Africa is evolving into a global innovation powerhouse

By Pieter Bensch

25 May 2018

As Africa's economic growth accelerates, the continent is evolving from one of the world's major sources of mineral resources into a global innovation powerhouse. Africa is rapidly diversifying from its traditional strengths in mining, oil and agriculture into the technology and creative industries that are reshaping humanity's future. By 2050, over a quarter of the world's population will be African.

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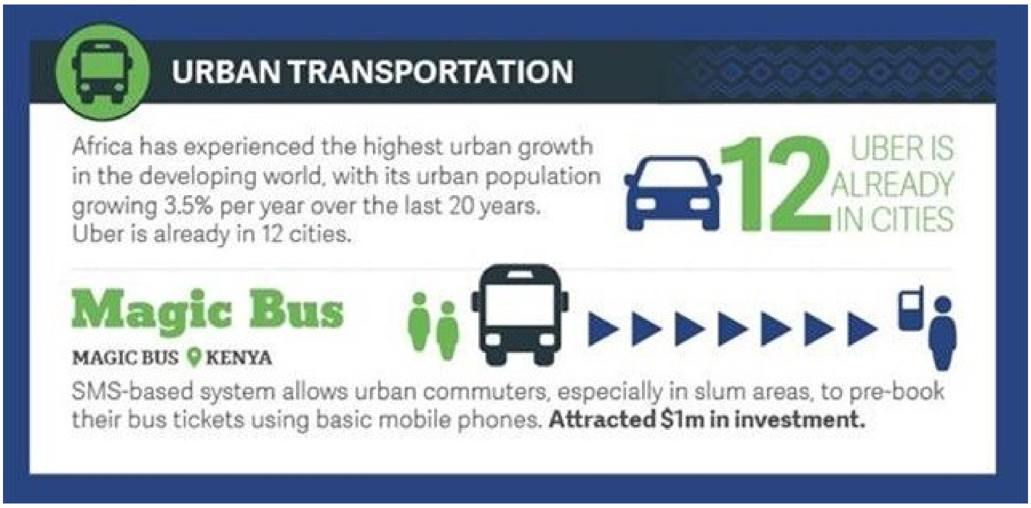
With a dynamic, youthful population and a growing internal consumer market, Africa's key economies are positioned for strong growth in the decades to come. What's more, we can expect African business builders to be at the forefront of the next wave of technology innovation, just as they led the world in adoption of cellphones and mobile money.

Today's Africa can't rely on its traditional sources of income—commodities prices remain volatile—but that doesn't seem to matter. The continent's entrepreneurs are finding new ways to build a business. Many of them are helping transform society at the same time, from renewable energies to medical technology.

Whether it's the creativity of the Nollywood film industry in Nigeria, the exciting FinTech solutions African companies are developing to address financial inclusion, or the massive investments entrepreneurs are making in clean, renewable energy, Africa is alive with innovation and creativity. There is much to celebrate and look forward to as we commemorate

Africa Day this year.



> *Africa is rapidly diversifying from its traditional strengths in mining, oil and agriculture into the technology and creative industries that are reshaping humanity's future.*

Pieter Bensch appointed Sage executive VP Africa, Middle East

20 Sep 2017

[Sage's infographic](#) wraps up some of the sectors showing really interesting growth, and some of the companies that are leading the way. From the first Kenyan company to sponsor an English Premier League football club to a Nigerian tech company helping hospitals search for safe blood supplies in real time via SMS, to the companies changing the way we pay for goods and services, there is plenty of business inspiration right here in Africa.

2017 for its "complete payments solution" for businesses.

SPORTS BETTING

Africa has a young and fanatical sports fan base, plus lax laws on betting and widespread use of mobile phones. In Nigeria, nearly **50% of adult males** are involved in active sports betting, spending N1.8bn every day placing bets.

1·8
N1.8bn BETS PLACED DAILY

SportPesa

SPORTPESA KENYA

Became first Kenyan company to sponsor an English Premier League club when it signed a 3-year deal with Hull City in July 2016.

DIGITAL HEALTHCARE

There is **less than one doctor per 20,000** people in countries like Ethiopia and Tanzania. Telemedicine, e-prescriptions and m-health applications are helping to free-up congested health facilities by dealing with non-urgent conditions.

FIND SAFE BLOOD

SMS

Redbank

REDBANK NIGERIA

Helps hospitals and patients quickly and easily search for and **find safe blood supplies in real time** via SMS.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Only 1 in 3 people in sub-saharan Africa has access to electricity, and up to **80% of households** still use firewood and charcoal as a primary energy source for cooking.

Yam Pro Energy

YAM PRO ENERGY GHANA

Secured a power purchase agreement that allows it to sell the electricity it generates; results could **provide up to 10,000 households with energy.**

POWER TO 10,000 HOUSEHOLDS

URBAN TRANSPORTATION

Africa has experienced the highest urban growth in the developing world, with its urban population growing 3.5% per year over the last 20 years. Uber is already in 12 cities.

12 UBER IS ALREADY IN CITIES

Magic Bus

MAGIC BUS KENYA

SMS-based system allows urban commuters, especially in slum areas, to pre-book their bus tickets using basic mobile phones. **Attracted $1m in investment.**

FASHION

XXL
PREDICTED WORTH OVER NEXT 5 YEARS: $15.5bn

The global fashion industry is worth $1.3tn in Africa, expected to grow significantly as personal incomes grow. The African Development Bank estimates **Africa's fashion industry could be worth $15.5bn over the next 5 years.**

ZUVVA

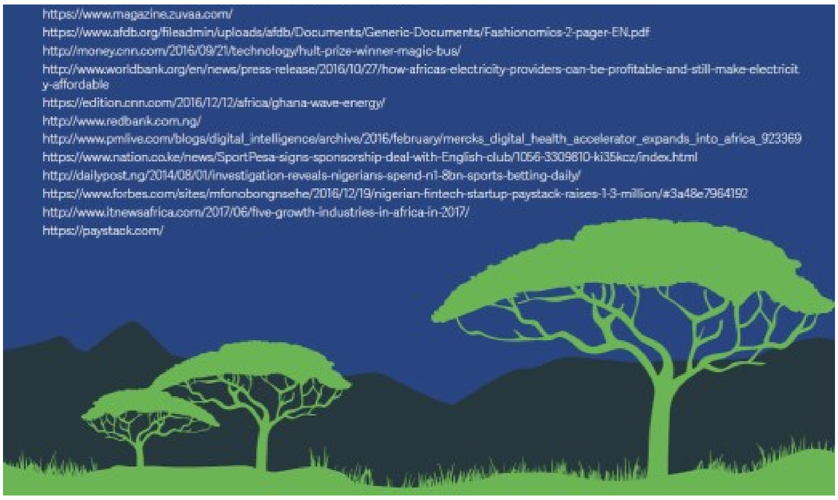
ZUVVA NIGERIA

NEARLY £2M IN SALES

Started by Kelechi Anyadiegwu with just $500 in 2014; two years later, **it made nearly £2m in sales.**

SOURCES

http://www.smallstarter.com/browse-ideas/top-11-business-opportunities-in-africa-for-2017/



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pieter Bensch is executive vice-president, Africa & Middle East at Sage.