

Afrocentric Digital Platforms and the Reimagining of African Identities in the Digital Age

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Abstract:

In the past decade, African nations such as South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, and Kenya have witnessed significant growth in their digital landscapes. For example, in 2020, the Global System for Mobile Communications (GSMA) reported that by the end of 2019, Sub-Saharan Africa had 477 million mobile phone users, with projections reaching 1 billion by 2024. GSMA also predicted that the number of smartphone users would double, reaching 678 million by 2025. This growth in digital connectivity raises an important question: what does it mean for a continent historically represented by external voices?

This study explores this question, focusing on how increasing digital connectivity has enabled content creators across the African continent and its diaspora to influence conversations about "Africanity"—that is, the various ways of being and understanding the people, cultures, countries, and identities of Africa. The research examines the rise of Afrocentric digital platforms, such as *Africa Is a Country*, *This Is Africa*, and *OkayAfrica*, which are dedicated to offering alternative narratives about Africa and its people.

The study also investigates the impact of neoliberal and postcolonial discourses on the development of these platforms, how they shape perceptions of Africa, and how they challenge mainstream media portrayals of African countries. Furthermore, the study examines how these platforms influence journalistic practices regarding Africa. Data for this study was gathered through interviews with contributors to these Afrocentric digital platforms, including founders, editors, writers, and photographers. Additionally, a discourse analysis of the platforms themselves was conducted to uncover the narratives and ideologies they perpetuate.