

## ***Google in Uganda***

Google featured in 3 different ways on the I-Network list, in January, Dr. Nkuuhe, announced Uganda would be the home base for the new Google regional Director, Google <http://www.google.com> is the leading search engine. Members of the I-Network list welcomed the regional director and expressed hope that Uganda would be able to benefit more from having her presence.

Later in the month, one of our valued members Kato talked about Google's brand power. *"As I drove to work today, I tuned in to BBC Network Africa. My favorite Presenter Audrey Brown was discussing the Jan 14, 2009 UN Security Council resolution giving Eritrea a five-week ultimatum to withdraw her forces from the disputed border region of Ras Doumeira and the island of Doumeira. Eritrean Ambassador to the UN Mr. Araya Desta was arguing passionately about Djibouti's aggression and Eritrea's "justified claim" to the territory. As he approaches the tail ends of his discussion, Desta points BBC listeners to Google Maps as a credible reference to Eritrea's claims. At this point, I turn to my wife and, with all the sobriety of a Catholic Priest at Confession, tell her... "this is the zenith of power in modern day Brand Management!" of course with her innocence of Online Brand wars (Sorry Barbara) she couldn't care less if Google was an online car dealership, a porn site or a gambling lounge. All she knows is that when she needs to read up on recent medical advancements in cardio therapeutic procedures, Google is her biggest ally.*

*But, friends, notice how Google has advanced from strength to strength since the days of Alta Vista. Google has now become a common verb ("...oh yes Angela checked in a short while ago but for the life of me I can't figure out where she went or what she's up to. You may have to Google her in the customer care section..."). Today, according to Araya Desta, Google can be ranked among the world's credible authorities in international territorial demarcations. Is it conceivable that Google could one day be called in by Governments to arbitrate at International Disputes of this magnitude?*

*I find this very impressive. "*

*This sentiment was echoed by Simon Peter, "Impressive indeed, looking at the reality of things, Google is no longer just any search engine, its the first point of reference for almost anything for anyone (even when looking for a website and you don't remember the title properly), rarely will you find someone referencing a yahoo or hotmail search, ask.com search or any of her search engine, i remember in the days when yahoo and hotmail were the search engines of choice seems like a very distant memory." And Joachim "Friend, Google will be the cause of international disputes! I am only beginning to understand the kind of things one would do with Google. Even some Ugandans say '...Google can do anything, short of picking your nose, or ironing your clothes'. There's even this quote closer to home from 2 years ago 'the Israelis have Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV's), the 'bad guys' have Google maps..."*

We believe the usefulness of Google and how Ugandans can benefit from it is summed up by the statement and pertinent questions sent in by Badru "Guys

*Google is just your modern intelligent library. They do not create the data they just know where it is on the internet. I think more of the worry is how society handles all this available information. Do we do good or bad with all this new information that our fore fathers did not have so readily. And what measures do we put in place to not only maintain the freedom of expression brought about but also somehow maintain a level of autonomy.*

*Some are still fighting to maintain sovereignty. But the question is what are the benefits. I remember how the British fought to maintain the pound as opposed to the Euro, however it looks like the choice no longer exists. How many of us here quote prices in dollars ???.*

*In short the internet is changing everything and Google, facebook, YouTube along with a number of other applications are changing the world as we know it.*

*The big question for us in Africa is how will we share in this new connected and contracted world ?. Are we going to once again settle for the last place in the queue as it was in the last era or do we actively participate and gain an equal share of the new digital pie ?*

*When you look at current share of internet number resources Africa has 14% of the worlds population yet we have less than 3% of the number resources and of those 3% at least 1% are in south Africa.*

*I bring this up cause we have all been led to believe that for us to participate in the digital world we need to connect to the internet and thus we need to have expensive access. Allot of the information that most of us need is locally available but not digitised so we end up borrowing foreign information on the net which comes with a big price. We should now start creating our local information and holding it locally once we have built up a good amount the rest of the world will actually pay for the internet pipes to get the information as opposed to what we do today. We create our information and host it in Europe and the US and then pay heavily to get to it. Where is the logic ???*

*On the positive side forward looking companies like Google are investing heavily in Africa maybe those of us who can see opportunities might benefit.*

*It's all about information and who knows where it is and how to package it for you.... that's the brave new world and today Google seems to be able to do that for most of us. I used to have a saying for all my new employees whenever they asked an obvious question "Google is your Friend" "*

Finally again on Google, members of the I-Network list were invited for a Google Earth/ Google Map Maker Training, it was organized by Google and Makerere University Faculty of Computing and IT. It was a hands on training intended to expose the trainees to different mapping tools used by Google. Tim Mwandha gave feedback on the training on the list " I would like to add my thanks too, to Rachel, Mark, Michael et al for introducing me to the world of Google... I was able to learn how to use the map maker, my maps on Google maps and the Google earth applications in the day-to-day activities of my life, and the two days away from my office were well worth it."