

5 trends that are shaping the future of SA's fleet management

New technologies continue to shape the connected world, enabling communication virtually, working remotely, and even accessing telehealth. Similar innovations are shaping South Africa's fleet management industry, driving the adoption of electric vehicles, Mobility-as-a-Service (MaaS), and countless other cutting-edge trends enabling the sector to operate efficiently, safely, and more environmentally friendly.



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"Although technology, like The Internet of Things (IoT), MaaS, and Artificial Intelligence (AI), has been around for some time now, the last two years accelerated its adoption," says Justin Manson, sales director at Webfleet. "Fleet managers have been able to use this technology to improve the customer experience, optimising transportation and creating opportunities to monitor their vehicles better. And this trend will only expand over the coming years."

The Internet of Things

Internet-connected devices are everywhere, from smart watches to smart home appliances, and the list of devices continues to grow. The Ericsson Mobility report estimates that there will be around 29 billion connected devices this year and that IoT will power approximately 18 billion of them.

The Internet of Things is critical in fleet operations, such as vehicle tracking, tyre pressure monitoring, and refrigerated monitoring systems. However, this technology will play an even more prominent role in the future of transportation, where fleet managers and drivers can monitor vehicle conditions in real time, accurately route vehicles to different lanes to minimise traffic time, and enhance automated alerts. For example, the technology will let fleet managers and drivers know what's about to break down or proactively alert emergency services and operators if a driver enters a danger zone, creating strategic alternatives to reroute and safeguard drivers and cargo.

Mobility-as-a-Service

MaaS has solved countless transportation problems, and its benefits will only continue to expand in the future. This service

is considered the future of mobility, and reports predict it will become a \$22.18 billion market by 2028. While initially focused on ride-sharing, MaaS is now spilling into traditional fleet operations, allowing services such as Uber Eats and Courier Butler to enter the market.

This service will undoubtedly gain much more traction in South Africa in the coming years and will eventually transform traditional fleet management into MaaS management.

Artificial Intelligence

Fleet management is one of the many areas that AI is disrupting – allowing fleet managers to prioritise driver safety without compromising cost or efficiency.

For example, in the past, fleet managers would need to sit and view endless hours of in-cab video footage to pick up if the driver was on the phone. However, fleet managers can now create safer driving conditions by pairing telematics technology with AI-based vehicle video cameras to identify risky driving. They can receive real-time audio and visual warning alerts when the driver speeds, brakes or steers harshly or when the driver engages in distracted driving behaviour, like using a phone.

As this technology advances, fleet managers can use it to monitor drivers' following distance, lane deviations, and similar risky driving behaviour.

Electric vehicles

Consumers have predominantly driven electric vehicles' success abroad because they want to be more environmentally conscious and reduce their carbon footprint or just looking to reduce the rising fuel cost. For South Africa, however, the fleet sector will drive the electrification of vehicles.

"The reason we'll see fleet management power this innovation in the country is that, on the consumer side, we don't have a lot of charging ports, and there's the issue of load shedding, which has a serious impact if a driver is trying to recharge their vehicle. So even though solar solutions are available, it can still be quite costly for people to install and use them for their vehicles," adds Manson.

For fleet management, however, charging vehicles is in the fleet manager's control. So, for example, managers who know how many kilometres their vehicles travel can charge them overnight. Additionally, most businesses throughout the country have generators, inverters, or solar systems set up. They can use those to charge their vehicles overnight, knowing that those vehicles are ready for however many kilometres they need to travel the next day.

Companies like Aeversa are already pushing the electric vehicle model in the fleet business by reducing the total electric fleet ownership costs for organisations.

Telematics

Telematics technology has experienced astronomical evolution over the years, allowing vehicles to sort and analyse vast asset data that businesses and drivers can use to schedule maintenance and address other issues smarter and faster than ever.

The sector is now seeing an environmental push where fleet companies take their carbon footprint more seriously. That's where telematics technology can help businesses drive down their carbon emissions and fuel costs.

"More businesses now realise the value behind investing in solutions like telematics, IoT, and AI, which has seen this technology grow exponentially, and we're going to see a lot more buy-in from businesses than before in coming years," concludes Manson.

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