

April 2021

# The Thinking Watermill Society

TRENDS IN AFRICA 2021



ILLUSTRATED BY KUSH MUIGAI



Graphic Designer/Illustrator: Gabriella Mukuhi Muigai (Indlovu Arts, Kenya)

Author: Maria Angela Maina (Chief Research Coordinator-Africa, The Thinking Watermill Society)

*The contents of this graphic novel  
are owned by The Thinking Watermill Society,  
with free and open access, distributed with  
License Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share  
alike CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.*

*© The Thinking Watermill Society, April 2021.*

# Dear Thinker,

The Thinking Watermill Society presents you with this Graphic Novel on the current trends in Africa, in collaboration with Ms Gabriella Mukuhi Muigai of Indlovu Arts in Kenya.

The aim of this graphic novel is to inform our large Western audience on the African trends to look out for in 2021 in an illustrative manner.

This graphic novel forms a part of our efforts to deconstruct different myths and misconceptions about the African continent as a whole.

Africa is not only the source of beautiful animal and plant life, but it is also the hub of revolutionary innovation, music and culture.

It is our hope that this graphic novel will help create a positive attitude towards Africa and what Africans have to contribute to the global economic performance.

**Thank you** for your ongoing support.

– The Thinking Watermill Society.



Image Source: Unsplash

# #1: Increase in Telemedicine Services

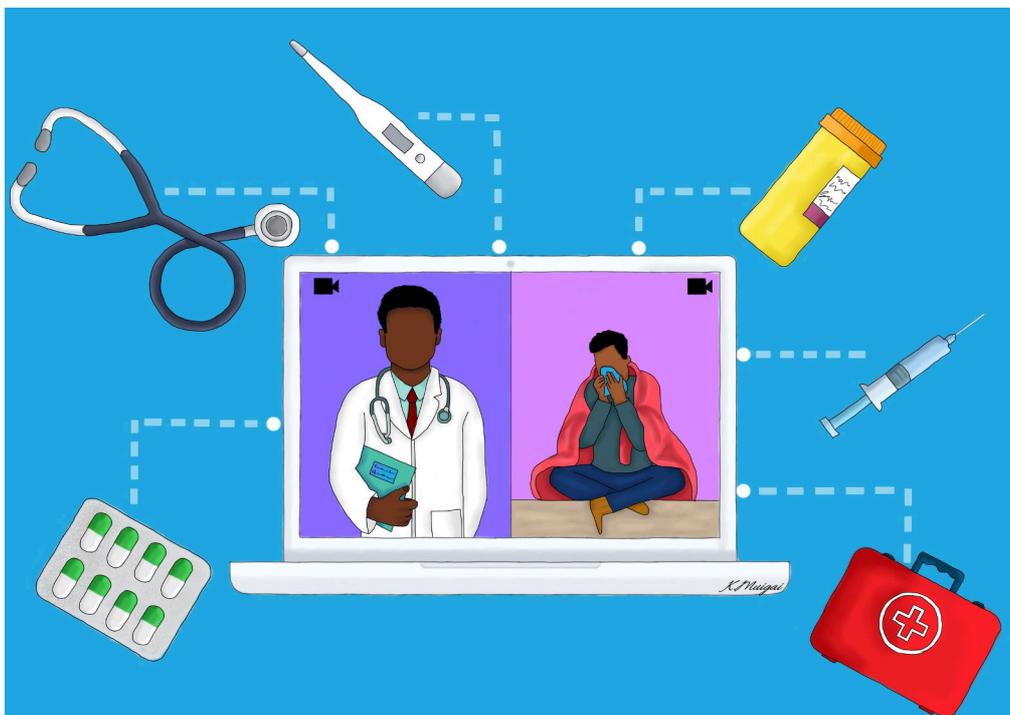
Automation in Africa is set to play a critical role in 2021. One way this is happening is through the increased use and perfection of telemedicine services.

Telemedicine is the use of information and communication technology services to provide medical services where distance is a critical factor. Telemedicine services in Africa are delivered through video calls, telephone calls and text messages, using tablets, computers or smartphones.

Telemedicine is the key to lessen the general overwhelming burden in the African healthcare systems. In support, [2021 IQVIA Healthcare Predictions](#) for Africa show the shift towards digital technology is a crucial step in redefining the relationship between healthcare professionals and patients relationships.

Further, a [2020 report](#) by Lancet dubbed Sub-Saharan Africa the “*new breeding ground for global digital health.*”

Telemedicine in Africa is currently prominent in Kenya, Mali, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Nigeria, South Africa, Rwanda and Burundi, among others.



“

"As we get better technology, probably pretty soon there will be something you can hook up to your iPhone that we can listen to your heart, measure your blood pressure with. We'll get there pretty quickly — quicker than we would have anticipated before COVID-19."

-Dr Jennifer Brumm, Mayo Clinic.

# #2: Evolution of Green Technology

Green Technology is the use of science and technology in production processes to yield eco-friendly products or services.

Green Tech is important to the African economy as it helps:

- Attract substantial amounts of investment capital.
- Repair the past damage to the environment.
- Conserve and preserve the natural resources.

According to the Global e-Sustainability Initiative, technology has the potential to contribute to all 17 of the SDGs, including over 50% of the 169 sub-targets.

Green-tech, like wind technology and bioenergy, is being used to reduce dependence on coal-based electricity generation and provide electricity to rural areas.

Green Tech projects and innovations to look out for in Africa this year include the following.

- eCooking.

It involves the use of biomass fuel or solar lighting to power cooking stoves. eCooking is a step towards increasing the accessibility of sustainable electricity in rural areas while protecting the environment. Further policies on access to electricity and cooking are expected to be implemented.

- The Benban solar park in Egypt.

The project currently has the capacity to produce 3.8TWh (terawatt hour) annually. Its completion in 2019 has shown there is great potential for Egypt to drive sustainable economic growth.



The 2021 Power for All survey indicates the following energy access trends for the year:

Utility	Percentage of Energy Access in Africa
Integrated Utilities	28%
Local Currency Finance	27%
Battery/Storage	13%
Productive Use of Energy in Agriculture	13%
Healthcare Cold Chain	11%
Clean Cooking	4%
Other	4%



Image source: Unsplash

# #3: More Domestic Travel in Africa

The African travel industry is a major driver of economic growth and job creation. Its wildlife, splendid scenery and rich cultural heritage captivate many from all over the world.

African Business reports show that travel in Africa had been on the rise in the following years:

Year	Number of Tourists in Africa
2016	58 million
2018	63 million

However, due to the Coronavirus pandemic, there has been the encouragement of domestic travel in Africa.

Countries such as Kenya and South Africa are now offering their citizens lower prices for day trips and park fees. Kenya and Tanzania are also offering up to 75% discounts on standard safari lodge rates to their citizens.

Travel to all African countries is ideal.

According to the United Nations World Travel Organization (UNWTO), some of the most explored countries in the Continent include Botswana, Kenya, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.



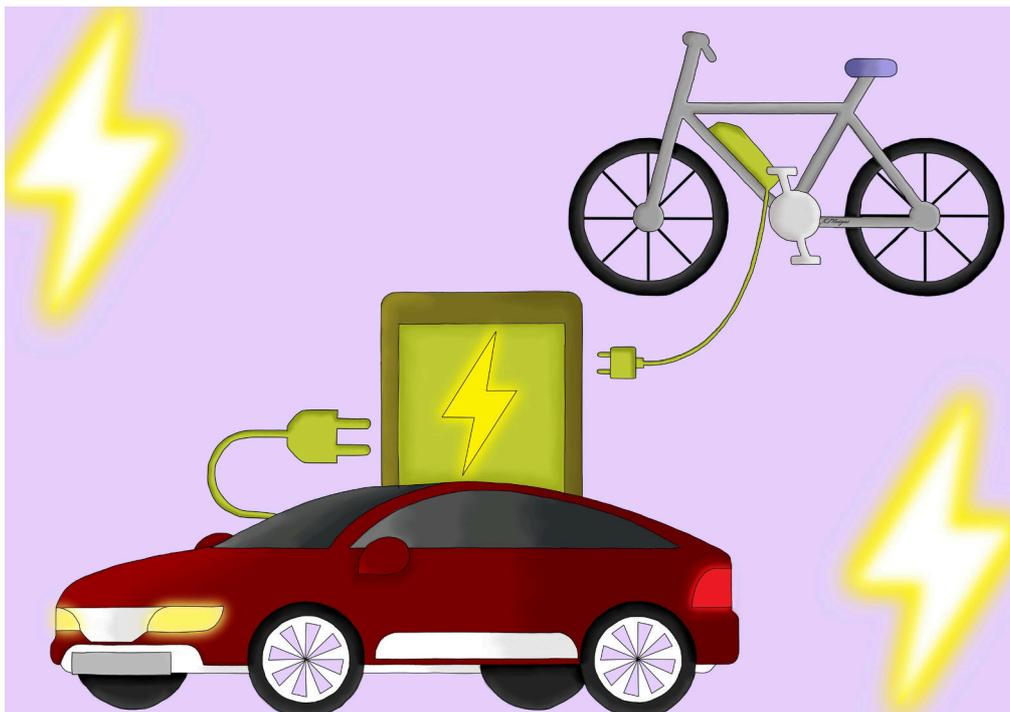
# #4: Advancement of Transport Systems and Methods

There are great technological advancements in the African transport sector. The introduction of designated car plug-in points by BMW in South Africa in 2016 pioneered the revolution of the industry.

Another interesting innovation was the launch of Ethiopia's smart parking structure in 2017. This project uses lifts to raise cars and is controlled by customers' smartphones and debit cards.

In 2021, you need to look out for the introduction of eBikes to initiate the eMobility initiatives in Africa. eMobility is expected to gain momentum in 2021 with the increasing importance of access to market and adjacent retail services.

In light of this, Power for All states the expectation of the development of national electric vehicle and electric cooking policies and roadmaps that support infrastructure and technology development to enable business models and create supporting financial mechanisms.



# #5: Growth of Sustainable Fashion

Sustainable and ethical fashion is an approach that aims to minimize the fashion industry's negative impact on the environment.

Currently, the demand for sustainable ethical fashion is a niche market, consisting of about 1% of the global fashion industry. With this in mind, the African continent currently accounts for 1.6% of global trade with its fashion industry valued at 1.3 trillion US dollars.

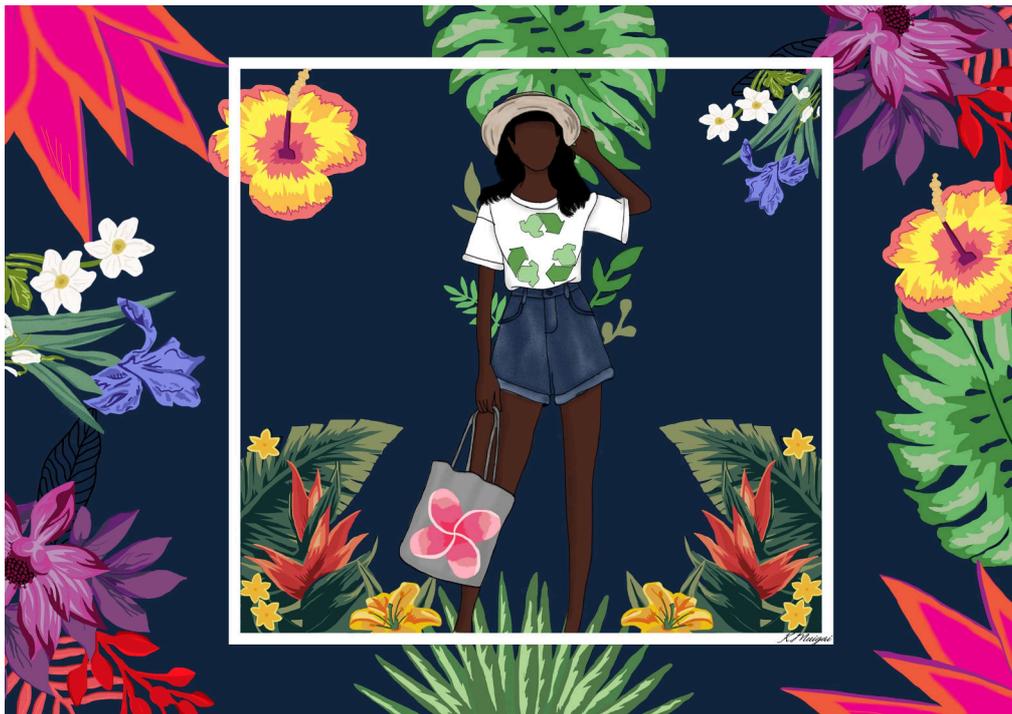
The presence of second-hand clothing in Ghana, Benin and Kenya is only the first step towards sustainability.

Research shows that the African sustainable fashion market is now on the rise and expects to record a compound annual growth rate of 11.0% in the near future.

Some methods of sustainable and ethical fashion practices in Africa include using:

- Natural and compostable materials.
- Plant dye.
- Strict observance of their fabric worker's rights.
- A return policy in exchange for new clothes.

Do you want to learn more about practising sustainable fashion? [Click here](#).



# #6: Fusion of Fashion and Technology

The fusion of fashion and tech, that is fashiontech, could spur the African fashion industry forward and make the Continent more competitive in the global fashion market.



Furthermore, the launch of the 5G network in South Africa and Kenya is an invaluable asset in this respect. In Kenya, the 5G network is expected to allow fashion consumers to virtually try on clothes.

# #7: Continuous Embrace of Traditional Fabric and Patterns in Fashion

The global fashion industry is moving towards embracing traditional African patterns and clothing. The patterns and fabric establish a fantastic blend with the unique clothing designs.

A recent example is the use of Kente designs in the 2021 Autumn-Winter men's Louis Vuitton collection by Virgil Abloh, a native Ghanaian.

“

“Virgil Abloh comes from Ghana and he is also the artistic director of a major clothing brand, so the use of Kente permits him to make reference to his own African origins. I think it's entirely legitimate to use a fabric that belongs to his culture, to his African identity. I think it's important that Virgil Abloh is doing this to introduce our culture into this pantheon of international fashion.”  
-Aristide Loua, founder of the Ivorian Kente Gentleman brand.

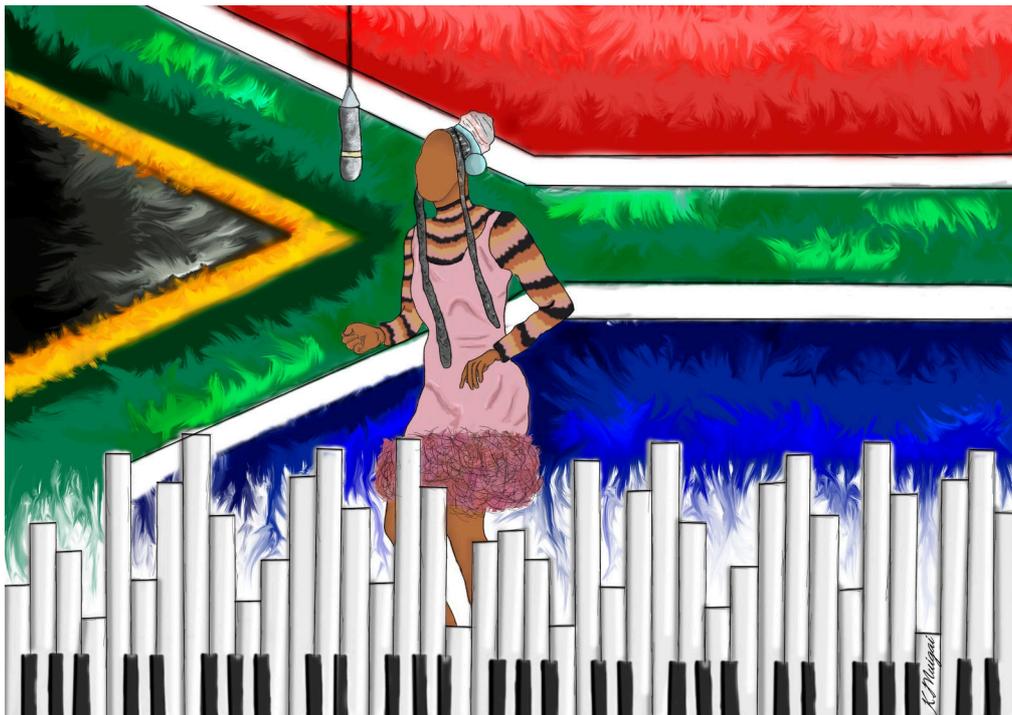


# #8: The Rise of Amapiano Music Genre

The increasing love of the Amapiano music genre from South Africa, throughout the African continent and beyond borders.

It is a combination of the Zulu plural article "ama" and the English noun "piano".

The genre is a hybrid of deep house, jazz and lounge music characterised by synths, airy pads and wide, percussive bass lines. Popular artists and DJ's in this genre are Major League DJs, Focalistic and Sho Madjozi.



“ The 26-minute documentary follows several artists that explain the origins of Amapiano, their rise to fame and the legacy they want to leave behind. The director of the film, Thabang "Papercutt" Moloto, was a fan of Amapiano since its humble beginnings. -Folklore Editorial, South Africa 2020.

“

FOR A CONTINENT THAT HAS THE YOUNGEST POPULATION, [AFRICA] SHOULD BE THE CENTRE OF THE WORLD.  
I MEAN THIS SHOULD BE THE CENTRE FOR THE FRESHEST IDEAS FOR INNOVATION AND EVERYTHING, AND THE  
CENTRE FOR WHICH PEOPLE CAN COME AND BRING THEIR IDEAS TO BRING GROWTH THAT WILL BENEFIT THE  
ENTIRE WORLD AS WELL.

-EDEM ADZOGENU, AFROCHAMPIONS.

”



Learn More about Gabriella Muigai

[VISIT INDLOVU ARTS](#)

# About The Thinking Watermill Society

The Thinking Watermill Society is a non-profit organization. In particular, it promotes the debate and exchange of ideas among its members regarding the changes underway in the economic, cultural and social landscape, together with the analysis of the consequences that said changes entail, so as to identify the possible opportunities of economic, cultural and social growth related to said changes.

Our headquarters are in Rome, Italy.

## Get Involved



"Ideas are what make us human. Ideas do not get handed to us by elites, the rich or the powerful. Ideas are not bounded by colour, race, gender or religion."

[VISIT OUR WEBSITE](#) | [CONTACT US](#)

Follow us

[LinkedIn](#) | [YouTube](#) | [Spreaker](#) | [Instagram](#)

2019 The Thinking Watermill Society - Non-profit Association. F.C. 96420540583. All rights reserved.