

Introduction

A country's digital competitiveness demonstrates how it leverages digital technology to drive economic growth, innovation, and societal development in the global digital economy. This executive summary will give a brief overview on South Africa's digital competitiveness against other countries who are part of BRICS that is China, Brazil, and India. Russia is excluded from this analysis due to unavailability of data on the available dataset. BRICS nations have been growing at a rapid pace over the past years and this analysis will look at South Africa's digital competitiveness as compared to the other BRICS nations. The summary will also look at South Africa's areas of strength and weakness, analyse the factors that contribute to South Africa's relative position in the digital economy, thereby informing strategies for improvement and growth in this critical sector.

The STEEP analysis framework was used to analyse the factors influencing South Africa's digital competitiveness. It groups analysis into Social, Technological, Economic, Environmental, and Political factors. Through this groups, the framework provides a comprehensive view of a country's digital competitiveness.

There are many indices that are used when assessing a country's digital competitiveness and, in this report, they have been grouped according to the STEEP analysis framework. Years with missing information have been excluded from the analysis.

Overview of South Africa's Digital Competitiveness:

Economic Factors

The economic environment provides the investments required towards technological development which is crucial for innovation and building a robust digital infrastructure. South Africa's economy in terms of IT & Media stock market capitalization has been steadily growing for the past 10 years which indicates that South Africa's digital industry is growing. Funding for technological development has been consistent throughout the past 10 years which shows the country's commitment to supporting growth and innovation. High-tech exports and the country's GDP per capita have been fluctuating over the years but no significant changes. Comparing South Africa to other BRICS nations in terms of the economic environment the country has lower funding for technological development compared to China and India though the margin is higher than that of Brazil. High tech exports are also lower than any other country in the BRICS nations group. South Africa GDP per capita is also lower compared to China and Brazil.

Technological and Environmental Factors

High bandwidth speed is essential for efficient digital communication and online services. South Africa's bandwidth speed has been steadily increasing for the past 10 years. This indicates a growing digital market though it is behind all other nations in the BRICS group. A skilled workforce is crucial for developing and implementing digital technologies and in terms of South Africa, levels of digital/Technological skills have not had any significant increases but instead South Africa has

maintained a certain level which is lower than China and India. Use of data and analytics to drive economic growth for South Africa is lower than China and India. A country that has high levels of agility means it has great potential for growth and innovation. South Africa's agility levels have been growing at an upward trend which shows that the country is moving with trends and thereby staying relevant and continuing to grow its digital competitiveness. Compared to other BRICS nation, SA is behind China and India whose nations are resource rich and more dynamic.

Social and Political Factors

South Africa's indicator for attitudes towards globalization has been fluctuating for the past 10 years though the changes are not significant. Openness to globalization influences international trade and digital collaboration, comparing South Africa's attitudes towards globalization to other BRICS nation South Africa ranked second between 2014 until 2016 but averagely for the past 10 years it ranked last which shows that other years the indices were lower. South Africa also ranks lower in terms of political factors that foster and govern environments conducive for innovation and growth. High-tech patents grants are an indicator of innovation and intellectual property generation. South Africa is behind in high-tech patent grants compared to China and India, reflecting lower levels of innovation. Management of cities support development of smart city initiatives and necessary digital infrastructure. South Africa city management rank is not far behind that of China and India, South Africa's management of cities indicator is higher than that of Brazil. For the past years South Africa's infrastructure has improved and is moving with the trends. A business environment that has well layered out rules and regulations foster growth as it encourages investment. South Africa's indicator for enforcing contracts is not far behind that of China and India and is ahead of Brazil, this shows that SA has a stable business environment.

Conclusion

Analysing South Africa's economic, environmental, political, social, and technological factors shows that these indicators have been on an upward trend for the past 10 years. South Africa's digital competitiveness strengths include having a higher value for IT & media stock market capitalization than any other BRICS nation indicating significant potential for increased innovation and development of digital services. SA has a higher number of science graduates after India. At a high-level overview South Africa falls behind China and India because their economies are ahead in terms of funding, high tech exports and GDP per capita. The other BRICS nations are also ahead of South Africa in terms of technological skills, agility, bandwidth speed and high-tech patents grants. South Africa has the potential to compete at higher level with other BRICS nations if the country continues to invest in research and technology, including increasing technological skills and creating conducive environments that foster innovation and growth through government policies and regulations.