Africa is embracing AI but further investment will harness its full potential

The rise of AI and its revolutionary impact on African business, society, and culture led discussions on the final day of GITEX Africa 2023 in Morocco, as experts from across the globe gathered to debate and advance the transformational new tech that's now the focal point of worldwide debate.

While dozens, including the heads of OpenAI and Google Deepmind, have backed statements warning about potential disaster scenarios around AI – even the extinction of humanity – others in the field have said AI fears are overblown. For every dystopian vision there is a utopian version.

It is certain that AI is the next big global technology shift, and in Africa, it has the ability to transform the way businesses are run and societies function. According to Mustapha Zaouini, the Chairman of *AI in Africa*, the continent is now exploring AI to solve pressing issues including poverty, unemployment, and inequality.

"While Africa has unique challenges, such as disparity in internet access, it's steadily embracing AI," said Mr. Zaouni, a panellist at the GITEX Africa AI Summit on the topic of Responsible Generative AI.

"Readiness varies across countries, and there's a need to invest in

infrastructure, education, and policy-making to fully harness AI. Ensuring equitable access to technology and bridging the digital divide are crucial steps to prepare for AI's impact in Africa."

Simon See, the Global Head of _Nvidia_ AI Technology Centre in Singapore, speaking at _GITEX Africa_, said with the right investments and policies, AI can help Africa to achieve its development goals and improve the lives of its people.

"In Africa, the demand for AI skills is expected to grow by 36% between 2020 and 2025," said Mr. See, whose American-headquartered Nvidia makes specialist AI chips.

"This growth is driven by the continent's young population, as well as its investments in start-ups and innovation. The growth of AI is creating new jobs in Africa, as companies look to hire experts to help them develop and implement AI-powered products and services."

Putting African talent at the forefront of a new global workforce

Mr. See said Africa is still in the early stages of AI adoption, but there's a growing interest in the technology across the continent: "Several African countries have developed national AI strategies, and there're a number of startups and research institutions working on AI-related projects," he said.

Dr. Adel Alsharji, the COO of _Presight_, a UAE-based AI-powered big data analytics company, delivered a keynote address on the Societal Impact of Artificial Intelligence at the GITEX Africa AI Summit, one of the ten conference tracks at the inaugural GITEX Africa.

Dr. Alsharji said Africa is the second-fastest growing region globally in AI adoption: "Africa's AI journey is gaining momentum, and this progress highlights the continent's readiness to explore and harness the potential of AI for driving economic growth and addressing local challenges, ultimately benefiting the greater good of its people," said Dr. Alsharji, adding that demand for AI-related jobs will increase two-fold over the next three years.

"A study by McKinsey Global Institute predicts that AI could add $13T to the global economy by 2030, while the number of AI-related jobs in Africa alone is expected to grow by 200% by 2025."

Mr. Zaouini, whose AI in Africa is a non-profit organisation aimed at empowering African youth for an inclusive AI future, concluded that in Africa, AI

should be seen as a tool to leapfrog traditional stages of development while elevating African talent to the forefront of a new global workforce.

"The African societal impact of AI is immense, as it revolutionises the way we work and live," concluded Mr. Zaouini. "After the internet, the second revolution was probably the social dilemma, but AI is an even bigger revolution than all of them."

The AI-powered healthtech solution transforming African blood donations

AI and it's far-reaching multisectoral impact were also evident in the 10 halls and 45,000sqm of purpose-built exhibition space, with exhibitors showcasing how AI is driving innovation across industries, from education and agriculture, to transport, retail, energy and logistics.

BetaLife, an award-winning Nigerian startup encapsulates the adoption of AI in the healthcare sector. The cloud-based AI-powered platform connects hospitals and blood banks using advanced algorithms to ensure the efficient flow of blood to patients in need.

Mubarak Ayanniyi, the 21-year old founder and CEO, said the greatest advantage of Betalife is its ability to analyse copious data via an AI-powered algorithm that accurately predicts when, where, and in what amounts blood donations are required, thereby directing resources and allocating donations when needed, ultimately saving countless lives.

"BetaLife has revolutionised the way that blood donations are managed in Africa", said Ayanniyi. "Instead of relying on manual processes, hospitals and blood banks are now using BetaLife to predict when and where blood donations are needed most. This has led to more efficient distribution of blood products, reducing waste and ensuring that those who need it most receive the lifesaving treatment they require."

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