

Reconnecting with humanity in a tech-filled world



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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Media keeps showing us pessimistic views of the future where it becomes all too easy to buy into the idea that tech is out to rob us of our humanity. But the trends of 2020, from global thought leaders and data, paint a different picture: that technology is actually allowing us to reconnect with our humanity.

[Lee Naik](#), CEO of TransUnion Africa, unpacks some insights into how trends are doing this.

▣ **Firstly, what are some of the key trends that we will see in 2020?**

As part of the continued evolution of technology, I believe that 2020 will be a very considered and introspective year for the use of technology in South Africa.

Amidst a tough economic environment, we expect businesses to make more judicious calls on the technology that will be adopted and in many regards, they will focus less on the technology for its own sakes but rather focus on how we seek to rediscover our humanity whilst technology is advancing at a rapid pace.



Lee Naik, CEO of TransUnion Africa

Some of the key technology trends that we expect to see go mainstream include edge computing, which will be tightly linked to further release of spectrum allowing telecommunications players to start providing 5G communications to citizens across the country.

5G known for both its speed and ability to capture vaster coverage areas will force both businesses and the government to reimagine how we engage with citizens and consumers. A connected digital society will help us leapfrog some of the legacy that held us back and give rises to use cases for government services, farming, safety and other localised edge computing solutions.

Some of the other key trends include preparing for consumer data privacy POPIA legislation coming into effect in the next year or two and consequently trust becoming central to most business strategies.

Given the well-held concerns around technology and its impact on the future of jobs, as well as concerns around data leaks and implications of using social media, we expect businesses to focus on making strategic choices linked to the well-being of employees and customers.

A linked trend, titled digital minimalism, will see consumers with constrained disposable income choose to lag beyond new technology adoption and even spend less time on technology and specifically mobile apps. Winning the heart and minds of consumers in 2020 will require a lot more effort given the current business environment.



■ ***The infrastructure for IoT has been laid down for South Africa in the last few years. How is TransUnion taking advantage of this and how are you implementing in TransUnion Africa?***

The Internet of Things will see businesses include sensors into all aspects of their operations from improving productivity of crop farms to better management of vital water and electricity resources. IoT implies more data being shared and provides the opportunity for businesses to understand people and situations better.

Our investments over the last few years have been focused on helping leverage these data points to help develop solutions that solve key problems facing South Africa. IoT data forms part of a broader set of data known as Alternate Data and it is our focus in this area that has helped us drive solution to enable financial inclusion solutions, optimising client acquisition strategies in a climate where they need to see better return on investment, and helping businesses understand and make trust possible as the physical world reality of consumers converge with their digital aspirations.

One of our most recent IoT linked solutions, iovation helps businesses understand the reputation of mobile devices and other internet-connected devices and contribute to making e-commerce and other online transactions more secure.

■ ***As we head to the final frontier of the so-called 'digital revolution', we await the full roll-out of 5G. How prepared is TransUnion and how has this influenced the company?***

TransUnion continues to build solutions that talk to changing needs and expectations of our customers.

Key to our strategy is improving the speed at which we are able to deliver services at a high speed, in a 5G connected world where customers will seek quick turnaround and the instant gratification that they have come to expect from social media applications.

This includes services that they need to transact within a 24/7 manner and in the channel that they prefer. We continue to focus on leveraging automation, big data technologies and artificial intelligence to leverage the increased volumes of data we have already started to see in the local market to improve our value proposition to customers.

■ ***We're in the age of automation. How is TransUnion making use of this technology to make business easier?***

TransUnion is focused on leveraging automation technologies to improve our ability to better serve our business customers and consumers. Given our 119-year history in South Africa, we have focused on enabling traditionally manual tasks to be done at pace in an automated way, thereby creating value for customers and in addition allowing our employees to focus on non-modular tasks.

We have also focused on leveraging automation to allow consumers to self-service their needs without having to always use traditional contact centre channels. This is an ongoing journey to partner with technology to find optimal ways to deliver work and create value for all concerned.



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■ ***We cannot forget about AI and AR. Has TransUnion incorporated this into future plans? If so, how?***

Artificial Intelligence and its many forms are a key part of how we currently operate globally and within South Africa. In an effort to serve the diverse needs of our business customers serving consumers in a 24/7 digital world, we currently leverage machine learning, robotic process automation and other AI self-service techniques as part of our business model.

We will continue to research and implement AI technologies were applicable to better serve the needs and outcomes of our customers.

■ ***Global thought leaders are saying that technology is allowing us to reconnect to humanity. How is this happening? And what measures is TransUnion taking to stay in touch with humanity?***

Advances in big data and alternate data have really helped us understand more about businesses and consumers. Coupled with the advances in technology and the consumer trend of digital minimalism, TransUnion has started to think differently about how we do business both for our employees but also for how we serve consumers.

From an internal perspective, we are continually seeking out ways to ensure how employees work on value-adding projects and activities whilst allowing the technology to deal with repetitive tasks that are prone to automation.

For our customers, we spend a lot of time understanding their context and psychography using both insights linked to their

human needs coupled with insights from data. This allows us to deliver solutions in the market that are differentiated and solve problems that matter.

▣ ***What do you think will be the one major disruptor in this decade?***

The stabilisation of a multi-polar world where the trend of moving the centres of economic power from established to emerging economies will in general challenge well-held orthodoxies regarding technology, innovation, creativity and growth.

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