

Private news, automation and the Moon: A peek into 2019

2018 was full of surprises. 2019 will have many more. Andries Brink, CEO of Andile Solutions, ventured a few educated guesses on what we will be talking about in 2019 - and he starts by leaving the planet.



Andries Brink, CEO of Andile Solutions

“2019 will mark a return to the Moon with nations like Israel and Japan leading the charge. It will be unmanned though, with the first human visit, likely to be Chinese or Indian, scheduled within the next five years. Of course, some privateers are also in the race due to the fact that technology has made space travel so much cheaper.”

Meanwhile back on Earth, our societies will start seeing the broader impact of the same technologies that are making such amazing feats more commonplace. Specifically, Brink gave caution to unions: artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics are coming and will lead to job losses if people aren't sufficiently skilled.

In the near future, we can expect self-driving cars to drastically reduce the number of employed drivers. But next year, even white collar jobs such as tellers, traders and travel agents will dwindle in numbers, along with blue collar jobs such as in manufacturing. Meeting this change means helping people adjust to the new roles.

Agriculture steps up

On the other hand, automation is already showing great results for large-scale farming, producing larger yields and lower food prices.

“Commercial farmers will continue to invest heavily in automation and AI, as it makes the industry profitable and able to deliver on the demands of an exploding population. This investment moves the balance sheet value of any food-producing entity more and more into IP and balance sheet equipment.”

But there is a caveat to this movement: due to the unknowns of land expropriation, savvy farmers are investing more into movable technology assets. It may lead to reduced skills development because prospects for investment are hard to

determine.

Improving urbanisation

Technology will also be more and more visible as the continent tackles challenges from rapid urbanisation. Sub-saharan Africa is one of the fastest urbanisation centres on the planet and nearly half a billion people here already live in urban areas. This will require new ways to tackle problems in cities. But the tools to do so are already appearing.

“Urbanisation in Africa is at a tipping point and the need for smart solutions is increasing. Luckily with 5G networks and AI-driven city networks developing fast, technology could play a major role in dealing with the challenges posed. As we’re only a few years away from municipal elections, the potentially significant bump in quality of life from smart city projects will give a lot of incentive for politicians to pursue them.”

The new news business

Yet the most apparent change in 2019 will be how we get our news. Media businesses have been under siege for nearly two decades. Ad revenues are falling, disinformation has sown distrust for news outlets and quality reporting is fast being replaced by tabloid pandering.

Fortunately, all is not lost, especially in South Africa where a free and powerful media is critical to battle the corruption and crime that seems to engulf the nation. Upstart news companies, funded by their audiences, are leading the way to new news models where integrity is met with member contribution. At the same time technology is helping spot and remove dubious reports.

“Quality news will be privatised further. The attack on ‘fake news’ outlets will intensify as AI and news bots start verifying information faster than ANN7 could put a spin on anything. This would mean that the 80s newsroom will continue to decline and with it jobs for content creators. Look for more independent, hard-nosed reporters and opinion formers sponsored by crowdfunding and Patreon models.”

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