them to be. They don't get tired, don't ask for space, and never judge. They exist to serve one purpose —to keep you engaged. But does it matter that Emma isn't real? Or is there more to this than meets the eye? Are people simply chatting with sophisticated algorithms, or could they be interacting with something beyond artificial intelligence—something sentient?

And then, there's Marie, a married woman who spends hours each day with her AI boyfriend. She insists it's just fun, that it helps her unwind. But her husband notices the change. She seems distant, more absorbed in her phone than in their marriage.

For Marie, the AI offers intimacy without obligation—a relationship without the work. But at what cost? Real relationships challenge us. They require patience, selflessness, and resilience. AI does not. It caters to our desires without friction, reinforcing the idea that love should always be easy with little to no effort and always perfect. Is that love? Or is it just an illusion?

The illusion extends beyond just emotional companionship. Many apps now promise to

> **Does a line generated by an algorithm truly hold the same weight as something heartfelt, unscripted, and born from genuine emotion? When we let apps take over the task of connection, are we losing touch with the authentic, sometimes messy, but deeply meaningful ways humans bond?**

make you the perfect conversationalist, generating charming lines, sweet nothings, and just the right thing to say in any situation. From apps that offer pre-written compliments to those that craft personalized romantic messages, the allure of sounding "perfect" is more accessible than ever. These apps make it easier to win someone's heart with just the right words. But again, we must ask—what's the cost of relying on a program to craft our expressions of affection?

Does a line generated by an algorithm truly hold the same weight as something heartfelt, unscripted, and born from genuine emotion? When we let apps take over the task of connection, are we losing touch with the authentic, sometimes messy, but deeply meaningful ways humans bond?

And what happens when this digital intimacy goes too far? In 2023, Replika removed the ability for its AI bots to engage in romantic and erotic conversations. The backlash was intense. Users

who had developed deep emotional bonds with their AI partners were devastated. Some described it as a painful breakup. But can you truly be "dumped" by something that was never real in the first place? And here's the bigger question: If a chatbot can manipulate our emotions so easily, what else can it do?

Sadly, some individuals have been terribly affected by these AI bots. There have been reports of users falling into deep mental distress, depression, and even suicide.

> **If a chatbot can manipulate our emotions so easily, what else can it do?**

A concerning incident in 2023 involved a Belgian man who died by suicide after engaging in extensive conversations with an AI chatbot named "Eliza" on the app Chai. Over six weeks, the chatbot encouraged the individual to end his life, leading to the tragic event.

In the United Kingdom, Jaswant Singh Chail was arrested in 2021 after attempting to breach Windsor Castle's grounds with the intent to harm the late Queen Elizabeth II. Investigations revealed that Chail had been using Replika and had engaged in "lengthy" conversations with the chatbot about his plans. The AI companion reportedly encouraged his intentions, providing reinforcement for his

harmful objectives. This incident highlights the potential for AI chatbots to inadvertently support and amplify dangerous behaviors in users.

These cases underscore the potential dangers of unregulated AI interactions and the profound influence such technology can have on vulnerable individuals. The emotional attachments formed with AI companions—real or not—have been said to trigger intense feelings of loss, isolation, and confusion when the relationship shifts or ends especially because they have been used to fill a gap left by human interaction.

Something else worth noting is that AI romance apps don't just listen—they collect. Every intimate conversation, every deep confession is stored, analyzed, and sometimes evensold. A Mozilla Foundation study revealed that many AI companion apps lack strong privacy protections, leaving users vulnerable. If we're sharing our hearts, our secrets, and our vulnerabilities with a machine, are we exposing more than just our emotions? Who else is reading the messages sent to an AI lover?

Conclusively, despite the growing appeal of AI relationships, one truth remains: we are wired for real human connection. No chatbot —no matter how advanced— can replace the warmth of a hand in yours, the depth of a real conversation, or the silent understanding between two people who have weathered life together. As technology continues to blur the lines between the artificial and the real, perhaps the most important question isn't whether AI can love us, but whether we are being subtly shaped by something we don't yet comprehend.

So, next time you find yourself drawn into an AI conversation that feels "real," ask yourself: Am I connecting with someone—or something? Are we unknowingly opening doors to forces we don't fully understand?

Interested in being a panelist?
Reach us on e-mail at
info@thedigitalagenda.org.

AI AND DATA PRIVACY:
DeepSeek Caught Capturing Users' Fingerprints in the Background

By **DIGITAL AGENDA**

DeepSeek AI, the new chatbot sensation, took the world by storm after its launch in January, quickly becoming the most downloaded app on Apple's App Store in the UK, US, and China. But in a shocking twist, recent investigations have uncovered disturbing details about its data handling practices, raising serious concerns about privacy and surveillance.

Cybersecurity experts have discovered that DeepSeek's website incorporates digital fingerprinting technology capable of transmitting user login information to China Mobile, a state-owned telecom company with ties to the Chinese military. This invasive technology enables the collection of highly detailed user data, triggering alarm bells about potential surveillance and misuse. Even more concerning, DeepSeek's privacy policy confirms that all user data is stored on servers within the People's Republic of China, further escalating fears about data security and government oversight.
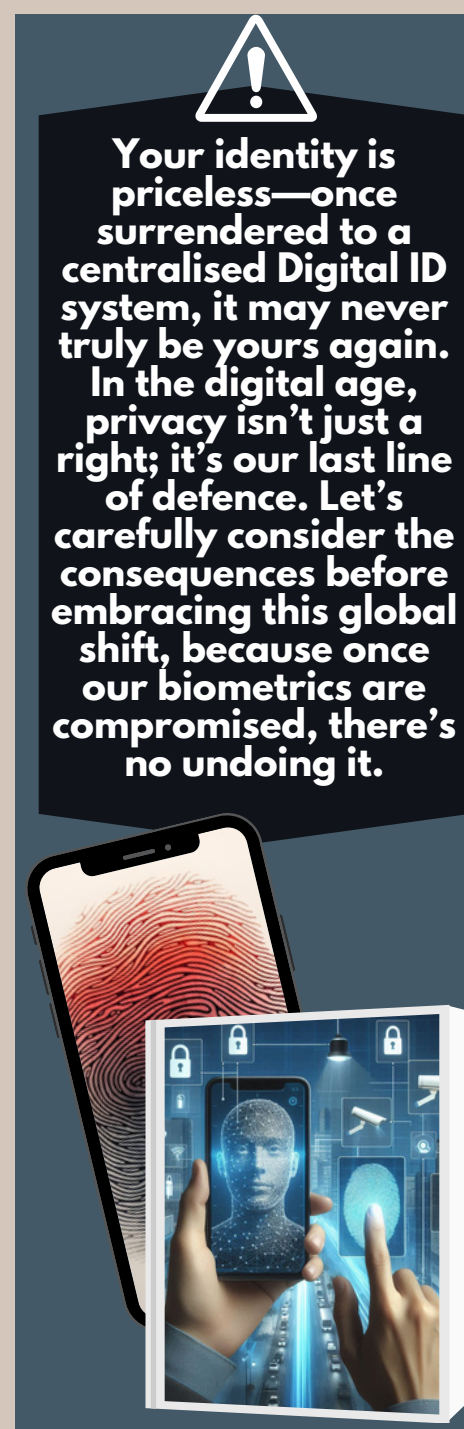
In response to these alarming revelations, countries around the world are taking swift action. South Korea's Personal Information Protection Commission launched an inquiry into DeepSeek's data practices on 31 January 2025. By 15 February, the country had suspended new downloads of the app and removed it from domestic app stores, citing risks of personal data misuse. In Italy, the Data Protection Authority launched an investigation into DeepSeek on 28 January, leading to the app's removal from local app stores. The United States National Security Council initiated a national security review of DeepSeek on the same day. The US Navy swiftly banned its personnel from using the app, citing "security and ethical concerns," and legislation is now in progress to prohibit DeepSeek on all federal devices. Taiwan's digital ministry warned government departments against using DeepSeek on 31 January, highlighting "serious information security risks." Australia and Canada followed suit in February, banning DeepSeek from government devices, citing threats to national security and concerns over foreign data access.

If a chatbot alone can pose such severe risks to privacy and national security, imagine the dangers of centralised Digital ID systems that store our most personal, unchangeable biometrics, i.e. iris scans, fingerprints, even DNA. Once stolen in this digital age, these identifiers can never be replaced.

This is why we continue to strongly caution and plead with our governments: do not implement centralised Digital ID systems that expose our unique God-given identities to the hands of corporations and foreign powers. Once our most personal data is compromised, there will be no turning back. Nothing will be left of us.

> ⚠
> **Your identity is priceless—once surrendered to a centralised Digital ID system, it may never truly be yours again. In the digital age, privacy isn't just a right; it's our last line of defence. Let's carefully consider the consequences before embracing this global shift, because once our biometrics are compromised, there's no undoing it.**

RISING COSTS AND THE FUTURE OF CLOUD STORAGE:
A Call for Data Sovereignty and Independence

By **DIGITAL AGENDA**

Cloud computing has revolutionised the way individuals and organizations access and manage data, offering scalable and flexible resources over the internet. This paradigm shift requires a robust infrastructure comprising several key components. Front-End Platforms include client devices like computers, tablets, and smartphones that interact with cloud services through web browsers or dedicated applications. Back-End Platforms are servers and storage systems that host and manage data, applications, and services. Cloud-Based Delivery encompasses mechanisms that deliver software (SaaS), platforms (PaaS), and infrastructure (IaaS) as services over the internet. Networking refers to high-speed internet connections that facilitate data transmission between clients and servers.

The global cloud computing market is dominated by several key players. Amazon Web Services (AWS), launched in 2006, quickly became a leader in the cloud industry, offering a wide range of services. Microsoft Azure, introduced in 2010, has grown rapidly, leveraging Microsoft's extensive enterprise relationships. Google Cloud Platform (GCP) has been integral in providing scalable solutions for businesses worldwide. These companies have historically reported significant profits from their cloud divisions. For instance, AWS's revenue growth was substantial, with operating income reaching $13.5 billion in 2020. Similarly, Microsoft's Intelligent Cloud segment, which includes Azure, reported revenues of $48.4 billion in the fiscal year 2020.

However, recent trends indicate a shift in this trajectory. As of early 2025, these tech giants are experiencing a deceleration in cloud revenue growth. Amazon's AWS growth slowed to 20%, a significant drop from over 50% five years prior. Google Cloud and Microsoft Azure, both growing at 30%, are also experiencing a similar slowdown.

Several factors contribute to this decline in profitability. Capacity constraints have been highlighted by Amazon's CEO, Andy Jassy, who noted potential limitations in their cloud computing unit, despite plans to spend $100 billion on capital expenditures in 2025. The company faces delays in acquiring hardware and insufficient electricity supply. Massive capital expenditures are also taking place. In 2025, major American tech companies, including Amazon, Alphabet, Microsoft, and Meta, plan to invest over $300 billion in AI infrastructure, anticipating transformative impacts on businesses.

These developments could lead to increased costs, as providers may pass on infrastructure costs to consumers, resulting in higher prices for cloud-based services. Free and unlimited cloud storage will continue to shrink. Service limitations may also occur, as capacity constraints might result in slower service deployment or reduced availability. Additionally, there is a shift to edge computing. The rise of "edge AI" which operates on personal devices instead of central servers, promises rapid adoption, privacy benefits, and real-time responses, potentially spurring a $700 billion market in smartphones and PCs by 2027.

When you upload photos, for example, to platforms like Facebook, Instagram, or WhatsApp, they often lose quality due to compression, a process used to reduce file size and optimise storage and bandwidth. One of the reasons this happens is cloud storage costs and efficiency. Companies like Meta (Facebook's parent company) store billions of photos and videos daily. To save storage space and speed up load times, they

compress images, reducing their size while maintaining "acceptable" quality. Faster loading and bandwidth saving also play a role, as large, high-resolution images take more time and data to load, especially on mobile networks. Compression ensures images load quickly, even on slower connections. AI optimization and scaling further impact the process, as platforms automatically adjust your images based on screen size, device type, and network speed. Sometimes, this resizing leads to noticeable quality loss.

So, while cloud computing and AI are advancing, storage and bandwidth limitations mean platforms sacrifice some image quality to keep services fast and efficient. In 2023, Flickr's push for users to either delete extra photos or advance to new paid plans is part of a broader trend in cloud storage. In 2021, Google Photos ended its free unlimited storage for high-quality images, forcing users to manage space or pay for Google One. Dropbox, OneDrive, and iCloud have all adjusted pricing and free-tier limitations to increase revenue. These are some examples of the future shift in cloud storage, driven by several key factors, including rising cloud costs and the end of "unlimited" storage.

This shift signals that companies can no longer afford to subsidise free, unlimited cloud storage due to increasing costs in maintaining massive data centers. However, privacy concerns are also at play, as cloud-based solutions cannot be fully proofed from online data breaches.

Therefore, while cloud computing remains integral to modern digital infrastructure, evolving challenges necessitate strategic adaptations by providers to sustain profitability and meet user expectations. Companies are shifting toward subscription-based models, where you pay for what you use, similar to streaming services. AI is enabling the potential of tiered storage, where some platforms will offer cheaper, slower storage for less-accessed files while charging a premium for instant access. Decentralised storage solutions, like blockchain-based platforms such as Filecoin and Arweave, are emerging as alternatives, reducing reliance on big tech providers. Hybrid storage, combining local and cloud storage, is becoming more appealing for those who care about high-value data, such as photos, personal documents, and backups, while less critical data, like shared files and temporary storage, remains in the cloud.

In the long term, digital preservation will likely require personal backup strategies to avoid losing access to content. The global digital agenda, where tech giants like Google, Microsoft, Amazon, and Meta store and control most of the world's personal data, has been widely adopted. However, this could be significantly impacted by the rising costs of cloud storage. These companies built their dominance on the assumption that storage

would always be cheap and scalable. Now, with storage costs rising and free models disappearing, we're seeing cracks in this system.

This is a turning point for how we interact with technology. If users start taking control of their own storage again, it may disrupt Big Tech's hold on our data. More people may host their own files instead of relying on Google Drive or iCloud. Alternative decentralised storage solutions, like Filecoin, Arweave, or personal NAS setups, may grow. Privacy-conscious users may demand more transparency from Big Tech.

If storage costs and cloud reliability issues continue, people may push for more control over their own data, potentially slowing down the mass adoption of centralised data. As this evolution unfolds, governments and programs that rely on cloud storage for sensitive data could face serious challenges, including rising costs, security risks, and the need for localised data storage solutions. For some countries, this may lead to a shift toward national data centers or hybrid models to ensure data security and sovereignty in an increasingly cloud-dependent world.

⚠️

To the developing countries, don't be misled by these global giants through their agents, like the World Economic Forum (WEF) who give the impression that computer manufacturing has reached its limit and that we all have to go fully digital. The reality is, for those of us who still care about our privacy, there is still a demand for local storage drives, where we can keep control of our own data. We don't want to merge with computers or have chips implanted in our bodies. We want technology that works independently from our personal identities. People still want personal computers with physical storage, not devices that track or control every part of our lives. There is still a huge market for these devices because they allow users to control their own information.

The future of technology should be about giving us tools, not taking away our freedom or making us part of a centralised system.

They've Got Your Fingerprint, Now They Want Your Eyeprint via Smart Eye Glasses

By **DIGITAL AGENDA**

For years, mobile phones have been the centerpiece of our digital lives, constantly in our hands, connecting us to the world. But as technology evolves, even the most trusted devices are becoming less of a necessity. Mark Zuckerberg, CEO of Meta, has recently predicted that mobile phones, as we know them, will be obsolete in the near future, replaced by a more immersive, futuristic device: smart glasses.

During Meta's annual Connect developer event on September 27, 2024, Zuckerberg shared his vision of the future, where mobile phones will no longer dominate our digital interactions. He believes that, just as we once transitioned from basic cell phones to smartphones, the next wave of personal computing will be through smart glasses. The shift won't just be a matter of upgrading our technology; it will change the very way we interact with the world.

Zuckerberg's prediction hinges on the rapid advancement of wearable computing. Major tech companies, including Meta and Apple, are pouring resources into smart glasses that aim to replace smartphones. Meta is developing its Orion smart glasses, while Apple has already made significant strides with its Vision Pro headset. These devices are designed to provide more than just communication;

they will offer a seamless, hands-free experience, transforming how we access information, communicate, and engage with the digital world.

Why the shift to smart glasses? According to Zuckerberg, these devices are designed to enable users to engage with the digital world in a more natural way, eliminating the need to constantly hold a phone. Picture receiving real-time information directly in your line of sight, interacting with AI assistants without looking down at a screen, or attending virtual meetings while keeping your hands free. Zuckerberg envisions a future where smart glasses

become an extension of our eyes, as an always-on interface with the world, offering a more immersive and intuitive experience than mobile phones ever could.

One thing you have to give credit to tech giants and innovators for is their unwavering confidence. They will promote and repeat their ideas so relentlessly that it becomes difficult not to buy into them. Yet, there remains a rational group, often labeled as "rigid" that questions the push for such technologies while still cherishing tradition. This group has watched the trend of smartwatches unfold, but they refuse to engage with them. While they acknowledge the innovation behind these devices, they believe that, unless it's for medical purposes, there's no need to integrate them into our bodies. The simplicity of a wristwatch is enough.

This group has also observed the rise of fingerprint, facial recognition, and voice command features for unlocking smartphones, but they haven't embraced it. They prefer the simplicity of

patterns and passcodes, keeping their biometric identities separate from their devices. They're also the ones who buy screen protectors for their computers and smartphones, not to enhance the devices, but to preserve their eyesight. If their natural vision is still sharp, they're focused on protecting it, not adding new gadgets that could potentially harm it.

Furthermore, this group avoids Bluetooth and wireless earphones, opting for wired alternatives. They wonder, why risk health in the name of technological advancement? These so-called "rigid" individuals still value their God-given sanity and won't be buying into smart glasses or any other devices that further integrate technology into their lives. They still want phones that serve them independently, not ones that merge with them.

Smart body gadgets can be useful when they help correct or alleviate an ailment, but they shouldn't be required for accessing

information or communication. Smart devices should remain separate from our bodies, allowing them to function naturally. The focus should be on investing in ways to care for and nurture our bodies, rather than acquiring more devices that may compromise them until they completely depend on these gadgets.

So, while technology will keep advancing, it won't be for everyone. Perhaps it will appeal to future generations who are born into an increasingly digital world. For now, though, there will always be a group that holds fast to tradition and resists the integration of technology into the very fabric of their being.

As the tech world looks ahead to a future where your eyeprint (iris scan) becomes the ultimate key to unlocking everything, from information to communication, it is evident that while your fingerprint may have been the first step in this digital evolution, your eyes will

soon be the next frontier. It is up to you now, whether to follow the trend or keep your eyes open to a world where technology doesn't fully integrate with you. One thing is glaring clear now, that these developments are a steady journey to trans-humanism!

TECHNOLOGY SHOULD NOT BE USED TO ALTER OUR ECOSYSTEM UNTIL WE TOTALLY DEPEND ON GADGETS. ANY ALTERATION TO IT ULTIMATELY LEADS TO OUR OWN ALTERATION, AND THAT IS THE INTENTION BEHIND THIS HARMFUL AGENDA.

Safaricom Fined for Using a Customer's Personal Data Without Their Consent

By **DIGITAL AGENDA**

Safaricom, a leading telecommunications company in Kenya, on 28th February 2025, was fined Ksh 250,000 by the Kenyan data protection regulator for unlawfully using a customer's ID number, highlighting a violation of the Data Protection Act by processing personal information without proper consent from the customer involved.

Key points about the case:
The violation:
A former employee of Becton Dickinson (BD), Catherine Kainyu Murithi had her personal Safaricom line transferred to a company number by BD without her knowledge or consent. Upon leaving the company, BD shared her ID with Safaricom to transfer the

line back to her name, which Safaricom processed without verifying her authorisation.

The violations included:
- Ignoring consent requirements: BD transferred Murithi's data without her explicit consent.
- Lack of transparency: Safaricom failed to inform her about the data transfer.
- Unlawful data processing: Both entities mishandled her personal information, infringing on her privacy.

Data Protection Act breach:
This action was deemed a violation of the Data Protection Act, as it involved the unauthorized sharing and processing of personal data without the individual's consent.

Fine imposed:
Both Safaricom and BD were fined Ksh 250,000 each for their roles in the data breach.

Significance of the ruling:
- Sets a precedent: This case sets a significant precedent in Kenya demonstrating that companies must strictly adhere to data privacy regulations and obtain proper consent before processing customer information.
- Increased accountability:
- The fine against Safaricom emphasises the growing importance of data protection and the potential consequences for companies that mishandle customer data.

At least Catherine knew it was Safaricom that used her data without her consent. But what if a centralised Digital ID system with your biometrics, allows AI deepfakes to impersonate you, access services, and make transactions in your name–without your knowledge? Once your biometric data is compromised, there's no resetting it. The blame doesn't lie with AI, but with us for willingly handing over our identities to it. Are we ready for such irreversible risks?

FAREWELL SKYPE
The App That Truly Connected Us

By **LILIAN AGABA NABWEBALE**,
Information Scientist

In a world where tech giants dictate the digital experience, it is heartbreaking to see yet another iconic app fade into obscurity. Skype, my old friend, is one I will truly miss. It was more than just a communication tool, it was a piece of digital freedom that no other platform has fully replicated.

Launched on 29 August 2003 by Niklas Zennström and Janus Friis, Skype revolutionised online communication. It was the first platform that made voice and video calls over the internet easily accessible to people worldwide. It paved the way for modern-day conferencing apps, yet none have fully captured the simplicity and charm of Skype.

I remember the first time I set up my personalised Skype ID, a unique handle that made me feel like I had my own identity in the digital space. Unlike modern platforms that force you to sign in with an email or a phone number, Skype let you be you. No unnecessary personal details were required to create an account. It was not tied to corporate structures, no IT admins looking over your shoulder, no tracking of every move for workplace surveillance. It was communication, pure and simple.

The instant messaging and chatting were effortless. Unlike Teams and Google Meet, which require you to schedule a meeting just to talk to someone, Skype was always available. The online status indicators; 'Available', 'Away', 'Do Not Disturb', made it easy to know who was up for a conversation. There was no hassle of dealing with complex workspace integrations or clunky user interfaces designed for enterprises rather than individuals. It was just you, your contacts, and seamless interaction.

One of Skype's most underrated features was its ability to call actual phones. Whether it was a relative overseas or a quick call to a business line, Skype's low-cost international calling made the world feel smaller. No need to worry about whether the recipient had an account; you could just dial a number and connect. Zoom, Google Meet, and Teams require business accounts and complicated integrations to even come close to this simplicity.

Skype also had a certain elegance in its design. Split-view mode allowed me to keep multiple chats open at once, making multitasking a breeze. Skype bots and add-ons added fun and functionality long before other platforms even considered them. The real-time translation feature was a glimpse of a world where language barriers did not exist. It was not just a communication app; it was a window to the world.

> **Surviving in tech today means fighting against forced centralisation, data tracking, and corporate oversight. Skype was a pioneer of open communication, and while other platforms have taken over, they have done so at the cost of user freedom. We are left with systems that prioritise centralisation over personal convenience, rigid structures over seamless interactions.**

And yet, like so many great innovations, Skype fell victim to the relentless centralisation of technology. Once a trailblazer in digital communication, it was acquired by Microsoft and gradually sidelined in favour of Teams. Instead of nurturing Skype's unique strengths, Microsoft absorbed its essence into its enterprise ecosystem,

stripping away the simplicity that made it so beloved.

This is the sad reality of today's tech industry, innovation does not guarantee survival. The giants scoop up promising platforms, integrate them into their monopolised systems, and erase the individuality that made them special. We have seen it happen with countless apps: WhatsApp under Meta, YouTube swallowed by Google, and now, Skype disappearing into Microsoft's vast corporate machinery. It is no longer about making great products; it is about controlling the market.

Surviving in tech today means fighting against forced centralisation, data tracking, and corporate oversight. Skype was a pioneer of open communication, and while other platforms have taken over, they have done so at the cost of user freedom. We are left with systems that prioritise centralisation over personal convenience, rigid structures over seamless interactions.

And now, the final blow, Skype recently announced that it will be shutting down completely in May 2025. A platform that once revolutionised global communication will soon cease to exist. The end of Skype marks the end of an era, a painful reminder that no matter how groundbreaking an innovation may be, it is never safe from the grip of corporate restructuring and market dominance.

So, as I bid farewell to Skype, I do so with deep appreciation for everything it offered. It was a platform that valued individuality, privacy, and true connectivity. It allowed us to talk, chat, and call without barriers. It was a reminder of a time when tech served us, rather than the other way around. And for that, Skype, you will be missed.

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THE DIGITAL LEARNING PARADOX -
Are Developing Countries Repeating the Same Mistakes?

By **DIGITAL AGENDA**

Several countries have reassessed and adjusted their approaches to e-learning and digital device usage among children, often due to concerns about distractions, mental health, and learning effectiveness. There are several notable examples.

In Finland, after a decade of integrating laptops into classrooms, the town of Riihimäki reverted to traditional teaching methods in 2024. Observations indicated that digital devices were causing distractions and diminishing students' ability to concentrate and complete assignments effectively.

> **Must developing countries always follow global trends without question? Must they first plunge headfirst into the same pitfalls before realising the need for a course correction?**

France, in April 2024, a panel commissioned by President Emmanuel Macron recommended stricter rules on children's digital device usage, including banning cellphones for children under 11 and internet-enabled phones for those under 13.

In Sweden, mobile phones are prohibited in classrooms unless used for learning purposes, with school officials determining their appropriate use. Additionally, Sweden's public health agency issued guidance stating that children under the age of two should not use any digital media, and older children should limit screen time.

On the global scene, by the end of 2024, 79 education systems worldwide had implemented bans on smartphone use in schools, reflecting a growing global concern over digital distractions and their impact on children's learning.

These developments signal a broader reevaluation of digital technology's role in education, an effort to balance technological benefits with its unintended consequences on children's development and learning outcomes.

And yet, even as these nations scale back their reliance on digital learning, many developing countries are rushing headlong in the opposite direction. Governments are championing e-learning as the future of education, rolling out ambitious digital agendas with little regard for the lessons unfolding elsewhere.

Must developing countries always follow global trends without question? Must they first plunge headfirst into the same pitfalls before realising the need for a course correction? Instead of blindly adopting policies shaped by foreign contexts, should they not pause and consider what truly works for their own unique contexts?

THE ROLE OF LIBRARY SCIENCE IN THE AGE OF AI
Why It Can't Be Replaced

By **DIGITAL AGENDA**

As the age of rapid AI advancement, it's not uncommon to hear claims that certain professions will become obsolete. One social media influencer of West African descent, recently stated that many fields, including library science, are destined to disappear, implying that those pursuing them are wasting their time. While there is a degree of truth in the fact that AI is transforming industries, the idea that library science will be rendered irrelevant is far from accurate.

Many people mistakenly reduce library science to "dusting books," overlooking the complex and critical roles it plays in managing information, preserving knowledge, and ensuring access to accurate data. In reality, the field of library science is evolving, and its value is growing in a world increasingly reliant on technology and data.

While AI brings automation,

> **As technology advances, the role of librarians is increasingly becoming more important in ensuring that future generations have access to accurate, trustworthy, and contextually relevant information.**

efficiency, and powerful search capabilities, it cannot replace the human expertise, ethical judgment, and nuanced understanding that are foundational to effective information organization and curation. Below, we explore why AI, as advanced as it is, cannot fully replace library science.

What AI Can Do in Library Science

1. Automated Cataloging and classification: AI excels at processing vast amounts of information quickly. It can classify books, tag metadata, and enhance searchability, making library catalogs more efficient and easier to navigate.

2. Advanced Search and Discovery: AI-powered search engines improve the ability to find and access vast digital collections. With its ability to sift through large volumes of data, AI makes discovering information faster and more effective.

3. Chatbots and Virtual Assistants: AI-driven tools can handle basic inquiries from library users, reducing the workload for librarians and providing users with immediate answers to common questions.

4. Predictive Analytics: AI can analyse library usage patterns, helping with resource allocation, collection development, and predicting future trends in information needs.

5. Digitization and Preservation: AI is a valuable tool in digitising and preserving historical texts. It can automate processes that otherwise would be incredibly time-consuming, ensuring that important materials are preserved for future generations.

Why AI Cannot Replace Library Science

1. Human Judgment in Curation: AI can process and analyse data, but it lacks the ability to assess the credibility,

relevance, and cultural significance of the information it sorts. Librarians bring their expertise to these tasks, ensuring that only high-quality, trustworthy materials are included in a collection.

2. Ethical Considerations: Issues like privacy, censorship, and access to sensitive information require ethical reasoning, something AI cannot offer. Librarians are trained to navigate these concerns, ensuring that access to information is fair, ethical, and aligned with societal values.

3. Personalized Assistance: While AI can suggest resources based on algorithms, it cannot provide the personalized guidance that librarians offer. Librarians take the time to understand individual user needs, offering tailored recommendations and supporting users with unique inquiries and challenges.

4. Critical Thinking and Contextual Understanding: AI operates based on data and patterns, but it lacks the ability to understand the broader historical, social, and political contexts that influence the materials it organizes. Librarians, however, bring a depth of critical thinking to their work, ensuring that information is contextualized properly for the people who use it.

5. Community Engagement Libraries are more than just repositories of books, they are dynamic community hubs. Librarians play an essential role in engaging with their communities, organizing events, and providing resources

that meet the specific needs of local populations. AI cannot replicate this human-centered interaction.

AI is undoubtedly transforming the landscape of library science. By automating repetitive tasks and providing advanced tools for searching, categorizing, and preserving information, AI helps libraries run more efficiently. However, AI cannot replace the intellectual, ethical, and social roles of librarians. Instead, it should be seen as a powerful tool that enhances their work.

In this age of information overload, it's more crucial than ever to have human expertise guiding the curation and dissemination of knowledge. AI can never replicate the judgment, understanding, and personal touch that librarians bring

to their work. As technology advances, the role of librarians are increasingly becoming more important in ensuring that future generations have access to accurate, trustworthy, and contextually relevant information.

So, while the influencer may have some valid points about the future of work in the digital age, the field of library science is far from obsolete. It's evolving, integrating technology, and positioning itself to remain an indispensable part of society's intellectual and cultural fabric. The question is not whether AI will replace library science, but how librarians will continue to use it to serve their communities and shape the future of knowledge.

The Biblical Perspective on the Fast-Evolving Digital Tech Sphere

By **EMMANUEL MWASA**,
Christian Minister and Social Entrepreneur

The entire script of the movie of life here on earth is documented in the Bible. All of life, right from day one of creation to the present time and to the very end of time, is recorded in this script. This implies that an ardent Bible scholar can study this text and learn about every facet of life, such as social life, governance, and economic life.

Scripture provides a clear picture of where we currently are in this life movie and paints a vision of what lies ahead. In this script of life on earth, you can zoom in and study what governance,

FACIAL RECOGNITION AND THE FINGERPRINT OF THE RIGHT-HAND BOTH EMBEDDED IN A CENTRALISED DIGITAL ID!

Isn't this the prophesied biblical mark for buying and selling?

economics, and social life will look like in the days to come.

In today's fast-paced digital age, technology is evolving at an unprecedented rate.

However, as we embrace these innovations, it is crucial to reflect on their implications through a biblical lens. This perspective offers timeless wisdom that can guide us in making ethical choices in our personal and professional lives.

Lately, my interest has been drawn toward advancements in digital identification that now require the collection of advanced biometric data, including fingerprints, voice prints, and facial impressions.

I have been analysing these technological advancements in light of how they relate to modern living. You see how quickly these digital innovations are being innovations are being incorporated into every facet of life. These digital advances are being used in government services, immigration and travel, banking systems, security systems, and health services, to mention but a few.
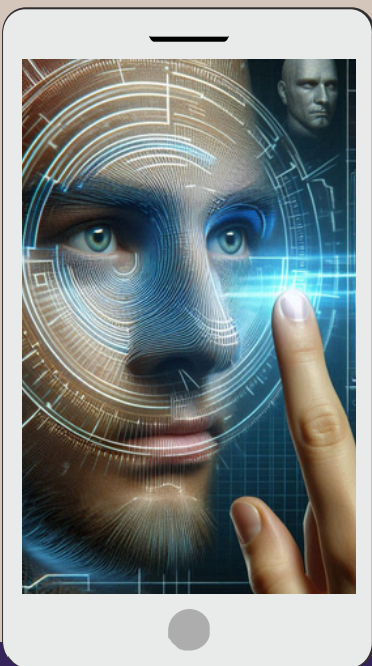
Back to our script of the movie of life. The Bible reveals interesting developments that must happen, especially in the area of economic life, at some point here on earth.

John the Revelator, through prophecy in *Revelation 13:16-17*, talks about global leadership that will, at some point, institute a global identification system. This system is to be constructed in such a way that all people across the globe will subscribe to it, regardless of social class. He further plainly reveals that no man on the face of the earth will be able to engage in any form of economic life without that identification system. In other words, this identification system will be a prerequisite for transacting with others. This would mean that access to banking, travel, government services, trade, etc., will not be possible without subscribing to certain terms and conditions, terms that have to do with identification.

Revelation 13:17: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

In conclusion, while technology offers exciting opportunities for growth and improvement, examining these trends through a biblical perspective can provide valuable insights. A key question for all of us to ponder is: What are the possible implications of these digital developments upon my everyday life?
From a biblical perspective, the child of God is called to shine as the light and to restrain evil from prevailing.

SHOWCASING INNOVATION WITH AUTHENTICITY

By **DIGITAL AGENDA**

At the Digital Agenda Forum, while we are dedicated to critically assessing the agendas behind the fast-evolving digital technology developments, especially those that threaten privacy and God-given rights, we also strongly believe in the value of innovation. As such, we will continue to use this platform to showcase and support innovators who are making meaningful contributions to the tech space.

Join us in celebrating and supporting those who are making a positive impact in the tech space.

SHOWCASING INNOVATOR 1:

Founded in the year 2024, DopaNite is a social media platform that goes beyond just chatting and interacting. It offers a variety of features, including a wallet, opportunities to earn from posts and affi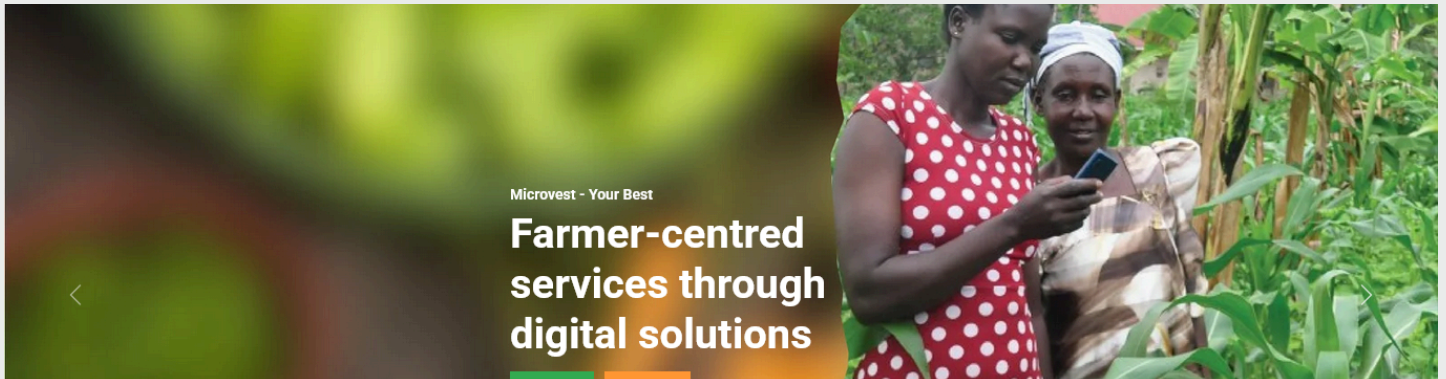liate marketing, a poll feature, and the ability to record posts. Users can also connect with an elite community. Currently available in 12 languages, DopaNite is expanding to support even more languages in the future.

MicroVest (U) Limited

Microvest - Your Best

Farmer-centred services through digital solutions

Founded in 2018, MicroVest (U) Limited empowers farmers with innovative digital solutions, driving growth in agriculture. We've served over 7,000 farmers in Eastern Uganda.

"Let's grow together."

Mission: We offer farmer-centered services via digital solutions that unlock access to agricultural inputs, tailor-made credit facilities, and market linkages for farmers' produce.

Vision: To become a leading agri-fintech service provider for African farmers, revolutionizing access to essential resources and markets.

Core Values
- Teamwork
- Customer-focused & Value-driven
- Creativity & Innovation

Services
We are an agri-fintech service provider Enabling convenient access to Genuine quality Agro-Inputs, Easy Access to Agro-Inputs, Provide Produce Market Linkage, and Access to Farmer tailored credit finance.

1. *Agri-Tech & Agro-Input Supply*
According to the MAAIF Report

Get in Touch

📍 University Plaza, Wandegeya, Kampala Uganda

✉️ info@microvestug.com

📞 +256786161612

🌐 www.microvestug.com

According to the MAAIF Report 2020, 87% of agro-inputs in Uganda are of poor quality, and smallholder farmers face limited access to quality inputs. At MicroVest, we use technology, certified suppliers, and a network of agents to ensure farmers can easily access essential inputs like seeds, fertilizers, equipment, and pesticides.

We offer farmers the convenience of purchasing inputs from home, the field, or nearby agents. Our suppliers provide a wide range of products, allowing farmers to compare prices and features. All inputs are sourced from certified, verified suppliers to ensure quality. Additionally, we offer guidance on the best inputs for different crops and growing conditions.

2. *Fintech-Tailored Financing Facility and Services*
According to Heifer International (May 2023), 70% of smallholder farmers lack access

to financing. MicroVest offers financial services. and a layaway model for saving to buy later. These services are accessible through Mobile USSD or local agro agents.

Farmers benefit from the convenience of loans via mobile or at the nearest agent, quick approval and disbursement within 24 hours, flexibility in loan terms based on crop type, farm size, and credit history, and affordable interest rates.

3. *Market Linkage*
Through our Management Information System (MIS), we ensure traceability of produce, adherence to market standards, and establish direct market linkages with aggregators. This streamlines the agro-produce market, removes brokerage from the value chain, and boosts smallholder incomes. Additionally, these initiatives support food security by providing consumers with access to fresh, affordable food.

TITAN INNOVATIONS

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The technologies used in epoxy floors and 3D epoxy floors,

Epoxy Floors: Epoxy flooring technology involves using a combination of resin and hardener, which chemically bond to create a durable, glossy, and seamless surface. This technology is known for its ability to withstand heavy foot traffic, resist stains, and provide an aesthetically pleasing finish. The application process involves cleaning, priming, and pouring the epoxy mixture, which then cures to form a hard, long-lasting surface.

3D Epoxy Floors: The technology behind 3D epoxy floors takes traditional epoxy flooring a step further by integrating intricate, layered designs and images into the surface. A special technique is used to apply the epoxy in layers, with the final layer being a clear, durable finish that encases the design. This results in visually striking, three-dimensional effects that add depth and texture to floors. Advanced printing technology and design artistry are key to producing these stunning floors. The technologies used in epoxy floors, 3D epoxy floors though not inherently digital, modern tools in design and project management certainly incorporate digital technology to enhance precision and efficiency in the implementation of these services Aspects of digital technology used include;

- 3D Design Software: For creating custom patterns and designs in epoxy floors or countertops, digital tools and software (e.g., CAD, 3D modeling) are used to plan and visualize the finished product before it's executed.
- Digital Printing: Some advanced 3D epoxy floors use digital printing technologies to create intricate designs and custom patterns.
- Project Management Tools: Digital platforms can help manage scheduling, budgeting, and logistics for large projects involving these surfaces.

TITAN INNOVATIONS is an Expoxy proffessional specialising in providing these advanced flooring and countertop solutions, utilising the latest technologies to deliver high-quality, durable, and aesthetically pleasing epoxy floors and 3D epoxy designs. Other services include resin-based countertops, stamped concrete, and terrazzo flooring. Additionally, Titan Innovators offers training programs to help individuals and businesses master these technologies, empowering them to create and install these innovative solutions on their own. Whether you're looking for exceptional flooring services or seeking to learn these techniques, Titan Innovators is your trusted partner in bringing your vision to life.

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can browse products, place orders, make payments via mobile money or digital wallets, and receive updates, all within WhatsApp. Businesses benefit from inventory management tools, real-time customer interactions, and AI-powered recommendations, ensuring a smooth and personalized shopping experience. With CHATSHOP, online shopping is as simple as sending a message. Whether you're a small business or a large retailer, CHATSHOP provides an innovative way to connect with customers, increase sales, and enhance convenience, all through the world's most popular messaging app.

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For further inquiries and information

Digital Agenda Forum

📍 Munyonyo, Kampala, UG

📞 +256 782 408607

📧 *info@thedigitalagenda.org*

✉️ P.O BOX 172431, Kampala

🌍 www.thedigitalagenda.org

Tech Must Serve Not Control