

The African digital revolution

 By [Ravi Bhaya](#)

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"2015 could be the tipping point for the African digital revolution."

Q: Your 'game changer' trend in 2014?

A: Facebook Autoplay - especially the impact it had on the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge, and Uber that has made its presence felt, globally impacting commercial transportation as we know it.

Q: Your most significant industry trends for 2015?

A: As the world gets more inter-connected, the Internet of Things will become more of a reality in the emerging markets of Africa. We have moved into the information space where it needs to be useful, organised and accessible. And I am not talking about 'search', but a continued trend towards home automation, auto-mation, healthcare and transport in the African region.

- *Home Automation:* Apple and Google are both transforming themselves from handheld devices to remote controls, putting the power in the hands of the users to connect and control home appliances from their mobile phones.
- *Auto-mation:* Nissan Leaf and the soon-to-be released BMW i3 and BMW i8 in South Africa, shows that while the user has control of the vehicle, the smarter car will be able to make accurate and faster decisions for you.

- *Healthcare (+wearables):* Samsung Gear, Fitbit, Apple Watch will continue to revolutionise the industry. A health-conscious user directly contributes to the sporting attire and shoes industry - Asics, Adidas, Nike, etc.

- *Transport:* Uber (a \$40bn valuation company), which has become integral to our offline lives, will continue to revolutionise the commercial transportation business in spite of the flack they have taken towards the latter part of 2014. Things will start to get interesting when Lyft, Sidecar, Flywheel etc. make their competitive presence felt in our region and the diversity of their expanded service the users will benefit from.

- *Big data:* Though still a buzzword, this will soon become a standard requirement for/from organisations. With the above-mentioned trends in home automation, healthcare wearables, transport, and soon mobile payments, data and information will be required to be better mined and structured. This data will also become more accessible allowing organisations across industries such as media, entertainment, telecommunications, finance, etc. to enhance the personalisation of services offered to the end-user.

Q: What do you hope to see less of going into a New Year?

A: Although radio, TV and OOH will continue to play a pivotal role in the media mix for clients, social and digital should not

be seen as isolated channels of media distribution.

Q: What do you hope to see more of in 2015?

A: With Facebook's plans to provide free satellite internet access across Africa (part of the internet.org plan), and the governments' plans to build more pipes, 2015 could be the tipping point for the African digital revolution. The opportunities will be immense from a communication, content and consumer perspective.

Q: What advice do you have for your employees/peers for the next year?

A: Consider every day as a new learning. Work hard to up-skill yourselves since there is a plethora of information, tools and resources available to do so. Understand how consumers are evolving their consumption of media and content across devices, enrol in a Google certification programme, ensure your Facebook news feeds are serving the information that you find relevant (although their algorithms are working hard at knowing this better than you)!

Q: What would you like to tell your clients?

A: Let's create magic in the African region. Let's create benchmarks that the world takes note of and imitates and build stories that are award-winning.

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ABOUT RAVI BHAYA

Ravi Bhaya is managing director of The Starcom MediaVest Group (SMG). He recently moved to South Africa from the South East Asia region markets where he spearheaded operations in Indonesia and Vietnam. In his role as the MD, SMG SA, Ravi is responsible for the P&L of SMG South Africa and the Africa RHQ as well as the integration with Lighthouse Digital, South Africa's largest digital agency that SMG acquired in 2014.

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