

The new digital Africa

 By [Gaurav Singh](#)

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Top industry trends for the year across the continent will include marketing automation, online media investment and the continued rise of local content - all part of the new digital Africa.

Eight trends are expected to transform Africa over the next 12 months, as follows:

1. Marketing automation

Tier 1 marketers in the SSA region will start exploring the opportunity of marketing automation to deliver better personalisation and micro-targeting through more sophisticated segmentation tools and systems. This is all on the back of a consumer base that is more connected and more receptive to messaging, and offers that improve their lives.

2. 25% investment for online media

With over 26% average internet connectivity across the sub-Saharan region and more than 40% of time spent on mobile devices, we'll finally see marketers investing up to 25% on online channels ... as a result video, programmatic and native will finally become part of the healthy marketing mix. Perhaps not too surprisingly, South Africa's digital economy is the most developed in Africa, with Egypt, Kenya and Nigeria close behind. Africa's internet penetration last year stood at 16 percent, or 167 million people, but it is forecast to reach 50%, or 600 million people, by 2025 given the young consumer markets in Africa and the accessibility to more affordable technology.

3. Social to sales

Due to their 'near zero' organic reach, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn are no longer social platforms, but the good news is that they offer sophisticated products specifically driving performance, such as online sales, acquisition and driving downloads. In 2016 we'll see Facebook offering hyperlocal targeting capability, which will allow local businesses to move from engagement as the matrix to driving actually footfall and sales. The conversion channels will be made easier and as we see the introduction of more accessible payment systems, so we will see the growth of online sales increasing across Africa.

4. Global vs local content

The advent of digital migration has been rather slow across Africa, and in most parts the content is heavily skewed towards global content consumption (80:20). However, most African markets will see local content getting its fair share of the spotlight, and this will help build local ecosystems with the right talent, ad formats and revenue for local publishers. This will be a big boost for local content producers and media owners as we are already witnessing the growth of Nollywood as an example.



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5. e/m-commerce

Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya and Egypt are currently leading the e/m-commerce drive on the continent, however over the next couple of years, e/m-commerce will start emerging in the next six SSA economies (Tanzania, Ghana, Gabon, Zambia, Uganda and Senegal), largely driven by the improvement in broadband connectivity, local logistics ecosystem and smartphone penetration. This is already a key focus for the banking sector.

6. Native apps

Thanks to the uptake of smartphones and lower broadband cost, 2016/17 businesses will move from mobile-optimised sites to rather focus on native apps for the businesses. In the early stages of the smartphone market, most apps were tailored to the iPhone. However, the market share for Android phones grew, thus, the need for cross-platform functionality became an issue. This will still be a problem going forward as we see new phone manufacturers entering the African market with cheaper smartphone options, but it won't deter the growth for long.

7. Instant messaging

Chat platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook messenger, WeChat, Snapchat and Viber will overtake emails to become the most popular communication channel, and in the next couple of years we'll see how businesses will start incorporating instant messaging (IMs) as part of consumer engagement. Data and airtime are valuable to consumers in Africa, so IM will grow in popularity across the board and will fuel new commerce initiatives for many brands.

8. Government sector growth

Massive investments are already being made by many sub-Saharan economies as they move processes such as benefit payments, tax filing, passport and license application online. We'll also see more investment in digitising education, healthcare and public services. As such, governments will play a large role in building and capitalising on a rapidly developing digital new Africa.

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