

Emphasising interactive kiosks' role in retail sector



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There are just over 1000 interactive kiosks in South Africa's retail sector, compared to between 50 000 and 100 000 in the US where they were introduced some 15-20 years ago, it was revealed yesterday. Therefore, a conference aimed at emphasising the vital role of interactive kiosks is due to take place in Johannesburg this year.

An interactive kiosk is a computer-like device deployed in a public venue to give people self-service access to products and services. Interactive kiosks installed at Johannesburg's OR Tambo International Airport, for instance, serve as check-in tools for people who don't want to stand in queues.

"We are lagging far behind in terms of interactive kiosks compared to other parts of the world such as Europe and US," kiosk consultant Frank Nunan, of the Kiosk Shop, told *Bizcommunity.com* yesterday, Thursday 15 April 2010, in Sandton.

Expensive but necessary

The interactive kiosk, which Nunan described as an expensive technology aimed at enhancing shopper and user experience, was introduced here 10 years ago. It is high time the country understood its huge relevance, he said.

"I have been talking to government in the past six years or so, including the departments of communications, home affairs, health and many others, but none of them is yet to budge."

He said some organisations are still hesitant because of the high cost of this technology, but the overall impression is that they have begun to realise that they do need it now more than ever.

That is why JusTTouchIT and Expo is hosting a conference next month to give all potential deployers of kiosks and kiosk networks, integrators and potential suppliers an in-depth look at the industry, benefits of self-service, and its revenue and relevance in the current economic climate. The conference, which will give ideas and insights about digital media, will take place on 4-5 May 2010 at the Midrand Conference Centre in Halfway House.

But some observers continue to wonder why the country needs this technology because there are people who are tasked to service customers at public venues.

Strategic planning

Nunan said: "No matter where kiosks are deployed, be it in the retail sector, the public sector, human resources and so on,

you are always dealing with a customer or user, and your kiosks must always be part of an overall communications strategy.

“Wherever customer service is crucial, self-service or kiosk technology is on the rise.”

It is believed that these installations are growing at a rate of at least 35% per annum in Europe.

“Airports are installing check-in kiosks, supermarkets are adding terminals to more branches every day, banks offer their customers more sophisticated service by kiosk, and fast food has become faster by kiosk,” Nunan said, adding that applications and opportunities are endless.

For more information on JusTTouchIT 2010 conference:

- Bizcommunity: [IBM sponsors JusTTouchIT 2010](#)
- JusTTouchIT: www.justtouchit.co.za

ABOUT ISSA SIKITI DA SILVA

Issa Sikiti da Silva is a winner of the 2010 SADC Media Awards (print category). He freelances for various media outlets, local and foreign, and has travelled extensively across Africa. His work has been published both in French and English. He used to contribute to Bizcommunity.com as a senior news writer.

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