

# The rise of data centres in Africa

Now and again, a new Information and Communication Technology (ICT) solution sees a combination of factors unite to create a 'perfect storm' of demand - one that is exacerbated by the various vendors' inability to keep pace with it.



Stephane Duproz, CEO of Africa Data Centres

One such industry is the multi-tenant colocation data centre market in Africa, which is poised on the brink of hugely accelerated growth, driven by several factors, including a soaring demand for cloud services, pressure by regulators to bring African content back to Africa, a surge in media content markets and improved broadband around the continent.

“Data centres are at the heart of economic growth in Africa and without them, developing rich and self-sufficient ICT ecosystems cannot happen,” says Stephane Duproz, CEO of Africa Data Centres. “These facilities are the lifeblood of every business and the foundation of the internet itself, with thousands of networks and connections meeting there.”

Duproz says the continued and sustained investment in connectivity and broadband in Africa are putting foundations in place for true African digital transformation.

“For example, 2018 saw mobile penetration reach 44% in sub-Saharan Africa, which in turn, saw the demand for data for personal and business use reach all-time highs. Add to this the ready availability of affordable smartphones and more reasonable data plans and you’ll see why Africa is hungry for all things digital.”

### **The greatest untapped market**

Building data centres is the one way that Africa can meet the growing requirements for storage and networking that are key to fulfilling Africa’s digital transformation dreams, adds Duproz.

*“ Keep in mind that a slew of new technologies including analytics, IoT, artificial intelligence and cloud are fueling the demand for rapid, high-availability services, and infrastructure that is local, not situated in Europe or the United States. ”*

Despite the clear need for more data centres, he says Africa remains the greatest untapped market for data centre providers and considering the continent is made up of more than 50 countries and a population of over a billion, this needs to change.

“Most of Africa’s citizens are of the age where they want to go online, learn, communicate and consume digital services.”

Duproz says data centres have to deliver IT services and provide storage and networking to a skyrocketing number of networked devices, users, as well as business processes.

“It’s no surprise then that demand for data centre colocation services in Africa has been unprecedented, driven by the factors I mentioned above, as well as the need for digitisation in Africa. Africa wants to go digital and it wants to do it now. The continent needs servers, power, broadband - and as much of it as possible.”

### **Demand for data centres**

At the moment, Duproz says the demand for colocation data centres in Africa is rising more rapidly than supply.

“More modern colocation facilities in Africa will not only help meet the continent’s needs but will help to connect the various regions to the broader global data economy, which in turn will drive economic and social development.”

During the past couple of years, he says several cloud infrastructure and data centres have been built in many growing African markets. “However, this is just a start. The desire for more data centres for Africans is skyrocketing, and concurrently, many global companies are looking to the region for data centre development and support.”

According to him, this is important because the data centre market on the continent is crucial to the integration of Africa into worldwide networks. Look at the hyper-scale cloud providers, including Amazon Web Services, Azure, Huawei and Google. They all have global cloud services built upon a wide network of self-built data centres, but the lack of Africa-based data centres is creating latency issues and inhibiting the growth of their hyper-scale offerings on the continent.

Another reason the continent can benefit from interconnected, carrier and cloud-neutral data centre facilities, is because they enable public sector entities in Africa to harness the benefits of information and communication technologies, as well as the economies of scale that the cloud provides.

Ultimately, Duproz says, what the continent needs is a vision of a pan-African network of carrier-neutral data centres.

“I believe this is the way of the future because we can offer services in all the countries in which we are present to any international customer who wants to come to Africa. We have one aim, and one aim only and that is it to digitalise Africa and interconnect our data centres all over the continent to drive true digital transformation,” he says.

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