STRATEGIC MARKETING for AFRICA

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AMC AFRICAN MARKETING CONFEDERATION

Journal of the African Marketing Confederation

Issue 2 2026

Online Search

CREDIBILITY AND TRUST CREATE THE NEW VISIBILITY

AI and the human intelligence imperative

2026 Conference: Africa gathers in Livingstone

Meet our new AMC President

Redesigning the in-store experience

Changing media trends in the DRC

Buying decisions in traditional trade

Charting a bold future direction for the AMC as we embrace change

It is with immense pride that I welcome readers from across the continent to the latest issue of *Strategic Marketing for Africa*, the thought-leadership magazine of the African Marketing Confederation.

This publication's role is to inform, educate, share knowledge and foster debate about marketing and its related professions. It does so from an unapologetically African perspective, while acknowledging the marketing trends, developments and discussions taking place globally.

This is my first column since being elected President of the AMC in May 2026, and I look forward to this magazine being a medium for sharing the AMC's plans, activities and success stories during my five-year term in office.

I share some of my thoughts and plans on pages 16-17 of this issue. But, as I acknowledge in my interview, the African Marketing Confederation exists to serve its members and the African marketing profession as a whole, so there will be extensive consultation with all stakeholders as we develop a strategic plan to drive us through the next five years.

One of our immediate priorities has been finalising plans for our upcoming AMC Conference in late September 2026. As a Zambian I am immensely proud that my country is hosting this gathering in the shadow of mighty Victoria Falls, or Mosi-oa-Tunya, which is a deep cultural and spiritual anchor for Zambians. Read more about the conference on pages 18-19 of this issue, including how we are part of a groundbreaking triple-discipline gathering under the auspices of the Africa Commerce Convergence Summit.

I look forward to welcoming you in Livingstone!

Matongo Matamwandi
President: African Marketing Confederation

> « **There will be extensive consultation with all our stakeholders as we develop a new five-year strategic plan** »

MESSAGE DE LA PRÉSIDENTE DE LA CONFÉDÉRATION AFRICAINE DU MARKETING

Définir une vision d'avenir forte pour l'AMC

C'est avec une immense fierté que je souhaite la bienvenue aux lecteurs de tout le continent à cette nouvelle édition de *Strategic Marketing for Africa*, le magazine de réflexion stratégique de la Confédération africaine du marketing.

Cette publication a pour mission d'informer, d'éduquer, de partager les connaissances et de favoriser le débat sur le marketing et les professions qui y sont liées. Elle adopte une perspective résolument africaine, sans pour autant perdre de vue les tendances, les évolutions et les réflexions qui animent le marketing à l'échelle internationale.

Il s'agit de ma première chronique depuis mon élection à la présidence de l'AMC en mai 2026, et je me réjouis de voir ce magazine servir de plateforme pour partager les projets, les activités et les réussites de l'AMC au cours de mon mandat de cinq ans.

Je partage quelques-unes de mes réflexions et de mes projets aux pages 16-17 de ce numéro. Toutefois, comme je le souligne dans mon entretien, la Confédération africaine du marketing est au service de ses membres et de l'ensemble de la profession du marketing en Afrique. C'est pourquoi nous mènerons une vaste consultation de toutes les parties prenantes dans le cadre de l'élaboration d'un plan stratégique qui guidera notre action au cours des cinq prochaines années.

L'une de nos priorités immédiates a été de finaliser les préparatifs de notre prochaine Conférence de l'AMC prévue pour la fin du mois de septembre 2026. En tant que Zambien, je suis immensément fier que mon pays accueille ce rassemblement à l'ombre des majestueuses chutes Victoria, ou *Mosi-oa-Tunya*, qui constituent pour les Zambiens un puissant symbole de leur patrimoine culturel et spirituel. Pour en savoir plus sur la conférence, consultez les pages 18-19 de ce numéro, notamment pour découvrir comment nous participons à un rassemblement novateur réunissant trois disciplines sous les auspices de l'Africa Commerce Convergence Summit.

Au plaisir de vous accueillir à Livingstone !

Matongo Matamwandi
Président : Confédération africaine du marketing

MENSAGEM DA PRESIDENTE DA CONFEDERAÇÃO AFRICANA DE MARKETING

Traçar um futuro arrojado para a AMC

É com imenso orgulho que dou as boas-vindas aos leitores de todo o continente à mais recente edição de *Strategic Marketing for Africa*, a revista de liderança de pensamento da Confederação Africana de Marketing.

O papel desta publicação é informar, educar, partilhar conhecimento e fomentar o debate sobre o marketing e as profissões com ele relacionadas. Fá-lo a partir de uma perspectiva assumidamente africana, reconhecendo igualmente as tendências, os desenvolvimentos e os debates de marketing que têm lugar a nível global.

Esta é a minha primeira coluna desde que fui eleito Presidente da AMC em Maio de 2026, e espero que esta revista seja um meio para partilhar os planos, as actividades e as histórias de sucesso da AMC durante o meu mandato de cinco anos.

Partilho algumas das minhas reflexões e planos nas páginas 16-17 desta edição. Mas, como reconheço na minha entrevista, a Confederação Africana de Marketing existe para servir os seus membros e a profissão de marketing africana como um todo, pelo que haverá uma ampla consulta com todas as partes interessadas à medida que desenvolvemos um plano estratégico para nos orientar ao longo dos próximos cinco anos.

Uma das nossas prioridades imediatas tem sido finalizar os planos para a nossa próxima Conferência da AMC no final de Setembro de 2026. Como zambiano, sinto um imenso orgulho pelo facto de o meu país acolher este encontro à sombra das majestosas Cataratas Vitória, ou *Mosi-oa-Tunya*, que constituem uma profunda âncora cultural e espiritual para os zambianos. Leia mais sobre a conferência nas páginas 18-19 desta edição, incluindo o facto de fazermos parte de um encontro inovador de três disciplinas sob os auspícios da Africa Commerce Convergence Summit.

Aguardo com expectativa a oportunidade de vos dar as boas-vindas em Livingstone!

Matongo Matamwandi
Presidente: Confederação Africana de Marketing

STRATEGIC MARKETING for AFRICA

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Tanzania Marketing Science Association
Uganda Marketers Society
Zambia Institute of Marketing
Le Club Marketing Avis+

Meeting the demands of an industry that never stands still

Welcome to our latest issue of the African Marketing Confederation's thought-leadership magazine for discerning African marketers. As always, it's a pleasure to be with you and I trust that you will enjoy your read.

Many years ago, when I began editing marketing publications, one of my big concerns was whether I would find enough content to fill the pages. Since then, a few people have asked me how we find sufficient stories for each issue.

The answer is simple: This is an industry that doesn't stand still – not for a minute. I had this validated a while ago when I was chatting to a senior marketer and asked him why he'd chosen marketing over other potential professions. His response was "because no two days are the same".

More recently, I had the pleasure of interviewing new AMC President, Matongo Matamwandi (read that interview on pages 16-17) and asked a similar question. His response was much the same: It's a profession that's ever-changing.

All-embracing AI

Our latest issue confirms this. Not long ago, SEO was a bedrock of digital marketing. These days? Not so much, as our cover story by the very talented journalist Fiona Zerbst highlights (see pages 10-15).

All-embracing AI is seemingly changing the game at every turn – or at least has the potential to. When the next wave of AI arrives are businesses in Africa prepared to receive it? That's the question that experienced pan-African marketer Rahwa Gebremeskel attempts to answer on pages 20-25.

Retail, too, is certainly not exempt from the significant changes being shaped by the rapid onward march of martech.

As retail consultant Riad Laher points out on pages 32-35, many retail systems – including the checkout – are being fundamentally redesigned by the onset of AI-based tech. What I find fascinating is his assertion that the checkout has moved from being a labour-intensive payment function to a real-time operational intelligence system that will have significant implications across almost every corner of the store.

For the AI sceptics

If you're tech-averse or just a medium-weight AI sceptic, we have something for you too. On pages 30-31, market research expert Soyinka Witness argues that, in African contexts in particular, AI will not replace market research and human market researchers. But it will expose weak strategy faster.

Similarly, in her article on pages 28-29, marketing academic and educator Dr Helena van Wyk examines what she calls the 'tech-hype trap' and explains why human judgement, not technology, will pave the way to competitive advantage in Africa.

Latest marketing news

Lastly, don't forget that our news team also posts daily news articles on the AMC website to keep you updated on the latest marketing news from Africa and the world

Click on the 'News Articles' tab for the latest news relevant to marketing professionals and those working in allied industries.

Until next time,

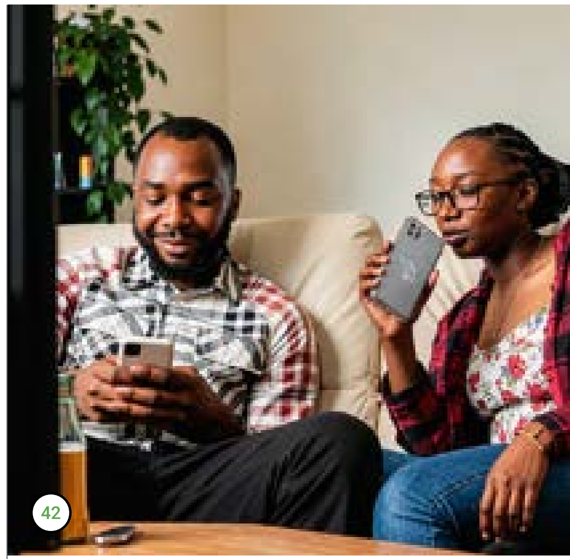
Mike Simpson
Editor

Our AMC members

Each issue, we do our best to report on what our AMC members are doing. Whether it's hosting events, organising educational activities, hanging out together at fun days, or electing new office bearers – we'd like to hear about it.

In this magazine we have articles about AMC member associations in Malawi, Rwanda, South Africa and Zimbabwe. But there's always room for more, so please keep us informed about your activities.

Contents



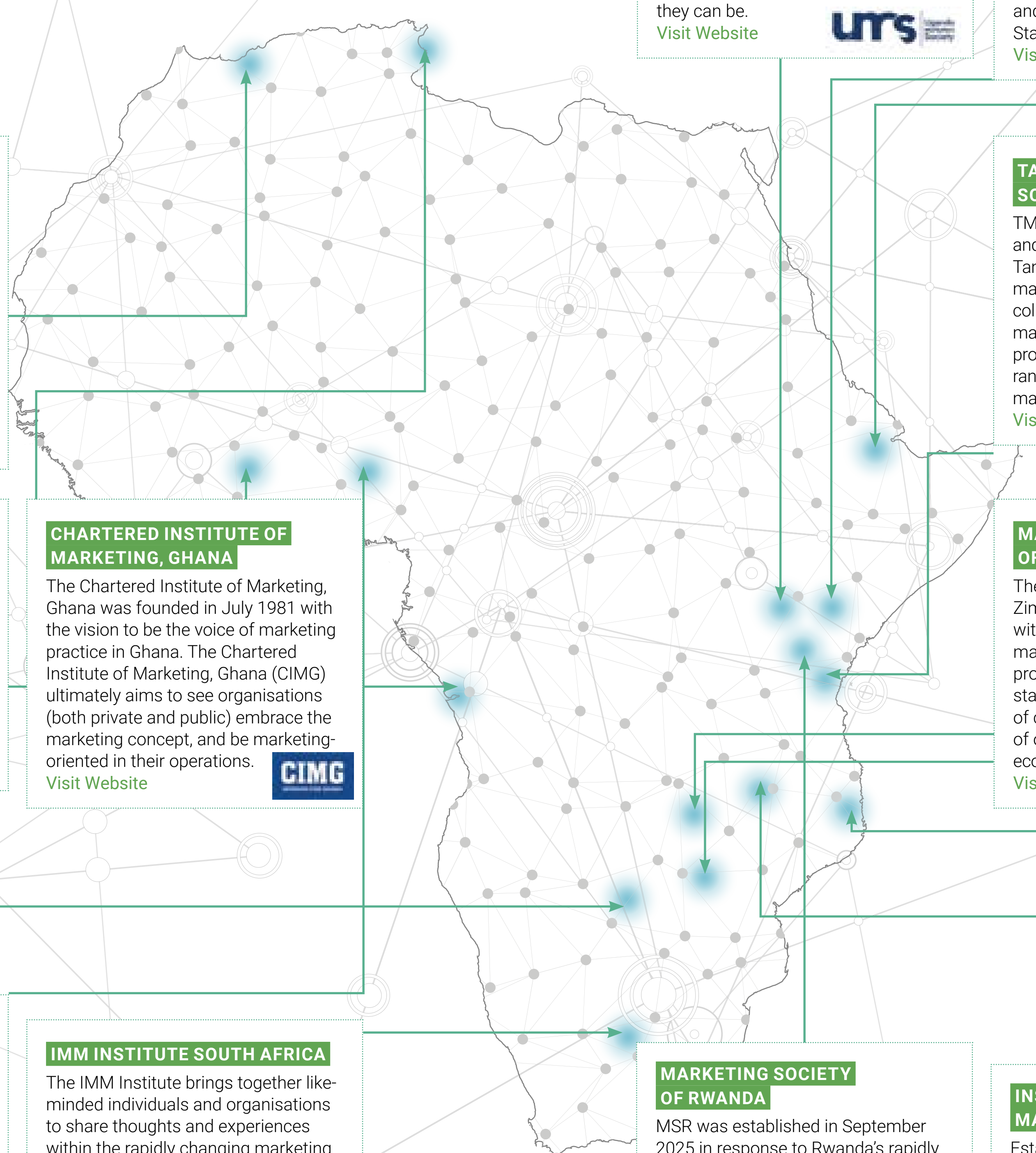
NEXT ISSUE:

- 2026 AMC Conference report-back
- What's driving marketing performance in African markets
- Morocco's disappearing neighbourhood stores

Introducing the African Marketing Confederation

The African Marketing Confederation is the ground-breaking pan-African body of marketing professionals spearheading the ongoing development of the highest possible standards of marketing across Africa.

Founded in 2011, the AMC is a collaboration between the various national marketing bodies and associations to exchange expertise and information, as well as to promote the marketing profession as a whole.By unifying the bodies in the various countries, the AMC exchanges expertise and information, provides intellectual capital, and ensures that the continent has a platform for like-minded marketing professionals.



UGANDA MARKETERS SOCIETY

Uganda Marketers Society is the premier organisation for marketers in the country, dedicated to promoting excellence in the field. UMS provides a range of resources and opportunities for skill-building, so members can stay up-to-date with the latest trends and best practices in marketing. We help members become the best marketer they can be.
Visit Website

MARKETING SOCIETY OF KENYA

MSK is the national umbrella body for all marketers in Kenya. Its key mandate is to empower and regulate the marketing industry by creating policy that governs the Marketing Industry (self-regulated), education and training of professionals, corporates and entrepreneurs, marketing and business mentorship, and arbitration through the Advertising Standards Board.
Visit Website

ETHIOPIAN MARKETING PROFESSIONALS' ASSOCIATION

The Ethiopian Marketing Professionals' Association is a beacon of marketing excellence, officially recognised and licensed by the Ministry of Justice under Proclamation No. 621/2009. The EMPA's goal is ambitious but tangible: To emerge as Africa's leading marketing association and catalyse engagement, education, inspiration, and the training of exceptional marketing professionals.
Visit Website

LE CLUB MARKETING AVIS+

Since 2019, the Avis+ brand of PVRM (Plus Value Research and Marketing) has united a dynamic community of 500+ French-speaking marketing leaders across eight African markets (Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Congo, Guinea, Senegal, and Togo) through its flagship knowledge-exchange platform, the Avis+ Marketing Club.
Visit Website

L'ASSOCIATION MAROCAINE DE MARKETING ET DE LA COMMUNICATION

The AMMC (English name: Moroccan Association of Marketing and Communications) was created in 2013 as a platform for the country's marketing and communication communities. Its aim is to promote the professions, develop the skills and knowledge of members, and promote the economy of Morocco. Visit Facebook page

TANZANIA MARKETING SCIENCE ASSOCIATION

TMSA harmonises the knowledge and practice of marketing in Tanzania. It aims to create a strong marketing ecosystem by driving collaboration between industry and marketing experts. Its services include professional training programmes ranging from certified to professional marketer.
Visit website

ZAMBIA INSTITUTE OF MARKETING

The Zambia Institute of Marketing is a professional marketing institution that was established by an Act of Parliament No. 2 of 2022 to regulate, promote, uphold and improve the standards of training, practice and professional competence of persons and organisations engaged in marketing and advertising in Zambia.
Visit Website

MARKETING ASSOCIATION OF BOTSWANA

The Marketing Association of Botswana (MAB) is dedicated to empowering marketing professionals, fostering industry growth, and shaping marketing's future in Botswana. It exists to unite marketing leaders, strategists and creatives under one dynamic network. It also aims to elevate standards through knowledge-sharing, mentorship and learning, as well as advocate for marketing's strategic role in driving growth.
Visit LinkedIn page.

L'ASSOCIATION TUNISIENNE DES PROFESSIONNELLES DU MARKETING ET DE LA COMMUNICATION

The ATPMC offers Tunisia's marketing and communications professionals access to a network of colleagues and high-level industry experts. It also promotes the image of marketing and communications in Tunisia.
Visit website

CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF MARKETING, GHANA

The Chartered Institute of Marketing, Ghana was founded in July 1981 with the vision to be the voice of marketing practice in Ghana. The Chartered Institute of Marketing, Ghana (CIMG) ultimately aims to see organisations (both private and public) embrace the marketing concept, and be marketing-oriented in their operations.
Visit Website

MARKETERS ASSOCIATION OF ZIMBABWE

The Marketers Association of Zimbabwe was launched in 2007 with a vision to be a leading body of marketing professionals promoting professionalism of the highest standards, and establishing channels of career development for the benefit of organisations and the Zimbabwean economy at large.
Visit Website

ASSOCIAÇÃO MOÇAMBICANA DE COMUNICAÇÃO E MARKETING (ACM)

The Associação Moçambicana de Comunicação e Marketing (English name: Mozambican Association of Communication and Marketing) was established in 2024 and is dedicated to the development and promotion of marketing practices in Mozambique. ACM's mission is to promote excellence in marketing and contribute to the development of the sector, providing assistance, training and resources to professionals.
Visit Website

ANGOLA MARKETING NETWORK

More information coming soon!

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MARKETING OF NIGERIA

NIMN has the responsibility to regulate and standardise marketing professional practice through professional examinations and certifications, training, retraining and consultancy services geared to ensure that members adopt a professional approach to marketing.
Visit Website

IMM INSTITUTE SOUTH AFRICA

The IMM Institute brings together like-minded individuals and organisations to share thoughts and experiences within the rapidly changing marketing environment. It also offers | a range of activities and services for industry professionals.
Visit Website

MARKETING SOCIETY OF RWANDA

MSR was established in September 2025 in response to Rwanda's rapidly evolving business landscape. Its vision is to be the country's leading continental hub for marketing stakeholders across the private and public sectors.

INSTITUTE OF MARKETING AND MANAGEMENT, MAURITIUS

Established in 1991, the Institute of Marketing & Management is the leading professional marketing education and training institution of Mauritius.
No Website

INSTITUTE OF MARKETING IN MALAWI

IMM Malawi is a locally recognised and registered marketing body, whose agenda is to promote, enhance, and regulate the marketing profession in Malawi, with the aim of developing marketers into positions of influence. IMM Malawi started in January 2021, transitioning from the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) Malawi.
Visit Website

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ZAMBIA: 8 Borders.1 Gateway.

The Epicentre of African Commerce.

- *Matongo Matamwandi,*
AMC President

" The momentum behind this event is a testament to the legacy we've built across the continent. When African marketing leaders unite, we don't just discuss the market ***- we move it.*** "

2026 AMC Conference

23-25 September

Livingstone | Zambia

AFRICA RISING: Through Marketing Leadership, Brand Power and Value Creation

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$550 (USD)

Non-Members
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An Executive Roundtable Session of Your Choice

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Themed Dinners

Glamorous Awards Gala Event

Search is fragmenting – credibility and trust create the new visibility

Online search behaviour has changed significantly with the rise of AI. **Fiona Zerbst** explores how African brands can adapt to this new marketing landscape.

For decades, digital marketing has relied on a predictable strategy: ensure you rank on the first page of Google.

However, large language models (LLMs) have changed the dynamic, and marketers worry that search engine optimisation (SEO) may be going the way of the dodo. Do keywords, site structure and backlinks still matter in a 'zero-clicks' environment in which users bypass the traditional blue links to company websites and social media platforms?

"AI-powered search has collapsed the customer journey as we know it," says Amen Mpofu, AI SEO/GEO & Growth Marketer at AI SEO agency GroXcelent. "Because users now access information everywhere they search, they skip the stages of the traditional customer journey."

As search answers are increasingly delivered via AI summaries, marketers must grapple with Generative Engine Optimisation (GEO) and Answer Engine Optimisation (AEO), where the goal is no longer just to be found, but to be included in the answer itself.

"Unlike traditional SEO, which focuses on improving rankings on search engine results pages, GEO is concerned with whether your content is selected and synthesised into AI-generated responses," notes Jacqui Muller, Industry Coordinator at Belgium Campus IT university in South Africa.

"In essence, SEO helps users find you, while GEO determines whether AI chooses to represent you."

This does not render SEO obsolete, believes Brian Omondi, a digital strategist at DigitalMarketingNow in Kenya. He says SEO remains highly relevant and that brands should not abandon SEO best practice.

"For your business content to be cited by LLMs, it must still rank well according to traditional search engine results page (SERP) rankings. It's from there that LLMs like ChatGPT, Claude or Perplexity will pick it up and present it to readers as one of the reliable answers to their queries," he explains.

The economics of visibility is changing, comments Antoinette Prophy, author of *The Prophy Africa Signal*, a report unpacking how AI reshapes marketing systems, consumer behaviour and growth across Africa's key markets. "Audiences increasingly expect synthesis rather than search, recommendations rather than results, and answers rather than links."

For marketers, this creates a fundamental tension: the familiar levers – rankings, impressions and clicks – no longer fully explain performance.

However, the underlying objective remains the same, argues Lauren Joubert, lead strategist and founder of boutique SEO agency Elevate Online.

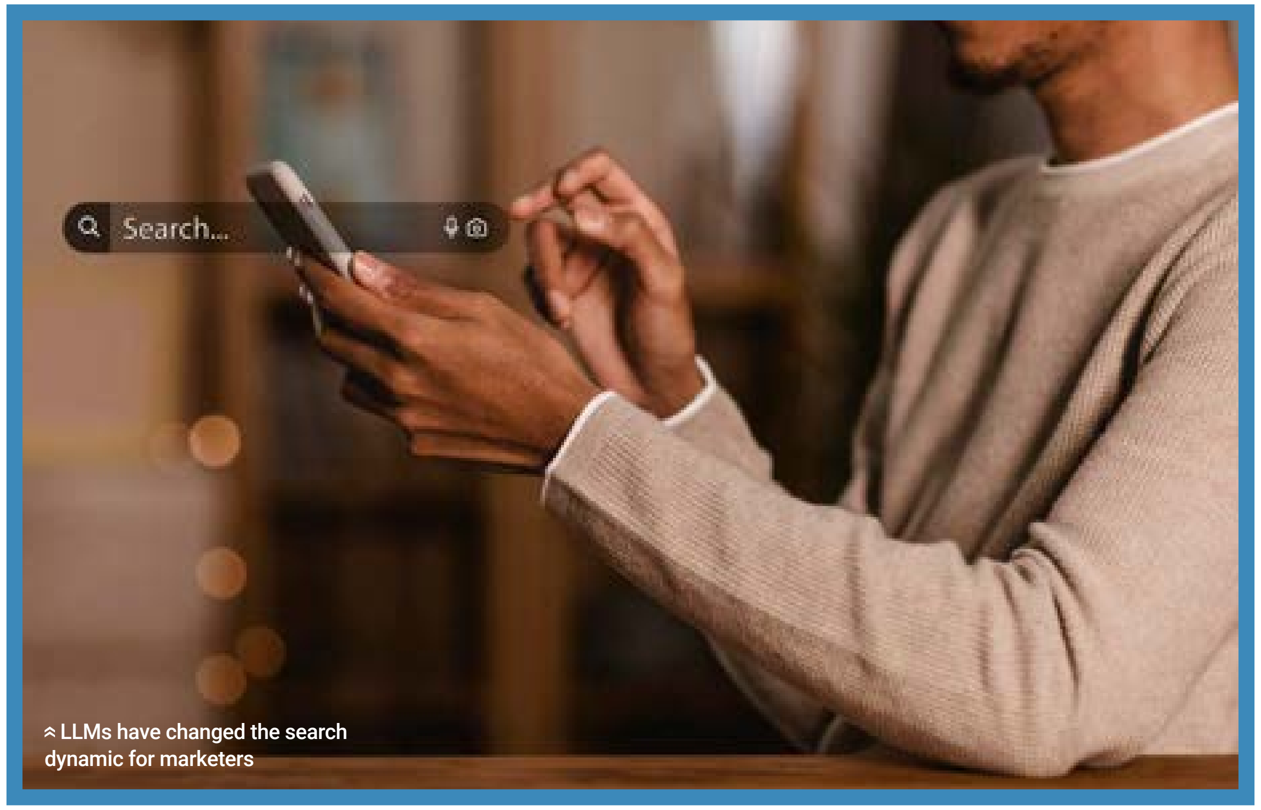
"Success now looks like inclusion and attribution, being the brand the AI model names, summarises or links when it constructs an answer," she explains. "[Being in] position one of 10 links matters far less when 60-70% of searches now end without any click at all. The win is being inside the answer, not adjacent to it," she emphasises.

Prophy says the fundamental question brands need to ask themselves is no longer 'How do I rank?' but 'How do I become the most trusted answer?'

> « Now the fundamental question is 'how do I become the most trusted answer?' »

Distinct opportunity for African brands

While the shift is global, it creates a distinct opportunity for African brands.



LLMs have changed the search dynamic for marketers

Most LLMs are trained on Western, English-language data, leaving African markets underrepresented.

The local information environment is far less contested, meaning a brand that publishes authoritative, well-structured content rooted in local context and languages can become the source AI models rely on for that niche.

"AI search is a leveller: it rewards substance, structure and authority over raw budget and decades of accumulated backlinks, which means a focused African challenger can leapfrog incumbents who are complacent or slow," says Joubert. "This is a far more winnable game than in a saturated US category."

But Omondi cautions against viewing AI-based search as a silver bullet. "Rather, AI is a ladder to an existing market waiting to be reached via the new systems available," he notes.

How brands must compete for attention

Startups and challenger brands can now produce content at a scale and speed that previously required significant budgets and infrastructure, allowing them to compete more directly for the attention of online audiences.

However, legacy brands operate under greater scrutiny. With established identities and reputations to protect, they face higher expectations around tone, accuracy and consistency, says Prophy.

"This tension is already playing out publicly. Quick-service restaurant business Nando's South Africa has stated that the brand will not use AI-generated creative content, arguing that the originality, humour and cultural relevance defining the brand should remain human-led. While many marketers support this position, others see it as overly restrictive, given the efficiencies AI can unlock.

Prophy argues that the brands most likely to succeed in the online search space – and quest for audience attention – will be those that balance these pressures effectively.

"Brands that will succeed are those that use AI to amplify expertise rather than automate it," she says.

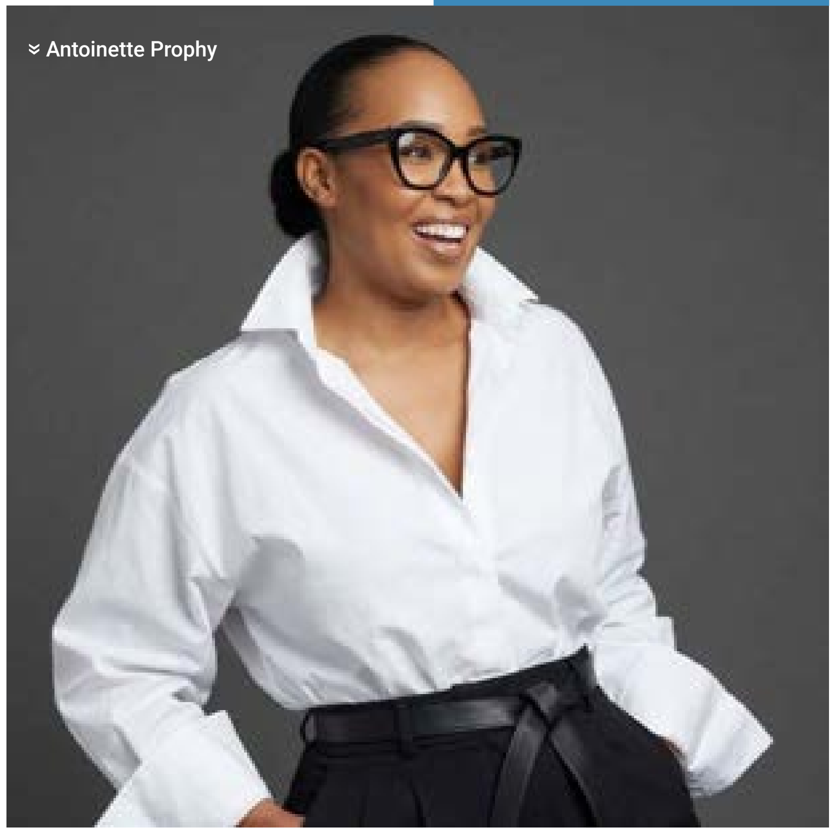
Mpofu reinforces this caution. "AI-generated content can come across as generic and 'spammy', which violates Google policies. Businesses must always create content for the user – human expertise should take a central role, even when using AI."

It almost goes without saying that content should be fact-checked as LLMs can 'hallucinate' and fabricate information and facts.

Specificity and local or cultural references are also important for online search, points out Blessings Ngalande, Digital Marketing Executive at Corporate Graphics Malawi.

"Instead of writing a generic article about inflation, a South African brand could publish an article about the current cost of braaiing (barbecuing), tracking the prices of meat, charcoal and vegetables across major super-markets. This first-party data can be cited by AI-powered search when a question about inflation in South Africa arises," he says.

Blessings Ngalande



Antoinette Prophy

Measuring Success

As online discovery of brands changes, so, too, does measurement.

According to Joubert, falling organic traffic makes it less useful to chase volume, particularly at the top of the funnel. Instead, the emphasis is shifting to fewer, higher-quality content assets that are trusted and capable of converting intent into action.

"Most valuable is anything an AI-powered model can't generate on its own: original research and data, first-hand experience and case studies, genuine expertise and opinion, proprietary benchmarks and strongly branded points of view," she says.

Hezron Ochiel, founder of Hezron Insights in Kenya, describes this as the rise of the 'expertise economy'.

"Opportunities increasingly flow to organisations that consistently share useful knowledge," he explains. "A potential client may first encounter a brand through an AI-generated response, then read a media article, explore its LinkedIn presence, and visit its website much later. Each interaction shapes perception and influences future decisions."

In this environment, influence becomes a more useful indicator than traffic alone. Joubert highlights branded searches, direct traffic, conversion rates and revenue per session as stronger performance signals.

Attracting audience attention has become less important than credibility, trust and influence

For Prophy, this signals the demise of 'vanity metrics' such as organic traffic volume, impressions and engagement in isolation. "Being seen is not the same as being trusted," she says. "AI systems prioritise authority and relevance over exposure, and high impressions don't necessarily translate into recommendations, citations or consideration."

Instead, she measures 'cognitive visibility': how often a brand is recommended by AI systems, cited as an authority, associated with expertise and searched for directly.

This requires brands to be present wherever decisions are made – across AI interfaces, social platforms, communities and physical environments. In Africa, in particular, this future is 'phygital', blending digital discovery with real-world experience.

South Africa's GoTyme digital bank offers a clear example, says Prophy.

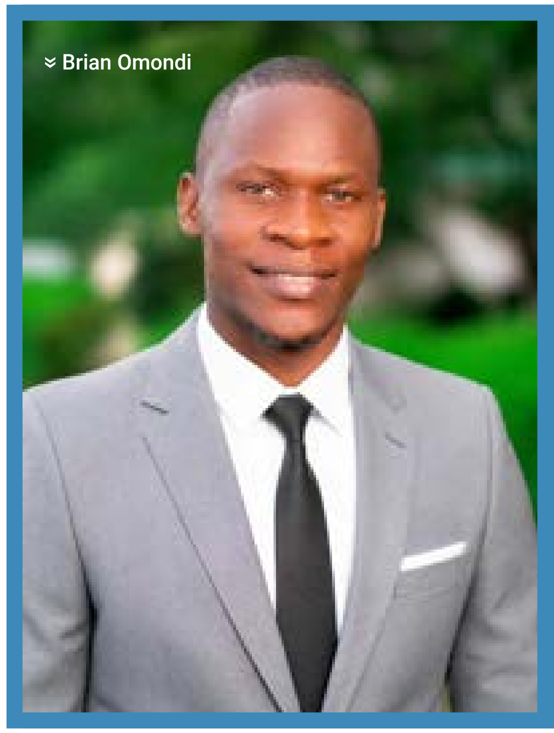
"Customers may first encounter the brand through AI recommendations, digital channels or social conversations, but trust is reinforced through physical kiosks in high-traffic retail environments. These touchpoints provide visibility, accessibility and human interaction at critical decision-making moments, ensuring the brand is experienced as well as seen."

"In many ways, AI is forcing brands to become genuinely useful again," Prophy notes.

Consistency is rewarded

For Omondi, consistency is critical in this new environment.

"Even if your brand is doing all the right things to be visible in an AI-driven discovery environment, if you're not consistent, other businesses will beat you at the game. Consistency is the secret to gaining visibility and remaining there," he notes.



Brian Omondi

"Over time, your content will start appearing in the places that matter: discussion forums, social media, Google and so on. And AI search engines won't have any reason not to cite your content and position your business as an authority in your industry."

Joubert agrees: "Consistency is the cheapest authority signal most brands neglect," she says.

For Ochiel, this means continuously documenting and sharing work.

"The priority is to build a presence wherever audiences seek information. This includes websites, media coverage, LinkedIn, industry publications, podcasts, videos and research reports that reinforce your messaging. Every credible contribution strengthens a brand's reputation and increases its chances of being surfaced in AI-generated responses," he explains.

He urges brands to become educators in their fields: helping audiences solve problems, building trust, and making it easier to be discovered and recommended.

Ochiel recommends a simple test. Three questions a brand should ask are: Can people find us? Can they trust us? Can they recommend us? "Those questions provide a useful guide for building visibility in an increasingly AI-driven environment," he says.

Marketers must adapt

Priorities are becoming clearer.

"You should build original content, publish proprietary data and real expertise that machines will want to cite," recommends Joubert. "Get the structure and foundations right: clean, answerable content, robust schema (a structured blueprint that defines how data is organised), consistent messaging across the web and a presence on third-party sources that LLMs trust – such as reputable publications, industry bodies, directories and partners."

Prophy says the brands that consistently appear in searches have four characteristics: depth of expertise, consistent digital signals, recognition by other trusted entities, and content structured in ways that are both human-friendly and LLM-readable.

She believes Nike is a good example as it combines strong authority signals with structured, AI-friendly content and storytelling. "As a result, Nike is frequently surfaced in AI-generated responses related to sustainability, innovation and sports performance.

"Closer to home, African fintech company Flutterwave has strengthened its visibility by creating well-structured educational content, frequently asked questions (FAQs) and solution-focused resources that align with how users ask questions. This increases the likelihood of being referenced when AI systems respond to queries about payment solutions and fintech in Africa."

Mpofu points to South African insurance brand Naked. "Instead of building a text-heavy website to try to rank for thousands of generic keywords, they instead built an entirely AI-driven digital infrastructure, which digital tools easily crawl and understand, allowing the brand to surface at the top of search results."

He adds that digital PR and reputation signals remain important.

"AI models look at what others say about your brand," he says. "Positive sentiments prompt the AI to cite and recommend you – for example, Google Business Profile, Yelp and Trustpilot reviews are key.

At the same time, traditional channels still have value. "Paid advertising, digital PR and email marketing are still viable strategies," Mpofu says.

Ochiel believes it's important to think beyond the company website as AI systems frequently surface information from platforms such as Reddit, Wikipedia, Quora and industry publications. "Brands benefit from contributing knowledge and earning credible mentions in these community spaces, where people already go to learn, ask questions, and evaluate options," he says.

Search may be fragmenting, but it is not disappearing – it is shifting from a system that rewards visibility to one that rewards credibility. For African brands, the opportunity lies in becoming a trusted source of insight that AI systems choose to surface when decisions are made.

Those that invest in original thinking, local relevance and consistent knowledge-sharing will not only remain discoverable – they will shape the answers themselves, building influence that extends far beyond the click. ■

Fiona Zerbst has been a journalist and editor for over 20 years. She writes primarily about business and finance, and has worked for publications in South Africa, Botswana, Zambia, Nigeria, Canada, Finland and the UK.

« AI systems obtain information from the likes of Reddit, Wikipedia and from industry publications »

Top tips for brands

Blessings Ngalande's tips:

- Implement local optimisation by claiming a Google Business Profile and making sure your name, address and phone numbers (NAP) are identical online, so your business appears consistent and trustworthy.
- Focus on trying to rank for long-tail keywords, as in conversational queries, by creating content that matches how people naturally ask questions.
- Optimise images and short-form videos, as AI tools pull YouTube Shorts, TikTok videos and Instagram Reels, so visual content shows up more easily in search.

Amen Mpofu's tips:

- Strengthen traditional SEO while building GEO tactics: research and understand user AI prompts, train AI with legacy brand information, diversify traffic sources (for example, digital PR) and create well-structured content.
- Measure AI search performance, including AI referral traffic (such as Bing and GA4), and work with agencies or SEO consultants where possible.
- Build your reputation by covering topics in depth rather than simply targeting keywords, staying rooted in your specific industry and location.
- Ensure your website loads quickly so that both AI tools and users don't drop off before engaging.

PHOTOS: FREEPIK/MAGNIFIC; SUPPLIED

Exploit the ‘magic of difference’ that we have in Africa

New President discusses the way forward for the AMC and the role marketing can play in developing our continent. By **Mike Simpson**.

^ Matongo Matamwandi has enjoyed a long and significant relationship with the AMC

For Matongo Matamwandi, who was elected as the new President of the African Marketing Confederation in May this year, the upcoming 2026 AMC Conference in Livingstone, Zambia represents a remarkable full circle.

He was one of a small group of prominent African marketers who met in Livingstone back in 2011 to discuss the development of the marketing profession across Africa, as well as the possible formation of a pan-African marketing body to elevate professional standards and promote home-grown marketing approaches suited to the continent’s diverse cultures.

Fifteen years on, that vision has transformed into a thriving reality that is coming home to the place where it all started. With a proud Zambian at its helm.

“I was part of the creation, I was part of the origin, I was part of the idea of creating the AMC,” he recalls. Which makes it extra special to be in a key role at this year’s groundbreaking three-conference gathering on the banks of the Zambesi River, which brings together marketing, supply chain and IT disciplines under the banner of the Africa Commerce Convergence Summit.

Matamwandi is a true son of Zambia, having been CEO of the Zambia Tourism Agency, President of the Zambia Institute of Marketing, Director General of the Zambia Development Agency, Vice Chancellor of the Kenneth Kaunda Metropolitan University, and Chairperson of the Minerals Regulation Commission. The latter role he fills concurrently with his position as President of the African Marketing Confederation.

PHOTOS: AFRICAN MARKETING CONFEDERATION

Conference aims

Among his aims for the upcoming Zambian conference is to emphasise to delegates the new realities of the move from traditional marketing to digital marketing as a dominant force globally, and to examine in detail how African marketing can effectively integrate into this paradigm shift.

He believes it’s valuable that ICT-focused colleagues will be present in Livingstone to help shed further light on how marketing techniques, IT and AI can be integrated to achieve common objectives. Similarly, Matamwandi is excited to see how the presence for the first time of African supply chain professionals at the gathering will add all-round value.

“In essence, I want to see that the outcome of the conference gives a complete new direction to how the entire business world and marketing is going to integrate,” he tells *Strategic Marketing for Africa*.

AMC strategic plan

Looking beyond the 2026 conference to the rest of his five-year term as President of the AMC, Matamwandi says it’s important to set a clear agenda going forward.

“One of the first things I’m working on – and which will happen in the next two to three months – is putting forward a strategic plan for the next five years. Of course, we will pull in all the presidents and CEOs of all the member associations so that we build this strategic plan together.

“Without pre-empting these discussions, I believe we should focus on industry research so that we can see the relevance of marketing in supporting African businesses.

“I would also like to look at marketing’s human capital. Having worked across Africa, I can tell you that there are a lot of academic qualifications, but the basic technical skills of marketing are limited. We can’t comfortably compete with the rest of the world in this global village. That will be another focus area for the AMC.”

Matamwandi also intends working with the academic institutions to bridge the gap between what the industry wants and what the continent’s academic community can develop. Flowing from this will be seeking better ways to understand how technology, including AI, can enhance marketing in Africa.

^ Matongo Matamwandi (centre) is presented with honorary membership of the AMC at the 2022 conference in Zimbabwe

> « If Africa is to compete with the rest of the world, we cannot have our countries work in silos »

“I am also hoping that we can work with the African Union and other regional bodies to allow marketers to work across Africa. In other words, creating mobility of skills,” he says.

Tourism promotion

The growing participation of the AMC in Africa’s tourism sector – through the formation last year of the confederation’s own Tourism Chapter and its collaboration with UN Tourism on its Brand Africa initiative – is another focus area that will feature regularly on the new AMC President’s to-do list.

As a former head of the Zambia Tourism Agency, Africa’s tourism industry is close to his heart. Indeed, at the time he led the country’s tourism agency he was pivotal to getting the AMC involved with UN Tourism.

“I was hosting all the CEOs for African tourism boards in Zambia, under the auspices of UN Tourism. I extended an invitation to the AMC to attend, because I knew that if we must drive Brand Africa there is no better way than to use our marketers. And where do these professional marketers sit? Under the AMC banner,” Matamwandi explains.

He emphasised the AMC’s desire to incorporate non-traditional marketing areas such as tourism promotion, export promotion and investment promotion. This will require extending corporate membership to tourism promotion organisations and trade and investment promotion agencies in Africa.

The President emphasises that the AMC will also work with the rest of the marketing world on benchmarking and skills development.

“If Africa is to compete with the rest of the world, we can’t have our countries work in silos. We need to get the best of what we have in different countries and use it for a united African front … we must exploit the magic of difference that we have in Africa.” ■

New roles within AMC

The AMC President’s Council elected Matongo Matamwandi as President with effect from 4 May 2026. He takes over from Helen McIntee, who has assumed the role of AMC Director for International Relations. This is in addition to serving as Vice President of the World Marketing Council, of which the AMC is a founder member.

In addition, Gillian Rusike was elected as Vice President of the Southern African Region. He is Executive Secretary of the Marketers Association of Zimbabwe (MAZ).

All systems go for AMC's 2026 conference as Zambia readies for a landmark convergence

2026 is the AMC's fifth annual gathering, but this year is the first time that three parallel Africa-wide conferences converge at one location.

Excitement is mounting as the African Marketing Confederation and the host association for the 2026 AMC Conference, the Zambia Institute of Marketing, prepare for a groundbreaking gathering in Livingstone on the banks of the Zambezi River and in the shadow of the mighty Victoria Falls – *Mosi-oa-Tunya*, 'The Smoke That Thunders'.

Each year, the conference brings together marketing professionals from across Africa and around the world to network and to explore key topics and themes reflecting the evolving marketing landscape.

Three industries converge

While 2026 is the fifth iteration of the AMC's flagship gathering, Zambia marks the first time that three parallel Africa-wide conferences will converge at a single location, as the African Marketing Confederation joins the Technology Information Confederation Africa (TICON Africa) and the African Supply Chain Confederation (ASCON).

The rationale underpinning this approach is that **marketing** creates demand, builds brands and connects businesses with customers across Africa. **ICT** builds the digital pathways, enables innovation, and powers the technologies that drive Africa's connected economy. Supply chain delivers goods efficiently through logistics, procurement and cross-border trade.

This unprecedented coalescence of professional disciplines under the banner of the Africa Commerce Convergence Summit will enable unique cross-industry collaboration.

The overarching theme for the 2026 event, taking place from 23-25 September, is '*Africa Rising: From Continental Strengths to Global Impact*'. Flowing from this, each participating confederation brings its own sector lens:

- AMC: *...through Marketing Leadership, Brand Power and Value Creation.*
- ASCON: *...with Supply Chain (Collaboration & Integration).*
- TICON Africa: *...into Global Digital Impact with ICT.*

The three local hosting organisations are the Zambia Institute of Marketing (ZIM); ICT Association of Zambia (ICTAZ); and the Zambia Institute of Procurement and Supply (ZIPS).

Making conference bookings convenient

Your conference tickets, accommodation and activities for the 2026 AMC Conference can be booked exclusively through the Africa Commerce Convergence Summit (ACCS) Portal. As the official booking platform for the summit, it allows delegates to manage their registration, accommodation, activities and payments in one convenient location. The website address is www.accsummit.org

PHOTOS: PHOTO CREDITS: AFRICAN MARKETING CONFEDERATION; WIKIMEDIA COMMONS; AVANI HOTELS & RESORTS

Topics in the spotlight

The agenda for the marketing conference is structured to address the macro-economic shifts, technological leaps and strategic commercial realities facing industry practitioners and leaders across the continent. Vital international marketing voices will be brought to the table through the AMC's alliances with the World Marketing Council, which embraces marketing associations from across Europe and Asia, and the renowned Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM).

Among the topics to come under the spotlight:

- Brand Africa: Converting Continental Strengths, Cultural Capital and Creativity into Global Competitive Advantage.
- Marketing Leadership in the AI and Digital Economy: Governing Data, Trust and Competitive Advantage.
- Marketing as an Economic Lever: Driving AfCFTA, Digital Trade and Global Market Access.
- Sustainability, Trust and Purpose: Building Brands for Long-Term Global Relevance.
- Youth Voices, Global Choices: Africa's Young Creators and the Future of Marketing Leadership.
- Africa Rising at the Global Marketing Table: Leadership Commitments for an AI-Enabled, Digitally Competitive Future.

Also on offer to delegates will be Executive Roundtable Sessions and Executive Strategy Labs.

The former is an exclusive space for peer-to-peer executive exchange. These sessions will unpack strategic perspectives, challenge industry assumptions and map emerging market risks through deep collaborative inquiry rather than pre-packaged solutions.

The latter is an immersive, hands-on environment built for immediate output. Attendees will walk away with custom strategic frameworks, tangible solutions and actionable recommendations that bypass theory and focus on immediate operational execution.

Knowledge – and more

Apart from the thought-leadership and knowledge-sharing elements of the conference, delegates can forge pan-African and international connections through relaxed and informal lunches, dinners and networking activities.

There are also opportunities to experience the magic of Zambia's culture and physical attractions through events and outings.

In keeping with tradition, the conference closes with a final night dinner and awards ceremony. The awards are a highlight of the annual AMC conferences, and 2026 will be no exception as high-achieving African marketers, marketing teams and campaigns are recognised for their excellence.

To find out more about the 2026 African Marketing Confederation Conference, visit the AMC website: www.africanmarketingconfederation.org or follow the AMC's social media platforms. ■

> « This is a unique coalescence of professional disciplines in Africa »

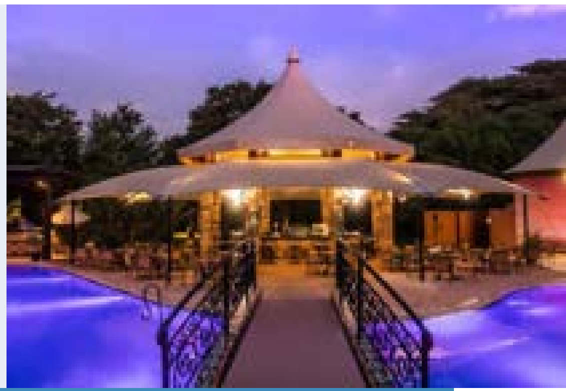
Partnership opportunities

By sponsoring the 2026 Africa Commerce Convergence Summit event, brands gain simultaneous exposure across three specialised demographics, creating a compounding effect on brand visibility and influence. For further details visit www.accsummit.org

» The 2026 conference takes place in the shadow of the mighty Victoria Falls

Our conference venue

Hosted at the iconic Avani Victoria Falls Resort, just a stone's throw from Victoria Falls, the conference unfolds in one of Africa's most extraordinary destinations. Special delegate rates have been negotiated, with easy access to conference activities, networking events and transport services.



» Avani Victoria Falls Resort offers delegates a wide range of facilities

The tool will only take you as far as the thinking does

Rahwa Gebremeskel examines AI adoption and the human intelligence imperative in African marketing.

A social media manager in Nairobi told me that he tripled his client base in the last 18 months. He has AI to thank for that, having integrated AI tools into every stage of his production workflow.

He got faster at scripting, faster at editing, faster at turning briefs around – and his clients noticed.

A graphics designer and video editor working across brand and digital projects in Ethiopia tells a similar story. AI has made her faster, and her clients keep returning because what they are actually paying for is her judgment – the ability to read a brief, understand a market and decide what will land.

Both practitioners adopted AI independently, figured it out by doing, and built it into how they work.

AI adoption for marketers in Africa is arriving through individual practitioners solving a personal productivity problem and discovering that the tools work.

The *2024 Africa MSME Pulse Survey* by GeoPoll and Africa 118 – conducted across South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya and Ethiopia – found that 58% of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are actively using AI tools, with the primary uses being content creation, chatbots and social media design.

That is up from 29% of respondents reporting AI investment intent in the 2022 wave of the same survey, a near doubling in two years. In 2026, this adoption rate is only increasing. But what is happening underneath it is more complicated.

The split is not simply between those using AI and those who are not. It is between practitioners using it well and those who have handed their work to a tool they have not yet learned to direct. The outputs of these two groups look different, and the gap between them is widening.

Most AI use across small businesses in Africa stays at the surface: conversational interfaces, content generation, basic design assistance. This reflects where the tools are most accessible, where the learning curve is lowest and where the return is most immediate. The value ceiling sits considerably higher. The next wave of AI adoption is deeper, more systemic … and already arriving.

The organisation

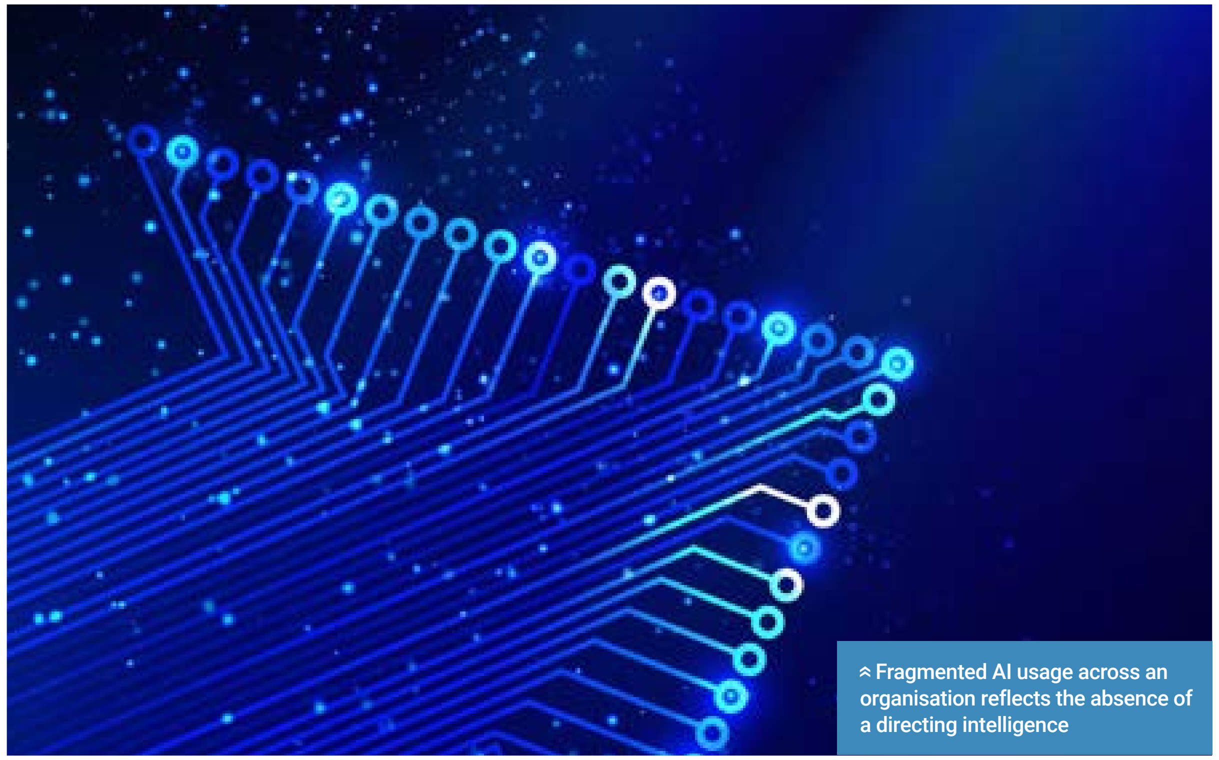
Consider a mid-sized brewery in Kenya, distributing across Central Africa with a team of around 30 people. Ask any member of that team whether they use AI tools and the answer is 'yes'.

Ask whether there is a shared system or any intentional thinking behind how those tools are being used, and the answer is 'no'. Everyone is using AI. Nobody has agreed on how, why, or to what end. The tools are scattered across individual workflows with nothing connecting them. Speed is being captured. Strategic value is not.

This pattern is common across the continent. An IFC/World Bank report published in 2023 found that fewer than one in three firms in Africa that have adopted digital technologies make intensive use of them to improve how the business actually runs. Tools are being acquired. Systems are waiting to be built. Part of the reason is structural.

« The AI tools are scattered across individual workflows with nothing that is connecting one tool to the other »

» The AI tool will only take you so far. The thinking is the real work



» Fragmented AI usage across an organisation reflects the absence of a directing intelligence

AI tools are sold as discrete products with standalone capabilities. The consultancy layer that would connect them to business strategy is often absent, too expensive, or not configured for the conditions in which most African businesses operate.

The more pressing question is about readiness. When the next wave of AI arrives are businesses in Africa prepared to receive it?

That wave has a timeline. Gartner projects that 40% of enterprise applications will include task-specific AI agents by the end of 2026, up from less than 5% in 2025. Global AI investment is on track to reach US$1.3-trillion by 2029, growing at 31.9% annually, driven largely by agentic systems. Globally, 70 to 80% of agentic AI initiatives have not reached enterprise scale, according to studies by Accenture and Wipro.

That figure comes from markets with significantly more infrastructure, more investment in change management and longer institutional experience with technology adoption. The implication for businesses across Africa is direct. Human readiness, not access to tools, is the actual constraint.

The input

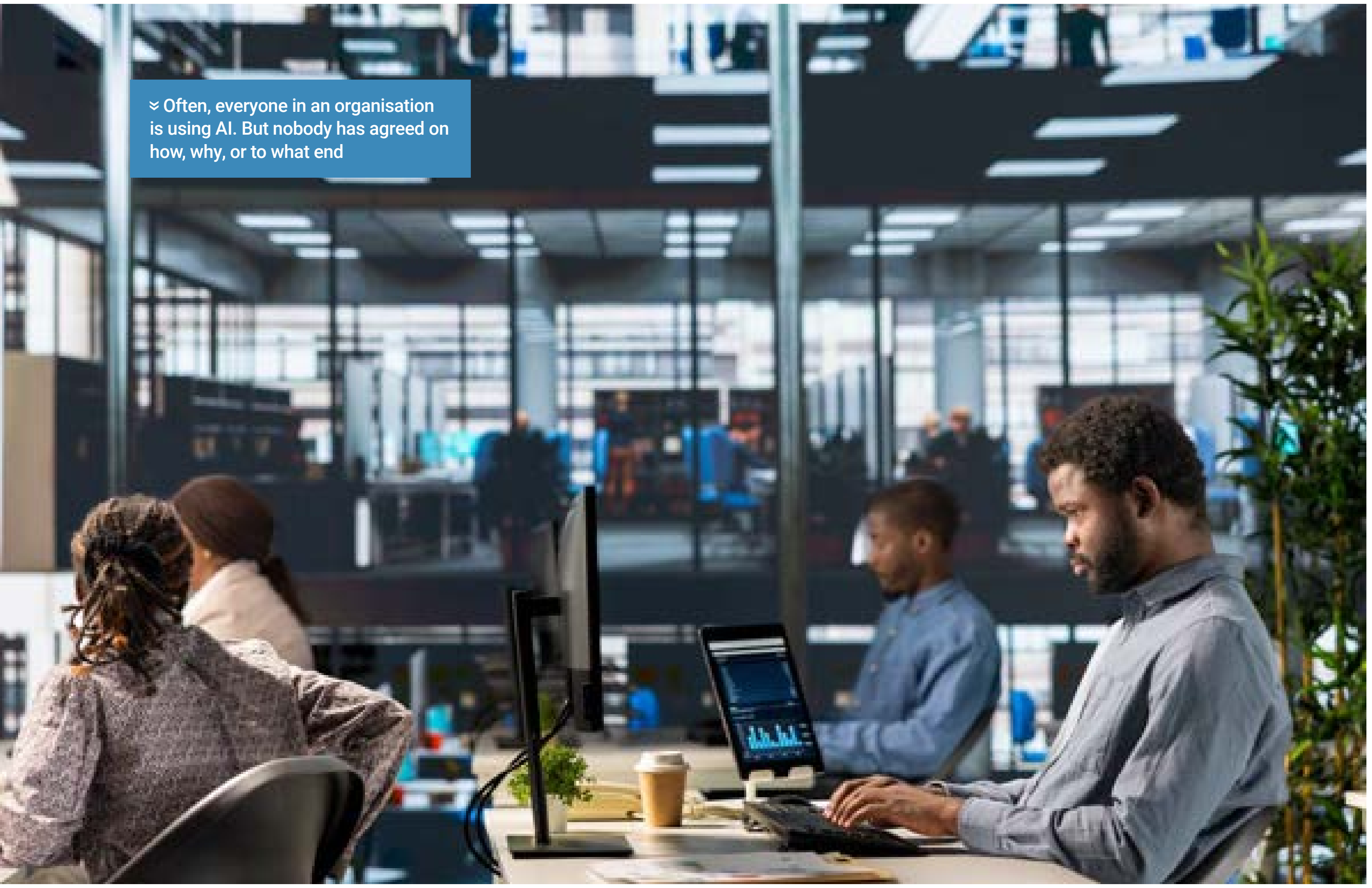
The social media manager is faster because the craft came first. Before AI, he had already built the judgment to know what a client needs, what a brief is really asking for, what creative direction will work in a specific market. AI gave him speed. His expertise gave that speed direction.

The designer and video editor keeps her clients because what they are paying for is her read on a market (her aesthetic sense, understanding of what a brand needs to say and how). These capabilities are not inside the tool. They are what she brings to the tool, and the tool extends them. Without that human input, the output may look technically competent but strategically hollow.

The brewery's scattered AI usage reflects the absence of a directing intelligence. When nobody has asked what the business is trying to achieve with these tools, the tools will be used for whatever is most immediately convenient. As AI systems become capable of acting across business workflows with greater autonomy, the absence of that directing intelligence becomes a significant liability.

The language

There is a specific challenge facing marketers in Africa in AI adoption, and it sits where language meets culture. The leading AI models are trained predominantly on English and shaped by a particular cultural logic (a grammar of expression, a set of reference points, a way of framing arguments and making meaning).



» Often, everyone in an organisation is using AI. But nobody has agreed on how, why, or to what end

An Ethiopian professional thinking in Amharic and expressing in English is working through two cognitive structures simultaneously. The thought was formed in one language, moved through one set of cultural assumptions, and arrived at the English interface already translated. The model processes the English output without accounting for that translation, flattening the cultural specificity that gave the original thought its texture.

Brand building in African markets is a cultural practice. It requires fluency in local expression, understanding of community values, and sensitivity to how trust is built and broken in specific contexts.

These capabilities must come from practitioners who hold them. People who grew up in the market, who speak the languages, who understand what a consumer in Addis Ababa or Kampala or Lagos is actually responding to when they engage with a brand. That knowledge is the input. AI can help express it, scale it, and distribute it. Generating it from scratch is beyond what these tools can do.

This is what makes prompting a strategic skill. A rich, culturally specific, strategically grounded brief will produce substantially better AI-assisted output than a vague or generic one.

Writing a good prompt requires knowing your market well enough to describe it precisely, knowing your consumer well enough to characterise them accurately, and knowing your brand well enough to say what it stands for. These are exactly the capabilities that serious marketing practice has always demanded. AI has made the presence or absence of them more visible.

The next wave

The current mode of AI use – prompt in, output out, human reviews and edits – is the beginning of a longer trajectory, one that is moving faster than most businesses have registered. Deloitte estimated that 25% of companies using generative AI would launch agentic AI pilots in 2025, rising to 50% by 2027. Gartner's projection puts 40% of enterprise applications containing task-specific AI agents by end of 2026. We are inside this window now.

What changes for marketing teams in an agentic environment is the nature of the contribution required. A practitioner using AI today is still doing the work and using a tool to do it faster.

In an agentic environment, the primary contribution is designing the system. This means defining the parameters within which the agent operates, setting the strategic logic it follows, supplying the consumer and cultural context that shapes its decisions. This is more demanding work. It requires a clearer picture of what the business is trying to achieve, a more precise account of who the consumer is, and a sharper definition of what the brand stands for.

Marketing has always been about context translation. Taking what is true about a consumer, a market, a cultural moment, and converting it into communication that lands. In an agentic environment, that contextual

« The best brands still make people feel something that no AI-driven algorithm can possibly prompt »

Brand distinctiveness is a top priority when every brand has the same tools

In a market where everyone has access to the same tools, the edge will go to brands that are creative and different. This is according to international marketing services agency Scopen, which says that the context in which brands are trying to stand out has never been more complicated.

Maintaining brand distinctiveness against emerging competitors has entered the top tier of concerns for the first time for marketers, emphasising how dramatically the media landscape has shifted, the agency's research team notes. Indeed, nearly three-quarters of marketers cited adapting to AI as their primary challenge in Scopen's recently released study (which covers 2025) – a figure that has almost doubled since 2023.

Meanwhile, budgets are shrinking and pressure to prove ROI is rising. Marketers are being asked to do more with less, faster, in a landscape that is changing shape beneath them.

"But here is the uncomfortable paradox at the heart of it all: the very tool that promises efficiency is accelerating the sameness problem," Scopen notes in a press release.

As one respondent in the agency's annual study put it, "the evolution of AI is likely to take us to a point where all creative work feels the same, with no real brand differentiation".

CFOs are pushing for AI-driven cost efficiencies, but because AI outputs tend to look alike, standing out is becoming harder, not easier.

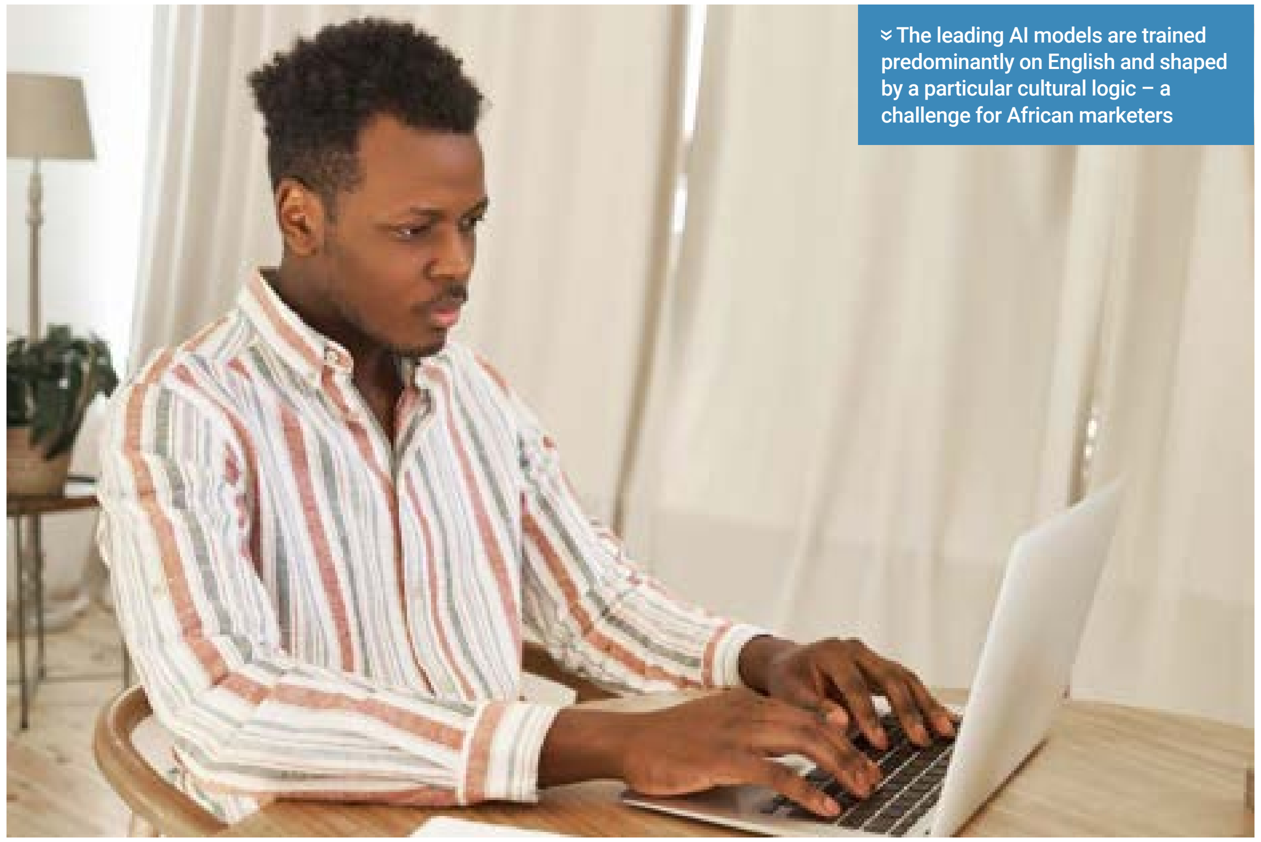
"Distinctiveness is becoming a defining factor in brand growth," comments César Vacchiano, President and CEO of Scopen. "In increasingly splintered markets, brands that create strong memory structures and emotional resonance are the ones that remain competitive."

The agency notes that marketers are not just worried about AI adoption in the abstract; they are wrestling with a very specific question: how do you use digital tools to cut through clutter and stand out when everyone else is using the same tools?

Add to that the fragmentation of platforms and growing consumer fatigue from brands hammering the same channels, and the challenge sharpens considerably. Not award-winning creativity for its own sake, but creativity as the mechanism that gives a brand genuine character, recognisability and cultural presence.

Concludes Scopen: "In a market where everyone has access to the same tools, the edge will go to brands that can still make people feel something no algorithm can prompt."

Mike Simpson



The leading AI models are trained predominantly on English and shaped by a particular cultural logic – a challenge for African marketers

translation becomes the input to the entire system. Get it wrong at the start and the agent scales the error.

The preparation

The practitioners already winning with AI brought something to the tool before they picked it up. Craft, judgment, market knowledge, genuine familiarity with the consumer. AI gave them speed and scale. Their expertise determined what that speed and scale produced.

For businesses across Africa, the preparation that matters is building the intelligence which directs the tools. Who the consumer is, what the market demands, what the brand stands for. These are the core capabilities of marketing practice. They have always been.

Businesses that have built this foundation will extract more value from each successive wave of AI capability. Better outputs, faster iteration, more precise targeting, less rework. In markets where the complexity of cultural context, the diversity of language, and the specific dynamics of consumer trust already make generic output inadequate, the cost of that confusion is not abstract. It shows up in campaigns that do not land, brands that do not resonate, and budgets spent producing content that the market ignores.

The tool will only take you as far as the thinking does. The thinking is the work. ■

Rahwa Gebremeskel is a brand and marketing strategist based in Nairobi. She led Heineken Ethiopia's local production operations, co-founded a marketing agency that worked with over 100 brands across East Africa, and has since led marketing and PR functions at regional and global scale. She is currently focused on AI systems and their application for businesses in Africa, with a particular interest in the human intelligence layer that shapes how those systems perform.

Rahwa Gebremeskel

PHOTOS: MAGNIFIC; KOTKOA AND KARLYUKAV ON MAGNIFIC; AFRICAN MARKETING CONFEDERATION; COUNT CHRIS FROM PEXELS

Ad holding group WPP creates its own AI-talent pipeline to address the skills gap

Global advertising group WPP has launched a new studio called Hex that it says is designed to help its network address the growing skills gap in artificial intelligence.

Sitting within WPP Production's content production and innovation teams, it functions simultaneously as a creative production studio, R&D lab and consultancy.

The studio specialises in generative and agentic AI, gaming, immersive experiences and robotics. According to WPP, it is already delivering "innovative work" for its global client roster.

Companies within the WPP stable include VML, Ogilvy, Grey, GroupM and Mindshare. Its client base encompasses the likes of Unilever, Nestlé, The Coca-Cola Company, Amazon and Procter & Gamble.

"Hex's approach provides a direct solution to one of the economy's most significant challenges: the AI talent gap," WPP explains in a statement.

"Recent findings from DataCamp revealed that while 88% of leaders recognise data and AI literacy to be as fundamental as writing, less than half provide basic training. Meanwhile, a 2026 Deloitte report showed that only 25% of companies successfully move AI pilots to production, without the parallel investment in people capabilities.

"The studio is built on the philosophy that cutting-edge AI models alone don't drive business growth; the real value comes from creative talent that can operationalise the technology."

Technology partners

WPP says the studio works closely with technology partners like Adobe, Google and NVIDIA to test emerging tech and explore real-world applications, embedding teams of forward-deployed experts directly with clients for months at a time to evaluate challenges, build custom solutions and train internal teams to use AI workflows independently.

The human talent for Hex is sourced from WPP's Creative Tech Apprenticeship, a nine-month paid programme founded by WPP in 2022. With a goal of training at least 1,000 people by 2030, the programme aims to address the industry's AI skills gap by recruiting from outside traditional ad schools and engineering programmes, with a curriculum focused on creative problem-solving and rapid learning of new technologies.

Mike Simpson

Social media practitioners are more ready than most to adapt to AI usage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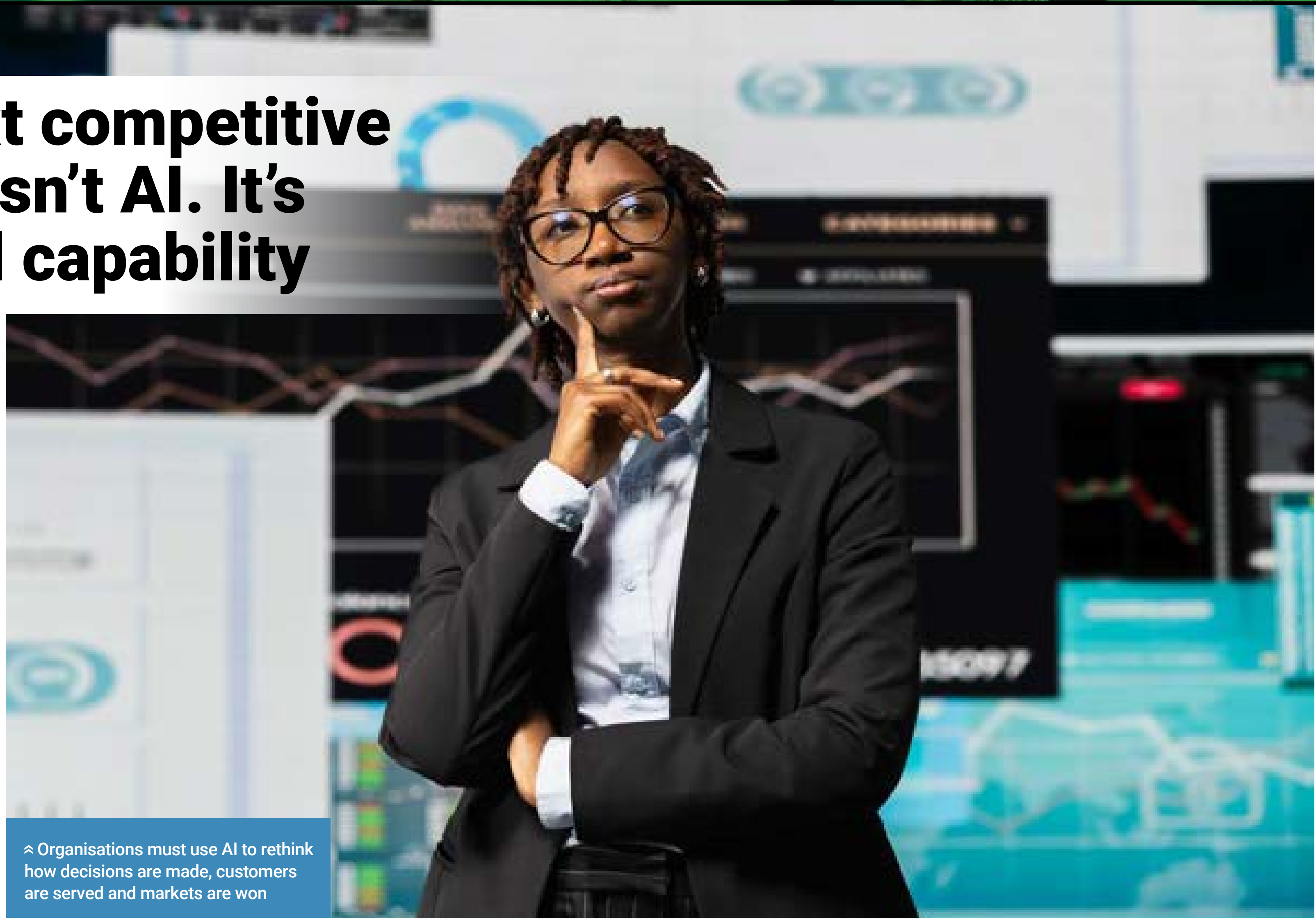
Africa's next competitive advantage isn't AI. It's commercial capability

Dr Helena van Wyk examines the tech-hype trap and explains why human judgement, not technology, will pave the way to competitive advantage in Africa.



^ Organisations must use AI to rethink how decisions are made, customers are served and markets are won

Across Africa, businesses are investing heavily in artificial intelligence, digital platforms and digital skills. The assumption is simple: better technology will produce better business performance.

The evidence increasingly suggests otherwise.

Recent research by McKinsey shows that only 39% of organisations worldwide report enterprise-wide bottom-line impact from AI, while only a small minority attribute significant EBIT (earnings before interest and taxes) impact to their AI investments, despite substantial spending on software, infrastructure and digital transformation.

African enterprises are likely to face the same challenge: adoption may be accelerating, but measurable returns still depend on whether technology is translated into business-model, customer and operational value.

The problem is not a shortage of technology. It is a shortage of organisations able to translate technical capacity into commercial results.

This is the real tech-hype trap.

Too many organisations still treat AI as another software upgrade instead of using it to rethink how decisions are made, customers are served and markets are won.

The businesses creating a lasting advantage are doing something different. They are developing **commercial capability**: the ability to combine technology, customer insight, market understanding and commercial judgement to create sustainable business value.

Technology expands what an organisation can do. Commercial capability determines whether any of it matters.

The seniorised entry-level shock

This shift is already reshaping the labour market.

PwC's 2026 *Global AI Jobs Barometer*, based on more than one billion job advertisements, found that AI-exposed junior roles are now **seven times more likely** to require traditionally senior capabilities such as leadership and strategic thinking.

At the same time, so-called 'seniorised' entry-level roles have grown by 35% since 2019.

Artificial intelligence is not simply changing how work is done. It is changing how careers begin.

Routine work that once served as a professional apprenticeship: drafting reports, analysing data, preparing presentations, and basic coding, is increasingly performed by generative AI.

As those entry-level tasks disappear, organisations expect graduates to contribute to commercial judgement much earlier in their careers.

Execution is becoming abundant. Judgement remains scarce.

That raises an important question for both employers and higher education: if technical execution is increasingly automated, what capabilities will differentiate tomorrow's professionals?

Commercial capability in the workplace

The distinction between technical capability and commercial capability is best illustrated by the Shoprite retail group's Checkers Sixty60 platform, the dominant on-demand grocery home-delivery service in South Africa.

By 2025, Sixty60 had surpassed 100-million cumulative orders, and Shoprite reported R11.9-billion (US$728-million) in Sixty60 sales for the 26 weeks ended 28 December 2025. While AI-powered demand forecasting and inventory management underpin the platform, technology alone did not create Shoprite's competitive advantage.

PHOTOS: DC STUDIO/MAGNIFIC; SUPPLIED

The real innovation was commercial. Shoprite redesigned its operating model around changing customer expectations, transforming stores into local fulfilment hubs, reconfiguring its supply chain, and bringing last-mile delivery largely in-house through a fleet of approximately 10,000 Pingo drivers. Pingo is the delivery company that provides last-mile delivery for the Shoprite group of companies.

AI helped the business anticipate demand, but commercial leadership determined how the organisation would respond to it. That distinction is critical. Algorithms can identify opportunities, but they cannot redesign an organisation, reshape customer experiences, or make strategic trade-offs between investment, operations and long-term growth.

Shoprite is not an isolated example. Similar patterns can be seen at Kenyan telecommunications company Safaricom, African payments technology company Flutterwave, and multinational telecommunications operator MTN, where technology has provided the platform, but sustained competitive advantage has come from combining technical capability with deep customer understanding, market insight and disciplined commercial execution.

Across Africa's leading organisations, the lesson is remarkably consistent: technology creates capability; commercial judgement creates value.

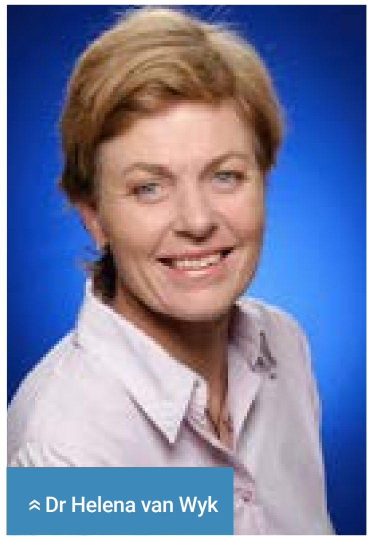
Where commercial capability is built

If commercial capability is becoming Africa's scarcest competitive resource, then organisations must also rethink how they develop it. This is where strategic marketing deserves to be viewed differently.

For too long, marketing has been treated as a communications function concerned primarily with campaigns, advertising and promotion. In an AI-enabled economy, its strategic value lies elsewhere. In a tech-obsessed corporate world that risks drowning in automated data, the strategic marketer must serve as the vital **customer wayfinder**.

Technology can generate infinite consumer data, but strategic marketing determines which insights matter. It is the discipline that connects customer insight, commercial strategy and organisational decision-making, helping businesses determine not simply how to sell, but where to compete, which opportunities to pursue, and how technology can create meaningful value for customers.

That is why the conversation naturally extends to business education. As AI automates more routine execution, postgraduate study becomes less about acquiring another qualification and more about developing the capabilities organisations cannot automate: systems thinking, commercial reasoning, strategic judgement and the confidence to make complex decisions in uncertain environments.



^ Dr Helena van Wyk

This is the philosophy underpinning the IMM Graduate School's approach to postgraduate marketing education. Through industry-connected learning and a strong emphasis on real-world relevance, the objective is not simply to develop graduates who understand technology, but professionals who can translate technical capability into commercial success.

Africa does not face a shortage of technology. Its greatest opportunity is to develop leaders with the judgement to use it well.

Conclusion

Africa's future competitiveness will not be determined by how quickly organisations adopt artificial intelligence. AI will continue to improve, become more accessible and eventually become commonplace. Technology, on its own, is unlikely to provide a lasting competitive advantage.

What will remain scarce is the ability to ask better questions, make better commercial decisions, and turn technical possibility into sustainable business value. That is the essence of commercial capability.

It is why strategic marketing is becoming an increasingly important executive discipline. It is why organisations are searching for graduates who can think beyond execution. And it is why postgraduate business education has an increasingly vital role to play in preparing leaders for an economy where judgement matters more than routine expertise.

Artificial intelligence will become increasingly accessible. Commercial capability will not. That scarcity, not the technology itself, may prove to be Africa's next competitive advantage. ■

Dr Helena van Wyk is Dean: Postgraduate Studies at the IMM Graduate School, where she also chairs the Centre for Research. With over 20 years in higher education, her expertise spans strategic branding and communication. She serves as Managing Editor of the *Retail and Marketing Review* academic journal.

Editor's Note: The author has provided a list of sources, which is available from the editor on request.

AI won't replace market research. But it will expose weak strategy

Much of the broader conversation around AI in market research assumes conditions that do not consistently exist across many African markets, writes **Soyinka Witness**.

For years, market research has largely been viewed as the business of asking questions, collecting responses and packaging findings into reports. That model is no longer enough.

Artificial intelligence is rapidly reshaping how organisations think about data, decision-making and growth. In market research and strategy consulting, its impact is already visible in the speed with which information can be processed, the scale of analysis that can be undertaken, and the increasing ability to move beyond descriptive reporting toward predictive insight.

For businesses operating in volatile and fast-changing markets, this represents a meaningful shift. The challenge many organisations face today is not the absence of data, but rather the difficulty of translating growing volumes of information into decisions that are commercially sound, strategically relevant and responsive to changing market realities.

In our business, we see AI as an important enabler of this next phase of market intelligence. The technology materially improves our ability to synthesise complex datasets, identify emerging patterns, model scenarios, and accelerate the journey from information to insight.

In this sense, AI is not simply an operational efficiency tool; it has the potential to fundamentally improve how organisations anticipate market change, understand consumer behaviour and make strategic choices with greater confidence.

The reality in Africa

However, much of the broader conversation around AI assumes conditions that do not consistently exist across many African markets. Global discussions often presume access to clean, structured, continuously updated datasets capable of producing reliable machine-led interpretation.

The reality across much of sub-Saharan Africa is more complex. Significant portions of economic activity remain informal, consumer behaviour is often shaped by rapidly shifting economic pressures, distribution systems are fragmented, and formal reporting mechanisms frequently provide only partial visibility into how markets actually function. In such environments, data interpretation is rarely a straightforward technical exercise.

This is where the continued importance of human judgement becomes clear. AI is a powerful analytical tool, but its usefulness is ultimately shaped by the quality of the questions being asked, the assumptions informing the analysis, and the contextual understanding brought to interpretation.

A machine can identify patterns in available information, but it cannot independently determine whether those patterns reflect commercial reality, behavioural adaptation, structural market distortions, or gaps in the underlying data itself. In many African contexts, that distinction is not academic – it is commercially decisive.

Real-life examples

Consider Nigeria. Anyone attempting to assess the market opportunity for generators or backup power solutions would benefit from understanding the phrase 'I pass my neighbour'.

To someone unfamiliar with the market, or to a machine interpreting language literally, the phrase may appear to suggest social competition or personal superiority. In practice, it refers to a category of small household generators, reflecting the lived reality of unreliable electricity supply and the coping mechanisms households have adopted in response.

Without that contextual understanding, analysis may accurately process language while entirely missing the commercial significance embedded within it.

Ghana offers a similar lesson through the term 'dumsor', which became widely used to describe persistent power outages. On the surface, this may appear to be merely a colloquial expression. In reality, it captures a broader infrastructure challenge with implications for energy demand, household consumption behaviour, productivity and resilience-related purchasing decisions.

The presence of the term in data is one thing; understanding what it signals commercially is something else entirely.

Expertise at a premium

These examples illustrate a broader point: AI does not eliminate the need for expertise; it increases the premium placed on it. The value of AI lies not in autonomous decision-making, but in its ability to augment strategic thinking when deployed by practitioners who understand the markets they are analysing.

The stronger the contextual understanding, the more valuable the tool becomes. Conversely, where contextual understanding is weak, AI can simply accelerate flawed assumptions and produce misleading confidence in incorrect conclusions.

This is why we do not see AI as a replacement for market research at Ipsos Strategy3, but rather as an evolution of it. The future of market intelligence lies in combining machine efficiency with human judgement, predictive capability with lived market understanding, and analytical sophistication with commercial pragmatism.

AI can materially improve the speed and depth of strategic analysis, but interpretation remains inseparable from context.

Apply tools intelligently

Kenya provides a compelling example of how this future may evolve. As one of Africa's most digitally advanced economies, the country has demonstrated the transformative potential of technology through mobile money, digital commerce and platform-based innovation.

Its increasing focus on AI reflects a broader ambition to remain at the forefront of digital transformation. Yet even in technologically progressive environments, competitive advantage will not come merely from access to advanced tools, but from the ability to apply them intelligently in contexts where market behaviour remains dynamic and nuanced.

The organisations that will lead in this next phase will therefore not simply be those that adopt AI most aggressively, but those that combine technological capability with sharper strategic judgement and stronger local market intelligence.

AI will undoubtedly transform market research, but it will not replace the need for critical thinking, contextual interpretation, or commercial understanding. If anything, it will make weaknesses in those areas more visible, more quickly, and with greater consequence.

That is why AI will not replace market research. But it will expose weak strategy faster. ■

Soyinka Witness is Director, Sub-Saharan Africa, Ipsos Strategy3. Based in Nairobi, he has extensive industry experience, including almost seven years with Ipsos Business Consulting. He holds an MSc in Financial Mathematics from Strathmore University and a BA in Economics & Mathematics from Kenyatta University.

PHOTOS: AI GENERATED VIA SIMPSON MEDIA/CHATGPT/MAGNIFIC

Why retailers are quietly re-engineering the checkout – and removing friction

Africa's retail future may be led not by size, but by those who most effectively remove the friction between customer intent and transaction. By **Riad Laher**.

A customer walks into a fast-food restaurant in Shanghai, China. There are no queues. No cashiers. No touchscreens.

Instead, the customer speaks naturally to an AI-powered ordering system. The kiosk responds conversationally, recommends meals, modifies the order, processes payment digitally and sends the order directly into the kitchen workflow.

The transaction feels less like a checkout and more like a conversation. What once sounded futuristic is rapidly becoming operational reality.

Across global retail, the checkout is being fundamentally redesigned. But the real story is not self-service kiosks or mobile apps. It is something far bigger. Retailers are quietly rebuilding the final stage of the shopping journey because that final moment shapes speed, labour efficiency, customer satisfaction, inventory visibility and profitability.

The checkout is no longer merely a payment point. It is becoming the intelligence layer of the store.

Retailers are redesigning stores around digital behaviour rather than around queues and fixed cashier infrastructure

Across Africa, retailers are already experimenting with elements of this transition. Self-service checkouts are appearing in supermarket outlets such as Woolworths in South Africa, Model Foods in Namibia, and Carrefour franchise stores in Kenya.

Fast-food brands operating in Africa such as McDonald's and KFC have also rolled out self-service kiosks which enable customers to place and pay for orders digitally. Mobile ordering is expanding across quick service restaurants.

Other customer-service technology being trialled in Namibia by Model Foods includes a robotic assistant to help customers navigate the store and locate products. In South Africa, the Checkers supermarket chain introduced smart shopping trolleys at a small number of selected stores.

QR-based payments continue to grow across informal and formal retail environments on the continent. Retailers are increasingly connecting loyalty systems, payment infrastructure and inventory visibility into unified operational platforms.

Going beyond checkouts

Internationally, some retailers are already moving beyond the concept of the checkout itself.

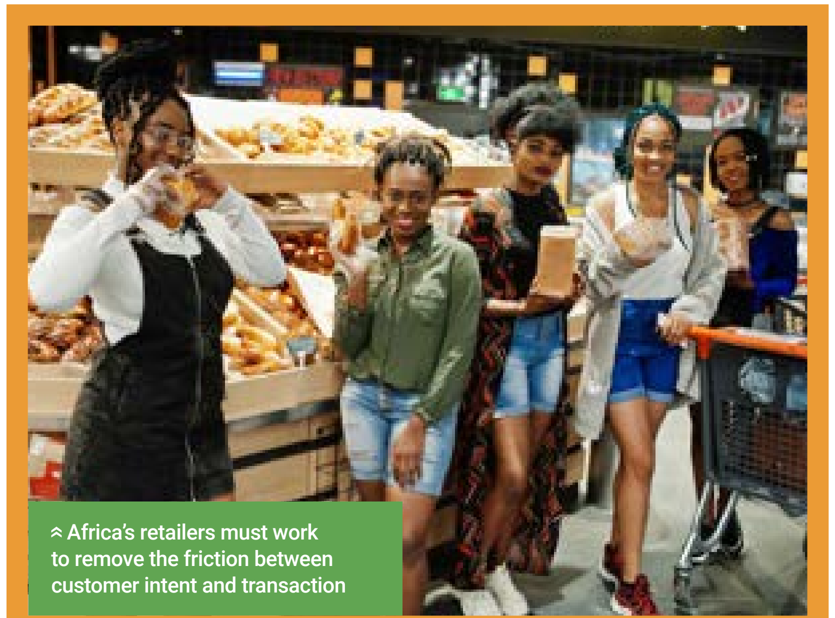
At a reimagined Sam's Club store in Grapevine, Texas, traditional checkout counters have been removed entirely. Customers scan and pay through the retailer's mobile application while AI powered computer vision systems verify purchases as shoppers leave the store.

The space previously occupied by tills and queues has been converted into merchandising and fulfilment space. Autonomous robots monitor inventory levels while RFID systems (a smarter, contactless version of a traditional barcode that does not require line-of-sight to read data and can scan multiple items simultaneously) track stock movement in real time.

The significance of this shift extends beyond mere convenience. Retailers are redesigning stores around digital behaviour rather than around queues and fixed cashier infrastructure.

Historically, retail stores were designed around operational bottlenecks. Queues, tills, receipt verification, and payment counters dictated store layout and customer movement.

That's changing. Increasingly, retailers are attempting to remove friction from these systems because friction slows customer flow, reduces basket conversion and creates operational inefficiency.



Africa's retailers must work to remove the friction between customer intent and transaction

Changing the rhythm

If the checkout process becomes faster, invisible or automated, the rhythm of the entire store changes.

This is particularly visible within the quick-service restaurant sector. Fast-food operators have emerged as early leaders in self-service and AI-assisted checkout systems because their operating environments are relatively structured.

Product ranges are limited. Transactions are repetitive. Basket sizes are smaller. Decision trees are simpler. Speed matters significantly.

Fashion retail, however, presents a far more complicated environment. While some apparel retailers internationally have experimented with self-checkout systems, adoption has generally been slower and operationally more challenging.

Fashion transactions involve size variants, colour variants, fitting-room behaviour, security tagging, returns management and assisted selling. Purchasing behaviour is also more emotional and less transactional than in food retail.

The result is that frictionless checkout works exceptionally well in some retail categories while struggling in others.

This distinction matters because it highlights an important reality often ignored in discussions around retail technology. There is no universal checkout model. Retail infrastructure must align with operational complexity, customer behaviour and local market conditions.

> « Frictionless checkout works exceptionally well in certain retail categories, but does struggle in others »

Situation in Africa

Africa presents a particularly unique environment for this evolution.

Many African retailers are operating in highly fragmented, high-friction environments where traditional retail infrastructure has not always matured in the same way as developed markets. Yet this challenge may become an advantage. African markets have repeatedly demonstrated an ability to leapfrog legacy systems through mobile and digital adoption.

Kenya's mobile money ecosystem remains one of the clearest examples. Large portions of the population embraced digital payments without first moving through traditional banking infrastructure. Similar patterns are emerging across informal commerce, QR payments and app-based retail interactions.

In many ways, African retail innovation is being driven by necessity rather than by luxury. This becomes especially important when considering conversational AI-powered checkout systems.

Traditional self-checkout kiosks assume a level of digital confidence, literacy and language standardisation. Africa's retail environment is multilingual, culturally layered and highly diverse.

Voice-enabled retail interfaces potentially remove some of these barriers by allowing customers to interact naturally in their preferred languages. A customer could theoretically order in Swahili, Zulu, Hausa, Arabic, French or Pidgin English without navigating complicated touchscreen menus.

For a continent where accessibility and inclusion remain critical retail considerations, this could become one of the most significant long-term shifts in customer interaction.

The transformation beneath the surface

But perhaps the most important transformation is happening beneath the surface.

Modern checkout systems are increasingly connected directly into broader operational ecosystems. Every transaction becomes a live data signal feeding the retailer's inventory systems, replenishment engines, demand forecasting tools, loyalty platforms and shrink management systems.

In this scenario, the checkout is no longer isolated from the rest of the business. It is becoming deeply integrated into how retailers understand customer movement, predict demand, monitor stock accuracy and optimise operations.

The strategic implications are significant. Historically, retailers viewed checkout primarily as a labour and payment function. Now it is becoming a real-time operational intelligence system.

Retailers can identify product movement instantly. Inventory discrepancies become more visible. Queue patterns can be analysed dynamically. Labour allocation becomes more responsive. Promotional effectiveness becomes measurable in real time.

Self-service systems at a McDonald's store in Asia

The Checkers Xpress Trolley, currently in testing in South Africa, allows customers to scan-and-bag items as they shop, track a live total of their basket, and pay directly on the trolley

Carrefour launched a self-service checkout service in Kenya in 2023

Security evolving too

Even security systems are evolving. One of the more psychologically frustrating aspects of retail has always been the manual receipt check at store exits. Retailers introduced these processes to manage shrinkage and verify transactions, but they also introduced friction and customer frustration.

AI-powered verification systems are now beginning to replace some of these manual processes. Instead of suspicion-based verification, stores are moving toward invisible digital validation through computer vision, RFID and transaction-matching technologies.

This changes the relationship between retailer and customer, because the store quietly verifies trust in the background rather than interrupting the customer journey visibly.

South Africa may become an important market to watch in this regard. Walmart-owned Massmart has already indicated interest in reducing traditional security checks of receipts at the exits of its Makro wholesale retailer outlets.

While South African retail environments face unique realities around shrinkage, labour dynamics and infrastructure constraints, many of the building blocks for more advanced retail systems are already emerging.

Local retailers are investing heavily into apps, loyalty ecosystems, click-and-collect infrastructure, QR payments, smart surveillance and integrated fulfilment systems.

Realities of Africa

The transition may not mirror American or Chinese retail models exactly. African retail environments operate within different economic, infrastructural and social realities. Power instability, connectivity gaps, concerns over job losses, and varying levels of digital adoption remain important considerations.

At the same time, African retail has consistently demonstrated an ability to adapt creatively under operational pressure.

Given these realities, the future African store will not become fully cashier-less overnight. It will evolve into a hybrid environment where physical retail, mobile commerce, conversational AI, digital payments, intelligent inventory systems and fulfilment infrastructure increasingly work together.

Cashiers will not disappear entirely, but their roles may shift toward customer assistance, fulfilment support and operational oversight rather than repetitive scanning functions.

And perhaps this is the most important point. Retailers are not simply automating checkout. They are redesigning the architecture of the store itself.

The retailers likely to lead the next phase of Africa's retail evolution will not necessarily be those with the biggest stores or the most aggressive expansion plans. They will be the retailers that remove friction most effectively between customer intent and transaction.

Because in modern retail, speed, visibility and convenience are no longer operational advantages. They are becoming the foundation of competitiveness. ■

Riad Laher is a Director of Groworx Retail consultancy. With over two decades of hands-on experience in the retail industry, he been at the forefront of transforming businesses through robust processes, scalable systems and strategic store rollouts. His current focus is on how AI is reshaping retail marketing.

Robotic assistant at a Model Food supermarket in Namibia.

PHOTOS: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS; SHOPRITE CHECKERS; CARREFOUR; MODEL FOODS; ASPHOTOFAMILY/MAGNIFIC; SIMPSON MEDIA/MAGNIFIC AI

A screen grab of the video campaign

PHOTO: YOUTUBE SCREEN GRAB

Kenyan agency wins country's first Cannes Lions Grand Prix

'*Paid Sick Leave for Cows*' campaign comes out tops against nearly 300 international entries in the Sustainable Development Goals category.

Nairobi-based advertising agency The Partnership Africa has won Kenya's first Cannes Lions Grand Prix by coming out tops in the Sustainable Development Goals category.

The agency's campaign for Kenyan dairy brand Too Good, titled '*Paid Sick Leave for Cows*' won against 289 category entries from around the world.

"The jury awarded the Grand Prix to a brilliantly simple idea that creates lasting systemic change," commented Kazoo Sato, Jury President of the Sustainable Development Goals Lions jury panel, and Chief Creative Officer and CEO at Earth Centric Design in Tokyo, Japan.

"It turns an apparent trade-off into shared value for people, for business and for other species. It offers a replicable model for a more sustainable future."

Winners in the Sustainable Development Goals category must deliver work that goes beyond awareness. The jury panel asks three questions: does the campaign create real change, does it durably transform the underlying system, and does the impact last after the campaign ends?

The campaign concept

Kenya has the highest per capita milk consumption in SSA, with around 80% of milk production coming from smallholder farmers.

One in four milk samples tests positive for antibiotics, because farmers cannot afford to stop production during the withdrawal period following a cow's illness. That withdrawal period is the heart of the problem. When a cow receives antibiotics, its milk cannot be sold for several days to prevent contamination. Farmers then face a choice between following the rules and losing income, or selling milk that does not meet the standard.

The economics make the responsible choice the expensive one. Raising market prices is not an option, so Too Good and The Partnership Africa have placed the problem not with farmer behaviour, but with the system around it.

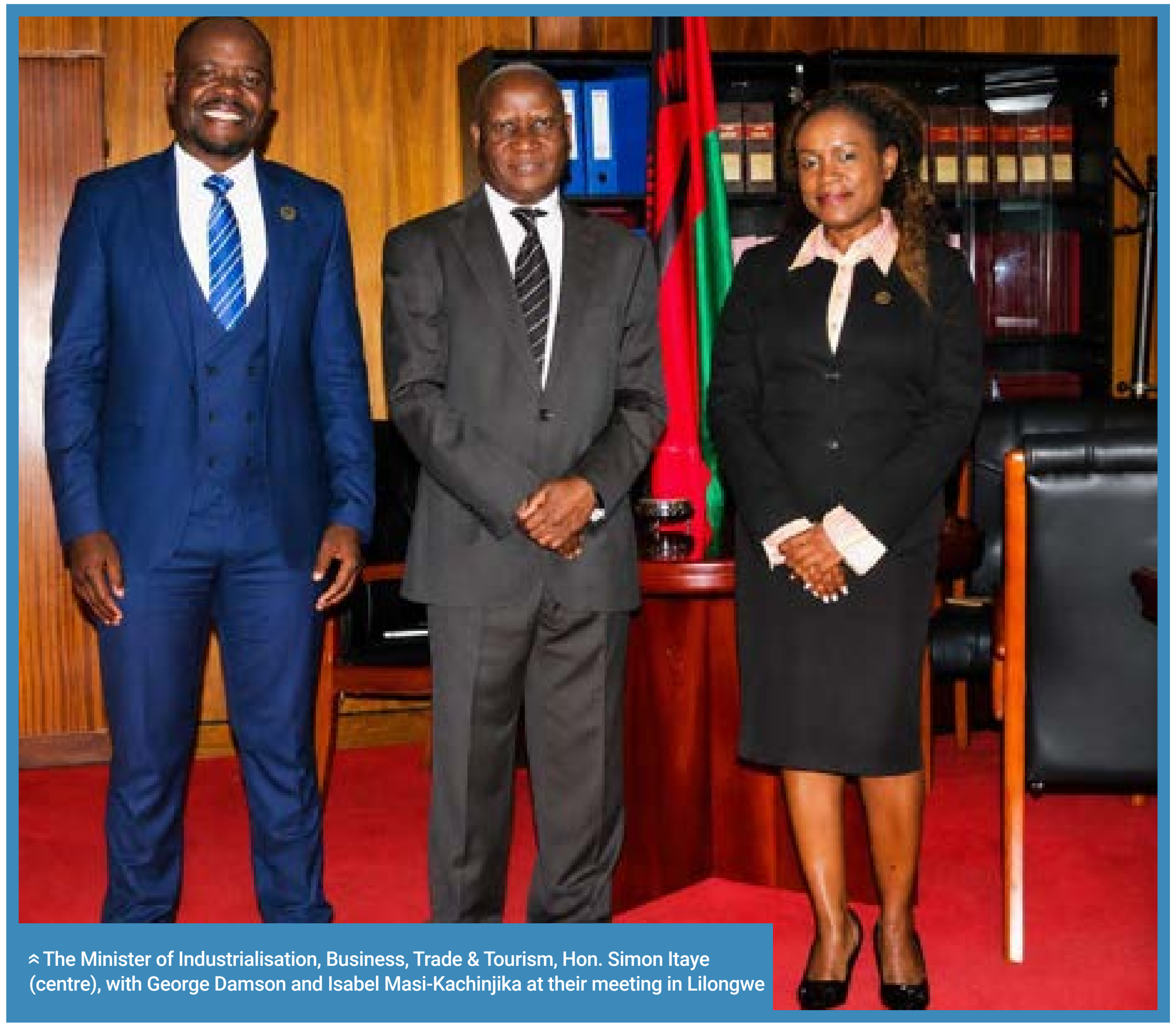
Inspired by the human sick leave model for workers, they decided to register cows as economic workers rather than livestock. The mechanism to register the 'sick workers' is deliberately low tech. Farmers apply for paid sick leave for a recovering cow via WhatsApp. Too Good then validates the request and compensates the lost income across the withdrawal period.

Within eight months the model has returned $27,000 to farmers for milk they had to withhold. Farmer income stays fully protected as a result. The campaign connects labour rights and agriculture, and offers a different way to think about work and value within food systems.

Years of believing

"Winning a Cannes Lions Grand Prix is a rare privilege, but it's never the result of one great idea or one great week. It's the culmination of years of believing that creativity can solve real business and human problems, and having the courage to pursue that belief relentlessly," Co-Founder and Chief Creative Officer at The Partnership Africa, Deepesh Jha, told *The Kenyan Wall Street* publication.

Readers of our Digital Edition can watch a YouTube video of the campaign here. ■



The Minister of Industrialisation, Business, Trade & Tourism, Hon. Simon Itaye (centre), with George Damson and Isabel Masi-Kachinjika at their meeting in Lilongwe

Institute of Marketing in Malawi and the Malawi Government strengthen joint collaboration

George Damson, President of the Institute of Marketing in Malawi, reflects on the implications of a recent groundbreaking meeting in Lilongwe.

There are meetings that fill a diary, and there are meetings that mark a turning point. It was a privilege and honour to be given an audience by the Minister of Industrialisation, Business, Trade and Tourism, Honourable Simon Itaye, in Lilongwe, where the Institute of Marketing in Malawi took the opportunity to brief our parent Ministry on the inititiatives we are undertaking and how we could collaborate with the governemnt of Malawi in driving the national agenda.

This meeting marked the beginning of a conversation that the marketing profession across our continent needs to have.

Why an audience like this matters

It is tempting, in our profession, to treat marketing as a private craft – something practised inside boardrooms and agencies, measured in campaigns and conversions, and largely invisible to the machinery of the state.

For too long, that is exactly how it has been treated – and not only in Malawi. Across much of Africa, marketing has been seen as the cheerful department that decorates a product after the serious work of making and trading it is done.

That perception is not merely unflattering; it is economically costly. A nation that wants to industrialise, to grow its small businesses, to sell its tourism to the world and its produce across borders, cannot do so without marketing competence at scale.

Every export ambition is, at bottom, a marketing ambition. Every effort to attract investment is an exercise in positioning. When a government commits itself to industrialisation, business, trade and tourism it is – whether it names it or not – committing itself to marketing as a national capability.

So our purpose in seeking the audience was straightforward. We wanted to brief the Minister on where the Institute has come from and where it is going. We wanted him to see the Institute of Marketing in Malawi not merely as a club for practitioners but as an instrument of national development.

The substance of the conversation

We – the 'we' in this instance being immediate past President of the IMM, Isabel Masi-Kachinjika, and myself – briefed the Minister on the initiatives the Institute is undertaking: the work of professionalising marketing through accredited training and membership, of raising ethical standards, and of building a pipeline of qualified marketers who can serve both the public and private sectors with credibility.

The Institute of Marketing in Malawi has championed several causes aimed at positioning Malawi's tourism sector profitably. We championed the first ever public lecture by the Ministry as a precursor to the country's premier tourism exhibition, the Takulandirani Tourism Expo, and the public lecture became a permanent feature on the calendar of this exhibition.

We have also championed the Buy Malawi strategy as an Institute, and the government recognises our role in this crucial initiative meant to address some of the country's economic challenges.

These are not glamorous undertakings. Rather, they are the patient, institutional work of making marketing a profession that should be treated with the respect it deserves.

We also tackled the issue of the upcoming legislation meant to give IMM the mandate to fully promote and regulate the profession in Malawi. A profession becomes durable when it is anchored in law – when there is a statutory basis for who may call themselves a marketer, what standards bind them, and how the public is protected from poor or unethical practice.

Doctors, lawyers, engineers and accountants enjoy this protection. Marketers, in most of our countries, do not. The legislative agenda we discussed is about closing that gap. It was fitting that the immediate past President, who has carried this thread through her own tenure, was the one to carry it into the room.

The Minister assured us of government support and spoke of increased consultation and collaboration between the IMM and the parent Ministry across a range of areas. This was a strong signal of government's willingness to treat our Institute as a partner rather than a petitioner – to build policy with us rather than merely around us. Out of this conversation, I will be appointing a committee made up of members from our Institute to drive various initiatives together with the Ministry.

Why this is a lesson beyond Malawi

I share this account in the pages of the African Marketing Confederation's magazine not to report a national event, but because I believe the story it tells belongs to all of us.

The AMC exists on the conviction that marketing is a profession worth organising continentally, and that the national institutes which make up our confederation are stronger for standing together. What happened in Malawi is a small, concrete instance of a pattern we should be pursuing everywhere.

Consider the shape of it. A national marketing institute, confident in its mandate, approaches government not to ask for favours but to offer capability. It frames marketing not as advertising but as a driver of trade, industrialisation and tourism – the language of national development. It comes with a legislative proposal that would embed professional standards in law. And it finds a government willing to listen and to collaborate. That sequence is replicable across our countries.

The pan-African opportunity here is real. As the African Continental Free Trade Area moves from agreement to practice, the continent will live or die commercially on its ability to market – to brand African goods, to position African destinations, to tell African stories to African and global buyers.

That work cannot be left to chance or to imported expertise. It requires home-grown, professionally certified marketers in every member country, backed by institutes that governments recognise and, increasingly, that the law protects. The conversation we began with one Minister is, in miniature, the conversation our whole profession must have with the entire continent.

The state is not indifferent to our profession; it has simply not been asked, in the right language, to take it seriously. When we go to government speaking of trade and industrialisation and jobs – the things they are charged to deliver – and show them that professional marketing is a means to those ends, they listen.

Marketing in Africa is coming of age. It is moving out of the agency and into the conversation about how nations grow. Our place is there at the table and it is for us, the institutes, to claim it. ■

PHOTOS: GEORGE DAMSON

George Damson, President of the Institute of Marketing in Malawi

> « Marketing is moving out of the agency and into the wider conversation about how nations grow »

George Damson has been President of the Institute of Marketing in Malawi since December 2024 and has previously served as Vice President and Director of Public Relations. He is also Managing Director of leading brand communication agency Blitz Interactive.

Marketing guru Seth Godin honoured by AMC's European partner body

European Marketing Confederation names the legendary Godin as the winner of its Lifetime Achievement Award for 2026.

The European Marketing Confederation, a partner of the African Marketing Confederation in the founding of the World Marketing Council, has named renowned international marketing commentator Seth Godin as the recipient of its Lifetime Achievement Award in Marketing for 2026.

Godin was selected for his impact on modern marketing thinking and his continued relevance in an evolving industry.

The European Marketing Confederation (EMC) award recognises individuals whose work has shaped the development of marketing as a strategic discipline. Past recipients include Philip Kotler in 2023, Simon Sinek in 2024 and Byron Sharp in 2025.

Recipients are chosen through a nominations and voting process involving member associations across Europe. For 2026, the process was expanded to include input from marketing confederations in Africa and Asia, reflecting the international scope of the award.

International Day

The award was formally presented on 27 May during the International Day of Marketing, a global initiative established by the EMC to highlight the role of marketing in business and society.

"Seth Godin is widely recognised as one of the most influential voices in modern marketing. Through his books, writing and thought leadership, he has consistently challenged conventional thinking and redefined how organisations create meaningful connections with their audiences," says Ralf Strauss, Chairman of the EMC.

"His work has empowered marketers to focus on trust, purpose and value creation – principles that are more relevant today than ever, and we feel privileged to recognise his lifetime contribution with this award."

Comments Godin: "Marketing leadership isn't about hustle or hype or even advertising – it's the persistent commitment to doing work that matters for people who care. We have the tools to create value, and now each of us has the opportunity to choose to show up and lead."

PHOTO: SETH GODIN

Seth Godin has won the EMC's Lifetime Achievement Award

Marketer of the Year

Meanwhile, the EMC recently named Laurence Herbert as European Marketer of the Year for 2026. She is Chief Marketing Officer at Puratos, a Belgium-based international company specialising in innovative food ingredients and services for the bakery, patisserie and chocolate industries.

Puratos has a significant and growing presence in Africa, with subsidiaries and local production in key markets including Kenya, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Nigeria and South Africa.

Marketing associations from across Europe nominated national champions, with 10 finalists competing for the title. An independent international jury selected Herbert as the winner, based on her strategic leadership and contribution to business transformation and sustainable growth.

The European Marketing Confederation, African Marketing Confederation and Asia Marketing Federation last year formed the World Marketing Council. ■

« Leadership is not about hustle or hype. It's an ongoing commitment to doing work that matters »

DRC media landscape shifts from channel dominance to influence layering

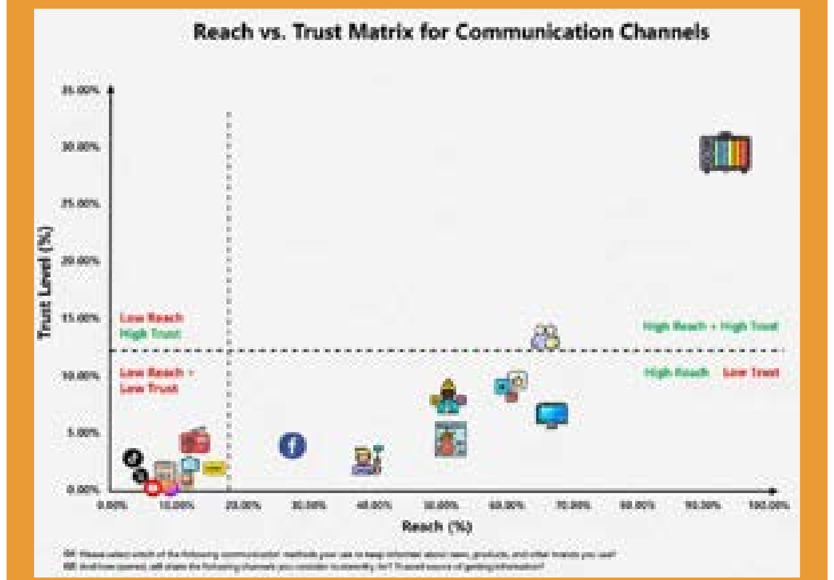
High-frequency physical visibility in the DRC is functioning less as advertising and more as validation

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, TV wins on scale, but friends and family turn exposure into belief more efficiently than any paid channel. By **Yannick Lefang**.

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) media environment is no longer defined by which channels people can access, but by how credibility is constructed across them.

What used to be a relatively linear funnel; TV driving awareness, followed by persuasion, is now a fragmented ecosystem where visibility, trust, and decision-making are distributed across competing sources of influence. The result is not 'media overload' but 'meaning overload': consumers are constantly triangulating what they see, hear and experience before they believe anything.

This analysis draws on the *Kasi Media Tracker*, a monthly lens into how consumers access and process information across diverse media sources. It tracks evolving preferences in information channels, shifting patterns between digital and traditional media, and changes in both trust and engagement; providing a grounded view of how media behaviour is reshaping decision-making in real time.



Mass reach remains strong, but influence is becoming more distributed

Television continues to dominate as the primary awareness channel in the DRC, with usage remaining consistently high at 94% in 2024, up from 91.6% in 2022. However, trust in television has softened over time, declining from 34% in 2022 to 29.1% in 2024.

This divergence between reach and trust is critical. Television is no longer the endpoint of persuasion; it is the starting point of validation. It still owns scale, but it no longer owns certainty. Consumers are exposed through TV, but decisions are increasingly confirmed elsewhere.

Trust is shifting toward social validation networks

Friends and family recommendations have become increasingly influential, with usage rising sharply to 67.2% in 2024, while trust remains among the highest outside traditional media at 13.9%.

This reflects a deeper behavioural shift: trust in the DRC is becoming relational rather than institutional. Information is no longer evaluated on authority alone, but on proximity; who is saying it, and how close they are to lived experience. Even more importantly, trust is being 're-verified' socially after initial exposure elsewhere.

At the same time, exposure to influencers has grown significantly, reaching 54.1%, signalling the formalisation of informal networks into structured persuasion systems. Influence is no longer accidental; it is increasingly engineered through personality-led credibility.

PHOTOS: KASI INSIGHT; SIMPSON MEDIA VIA CHATGPT; SIMPSON MEDIA VIA MAGNIFIC/AI

Consumers in the DRC are exposed through TV, but decisions are increasingly confirmed elsewhere

Visibility is becoming a proxy for legitimacy

Physical channels are also gaining importance. Billboard exposure has grown substantially, reaching 66.5%, while brand activations and spokesperson-led communication have also increased meaningfully.

This points to a distinct market truth: in the absence of full media trust, repetition becomes a substitute for reassurance. High-frequency physical visibility is functioning less as advertising and more as validation; signalling that a brand is established, present and economically real.

In the DRC context, 'seen often' is increasingly interpreted as 'safe to trust'.

Digital discovery is rising, but trust architecture remains traditional

While digital channels are expanding rapidly, trust remains anchored in traditional media. In 2024, 62% of consumers still identified traditional channels as their most trusted source, compared to 38% for digital.

This creates a structural tension: digital is becoming the discovery layer, but not yet the belief layer. Consumers increasingly encounter information online but still require offline reinforcement; through TV, physical presence, or interpersonal validation – to convert exposure into conviction.

The result is a hybrid trust system where no single channel completes the journey alone.

Media engagement reflects a fragmented attention economy

Most consumers spend limited time on social media, with the majority engaging for less than three hours per day. Streaming engagement is more stable, typically concentrated between one and three hours daily, positioning entertainment platforms as the most consistent digital attention environments.

This fragmentation matters less in terms of 'screen time' and more in terms of 'attention continuity'. Consumers are not deeply embedded in any single channel; instead, they move across multiple micro-moments of exposure, making repetition across platforms more important than intensity within any one platform.

What this means for brands and institutions

The DRC media landscape is shifting from channel dominance to influence layering. Television still delivers unmatched scale, but it no longer controls interpretation. Trust is now built through reinforcement loops, where mass exposure is validated through social proof, physical visibility, and repeated encounters across fragmented environments.

For brands, the implication is clear: effectiveness is no longer about choosing the strongest channel but orchestrating the most consistent presence. In this environment, credibility is not created by reach alone, but by alignment. Where what is seen, what is said, and what is experienced all reinforce the same narrative until belief becomes inevitable. ■

Yannick Lefang is the founder & CEO of Kasi Insight, a leading African decision-intelligence company based in Nairobi, Kenya and Toronto, Canada. It aims to empower business leaders and entrepreneurs to make crucial decisions with confidence. The company pairs its proprietary high-frequency survey capability with advancements in statistics, data analytics and storytelling to inform better decisions on what Africans think and do – and why.

Évolution du paysage médiatique en République démocratique du Congo

En RDC, une forte visibilité physique, répétée dans le temps, joue de moins en moins un rôle publicitaire et de plus en plus un rôle de validation.

En RDC, les amis et la famille parviennent à transformer l'exposition au message en conviction plus efficacement que les canaux payants. Par **Yannick Lefang.**

L'environnement médiatique de la République démocratique du Congo (RDC) n'est plus défini par les canaux auxquels les populations peuvent accéder, mais par la manière dont la crédibilité s'y construit.

Ce qui était autrefois un parcours relativement linéaire, où la télévision suscitait la notoriété avant de mener à la persuasion, est aujourd'hui un écosystème fragmenté où la visibilité, la confiance et la prise de décision sont réparties entre différentes sources d'influence concurrentes. Le résultat n'est pas une « surcharge médiatique », mais une « surcharge de sens » : les consommateurs recoupent en permanence ce qu'ils voient, entendent et vivent avant d'accorder foi à quoi que ce soit.

Cette analyse s'appuie sur le *Kasi Media Tracker*, un baromètre mensuel qui offre un aperçu de la manière dont les consommateurs accèdent à l'information et l'assimilent à travers diverses sources médiatiques.

La portée de masse demeure forte, mais l'influence est de plus en plus répartie entre de multiples acteurs

La télévision continue de dominer en tant que principal canal de notoriété en RDC, avec un taux d'utilisation stable et élevé de 94 % en 2024, contre 91,6 % en 2022. Cependant, la confiance accordée à la télévision s'est érodée au fil du temps, passant de 34 % en 2022 à 29.1 % en 2024.

Cette divergence entre la portée et la confiance est déterminante. La télévision n'est plus le point d'aboutissement de la persuasion ; elle en est désormais le point de départ, où s'amorce la validation du message. Elle conserve sa puissance de diffusion, mais elle n'a plus le monopole de la crédibilité. Si elle reste le principal canal d'exposition aux messages, les décisions des consommateurs sont de plus en plus influencées et confirmées par d'autres sources d'information.

La confiance repose de plus en plus sur la validation apportée par les réseaux sociaux et les relations de proximité

Les recommandations des amis et de la famille gagnent en influence, leur utilisation ayant fortement progressé pour atteindre 67,2 % en 2024. Par ailleurs, elles bénéficient d'un niveau de confiance parmi les plus élevés en dehors des médias traditionnels, avec un taux de 13,9 %.

Cela reflète une évolution comportementale plus profonde : en RDC, la confiance devient relationnelle plutôt qu'institutionnelle. La crédibilité de l'information ne repose plus uniquement sur l'autorité de la source, mais aussi sur sa proximité avec le public : l'identité de l'émetteur et son ancrage dans l'expérience vécue influencent de plus en plus la confiance accordée au message. Plus important encore, la confiance fait l'objet d'une « revérification » sociale après une première exposition au message par un autre canal.

Parallèlement, l'exposition aux influenceurs a fortement progressé pour atteindre 54,1 %, ce qui témoigne de la structuration progressive des réseaux informels en véritables systèmes organisés de persuasion.

La visibilité devient un indicateur de légitimité

Les canaux physiques gagnent également en importance. L'exposition à l'affichage publicitaire a fortement progressé pour atteindre 66,5 %, tandis que les activations de marque et les communications portées par des porte-parole ont également enregistré une hausse significative.

Cela révèle une réalité propre au marché : lorsque la confiance envers les médias n'est pas pleinement établie, la répétition des messages devient un moyen de rassurer le public. Une forte visibilité physique, répétée dans le temps, joue de moins en moins un rôle publicitaire et de plus en plus un rôle de validation. Elle signale qu'une marque est établie, présente sur le marché et économiquement solide.

En RDC, une marque « souvent vue » est de plus en plus interprétée comme une marque « digne de confiance ».

La découverte numérique progresse, mais l'architecture de la confiance demeure traditionnelle

Alors que les canaux numériques se développent rapidement, la confiance reste ancrée dans les médias traditionnels. En 2024, 62 % des consommateurs considéraient encore les médias traditionnels comme leur source d'information la plus fiable, contre 38 % pour les canaux numériques.

Cela crée une tension structurelle : le numérique devient la couche de découverte, mais pas encore la couche de conviction. Les consommateurs rencontrent de plus en plus l'information en ligne, mais ont toujours besoin d'une confirmation hors ligne — par la télévision, la présence physique de la marque ou la validation par leur entourage — pour transformer l'exposition en conviction.

Il en résulte un système hybride de confiance dans lequel aucun canal, à lui seul, n'achève le parcours.

L'engagement envers les médias reflète une économie de l'attention fragmentée

La télévision reste le principal canal d'exposition aux messages en RDC, mais les décisions des consommateurs sont de plus en plus influencées et confirmées par d'autres sources d'information

La plupart des consommateurs passent un temps limité sur les réseaux sociaux, la majorité y consacrant moins de trois heures par jour. L'engagement sur les plateformes de streaming est plus stable, les utilisateurs y consacrant généralement entre une et trois heures par jour. Les plateformes de divertissement apparaissent ainsi comme les environnements numériques offrant l'attention la plus régulière et la plus soutenue.

Le véritable impact de cette fragmentation concerne moins le volume de temps passé sur les écrans que la capacité des marques à maintenir une attention continue. Les consommateurs ne sont pas profondément ancrés dans un seul canal ; au contraire, ils passent par de multiples micro-moments d'exposition, ce qui rend la répétition des messages à travers plusieurs plateformes plus importante que l'intensité de la présence sur une seule plateforme.

Ce que cela signifie pour les marques et les institutions

Le paysage médiatique de la RDC évolue, passant de la domination des canaux à une superposition des influences médiatiques. La télévision reste le média offrant la plus grande portée, mais elle ne maîtrise plus seule la perception et le sens attribué aux messages. La confiance se construit désormais à travers des boucles de renforcement, où l'exposition de masse est validée par la preuve sociale, la visibilité physique et des rencontres répétées dans des environnements fragmentés.

Pour les marques, la conclusion est claire : l'efficacité ne consiste plus à choisir le canal le plus puissant, mais à orchestrer la présence la plus cohérente. Dans cet environnement, la crédibilité ne se crée pas par la seule portée, mais par l'alignement. Là où ce qui est vu, ce qui est dit et ce qui est vécu renforcent tous le même récit, jusqu'à ce que la conviction devienne naturelle. ■

Yannick Lefang est le fondateur et PDG de Kasi Insight, une entreprise africaine de premier plan spécialisée dans l'intelligence décisionnelle, basée à Nairobi, au Kenya, et à Toronto, au Canada.

PHOTOS: KASI INSIGHT; SIMPSON MEDIA VIA CHATGPT; SIMPSON MEDIA VIA MAGNIFIC/AI

IMM Institute honours it's top marketing and supply chain achievers

South Africa's IMM Institute hosts its annual Excellence Awards at a glittering gala dinner in Johannesburg recognising the best in marketing and supply chain talent.

This year's IMM Institute Excellence Awards once again affirmed the calibre of talent, leadership and innovation impacting Africa's marketing and supply chain professions.

The evening's highest honours went to two individuals who have shaped the landscape of their professions over many years.

Santie Botha received the Marketing Lifetime Achievement Award for her extraordinary leadership legacy and enduring contribution to the marketing profession and to business transformation.

Professor Douglas Boateng was awarded the Supply Chain Lifetime Achievement Award in absentia. He was honoured for his exceptional thought leadership which has left an indelible mark on the supply chain field across Africa.

« The recipient of the 2025 Marketer of the Year Award, Happy maKhumalo Ngidi (right) was the 2026 Keynote Speaker. With her is Irene Gregory, CEO of the IMM Institute
« Emerging Marketer of the Year, Thabang Modiba (right), receives his award from Lars van Tonder of the IMM Graduate School

« Sustainability Impact Award winner, Emmanuel Bonoko (right), celebrates with the President of the African Marketing Confederation, Matongo Matamwandi

« This year saw the launch of a Sustainability Impact Award recognising purpose-driven innovation »

Sustainability Impact

This year also saw the launch of the inaugural Sustainability Impact Award. "The new category drew exceptional finalists and highlighted how purpose-driven innovation is becoming central to business success," commented Irene Gregory, CEO of the IMM Institute.

"Its winner set a compelling benchmark for how sustainability can move beyond compliance to become a genuine driver of commercial and societal value."

The award went to Emmanuel Bonoko, founder of Brandscapers Africa and the EBonoko Foundation, whose agency serves clients including Standard Bank and Shell South Africa.

Marketer of the Year

Sydney Mbhele as named Marketer of the Year. He is currently Group Chief Marketing and Corporate Affairs Officer at financial services group Absa. He has also held leadership roles at the likes of Unilever, brewer SABMiller, Nedbank, and financial services company Liberty.

In addition, Mbele is a former Chairman of the Marketing Association of South Africa (MASA) and has long been recognised as among South Africa and Africa's top marketers.

Corporate Marketing Team

Corporate Marketing Team of the Year was won by Pace Auto Group, a locally founded vehicle rental company that has been providing flexible mobility solutions since 2006. With a national footprint and a diverse fleet, it serves both individuals and businesses across daily, long-term and commercial needs.

Other marketing award winners

The winners of several other marketing award categories were also announced

« Santie Botha (left), recipient of the Marketing Lifetime Achievement Award, with Michelle McGowan of award sponsor Kwikot

« The IMM Institute Excellence Awards have become a highlight on the South African marketing and supply chain calendar

at the glamorous ceremony held at The Venue in Melrose Arch:

Entrepreneur of the Year: Carl van Blerk. Founder of Food Sock Meals and Heartfelt Foods, he is a Top Five Startups honouree and FlySafair Business Booster Award winner.

Marketing Student of the Year: Sophia Downes. She graduated cum laude with a BBA in Marketing Management and is currently pursuing her Honours. Downes combines academic excellence with an entrepreneurial spirit.

Emerging Marketer of the Year: Thabang Modiba. Category brand manager at Mondelez International, Modiba has nearly a decade of FMCG experience and deep expertise in high-growth market brand strategy.

Supply chain expertise recognised by the Institute

For 2026, the Supply Chain Professional of the Year award went to Malle Mabelane, Supply Chain Demand Manager at energy and chemical company Sasol. She holds a BCom Honours in Supply Chain Management and an MBA.

At Sasol, she leads procurement across Legal and IP – driving efficiency, governance and performance. Recognised for her excellence and innovation, she is also a winner at the Pan African Supply Chain Awards, receiving the award for Best Private and Public Sector Project.


« Supply Chain Professional of the Year, Malle Mabelane, with Ruchelle Mouton of award sponsor Tractor

« Carl van Blerk, Entrepreneur of the Year winner, receives his award from Meggan McCarthy of Modern Marketing

« Supply Chain Student of the Year, Kay Whitehead (right) is presented with her award by Trynie du Plessis of Profmed

« The awards indicate a shift toward integrated and future-focused leadership »

Supply Chain Team

Corporate Supply Chain Team of the Year went to the National Transmission Company of South Africa (NTCSA), a wholly owned subsidiary of Eskom Holdings established in July 2024 to own and operate the national electricity transmission grid. Committed to innovation and efficiency, NTSA delivers system operator services and supports a dynamic energy market.

Other supply chain winners

Supply Chain Student of the Year: Kay Whitehead. The Stellenbosch-based professional graduated top of her class and achieved a 97% overall score in the judging process.

Emerging Supply Chain Practitioner of the Year: Jarett Lynch. At 25, Lynch has three years' experience across international shipping, customs clearance, logistics, warehousing and distribution.

"The overall quality of this year's winners and finalists reflects a growing depth of strategic thinking, innovation and professional maturity across our industries," Gregory said. "Collectively, the awards signal an exciting shift toward more integrated, future-focused leadership across Africa's professional ecosystem."

The 2026 event sponsors were: Kwikot, UXi Private Education Group, IMM Graduate School, Modern Marketing, Profmed, Tractor and the African Marketing Confederation. ■

PHOTOS: IMM INSTITUTE

Angola is clamping down on certain foreign food imports

The latest decree forms part of Angola's ongoing efforts to reduce its high level of dependence on imported food products.

Angola has announced a new regulation requiring food importers to purchase at least 20% of selected products from local producers before selling them in the domestic market.

Poultry, pork, refined sugar, broken white rice and tilapia (a popular freshwater fish) are among the designated priority sectors under Executive Decree No. 130/26. The decree was published on 22 May 2026 and came into effect 30 days after publication.

This is part of Angola's ongoing efforts to reduce its dependence on imported food. Despite possessing extensive arable land, only around 10-15% is said to be under cultivation, according to various reports from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation and others. This means the country spends billions annually on food imports.

The decree also requires distributors and retailers to ensure Angolan-produced goods are given visible shelf placement. Practices that restrict consumer access to locally produced products are not allowed.

"Poultry and pork were included in the regulation because they remain the country's largest imported protein categories, while tilapia was selected due to the government's interest in expanding domestic aquaculture production to meet growing demand," reports the publication *'Food Business Middle East and Africa'*.

"According to available industry estimates, Angola imports about 300,000 tonnes of frozen chicken each year from suppliers in Brazil, the United States and the European Union, while domestic poultry production is projected to reach around 60,000 tonnes in 2026."

Xinhua, the Chinese-based news agency, quoted the Minister of Industry and Commerce, Rui Miguens de Oliveira, in a May 2026 news report as saying that anyone wishing to import 100 tonnes of pork will have to prove to the Ministry of Industry and Commerce that they will acquire, have contracted, or are in the process of acquiring at least 20 tonnes from national producers.

"Products of national production will always have some prominence in our commercial units", the Minister said, noting that compliance checks will begin during the import licensing process.

Key part of the import substitution strategy

Meanwhile, a report compiled by the United States Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service in June 2026 notes: "By requiring importers of selected food products to procure at least 20% of their intended import volume from domestic producers as a condition for obtaining or renewing import licenses, the Government of Angola has formalised a key component of its import substitution strategy.

"The decree substantially increases the commercial relevance of the strategy and raises the likelihood of tangible impacts on trade flows for poultry, rice, sugar, pork and tilapia, and potentially more. Although it may create incentives for local production and investment partnerships, the more immediate effect could be a barrier to trade.

"[Foreign Agricultural Service] contacts suggest that the decree may not be fully enforced in the near term because local suppliers currently lack sufficient production capacity to meet the 20% local procurement requirement mandated by the Government of Angola." ■

» Retailers must ensure Angolan-produced goods are given visible shelf placement

PHOTO: AI GENERATED VIA PHOTO AI

Angola reprime certas importações de alimentos

O último decreto tenta reduzir o elevado nível de dependência de produtos alimentares importados.

Angola anunciou um novo regulamento que exige que os importadores de produtos alimentares adquiram pelo menos 20% dos produtos seleccionados a produtores locais antes de os comercializarem no mercado interno.

Carne de aves, carne de porco, açúcar refinado, arroz branco partido e tilápia (um peixe de água doce popular) estão entre os sectores prioritários designados ao abrigo do Decreto Executivo n.º 130/26. O decreto foi publicado em 22 de Maio de 2026 e entrou em vigor 30 dias após a sua publicação.

O decreto exige igualmente que os distribuidores e retalhistas assegurem que os produtos produzidos em Angola tenham uma colocação visível nas prateleiras. Não são permitidas práticas que restrinjam o acesso dos consumidores a produtos produzidos localmente.

"A carne de aves e a carne de porco foram incluídas no regulamento porque continuam a ser as maiores categorias de proteína importada do país, enquanto a tilápia foi seleccionada devido ao interesse do governo em expandir a produção aquícola nacional para satisfazer a procura crescente", informa a publicação 'Food Business Middle East and Africa'.

"De acordo com as estimativas disponíveis do sector, Angola importa cerca de 300.000 toneladas de frango congelado por ano de fornecedores no Brasil, nos Estados Unidos e na União Europeia, enquanto se prevê que a produção nacional de carne de aves atinja cerca de 60.000 toneladas em 2026."

A Xinhua, agência noticiosa sediada na China, citou o Ministro da Indústria e Comércio, Rui Miguens de Oliveira, numa reportagem de Maio de 2026, afirmando que qualquer pessoa que pretenda importar 100 toneladas de carne de porco terá de provar ao Ministério da Indústria e Comércio que irá adquirir, que já contratou ou que está em processo de adquirir pelo menos 20 toneladas junto de produtores nacionais.

"Os produtos nacionais terão sempre algum destaque nas nossas unidades comerciais", afirmou o Ministro, observando que as verificações de conformidade terão início durante o processo de licenciamento das importações.

Estratégia de substituição de importações

Entretanto, um relatório elaborado pelo Serviço Agrícola Estrangeiro do Departamento de Agricultura dos Estados Unidos, em Junho de 2026, observa: "Ao exigir que os importadores de produtos alimentares seleccionados adquiram pelo menos 20% do volume de importação pretendido junto de produtores nacionais como condição para obter ou renovar licenças de importação, o Governo de Angola formalizou uma componente-chave da sua estratégia de substituição de importações.

"O decreto aumenta substancialmente a relevância comercial da estratégia e eleva a probabilidade de impactos tangíveis nos fluxos comerciais de carne de aves, arroz, açúcar, carne de porco e tilápia, e potencialmente de outros produtos. Embora possa criar incentivos para a produção local e parcerias de investimento, o efeito mais imediato poderá constituir uma barreira ao comércio.

"Os contactos do [Foreign Agricultural Service] sugerem que o decreto poderá não ser plenamente aplicado a curto prazo, porque os fornecedores locais actualmente não dispõem de capacidade de produção suficiente para cumprir o requisito de aquisição local de 20% imposto pelo Governo de Angola." ■

» Os retalhistas devem assegurar que os produtos produzidos em Angola tenham uma colocação visível nas prateleiras

ILUSTRAÇÃO: FOTO GERADA POR IA

Fun and fitness as MAZ hosts Interbrands Sports Games in Harare

Weekend of fun created a spirit of camaraderie among industry professionals, promoted fitness, and created a platform for networking.

The Marketers Association of Zimbabwe (MAZ) presented an unforgettable sporting experience for the country's marketing fraternity in June when it hosted the 2026 Interbrands Sports Games at the ZB Sports Club in Mount Pleasant, Harare.

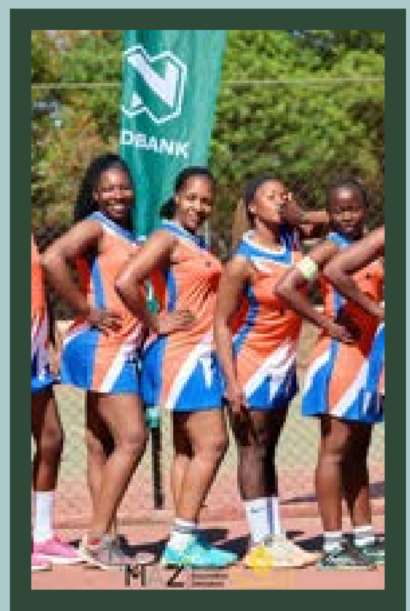
It brought together marketers, brands and their supporters for a weekend of hard-fought competition and plenty of fun. For those not feeling very athletic, there were less physically demanding activities on offer. Or they could simply relax, support their colleagues, and network.

With interest in the 2026 FIFA World Cup at fever pitch, it was hardly surprising that soccer took centre stage, with many skilful and highly competitive clashes entertaining the spectators. Impala Car Rental again took the trophy for being best at the beautiful game.

Competitors also battled it out in various other sports including netball, volleyball, tennis and marathon running. There was also snooker and novelty games such as tug-of-war and tyre flipping.

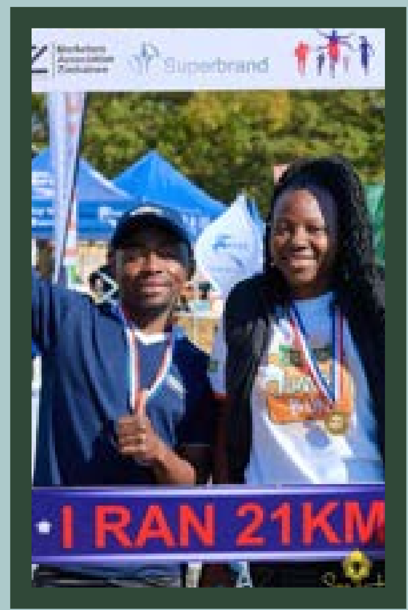
More and more brands are becoming part of one of Zimbabwe's biggest corporate sporting spectacles as brands go head-to-head in an action-packed weekend of competition, team spirit, networking and bragging rights.

The 2026 Interbrands Sports Games were proudly powered by Huletts. Start training now to ensure you win bragging rights in 2027!



« More brands are becoming part of one of Zimbabwe's biggest corp-orate sporting spectacles »

PHOTOS: MARKETERS ASSOCIATION OF ZIMBABWE



In the battle for the open market consumer, sellers are influencers

In informal retail, purchasing decisions are often shaped in the moment by available cash, visible alternatives and seller recommendations. By **Mike Simpson**.

Mushin Market in Lagos

Today, in Nigeria and many West African markets, modern trade continues to attract attention because it is easier to measure, easier to standardise and easier to analyse.

Yet a significant share of food purchasing still happens inside open markets, neighbourhood stalls, and informal retail environments where consumers make decisions very differently.

According to Lagos-based insights consultancy Pierrine Consulting, many households do not arrive with fixed shopping lists and predetermined brand choices. Instead, purchasing decisions are often shaped in the moment by available cash, visible alternatives, seller recommendations, quality perceptions and immediate value comparisons.

This makes open markets far more influential than they often appear on paper; they do not simply facilitate transactions, they actively shape purchasing behaviour.

Price sensitivity increasing

Pierrine notes in a recent market report that economic pressure continues to influence food purchasing across the region. Although food inflation in Nigeria has moderated from previous highs, consumers remain conscious of spend size and are increasingly willing to compare alternatives before committing to a purchase.

"This is particularly visible in categories such as seasonings, cooking aids and packaged food products, where consumers can often choose between several acceptable options within seconds," the consultancy notes.

"In these situations, the strongest brand does not automatically win. The product that feels most affordable, most visible, or most strongly recommended often gains the advantage.

"This helps explain why smaller and local brands continue to find opportunities despite having fewer resources and lower overall awareness than larger competitors. They are often competing more effectively at the moment of decision."

Seller as influencer

The consultancy believes one of the most overlooked realities of open-market commerce is the influence of the seller.

Consumers frequently rely on traders and market vendors to suggest alternatives, recommend products, explain price differences, or substitute unavailable items.

In highly price-sensitive environments, these recommendations can have a meaningful impact on what ultimately enters the shopping basket. This creates a form of influence that operates very differently from traditional marketing.

"A brand may invest heavily in advertising, but the final decision can still be shaped by a conversation taking place across a market stall," Pierrine emphasises in its market report.

For food brands, this means that visibility, trader relationships and point-of-sale presence often matter far more than is reflected in conventional brand-planning frameworks.

A shopkeeper in a Tunisian market stall

Different growth model

Pierrine believes this shift implies that success in open markets can no longer be driven primarily through brand awareness and distribution scale alone.

As consumer decisions become more immediate and increasingly influenced by affordability, trader recommendations and point-of-purchase visibility, competitive advantage moves closer to the moment of decision itself.

Therefore, the brands that perform best will likely be those that treat open markets as living consumer environments rather than simply as sales channels.

This requires a deeper understanding of how consumers compare products, how traders influence choices, how purchasing behaviour changes across income cycles, and how value is perceived within highly constrained spending environments.

It also requires commercial systems that are capable of responding quickly to local realities rather than relying solely on broad national assumptions.

"The opportunity here may not simply be to sell more products into open markets. The larger opportunity may be to build stronger influence within the environments where food choices are actually made," Pierrine comments.

"Because as economic pressure continues to reshape purchasing behaviour across West Africa, market leadership will increasingly belong to the brands that understand consumer decision-making most closely, not necessarily the ones that distribute the most inventory." ■

Route to market must consider what works for the wholesaler and retailer, not just the consumer

Wholesalers and retailers influence purchases

Emerging markets consultancy Trendtype agrees that informal retailers are important influencers in this market, adding that wholesalers are, in turn, important influencers of what shop owners keep in stock.

"Store owners can only buy what wholesalers stock and are therefore heavily influenced by wholesaler sentiment towards brands. In turn, because traditional trade stores can only stock a very limited number of SKUs and are not self-service, consumers are heavily influenced by the stores in which they shop," the consultancy says on its website.

It adds that in traditional trade-dominant markets, trader trust is costly to win for brands but can also be lost quickly – sometimes in as little as three months. Examples of loss of trust include brands withdrawing promotional budget (spirits), changing formulation (margarine) and altering the colours on packaging (feminine sanitary products).

"Ultimately, consumers cannot buy what traders won't stock. It means that the route to market needs to be built around not just what the consumer wants but what works for the wholesaler and the retailer."

Ignore at your peril

Frontline Research Group lists two reasons why brands can't ignore the traditional trade:

1. Traditional traders often progress into modern trade over time. Establishing loyalty early on can lead to long-term, mutually beneficial partnerships as these traders formalise and expand.
2. Similarly, customers of traditional trade evolve. A shopper introduced to a product while living in an informal settlement may retain their loyalty as they move into middle-class neighbourhoods and begin purchasing from modern supermarkets.

PHOTOS: ANTHEA SPIVEY, TAKOUTI, OMOEKO MEDIA VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Three Southern African destinations form a new tourism partnership

Collaboration signifies a more coordinated regional approach that unites marketing, shared capabilities and event-driven opportunities to shift from 'volume to value'.

Zimbabwe's Eastern Highlands, looking south towards Nyanga

« Developing a connected and high-end destination that is capable of competing more effectively on the international travel stage »

In a strategic tourism marketing initiative designed to strengthen Southern Africa's global tourism position and unlock greater value from international travel, the city of Cape Town has teamed up with Zimbabwe and Namibia to establish a new partnership.

First explored at the *World Travel Market Africa 2025* gathering, the agreement formalises collaboration between the three destinations to enhance regional coordination, unify marketing efforts and facilitate more seamless cross-border travel for long-haul visitors.

At its core, the partnership aims to shift from volume to value – promoting longer stays, increasing per-trip expenditure and distributing tourism benefits more evenly across the region.

The initiative will roll out joint digital campaigns and multi-country itineraries that are supported by shared insights on digital marketing, storytelling and what drives bookings. The aim is to help all partners reach the right audiences and turn interest into travel.

Gateway with intent

"Cape Town has always been a gateway, but the opportunity now is to be a gateway with intent," says Mayoral Committee Member for Economic Growth, James Vos.

"By strengthening regional ties, we are fostering a more inclusive model of tourism growth – one that encourages higher visitor spending, supports cross-border businesses and ensures that the benefits of tourism are shared more widely across Southern Africa. This is how we build a sector that is not just larger, but more resilient and balanced."

Adds Enver Duminy, CEO of Cape Town Tourism: "This partnership reflects a deliberate shift in how we think about growth. Global travellers are no longer looking for single-stop experiences; they want depth, diversity and seamless travel.

"By collaborating with Zimbabwe and Namibia, we are creating richer, multi-faceted journeys and positioning Southern Africa as a connected, high-end destination capable of competing more effectively on the international stage."

Major events a catalyst

Additionally, the agreement places greater emphasis on major events as catalysts for travel.

Sporting, cultural and business events will serve as anchor points to promote multi-country itineraries, encouraging visitors to extend their trips before and after key events and unlocking broader regional impact.

"This partnership marks a milestone in regional integration," says Sebulon Chicalu, CEO of the Namibia Tourism Board.

PHOTOS: CITY OF CAPE TOWN; SEABIFAR VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

George Manyaya (Zimbabwe Tourism Authority CEO), James Vos (Cape Town Mayoral Committee Member for Economic Growth), Sebulon Chicalu (Namibia Tourism Board CEO) and Enver Duminy (Cape Town Tourism CEO)

"Our collective investment supports the economic resilience of our entire region by removing friction in regional travel and encouraging high-value visitors to stay longer and explore further. Namibia is ready to welcome the world through this new gateway, ensuring that every visitor experiences the immense diversity and high-end value that we have to offer."

Regional positioning

For Zimbabwe, the partnership reflects a broader shift in how the region positions itself internationally.

"This collaboration signals a new era for how Southern Africa shows up on the global stage. By aligning our efforts, we're making it easier for travellers to experience more of the region in a single journey and unlock greater economic impact across our destinations," says Dr George Manyaya, Chief Executive of the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority.

"It's a smart, future-focused approach that strengthens our collective competitiveness and ensures tourism growth is shared more broadly."

Campaign development will begin in the coming months, with activity expected to launch ahead of the peak international travel planning period in November.

"Ultimately, the partnership signifies a more coordinated regional approach, uniting marketing, shared capabilities and event-driven opportunities to create a tourism ecosystem that is more competitive, resilient and prepared for long-term, inclusive growth," the partners state in a press release.

The African Marketing Confederation is collaborating with UN Tourism on its Brand Africa initiative to create a responsible, sustainable and attractive pan-African tourism brand. The AMC is also launching a dedicated Tourism Chapter for African tourism marketers. ■

How Southern African regions can benefit from this new marketing partnership

The Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe is one of the regions that stands to gain immensely from this approach, according to an article published by *Herald Online*, the digital version of *The Herald* newspaper.

As one of Zimbabwe's most scenic tourism regions, the Eastern Highlands possess a unique combination of attractions ranging from breathtaking mountain landscapes, waterfalls and forests, to rich cultural heritage and adventure tourism opportunities.

Destinations such as Nyanga National Park, Vumba Mountains, Chimanimani Mountains, Hot Springs, Bridal Veil Falls, Mutarazi Falls, the Skywalk and Zipline, and numerous cultural heritage sites provide a tourism product capable of competing with some of the best destinations on the continent.

"However, despite its immense potential, the region has often struggled with international visibility when compared to globally recognised destinations such as Cape Town, Namibia's desert tourism circuits or East Africa's safari destinations," notes Lloyd Makonya, a correspondent for the publication.

He believes the new strategic partnership presents an opportunity to change this narrative.

Leverage digital marketing

"By leveraging digital marketing campaigns, shared tourism platforms, influencer marketing, content creation and destination storytelling, the Eastern Highlands can position itself as an essential component of the Southern African tourism experience," Makonya writes.

"Tourism experts have long argued that visibility is one of the most important currencies in modern tourism. Today's traveller is increasingly influenced by digital content consumed through social media platforms, travel blogs, online booking systems and virtual tourism experiences.

"A single viral video showcasing the sunrise from Nyanga Mountain, the mist-covered forests of Vumba or the dramatic landscapes of Chimanimani can potentially reach millions of prospective visitors across the globe."

Makonya notes that the Government's embrace of digital marketing therefore arrives at an opportune moment.

For tourism operators in the Eastern Highlands, this means investing in professional digital content, maintaining an active social media presence, improving online booking capabilities and telling compelling destination stories that resonate with international audiences.

Marketing Society of Rwanda joins the AMC fold

Moses Kazoora, President of MSR, one of East Africa's leading marketing and communications professionals

Modern Kigali, capital of Rwanda

Patricia Allen Garuka, Vice President of MSR, has over 16 years' experience in marketing and brand management

Society's aims include developing professional standards and creating opportunities for Rwandan marketers to learn, network and participate in Africa-focused initiatives.

The African Marketing Confederation has welcomed its newest member body to the fold, the Marketing Society of Rwanda (MSR).

Formally established in September 2025 in response to Rwanda's rapidly evolving business landscape, a group of dedicated industry leaders came together to build a unified platform that represents marketing professionals from every sector of the economy.

Speaking to *Strategic Marketing for Africa*, the President of MSR, Moses Kazoora, says that as the country continues to position itself as a regional hub for business, innovation, tourism, and investment, there is an increasing need for a strong and globally competitive marketing profession.

Through its membership of the AMC, the Marketing Society of Rwanda gains access to professional standards, certification frameworks, research, thought leadership, and best practices that will help strengthen marketing excellence among local practitioners.

"The AMC is also a strategic partner in advancing the recognition of marketing as a key driver of business growth, competitiveness, innovation and national development. Its experience, continental reach and professional credibility will support MSR as it builds institutional capacity, develops professional standards, and creates greater opportunities for Rwandan marketers to learn, network and participate in regional initiatives – including the annual AMC conference," he states.

"Marketing is evolving rapidly, driven by digital transformation, artificial intelligence, data analytics, changing consumer behaviour, and the growth of AfCFTA. These developments require marketers to continuously learn, collaborate and share knowledge beyond national borders."

MSR is now focused on establishing a strong foundation and its immediate priorities are:

- **Growing a vibrant membership community** by bringing together marketing professionals, business leaders, entrepreneurs, academics and students.
- **Strengthening institutional capacity** by establishing robust governance structures, professional standards and operational systems that ensure transparency, sustainability and effective service delivery.
- **Building strategic partnerships** with government institutions, academia, civil society, the private sector and development partners.
- **Developing professional learning opportunities** through training, certification pathways, research, thought leadership, networking events and mentorship programmes.
- **Strengthening regional and continental engagement** by participating in AMC initiatives and supporting knowledge exchange across Africa.

Indicative of its commitment to positioning Rwanda as a centre for marketing excellence on the continent, MSR also intends bidding to host a future AMC conference.

Readers of our Digital Edition can find out more about MSR here. ■

PHOTOS: MARKETING SOCIETY OF RWANDA; PAUL KAGAME VIA FLICKR

Skechers has become a prominent global athletic footwear brand

PHOTO: UNSPLASH/VENTI VIEWS

Global footwear brand Skechers establishing first African factory

US-based company heads to the North African country of Algeria as it seeks a foothold in Africa and the Mediterranean region.

Skechers, one of the largest athletic footwear brands worldwide, recently signed an agreement to establish its first African factory in Algeria under an agreement with a local partner.

The US-based company will initially produce 300,000 pairs of shoes a year at the North African facility, a figure rising to two million when the project is completed in 2031.

"This project embodies the state's strategy aimed at replacing imports with national production, through attracting productive foreign investments and strengthening partnerships with major global brands," said Algeria's Minister of Foreign Trade and Export Promotion, Kamel Rezig.

He was speaking at the signing ceremony between Skechers and local partner Tradifoot. The latter is a major player in the distribution of international brand footwear in the Algerian market.

Products manufactured at the facility will supply the Algerian market, other parts of Africa, and the Mediterranean region of Europe.

Speaking at the same event, Skechers' Vice President for Finance, Douglas Parker, highlighted Algeria's strong growth and expansion potential. He added that 65% of Skechers' revenue comes from markets outside the United States, making expansion into Africa and the Arab world a strategic priority for the brand.

Factory near Algiers

The factory will cover 22,000 square metres in Bab Ali, located 20 kilometres west of the capital city of Algiers.

Tradifoot said the project aims to "actively contribute to the development of 'Made in Algeria', create skilled and sustainable jobs, and position Algeria as a regional production and export hub."

Comments the prominent Algerian daily newspaper *Echorouk El Yawmi* in a news report: "Beyond the factory's production figures, the project reflects Algeria's broader ambition to attract international manufacturers and strengthen its industrial base.

"The investment could contribute to the development of local supply chains, skills transfer, and job creation while positioning the country as a regional manufacturing platform. If export targets are achieved, the facility may also reinforce Algeria's role in connecting African, Middle Eastern, and European markets."

Tied to oil and gas

Because Algeria's economy is closely tied to oil and gas, macro-economic stability can fluctuate significantly based on global energy demand and OPEC+ policies.

To lower this dependency, the country has introduced reforms like a new Investment Law to attract foreign capital and increase trade efficiency.

Algeria is also expanding its footprint in the broader African market, leveraging the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to increase exports of non-oil goods to neighbouring countries.

Competitor to Nike

Skechers ranks among the world's largest sports footwear brands alongside Nike, Adidas and Puma. The company designs, manufactures, and markets a wide range of footwear, apparel and accessories for men, women and children.

Skechers distributes its collections in around 180 countries and territories and manages international operations through wholly owned subsidiaries, joint ventures and distribution agreements. ■

MTN is Africa's most valuable brand, Tusker is its strongest brand

Latest Africa-wide study finds South Africa still dominates the brand landscape, with Morocco and Egypt bubbling under.

Kenya's Tusker is Africa's strongest brand

PHOTO: FLICKR

Africa's top 200 brands have grown by 11% to reach a combined value of US$62.6-billion in 2026, driven by strong performance across the banking, telecoms and retail sectors. This is according to the '*Africa 200 2026*' report by brand valuation consultancy Brand Finance.

South Africa continues to dominate Africa's brand landscape, accounting for 71% of total brand value, with 104 brands worth US$44.6-billion, driven by the scale and sophistication of its banking, telecoms and retail sectors. SA is home to all the top 10 most valuable brands in this year's ranking.

While MTN maintains its position as Africa's most valuable brand for the 13th consecutive year, the gap separating MTN from second-placed Vodacom and third-ranked Standard Bank has narrowed significantly.

At its peak in 2022, MTN was 100% more valuable than Vodacom and 156% more valuable than Standard Bank. By 2026, this lead had narrowed to just 6% and 13% respectively, signalling intensifying competition at the top of the ranking.

Regional brands are now gaining ground

Beyond this, a tier of emerging regional markets is gaining ground: Morocco's 13 brands contribute just over 7% of brand value, led by Attijariwafa Bank (brand value up 20%).

Egypt holds 6.6% of brand value with 25 brands, anchored by National Bank of Egypt (up 10% in value), while Nigeria accounts for 5.5%, driven by strong growth from Seplat Energy (up 119%), the fastest-growing African brand.

Kenya's 15 brands contribute around 4%, and continue to outperform on brand strength, with Tusker ranked as Africa's strongest brand (brand strength is based on different metrics to brand value).

"Overall, Africa's brand landscape remains highly concentrated but is showing increasing momentum across key regional markets," Brand Finance comments.

Brand Strength Index (BSI)

Tusker beer's ranking as Africa's strongest brand is achieved with a BSI score of 97.9/100. "Its leadership is driven by exceptional performance across familiarity, preference and reputation, reflecting deep cultural resonance and strong emotional connection with consumers in its home market, supported by consistent brand building and enduring loyalty," the report states.

South Africa's Checkers supermarket chain is second with a BSI score of 97.0/100. Brand Finance says it is "underpinned by a compelling blend of credibility and a premium value proposition focused on quality, innovation and convenience. This positioning is further strengthened by Shoprite Group's scale and advanced digital capabilities, which continue to expand customer reach and enhance engagement."

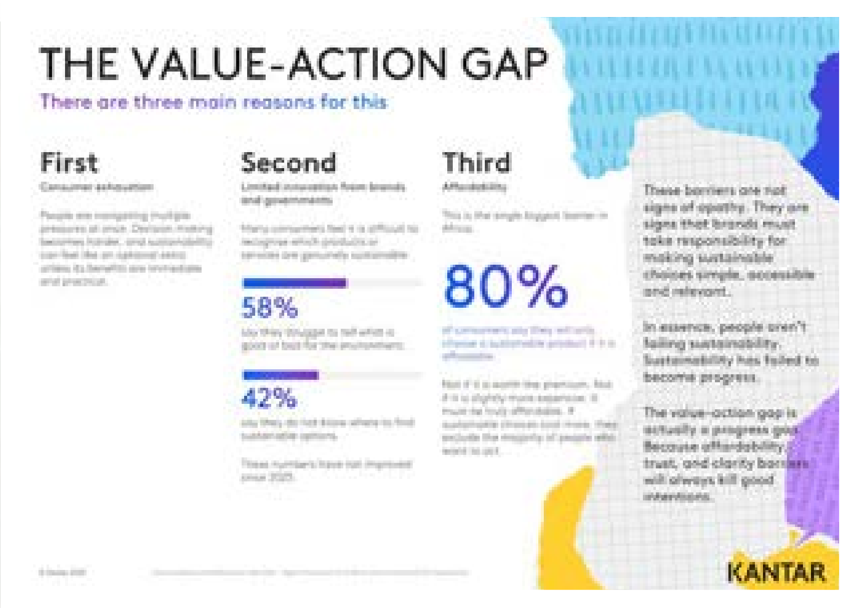
Comments Jeremy Sampson, Chairman of Brand Finance Africa: "Many of the continent's most valuable brands are no longer defined solely by their domestic markets. They are expanding across borders, exporting African expertise, and increasingly competing with global players on equal footing.

The progress is clear: intra-African trade accounted for just around 3% in the late 1950s, compared to nearly 20% today, with momentum continuing to build."

Find out more: https://brandirectory.com/reports/africa. ■

The best African brands deliver sustainability through actions, not words

African consumers want ethical, responsible choices. Therefore, brand growth hinges on making sustainable choices simple, accessible, affordable and relevant.
By **Cara Bouwer**.



Like a coin, the word 'sustainability' has two sides. The well-known face considers the ecological impact of our day-to-day lives and the products and services we consume. It's about finding ways to live sensitively within our planet's boundaries. The second meaning links to longevity. Not just for humans, but communities and businesses as well.

In Africa, sustainability is deeply intertwined with both social and environmental challenges. Not only that, says Ndeye Diagne, Chief Strategy and Transformation Officer: Middle East, Africa & Türkiye at market intelligence firm Kantar, the impact of climate change on jobs, food security and daily life adds further depth which influences how the concept is interpreted across the continent.

For many businesses, it's easier to focus on the ecological side and the potential costs associated with net-zero and resource management, rather than all the messy interconnected issues. In doing so, these organisations forget that their growth and success in Africa is intrinsically linked to enabling the people who use their products and services to progress through life.

It is for this reason that Kantar decided to 'retire' the word sustainability. A least as the headline act of the firm's latest whitepaper, *'Progress – The new rules of growth in Africa'*.

For Diagne and co-author Astrid Ricketts, Kantar's Sustainable Transformation Practice Lead, the word sustainability has "stopped moving decisions". Instead, they chose to focus on the chasm that exists between how people want to live their lives and the choices they can reasonably access to help them do so. It's within this gap, they explain, that brand possibility exists in Africa.

A space of growth and of possibility

By embracing what they call "the progress principles for brand growth", the Kantar team believes this value-action gap can be closed by brands that adopt a progress outlook as part of their growth strategy.

In practice this means developing a willingness to transform existing categories, design products and services with affordability in mind, and actively removing the friction that gets in the way of people living according to their values. This shift, it seems, may help unlock access to bigger markets, while also generating greater brand affinity.

> « Brands must actively remove the friction that gets in the way of people living according to their values »

The numbers bear this out. At a headline level, Diagne explains, "African consumers still care deeply about sustainability. Across Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa, around 86-87% say people like them need to act on climate change and social inequality.

But at the same time, there's a significant gap between intention and action: 93% say they want to live sustainably, yet only 37% are actively changing their behaviour."

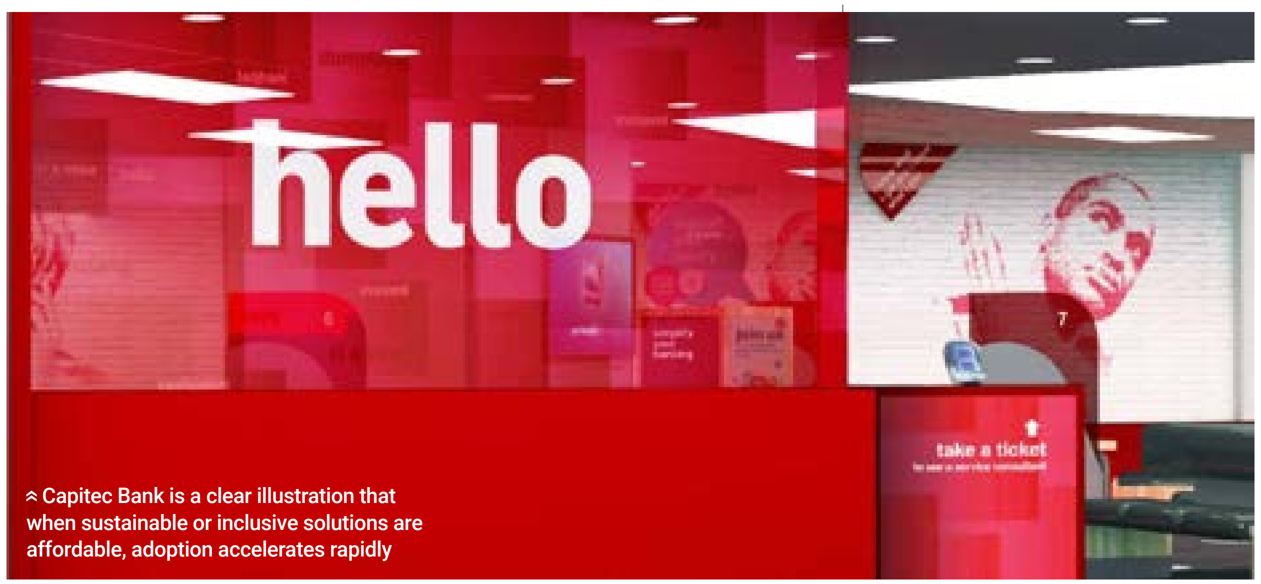
This finding really stood out for the authors as it clearly showed that sustainability was not being held back because people don't care, but because the system hasn't made it easy enough for them to act. "It's not a lack of concern, it's a combination of very real barriers," says Diagne.

"People are feeling overwhelmed by multiple crises, from cost-of-living pressures to safety and economic instability, and simply don't have the bandwidth to engage with sustainability in abstract terms."

This, she says, "reframes the role of brands quite fundamentally".

Insufficient innovation from brands, and a lack of clarity around which products and services are truly sustainable, makes it harder for consumers to make proactive decisions. Ricketts and Diagne explain that "consumers want solutions and they want inspiration for action. They're looking to brands to provide it. In this reality, progress means products and services that are affordable, practical, visible and directly solve the pressures of daily life."

African brands that understand the unique and sustained pressures impacting local consumers, and who take the chance to "build progress into

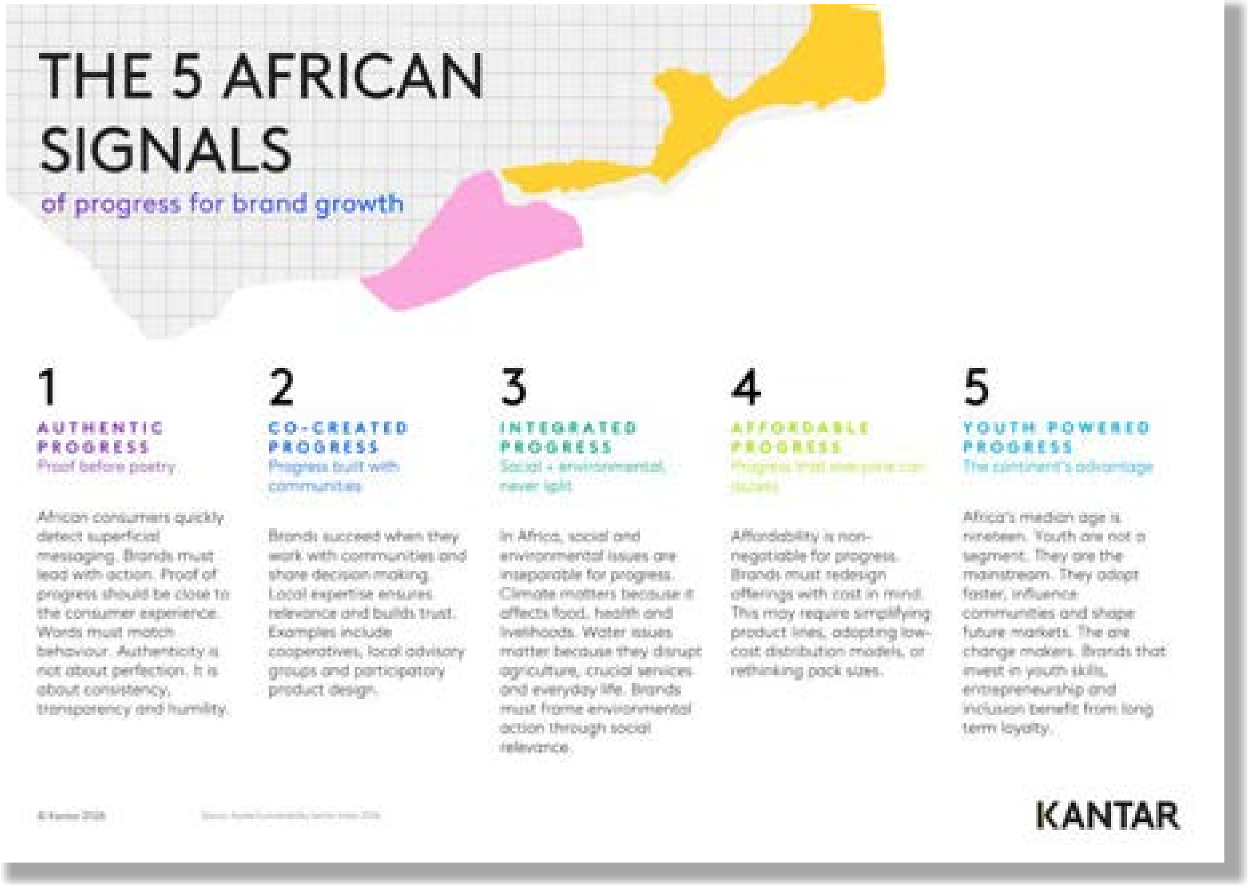


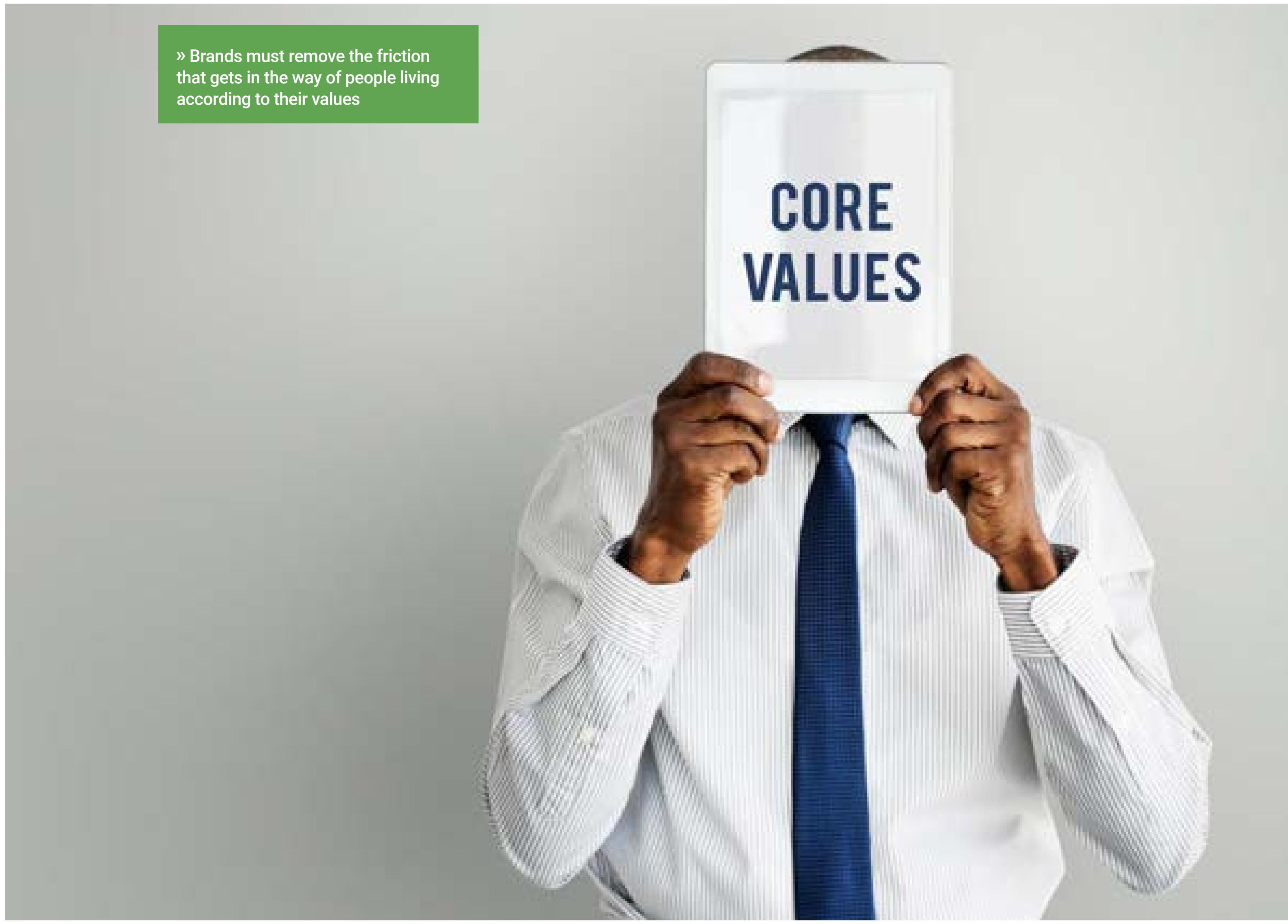
^ Capitec Bank is a clear illustration that when sustainable or inclusive solutions are affordable, adoption accelerates rapidly

people's lives" by addressing their specific needs and pain points, will inevitably scale, is the message. These brands will engender trust and endure, because they understand what sustainability looks like in Africa and how clearing the way for people to progress offers hope amidst a whirlwind of disruption and uncertainty.

These brands understand the fundamental truths underpinning how sustainability and progress are viewed in Africa. Firstly, in a view shared by 82% of individuals polled, African consumers feel strongly that businesses should be acting in the collective interest of communities and not just for individuals. Secondly, sustainability can't be one sided, it requires a systemic, interconnected view that puts issues like climate change, food security and water

> « Consumers feel businesses must act in the best interests of their local communities »





» Brands must remove the friction that gets in the way of people living according to their values

pollution on the business radar.

Finally, the defining constraint is affordability, says Diagne. Kantar's research showed that 73% of African respondents across Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa felt sustainability carried a heftier price tag. "Around 80% say they will only choose sustainable options if they are affordable. In an African context, sustainability is not a premium choice, it has to compete at everyday price points," Diagne emphasises.

Baking progress into an African brand

The whitepaper posits how African brands that take these foundational truths to heart and combine them with Kantar's five progress markers – namely authenticity, co-creation, integration, affordability and youth power – can close the possibility gap.

In the West African country of Togo, for instance, the impact of co-creation is evident in the work of beauty brand Alaffia, which integrates community welfare into its business model, supporting social initiatives like education, maternal care and tree planting. By operating through women-led cooperatives, "with decisions shaped by local communities rather than imposed externally", the approach builds relevance and credibility, both of which are "critical in a context where trust can be fragile", says Diagne.

By delivering shared value in a way that communities and individuals can see and own, Alaffia has also successfully ensured stronger community goodwill, and built future longevity into the brand.

Alaffia Founder and CEO, Olowo-N'Djo Tchala, addressed this approach in a recent video interview with Producers Trust, a digital global marketplace focused on building equity for producers.

"When we were growing up in the central part of Togo, there were all these different ways of protecting nature. It used to be that we cannot cut the shea trees down because if you cut the shea trees down your village will curse you. So, you don't touch them. There was all this community governance within our culture, and that's how I feel about Alaffia too – I'm trying to show our communities in West Africa, and our communities in America, that it is possible to use our traditional knowledge to create healthy products without destroying ourselves. As we go forward in the world, we must consider the environment," Tchala said.

Similarly, Capitec Bank in South Africa is achieving progress through affordability by making banking simpler and reducing fees. The Kantar authors explain that this model "shows how affordability creates scale and how scale creates inclusion".

Founded in 2001, Capitec's purpose is, fittingly, to "make a meaningful difference in people's lives, empowering them to grow". Today, the bank has more than 25.8-million active clients, employs around 17 000 people and has over 885 branches in South Africa.

For Diagne, Capitec is an example of a compelling brand that doesn't use any sustainability messaging. Instead, it is embedding progress into how the business operates, she explains, especially around affordability and access.

"Capitec in South Africa has built its entire model on simplifying banking and making it accessible at scale… It's a clear illustration that when sustainable or inclusive solutions are affordable, adoption accelerates rapidly," she says.

Finally, another standout theme is the integration of social and environmental impact. Diagne singles out initiatives like the Beyond the Grid Fund, which aims to bring off-grid energy solutions to almost nine million people in Africa by 2029.

Funding rounds are already underway in Burkina Faso, Liberia, Zambia, Mozambique and Uganda. In this case, she explains that "environmental progress is achieved through delivering tangible social value. The fund demonstrates this well, where clean energy solutions are positioned not just as environmental interventions, but as enablers of jobs, healthcare access and economic activity."

Unlocking the potential hiding in the value-action gap isn't about running another marketing or advertising campaign, it's about reshaping business operating models to put real value into the hands of consumers. Ultimately, says Diagne, "the brands that stand out are those making sustainability practical, visible and useful in people's everyday lives". ■

Cara Bouwer is an experienced writer, independent researcher, journalist and editor. Her words appear in media articles around the world, in business case studies, white papers, insight reports and corporate copywriting.

⌃ Ndeye Diagne of Kantar

⌄ Beauty brand Alaffia operates through women-led cooperatives

PHOTO/ILLUSTRATION: KANTAR; MAGNIFIC; RAWPIXEL VIA MAGNIFIC; CAPITEC BANK; ALAFFIA

Extensive infrastructure upgrade planned for Douala–Bangui corridor

More than $1,1-billion to be spent on improving the 1,400km-long corridor which provides a critical trade route for Cameroon and the Central African Republic.

Cameroon's ambitions as a regional logistics hub will be strengthened by improvements to the Douala–Bangui corridor, as well as upgrades to ports such as Kribi

The World Bank has approved a US$1.12-billion infrastructure programme aimed at transforming the Douala–Bangui corridor in Central-West Africa.

Stretching over 1,400km, the corridor is described as the economic backbone of Cameroon and a critical lifeline for the landlocked Central African Republic (CAR), carrying more than 80% of the country's external trade.

"By rehabilitating infrastructure, reducing bottlenecks, and piloting sustainable maintenance systems, the programme will lower transport costs, improve market access, and support inclusive growth across one of Central Africa's most vital trade routes," the World Bank says.

Despite its strategic importance, the corridor has long suffered from deteriorated roads, transport costs as high as US$270 per ton, journey times of 9 to 12 days under normal conditions, and 38 checkpoints in Cameroon alone – 17 of which involve informal payments.

There is concern that these barriers choke trade, raise consumer prices, undermine food security, and keep millions of people isolated from economic opportunity.

According to the World Bank, the investments will rehabilitate key road segments to climate-resilient standards, establish axle-load control stations, develop logistics hubs and feeder roads, strengthen value chains, and support trade facilitation and institutional reforms.

The first phase, costing US$525-million, will focus on rehabilitating priority infrastructure, improving road safety and strengthening road maintenance systems in Cameroon, the Central African Republic and across the wider Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) region.

CEMAC is a regional economic bloc comprising six countries: Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and the Republic of Congo. The community shares a common central bank and a single currency, the CFA franc.

"The programme is anchored in a broader vision of regional integration within CEMAC," comments Cheick Kanté, Division Director at the World Bank. "Through a phased approach, it combines infrastructure rehabilitation, logistics and policy reforms, and initiatives to unlock economic opportunities and attract private investment."

Regional logistics hub

For Cameroon, the project also supports its ambition to strengthen its position as a regional logistics hub built around the ports of Douala and Kribi, as well as transit services, trucking operations and cross-border trade activities, a news report by *Business in Cameroon* states.

In early 2026, Cameroon and an international development consortium launched the Kribi Port Industrial Zone (KPIZ) project, with the aim of driving the economic transformation of the country and the CEMAC region.

Located in the immediate vicinity of the deep-water port of Kribi and covering nearly 4,000 hectares, KPIZ benefits from a strategic geographical position, a hinterland extended to Central Africa, as well as strong potential for the development of industrial, logistics, port and tourism activities.

According to the website *Ports Africa*, the project includes the construction of essential infrastructure networks (roads, energy, water, telecommunications), the development of a business and conference centre, as well as modern logistics facilities and specialised industrial zones.

The estimated cost of the KPIZ project is approximately US$905.5-million. ■

« The project will strengthen the ambitions of Cameroon to be a powerful logistics hub in the region »

Amélioration prévue pour le corridor Douala-Bangui

Plus de 1,1 milliard de dollars seront consacrés à l'amélioration d'un axe commercial stratégique pour le Cameroun et la RCA.

Le port de Kribi figure parmi les infrastructures en cours de modernisation visant à améliorer la logistique au Cameroun

CRÉDIT PHOTO : PORT DE KRIBI

La Banque mondiale a approuvé un programme d'infrastructures de 1,12 milliard de dollars américains visant à transformer le corridor Douala–Bangui en Afrique centrale et occidentale.

S'étendant sur plus de 1 400 km, le corridor est décrit comme l'épine dorsale économique du Cameroun et comme une artère essentielle pour la République centrafricaine (RCA), pays enclavé, assurant plus de 80 % du commerce extérieur de ce pays.

« En réhabilitant les infrastructures, en réduisant les goulets d'étranglement et en mettant en œuvre des systèmes de maintenance durables, ce programme permettra de réduire les coûts de transport, d'améliorer l'accès aux marchés et de favoriser une croissance inclusive le long de l'une des voies commerciales les plus importantes d'Afrique centrale », indique la Banque mondiale.

Malgré son importance stratégique, le corridor souffre depuis longtemps de routes dégradées, de coûts de transport pouvant atteindre 270 dollars américains par tonne, de temps de trajet de 9 à 12 jours dans des conditions normales, ainsi que de 38 postes de contrôle rien qu'au Cameroun, dont 17 impliquent des paiements informels.

Ces barrières suscitent des inquiétudes, car elles entravent les échanges commerciaux, font grimper les prix à la consommation, compromettent la sécurité alimentaire et privent des millions de personnes d'opportunités économiques.

Selon la Banque mondiale, ces investissements permettront de réhabiliter des tronçons routiers clés pour les adapter aux normes de résilience climatique, de mettre en place des postes de contrôle de la charge à l'essieu, de développer des plateformes logistiques et des routes de desserte, de renforcer les chaînes de valeur et de soutenir la facilitation des échanges ainsi que les réformes institutionnelles.

La première phase, d'un coût de 525 millions de dollars américains, sera axée sur la réhabilitation des infrastructures prioritaires, l'amélioration de la sécurité routière et le renforcement des systèmes d'entretien routier au Cameroun, en République centrafricaine et dans l'ensemble de la région plus vaste de la Communauté économique et monétaire de l'Afrique centrale (CEMAC).

Plateforme logistique régionale

Pour le Cameroun, le projet soutient aussi son ambition de renforcer sa position en tant que pôle logistique régional articulé autour des ports de Douala et de Kribi, ainsi que des services de transit, des opérations de transport routier et des activités commerciales transfrontalières, indique un article de presse de *Business in Cameroon*.

Début 2026, le Cameroun et un consortium international de développement ont lancé le projet de Zone industrielle portuaire de Kribi (KPIZ), dans le but de stimuler la transformation économique du pays et de la région de la CEMAC.

Située à proximité immédiate du port en eau profonde de Kribi et couvrant près de 4 000 hectares, la KPIZ bénéficie d'une position géographique stratégique, d'un arrière-pays étendu jusqu'à l'Afrique centrale, ainsi que d'un fort potentiel pour le développement d'activités industrielles, logistiques, portuaires et touristiques.

Selon le site web *Ports Africa*, le projet comprend la construction de réseaux d'infrastructures essentiels (routes, énergie, eau, télécommunications), l'aménagement d'un centre d'affaires et de conférences, ainsi que d'installations logistiques modernes et de zones industrielles spécialisées. Le coût estimatif du projet KPIZ est d'environ 905,5 millions de dollars américains. ■

Warning that African supply chains are vulnerable to cyber fraud

Growing mobile-first trade, digital procurement and integration with global IT systems – coupled with a rise in AI-enabled fraud – are exposing weak controls across African supplier networks, says **Fiona Zerbst**.

As with digital marketing, digital banking, fintech, e-commerce and many other business sectors in Africa, the continent's supply chain is digitising rapidly and embracing information technology.

And while this brings numerous efficiencies and global competitiveness benefits, it also brings with it the growing challenge of exposure to cyber fraud.

"Businesses have digitised quickly, but not securely," says Paul Vos, Regional Managing Director of the Chartered Institute of Procurement & Supply (CIPS) Southern Africa. UK-based CIPS claims to be the world's largest professional body for procurement and supply chain management.

"The controls that should be in place – supplier verification, payment authorisation discipline, contractual accountability and fraud awareness – are often lagging," notes Vos. "Companies are still treating cyber security as an IT issue, not a procurement issue."

With cyber fraud set to surge year-over-year, supply chains are not ready – and the risk is not just increasing incidents of cyber crime, but a widening attack surface across the supply chain.

This gap is most visible where supplier onboarding, payments and approvals are digital but not fully end-to-end secure, warns Vos.

While financial systems remain key targets, cybercriminals are increasingly targeting procurement networks, supplier portals and logistics platforms. These areas are often less protected than financial systems, but are still linked to payments and sensitive data that the criminals would like to access.

« Exposure in the supply chain is no longer only about a company's own systems »

Why supply chain matters to Africa

Ronald Mlalazi, President of the African Supply Chain Confederation (ASCON): "For the African continent, competent supply chain management is the fundamental engine for macro-economic development. The successful implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) relies entirely on seamless cross-border logistics, harmonised procurement, and integrated regional value chains."

Kevin Holmes, Product Development Portfolio Head, Trade and Working Capital Broader Africa, Rand Merchant Bank (RMB): "Fragile supply chains pull down job creation, industrial growth and export competitiveness. They erode confidence in Africa's ability to localise manufacturing and reduce dependence on imports."

Vos believes smaller African businesses are having to manage risks they can't realistically control, especially where global standards are applied without context. "The answer isn't lowering expectations," he says. "It's making them practical and scalable. Resilience doesn't have to be complex – but it does have to be consistent and applied.

This comes back to capability. "Procurement professionals need to be able to recognise cyber-fraud indicators, challenge supplier claims and understand where vulnerabilities exist in their own processes," Vos emphasises.

Common attack methods include business email compromise, invoice redirection fraud, fake supplier onboarding, and manipulation of banking details within supplier records.

This is not just a peripheral IT issue in African supply chains but a core operational threat, and it should be treated as such, he warns.

For African companies, especially smaller and mid-sized ones that have gone digital through smartphones and cloud tools rather than through large enterprise platforms, the danger is not always a simple hack. Often, it can look like a normal payment instruction, a routine request to amend supplier banking details, a new vendor added to the system, or an urgent email that appears to come from a trusted counterparty.

"What looks like a normal transaction is actually fraud. That's the risk – it hides inside the process," says Vos.

Third-party risk

What makes the issue more urgent is that supply-chain exposure is no longer only about a company's own systems.

US-based tech company Verizon's *2025 Data Breach Investigations Report* says third-party involvement in breaches doubled to 30% in a year, while vulnerability exploitation rose to 20% of breaches analysed.

In other words, the supplier ecosystem is increasingly under attack. This is concerning in African markets, where companies frequently depend on external logistics providers, outsourced software, digital payment intermediaries, and distributors whose controls may be uneven.

Weak governance and contractual blind spots

Cyber fraud is increasingly surfacing through weak contractual and governance structures. In ICT, SaaS (software as a service) and outsourced service agreements, organisations are often exposed through vague data security clauses, limited audit rights and unclear accountability in the event of a breach.

"Contracts must be more than service agreements," notes Vos. "They must clearly define accountability, data protection requirements and incident response obligations."

Resilience doesn't mean spending more on IT systems, he says. Rather, the priority is to tighten supplier onboarding, strengthen controls over payments and data changes, and build procurement capability.

"It's about discipline and visibility across the supplier's ecosystem," Vos explains. "Strong vendors can demonstrate how they manage risk, not just claim they are secure."

Weighing costs against risk

Vos points out that cutting costs can also pose a risk. "We need to stop treating resilience as a cost line – it's actually protection against much bigger losses. The cheapest supplier is only cheap until something goes wrong, then it becomes very expensive."

He says procurement needs to shift from price-driven decisions to risk-informed value decisions. "This is because you're ultimately not buying a product – you're buying reliability into your supply chain," he notes.

In an official trading update published in 2025, Southern African poultry producer Astral Foods noted that a cybersecurity incident on 16 March of that year had disrupted processing and deliveries in its poultry division, resulting in a loss of around US$1.13-million (R20-million) in profit for the reporting period.

The company said its business units had returned to normal operations, but the disclosure is a reminder that a cyber incident can quickly become a production and delivery problem – in effect, a supply chain failure.

Such a public disclosure does not, by itself, prove negligence or the root cause, but it does show how operational disruption translates into financial damage.

How to strengthen supply chain resilience

The policy implication is straightforward. African companies should stop treating cyber security as a specialist back-office concern and start treating it as part of procurement and supply chain discipline.

That means asking basic but often neglected questions, says Vos: who verified this supplier; who approved the banking change; what proof supports the claimed controls; what data protections are written into the contract; what happens if a supplier is compromised; and where are the single points of failure?

What's needed isn't full visibility, as such, but meaningful visibility of critical suppliers, digitally connected suppliers and single points of failure.

Vos believes the three most effective ways companies can strengthen their supply chain resilience right now are:

- Tightening supplier onboarding, where most vulnerabilities are introduced.
- Putting stronger controls around payments and data changes, as this is where money tends to leak.
- Building procurement capability, so people can recognise risk and not just process transactions.

Full transformation isn't needed, he notes – but you should focus on closing the biggest gaps first.

The landscape has changed. AI is making deception cheaper and faster; digital procurement has widened the attack surface; and third-party exposure is rising. But the first line of defence is still surprisingly old-fashioned: verification, segregation of duties, disciplined approvals, stronger contracts and teams trained to challenge what looks routine. "Cyber resilience is no longer about isolated controls," states Vos. "It is about building capability across the entire supply chain."

He says brands that can demonstrate resilience, transparency and control are perceived as more trustworthy. "This is critical because Africa is integrating into global supply chains at pace. This isn't just about compliance – it's about positioning African organisations as credible, reliable and globally competitive."

The companies that move first on those basics are unlikely merely to avoid losses. They may also become the partners that global buyers trust most. That, as Vos notes, is its own competitive advantage. ■

Editor's note: The author has supplied a list of references, which are available from the editor on request.

African supply chain's growing reliance on tech

The transformation of Africa's supply chain – particularly enhancing supply chain resilience and sustainability – is increasingly reliant on technology and advanced IT systems.

"Technology serves as a powerful catalyst for the transition to more sustainable supply chain practices. Route optimisation platforms and smart grids are examples of technology solutions that help to reduce emissions and waste generation by optimising logistics and resource utilisation," writes Lilian Nganda, Head of Customer Communication & Events, IMEA for Maersk, the giant global shipping and logistics company.

"Furthermore, blockchain technology has the potential to increase transparency and traceability, allowing consumers to make more informed decisions and hold companies accountable for their environmental impact," she notes in an article posted on the Maersk website in November 2024.

"These advancements have the potential to create a virtuous cycle in which sustainable practices become both environmentally responsible and economically advantageous, fostering long-term prosperity for Africa and its people."

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