



How the internet becomes your silver bullet - embrace it and take aim.

About the Writer

Miriam Nansubuga is a Chartered Accountant with Bank of Uganda and also provides some support to Inachee.com, an ethical thought leadership and advisory firm with offices in Kampala and London.

Foreword by D. E Wasake, Principal of Inachee

The internet has the capacity to disrupt the Status quo of established business models.

In 2010, per Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) there were only 645,000 internet subscribers. By 2013, in the space of only 3 years, there were 3.5m subscribers, a 551% increase!

At this rate, I predict that by end of 2014, there will be over 8 million internet subscribers in Uganda. This is significant in itself because 50% of Uganda's 36million population is below 15, which means of the remaining 18m who are above 15, about half of these are connected to the internet!

A further key point to note is that many of these new users are what is called "Millennials".

The current generation of users who are 18 – 34 years of age. It is important to understand their mindset.

Miriam's article provides an insight to the Ugandan millennial. Enjoy the reading!

Introduction

This is me. I spend my life surfing the internet mostly on a mobile device, my attention span is so short and instant gratification to me means, "Can I have that yesterday?"

You can pretty much get to know about me by liking me on *Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or LinkedIn*.

Born in the 80s, (it will have to be another article to disclose my exact age) I am in the generation group referred to as the millennials (1980-2000 babies).

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Reaching the East Africa Market

Research shows that millennials or the Gen-Y group is bigger than the baby boomers of the 1960s. In the United States alone for example, there are 80 million millennials. This group also happens to make up the biggest generation of customers worldwide.

For a Small and Medium Size Enterprise (SME) looking to thrive knowing who to market to, is one thing, knowing how to market to them is another.

As SMEs in the region embrace the commercial benefits of the East African Community (EAC), the role of the internet in reaching potential customers cannot be ignored.

Among other statistics, the population size of the EAC member countries combined is 141.8 million. For an SME in Katwe this means the customer base has increased from the 36.8 million Ugandans.

Before getting dizzy with the numbers, let us examine how an SME owner in Katwe can reach the 36.8 on hand and then the 105million (in East Africa).

Will Nkalubo & Sons of Katwe ever get online?

Truth be told the only time I am in Katwe is when I am making a trip to the beach or the airport. It is a slum area with a reputation for pick-pockets. Along the way welders line the road side.

A particular one - *Nkalubo and Sons Since 1990* stands out. It has been there for over 20 years. Surely they have developed in their craft. I suppose if i ever need a welder I will check out *Nkalubo and Sons Since 1990* online.

I know this is wishful thinking because although Nkalubo and Sons makes a decent sum to invest (an almost insignificant sum by the way) in a website, the thought has perhaps never crossed his mind.

Convenience, to millennials adds value and satisfaction.

Customers like me like to do a little digging before the visit. I like the convenience of information without having to call or travel to a business location. Convenience, to millennials adds value and satisfaction.

A good website is almost cost free advertising and publicity but the return on investment is quite significant. An informed millennial customer is a potential customer. Millennials do not like to talk on the phone to strangers. We like to click, touch and swipe for information.

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We like to click, touch and swipe for information. What we need is easy access to said information to help us make a buy decision quickly so that we do not delay the gratification any longer.”

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Look out for our comments

While we do not like to talk to strangers we like to chat and share experiences with them. A good business website allows for customer interaction and feedback. This can go either way.

If we do not like your product or service, we are going to tell the world first and then you. If we like you, we are going to tell you and then the world. If your website has an interactive page however, we are going to tell you first in any situation good or bad.

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Seek our opinions (we are kinda deluded you know)

In our generation we are deluded enough to think that we shall all be wildly famous someday. For SMEs this is your opportunity to make our dreams come true. Engage us in a little market research online on new or existing products and services. Seek our honest, raw opinions.

Kim Kardashian, a famous American socialite and entrepreneur made use of this little known fact. For her debut fragrance she invited her *Twitter* and *Facebook* followers to choose the bottle design. Winners were invited to meet and greet their favourite celebrity.

The great big internet is a potent marketing tool for SMEs. There is no other place a business owner is likely to grasp the attention of so many prospective customers than online.

Your website is the trick!

The trick is in an interactive, reliable, regularly updated website. Interactive, reliable and updated cannot be over emphasised. A solid web presence is worth millions in advertising since it speaks the language of your biggest customer base ever.

The writer is a consultant with Inachee Uganda Limited as well as an Accountant with Bank of Uganda.