

Mobile users choose internet browsing over making calls

According to the Communications Commission of Kenya (CCK), Kenyans are using their mobile phones for internet browsing rather than making calls.

The CCK revealed in its annual statistics report, internet usage as measured at the end of the final quarter of fiscal year 2011-2012 is significantly up from the same period last year, with internet now used by approximately 7.7 million people. This demonstrates a 19.2% increase on last year's figures, when the internet subscriber base lingered at 6.4 million. The number of annual subscriptions has rocketed 81.7% over the fiscal year.

98.9% of these internet subscribers use the internet over their mobile devices, showing an increasing trend among the Kenyan population to use their mobile phone for internet browsing rather than making calls.

The CCK concluded that the huge increase in the internet user base is attributed to the vast improvement in internet infrastructure; notably, an increase in international connectivity bandwidth which has seen a 58% increase over the fiscal year. International connectivity bandwidth currently weighs in at 264 584 Mbps measured in Q4, representing 46% of total available bandwidth in the East African country; the total bandwidth capacity measuring 574 704 Mbps³.

The ups and downs

Mobile phone subscription rates also saw a significant growth over the last quarter and the year. In Q4 the mobile subscriber base grew 1.7%, while over the whole year the number of subscribers grew by 17.5%. 99.1% of Q4 mobile subscriptions were for pre-paid lines.

Voice usage for mobile phones is reported to have seen a decline over the final quarter, with voice traffic dropping 6.9% from Q3 figures. While in the third quarter the CCK recorded 6.8 billion minutes of traffic, this figure was down at 6.3 billion minutes for the final quarter.

The CCK pointed to declines in traffic reported by both Safaricom and Airtel - which together dominate 80.5% of the market as measured by subscription rates. Safaricom noted a 5.3% drop in voice traffic, whereas Airtel suffered a 37.6% decrease.

The conclusions to be drawn are that an increasing number of Kenyan are joining up to the mobile phone network across Kenya - East Africa's largest economy - however, most of these subscribers seem to be shifting their focus as to the primary use of their mobile devices. Mobiles are no longer used mostly for voice usage, but rather users are relying on mobile devices for their internet browsing purposes.

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