**Can Your Startup Legally Lean on AI in Nigeria? Here’s What the Law Says**

Startups in Nigeria are increasingly turning to artificial intelligence (AI) to streamline daily operations—think automating customer service with chatbots, optimizing logistics, or crunching data for smarter decisions. It’s a game-changer for efficiency and growth, especially in a fast-moving market like Nigeria’s.

But here’s the catch: while AI promises to supercharge your startup, what does the law say about using it for your day-to-day grind?

In a country with no specific AI legislation yet, the rules aren’t crystal clear, but there’s still a legal landscape you need to navigate.

First off, Nigeria doesn’t have a dedicated AI law as of February 25, 2025. Instead, existing regulations—like the Nigeria Data Protection Act (NDPA) of 2023, step in to govern how AI interacts with personal data, which is often the fuel for AI systems. If your startup uses AI to process customer info (say, for targeted marketing or credit scoring), you’re legally required to get consent, keep that data secure, and be transparent about how it’s used. Mess up here, and you could face penalties or reputational damage.

The NDPA isn’t AI-specific, but it’s a big deal because AI thrives on data, and Nigeria’s regulators are watching.

Then there’s the ethical and liability angle. Let’s say your AI-powered chatbot accidentally gives bad advice to a customer, or your algorithm screws up a delivery schedule,

who’s on the hook? Nigerian law doesn’t explicitly say “AI is liable,” because AI isn’t a legal person. Under the Cybercrimes Act of 2015, if your AI system causes harm (like a data breach), your startup could still be held accountable if negligence is proven.

The lack of AI-specific liability rules means you’re operating in a gray zone, so documenting how your AI works and ensuring human oversight might save you a legal headache.

Intellectual property (IP) is another tricky spot. If your startup builds an AI tool or uses one to create content, like a logo or a product description. who owns it?

The Nigerian Copyright Act of 2022 says only humans or companies can claim copyright, not machines. So, if your AI spits out something brilliant, you might argue it’s yours as the creator of the system. But if it’s trained on someone else’s copyrighted data without permission, you could be infringing.

Startups need to tread carefully here, especially with global AI tools that might not align with local IP quirks

So, what’s the takeaway for your Nigerian startup? You can use AI for daily tasks, think customer support, inventory management, or even hiring. But you’ve got to play by the rules of data protection, accountability, and IP.

The government’s working on a National AI Strategy (drafted in 2024), so clearer guidelines might be coming. For now, weave compliance into your AI adoption: get consent, audit your systems, and keep humans in the loop. That way, you harness AI’s power without tripping over Nigeria’s evolving legal wires.