

Google Kenya's Charles Murito on digital advertising and the age of assistance

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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Google SA hosted a media event earlier this week to bring media practitioners across Africa up to speed on the latest technological advancements in the digital advertising space, focusing on Google Ads in particular.

One of the speakers, Charles Murito, country manager of Google Kenya went into detail about this evolution of advertising from a digital perspective and the new age of assistance we're entering.



Charles Murito, country manager of Google Kenya | futureiskenya.co.ke

The initial focus for Google back in 1998 was on building the product – the actual search engine – and one that works well.

Advertising on the platform only came a couple of years later, and it all began with the humble search ad in 2000 when Google started monetising its audience through online advertising.

This presents a unique opportunity for marketers wanting to deliver relevant and timely messages, but it's still the advertiser's responsibility to create compelling ads.

“*“The most disruptive thing in the market is not technology, but rather the customer.” Google Kenya Country Manager, @njenga_cm, quoting Tiffani Bova. He argues that for advertising this is very critical. #Google4BizSSA pic.twitter.com/bTa97pxMuA— Google in Africa (@googleafrica) February 5, 2018*”

While digital advertising has changed, the marketer's job has stayed the same. Although marketers are now faced with a new set of challenges, one being that their customers now 'live' online.

This notion of customers living online is driven by changes in the infrastructure – cheaper devices and lower data prices. Thus, the growth of internet usage in Africa has increased over the last three to four years. Since 2014, South Africa's has grown from 48 to 65%, Nigeria's has only grown one percentage point from 62 to 63% and Kenya's has increased to 53% from 45, and according to Murito, these figures will continue to increase.

Search has also seen massive growth, in terms of users searching online. What's unique about Africa in this regard, says Murito, is "the phenomenon whereby people search on their mobiles more than anywhere else". In fact, Nigeria is one of the top three countries in the world in this regard, and Kenya and SA are not far behind. Year-on-year from Q4 2016 to Q4 2017, Nigeria had a share of 76%-86% searches on smartphones, Kenya went from 74% to 81% and South Africa 61%-67%.

YouTube watch time over the past 12 months has also grown massively. Nigeria experienced a +120% year-on-year growth in terms of YouTube watch time, Kenya's grew +110% year-on-year and SA's by +90%.

As a result, internet advertising revenue has skyrocketed to the extent that in 2016, for the first time, brands spent more money advertising online than on TV, according to the PwC Entertainment and Media Outlook 2017-2021. The report predicts that by 2020, this is going to total \$1bn across the three regions.



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Danette Breitenbach 27 Sep 2017



This means marketers need to follow their customers online, and with programmatic it's now possible to do this more efficiently than ever.

Another challenge that marketers are presented with today, is that brands are not only competing with each other, they're actually competing with experiences.

With the internet, consumers are more mindful and better informed when it comes to buying a product or service. They're more curious, demanding and impatient, so "as an advertiser, you have to think about how to engage those consumers in a way that they remember you."

What's particularly interesting, though, is their search habits, and understanding these is the first step to making sure your brand has a strong, informative online presence and is top of mind. Here are some that Murito pointed out:

- Not only are people spending a lot of time researching, but they're researching things that seem trivial, like "best mattress protector".
- Local searches without "near me" have outgrown comparable searches that include "near me".
- More than 140% increase in mobile searches for "where to buy (product)."
- 2x increase in same-day shipping services.
- 150% increase in travel searches for "today and tonight."
- 3x increase in "open now" searches.

"These are just some the changes we're seeing in terms of those search habits. The next thing we're seeing is this notion of assistance," says Murito.

Assistance is the new battleground for growth

It is critical for brands to anticipate their customers' wants and needs. It's no longer good enough to be present on the shelf when people 'show up'. People now want you, as a brand owner, to tell them what they need.

Steve Jobs told *Business Week*:

“ A lot of times, people don't know what they want until you show it to them. ”

That's what Apple did with the iPhone. "It's about taking the data points you're acquiring from your customers, analysing that and really anticipating the needs of your customers in a manner that helps them save time," explains Murito. This is why a lot of brands are investing heavily in data science. The ability to take your data and turn it into insights is what's going to enable you to optimise micro-moments, drive revenue for your business and ultimately differentiate those who win and those who lose.

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