



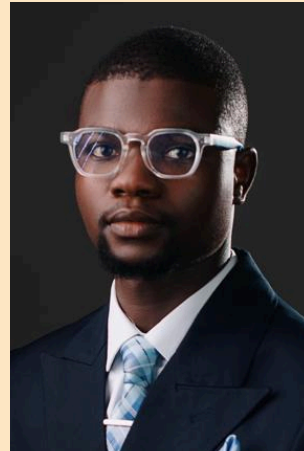
THINK BEFORE YOU POST: LIBEL RISK FOR NIGERIAN CONTENT CREATORS



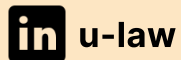
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Nigeria's digital landscape is expanding rapidly, driven largely by young creators and digital entrepreneurs across platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), podcasts, YouTube, and blogs. Content creation has evolved beyond casual posting into structured businesses, personal brands, and full-time careers with measurable influence and financial value.

But with visibility comes exposure. As creators pursue engagement, growth, and virality, an important consideration is often overlooked: the legal risks associated with publishing content online. A single post, tweet, caption, or video can carry consequences far beyond audience reactions or lost followers. Among these risks, libel remains one of the most significant and misunderstood legal exposures for content creators.



Libel in the Digital Age

Libel refers to the publication of a false statement presented as fact that damages the reputation of another person or organisation. In the digital environment, publication includes virtually any written, recorded, or visual content shared online, including tweets, captions, blog posts, podcasts, YouTube commentary, and WhatsApp broadcasts.

If content posted online harms the reputation of another person or business, the creator or publisher may face legal liability. The speed and reach of digital platforms increase the risk, as content can spread rapidly to thousands or even millions of viewers beyond the creator's control within minutes.

“I Just Shared It”: The Forwarded Content Myth

A common misconception in digital spaces is that adding disclaimers such as “forwarded as received,” “allegedly,” or “no copyright intended” offers protection against liability. In reality, this belief is incorrect. Under defamation law, every repost, share, or forward is treated as a fresh publication. Even if a creator did not originate the content, sharing it may still expose them to liability.

Sharing content is an editorial decision, and editorial decisions carry legal consequences. Disclaimers do not automatically shield individuals from responsibility.

Why Libel Matters to Content Creators

For content creators, digital platforms represent professional identities and commercial assets. Every post contributes to building or weakening credibility, audience trust, and brand value. Poorly considered content can lead to legal threats, takedown demands, and reputational disputes. In some cases, allegations of defamation have led to the loss of brand partnerships and sponsorship opportunities.

Trust is currency in the digital economy. Audiences and collaborators gravitate toward creators perceived as credible and responsible.

Defences Available Under Libel

The law recognises several defences where content is published responsibly. One key defence is truth; if a statement can be proven true, it generally will not amount to libel. Another defence is honest opinion, where views are clearly presented as opinions and based on facts. There is also the defence of privilege, which applies in specific contexts such as fair reporting of official proceedings. These defences must be applied carefully and should not be treated as automatic protection.





Practical Tips for Posting Responsibly

Creating content requires discipline and awareness. Creators should verify information before publishing, avoid amplifying unproven allegations, and distinguish clearly between fact and opinion. Tone also matters. Humour, sarcasm, and satire can still be defamatory if they convey false statements.

Taking a moment to pause before posting reflects professionalism and responsibility.

The Bigger Picture

As Nigeria's digital economy continues to grow, legal scrutiny of online content is likely to increase. Creators who understand the legal implications of publishing are better positioned to grow sustainably and protect their brands. Knowledge of defamation law helps prevent costly disputes and preserve long-term reputation.

Legal awareness is not a barrier to creativity; it is a tool for longevity.

Conclusion: Create Boldly, Post Responsibly

Content creation offers significant opportunities for expression and income. With influence comes responsibility. When creators verify information, exercise sound judgment, and respect legal boundaries, they safeguard both their reputation and long-term success.

Understanding libel risk is not about limiting creativity; it is about protecting the creator, the audience, and the integrity of the digital space. When creators verify information, exercise good judgment, and respect legal boundaries, they protect not only themselves but also the integrity of the digital space.

Create boldly. Post responsibly. Stay legally protected.

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