# Opera driving digitalization across Africa

February 12, 2024




Opera was among the very first tech companies to believe in the future of the African market over 17 years ago. We saw immense, untapped potential: today Africa is the continent with the fastest-growing internet penetration, with a young population, improving internet infrastructure, and rapid smartphone adoption all contributing factors.

Our certainty of the continent's bright future – coupled with our belief that access to information is a universal right – led Opera to announce its Africa First strategy back in 2017. Africa First means our mobile products and services are developed first and foremost with the African consumer in mind. As a part of this commitment, we announced a $100M investment in the region to bring more people online and offer them the fastest and most budget-friendly internet connection. We have been honoring our commitment by strengthening the continent's internet ecosystem and working with local partners to fulfill our mission of bringing ever more users online. Today the result is a thriving presence in Africa's biggest markets, with Opera seeing up to 94% brand awareness and Opera Mini garnering over a hundred million users on its way to becoming the continent's most downloaded browser.

## Tailored-for-the-market solutions

In order to bridge the digital divide, Opera engaged with local users to understand their needs rather than ship an already-existing platform that was made for Western markets. The result was Opera Mini – an innovative solution designed to address the challenges faced by local users, given that the cost of data in sub-Saharan Africa is among the highest in the world (the average price of 1 GB data in Kenya, for example, is $2.25; in Italy it is just $0.12). It was created as a practical and reliable tool, Opera Mini enables users to browse the web with ease while consuming up to 90% less data thanks to Opera's unique data-saving technology. The browser has been downloaded more than 1B downloads on the Google Play Store, and is among the most popular apps on the continent.

A second pillar of Opera's efforts to bolster digital inclusion has been Free Data Campaigns. Amidst the tumult of the COVID pandemic – in which so much activity was shifted online, and Africans were acutely affected by the high costs of data – Opera forged strategic partnerships with leading telecom companies across sub-Saharan Africa aimed at providing people with free browsing through Opera Mini. Working closely with MTN and Airtel in Nigeria, Safaricom and Airtel Kenya in Kenya, MTN South Africa, and Safaricom in Ethiopia, Opera has been able to offer over 40 million people across six African countries up to 3 GB of free browsing each month. This initiative has helped to empower users throughout the continent – enabling them to establish businesses, connect with loved ones, and embark on educational journeys, all with greater ease and affordability.

Opera doesn't just stop at a made-for-the-market internet browser and Free Data Campaigns: the company constantly brings fun and creative features and contests to the market to engage its users. Aware of a continent-wide passion for football, for example,

Opera Mini now boasts an integrated Live Scores feature that enables fans to always stay on top of the action. The suite of features allows users to track multiple matches at a time from competitions around the world – including the Premier League, La Liga, and the Champions League – enjoying in-depth statistics and running commentary within Opera Mini. And Opera consistently times its popular “Shake and Win” campaigns with the continent’s most followed tournaments. A November 2022 edition for the World Cup – which featured $300,000 in prizes – drew tens of millions of participants who shook their phones up to 1M times a day and shot Opera Mini to the number 1 most downloaded app in the Google Play Store in Nigeria and Kenya. The most recent campaign – timed to celebrate the Africa Cup of Nations – is now just wrapping up, with over $180,000 in prizes up for grabs.

## Local investments yielding results

Beyond pioneering innovative technologies and working to provide users with free data, Opera has been cognizant of the need to invest in infrastructure on the ground. Opera has worked to combat slow internet speed by installing new local data centers in Nairobi and Lagos. The servers accelerate online browsing by up to four times when using Opera mobile applications like Opera Mini and Opera News.

In addition to providing platforms and services that reduce the digital divide, Opera has also developed in-app resources that are tailored to local needs, such as Opera News. After its launch in January 2017 it became one of the most popular news apps in Africa. To date, it has been downloaded by more than 100 million users.

Opera also works to stimulate education throughout the continent, offering, in conjunction with WorldReader, a free e-book program. Through Opera Mini, users have free access to thousands of ebooks available in the Worldreader library. Users can choose from a wide variety of literary genres such as fiction, fantasy, classics, romance, inspirational, and self-help ebooks.

Another area in which Opera has invested is digital financial inclusivity. In partnership with the Celo Foundation, Opera introduced MiniPay in September 2023. A blockchain-based dollar wallet built on Celo and integrated right into the Opera Mini browser, MiniPay allows users to benefit from USD savings and ensures their funds are safe from local currency stability issues. Fast and cost-effective, MiniPay users’ transactions are completed in seconds and for a nominal fee – all with just a phone number. To date, the fast-growing Web3 wallet has been introduced in Nigeria, Kenya, and Ghana, with Opera is set to introduce MiniPay to more markets across Africa in 2024.

Opera’s main goal with the Africa First strategy has been to decrease the digital divide, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, where the costs of data are such a major issue. Ever since we entered the market we have offered products and solutions that can address this challenge, like Opera Mini and Free Data Campaigns. Though we recognize that the digital divide remains, we are proud to be a part of the wave of digitization across the continent. Year after year we will continue to invest millions of dollars into our products, making browsing faster, less data-consuming, or even free. We are constantly investing – at this point, over $100 million – in the African digital economy by providing affordable internet access, localized content, and innovative digital services. Opera's commitment to the African digital economy is driving growth and innovation in the region, and the company is set to play a leading role in continuing to shape digital commerce and connectivity going forward.