

African growth opportunity is a tweet away

 By [Sean Riley](#)

8 Oct 2015

The African business landscape is evolving at a rapid pace. Africa has always been a mobile-centric hub, and with operators about to launch \$30 smartphone handsets, the perfect storm is rapidly approaching. According to the latest Ericsson Mobility Report, African smartphone penetration will be sitting at 70% by 2020. This increased accessibility to intelligent devices will mean that marketers will need to build integrated campaigns with mobile as a channel in mind.

Moreover, social media has changed the fundamentals of doing business in Africa. Not only has it connected business owners directly to consumers, but it has democratised information and news as well as personalised messaging. Consumers are now looking for direct engagement with brands and instant gratification.

Now is the time for Africa to seize the opportunities presented by mobile as a channel as well as social media like Twitter to cultivate innovation and growth. In Africa, businesses recognise the possibilities of Twitter, to not only build relationships with customers and influence their decisions, but also to reach them directly through the growing mobile imperative. According to a Nielsen report, more than 45% of African Twitter users find Twitter helpful to stay up to date with a brand, whilst over 60% of African Twitter users are discovering new brands through Twitter.



Image via Pxabay

The uptake of advertising on Twitter in Africa has been far reaching. On average globally, Twitter's engagement rates on Promoted Tweets fall between 1% and 3%. Africa is beating this average across all markets and the uptake of Twitter Ads is highest in South Africa, Tanzania and Kenya.

But what differentiates Twitter? Firstly, the reach of Twitter Ads is organic in nature. In other words, any Promoted Tweet that is further retweeted or shared organically, is not paid for and can grow exponentially. The key is to stick to the rule of thumb of content is king. Secondly, SMBs can reach over 200 countries and territories through the recent expansion of the Twitter Self-Service Ads platform. This translates to broader target audience reach and further expansion prospects. This is also exciting news for Africa's burgeoning mobile market.

A good example of a brand that has achieved great success in Africa is Airtel ([@Airtel_Ug](#)). Their tactic of using localised content and providing regular product updates has allowed them to penetrate a variety of African countries. Engagement with followers is also integral in Africa. Aromat Kenya ([@AromatKE](#)) effectively engages with followers in a visual and participative manner.

Success in the use of social media in Africa is evident in the way African businesses are using retweets and hashtags. There is however still huge potential for African brands to invest in original content and a develop a unique identity.

With the African growth potential for business reaching a tangible peak, businesses wishing to reach consumers are looking to Twitter as a marketing tool as they venture into the unknown and engage in mobile space. The traditional carrot and stick approach no longer works and direct engagement with humanised content is the key in reaching today's social savvy audiences. Brands are ultimately building their identity and individual voice on Twitter and developing a long term relationship with their followers.

ABOUT SEAN RILEY

Sean functions as the CEO of Ad Dynamo. He began his working career in 1996 at Credit Suisse in London, where he worked in derivatives for a period of 3 years. During this time, Sean began developing tactical applications for the bank. Upon returning to South Africa, Sean developed South Africa's first online share trading software which he licensed to E*Trade. In 2000 Sean co-founded Entelligence with prominent SA banker, GT Ferreira.
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