



Kuza Africa

THE ATTENTION ECONOMY

**How Africans
Consume Media**

May | 2026





Introduction

In Africa, attention is no longer won by being seen. It is won by being relevant, in the right language, on the right screen, in the right moment.

Africa is the **youngest, most mobile-native media market on earth**. A median age of 19.5 and a population overwhelmingly under 30 means most consumers have never known scheduled TV or print-first news - **their first and often only screen is a phone**. They have leapfrogged straight into feeds, messaging apps and short-form video.

But abundance has changed the rules. Attention, which was once scarce because channels were few, is now scarce because channels are infinite. **Consumers are not short of media, they are short of patience**. They scroll fast, switch faster, and reward only what feels relevant, credible and culturally fluent.

For brands, the old logic of buying reach is breaking down. Attention now has to be earned through **formats people actually use, voices they actually trust, and content that speaks their language**, literally and culturally.

72%

of all web traffic in Africa comes from mobile phones. This is the highest mobile share of any region in the world.

Source: Statcounter / Statista, 2025

3h 10m

the average time Africans spend on social media each day — well above the global average of 2h 21m.

Source: DataReportal / Meltwater, 2025



How Has the Media Landscape Evolved?

Media in Africa has never stood still. As access has exploded, **the way consumers spend their attention has shifted dramatically** from scarcity and broadcast to mobile, creation and cultural resonance.

From Scarcity to Saturation

A handful of state broadcasters and newspapers once meant attention was easy to capture; there was simply little else to watch or read. Today **consumers face infinite, always-on feeds** competing for every second.

From Broadcast to Mobile

Africa skipped desktop and print and went straight to the smartphone. **The phone became the primary, and for many, the only media device**, reshaping what content can even look like.

From Consumption to Creation

Africans stopped only receiving media and started producing it. Afrobeats, Amapiano, Nollywood, skits and podcasts turned the continent from an audience into a **global cultural exporter**.

From Reach to Resonance

Attention is now fast, fragmented and earned. The brands that hold it win not by shouting louder, but by being **relevant, trusted and culturally fluent in the moments that matter**.





So, what do these **changes** mean to consumers?

How is it impacting and **influencing the choices they** make?

How can companies **stay relevant** in this new context?



The Key Trends Shaping Media Consumption in Africa

1 The Mobile-Only Screen:

Mobile dominates Africa's attention economy.

1



2 The Creator Trust Shift:

Local creators out-trust ads and celebrities.

2



3 The Data-Cost Filter:

The price of data decides what gets watched.

3



4



4 The Audio Renaissance:

Podcasts, radio and voice are booming.

5

5 WhatsApp Is the Media Layer:

Messaging is the new front page.



6 Short-Form Video Is the New Prime Time:

The feed has replaced prime-time TV.

6



7 Vernacular Wins:

Local language captures the attention English misses.

7



8

8 The Trust Premium in a Fragmented Feed:

In the noise, credible voices win.



The Mobile-Only Screen

For most Africans the phone is not the first screen, it is the whole media universe. No TV, no desktop, no print. This makes data-light, vertical, low-storage, sound-flexible design the baseline for capturing attention, not a nice-to-have.

How Brands in Africa Can Leverage This Trend:

Design mobile-first, not mobile-also:

Built for small screens, intermittent connectivity and entry-level devices through vertical video, fast load times and offline modes.

Go where the storage isn't:

Lite apps and progressive web apps win in a market where phone storage and data are precious.

Respect the thumb:

One-handed, vertical, sound-on-and-off. Content that fails on a cheap Android in bright sunlight fails completely.



Watch iT (Egypt)

Egypt's home-grown streaming service launched mobile-first, with download-and-watch built for data-conscious viewers.



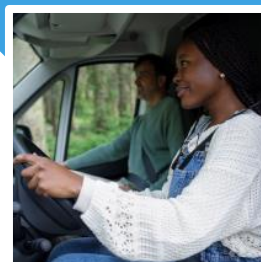
Opera Mini & Opera News (Pan-African)

Built a huge African audience on data-light browsing and a news feed engineered for slow networks and cheap phones.



Transsion / TECNO (Pan-African)

Africa's best-selling phone maker put smartphones in hundreds of millions of hands — the device layer that makes a mobile-only media life possible.



Trend 2

The Creator Trust Shift

Africans increasingly trust local creators over traditional advertising and even over global celebrities. Influence has fragmented into thousands of niche, culturally specific voices who feel like 'people like me' and who hold real sway over what gets watched and bought.

How Brands in Africa Can Leverage This Trend:

Partner with credibility, not just reach:

A micro-creator with a loyal niche often converts attention better than a mass-market celebrity.

Hand over creative control:

Audiences detect scripted brand-speak instantly. Let creators tell the story in their own voice and format.

Build long-term creator relationships:

One-off placements read as ads; ongoing partnerships read as genuine endorsement.

Wode Maya (Ghana)

Pan-African storytelling that brands partner with to borrow authentic, continent-wide credibility.



Mark Angel Comedy (Nigeria)

Turned short skits into one of Africa's most-watched media brands, with pan-African reach that rivals broadcasters.



El Da7ee7 / Ahmed El Ghandour (Egypt)

Egypt's most trusted edutainment creator — proof that a single credible voice can out-reach traditional science and news media.



Trend 3

The Data-Cost Filter

Attention in Africa is rationed by the price of airtime and data. Smartphone adoption in Sub-Saharan Africa is only around 54%, and a large usage gap remains and cost, not just interest, decides what gets watched. Every megabyte competes with the household budget.

How Brands in Africa Can Leverage This Trend:

Make the value worth the megabytes:

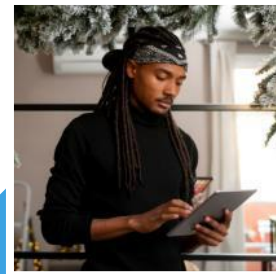
Treat the consumer's data budget as a real cost of attention and earn it with genuinely useful, efficient content.

Embrace zero-rating and lite formats:

Data-free partnerships, lightweight apps and offline modes lower the price of paying attention.

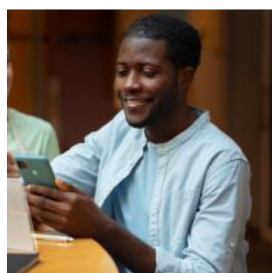
Default to the cheapest rails:

WhatsApp, USSD and audio reach people that heavy video and apps price out.



Meta Lite apps (Facebook / Messenger Lite)

Stripped-down versions built for low-end phones and thin networks, keeping millions connected affordably.



Opera Mini (Pan-African)

Made its name on data compression — letting users do more for less, the core promise of an attention-on-a-budget market.



Boomplay (Pan-African)

Built offline downloads and data-light streaming into the core product, designed around African data realities.



Trend 4

The Audio Renaissance

Audio is booming because it fits African life - multitasking, varied literacy levels and a lower data cost than video. Podcast listening on Spotify in Africa grew about 97% year-on-year, and home-grown platforms are scaling fast. The ear is the most under-priced attention channel on the continent.

How Brands in Africa Can Leverage This Trend:

Show up in earbuds, not just feeds:

Podcasts, radio's digital second life and audio rooms reach attention that screens can't.

Use voice notes as a channel:

The voice note is Africa's native communication unit so meet people where they already talk.

Sponsor culture, not just slots:

Back the faith, society and music audio communities consumers already gather in.



mdundo



Mdundo (Pan-African)

An ad-supported model designed for African listeners and artists, scaling audio access across many markets.



Boomplay (Pan-African)

Over 90 million users on a platform built for African music and audio — the continent's answer to global streamers.



Boomplay



Anghami (North Africa / MENA)

The region's leading audio platform, deeply embedded in Egyptian and Maghreb music and podcast culture.



Trend 5

WhatsApp as a Media Layer

WhatsApp is near-universal, with about 97% in Kenya, 96% in South Africa and 95% in Nigeria, and it is no longer just messaging. It is the front page, the marketplace, the community hall and the news wire, all at once. For many Africans, the inbox is the internet.

How Brands in Africa Can Leverage This Trend:

Treat WhatsApp as a primary channel:

Catalogues, broadcasts, Channels, communities and commerce all live here now and not just as support, but as the main stage.

Design for forwarding:

Social sharing drives reach you can't measure. Make content easy and rewarding to pass along.

Be useful in the inbox:

Order updates, reminders and fast service that respect the intimacy of the space.



Merchants on WhatsApp Business (North Africa)

Egyptian and Maghreb retailers run entire storefronts — catalogue, chat and checkout — inside WhatsApp.



News brands on WhatsApp Channels (Pan-African)

Outlets now publish straight into WhatsApp, meeting audiences where attention already lives rather than chasing them to a website.



Jumia (Pan-African)

Uses WhatsApp for order updates, support and re-engagement, turning the messaging app into a commerce channel.



Short-Form Video Is the New Prime Time

TikTok, Reels and Shorts are choice viewing for young Africa. Snackable, native, fast video is where culture is now made. Breakout musicians and trends originate on the feed before they ever reach radio or TV. The For You Page has replaced the prime-time slot.

How Brands in Africa Can Leverage This Trend:

Make content native to the format:

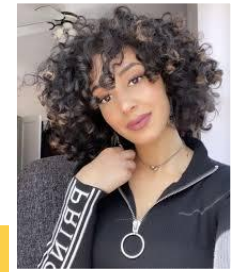
Brand content should not be a TV ad re-cut. It should be vertical, fast, sound-led and culturally in-the-moment.

Enter the trend cycle:

Sounds, challenges and memes move daily. Relevance means moving at feed speed, not campaign speed.

Let entertainment carry the message:

On short-form, a brand earns attention by being genuinely watchable first and promotional second.



Egyptian & Moroccan TikTok creators (North Africa)

A fast-growing short-video scene in Arabic and Darija that brands tap for youthful, local reach.



Amapiano & Afrobeats artists (Pan-African)

South African and Nigerian sounds went global on the back of TikTok challenges — the feed is now a hit-making machine.



MultiChoice/DSTV & streaming promos (Pan-African)

Uses short-form clips and creator collaborations to drive discovery where its audience already scrolls.



Vernacular Wins

English-default content misses a lot of the available attention. Pidgin, Swahili, Amharic, Hausa, Darija and local memes capture engagement that polished, anglophone media does not. Language is the fastest route to feeling 'seen' and the clearest signal of who a brand is really for.

How Brands in Africa Can Leverage This Trend:

Create in-language, not just translated:

Local idiom, humour and slang signal genuine belonging and translation reads as an afterthought.

Localise by market, not by continent:

'African' is not an audience. Lagos, Nairobi, Cairo and Casablanca consume media differently.

Hire real cultural fluency:

Vernacular done badly is worse than plain English. Get native voices in the room, not just the brief.



Swahili digital content (East Africa)

Swahili-first radio, video and social content reaches an audience that English-only media leaves on the table.



BBC News Pidgin (West Africa)

Built a large, loyal audience by reporting in the language millions actually speak, not formal English.



Darija-first media & creators (Morocco)

Moroccan radio, TV and creators win attention by speaking everyday Darija rather than formal Arabic.



Trend 8

The Trust Premium in a Fragmented Feed

With infinite sources and rising misinformation, attention is splintering while trust is consolidating around credible voices. Consumers, especially Gen Z, reward media and brands they find authentic and reliable, and punish those they don't. In a noisy feed, credibility is the scarcest asset of all.

How Brands in Africa Can Leverage This Trend:

Be a source of clarity, not noise:

In a feed full of rumour, accuracy and consistency become a genuine competitive advantage.

Earn trust through transparency:

Show your sources, correct mistakes fast and avoid manufactured hype.

Back trusted voices:

Align with the creators and outlets that already hold credibility with your audience.

Mada Masr (Egypt)

An Egyptian outlet whose reputation for independent, careful reporting earns durable trust with its readers (North Africa).



Africa Check (Pan-African)

The continent's leading fact-checking organisation - meeting demand for verified information in an era of viral misinformation.

Independent news brands (Daily Maverick, Premium Times)

Outlets that built loyal audiences on credibility and accountability journalism.



Mind-the-Gap

Media looks different across generations.



GEN ALPHA
(2013 onwards)

GEN Z
(1997 - 2012)

MILLENNIALS
(1981 - 1996)

GEN X
(1965 - 1980)

BOOMERS
(1946 - 1964)

Digital Behaviours

Watches more than reads; taps, swipes and talks to devices; learns through play, always co-viewing with a parent.

Creates as much as consumes; discovers via the feed, not search; second-screens constantly in short, sound-on bursts.

Heavy multitaskers; binge then scroll; research and read reviews before buying; mix of long- and short-form.

Purposeful and selective; logs on to do, not to browse; blends digital with linear TV and radio.

Lighter, slower use; forwards and shares more than posts; family often sets things up for them.

Themes That Connect

Fun, characters, play and interactivity. Attention follows the parent's choices.

Authenticity, identity, humour, social causes and peer validation.

Aspiration, value, life-stage relevance, nostalgia and self-improvement.

Practicality, reliability, family, credibility and convenience.

Trust, familiarity, community, faith and respect.

Channels That Capture Attention

WhatsApp — the one channel that cuts across every generation:

YouTube / YouTube Kids, mobile games and short video — via a parent's device.

TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, Telegram groups, streaming and audio.

Instagram, YouTube, podcasts and streaming platforms.

Facebook, YouTube, radio, linear + catch-up TV and email.

TV, radio, Facebook and in-person community.

Brand Aspects That Matter

Safe, playful, parent-approved, interactive and character-led.

Authentic, culturally fluent, fast, shareable and values-aligned.

Relevant, well-produced, useful, lifestyle-fit and mobile-smooth.

Clear, credible, reliable and hybrid digital + human.

Trustworthy, familiar, simple, respectful and human.

Engagement Style

Playful, visual and gamified — reach the parent first.

Participatory, native and co-created; sound-led. Avoid polished ad-speak.

Value-led and evidence-based — reviews, results and useful stories.

Straightforward and dependable; word-of-mouth and proof over time.

Warm, clear and human; trusted voices and gentle repetition.





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Understand Users

- Mental Models & Motivations
- Generative Feedback (NCPI Framework)
- Uncover Unmet Needs, Beliefs & Pain Points



Architect with Purpose

- Open/Closed Card Sorting
- Information Design & Journey Structuring
- Content Grouping Based on Real User Logic



Design That Resonates

- GUI & Aesthetic Evaluation
- Preference Testing (A/B, Multivariate)
- Wireframe Testing (Low to High Fidelity)



Benchmark & Refine

- Competitor Experience Benchmarking
- UX Gaps, Fixes & Final Recommendations



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- Real-Time Beta App Feedback (Live API Scenarios)

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2025 Playbook

FEBRUARY

MARCH

Redefining Aspiration –
Re-imagining success.
Status
and the Good Life

APRIL

**The Loyalty Paradox
Why African
Consumers Switch &
Why They Stay**

MAY

**The Attention
Economy - How
Africans Consume
Media in 2026**

JUNE

**Small Is Strategic -
Smaller commitments,
modular products, and
reversible decisions.**

JULY

**Retail &
Commerce -
Friction Is
the Enemy**

AUGUST

**Quietly AI -
How Artificial
Intelligence Is Entering
African Life**

SEPTEMBER

**Time-Rich, Cash-Smart
Behaviour - Trading
time, attention, and
effort consciously**

OCTOBER

**Money Mindsets –
The New Financial
Behaviors of African
Consumers**

NOVEMBER

**African Identity –
The New African
Self-Image**

DECEMBER

**The Next Generation –
Gen Alpha & What
They Mean for
Africa's Brands**

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