

Africa celebrates Social Media Day with #SMDayAfrica

Annually taking place on 30 June, Africa celebrated Social Media Day for the first time, with the continent using the hashtag #SMDayAfrica to drive the conversation on digital in Africa.

The Social Media Day Africa #SMDayAfrica celebration is a parallel event with the global Social Media Day launched in 2010 by Mashable - a global technology firm. #SMDayAfrica was organised by the Social Media Awards Africa, #SMAA, as an all-day continent-wide virtual event to commemorate the 2015 Social Media Day from an African perspective with global ambience.



Internet on the rise

The event which featured eight sessions cutting across diverse sectors and countries of the continent had appearances from leading industry experts with a knack for social media such as Maverick Music Produce Don Jazzy; HR Expert, Jimi Tewe; Songstress, Simphiwe Dana; Social Commentator, Japheth Omojuwa; Social Media Denizens, Subomi Plumtre and Chioma Chuka; Representatives of the African Media Initiative AMI; Social Innovators, Yemi Adamolekun and Seun Onigbinde; as well as winners, finalists and nominees of the maiden Social Media Awards Africa #SMAA from across the continent - Ben Kiruthi, Michael Hlatshwayo, Jimi Tewe, Barefootlaw, The Love Tour, Republic of Rwanda Ministry of Youth and ICT, DHL Africa, Stand to End Rape, Adforumco, KCB Group, Afrinolly, #TheNiteTalk, Raha 2.0, Nigeria Trade Hub; amongst other prominent personalities, social media enthusiasts and users across the continent.

#SMDayAfrica started trending in Nigeria within two hours of launch, reached over 30 million Twitter users. The celebration also had other events at country-levels with active participations by the online community including #SMAA winners, finalists and nominees in Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, South Africa, Uganda, Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco.

Opening the conversation on the realities of social media usage and practice in Africa, Chioma Chuka posited that although gradual progress is being made on internet penetration across the continent, yet, more needs to be done on digital penetration and local content generation. Chioma urged Africans to be conscious to their online existence. HR Expert, Jimi Tewe, explained that social media is a growing component of online recruitment which Africans need to come to terms with.

Music industry becoming digital

On music, creativity and social media, South African songstress, Simphiwe Dana and Nigeria's Multiple Award-winning, RnB turned Gospel Artiste, Obiora Obiwon, agreed that digital and social media advancements are disrupting age-long processes in the entertainment industry, though with attendant benefits and downsides, alike. They agreed that the future of Africa's music industry is digital.



Don Jazzy and Simphiwe Dana, however had a point of difference on whether or not music artistes need to be signed to a record label, considering the growing popularity of digital collaboration.

Future of digital

Sterling Bank Plc, lead sponsor of the Social Media Awards Africa #SMAA, explained that the future of banking on the African continent is social, which, the bank says it is taking the lead in innovating the path and pattern towards the social media boom. The innovative #OneCustomer financial institution which has clearly set the pace in social banking, participated actively and engaged stakeholders for an hour's session entitled 'The Social Media Story: Me and My Bank.'

Relating governance with social media practice in Africa, Seun Onigbinde of BudgIT and Yemi Adamolekun of Enough Is Enough, agreed that although social media tools are viable in advancing governance and accountability processes in Africa, they however cannot in isolation pull through on the desired social need of the continent, hence, the need for offline and online convergence.

Citing emerging trends such as digital jobs and cloud computing, experts raised the need for Africans to acquire requisite digital skills in order to be effectively relevant in the globalised world. They also challenged the African continent to influence and develop itself through local content production and distribution.

Conversations and other activities of the #SMDayAfrica celebration can be followed via [@sma_africa](https://twitter.com/sma_africa) on Twitter.