

Why my startup scene is better than yours: Kenya

Last week, Disrupt Africa kicked off a new series, in which we have spoken to the great and the good from various African tech scenes to find out what it is that makes them tick.

 By Tom Jackson 1 Feb 2018



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[South Africa has had its turn](#), now we give various stakeholders in the Kenyan tech space the chance to make their case.

Bitange Ndemo, former permanent secretary at Kenya's Ministry of Information and Communication

"I recently did an article on what is happening in Europe with respect to startups. In France, for example, the government has put enormous resources behind the digital economy. President Macron is betting on this new economy. Most of Africa's startup ecosystems lack the political will, and academia still is unconvinced



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"That said, Kenya's startup ecosystem has the benefit of a series of successes where the government has provided support to unlock critical resources like data and investments in infrastructure, provision of subsidies to university students to acquire laptops. Although sometimes difficult, Kenya's immigration department has allowed talent from outside to work side by side with local teams. The presence of international research labs has made Kenya an attractive destination. More needs to be done especially attracting talent to make the country competitive."

Viral Shah, co-founder and CEO of Sokompare

"Kenya is home to a wide group of young entrepreneurs and visionaries from all fields, from tech solutions to social impact. It is the country to be in for African startups to develop and grow since all resources are

reachable with ease. Various incubators provide assistance from HR, legal, and financial support.

“In the tech scene young programmers collaborate with other like-minded people to build great startups that could potentially scale Africa-wide. So far Kenya has seen great potential and since the revolutionary M-Pesa it can clearly be seen that Kenya has one of the best startup ecosystems in Africa.”

Hezron Muriuki, founder and CEO of Noveta

“Kenyans grow up with a lot of innovation surrounding them. There is already pressure to innovate around service delivery with Kenya recognised for the advancements that have been brought about by M-Pesa. The rapid penetration of mobile phone connectivity has brought with it access to information and thus increased maturity in customer needs and refinement of customer tastes.

“There is, therefore, customer pressure to innovate around service delivery and many businesses are unable to keep up with these customer needs. As a result, there are a lot of gaps that startups aim to bridge with clever innovations, making customers in some captive markets ready to test and trial these solutions. This, coupled with the fact that there is a lot of fragmented service delivery in many industries, makes the startup ecosystem very vibrant.”

Daniel Maison, co-founder and CEO of Sky.Garden

“Kenya is unique in that her people possess a natural entrepreneurial spirit and are renowned for their enterprising culture. The widespread penetration of mobile banking and the high adoption of automated systems is nearly unmatched in the continent. These ideal factors create a thriving environment where startups and disruptive platforms can fully realise their potential.”

Sophy Mwale, founder and CEO of Jobsikaz

“I believe what makes the Kenyan startup ecosystem great is that there is always a market for almost anything. Basically an economically-empowered consumer base. The middle class are not only technologically aware but they love to move with trends. The bottom of the pyramid are massive, they are voracious consumers with also a decent buying capacity.

“The other thing is a booming private sector, where a lot of business is in the hands of private businesses opposed to government and NGOs. So decision making is faster and less rigid, which is really great for startups.”

Hannah Clifford, general manager at [Nairobi Garage](#)



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“Nairobi is the leading African innovation ecosystem because of the level of creativeness and entrepreneurial spirit in the culture. Our strengths are in the openness of the innovation community to collaborating and helping one another. And of course the quality of the internet connectivity.”

Kenyan startups raised a total of \$32.8 million in 2017, according to the most recent African Tech

Startups Funding Report, the third largest amount raised by any one country on the continent. More information is available [here](#).

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ABOUT TOM JACKSON

Co-founder @DisruptAfrica. Tech and business journalist in Africa. Passionate about the vibrant tech startups scene in Africa, Tom can usually be found sniffing out the continent's most exciting new companies and entrepreneurs, funding rounds and any other developments within the growing ecosystem. View my profile and articles...

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