

Africa on brink of bandwidth revolution

The African continent will have 13 submarine cables by the end of 2011, a process that will redefine the technology environment and set the continent on a major broadband explosion, Saï Malik, director of operations at Broadband Communication Technologies (BCT), told a workshop at the Africa Media and Broadcasting 2010 Congress at the Sandton Convention Centre in Johannesburg, South Africa.

 By [Issa Sikiti da Silva](#) 29 Nov 2010



"Traffic on the world's networks is being increased by 46% annually starting from 2007 until 2012. As a result, there will be an annual bandwidth demand of approximately 522 exabytes, or more than half a zettabyte," Malik announced today, Monday, 29 November 2010.

"From currently being seen as a dark continent, Africa will become the light continent, simply because of the amount of bandwidth," Malik, a visiting University of Cape Town Business School lecturer, said today.

Impact on economy

He said this bandwidth revolution will have a major impact on the continent's economy because 1% increase in bandwidth has the power to increase a country's GDP by 0.5%, as per the World Bank and International Telecommunications Union (ITU) forecasts.

The Africa Media and Broadcasting Congress is set to last about five days, with a series of workshops and plenary sessions planned to discuss issues affecting the continent's media and broadcasting industry.

The African media industry, one of the less developed in the world, faces challenges ranging from outdated infrastructure, flawed policies and political pressure. But, as the amount of bandwidth increases, Malik said the internet and media space becomes a three-way system, whereby broadcasters, internet players (existing and upcoming) and telecoms companies will have to work together to see how best they can distribute video content, which is now ruling the internet.

Video content to dominate

"Video content has become the focus of the world because people love pictures and images and even though Africa is very much concentrated on voice, these new broadband developments will change that," Rajen Naidoo, BCT director of technical operations said.

"Video now rules the web and video will account for nearly 50% of internet traffic by 2012," Naidoo said.

Malik explained: "Broadcasters own the video content, while the telecoms own the pipes and cables and

internet players own the backbone infrastructure of the exchange point. Nobody can say I own everything.

"So, they have no choice but to collaborate. Each one needs each one."

There were 1.319 billion internet users at the end of 2007, with Asia being the largest part of the world of internet users, followed by Europe and North America. Africa accounts for only 44 million internet users out of a population of one billion. According to recent statistics, Nigeria now is the continent's top country internet user, with 50 million people, followed by SA and Egypt.

South Africa is ranked 61st in terms of broadband quality globally.

The Africa Media and Broadcasting 2010 Congress is sponsored by SES, Neotel, NDS, BET, in association with media partners Quantum, Bizcommunity.com and Mybroadband.co.za.

For more information, go to www.terrapinn.com/2010/mediaza and www.bct-global.com.

ABOUT ISSA SIKITI DA SILVA

Issa Sikiti da Silva is a winner of the 2010 SADC Media Awards (print category). He freelances for various media outlets, local and foreign, and has travelled extensively across Africa. His work has been published both in French and English. He used to contribute to Bizcommunity.com as a senior news writer.
View my profile and articles...

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>