

How we are facilitating growth of the African digital economy

By Jørgen Arnesen, EVP Mobile



Africa's 54 countries and 1.3 billion people represent the biggest opportunity for tech giants to onboard new internet users, with almost 800 million people yet to embrace the Internet. It is great to see that Google, our long term partner, recently announced [new investment commitments](#) in Africa to further accelerate internet adoption throughout the continent.

As a company with more than 150 million active users in Africa, we know there is significant growth ahead. This region has the fastest growing internet penetration of any continent. According to [Statista](#), internet penetration in the first quarter of 2020 in Africa was 39%, meaning less than 4 out of every 10 people on the continent were using the web. By contrast, average internet penetration globally at that time was nearly 60%.

While we've operated in Africa for more than fifteen years, the acceleration of our strategic investments in the region started in 2017, when Opera [announced](#) the plan to

invest \$100 million USD over the following two years. Through these investments we've helped to speed internet adoption in Africa, strengthen the internet ecosystem with local partners and infrastructure and foster new startups. Opera has never invested more on the continent than we are right now as part of our [Africa First strategy](#).

What's next for Opera in Africa?

40 Million people online across five African countries

Providing local products:
Hype – 3 million sign-ups
Opera Football – 10 million users

Supporting the fintech:
investing in OPay – the largest mobile payment platform in Nigeria

Stimulating the education:
free e-book program for millions of Africans

Being locally present:
hubs in Cape Town and Johannesburg, South Africa, in Lagos, Nigeria and Nairobi, Kenya

Opera

Accelerating Internet adoption

According to the UK Company [Cable.co.uk](#), the price of mobile data in Sub-Saharan Africa is the most expensive in the world, with an average cost of \$6.44 per 1GB of mobile data (in contrast to Western Europe, where the same amount of mobile data costs only \$2.47).

To address this disparity in pricing we are investing in local data centers which facilitate up to 90% data savings for our Opera Mini users when browsing the Internet. Furthermore, we've partnered with 10 leading telecom providers across the continent, including MTN Nigeria and Safaricom Kenya, to offer free Internet access via Opera

Mini. As part of our commitment to help people get online we are sponsoring 1.5GB of monthly data via Opera Mini for our millions of users.

Providing local products truly tailored for the market

We continue to implement Africa First innovations and develop local products such as Hype and Opera Football.

Hype

At the beginning of 2021 we launched Hype – the first African-inspired chat service built directly into a mobile browser – Opera Mini. It is now available across all English-speaking African countries and already has almost 3 million sign-ups. With the introduction of Hype chat, a secure end-to-end encrypted service, Opera is redefining the concept of mobile browsers, providing users with a personalized, engaging browsing experience that enables seamless chatting, surfing and sharing – without compromising speed or driving increased data consumption. Hype is getting new exciting features and updates on a regular basis, which makes it even more engaging for Opera Mini users.

Opera Football

We know that Opera users in Africa are hugely passionate about football. However, we also know that from a technology perspective, legacy football-focussed products do not cater to the African market with its unique device, data and connectivity requirements. [Opera Football](#) is a vertically focused news site with the best international and local sports content, and was created to provide a better solution for Africa's millions of passionate football fans. Launched in June of 2021, it is already showing impressive growth with over 10 million users as of the end of Q2 2021, making it among the leading sports websites in Africa. Our Opera Football app was launched in beta in Q3 and has more than 1 million users already.

Supporting fintech

OPay, incubated by Opera, is the largest mobile payment platform in Nigeria with over \$3B monthly transactions volume. It brings a high value to the continent, by making financial services more efficient for millions of users, which starts with the ability to pay and have access to the opportunities at the right time. By the end of 2020 OPay demonstrated 3x transaction volume growth YTD.

Stimulating education

Our free e-book program with WorldReader continues. Opera Mini gives users free access to thousands of ebooks available in the [Worldreader library](#). The Worldreader app has been optimized to support access from feature phones and smartphones within Opera Mini. Users can choose from a wide variety of literary genres such as fiction, fantasy, classics, romance, inspirational and self-help ebooks.

Being locally present

We know it is important to be locally present. To be right in the thick of the action and support businesses and product development, our local teams are working in the company's hubs in Cape Town and Johannesburg, South Africa, as well as in the new offices in Lagos, Nigeria and Nairobi, Kenya.

There are many challenges and huge opportunities in Africa for a technology company that is willing to tackle many of the most demanding use case issues - such as limited bandwidth and high data costs - and to pair technology with a real sense of presence. We are excited about how much room there is to grow, and we are looking forward to keeping you updated as we progress!