

Bringing Wi-Fi to Africa

 By Riaan Graham

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Wi-Fi is so alive and kicking, it has its own dedicated day. Today, 20 June 2017 marks the inaugural World Wi-Fi Day - a day celebrated around the globe to recognise the significant role Wi-Fi has played in getting the world connected through its cities and communities.

Some industry pundits see a dim future for Wi-Fi. They cite the rise of “unlimited” LTE cellular data plans and competition from technologies, like LTE-U. However, if you take an in-depth look at these new developments, you will understand why Wi-Fi is actually experiencing an upsurge.

Why Africa should widely adopt Wi-Fi

Let's take a look at why Africa should widely adopt Wi-Fi.



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Unlimited mobile data plans and easy-to-access communications with no passwords are what consumers want. However, “unlimited” is never, truly, “unlimited.” If you look closely, you’ll discover that full-speed service may be guaranteed only during the billing period and up to a certain data capacity. After that capacity has been exceeded, which happens quickly on multi-user family plans, customers experience throttling (the method where bandwidth is reduced and performance slows down noticeably).

The promise of high-performance access to unlimited data is also an unsustainable business model for carriers. As demand grows, carriers find that they need to expand their networks.

Building a single LTE cell tower can cost millions. While these towers provide great coverage, capacity is limited, not making it a viable solution.

Wi-Fi, a cost-effective and widely adopted solution, becomes the technology of choice in these situations.

Making rapid improvements in performance, security

In fact, it is anticipated that over [20 billion](#) Wi-Fi chipsets will ship between 2016 and 2021. Wi-Fi devices are also more cost effective to develop because chipsets require less silicon, in higher volumes. Additionally, chipsets for LTE devices can cost 5 to 10 times more, with licensing fees added on top of the development costs.



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Even more, enterprises in various sectors depend on Wi-Fi for their local area networks (LANs). Wi-Fi is designed to service LANs, while LTE is best used in wide-area networks (WANs). Additionally, with the advent of 802.11ac Wave 2 and 802.11ax, Wi-Fi is making rapid improvements in performance, security, seamless hotspot connections, and the ability to handle more users in high-density environments.

Africa optimal region

According to market research, the world Wi-Fi market size is expected¹ to grow to \$33.6bn by 2020, with an estimated CAGR of 17.8% from 2015. This statistic makes South Africa (SA) and Africa an optimal region to adopt Wi-Fi at a more rapid pace.

Currently, in South Africa, there is one hotspot for every 6160 people. The global average is one hotspot for every 150. As

Wi-Fi continues to be one of the most viable and cost-effective connectivity solutions to meet Africa's increasing bandwidth demands, there are initiatives to increase the adoption of Wi-Fi in the region.



Free Wi-Fi on World Wi-Fi Day

19 Jun 2017



Africa is already using information and communication technology (ICT) investment to power its economy to reap more benefits. In fact, government and private sectors are taking bold steps to fast-track the process. There are also direct foreign investments into key ICT initiatives across Africa.

Additionally, homegrown innovation and new disruptive models, fueled by Wi-Fi and connectivity, are opening new opportunities.

Demands are changing. Expectations are shifting. The time for Wi-Fi time is now.

Happy World Wi-Fi Day!

Download the infographic [here](#).

¹Global Wi-Fi Market, Markets and Markets, July 2015.

ABOUT RIAAN GRAHAM

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