

The case for satellite internet in Africa

 By [Dawie de Wet](#)

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In Africa, technologies of all types are evolving rapidly, with one exception - internet access. With around only 170 million users, internet penetration remains low, at around 18%, well below the global average.



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Low internet penetration in Africa is without a doubt an obstacle to the continent's development. Moreover, this is only getting worse as time goes on, so the gap is only getting wider and wider. Lack of access to the internet is depriving many Africans of the opportunity to harness the advantages of technologies such as e-learning as well as online financial, data and health services.

This is compounded by the fact that on the continent, the existing telecommunications infrastructure can't hope to provide reliable and consistent high-speed internet which is a non-negotiable in many sectors, such as mining, petrochemicals, agriculture and education. With reliable internet, governments will be empowered to use the increased access to bring better services to citizens, particularly those in rural areas.

Rugged, reliable satellite

This is where satellite internet comes in, as it has extremely low upfront as well as monthly running costs, and it offers extremely high reliability. Satellites offer the most suitable option for African internet access, because satellites are rugged and reliable. Using satellite also means organisations are not dependent on existing landline and cellular infrastructure.

Getting good enough connectivity to initiate and maintain communication in a remote location can be a major concern. In places without cables, wireless hotspots or phone lines, for example, internet access can be extremely tricky. Satellite internet has changed this, and making it possible for people to keep in touch even in the most remote locations.

Perhaps the main advantage of satellite over the various other types of internet services such as mobile, LTE or cable, is that it can be accessed from anywhere, at any time. The location of the user is not a factor in the slightest, since access can be initiated whichever country the user may currently be in. That means anyone can still be wired whether they're researching global warming in the north pole, or watching the migrations in the Serengeti in Africa.

Satellite internet is the perfect service to use in areas where broadband isn't ubiquitous, because it is easy to use, and highly reliable. As a rule of thumb, many telecoms providers and cable businesses avoid far-off or remote locations since there are considerable costs associated with building the infrastructure and providing the hardware for new telecoms facilities.

With satellite internet, users are unhindered by telephone line locations or wireless hotspots, or any other ground-based facilities for that matter. They can enjoy quick and reliable Internet irrespective of where they are.

ABOUT DAWIE DE WET

Dr Dawie de Wet is the CEO of Q-KON.

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