

# Internet Usage in Africa: Current Scenario and Future Prospects

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## Abstract

Changes in the role and influence of the Internet development occur very quickly and the usage of the Internet has been changed with a rapid growth all over the world. A number of studies have pointed that there is huge correlation between successful nations and web use in those nations. The purpose of this paper is to shed light on the importance of utilizing the Internet these days and to highlight its significant role in establishing an information-based society. It intended to concentrate on the present condition of use of the Internet in African countries and discuss its potency and influence on enhancing the competitiveness and productivity that needs to be improved in order to foster the total economy of African countries. The design of this paper is based on theoretical approach. Various tools have been used and applied to accomplish the objective of this paper such as personal readings of intellectual production, literature review, experience, and the insights of other researchers and specialists in the extent of Internet utilize.

**Keywords:** Internet Usage in African Countries; Internet Penetration in Africa; ICT Infrastructure in Africa.

## Introduction

It would be very difficult to deny that the Internet and related forms of information and communication technology (ICT) have had a profound impact on societies in almost every corner of the world. According to several studies nowadays "the Internet had entered homes, schools, and workplaces - not to mention libraries, and cell phones to become a major feature of daily life" [1]. The Internet has transformed the way information is accessed and used in business, education, and in almost every aspect of our life [2]. The Internet has become an important tool for the advancement of any nation.

Since the sixties of the last century, economics scientists have added a fourth sector to the three primaries known sectors that are agricultural, industry, and services, i.e. the sector of information, since the production of information, preparation,

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management, and dissemination to their users has become the main economic activity in many countries of the world. Moreover, in the last decades, it was noted that radical changes have been made in the economic political and social powers because of depending basically on the Intellectual technology, which includes new commodities and services that mainly lies on information as an investment source and a strategic goods, national income source and a field for the labor force.

Perhaps one of the most outstanding aspects of the contemporary society is changing from an economy of industries to an economy of information and from a national economy to a world comprehensive economy or a world integrated economy, and changing from producing goods and manufacturing commodities to producing information. While this is the current scenario in the developed countries, there are many indicators which have pointed out that the developing countries have not participated in the industrial revolution as well as globalization. There are also negative indicators on participating the third world countries in the information revolution which will reflect badly on their foreseeable future if they do not act as quick as possible since knowledge is critical for sustainable development and for the evolution of social, economic, and intellectual life.

The World summit of information society in Geneva 2003 and Tunis commitment 2005 declare “the desire to build a people-centered and development-oriented information society, where everyone can create, access, utilize, and share information and knowledge” [3]. An information society is defined as “a type of society in which information and information access plays a central role, economically, socially and individually. The information society can be measured by exploring citizens access to and use of the internet, e-government, e-learning, e-health, buying and selling on-line and e-business readiness” [4].

It may be concluded from the former definitions that everyone in an information society participates in the process of handling of information as a producer or as a consumer and access to information is also available to everyone. To enable everyone to access information there is a need to improve ICT infrastructure in Africa and provide access to information using today’s technology and the world wide web. Nowadays, an adequate ICT infrastructure is more essential to any country than ever before. It is hoped that improving ICT infrastructure along with Internet access and the research environment will create new business and facilitate industrial research in Africa. This in turn will foster and enhance the total economy of African countries.

**Objectives**

The main objective of this theoretical study and review summary is as follows:

1. To find out the internet services in Africa
2. To assess the emerging Internet services in African countries in comparison to the world.

**Internet Market in Africa**

The Internet market in Africa has increased over the last decade but not at the rates seen elsewhere in the world. This can be observed from Internet usage statistics for Africa. Table 2 (Internet World Stats, 2017) shows the African region, estimated populations, the number of Internet users in the region in 2017, the percentage of growth in Internet usage between 2000 and 2017, the percentage of population penetration and the total percentage of users in those countries. It can be clearly seen that Eretria has the first lowest penetration and user rate in the African region in 2017 with 1,3%. Kenya has the highest penetration rate with 77%. The table demonstrates that the number of users in 2000 was 200,000 users, which increased dramatically to reach 37,718,650 users in March 2017. This indicates that there is a considerable change in the development of the Internet and its technology infrastructure in Kenya that will influence the forthcoming strategies and policies.

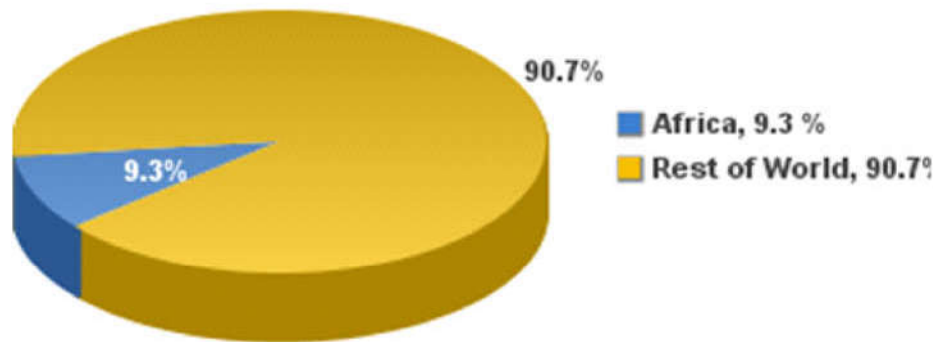


Fig. 1: African Percentage of Internet Users Comparison to Other Continents (Source: IWS, 2017 April)

Table 1: Internet usage statistics for Africa and the rest of the world (Source: IWS, 2017 April)

Africa Region	Population (2017 Est.)	Pop. % of World	Internet Users, Latest	Penetration (% Population)	Internet % Users
Total for Africa	1,246,504,865	16.6 %	345,676,501	27.7 %	9.3 %
Rest of World	6,272,524,105	83.4 %	3,386,296,922	54.0 %	90.7 %
World Total	7,519,028,970	100.0 %	3,731,973,423	49.6 %	100.0 %

Table 2: Internet users in Africa (IWS-2017)

Africa	Population (2017 Est.)	Internet Users 31-Dec-2000	Internet Users 31-Mar-2017	Penetration (% Population)	Africa Internet % Users
Algeria	41,063,753	50,000	15,105,000	36.8 %	4.4 %
Angola	26,655,513	30,000	5,951,453	22.3 %	1.7 %
Benin	11,458,611	15,000	1,232,940	10.8 %	0.4 %
Botswana	2,343,981	15,000	690,000	29.4 %	0.2 %
Burkina Faso	19,173,322	10,000	2,156,498	11.2 %	0.6 %
Burundi	11,936,481	3,000	526,372	4.4 %	0.2 %
Cabo Verde	533,468	8,000	235,183	44.1 %	0.1 %
Cameroon	24,513,689	20,000	4,909,178	20.0 %	1.4 %
Central African Rep.	5,098,826	1,500	246,432	4.8 %	0.1 %
Chad	14,965,482	1,000	387,063	2.6 %	0.1 %
Comoros	825,920	1,500	60,000	7.3 %	0.0 %
Congo	4,866,243	500	400,000	8.2 %	0.1 %
Congo, Dem. Rep.	82,242,685	500	3,101,210	3.8 %	0.9 %
Cote d'Ivoire	23,815,886	40,000	5,230,000	22.0 %	1.5 %
Djibouti	911,382	1,400	150,000	16.5 %	0.0 %
Egypt	95,215,102	450,000	34,800,000	36.5 %	10.1 %
Equatorial Guinea	894,464	500	181,657	20.3 %	0.1 %
Eritrea	5,481,906	5,000	71,000	1.3 %	0.0 %
Ethiopia	104,344,901	10,000	11,538,000	11.1 %	3.3 %
Gabon	1,801,232	15,000	670,197	37.2 %	0.2 %
Gambia	2,120,418	4,000	373,865	17.6 %	0.1 %
Ghana	28,656,723	30,000	7,958,675	27.8 %	2.3 %
Guinea	13,290,659	8,000	950,000	7.1 %	0.3 %
Guinea-Bissau	1,932,871	1,500	84,000	4.3 %	0.0 %
Kenya	48,466,928	200,000	37,718,650	77.8 %	10.9 %
Lesotho	2,185,159	4,000	444,376	20.3 %	0.1 %
Liberia	4,730,437	500	395,063	8.4 %	0.1 %
Libya	6,408,742	10,000	2,800,000	43.7 %	0.8 %
Madagascar	25,612,972	30,000	1,300,000	5.1 %	0.4 %
Malawi	18,298,679	15,000	1,670,839	9.1 %	0.5 %
Mali	18,689,966	18,800	2,212,450	11.8 %	0.6 %
Mauritania	4,266,448	5,000	714,132	16.7 %	0.2 %
Mauritius	1,281,353	87,000	803,896	62.7 %	0.2 %
Mayotte (FR)	253,068	n/a	107,940	42.7 %	0.0 %
Morocco	35,241,418	100,000	20,207,154	57.3 %	5.8 %
Mozambique	29,537,914	30,000	1,834,337	6.2 %	0.5 %
Namibia	2,568,569	30,000	520,000	20.2 %	0.2 %
Niger	21,563,607	5,000	439,164	2.0 %	0.1 %
Nigeria	191,835,936	200,000	93,591,174	48.8 %	27.1 %
Reunion (FR)	873,356	130,000	390,000	44.7 %	0.1 %
Rwanda	12,159,586	5,000	3,724,678	30.6 %	1.1 %
Saint Helena (UK)	3,970	n/a	2,000	50.4 %	0.0 %
Sao Tome & Principe	198,481	6,500	49,686	25.0 %	0.0 %
Senegal	16,054,275	40,000	3,647,939	22.7 %	1.1 %
Seychelles	97,539	6,000	56,168	57.6 %	0.0 %
Sierra Leone	6,732,899	5,000	310,000	4.6 %	0.1 %
Somalia	11,391,962	200	660,000	5.8 %	0.2 %
South Africa	55,436,360	2,400,000	28,580,290	51.6 %	8.3 %
South Sudan	13,096,190	n/a	2,179,963	16.6 %	0.6 %
Sudan	42,166,323	30,000	10,886,813	25.8 %	3.1 %
Swaziland	1,320,356	10,000	436,051	33.0 %	0.1 %
Tanzania	56,877,529	115,000	3,700,000	6.5 %	1.1 %
Togo	7,691,915	100,000	545,020	7.1 %	0.2 %
Tunisia	11,494,760	100,000	5,800,000	50.5 %	1.7 %
Uganda	41,652,938	40,000	13,023,114	31.3 %	3.8 %
Western Sahara	596,021	n/a	27,000	4.5 %	0.0 %
Zambia	17,237,931	20,000	3,167,934	18.4 %	0.9 %
Zimbabwe	16,337,760	50,000	6,721,947	41.1 %	1.9 %
<b>TOTAL AFRICA</b>	<b>1,246,504,865</b>	<b>4,514,400</b>	<b>345,676,501</b>	<b>27.7 %</b>	<b>100.0 %</b>

*Percentage of Population Penetration in Africa 2017:  
Top 10 Countries*

Kenya 77%, Mauritius 62%, Seychelles 57.6%  
Morocco 57.3%, South Africa 51.6%, Tunisia 50.5%  
Nigeria 48.8%, Cabo Verde 44.1%, Mayotte (FR)  
42.7% & Zimbabwe 41.1%

The Internet world state report further that total internet users in African countries is 345,676,501 of the total population of 1,246,504,865 as estimated for 2017. The total Internet penetration for African countries account for 27.7%. The report further stated that in these countries among the services most important and popular are social networking, shopping, entertainment and so on. The IWS report shows that in Africa, total Face book users reaches the number 146,637,000 (as on 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2016).

A list of countries with user base is depicted by the IWS shows the following interesting data:

- a. Nigeria holds 93,591,174 million users
- b. Kenya with 37,718,650 million users
- c. Egypt 34,800,000 million users
- d. South Africa holds 28,580,290 million users
- e) Morocco with 20,207,154 million users

*Future Prospects*

Today, Internet penetration in Africa is over 27% and increasing day by day. In any case, as Internet has turned into a basic foundation, Africa earnestly needs a substantially more prominent pool of talented specialists and Internet specialized architects to guarantee its operation. By 2020 there will be more than 700 million cell phone associations in Africa – more than double the anticipated number in North America and not a long way from the aggregate in Europe, as per (GSMA, a relationship of cell phone administrators).

In Nigeria alone 16 cell phones are sold each moment (minute), while transferable information activity crosswise over Africa is set to build 15-overlay by 2020 [9]. It is, in this manner, vital for sub-Saharan African governments and ICT controllers to take an interest in worldwide talks on issues like internet equality and computerized security for the advantage of the more than one billion potential users in the continent.

## Conclusion

The number of Internet users worldwide is expanding day by day. Internet access and penetration in the African continent is also increasing day by day. Many countries in Africa have put big efforts in internet systems and better information infrastructure. Similarly with different regions in the world, Africa likewise confronts the dangers posed by web security and protection issues. In its endeavor to create enabling legislation, the African Union made the convention or the so- called principles on cyber-security (AUCC) in 2011 to provide directions on the organization of electronic transactions, protection of individual information, advancement of digital security, e-administration and combating cybercrime [10].

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