



**EVIDENCE AND
METHODS LAB**



SHAPING UGANDA'S DIGITAL FUTURE:

**KEY INSIGHTS AND ACTIONS
FROM SODE 2025**



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Executive Summary

The 2025 State of the Digital Economy (SODE) forum, held on 26th September 2025 at Next Media Park in Kampala, marked a defining moment in Uganda's journey toward a digitally inclusive future. Convened under the theme "Making the Digital Economy Work for All," the event served as a high-level platform that united the country's leading voices in policy, innovation, research, and civil society. Organized by Next Media, in partnership with CIPESA, Evidence and Methods Lab (EML), and a coalition of key institutions, the forum underscored Uganda's commitment to building a digital ecosystem that is secure, inclusive, and people-centered.

Key government and regulatory bodies such as the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC), the National Information Technology Authority Uganda (NITA-U), the Uganda Institute of Information and Communications Technology (UICT), and the Ministry of ICT and National Guidance played pivotal roles in shaping the dialogue. The private sector and civic partners were equally visible, including BrighterMonday Uganda, Afro Mobile, Next Radio, Cerfodes, EML, CIPESA, the Google Developers Group (GDG) Kampala, and Soliton Telmec. Together, these organizations formed a unified front bridging policy, media, technology, and civil society to make Uganda's digital transformation both inclusive and sustainable.

Event Overview and Objectives

The SODE 2025 forum focused on assessing Uganda's digital economy, covering areas like Human Capital, Cybersecurity, Infrastructure, and Policy. Its objectives included identifying gaps in adoption, regulation, and access, strengthening collaboration across sectors, and creating evidence-based strategies for inclusive growth. Evidence & Methods Lab (EML) played a key role in advocating for research-driven decision-making and citizen-centered digital governance, emphasizing the importance of digital rights by reminding that *"what happens online doesn't stay online."*

Social Media and Digital Impact

The #SODE2025 event, held on September 26th, 2025, sparked remarkable online engagement, generating more than 12,000 social media posts across major platforms. Activity was most intense between 10:00 AM and 2:00 PM EAT, when participants and partners shared live updates, key quotes, and visual highlights from the sessions. In total, over 12,480 posts were recorded, reaching an estimated 1.3 million users globally. Twitter (X) emerged as the leading platform with 6,700+ posts, followed by Facebook with 3,200+ posts and Instagram with 2,580+ posts. The surge in activity reflected both strong in-country participation and growing regional interest in Uganda's digital transformation narrative.

Throughout the engagement window of SODE 2025, the most retweeted post came from Mr. Henry Ssebunya, highlighting the pivotal role of the Uganda Institute of Information and Communications Technology (UICT) in advancing digital human capital. This post perfectly encapsulated the event's central message: the critical need for strategic collaboration and skills development to foster sustainable digital growth. Alongside the hashtag #SODE2025, the most popular tags used included #StateOfTheDigitalEconomy, #NBSUpdates, and #NextRadioUG, which helped amplify the event's visibility across various media networks.

In terms of geographic distribution, Uganda dominated with 72% of the online conversations, followed by Kenya and Rwanda with 15%. The remaining 13% came from global audiences, primarily from Ugandan diaspora communities and international digital economy stakeholders. The event's institutional engagement played a crucial role in driving these conversations. Posts and mentions by key government and regulatory bodies, such as the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC), National Information Technology Authority (NITA-U), and the Ministry of ICT and National Guidance, collectively garnered over 8,000 interactions, showcasing the active involvement of the public sector.

The broader 2025 digital trends reflected the growing global digital landscape, with over 5.24 billion social media users worldwide, accounting for 63.9% of the global population. In line with these trends, short-form videos achieved the highest engagement rates during SODE 2025, followed by image posts and live tweet threads, which proved to be the most effective formats for engaging the audience. The event's average engagement rate of 2.1% per post not only aligned with but often exceeded global benchmarks, emphasizing the power of well-curated, real-time storytelling in driving impactful digital participation within Uganda's burgeoning innovation ecosystem.



Key note speeches

The SODE 2025 forum brought together voices of insight, innovation, and advocacy that captured the heart of the event. Hon. Nyombi Thembo, Executive Director of UCC, stressed the importance of making digital services more accessible by advocating for the removal of taxes on entry-level smartphones. ***“Removing taxes on entry-level smartphones can increase the uptake of digital services,”*** he said, highlighting the need for policy changes to make technology more affordable for all Ugandans.

Dr. Hatwib Mugasa, Executive Director of NITA-U, echoed the importance of building strong digital foundations for the future. ***“We need to plan in policy and implementation on how to deploy sustainable digital systems like UG Hub, a free channel connecting government systems,”*** he remarked, calling for a coordinated effort to ensure the digital services are sustainable and integrated across government platforms.

From the academic side, Ssebunya Henry, Senior Lecturer at UICT, raised an important point about cybersecurity. ***“Do people in the cybersecurity space have visibility in their information infrastructure?”*** he asked, urging the sector to enhance its focus on security. Phyan Karinge, from the Product Management Masterclass, reminded innovators about the reality of digital business. ***“If a customer can’t pay for your services, you’re running a hobby,”*** he said, emphasizing the need for solutions that are both innovative and financially viable.

In a creative twist, Danze Edwin, from Next Media and Afro Mobile, posed an intriguing question: ***“If content is king, who is the prime minister?”*** sparking conversation on the true power dynamics within the digital space.

From a regulatory standpoint, Eng. Arnold B. Mujuni of UCC shared an exciting update, saying, ***“There has been development of 35 websites for 35 district unions,”*** marking progress in digital governance. Xenia Wachira, Country Manager at BrighterMonday Uganda, raised an important concern about workforce development, asking, ***“Looking at human capital, how are we solving today’s talent matchmaking crisis?”*** highlighting the ongoing need for skilled workers in Uganda’s growing digital economy.

Ruth Aber, a Digital Legal Expert, grounded the conversation in the reality of Uganda’s digital growth, stating, ***“With 34 million mobile subscriptions and over 14 million internet users in Uganda, our digital actions are growing exponentially, but do we know what happens after we click send?”***

Lastly, Evidence and Methods Lab reminded everyone of the importance of digital rights and cybersecurity, stressing, ***“Every click, every upload, and every transaction creates digital traces. These are not private, they can travel far beyond what we imagine. What happens online doesn’t stay online. Awareness is your first line of defense.”***



Key Observations and Learnings



Best-performing content: Short-form videos (15–60s reels), speaker quote cards, and live photo updates.



Engagement windows: Morning (7:30–9:30 AM), midday (12:00–2:00 PM), and evening recaps (7:00–9:00 PM).



Top engagement drivers: Partner tagging, strong visuals, and multiple hashtags



Missed opportunities: Limited live polls and regional amplification; underutilization of LinkedIn's professional reach.



Accessibility: Some videos lacked captions and alt text, future events should prioritize inclusive content.

Recommendations for SODE 2026

Hashtag Strategy: Use #SODE2026 as the primary hashtag and #DigitalEconomy, #InnovationUG, and #BeSecureByDefault as secondary, limiting to 2–3 tags per post and following a standardized style guide.

Social Media Roadmap: Create engaging content before, during, and after the event with speaker cards, countdowns, live video clips, Q&A polls, and post-event infographics and highlight reels.

Influencer Partnerships: Engage thought leaders and influencers in the digital economy 2 weeks before the event and encourage youth ambassadors to share content using the event hashtags.

Analytics Discipline: Track all links with UTM codes, and measure reach, engagement, new followers, and click-through rates on each platform.

Visual Accessibility: Prioritize open captions on videos, use high-contrast visuals, and provide descriptive alt text for images to ensure accessibility.

Conclusion

The forum showcased that Uganda's digital transformation is more than just a policy initiative it is a collective movement driven by collaboration, innovation, and inclusion. With over 12,000 posts, 1.3 million users reached, and conversations ranging from policy frameworks to cybersecurity, SODE 2025 proved that Uganda is not only ready for the digital future, but is actively shaping it.

Looking ahead to SODE 2026, the focus will be on maintaining this momentum turning discussions into actionable policy, and transforming ideas into tangible results that ensure the digital economy benefits everyone. It's about continuing to build on the foundation laid by SODE 2025, ensuring that the vision for Uganda's digital future becomes a reality that works for all citizens.