

AI will be more powerful than fire in the future

We need to prepare for a future when everyone uses the internet on their phone, says Linah Maigurira, Google head of retail, sub-Saharan Africa, who spoke to *Bizcommunity.com*, following on a Google retail innovation workshop late last year.



Linah Maigurira, retail industry manager, Google South Africa.

Zimbabwean-born Maigurira works with top South African pureplay and bricks and mortar retail advertisers to design digital marketing strategies that grow their businesses. She has built up a wealth of knowledge in digital marketing, having worked with over 200 clients across over 10 industries, including retail, insurance, finance and travel. Her expertise ranges from media strategy, measurement, audience solutions, UX and attribution, to name a few.

Google recently announced the Equiano subsea cable from Portugal to South Africa, as Google sees a tremendous opportunity across the board for cloud. The cloud market is still in its infancy globally, and Google is experiencing momentum with companies of all sizes and industries across Africa.

Two key trends

Two key trends Maigurira raised, are how mobile is transforming the retail ecosystem; and how artificial intelligence will be more powerful than fire or electricity in the future.



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"Mobile is transforming retail in a big way. eCommerce is the biggest accelerator of that growth in retail. While many retail channels have slowed, eCommerce continues to be a key area of growth.

Retail continues to advance digital: global digital retail sales will increase 17% of all B2C sales by 2022, up from 12% today.

She said:

"Two in three consumers now expect personalisation. Before many people shop, they have done their research. Consumers are walking into stores with intent to buy, having done the research, but they also want an experience from retailers."

"Artificial intelligence is going to be more powerful than fire or electricity in the future. It really is transformative," said Maigurira, who pointed out that consumer adoption of new technologies and user patterns was also helping business to innovate.



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"The retailers that will survive are those who will connect to this connected consumer. Retailers have an incredible opportunity to transform all areas of their business, powered by the Cloud, to enable them to become more flexible."

Mission of marketers

Google Cloud's strategy in South Africa is to use its partners to take its cloud solution to market, via its Value Added Distributor Digicloud Africa. Google has thousands of partners in its rapidly-growing, vibrant ecosystem. In South Africa, 98% of retail sales still happen in physical stores. E-commerce is growing, Maigurira said, but the digital influence on the path to purchase is expected to grow. Customers are researching up to seven shopping categories a week online.



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“Customers today have high expectations, they respond to experiences that are timely, targeted and tailored to their specific needs and reject those that aren’t,” Maigurira told *Bizcommunity.com*. “The mission of marketing is to acquire customers; retain customers; and grow customers into brand loyal supporters – they need to put customers at the centre.”

Marketers do, however, struggle with data silos and only 13% of organisations say they’re making the most of their available customer data and Maigurira pointed out that the partnership between IT and marketing is more important than ever before.

“*Digital is still too small a proportion of marketing efforts. Marketing spend on digital is still under 5%. The rest is above the line. That is shocking given the share of time spent on online platforms vs offline systems. Brands are remapping to understand where their consumers are. It is about transforming organisational mindsets and shifting them.*”



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11 Sep 2018



Part of the problem is the legacy success of retailers – they continue to spend where they have had success in the past. But, Maigurira says for digital to be successful, siloed ecosystems need to be brought together.

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