

Understanding Africa's emerging markets in Covid-19

Covid-19 has swept throughout the world, and governments globally have taken drastic measures to stop the spread in an attempt to save lives.



Stephan Eyeson, CEO and co-founder of Survey54

In February 2020, as African countries watched Asia and Europe begin the implementation of lockdown, a study by Survey54, an automated mobile-led data collection platform, found that approximately 80% of Africans interviewed felt almost immune to the virus as they were yet to hear of any confirmed cases on the continent. This did not last long and by Mid-March, lockdown procedures were initiated across Africa.

Despite the swift response, lockdown came with many challenges that drastically affected a continent which heavily depends on the informal sector. With roughly 90% of Africans now concerned for their finances, the sentiment towards Covid-19 has shifted drastically.

No one and nowhere seems to be immune from the impact of this pandemic, as was made evident when, one week into the nationwide lockdown, South Africa was downgraded to “junk” status. Other African countries including Tanzania and Angola are now said to also be experiencing economic instability as a result of this pandemic.

Despite the uncertainty that has been brought about by the pandemic, tech-enabled companies have witnessed increased demand from individuals, businesses and even governments who seek to bridge existing communication and logistics gaps.

Businesses globally have started to prioritise digital transformation strategies to ensure business continuity. To complement this reliance on technology, surveys and insights studies are being conducted across Europe and the US to help businesses understand customer needs and attitudes. However, gathering this information within Africa has proven to be difficult due to a lack of infrastructure.

Understanding the future of Africa

Survey54's AI mobile technology enables businesses to get the answers they need to make decisions based on up-to-the-minute data in areas that are otherwise difficult to reach. Stephan Eyeson, CEO and co-founder of Survey54, says, "Our AI mobile technology enables businesses to get the answers they need during these uncertain times."

A study conducted by Survey54 across the continent found that almost 70% of survey participants in Nigeria no longer felt safe to go food shopping, a sign that customer behaviour is indeed changing and further indication that by looking into data and insights, African businesses and those operating on the continent have the opportunity to find innovative ways to cater to the needs of consumers in an efficient and informed manner.

Businesses can make use of services such as Survey54 for consumer insights to improve product offerings and strengthen their overall marketing and communications strategy in times of uncertainty.

Survey54 offers businesses relevant and timely data on countries within Africa that can help validate assumptions and stress test strategies even during nationwide lockdowns. Following their recent Covid-19 consumer perception study across Africa, Eyeson revealed some interesting findings including the fact that almost 55% of Nigerians decided to spend more time on personal development by taking online courses, perhaps proving that this is a chance for more unconventional modes of education to take root in the continent.

With 93% of the people who took the survey fearing for their finances during the lockdown, the question is whether these newly acquired skills will lead to a paradigm shift in terms of job creation and income generation after the pandemic.

In South Africa, it was found that 72% of survey takers felt financially affected by the pandemic, whereas amongst Ghanaians, this number dropped to 46%. This stark contrast of figures could suggest organisations would be mistaken for generalising the impact of the pandemic across the continent.

Moving forward, businesses and countries on the continent must strategize on short-, medium-, and long-term goals using accurate and up-to-date customer data. Eyeson suggests that "Further research, leveraging real-time opinion polls and audience sentiment, should be conducted on the ground post-Covid 19 to identify opportunities that the pandemic has inadvertently presented us with."

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