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Welcome to the Inaugural Issue of Business Connect Magazine!

With deep pride and real excitement, we welcome you to the very first edition of *Business Connect Magazine* - Lesotho's premier digital publication at the intersection of business, technology and African innovation.



This is more than a magazine launch. It's the beginning of a long-overdue platform - a space where Africa's boldest ideas, creators, and change-makers are seen, heard and celebrated.

We created *Business Connect* because Africa is ready. Ready to lead and ready to reimagine. Ready to take its place at the forefront of the digital economy. This magazine reflects that momentum, with a sharp focus on Lesotho, Botswana and South Africa.

We are proud to launch Lesotho's first-ever digital magazine, distributed through QR codes in newspapers and media platforms - a simple scan that connects readers to content designed to inform, transform and ignite.

This debut issue centres on two powerful themes shaping Africa's future: **Brand Africa** and **Digital Transformation**.

Brand Africa is about shifting the narrative - from one of deficit to one of potential. It champions African brands built by Africans, telling our stories, and leading on the global stage. And in today's digital era, the next chapter of that transformation is being written online - through design, code, content and innovation.

At the same time, digital transformation is reshaping every part of life and business and Africa isn't just catching up; we are contributing. From AI to e-commerce, this issue highlights the technologies and trends redefining how we live, work and create.

One story we are especially proud of is our cover feature: **Katiso Joachim Tsoho**, founder of Joachim Garments. From a small room in Maseru to building one of Lesotho's most respected fashion brands, Joachim's story reminds us that innovation can begin anywhere - with vision, resilience, and a single sewing machine.

As we launch, we recognise the real power of this magazine comes from you - our readers. Your experiences, feedback and voices will shape the evolution of *Business Connect*. We warmly invite you to engage with us and be part of the community we are building. To our team - writers, designers, technologists, and dreamers - thank you. Your energy and belief are stitched into every page.



Business Connect is not a campaign. It is a call to action.

A call to entrepreneurs, creators and organisations ready to build intentionally - with digital tools, inclusive thinking and global ambition. Founded by T-Connect, *Business Connect* is a growing

ecosystem - a meeting point for bold ideas, powerful partnerships, and solutions made for Africa, by Africa.

This is for the businesses scaling smarter. The youth turning creativity into enterprise. The leaders innovating with purpose.

We are not just building platforms. We are bridging divides. Powering MSMEs. Launching labs. And most importantly - we are building with people, not just for them.

Welcome to Business Connect Magazine. Let us build the future - together.

**Keiso Mohloboli &
Carla Pereira - Editors**
Business Connect Magazine



LESOTHO'S LOCAL BRANDS ASCEND



...as a new contender in Africa's top 100

As the landscape of consumer preferences evolves, Lesotho's homegrown brands are steadily forging their path to recognition in the highly competitive arena of African Branding. Despite the enduring presence of well-established international corporations within the country, local enterprises are steadily gaining ground, proving resilience and innovation. This surge is clearly illustrated by their remarkable placement in the prestigious Brand Africa's top 100 brands for 2025.

Amongst the most admired apparel brands in Lesotho, Joachim Garments stands tall as the frontrunner, swiftly becoming synonymous with quality and style. Following closely are Bonono Merchants, which has garnered a loyal

customer base and Basotholand Ink, known for its striking designs that celebrate the cultural heritage of Lesotho.

This upward trajectory not only underscores the growing competitiveness of Lesotho's brands in domestic and regional markets but also highlights a shift in consumer behaviour, with a newfound appreciation for local craftsmanship and innovation. As these brands continue to rise in prominence, they are poised to play a crucial role in reshaping the narrative of Lesotho's identity within the broader African market, inspiring a wave of entrepreneurial spirit across the nation.

In this transformative landscape, Thebe Ikalafeng, the visionary founder of Brand Africa, has been instrumental in spotlighting emerging brands like those in Lesotho. His commitment to celebrating African identity and fostering

brand development has set the stage for local enterprises to shine on the continent's biggest stage, underscoring the importance of nurturing homegrown talent amidst dominance of international giants. As Lesotho's brands make their mark in the top 100 African Brands for 2025, Ikalafeng's influence, and efforts continue to inspire a new era of African entrepreneurship and innovation.

In this in-depth conversation, Business Connect Magazine explores Ikalafeng's journey, the origins of Brand Africa, lessons learned over more than a decade, and his vision for the future of African brands in a rapidly evolving global landscape.

The Genesis of Brand Africa: A Defining Moment

The seeds of Brand Africa were sown in 2010, the year South Africa hosted the FIFA World Cup—the first ever on African soil. The eyes of the world were on Africa: its vibrancy, its potential, its passion. Yet amid the global celebration, Ikalafeng noticed something conspicuously absent: African representation among the event's corporate sponsors.

"There was only one African brand among the global sponsors," he recalls. "That moment highlighted just how underrepresented we were in shaping our own narrative on the world stage."

This observation was more than troubling—it was a call to action. For Ikalafeng, it was time for Africa to claim its space, not only politically or culturally, but also economically and reputationally. The result was the founding of Brand Africa: a platform created to inspire and celebrate African brands and to promote the continent's image, reputation, and global competitiveness.

The Brand Africa 100: Measuring Admiration, Mapping Aspiration

In 2011, Brand Africa launched its flagship initiative, Brand Africa 100: Africa's Best Brands—a groundbreaking study measuring the most admired brands across the continent. Its goal? To understand which brands resonate with African consumers and why. The initial results were sobering.

"Only 20% of the most admired brands were African. The rest were dominated by international names, mainly American and European," says Ikalafeng. "In luxury categories, African brands were virtually invisible."

Brands such as Nike, Samsung, and Coca-Cola held dominant positions, while Louis Vuitton and Mercedes-Benz commanded the luxury space. The findings reflected the continent's consumption habits and aspirations—ambitions more influenced by global trends than by home-grown innovation.

Rather than lament, Ikalafeng set out to rewrite the story. Brand Africa began championing local brands, celebrating African excellence, and fostering an environment in which indigenous brands could rise and thrive.

Understanding African Aspirations

Ikalafeng is clear that branding in Africa must not be viewed through a Western lens.

"In Africa, branding is cultural," he explains. "It is embedded in our music, art, fashion, and storytelling. A brand here is not merely a product—it is an experience, a connection."

This cultural wealth presents both a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge lies in global competition: African brands must compete not just on quality and price, but also on

perception. The opportunity lies in authenticity.

"Our stories, languages, and heritage are unique. When we package that authenticity correctly, we do not just create brands—we create movements."

Ikalafeng points to brands like Dangote, MTN, and M-Pesa as African success stories that fuse relevance, innovation, and purpose—brands that address real challenges and still stand tall on the global stage.

The Role of Infrastructure and Investment

Building global African brands, however, is no easy task. Many African entrepreneurs struggle with limited access to capital, poor infrastructure, and constrained market reach. These challenges, Ikalafeng argues, are systemic—but not insurmountable.

"We need an ecosystem that supports African entrepreneurship—from manufacturing to marketing, planning to legal frameworks. Great ideas alone are not enough; we need the structures to scale them," he asserts.

Brand Africa has thus increasingly focused on cross-sector collaboration—bringing together governments, the private sector, civil society, and academia to create a fertile ground for brand-led growth.

A Decade of Impact and Shifting Mindsets

Over more than a decade, Brand Africa's influence has expanded significantly. Today, the annual Brand Africa 100 rankings serve as a benchmark for pan-African consumer sentiment. More importantly, they function as a tool for transformation—charting

progress, inspiring pride, and reinforcing the importance of supporting African-made excellence.

"I've seen a shift in consciousness," reflects Ikalafeng. "Africans are beginning to take pride in what is theirs. There is a new generation that wants to buy African, wear African, and celebrate African innovation."

This pride is visible in the rise of local fashion labels, tech start-ups, and cultural exports like Afrobeats and Nollywood. Outsiders no longer solely tell Africa's story—it is told by Africans themselves, and through brands that reflect and embody that story.

Pioneering Africa's Digital Future Through Connectivity and Innovation

As Founder and CEO of Brand Africa, Thebe Ikalafeng stands at the forefront of a transformation that is reshaping the African continent. He envisions a future empowered by technology, where digital inclusion forms the bedrock of economic and social progress. In an era defined by rapid technological change, Ikalafeng underscores the critical role of internet and mobile access as catalysts for innovation and development.

The State of Internet Access in Africa

Currently, internet access in Africa hovers around 40%. While this marks substantial progress, it also highlights the significant gap that remains compared with global averages. Ikalafeng stresses that expanding access is about far more than connectivity—it is about full participation in the global digital economy.

"To truly revolutionise the African landscape, we must increase internet access and ensure its benefits reach every corner of the continent," he says.

Mobile access, however, is far more widespread, with nearly 80% of the population using mobile devices. This fact signifies a key opportunity. While many lack reliable internet through traditional means, smartphones and mobile technology offer a viable alternative.

"If I can access the internet via my phone, I can engage in the digital economy. That's a game-changer," Ikalafeng explains.

Mobile technology is laying the foundation for unprecedented growth across Africa. As more people come online, the demand for innovative services rises.

"We live in a time when technological change occurs not in years, but in seconds,"

he says. "The pace is exponential—and it's not just businesses driving it. Consumers themselves are reimagining how they engage with technology and services."

Predicting the Future: A Five-Minute Forecast

Looking ahead, Ikalafeng warns against complacency. "We're not talking about five or ten-year forecasts; we're talking about a five-minute window. That's how fast things are moving," he stresses.

He highlights the vital role of youth in this transformation. "Those under 30 are driving innovation. They are not just consuming—they are creating."

Technologies like artificial intelligence, blockchain, and mobile payments are rapidly shaping Africa's future, enabling new business models and entrepreneurial ventures.

At the heart of Ikalafeng's vision is individual empowerment through technology. As access improves, people gain more control over their economic futures. "Technology will empower me, personally, to run my own world and help shape the future of my country," he says. He envisions a future in which technology overcomes traditional barriers and opens new opportunities for all Africans, transforming governance, economic engagement, and social progress.

A Call to Action

Thebe Ikalafeng's insights reflect a deep understanding of Africa's challenges—and its immense potential.

With improved internet access, near-universal mobile connectivity, and a young, tech-savvy population, the continent stands poised for a digital revolution.

As the Founder and CEO of Brand Africa, he calls on governments, the private sector, and communities to work together to close the digital divide.

"The future is in our hands. We must act decisively to ensure that technology becomes a tool for empowerment and inclusive growth across the continent," he concludes.

HOW T-CONNECT IS POWERING LESOTHO'S LEAP INTO THE FUTURE

Advocate Phelane Phomane's bold vision for digital transformation is redefining how Lesotho lives, works, and connects - positioning technology as a cornerstone of national progress.

In a world reshaped by the relentless pace of technological advancement, digital transformation has become a necessity rather than a luxury - critical to the advancement of whole societies. For Adv. Phelane Phomane, Group Chief Executive Officer of T-Connect Group, this transformation transcends the adoption of digital tools. It represents a profound cultural and structural shift - rooted in innovation, collaboration and purpose-driven progress. At the heart of T-Connect's mission lies a commitment to broad-based, meaningful development. "Digital transformation is about how we live, how we work, and how we engage with the world around us," says Adv. Phomane. At T-Connect, this belief is more than rhetoric; it is a mindset embedded in every aspect of the organisation's operations, vision, and relationship with society. Transformation, however, rarely arrives without resistance. "One of our greatest challenges has been addressing the fear and hesitation that often surrounds digital change," he admits, "...long before the affordability challenges around it." For T-Connect, building digital confidence through education and skills development



has been fundamental - ensuring technology isn't simply introduced, but fully adopted and applied for real, lasting benefit.

The company's inception was driven by a deep-seated frustration. "It is disheartening to watch Lesotho fall behind while the world moves forward," he shares candidly. This urgency spurred the creation of T-Connect - a firm built with the conviction that Lesotho must not be excluded from the global digital economy. In countries such as Nigeria and Tanzania, internet access has changed macro-economic performance and unemployment statistics for the better. "If it worked there, imagine what impact reliable connectivity could have for Lesotho..."

Armed with game-changing technologies like satellite internet, T-Connect is forging the digital infrastructure that will enable Lesotho to access the same opportunities as the world's leading innovation hubs. "We are moving from terrestrial bricks, mortar and towers to space and cyber infrastructure," explains Adv. Phomane - signalling a critical paradigm shift in how development must now be conceived.

Mobile technology plays a vital role in this landscape. "Over 90% of Lesotho's working population owns a mobile phone. That's not just a statistic - it is a lifeline," he notes. Connectivity today is comparable to electricity or water: essential to survival. From communication and commerce to education and economic mobility, digital access now underpins every facet of modern life. But for Adv. Phomane, this mission goes beyond connectivity. "We are using technology to help solve for Africa's 'X'," he explains - a symbol for the deep-rooted challenges of unemployment, limited access to healthcare, and persistent inequality. At its core, this approach is about using innovation to drive inclusion, productivity, and problem-solving at scale.

Consider, for example, a wool and mohair farmer in remote Mokhotlong, now able to sell to wider markets via online platforms thanks to satellite internet like Starlink Business. "It is not just about being connected - it is about being economically active," he emphasises. For T-Connect, access must translate to impact.

Internally, T-Connect has undergone its own radical transformation. The company now operates entirely on digital platforms - from accounting to communication, enabled by a bouquet of tools like Microsoft 365, Slack, Deel, Azure and other cloud-based systems. "We are 95% paperless organisation...the remaining 5% is largely because regulation and the environment has not quite caught up yet...which it will, soon," he notes.

This evolution has done more than streamline operations - it has cultivated a culture of speed, innovation, and adaptability. "Most of the world simply cannot function without connectivity," says Adv. Phomane, underlining how indispensable digital access has become in today's working world.

Looking forward, artificial intelligence and quantum computing is a cornerstone of T-Connect's next chapter. "We can't ignore the reality - AI is the future of both life and work," he explains. "Our role is to make it serve us - to harness its power in ways that amplify human potential." With AI, T-Connect aims to sharpen its decision-making, scale its reach, and remain ahead of the curve.

But success, for Adv. Phomane, is not measured by headlines or accolades. "We don't aspire to be the first - we aim to be meaningful," he says. "Our focus is not on promoting our brand, but on serving people." T-Connect sees itself as an enabler and a partner - facilitating change through collaboration and shared vision.

"We may be leaders by circumstance," he reflects, "but leadership means delivering real value - changing lives, reshaping thinking, and creating sustainable paths to prosperity." This conviction is mirrored in his personal ethos: "If I did something in five hours yesterday, I want to do it better, and smarter, in three hours tomorrow."

A passionate believer in collective progress, Adv. Phomane urges communities, companies, and institutions to unite around shared goals. "Progress accelerates when people work together," he notes - a powerful call for integration in an often fragmented world. To emerging leaders, his advice is direct and uplifting: do not fear failure. "It has happened to those before you. Don't dwell on it - and don't let it define you," he says. For him, failure is not an end point but the foundation of reinvention and growth.

Ultimately, Adv. Phomane is not just building digital infrastructure, he is reshaping perceptions. "For me, the greatest success is when I see a shift in mind-set," he reflects. Through T-Connect, he is creating a future in which digital access is no longer a privilege, but a right - where technology is not the end, but the means to a more connected, capable and equitable society.

As Lesotho stands at the threshold of digital reinvention, leaders like Adv. Phelane Phomane are illuminating the way forward - demonstrating that with vision, resilience and shared purpose, even the most ambitious transformations are not only possible, but inevitable.

LEADING LESOTHO'S DIGITAL BANKING REVOLUTION

*... the green bank's
visionary journey*

In the ever-evolving landscape of modern finance, digital transformation has shifted from being a competitive advantage to an absolute necessity. Financial institutions across Africa are being called upon to embrace innovation, not only to stay relevant but also to drive growth, inclusion, and enhanced customer satisfaction. One of the leaders championing this transformative agenda in Lesotho is Lucas Ntakha, the Head of Business Transformation at Nedbank Lesotho. In this exclusive interview with Business Connect Magazine, Ntakha shares insights into the bank's digital transformation journey, its strategic imperatives, and how it is redefining the banking experience for Basotho.

Meet Lucas Ntakha: At the Helm of Transformation

Lucas Ntakha holds a pivotal role at Nedbank Lesotho, leading efforts that go beyond traditional banking operations. As Head of Business Transformation, his mandate centres on driving strategic projects that integrate digital technologies to deliver innovative, efficient, and customer-centric solutions. "Transformation is not just about technology," says Ntakha. "It's about reshaping the way we think, the way we operate, and how we engage with our customers. My



role is to champion initiatives that place our clients at the heart of everything we do, while ensuring that technology is used effectively to enhance our value proposition." Ntakha brings a clear vision: to create a modern banking environment that leverages digital innovation to provide seamless, secure, and personalized financial services across Lesotho.

Nedbank's digital transformation Strategy: Inspired by a Pan-African vision

Nedbank Lesotho is part of the broader Nedbank Group, one of Africa's most respected and technologically progressive financial institutions. As a subsidiary, Nedbank Lesotho benefits significantly from the group's strategic direction and digital capabilities. "At the core of our strategy is the concept of 'One Nedbank'," Ntakha explains. "This means harmonizing our systems and digital platforms across all our operating countries, South Africa, eSwatini, and Lesotho. Our

clients should experience the same level of service excellence and access to cutting-edge banking tools, no matter where they interact with us.”

The emphasis on uniformity is not just a branding exercise, it is a functional necessity. By leveraging shared platforms for data analytics, digital onboarding, mobile banking, and customer insights, Nedbank Lesotho is able to deliver a consistent and elevated user experience. The adoption of predictive analytics, for example, enables the bank to better understand customer behaviours, anticipate needs, and offer tailored solutions that truly resonate with clients.

“Our clients are becoming more tech-savvy and expect services that are intuitive, fast, and secure,” says Ntakha. “By investing in advanced analytics and intelligent platforms, we are empowering ourselves to serve better, faster, and smarter.”

Building a Digitally-Driven Culture: Doing More with Less

The phrase “doing more with less” has become a guiding principle for the bank’s transformation agenda. It reflects a focus on operational efficiency, delivering higher value at lower costs, while maintaining a strong commitment to service excellence.

“Digital transformation is not only about upgrading systems. It is about rethinking the entire value chain of the bank,” says Ntakha. “This means identifying bottlenecks, automating routine processes, eliminating redundancies, and redesigning the customer journey to be as seamless as possible.”

Nedbank Lesotho has made significant strides in automating its core banking functions and expanding its digital offerings. The adoption of mobile banking apps, USSD solutions for feature phones, and robust online banking platforms ensures that customers can transact anytime, anywhere, without visiting a branch.

But as Ntakha notes, these advancements are not just for the convenience of the customer, they also serve a broader strategic purpose.

“Efficiency allows us to redirect resources toward innovation and growth,” he explains. “The more we can automate low-value tasks, the more time and talent we can invest in building high-impact services and exploring new market opportunities.”

Embracing Technology While Managing Risks

Innovation inevitably comes with risks, particularly in the financial services sector where data security, regulatory compliance, and operational resilience are paramount.

“Technology offers immense opportunities, but it also demands that we become more vigilant,” says Ntakha. “Our transformation agenda is built on a foundation of

trust. We are deeply committed to safeguarding our customers’ information and ensuring that every digital interaction is secure.”

To this end, Nedbank Lesotho is investing in robust cybersecurity frameworks, staff training, and compliance protocols. The bank also works closely with the Central Bank of Lesotho and regional regulators to ensure that its digital initiatives are aligned with evolving industry standards and consumer protection laws.

Customer education plays a key role in the bank’s digital transformation journey. “We can roll out the most advanced systems, but unless our clients are confident and informed about using them, the full value will not be realised,” Ntakha emphasises. Nedbank Lesotho is therefore investing in outreach campaigns, digital literacy programs, and personalised onboarding experiences to ensure that all customers, regardless of age or background, feel comfortable navigating the digital banking ecosystem.

A Future-Focused Vision: Innovation with Purpose

As Ntakha reflects on Nedbank Lesotho’s transformation journey, he is quick to note that this is only the beginning.

The financial landscape continues to evolve, with emerging technologies such as AI, blockchain, and open banking reshaping the future of finance in Africa.

“We are not just digitizing for today, we are building for tomorrow,” he states. “Our goal is to be a future ready institution, agile enough to respond to emerging trends and bold enough to lead innovation in Lesotho’s banking sector.”

In the years to come, Nedbank Lesotho plans to expand its digital footprint, explore fintech partnerships, and leverage artificial intelligence to provide even more intelligent, customized, and proactive banking experiences.

Lucas Ntakha’s leadership reflects a powerful combination of technological insight, strategic foresight, and a deep commitment to customer empowerment. Under his guidance, Nedbank Lesotho is not only navigating the challenges of digital transformation, it is redefining what it means to be a modern financial institution in Lesotho.

“Thank you for providing me with this platform to share our journey,” Ntakha concludes. “At Nedbank Lesotho, we believe that digital transformation is not just about technology, it is about people. We are building a connected future where financial services are more inclusive, responsive, and aligned with the evolving needs of our community.”

As Lesotho continues to advance in the digital age, Nedbank Lesotho stands ready to lead with innovation, integrity, and purpose.

CREATIVITY, TECHNOLOGY, AND THE FUTURE: WHY AFRICA'S TIME IS NOW

BY THE EDITORIAL TEAM FEATURING MATEBELLO, CHIEF GROWTH OFFICER – **TCONNECT**

In every era, there are individuals who move ahead of their time. People who do not follow trends—they sense them. They live on instinct, faith, clarity, and a hunger for meaning. Matebello, Chief Growth Officer of **TConnect**, is one such person.

She is not just a strategist. Not just a tech leader. Not just a brand builder. She is a force—a voice that speaks both fire and grace. A woman who has lived boldly, slowed down purposefully, and returned more potent than ever. “I have always believed that creativity is not a job title—it is a way of seeing the world,” Matebello affirms. Raised in a multicultural commune, her mind was shaped by difference, openness, and possibility. This made her lens uncommon vaulting beyond borders, intuitive, and always attuned to deeper meaning.

Her early career at **Tangerine**, a creative agency that pivoted into tech and strategy, was not about chasing popularity—it was about building things that made sense: brands with soul, ideas that lasted, impact that echoed. “I have always loved brands that are truthful and intentional. The ones that respect people’s intelligence and emotions. That is the work I live for.”

Over time, her creative compass expanded—from entrepreneurship to commercial operations, and to what she calls her “**divine calling**”: digital transformation with purpose.

Today, as Chief Growth Officer at TConnect, Matebello is leading not just strategy but a movement—a contemporary style of business leadership. One that does not separate technology from humanity, but fuses both to address real problems and build resilient African brands. For the past few years, Matebello chose to slow down—not out of necessity but by design. To raise her children and imbue them with the same fire she once poured into teams and clients. “I believe in building people. That starts at home. I did not want to build the world and lose my world. That intentional time with my children—it changed me. It refined me. It grounded me.”

Her return to full-time leadership is not a comeback—it is a **relaunch**. A deeper, bolder, wiser iteration of the woman who once helped shape iconic African brands—now recharged to shape a continent’s future through Business Connect, TConnect’s open ecosystem for digital



transformation. “It is not easy working with me,” she laughs. “But results are guaranteed.”

With **Business Connect**, Matebello invites creators, corporates, innovators, and everyday entrepreneurs to join something bigger than technology. It is a cultural reset for African business — one seeking clarity, relevance, and courage. “Africa is not behind. Africa is becoming. And now, our tools are finally catching up with our brilliance.”

In her role, Matebello has seen how technology can collapse distance, unrestricted access and level playing fields. Yet she cautions: tech without intention is mere noise. “We are not just selling internet. We are selling freedom. Dignity. Growth. Choice. And we are doing it in a way that puts Africa in the driver’s seat.”



Under her leadership, TConnect has made explosive inroads across Lesotho, Botswana and South Africa. Not merely with products, but with meaning, presence, and strategy. Milestones that once took years have been achieved in months—with much more ahead. It is no surprise that Matebello's admiration for fellow builders is heartfelt. She champions brilliance. "I absolutely love what Joachim is doing. The guts. The creativity. The conviction. It reminds me of that fire I had when I started. And it confirms something: Africa's renaissance is already underway."

Joachim's story follows hers in this issue—not by coincidence, but by divine symmetry. Two forces—unswerving in their love for craft, brand, and culture—using creativity and innovation to change how the world sees Africa. "This is no longer about waiting for a seat at the table. We are building our own. And it is round. And it is ours."

Matebello's voice is clear. Her message is louder than ever. Her journey—both personal and professional—imbues her not just with experience, but with substance. She speaks as one refined by time, faith, motherhood, and the relentless pursuit of meaning. "The future is not coming. It is here. And it belongs to those who rebrand themselves. Who are not afraid of learning. Who combine wisdom with innovation. Who move with love, not fear."

This is not just about her. It's about a rising generation—makers, mothers, founders, tech leaders, rural dreamers, brand builders with grit. "Africa, arise. The world is watching. And we are ready."

Next in this issue: A unique feature on Joachim—the creative powerhouse whose bold, unapologetic vision is reshaping the African brandscape.



LEADING THE DIGITAL EVOLUTION IN ACCOUNTING AND ADVISORY HLB RL LESOTHO EMPOWERING BUSINESSES THROUGH SMARTER SYSTEMS AND STRATEGIC SUPPORT



In the heart of Maseru, a quiet shift is taking place in Lesotho's professional services sector. HLB RL Lesotho, once known primarily for traditional accounting and tax services, is emerging as a frontrunner in digital transformation- bringing a fresh, technology-driven approach to advisory work.

Founded in 2016 as RL Business Advisers, the firm rebranded to HLB RL Lesotho in June 2021 after joining the global HLB International network. Since joining in 2020, Co-founder and Senior Partner Mme Masechaba Mahlapha has played a central role in the firm's evolution. With a background in management accounting and an MBA, she leads the accounting and tax division and oversees a growing team of professionals.

"In today's fast-paced business environment, clients need more than compliance," says Mme Mahlapha. "They want clear insights, quick answers and dependable systems. For us, digital transformation is not a buzzword - it is the foundation for everything we do."

This shift touches every part of the firm's work: Finance, Strategy, and Risk. Tasks that were once manual and time-consuming are now streamlined through cloud-based tools, live dashboards and automated processes - covering everything from financial planning to internal

audits and valuations.

Mme Mahlapha believes the impact is clear. "By automating routine processes, we help our clients focus on what really matters - growing their businesses. It also gives our team the flexibility to work remotely and serve clients more efficiently."

HLB RL Lesotho now uses a full suite of modern digital tools:

Xero for real-time accounting

Power BI for interactive dashboards

Make.com to automate tasks across platforms

ChatGPT and AI tools to support internal knowledge-sharing

All supported by **Microsoft 365** for collaboration and secure documentation

But the transformation was not about jumping on trends. The team took a measured approach - mapping out internal processes, identifying inefficiencies, and introducing tools in stages to ensure they aligned with the firm's strategy.

Recognising that tools are only as good as the people using them, HLB RL Lesotho invested in training. "We built step-by-step guides and clear procedures," says Mme Mahlapha. "Everyone knows what tools to use, how to use

them, and why it matters.”

The results have been impressive. Monthly reports that once took days are now completed in hours. Client communication and document approval processes are now digital, with clear audit trails and fewer delays. The firm is seeing greater output, improved quality and more consistent service – delivered with leaner resources. One client put it simply: “We make decisions faster because we no longer wait for month-end reports.” To maintain regulatory compliance, the firm configures its systems around Lesotho’s tax deadlines and requirements – ensuring on-time submissions and secure digital records.

Of course, not every step has been easy. “Some staff were initially hesitant, and some clients worried about the disruption,” says Mme Mahlapha. The firm addressed this by running pilot programmes, demonstrating clear benefits and focusing on tangible outcomes: fewer errors, time saved, better visibility.

Internally, they have embedded digital fluency into everyday work. Staff are evaluated on how they use technology, early adopters mentor others, and digital champions are recognised for their leadership. Today, client relationships look different: virtual meetings, real-time dashboards, automated reminders and shared digital workspaces are the new norm. This has led to stronger engagement and higher client satisfaction. Mme Mahlapha notes that this transformation is not happening in isolation. Cloud-based accounting is becoming more common in Lesotho, interest in regulatory technology is growing, and businesses

increasingly want integrated advisory – not just number-crunching.

Looking ahead, she expects AI and machine learning to play an even bigger role in areas like forecasting and decision support. “We are moving towards a future where accounting firms become full data advisory partners.” To stay ahead, the team regularly joins webinars, subscribes to industry updates, and runs in-house knowledge-sharing sessions. Continuous learning is embedded in the firm’s culture.

Beyond its own clients, the firm is also making a wider impact. Through free public workshops and digital maturity assessments for small businesses and non-profits, HLB RL Lesotho is helping boost digital literacy and business growth across the country.

Her advice to other firms? “Start small, set clear goals, involve your team, and don’t wait for perfection. What matters most is momentum. Technology is only a tool – it is how you use it that makes the difference.”

As Lesotho develops its own digital strategy – including expanded internet access and e-government services – Mme Mahlapha believes private firms must lead by example. “Being digitally ready is no longer optional. For professional service providers, it is the only way to stay relevant and deliver real value.”

HLB RL Lesotho’s journey shows what’s possible when digital change is approached with purpose and persistence. From traditional accountants to strategic, tech-enabled advisors, the firm offers a strong blueprint for businesses across Lesotho ready to step confidently into the digital age.



FROM THE MOUNTAINS TO MODERNITY



...the journey of Maliba Lodge and its digital transformation

Nestled in the breath-taking landscapes of Lesotho's Maloti Mountains, Maliba Lodge stands as a testament to the beauty of nature and the spirit of innovation. Founded with a vision that melds luxury with sustainability, the lodge is not just a destination; it's an experience rooted in the rich culture and heritage of the Basotho people. At the helm of this inspiring story is Ntate Stephen Phakisi, the founder, whose commitment to hospitality and community upliftment has shaped the lodge's identity. Today, as the world embraces digital transformation, Phakisi's son, Letlotlo, is at the forefront of incorporating modern technology into the lodge's operations, ensuring that Maliba Lodge not only retains its charm but also thrives in the digital age.

The Genesis of Maliba Lodge

The story of Maliba Lodge began in 2006 when an innovative idea took shape among three partners: Mr. Nick King and Mr. Chris McEvoy from Australia, alongside Stephen Phakisi from Lesotho. Their shared vision was to empower local Basotho through eco-tourism, providing opportunities for them to live and work within their communities while contributing to educational, economic, and social improvements. After extensive research and careful deliberation, Stephen Phakisi identified an ideal site within the Tšehlanyane National Park in the northern part of Lesotho's Maluti Mountains. This location, which once

served as the halfway camp for the massive Katse Dam water/hydro project, boasted good access to essential resources such as water and power.

With the commitment to sustainability and local empowerment, Maliba Lodge, named after the Sesotho word for "lots of water," was designed by local architects. The construction process involved over 100 local villagers, fostering a strong sense of ownership and pride within the community. Maliba Lodge officially opened its doors and was inaugurated by the Prime Minister of Lesotho in October 2009, marking a significant milestone not only for the lodge but also for the region.

Despite facing challenges, including a devastating fire that destroyed the main lodge in 2015, Maliba Lodge was rebuilt even larger and stronger than before. This resilience exemplified the determination of Stephen and his team to create a benchmark for tourism in Lesotho, further establishing the lodge as the largest employer in the local area.

The founder's vision for Digital Transformation

As the hospitality industry evolved, so too did Stephen's understanding of digital transformation. He recognised early on that the future of tourism was intertwined with technology. "Connectivity is not merely about bringing guests into our beautiful lodge; it is about enhancing the entire experience," he explains. "Digital tools allow us to reach a broader audience, provide better services, and ultimately create a more inclusive experience for everyone."

Stephen's vision extends beyond the simple adoption of technology. For him, digital transformation is about ensuring that every person, from the lodge staff to local communities, can benefit from technological advancements. This includes initiatives like improving internet access within the lodge, offering online booking systems, and incorporating digital marketing strategies to promote Maliba Lodge to a global audience. He also sees digital transformation as a means to empower the Basotho population. "I dream of a day when local artisans can sell their crafts online, where our community can engage with tourists digitally, showcasing our culture and heritage," he states passionately. By integrating digital channels, the lodge aims to support local businesses and artisans, weaving technology into the very fabric of the community's economic ecosystem.

Passing the torch: Letlotlo Phakisi leads the way

As Stephen Phakisi transitioned into retirement, he handed over the management of Maliba Lodge to his son, Letlotlo. A bright and ambitious young man, Letlotlo has embraced the challenges of running the lodge in an increasingly digital world. With a strong passion for technology and a deep understanding of the importance of heritage, he aims to honour his father's legacy while pushing boundaries in the digital space.

Letlotlo describes his approach to managing Maliba Lodge by saying, "We have the responsibility to maintain the essence of our culture while also moving with the times. Digital transformation is not just about the tools; it is about how those tools can enrich our traditions." He understands that the lodge not only represents luxury hospitality but also serves as a bridge between the community and the outside world.

Under Letlotlo's leadership, Maliba Lodge has begun to implement various digital solutions aimed at improving operational efficiency and guest engagement. He has developed a user-friendly website that not only showcases the lodge's offerings but also provides essential information about local experiences, cultural tours, and outdoor activities. By integrating a seamless online booking system, Letlotlo has made it easier for travellers to plan their visits, thus widening the lodge's customer base.

Letlotlo recognises the potential of social media as a platform to connect with younger audiences. He actively engages with followers by sharing captivating stories, stunning photographs, and videos that capture the lodge's unique offerings. This strategy has significantly increased the lodge's visibility among local and international tourists. "We want Maliba Lodge to be more than just a place to stay; we want it to be part of a larger narrative about Lesotho and its people," Letlotlo emphasises.

Harnessing Technology for Sustainability

Letlotlo's digital initiatives extend beyond marketing. He is also implementing technologies to enhance the lodge's sustainability efforts. By using smart management systems, he aims to monitor energy consumption and reduce waste, ensuring that Maliba Lodge continues to care for the environment as it grows. This is particularly vital in a region that prides itself on its pristine landscapes. Additionally, Letlotlo is exploring partnerships with tech companies to integrate eco-friendly solutions into lodge operations. For example, efforts are underway to introduce solar energy systems and advanced water management technologies that can optimise resources while minimizing environmental impact.

A Legacy of Innovation and Heritage

The journey of Maliba Lodge is a compelling narrative rooted in the vision of its founder, Stephen Phakisi, and the passion of its new generation leader, Letlotlo. As Stephen's dreams of modern hospitality intertwine with Letlotlo's embrace of digital transformation, Maliba Lodge stands on the cusp of a new era, a place where luxury meets culture and tradition meets technology. Ultimately, Maliba Lodge is more than just a destination. It is a symbol of hope and progress for the Basotho people. As they navigate the ever-changing landscape of the digital world, the lodge remains dedicated to its core mission: to provide an extraordinary experience that uplifts, empowers, and showcases the best of Lesotho. As the mountains continue to guard the lodge's beauty, Maliba Lodge stands ready to greet the future, grounded in heritage and propelled by digital innovation.



AFRICA'S DIGITAL DAWN: TURNING INFRASTRUCTURE INTO OPPORTUNITY THROUGH PEOPLE AND PROCESS

Writes **Ohakaza Mohale**

Across Africa, the promise of digital transformation is unmistakable. New towers stretch internet signals into remote villages, governments pour resources into fibreoptic networks, and global tech giants lay subsea cables and open innovation hubs. Yet, even amid this technological burst, a disquieting reality persists: youth unemployment at record highs, local economies stagnating, and a wave of talented young Africans locked out of opportunity.

This is the paradox of our time: billions funnelled into infrastructure, yet millions of capable young individuals stay sidelined. Because cables do not create jobs. Laptops do not unlock potential. And apps alone do not build industries.

At Digify Africa, we champion a different vision. True digital transformation is not about devices—it is about people. And for people to thrive, they need systems. For the past decade, we have done more than train—they have built pathways. Our approach: move youth progressively from access, through skills, to meaningful work.

Access.

Through WhatsApp-based Learning Digibots, we deliver foundational digital training directly to mobile phones. To date, half a million South Africans have received interactive, accessible education—right from their pockets.

Skills.

Our flagship Digify Pro programme offers deep-dive training in digital marketing aligned with industry demand. Thousands have transformed from hopeful novices into freelancers, agency specialists, and entrepreneurs.

Work.

We end with placement pathways—connecting graduates to real jobs, whether moderating social media for top brands or managing full-scale digital campaigns. It's about sustainable careers, not temporary gigs.

This cascade works. Across South Africa, Kenya, and Nigeria, we have affected close to a million young people—shifting mindsets, boosting confidence, and delivering tangible outcomes.





Like **Bokang Sibolla**, a Digify Pro alumnus who founded Prospr— a digital strategy agency. And **Heather Tino Mavunga**, now a strategist and mentor, building brands while paying it forward. These are not merely job placements—they are career creators. Our alumni uplift communities, proving the ripple effect of investment in real skills.

But this transcends individual triumph. It is about national resilience. Without systems to support youth, we risk an exodus—brain drain drains our economies of futurebuilders. Skills are the new infrastructure. As Judith Owigar reminds us: “Empowering African youth with tech skills is how we build the Africa we want to live in.” Picture this: a content creator in Maseru helping a Berlinbased company go viral; a Soweto strategist managing campaigns for global brands; a digital marketer in Gaborone analysing insights for clients worldwide. This is not fiction—it is already unfolding.

Africa has the talent. What we lack is systems to scale it. India leveraged BPO—Africa’s moment is more expansive: mobilefirst, creativitydriven, innovationcentred. With intentional systems, we can lead the world in exporting digital services.

Achieving this requires more than good intentions—it calls for alignment:

Governments must calibrate skills policies to reflect real job market demand.

Businesses need to invest in training and integrate youth talent into supply chains.

Funders must support longterm systemic solutions over shortlived pilots.

This is not mere CSR. It is strategic economic investment. When digitalskills systems thrive, everyone helps young people, enterprises, communities, nations. Africa does not lack talent—it lacks scale. The clear positive aspect? We already know how to build it. And we are ready to begin.

About the Author

Qhakaza Mohare is a purposedriven strategist at the intersection of youth empowerment, digital innovation and education. With over a decade of experience delivering highimpact programmes at Digify Africa, she now leads the organisation’s expansion to scale systems that unlock youth potential across the continent. Keen to collaborate? Let’s explore realworld impact together.

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PUSHING THE NEEDLE TO TELL BASOTHO CULTURE AND HERITAGE

Unveiling the Fabric of Tradition Katiso Joachim Tsoho and Joachim Garments

In the vibrant tapestry of the fashion world, the threads of history, culture, and personal journey blend to create unique narratives. One such narrative is woven by **Katiso Joachim Tsoho**, a self-taught fashion designer whose local brand, Joachim Garments, is rapidly transforming the landscape of Lesotho's fashion industry. Rooted deeply in the traditions and stories of the Basotho people, Katiso's designs are not just garments; they are wearable expressions of a rich cultural heritage that yearns for recognition on both local and international stages. Born and bred in the rural town of Qacha's Nek, Katiso Tsoho's story begins in a household led by his grandmother, while his mother sought work in South Africa. This upbringing in a landscape of rugged beauty and rich history would inform his creative journey. From a young age, Katiso was no stranger to the struggles of life; growing up as a herdboys, he earned a modest one hundred and fifty Maloti (M150.00) a month. This income, although small, sparked an early passion for fashion in Katiso—the desire to own the best clothing available became a driving force in his life.

Reflecting on his childhood, Katiso recalls, "I always wanted to stand out, to express myself through what I wore. Even with little money, I tried to afford pieces that reflected my style and aspirations." That spark of individuality ignited a flame that would lead him down the path of fashion design.

Katiso's journey into fashion was not a straight line but rather a series of creative explorations. His passion for making clothes began with the humble tool of a pencil, a means to dream and draw the designs that danced in his mind. During his primary school years, Katiso spent hours sketching clothing ideas inspired by the vibrant colours of traditional Basotho attire and the textures of their woven blankets.

In time, his curious nature and artistic talent led him to explore digital design tools, bringing his visions into the realm of reality. "I always have visions about my designs, especially when I am in a quiet place. I enjoy seating by the river alone and enjoy the quietness," he explains. "I felt the need to digitise my ideas; it allowed me to push the needle and breathe life into my creations." This transformation marked the beginning of Katiso's commitment to mastering his craft, culminating in the establishment of Joachim Garments.



Joachim Garments was born from Katiso's desire to contribute something unique to the fashion industry, particularly within the context of Lesotho. He identified a gap in the market, an absence of brands that celebrated Basotho culture while simultaneously catering to contemporary tastes. With his knowledge as a Health Information Management graduate from Botho University, Katiso approached his fashion venture not just as an art form but as a business opportunity ripe with potential.

"My curiosity in art led me here," Katiso states. "I felt there was a missing touch in the existing fashion industry. I wanted to create ideas and bring them to life, infusing them with the essence of Basotho culture and heritage." This ethos became the cornerstone of Joachim Garments, where traditional aesthetic elements are seamlessly blended with modern design principles. At the heart of Katiso's work is a beautiful narrative of Basotho culture. Each piece he creates tells a story, whether it is the vibrant patterns that echo the

historical significance of Basotho blankets or the silhouettes that reflect the grace and resilience of Basotho women. Katiso sees fashion as a medium to communicate his heritage, saying, "Through my clothing, I tell the stories of my people, celebrating our past while looking toward the future."

This cultural integration is not only significant for aesthetics; it represents a larger movement towards the preservation of Basotho identity in an ever-globalising world. By infusing traditional motifs and stories into contemporary fashion, Katiso aims to create a sense of pride among Basotho people and encourage a broader appreciation for their rich cultural heritage.

In today's digital landscape, establishing a brand requires not only creativity but also strategic marketing. Katiso recognised the power of social media to reach a wider audience and create a strong brand presence. Platforms like Facebook have played a pivotal role in elevating Joachim Garments beyond local reach, showcasing his collections to potential customers eager for unique, culturally rich fashion.

"The visibility that digital platforms provide has been transformative," Katiso states. "I can connect with people not only in Lesotho but across the globe, sharing my designs and the stories behind them." This approach has not only garnered attention from fashion enthusiasts but has also landed Joachim Garments in the spotlight, achieving recognition as one of the top 100 brands in Africa for 2025.

The influence of social media extends beyond mere marketing; it fosters community engagement, allowing customers to connect with the brand on a personal level. Katiso regularly shares behind-the-scenes content, design processes, and cultural insights, which enriches the consumer experience and builds brand loyalty.

Despite the increased visibility and recognition, Katiso's journey has not been without challenges. Navigating the local fashion industry in Lesotho often presents obstacles, from limited access to resources and materials to the constant battle against counterfeit products. As a local designer, Katiso is committed to maintaining the integrity of his brand while promoting the value of local production.

"Our biggest challenge is the perception of fashion and the belief that quality should only come from outside. I want to change that narrative and show that local craftsmanship can stand shoulder to shoulder with global brands," Katiso affirms. To address these issues, he focuses on sourcing materials locally and ensuring





that his production processes support the community economically.

Educating consumers about the importance of supporting local brands is paramount. Katiso engages his audience by sharing the stories behind his materials and the artisans involved in the production process, fostering a deeper appreciation for the value of local craftsmanship.

Looking ahead, Katiso Tsoho envisions a bright future for Joachim Garments, one that not only elevates his brand but also champions the rich cultural legacy of the Basotho people. He aims to expand his collections further, incorporating unique elements from other cultures within Southern Africa while staying true to his brand's roots. Katiso is also passionate about empowering budding designers in Lesotho. He dreams of establishing a platform where aspiring fashion artists can find mentorship and resources to develop their skills. "I believe in lifting others as I climb. If I can inspire even one person to pursue their passion, I would have fulfilled my purpose," he shares.

Katiso Joachim Tsoho's journey from the hills of Qacha's Nek to establishing a successful fashion brand is a tale of resilience, creativity, and commitment to culture.

Through Joachim Garments, he offers more than just clothes; he provides a narrative that intertwines the past, present, and future of Basotho identity.

As the fashion industry continuously shifts, Katiso stands as a beacon of change, inspiring others to embrace their unique cultural narratives while carving out their places in an increasingly global marketplace. With each stitch, he affirms that fashion is not merely about garments; it is a powerful medium through which stories are told, cultures are preserved, and dreams are realised. In Katiso's own words, "My designs are a conversation between the past and the future, a way to keep our stories alive." Indeed, Joachim Garments is not just a brand; it is a vibrant testament to the beauty of Basotho heritage in modern fashion.

(Instagram)

https://www.instagram.com/joachim_garments/?hl=en

(Video link)

<https://www.tconnect.africa/joachim>

BRAND AFRICA 100: LESOTHO'S BEST BRANDS

Top 100 Brands			
#	Overall (Top 100)		Basotho Brands (Top 100)
#1	Nike		Joachim Clothing
#2	Adidas		Maluti Mountain Brewery
#3	Joachim Clothing		Bonono Merchants
Most Admired African Brand			
#	Most Admired African Brand (Aided Recall)		Most Admired African Brand (Spontaneous Recall)
#1	Joachim Lesotho		Joachim Clothing
#2	Shoprite/Checkers		Vodacom Lesotho
#3	Vodacom Lesotho		Maluti Mountain Brewery
#4	Maxhosa		Econet
#5	Econet		Bonono Merchants
Most Admired Media Brand			
#	African		Non-African
#1	SABC		Netflix
#2	Lesedi FM		Al Jazeera
#3	LNBS		BBC
Most Admired Financial Services Brand			
#	African		Non-African
#1	FNB		PayPal
#2	Standard Bank/Stanbic		American Express
#3	NedBank		Mastercard
Sustainable Brands – Doing Good for Society and the Environment			
#	African	Non-African	NGO
#1	Standard Bank	Vodacom	World Health Organization (WHO)
#2	Clicks	Nike	UNICEF/United Nations
#3	Econet	Coca-Cola	World Vision
#4	Pep	Herbal life	World Food Programme (WFP)
#5	Alliance Insurance	KFC	USAID
Most Admired G20 and BRICS+ Brands			
#	G20		BRICS+
#1	Nike		Vodacom Lesotho
#2	Adidas		Shoprite/Checkers
#3	Puma		Standard Bank/Stanbic

Nation Brands				
Most Admired Brand Contributing to a Better Africa			Most Admired Country Brand	
#	African	Non-African	African	Non-African
#1	MTN	Nike	South Africa	USA
#2	Vodacom	Coca-Cola	Lesotho	China
#3	Checkers/Shoprite	KFC	Botswana	United Kingdom
#4	Joachim Clothing	Samsung	Rwanda	India
#5	Econet	Microsoft	Nigeria	Japan

CATEGORY LEADERS

Alcoholic Beverages	Apparel
Maluti Mountain Brewery	Joachim Clothing
Apparel Retail	Auto Manufacturer
Ackermans	Toyota
Consumer Non-Cyclical	Electronics/Computers
Herbal life	Samsung
Fast-food	Luxury
KFC	Gucci
Non-Alcoholic Beverages	Personal Care
Coca-Cola	Avon
Retail	Sports & Fitness
Shoprite/Checkers	Nike
Technology	Telecommunications
Google	Vodacom Lesotho
Utility	
LEC	

BRAND AFRICA 100: SOUTH AFRICA'S BEST BRANDS

Top 100 Brands		
#	Overall (Top 100)	South African Brands (Top 100)
#1	Nike	GALXBOY
#2	Adidas	Bathu
#3	Puma	Woolworths
Most Admired African Brand		
#	Most Admired African Brand (Aided Recall)	Most Admired African Brand (Spontaneous Recall)
#1	MaXhosa	GALXBOY
#2	Bathu	Bathu
#3	GALXBOY	Woolworths
#4	Nando's	MaXhosa
#5	MTN	Shoprite/ Checkers
Most Admired Media Brand		
#	African	Non-African
#1	SABC	Netflix
#2	DStv	BBC
#3	NCA	CNN

Most Admired Financial Services Brand - Overall				
#	African		Non-African	
#1	FNB		American Express	
#2	Capitec Bank		Mastercard	
#3	Standard Bank		Chase Bank	
Most Admired Financial Services Brand – Banking and Insurance				
#	Banking		Insurance	
#1	FNB		Old Mutual	
#2	Capitec Bank		OUTsurance	
#3	Standard Bank		Sanlam	
Sustainable Brands – Doing Good for Society and the Environment				
#	African	Non-African	NGO	
#1	FNB	Nike	World Health Organization (WHO)	
#2	Woolworths	Unilever	Gift of the Givers Foundation	
#3	Shoprite/Checkers	Coca-Cola	United Nations/ UN AID	
#4	MTN	Johnson & Johnson	Greenpeace Africa	
#5	Clover	Adidas	Motsepe Foundation	
Most Admired G20 and BRICS+ Brands				
#	G20		BRICS+	
#1	Nike		GALXBOY	
#2	Adidas		Bathu	
#3	Puma		Woolworths	
Nation Brands				
Most Admired Brand Contributing to a Better Africa			Most Admired Country	
#	African	Non-African	African	Non-African
#1	MTN	Nike	South Africa	USA
#2	Shoprite/Checkers	Coca-Cola	Botswana	China
#3	MaXhosa	Adidas	Nigeria	UK
#4	FNB	Samsung	Kenya	Russia
#5	Woolworths	Gucci	Ghana	UAE
Generations				
#	Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Baby Boomers
#1	Nike	Nike	Nike	Adidas
#2	Adidas	Adidas	Adidas	Nike
#3	Puma	Puma	Puma	Samsung
#4	Gucci	Coca-Cola	Coca-Cola	Woolworths
#5	Coca-Cola	Samsung	Woolworths	Audi

BRAND AFRICA 100: BOTSWANA'S BEST BRANDS

Top 100 Brands				
#	Overall (Top 100)		Botswana Brands (Top 100)	
#1	Nike		BK Proctor	
#2	BK Proctor		All Kasi (AK)	
#3	Adidas		Glotto	
Most Admired African Brand				
#	Most Admired African Brand (Aided Recall)		Most Admired African Brand (Spontaneous Recall)	
	Botswana	African	Botswana	African
#1	All Kasi (AK)	DStv	BK Proctor	Bokomo
#2	BK Proctor	Amakipkip	All Kasi (AK)	Clover
#3	Glotto	Era DJ Zinhle	Glotto	Redbat
#4	Choppies	Maxhosa	Sefalana	Spar
#5	Berry Heart Creations	MTN	Dash Trends	Woolworths
Most Admired Media Brand				
#	African	Non-African	Botswana	
#1	DStv	Netflix	Duma FM	
#2	SABC	BBC	Botswana Television (BTV)	
#3	SuperSport	CNN	Yarona FM	
Most Admired Financial Services Brand				
#	African	Non-African	Botswana	
#1	FNB	Orange Money	Botswana Life Insurance	
#2	ABSA	Skrill	Letshego	
#3	Standard Bank	Visa	Botswana Savings Bank (SBS)	
Sustainable Brands – Doing Good for Society and the Environment				
#	African	Non-African	NGO	
#1	Choppies	Coca - Cola	World Health Organisation (WHO)	
#2	FNB	Orange	Red Cross	
#3	Debswana	Nike	United Nations/UN AID	
#4	ABSA	KFC	SOS Children’s Village	
#5	BK Proctor	Tesla	USAID	
Most Admired G20 and BRICS+ Brands				
#	G20		BRICS+	
#1	Nike		Huawei	
#2	Adidas		Bokomo	

#3	Puma			Clover	
Nation Brands					
Most Admired Brand Contributing to a Better Africa				Most Admired Country	
#	African	Non-African	Botswana	African	Non-African
#1	MTN	Nike	Choppies	Botswana	USA
#2	DStv	Coca-Cola	BK Proctor	South Africa	China
#3	FNB	Adidas	All Kasi (AK)	Rwanda	UK
#4	ABSA	Orange	Debswana	Nigeria	Russia
#5	First Bank of Nigeria	Samsung	Glotto	Tanzania	Canada
Generations					
#	Gen Z	Millennials		Gen X	
#1	Nike	Nike		Nike	
#2	BK Proctor	BK Proctor		All Kasi (AK)	
#3	Adidas	Adidas		Adidas	
#4	All Kasi (AK)	All Kasi (AK)		Orange	
#5	Puma	Puma		Samsung	



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CAN WE REALLY TALK DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION?

"Can we truly talk about digital transformation when we haven't even digitised or digitalised the basics?"

—
**Ntate Billy Sekgororoane, Managing Director,
T-Connect Botswana**

Digital transformation has become a buzzword – appearing in government strategies, corporate blueprints and development agendas across Africa. In Botswana, it features prominently in policy speeches and national frameworks.

But beneath the surface of this widespread rhetoric lies a critical question we seldom confront: **have we built the necessary foundation for transformation to actually take place?**

Digital transformation is not a starting point – it is the outcome of deliberate, sequenced steps: first **digitising**, then **digitalising** our core systems. And yet, many of our institutions strive for transformation without having completed the groundwork.

Across Botswana, the signs of this disconnect are clear:

- We issue e-passports, yet the application process is still manual – requiring certified hard copies of identification documents, often issued by the same ministry. We are repeatedly asked for information the government already holds: gender, date of birth, place of birth.
- Traffic offences are flagged digitally, but paying the fine typically involves visiting a police station in person, before returning to complete vehicle licence renewals.
- Patient records in public health facilities remain paper-based, stored in fragile manila folders – even as we talk about e-health and telemedicine.
- Land applications are still largely manual, despite an investment of BWP800 million in a land management system.
- In too many offices, handwritten receipts are still being issued, internal communication is sent by post, and even opening a bank account or registering for tax requires submitting physical documents.

These examples are not shared to assign blame. Rather, they illustrate the **chasm between aspiration and implementation**. Technology may be procured and funded – but the underlying processes often remain untouched. Systems are fragmented, data is siloed, and the user

experience remains painfully unchanged. This tells us one thing, clearly and urgently: **digital transformation**



must be sequenced.

We must begin by digitising – converting paper-based records and manual processes into digital formats. Next, we digitalise – re-engineering services using those tools to create smarter, more efficient workflows. Only then can we claim to be transforming – when systems are fully integrated, services are seamless, and outcomes are measurable.

Botswana has both the ambition and the potential to reach that point. But ambition, while essential, is not enough. We must be intentional at every stage. That means investing not only in infrastructure, but also in process design, data readiness, capacity-building and cross-sector collaboration.

If our goal is to build efficient, transparent, citizen-centred systems, then we must stop mistaking digital visibility for digital transformation.

Let us focus on the basics before we build the brand. Because at the end of the day, the question still stands: "Can we really talk about digital transformation when we haven't even digitised or digitalised the basics?"

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION SCORES A WIN AT BOCHELETSANE HIGH SCHOOL



MANTŠONYANE, LESOTHO – In the mist-clad highlands near Mantšonyane, Bocheletsane High School is charting a new course in digital education. Thanks to a partnership between T Connect and Starlink Business, the school's computer laboratory—once plagued by a feeble internet connection—has been reborn with unlimited high-speed access. This is not just a tech upgrade; it is a gateway to modern teaching and learning in the Kingdom's rural heartlands.

"Previously, our computer laboratory lay idle because the internet was too weak to support it," says Mr Thapelo Mapelepo, the school's sole Mathematics and ICT teacher. "All 300 pupils doing ICT depend on me alone. Classes

often consisted of theory on paper, simply because the computers could not connect to anything online."

Figures from the Ministry of Education and Training confirm that rural communities in Lesotho often face such digital barriers. As of mid-2025, only around half of secondary schools nationwide have reliable elearning connectivity, and many rely on government efforts via the Universal Service Fund—which is still scaling out fibre and solar-powered ICT kit.

In remote regions like Mantšonyane, pupils often grapple with intermittent electricity and poor broadband. Though modern learning strategies such as the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) policy have been introduced, the

terrain and infrastructure remain difficult hurdles. Meanwhile, professional development for teachers has lagged; excessive costs and resource constraints have impeded meaningful ICT capacity-building.

The installation of **Starlink Business by T Connect** has delivered a transformative boost. What was once a classroom full of dormant machines now hums with life.

"The change is remarkable," says a grade 9 pupil, name withheld. "Before, we waited for pages to load or fix the login. Now, we dive straight into projects, coding, and research. It is a complete shift."

Another student adds, "With strong, unlimited internet we can now practise coding, watch tutorials, even join regional ICT competitions. It feels like our world has grown far beyond Mantšonyane." Reliable broadband means more than fun and games—it allows students to envision careers in computer science, engineering or online entrepreneurship, regardless of their rural context.

For Mr Magelepo, the new connectivity means professional renewal: "I have enrolled in webinars and online training modules to improve my teaching methods. Without this stable internet, I could never do that." This mirrors a broader trend in Lesotho: teachers, even when provided with laptops and solar power, often remain under-skilled in ICT due to scarce training opportunities. But when connectivity is reliable, rapid professional growth follows—precisely what this school is experiencing.

The result? Students receive help from real-time feedback, cloud-based collaboration and web-enhanced lesson plans that span across subjects—far beyond ICT alone.

Principal Mamojalefa Manyeli is equally enthusiastic: "Thanks to T Connect's support—and especially the Starlink installation—not only the high school but our primary section, down the hill, will soon adopt elearning tools. Better science demos, video lessons, collaborative research: elearning will be conducive across the board." In Lesotho's rural schools, joint equipment sharing between high and primary sections often delivers greater value for scarce resources. The possibilities in Mantšonyane are boundless.

While rapid gains have been made, further work lies ahead. Mr Magelepo explains: "First, we will integrate digital learning into Geography, Maths, Science—beyond



just ICT lessons. I want every teacher to use YouTube demos, virtual experiments, online revision tools... but for that, we will need regular capacitation sessions and peer learning across schools."

This aligns with academic calls for clear policies, sustained funding and teacher development to ensure long-term digital integration.

At Bocheletsane High, early signs are illuminating:

Student engagement has soared—ICT classes are active, collaborative, and hands-on.

Teacher morale is at a high—not only is Mr Magelepo empowered, but he is sharing knowledge with local peers.

Primary school ripple effects are already visible; video lessons and online activities have begun at the lower school.

Mr Manyeli concludes with optimism: "In these mountains, connectivity once meant nothing. Today, it means teachers who can learn alongside students, and pupils whose dreams reach far beyond their village. That is digital transformation with purpose."

The journey at Bocheletsane High is far from over—but the trajectory is clear. When rural schools in Lesotho gain reliable, high-speed connectivity and teacher capacitation, entire communities stand to benefit. With the support of T Connect and Starlink Business, Mantšonyane is proving that even remote highlands can enter the 21st century digital fray. The ripple effects—better teacher training, improved crosscurricular elearning, community uplift—are precisely the outcomes needed to bridge Lesotho's digital divide.

SKY ALPHA HD: REDEFINING RADIO, RECLAIMING THE DIGITAL FUTURE OF LESOTHO

Business Connect Magazine (BCM) editor, **Keiso Mohloboli** engages in a thought-provoking conversation with Tello Leballo, the visionary founder of **Sky Alpha HD**, an innovative online radio station that has made notable strides in the realm of digital broadcasting. As the media landscape undergoes rapid transformation, driven by advancing technology and shifting consumer habits **BCM** explores the pivotal role that digital platforms play in reshaping the way we consume and interact with audio content. In an era where traditional media is constantly challenged by the digital wave, **Mr Leballo** shares his insights on the journey of **Sky Alpha HD**, shedding light on the challenges and opportunities that have emerged in the world of online radio. The interview delves into the intricacies of digital transformation, illustrating how adaptability and forward-thinking strategies are essential for success in today's dynamic business environment.

BCM: Please introduce yourself, and could you please share the inspiration behind founding SkyAlpha? How did your personal experiences in Lesotho shape your vision for the online radio station?

Mr. Leballo: My name is Tello Dallas T Leballo, a Mosotho broadcaster, music consultant, and founder of Sky Alpha HD, Lesotho's pioneering digital media platform. Sky Alpha HD was born from a firm belief that media must evolve in tandem with its audience – and that the future of audience engagement lies in the digital realm. Having embarked on my broadcasting journey in 2001 at Lesotho National Broadcasting Service, and having worked across countries such as Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, Botswana, Egypt, and the United States, I came to appreciate media's role as a conduit for education, identity, and opportunity. The concept of Sky Alpha HD emerged from recognising the growing disconnect between traditional broadcasting and the digital lives of young people. Sky Alpha was designed to bridge that gap – bringing compelling content to where the people are online.

BCM: What motivated you to choose a digital platform for SkyAlpha, especially considering the

traditional media landscape in Lesotho? How do you see digital transformation reshaping media and communication in your country?

Mr. Leballo: Opting for a digital platform was not merely a strategic decision; it was imperative.

Traditional media in Lesotho is often hampered by limited infrastructure and restricted reach.

Digital platforms afforded us the agility to build something that is lean, responsive, and truly without borders.

Digital transformation is not only reshaping communication in Lesotho; it is redefining access and participation. From mobile-first content consumption to podcasting, we are witnessing a profound shift in how Basotho engage with information. Sky Alpha HD was established to meet this transformative moment and ensure our national stories are not lost in the noise of global digitalisation.

BCM: In your view, how can innovation in media, particularly through digital platforms, enhance the way stories are told in Lesotho? Can you provide examples of innovative content or formats you have introduced at SkyAlpha?

Mr. Leballo: Innovation is at the heart of our operation. At Sky Alpha HD, we have introduced simulcasts, audiovisual storytelling, podcast incubation, and a media development programme aimed at nurturing new voices. A notable innovation is our simulcast talk show, which integrates radio with live video feeds on social media, enabling real-time engagement between hosts and listeners.

Importantly, the **Digital Innovators Summit** has emerged as a cornerstone of our innovation strategy. It is not merely a summit; it is a **simulcast eduprogramme** designed to educate, sensitise, and express the absolute necessity of digital literacy in today's world. These summits are crafted to spark national conversations, build AI awareness, and create a platform where technology meets ethics, innovation, and youth empowerment. We make no apology in stating that **digital literacy is no longer optional – it is foundational** to national development and civic participation.

Our “Voices of the Valley” series is another example – a digital storytelling initiative highlighting grassroots narratives, crafted in formats optimised for mobile consumption and cultural relevance.

BCM: One of your commitments is to youth empowerment. How does SkyAlpha actively engage and empower young people in Lesotho? What initiatives have you implemented to ensure their voices are heard through your platform?

Mr. Leballo: Empowering the youth is not an afterthought for us – it is a core mandate. Through our Content House and Media Development Programme, we provide practical training for students from institutions such as the National University of Lesotho and Limkokwing University. We equip young people with skills in podcasting, digital journalism, livestream production, and media ethics. Many young Basotho have had their first on-air experience at Sky Alpha HD, not only as presenters but also as producers, editors, and content strategists. We believe that once empowered, youth will create lasting legacies of their own.

BCM: What are some of the key challenges you faced during the digital transformation of SkyAlpha, and how did you overcome them? Were these challenges technical, logistical, or related to audience engagement?

Mr. Leballo: Transforming into a digital media hub has not been without its hurdles. Chief among them have been issues of connectivity, financial constraints, and the initial scepticism surrounding online radio.

We addressed these challenges through strategic partnerships, open-source tools, and persistent community outreach. Establishing trust, investing in listener education, and maintaining impeccable content quality were critical in overcoming early resistance.

BCM: How do you utilise social media and other digital tools to engage your audience? Can you share any successful strategies that have significantly increased listener interaction and participation?

Mr. Leballo: We adopt a multi-platform engagement strategy. Platforms such as Facebook Live, X (formerly Twitter), and Instagram serve as conduits for

real-time interaction, audience feedback, and digital broadcasting.

An exemplar of our success was the Digital Innovators Summit 2024, which amassed over 142,000 digital impressions. By merging live radio with social media visuals and integrating audience questions in real time, we bring our listeners into the heart of the narrative.

BCM: How do you approach content creation at SkyAlpha? What role do you believe digital technology plays in creating diverse and inclusive content that speaks to the youth in Lesotho?

Mr. Leballo: Our content creation philosophy is underpinned by three principles: to educate, to entertain, and to empower. Sky Alpha HD's editorial strategy places emphasis on inclusion, relevance, and responsiveness to cultural dynamics. Through digital tools, we personalise content, analyse engagement patterns, and diversify formats – from talk shows and music playlists to documentaries and podcast series. Our youth-oriented content is intentionally bold, relatable, and disruptive in the best possible sense.

BCM: Looking ahead, what trends do you foresee in the online media landscape in Lesotho? How do you think SkyAlpha can adapt or lead in this evolving environment?

Mr. Leballo: The future of media in Lesotho is undeniably digital. With smartphones becoming more ubiquitous and data costs gradually declining, we anticipate a sharp increase in on-demand content, vernacular podcasting, and AI-curated platforms.

Sky Alpha HD is positioning itself to lead this transformation, investing in low bandwidth solutions, immersive storytelling technologies, and regional collaboration. We intend not only to follow global trends but to shape them from a distinctly Mosotho perspective.

BCM: What technological challenges does online radio face in Lesotho? How have you navigated issues related to internet connectivity and access, especially in rural areas?

Mr. Leballo: Rural internet connectivity remains a significant obstacle. To navigate this, we have optimised our platforms for low-bandwidth environments and made Sky Alpha HD accessible via global aggregators such as Radio Garden and MyTuner.

We are also developing offline listening options and exploring SMS-based listener engagement to expand our rural footprint and ensure inclusivity.

BCM: Have you formed any partnerships with local or international organisations to enhance the services of SkyAlpha? If so, what impact have these collaborations had on your mission?

Mr. Leballo: Sky Alpha HD has thrived on collaboration. We have built enduring relationships with the United States Embassy, UNDP, Lesotho Communications Authority, and leading academic institutions.

Our participation in global networks such as the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) has enabled strategic knowledge exchange and reinforced our role as a digital innovator rooted in local relevance.

BCM: What metrics or indicators do you consider when evaluating the success of SkyAlpha? How has your understanding of success evolved as the platform has grown? A: We evaluate success through both hard metrics and human impact. Our key indicators include

streaming figures (currently over 750,000 global listeners), social media reach, internship outcomes, and community feedback.

That said, success also looks like an intern launching their own podcast or a rural story resonating across continents. Our definition of impact has matured to prioritise inclusion, influence, and long-term ecosystem development.

BCM: What advice would you give to aspiring media entrepreneurs in Lesotho or similar contexts who wish to harness digital tools for their ventures? What key lessons have you learned along your journey?

Mr. Leballo: To young media entrepreneurs: start small, start now, and stay consistent. You need not have all the resources – what you do need is a clear vision, adaptability, and a learning mindset. Above all, lead with purpose. Relationships, integrity, and resilience are your most valuable assets in this ever-evolving space.

BCM: How do you assess the current state of media excellence in Lesotho compared to other countries in the region? What role does SkyAlpha play in elevating media standards?

Mr. Leballo: Lesotho's media ecosystem is vibrant but still consolidating. Compared to other regional players, we are on a journey of catching up in digital investment, skills, and content diversity.

Sky Alpha HD plays a catalytic role in professionalising the sector, nurturing new talent, and setting benchmarks in innovation and ethics. We aspire to elevate the standard and reputation of Lesotho's media on a regional and global stage.

BCM: How do global trends in digital transformation and media consumption affect your strategies at SkyAlpha? Are there any specific international examples that inspire you?

Mr. Leballo: Global trends such as short-form content, AI-powered curation, and subscription-based podcasting significantly influence our strategies. Inspired by platforms like Spotify, NPR, and the BBC, we have adopted mobile-first approaches and restructured our user interfaces. The IVLP and DCN Lusaka Forum have further shaped our worldview, revealing how digital media can be a tool for both empowerment and resistance. These experiences directly inspired initiatives such as the Digital Innovators Summit.

BCM: How does SkyAlpha engage with the local communities beyond broadcasting? Do you have outreach programmes or community projects aimed at media literacy and youth engagement?

Mr. Leballo: Sky Alpha HD is not just a content provider; it is a community actor. We have led food relief campaigns, partnered with Days for Girls to deliver reusable sanitary pads, and run journalism integrity workshops funded by the U.S. Embassy. Our ethos is clear: the microphone must amplify, not alienate. Our outreach ensures that our digital footprint is grounded in social responsibility.

Sky Alpha HD is more than a radio station; it is a movement towards digital sovereignty, cultural authenticity, and youth empowerment. Our vision is to build a sustainable digital ecosystem that serves not only Lesotho but contributes meaningfully to the African and global media landscape. We are just getting started.

IMPACT HOLBERTON SCHOOL: EMPOWERING LESOTHO'S YOUTH TO CODE A BRIGHTER FUTURE



How a Pioneering Tech School Aims to Train 5,500 Software Engineers by 2030—and Transform a Nation's Prospects

In a bold stride towards reshaping Lesotho's technological and economic future, **Impact Holberton School** has set an ambitious target: to produce at least 5,500 certified Software Engineers by 2030. Headquartered in Dublin, Ireland, with a thriving campus in Maseru, this innovative start-up tech school is bridging the gap between education and employability, offering young Basotho a lifeline in an increasingly digital world.

Founded by Mr. Pheta Koenane and Mrs. Mamonaheng Koenane, Impact Holberton School emerged from a pressing need to address the shortcomings in Lesotho's computer science education. "We can do better than this," asserts Mr. Koenane, reflecting on the country's heavy reliance on foreign software solutions. "Our mission is to equip our youth with globally competitive skills—not just to participate in the tech industry, but to lead it." Mrs. Koenane highlights the frustration many graduates face when their qualifications fail to translate into meaningful employment. "There's nothing more disheartening than investing years in education only to

find no job prospects," she says. "At Impact School, we ensure our students gain real, marketable skills that open doors—both in Lesotho and beyond." In partnership with Holberton School, a world-renowned coding institution, Impact School offers tuition-free Software Engineering courses, removing financial barriers for aspiring tech professionals. "This is a game-changer," explains Mr. Koenane. "We're providing qualifications recognised worldwide, giving our students a passport to global opportunities."

The impact is already evident. Mrs. Koenane shares inspiring stories of transformation: "We see students who once faced unemployment and poverty now stepping into careers with confidence. They're not just learning to code—they're rewriting their futures."

To stay ahead of industry demands, the school emphasises networking, continuous research, and community engagement. "Our students won't just be coders—they'll be problem-solvers, innovators, and leaders," says Mr. Koenane. "By collaborating with tech giants and staying attuned to trends, we ensure our



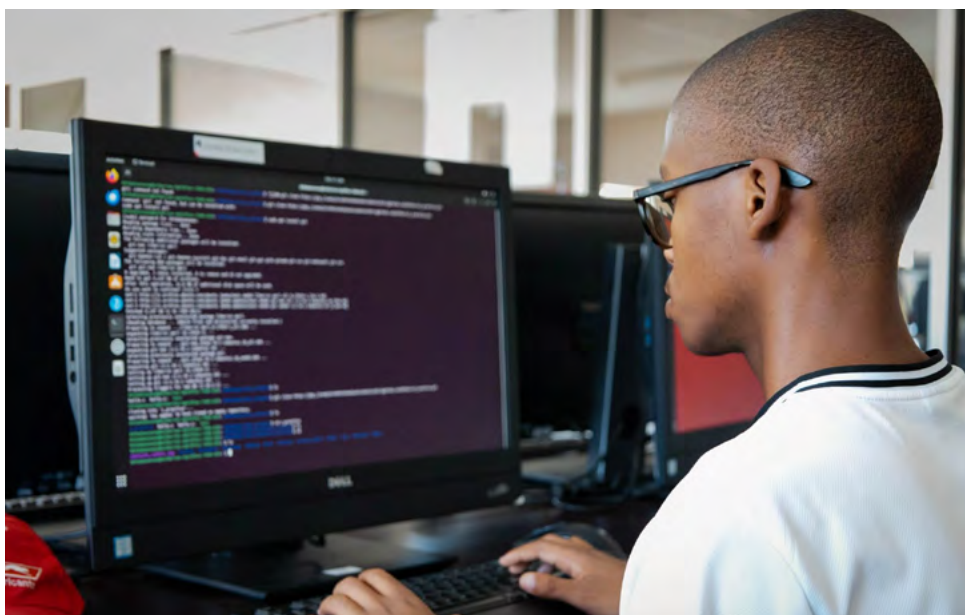
curriculum remains cutting-edge."

For the Koenanes, the mission is deeply personal. "What keeps me awake at night is knowing we're agents of change," admits Mrs. Koenane. "This isn't just about technology—it's about lifting communities, proving that Lesotho's youth can shape the digital economy." As Lesotho stands on the cusp of a technological revolution, Impact Holberton School is leading the charge, proving that with the right skills, the nation's youth can become architects of their own destiny. The school's vision extends beyond certification—it's about creating jobs, fostering innovation, and

positioning Lesotho as a tech hub in Africa.

In a world driven by digital transformation, Impact Holberton School isn't just educating software engineers—it's building the foundation for a stronger, self-reliant Lesotho. And with 5,500 future tech leaders in the making, the ripple effect of this initiative promises to be nothing short of extraordinary.

The future of Lesotho's economy is not just in its mountains—it is in the minds of the youth. And at Impact Holberton School, those minds are being equipped to code a new reality.



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FROM CASH PAY-POINT TO TECH

...as digital innovation reshapes Botswana's banking and beyond

When UK born technologist **John Moir**, Head of Technology and Commercial Operations at TConnect Botswana, arrived in Botswana, banking remained entirely manual. "I came here to computerise banking in four countries, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and Zambia," Moir recalls. "We started from ground zero. Systems ran on accounting machines, and communication between branches was completely manual. What has happened since is truly transformational."

Yet, while those early days planted seeds of digital progress, the full realisation of a truly inclusive, sustainable digital economy stays a work in progress.

EGovernment platforms now allow citizens to file taxes, register vehicles, and use various online public services. The **Power of Data Country Plan** (2023) reflects robust efforts to digitise data collection and harmonise systems across all ministries, delivering efficiency and stronger compliance with Vision 2036 and Sustainable Development Goals.

In healthcare, digitised patient records and telemedicine solutions are making inroads into communities far from urban centres.

With mobile money services like **Orange Money** and **BTC Smega**, banking has expanded beyond traditional channels, enabling previously unbanked individuals to send, receive and save money with ease.

Moreover, Botswana's ICT sector grew by 4.1 percent in Q2 2024—a signal of rising economic momentum—while mobile penetration now exceeds the population, giving a robust foundation for digital expansion.

The result? A flourishing cottage industry of small-scale entrepreneurs using social media and mobile payments, and new jobs in digital marketing, fintech, IT support and beyond.



Botswana has pioneered connectivity across schools: over 700 institutions and 400,000 students were online by late 2024, thanks to programmes such as Giga (UNICEFITU) and aggregated procurement through BoFiNet.

Coding clubs, hackathons, and elearning initiatives—especially prevalent postCOVID—are fostering STEM skills and digital literacy. Increasingly, students are gravitating towards tech courses and remote education via platforms.

The government's **SmartBots** strategy aims to deliver broadband to 500 villages by 2025 and build 12,000 km of fibre backbone. Also, **Paratus Botswana**, the country's first Starlink reseller, began offering LEO satellite internet in August 2024, enhancing rural connectivity



Botswana enjoys 4G/5G rollout in urban centres, and satellite services—alongside fibre—are closing access gaps.

Botswana is one of the first countries to implement the **Power of Data Country Plan**, under the UN and World Bank initiative, harmonising data collection across 23 ministries and transitioning systems from paper to digital—critical for Vision 2036’s data-driven governance. Despite 87.2 percent internet penetration by 2023, urban–rural disparities stay stark. Internet access in remote areas may fall below 35 percent especially in locales like the Kalahari.

Many rural households still lack connectivity due to device costs, limited infrastructure, and scarce service providers.

Mobile data stays pricey—10 GB might cost a month’s minimum wage (USD 103)—and smartphones or laptops are unaffordable for many people, particularly in lower-income and rural communities.

Skills, Literacy and Innovation Capacity

Botswana faces a shortage of qualified IT professionals and has a youth unemployment rate of 38.2 percent. Despite high overall literacy 88 percent, digital literacy—especially among the elderly and rural populations—is patchy.

These gaps limit the uptake of digital tools and hamper entrepreneurial innovation that could power local growth. Mobile security is underdeveloped in public sector organisations, leaving systems open to viral attacks, malware, and data breaches. Botswana has enacted the Cyber Crime Act (2018) and a National Cyber Security Strategy (2020), but the Data Protection Act (2018) stays unimplemented.

Public awareness of cyber risks is low—another hurdle on the path to trust and safety.

Although Starlink offers satellite alternatives, the state-controlled wholesale internet sector drives up consumer prices, and network reliability still falters due to power outages and infrastructure constraints.

Botswana already has two Starlink ground stations under construction (Gaborone and Lobatse) as of February 2025, but traditional telecom monopolies still dominate.

Paper-heavy bureaucracy, procurement bottlenecks and low digital understanding among public officials continue to slow e-government rollout.

“The benefits are clear—from e-government to fintech—but there is still a long way to go,” reflects Moir. “We must tackle the digital divide, ensure affordability, and up-skill people across the country.”

He emphasises the need for focus on rural needs: “For e-government to work, it must prioritise rural citizens. Sometimes it feels like they are an afterthought in planning. We need mobile-first, offline-capable solutions, and public-private partnerships to drive training and awareness.

Botswana’s journey from manual banking led by John Moir to a digitally enabled nation is impressive. The SmartBots strategy, fibre deployment and Starlink partnership signal real progress.

Yet, sustaining aspirational growth—moving beyond infrastructure toward a vibrant, inclusive knowledge economy—requires patience, investment, and policy innovation.

Botswana can build a fair digital future by guaranteeing affordable connectivity, expanding capabilities, securing data, simplifying governance, and fostering innovation. As Moir concludes, “We’ve come far, but our ambition—to become a knowledge economy—demands much more.”

A RAY OF HOPE FOR MARAKABEI HIGH SCHOOL

Located serenely in the scenic valley that rests between the capital town of Maseru and the vibrant, mountainous region of Mants'onyane, Marakabei High School stands as a testament to the aspiration for quality education in a challenging geographical context. Established to foster learning and personal development among its students, the school has become a beacon of hope for many local families. However, it has faced significant challenges, notably the lack of reliable internet connectivity, which has hampered the educational experiences of both students and teachers for years.

In 2017, Marakabei High School was a recipient of a generous donation: a computer laboratory equipped with 25 computer stations—an opportunity that promised to leapfrog students into the digital age and facilitate e-learning. Unfortunately, despite the school's best intentions and efforts, this state-of-the-art facility remained inoperative for seven long years because of the area's poor network infrastructure. Without signal strength to enable internet access, the school was unable to use the lab, denying its students crucial opportunities in an increasingly digital world.

Deputy Principal Mr Tlali Kubutu has been a witness to the frustration and challenges that this lack of connectivity has posed to both students and staff. "The dream of integrating technology into our curriculum was thwarted by the very foundation of modern education—access to the internet," he lamented during a recent interview. "Our students, despite having a computer lab at their disposal, could not learn how to use these valuable tools. It was incredibly disheartening to see potential going untapped, as our pupils were deprived of experiences that are essential in today's world."

The geographical situation of Marakabei High School compounded the issue. Set in a valley, the terrain creates natural obstacles that inhibit the kind of network infrastructure common in more urbanised areas. This results in poor signal reception, variations in connectivity, and at times, complete disconnection from vital resources. As Mr Kubutu puts it, "You can feel the isolation of our community. In a world where education is evolving rapidly, we found ourselves trapped in a time capsule—fated to be left behind without the tools to advance in this digital revolution."

It was, however, not until the advent of Starlink Business, powered by T-Connect, that a glimmer of hope emerged for Marakabei High School. Starlink, a satellite internet



constellation, aims to provide high-speed internet access to underserved and remote areas around the world.

This ground-breaking technology arrived at a critical juncture for the school, offering a practical solution to the communication barriers that had stifled learning.

T-Connect, as a local provider of the Starlink service, recognised the urgent need for reliable internet access at Marakabei High School and swiftly mobilised to assist. "The moment we heard about the struggles of Marakabei, we felt a responsibility to help," stated Mr Zweli Frans from T-Connect. "We have always believed in the transformative power of technology, especially in education. We are thrilled to be part of this journey and witness the excitement of both students and teachers as they embrace their newfound connectivity."

With the installation of the Starlink system, students at Marakabei High School enjoy high-speed internet access for the first time. This pivotal upgrade now empowers learners to access online resources, participate in e-learning programmes, and connect with educators worldwide. The impact has been nothing short of revolutionary. Suddenly, lessons no longer needed to be



confined to textbooks; students have the world at their fingertips.

Reflecting on this monumental change, Mr Kubutu emphasises, “It feels like the dawn of a new era for us. Our students can finally engage with digital content, participate in online discussions, and take advantage of educational tools that were merely dreams until now. We are now connected to a global community of learners, and it opens up a plethora of opportunities for our students.” The joy among students has been palpable, with many eager to explore the internet and visualise futures that were previously inaccessible.

The Starlink installation has benefitted the teachers as well, who have long sought ways to integrate contemporary teaching practices into their lesson plans. Prior to the advent of this technology, dependable teaching resources were not feasible for the staff at Marakabei High School. With reliable internet access, educators can develop more engaging lesson plans, communicate with their peers for best practices, and access a wealth of information to enhance their teaching methods.

“The arrival of Starlink has provided us with the tools to elevate our teaching,” Mr Kubutu noted. “Our teachers no longer feel isolated in their profession. They can join webinars, access professional development opportunities, and connect with fellow educators globally. This growth in teaching quality ultimately translates into a better learning experience for our students.”

The significance of such connectivity transcends educational boundaries; it fosters a sense of community resilience. Families in the Marakabei area, long disconnected from the conveniences of the digital world, now have access to online platforms for essential services, social interactions, and vital information regarding health, employment, and education. The newfound connectivity allows students to share

resources with their families, promising to uplift not just the school but the entire community.

Yet, while the transformation brought about by Starlink Business is evident and exciting, Mr Kubutu remains grounded in reality. “We must not forget that technology is a tool, and its effectiveness is limited by how well we can harness it,” he cautioned. “We have a long road ahead of us as we ensure our pupils are not merely consumers of information but critical thinkers and innovators who will take their knowledge beyond the classroom walls.”

As the community of Marakabei High School embarks on this new chapter, the narrative of struggle shifts towards one of hope and promise. With the implementation of Starlink Business by T-Connect, the digital divide that has long separated this community from contemporary educational practices is gradually diminishing.

The future looks bright for Marakabei High School; it exemplifies a broader movement towards equity in access to education. As technology continues to evolve and make strides in reaching previously underserved areas, it serves as a powerful reminder that with the right interventions, communities can ascend from challenges, adapt, and thrive. The partnership between Marakabei High School, T-Connect, and Starlink is not just about internet connection; it represents a lifeline to opportunities previously imagined only in dreams, empowering students to build a future of their own designing.

In the words of Mr Kubutu, “What we have experienced at Marakabei is the embodiment of hope—our school is no longer a forgotten outpost. Thanks to Starlink Business, our students now have a chance to dream of possibilities beyond these valley walls.” Indeed, the transformation from isolation to connection at Marakabei High School is a powerful testament to the potential of technology to reshape lives, foster learning, and enable progress in even the most challenging locales.

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