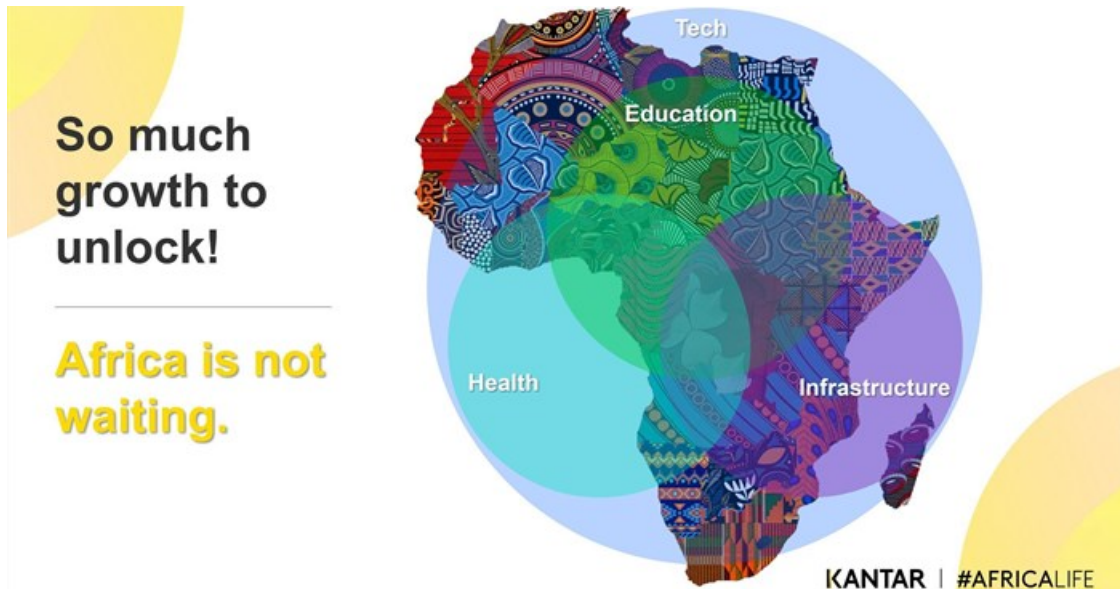


Think unconventionally. Win lavishly.

By [Ndeye Diagne](#), issued by [Kantar](#)

21 Jan 2022

Copying best practice from the rest of the world is always a good starting point. But that's what it is, just a starting point. We need to create our own new best practice, in our own context, environment, realities.



Fred Swaniker is a true Afrophile. Recognised as one of *Time Magazine*'s most influential people of 2019 and well known for his Ted Talks on Africa, he is an entrepreneur passionate about developing the continent. Where some see challenges, he sees opportunities, and he chatted to us at the launch of Kantar's *Africa Life* report, about turning the tables on the African narrative to uncover growth.

He suggests brands approach the continent with a spirit of innovation to reinvent the way we do business by offering unconventional solutions. Swaniker says this is especially urgent when we think that:

- Africa will comprise 40% of the world's population by the end of this century.
- The combined GDP of Africa today is \$2tn and will only grow more as the population grows. The continent is already home to some of the fastest-growing economies in the world. Covid-19 has made a dent, but the trajectory is bound to continue once economies recover.
- Africa has a clean slate. There are many great businesses to be built because where challenges arise, so too do great entrepreneurial and business innovation opportunities. We need better governance and healthcare, there's a lack of financial services, and opportunities in energy, education, infrastructure and agriculture. We spend \$40bn a year importing food into Africa, yet we have perfect soil and water conditions to grow it ourselves.



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"All these constraints drive innovation as they force us to think differently. As we lack some of the advantages found elsewhere in the world, we need to approach them with a spirit of innovation, to reimagine and reinvent with unconventional solutions, as that's how we will capture the opportunities," says Swaniker.

He continues, “For example: rapid urbanisation means 800m people will move into African cities by 2050, with a need for better sanitation, low-cost housing, water, traffic and urban planning. Nigeria already has a backlog of 20m homes yet is only building 150,000 a year. That’s a huge business opportunity, but if you approach it the conventional way you’ll miss out as building a house today is very expensive. It costs around \$30,000, which most families in Africa can’t afford – nor do we have a mortgage industry. What we do have is technology, which lets us 3D-print a house in just 24 hours, for less than \$4,000.”

That’s the innovative, leapfrog thinking that will turn Africa’s challenges into opportunities that turn a profit. Think about Africa as the now frontier market, as virgin territory for great businesses and innovations to be built unconventionally,” concludes Swaniker.

Practical tips for brands wanting to grab the African business opportunity

For any great business opportunity to succeed you need a great idea, the talent to execute it, and the capital. In Africa, it’s easy to come up with ideas and capital is increasingly available. What is scarce is talent, as Africa has a lot of talkers but not a lot of doers.

We can’t wait for universities and high schools to train our talent. Businesses need to think about their own capabilities to develop their talent and invest their own time and energy doing so. Leverage technology and grow digital-first business models, as that’s what happened in Asia under the Sars pandemic, which sparked the birth of many of the giants we see today, like Alibaba and Tencent.

Use moments of massive disruption to reimagine Africa in a digital way, leveraging technology to rebuild all our services and products. Think of digital healthcare, education, finance, banking and entertainment – there are so many services and products we can now deliver online, which massively increases reach, allowing businesses to innovate and disrupt, providing high-quality services at lower cost.



MARKETING & MEDIA

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Ndeye Diagne, Kantar 19 Jan 2022



When it comes to marketing and brand-building activity, there’s no excuse not to harness the power of digital, data and analytics to track the effectiveness of our interventions so we know what’s working and what’s not.

Digital also lets you get started with less capital as you can put together a storefront online, create a marketing campaign and distribute your product at a lower cost. As Swaniker says, “The African opportunity is a phenomenal one, and it’s ours to lose – let’s grab it.”

Catch up on our deep-dives into the four specific intersections of the changing dynamics of the African marketplace in the informal sector opportunity; the education and unconventional ideas opportunity; the culture, social commerce, and tech opportunity; and the entrepreneurship and human capital opportunity.

Find out all about Africa Life [here](#). With a focus on understanding the youth and the women of Africa. Missed the live launch? [Register](#) to watch the hour-long brand learning session on demand.



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Ndeye Diagne, Kantar 16 Sep 2021



ABOUT NDEYE DIAGNE

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