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Data Sovereignty - The African Mint.

Data has emerged as one of the most valuable strategic resources of the twenty-first century, driving innovation, artificial intelligence (AI), economic competitiveness, and evidence-based governance. Despite Africa's abundant natural resources and rapidly expanding digital population, the continent continues to derive limited economic value from its data due to low levels of data literacy, inadequate digital infrastructure, fragmented governance frameworks, and dependence on foreign-owned digital platforms. Consequently, African-generated data is frequently collected, processed, and monetised outside the continent, limiting opportunities for sustainable economic growth and reinforcing digital dependency. This research investigates the impact of data literacy and data sovereignty on African economic development by examining their complementary roles in enabling digital transformation. Data literacy is conceptualised as the ability to collect, analyse, interpret, communicate, and ethically utilise data to support informed decision-making, innovation, and entrepreneurship. Data sovereignty is defined as the capacity of nations to govern, protect, store, and strategically utilise data generated within their jurisdictions while safeguarding national interests, privacy, and digital rights. Together, these concepts provide the foundation for resilient digital economies capable of supporting AI, scientific research, public policy, healthcare, agriculture, financial inclusion, and industrial development.

Drawing upon contemporary scholarly literature and the conceptual framework presented in Data Sovereignty: The New Currency – The African Mint, this research argues that sustained investment in digital education, sovereign data infrastructure, robust governance frameworks, and AI-ready ecosystems is essential for Africa's future competitiveness. It concludes that strengthening data literacy and data sovereignty will enable African countries to capture greater value from their digital resources, foster innovation, enhance economic resilience, reduce technological dependency, and position the continent as a competitive participant in the global digital economy.

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