Radio & Audio Broadcasting in Africa 2026

BROADCAST MEDIA AFRICA

A four-page briefing distilling the headline findings of the Radio & Audio Broadcasting in Africa 2026 Industry Survey — where the sector stands on digital transformation, audience, monetisation and growth, and where the highest-leverage next steps lie.

THE BIG PICTURE

An industry that is **commercially resilient and still growing its audience**, led largely by senior decision-makers alert to the competitive threat from digital platforms — but constrained by thin audience data, low digital monetisation, and uneven digital infrastructure investment. The sector has adopted digital's visible layer (streaming, social) without yet re-engineering around it.

THE NUMBERS THAT MATTER

83%
EARLY-STAGE DIGITAL
Analogue-only or basic online presence; only 17% digitised or digital-first

60%
GROWING AUDIENCES
Report moderate-to-significant growth over three years

10%
REVENUE FROM DIGITAL
Digital & streaming's share of the revenue mix

100%
PLAN DIGITAL INVESTMENT
No respondent rules out new digital tech within two years

20%
DON'T TRACK AUDIENCE
Do not measure audience size at all — a recurring gap

0%
SAY “NOT ADAPTING”
Every organisation reports adapting to competitive pressure

KEY TAKEAWAYS AT A GLANCE

- The sector has adopted the **visible layer of digital** — streaming and social — but not yet the underlying production, distribution and data infrastructure.
- **Digital engagement has outpaced digital revenue**: audiences have moved online, but monetisation has not followed — the clearest commercial opportunity in the survey.
- **Intent is universal; execution is the gap.** Every respondent plans to invest — the constraints are measurement, monetisation and infrastructure, not appetite.

01 What the Survey Found

Six findings across maturity, audience, engagement, revenue, pressure and growth.

DIGITAL MATURITY

35%

A little over a third remain **analogue-only**, and nearly half (48%) have only a basic online presence. Just 17% run digitised or digital-first operations — the industry sits in a transitional zone.

AUDIENCE TRAJECTORY

60%

Report audience **growth** over three years against just 10% decline — but 20% don't track audience size and 30% don't know their age profile, understating true reach.

ENGAGEMENT HAS GONE DIGITAL

46%

WhatsApp and social comments together take **46% of listener interaction** — well ahead of the traditional call-in line. Behaviour has digitised faster than infrastructure.

MONETISATION LAGS

10%

Digital contributes only **10% of revenue** despite that engagement, and national brands account for 45% of advertiser income — a concentration risk alongside an untapped digital opportunity.

COMMERCIAL PRESSURE

24%

Competition from social media and **measurement challenges** tie as the top obstacles (24% each), ahead of a broader lack of audience data (20%). Encouragingly, 0% say they aren't adapting.

GROWTH PRIORITIES

21%

Podcast/on-demand and **youth & mobile-first** development tie as the top opportunities (21% each). AI-powered content ranks lowest (9%) — seen as a longer-horizon bet.

TAKEAWAY

- The sector is **commercially resilient and audience-rich**, but three constraints recur: thin audience data, low digital monetisation, and uneven infrastructure investment.
- The strongest three-way consensus in the survey is **podcast & on-demand audio** — it is simultaneously the most-adopted, most-planned and top-ranked growth area.

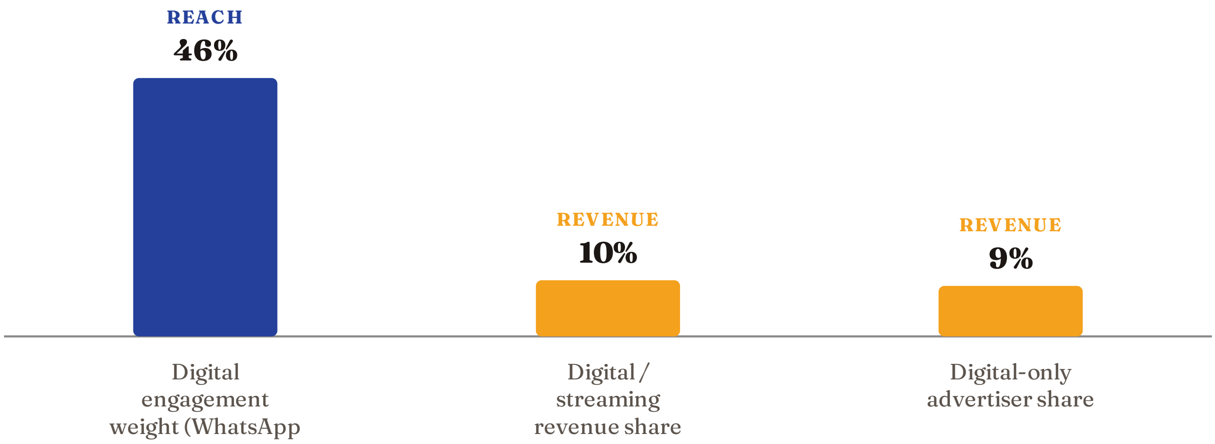
02 The Core Tension & Structural Themes

Reach without revenue — and three patterns that run across the survey.

REACH WITHOUT REVENUE

Listener engagement has clearly migrated to digital and mobile-native channels, yet the money has not moved with it. Digital captures nearly **half of engagement** but under **one-tenth of revenue** on either measure — the single clearest, largely untapped monetisation opportunity in the report.

DIGITAL REACH VS. DIGITAL MONETISATION



Digital's share of engagement (blue) dwarfs its share of revenue on either measure (orange).

THREE STRUCTURAL THEMES

THEME 1 · AUDIENCE DATA

A measurement shortfall recurs across audience, advertising and programming. Closing it has outsized impact on sales, programming and AI-readiness alike.

THEME 2 · REACH VS. REVENUE

Digital holds ~46% of engagement but under 10% of revenue. The monetisation layer lags the audience reach broadcasters have already built.

THEME 3 · SOFTWARE-LED

Investment favours apps, podcasts and streaming over DAB/DRM and IP playout — so audience-facing reach will outpace back-end infrastructure.

TAKEAWAY

- Fixing **audience measurement** is the highest-leverage move — it underpins advertising sales, programming decisions and AI-readiness at once.
- Near-term transformation will be **software- and content-led**; deeper infrastructure (DAB/DRM, cloud playout) will lag unless deliberately funded.

03 What to Do Next — Recommendations

Actions for broadcasters, industry bodies and investors acting on these findings.

FOR INDIVIDUAL BROADCASTERS

1 Invest first in audience measurement.
Close the basic audience-size and demographic-tracking gap before scaling programming, advertising or AI — even lightweight, app-based or panel measurement materially improves every downstream decision.

2 Build a digital monetisation layer to match digital reach.
Convert the engagement already on WhatsApp and social into revenue — sponsored digital content, premium on-demand tiers, or bundled broadcast-plus-digital packages — rather than leaving digital unmonetised.

3 Expand podcast and on-demand production.
The strongest three-way consensus in the survey: most-adopted, most-planned, and the top-ranked growth opportunity. A clear, low-regret priority.

4 Diversify the advertiser base beyond national brands.
With national brands at 45% of advertiser revenue and digital-only advertisers just 9%, build simpler, lower-cost products for local SMEs and digital-native buyers to reduce concentration risk.

5 Treat AI as a second-wave investment.
Sequence AI to follow foundational audience-measurement capability — it ranks lowest today and depends on the data foundations still being built.

FOR INDUSTRY BODIES & REGULATORS

- Support shared or subsidised audience-measurement infrastructure, especially for community and smaller commercial broadcasters.
- Coordinate DAB/DAB+ and DRM rollout with device manufacturers and regulators, since terrestrial adoption lags for reasons outside any single broadcaster's control.

FOR INVESTORS & DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

- Prioritise funding for digital monetisation tooling (ad tech, subscription, measurement) over pure content — reach is already growing faster than the means to capture its value.
- Target West and Southern African markets near-term, while backing further research into under-represented North, Central and East Africa.
- Back youth and mobile-first audience development — paired with the measurement tools to track its success.

THE BOTTOM LINE

1 · Close the audience-measurement gap — it underpins sales, programming and AI-readiness.
2 · Convert digital reach into digital revenue — engagement has migrated online; monetisation must follow. **3 · Pace infrastructure investment** to match the two-year adoption intent respondents have already signalled.

Get the full report. To access the full *"State of Radio & Audio Broadcasting in Africa 2026"* report — with the complete data, charts and methodology — go to **resources.broadcastmediaafrica.com** or email **info@broadcastingandmedia.com**.

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