

Technology, Innovation and Digital Tourism for Africa's Sustainable Development.

By Dr. Abigail Adesina Olagbaye DFCIHTMA DFCIHTM
President Sayari Dunia Sustainable Tourism Foundation.

Evolution of Technology Innovation and Digital Tourism in Africa

- Technology has doubtlessly played a significant and crucial role in the evolution of Tourism in Africa. Tourism in Africa became accessible and marketable through the advent of Technology contributing to job creation, economic growth and cultural exchange with countries like South Africa, Nigeria, Mauritius, Morocco leading the development.

*** Internet and Web : 1960 - 1990 :** This period birthed the internet era and laid the foundation for digital access to tourism products and travel information in Africa.

*** Early Adoption: 1990s-2000s :** This saw to Africa embracing digital technologies with the emergence of online booking platforms, websites etc., which disrupted traditional booking models e.g

- Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) e.g Expedia, Travelocity etc. which allowed users to book flights, hotels, car rentals, travel arrangements etc. online

*** Mobile Revolution: 2007 - 2010 :** The advent of mobile phones and mobile internet enabled access to digital services and products. It was also during this period that saw to the emergence of social media and online marketing.. Social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram transformed tourism marketing and African destinations and businesses utilised these platforms to showcase their attractions and experiences.

Evolution of Technology Innovation and Digital Tourism in Africa

*** Digital Payments of the 2010s:** Digital Payments such as mobile money and online payments gateways facilitated secure and convenient transactions.

*** Sharing Economy of 2008 to 2020 :** Travel became more local , flexible and connected through shared devices e.g Uber, Airbnb etc.

These platforms provided cost savings measures for consumers making it possible for service providers to supplement their income. It helped to provide flexibility as service providers were able to enjoy flexible work schedules. it also increased accessibility facilitating engagement and connections between users and providers making it easier to access products and services.

*** Tourism Apps and Virtual Reality of 2015 - 2020 :** Tourism apps provided tourists and travelers with vital information, including navigation and real time updates. Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality began to be used to digitally showcase destinations.

CURRENT TRENDS 2020- Present

- * Today, Africa's digital tourism landscape is characterized by:
 - **Increased Adoption of Digital Technologies** being leveraged by businesses to improve operational efficiency and provide personalised experiences.
 - **Data Analytics**: is utilised to inform decision - making, optimize operations and enhance customer behaviour as well as customer rights.
 - **Emergence of New Technologies**: Artificial Intelligence, blockchain and Internet of Things are being explored for their potential to transform the tourism industry. These intelligent tools enhance **TRIP PLANNING, SERVICE DELIVERY AND DECISION MAKING**.

CURRENT TRENDS 2020- Present

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

HOW TRAVELLERS ARE USING AI

1. 22% to stay within budget
2. 23% to make quick adjustments to plans
4. 40% to find new destinations
5. 58% to save time during planning
6. 70% to discover attractions or activities.

An Overview of Innovation in AFRICA

Source: Global Innovation
Index 2024

African Rank	Global Rank	Country	Score
1	55	Mauritius	30.6
2	69	South Africa	28.3
3	87	Botswana	23.1
4	90	Cabo Verde	22.3
5	92	Senegal	22.0
6	96	Kenya	21.0
7	101	Ghana	20.0
8	102	Namibia	20.0
9	104	Rwanda	19.7
10	110	Madagascar	17.9
11	113	Nigeria	17.1
12	117	Tunisia	16.8
13	119	Benin	16.4
14	121	Cameroon	15.9
15	124	Côte d'Ivoire	15.3

Top 10 AI Leaders in Africa

- 1. South Africa
- 2. Nigeria
- 3. Kenya
- 4. Morocco
- 5. Tunisia
- 6. Algeria
- 7. Rwanda
- 8. Ghana
- 9. Ethiopia
- 10. Uganda

By 2030 AI is projected to contribute to Africa's GDP in USD 1.2 Trillion by African Development Bank (2025) and The African Exponent (2024)

Growth Opportunities in Tourism Innovation for Africa

- 1. 42% of the global Youth is projected to be African by 2030
- 2. 30% is what AI skilled workers salaries in Africa could increase
- 3. USD 5 Billion was raised by African tech start-ups throughout 2022.

UNDESA (2023), World Economic Forum (2025), Investor's Daily (2025),

How Can Africa Prepare for the Future of Technology, Innovation and Digital Tourism Meaningfully

- We must invest in Digital Infrastructure
 - **Expanding Broadband Access:** Closing the access gap by investing in rural and remote areas, schools, clinics, community centres will increase internet penetration, access and usage.
 - **Investing in digital ID, payment systems and data sharing.**
- Fostering Innovation and Entrepreneurship
 - **Support start- ups and msme:** Africa must strengthen start- ups and micro, small, and medium enterprises. This will drive technology - based innovation and entrepreneurship in tourism.
 - **Encouraging Entrepreneurship::** Providing low - interest loans and business support services will foster green job creation and innovative solutions.
 - **Developing Digital Skills:** Investing in digital literacy programs, coding, data analysis, and digital innovation will equip young people with skills for emerging green sectors.

How Can Africa Prepare for the Future of Technology, Innovation and Digital Tourism Meaningfully

- **Promoting Digital Tourism:**
 - **Developing Smart Technologies:** Strategies for technology, innovation, sustainability, accessibility and inclusivity will enhance the tourist experience.
 - **Implementing Smart Travel Facilitation:** Consolidating tools for smart visas, borders, security processes and infrastructure will revolutionize tourism.
 - **Addressing Challenges**
 - **Closing the Digital Divide:** Bridging the gap in digital access in terms of its affordability, skills acquisition, knowledge transfers to promote inclusive growth.
 - **Developing Supportive Policies:** African governments and tourism authorities must enact policies that promote green skills acquisition, renewable energy, energy efficiency and other climate solutions that will support green job creation.
 - **Encouraging Private Sector Investment:** Providing clear investment signals and incentives that attract private sector investments in green technologies.
- Partnerships:** Partnerships between all stakeholders will foster tourism growth looking at the future of Africa's Tourism.



• **THANK YOU**

CONTACT

**Dr. Abigail
Adesina
Olagbaye**

**President
Sayari Dunia Sustainable
Tourism Foundation,
Nigeria.**

www.sayaridunia.org

abigail.o@sayaridunia.org

