Extracts from Digital-Life-Design (DLD14) conference

Ask Afrika's CEO Andrea Rademeyer recently attended the invitation-only Digital-Life-Design (DLD 14) conference in Munich.

The Burda group, one of the biggest print media businesses in Europe, owns DLD. It started this conference 10 years ago in order to digitise its own print world and have since expanded into other digital areas, through its thought leadership. She presents some key takeouts.

This conference presented global cutting-edge thinking and developments, which are thought to influence the immediate future of business. There were over 150 speakers and 1000 attendees and DLD14 brought together the most influential opinion-makers, industry leaders, start-ups and digital giants to celebrate its anniversary edition.

"Imagine restaurants beaming the menu onto the guest's smartphone and allowing the order to be sent straight to the bar/kitchen. Guests can pay and leave, without waiting for the bill. 'Shopnow' rewards consumers for entering a store, scanning a product and when taking too much time to buy, offers a discount. Eye lenses may be able to measure your insulin levels and send a message to your phone with required dosage. Sensor-driven watches will measure your mood and adjust the colour scheme of your home accordingly through the lighting system and paint."

The tagline for the conference was, 'Connect the unexpected!'

Some of the key take-outs were that Google creates billionaire brand owners, through its innovation and acquisition of life-tracking internet software, for example Nest (which was sold for US $3.2 billion by Google in January 2014). Google earns a $billion per month from its knowledge of human behaviour at $1.5 million per hour profit.

The internet gives power to big ideas with small budgets

- Technology is now becoming wearable, for example Google Glass and Jawbone.
- There is a widening digital divide between the US, Asia and Europe.
- Advertising has to reach consumers on a personal level and ad-free communication, like WhatsApp, Line and Snapchat, is growing.
- People are seeking out online consumer reviews and ratings of schools, doctors, hospital, hotels, through services like Yelp.
- The protection of personal information has been a big issue recently, highlighted by the NSA (Snowden) Scandal.

- The future will see responsive homes, mobile medicine, invisible technology through smaller and smaller devices, 3D printing systems, immersive gaming and telematics in vehicles.

Data is new economy

Data is the new oil for the economy; people you do not know exploit personal data. This is the mineral rights moment - it is important to own your data, monetise it or another corporate will. As data citizens, we must be vigilant with our data.

The authentication level of the internet will be re-worked, in order to put human beings at the centre of the internet, as opposed to companies. We are objects of the internet and we as individuals should want to be the subjects.

AI restrictions needed?

McKinsey forecasts that in the next decade close to 140 million jobs will be replaced by computers, by artificial intelligence (AI). This will have a huge impact on the middle market. Lord Martin Rees, a professor at the University of Cambridge demands that AI limits to be set for robots.

Google has committed to not building military products anymore. GoogleNow aims to replace all personal assistant planning functions for the individual consumer. The futurist Ray Kurzweil develops artificial consciousness for Google robots, which allows them to understand and copy human behaviour, only in the service environment, currently.

Ten years from now computer screens will have totally disappeared into wearables. The internet will be invisible since it is integrated into everything we use and do. In five years from now, it will be all about 'reaching the audience'- regardless of platform (TV, radio, internet) or channel (bricks/ internet). Outdoor will boom- because we are moving to a permanently multi-screen environment (RealCloudPlayer). WPP or Publicis might rather represent the consumer, than the advertiser.

Facebook, Google to dominate financial industry

When Facebook (FB) and Twitter launched ten years ago, BBM was big, now social media networks are common currency in personal and business spheres worldwide. When Facebook acquired Instagram in 2012, for nearly US $1 billion, Instagram employed only 13 people, whilst WhatsApp, which employed 50 people and had a 2013 turnover of US $20 million was recently bought by FB for US $19 billion.

WhatsApp has 18 billion messages and 500 million photos sent per day. It is a small company and, with the low cost base, it commits to having no ads, no games and no gimmicks. It was predicted that in 10 years, Google and FB would dominate the financial industry.

Less known to the layman is the social network ResearchGate to which 60% of global scientists have accounts. This is revolutionary in the sharing of ideas as 90% of science has negative results and thus never are reported.

Failed experiments get no attention. However, people can learn from negative results as well. Often communication of scientific results is influenced by religion and ResearchGate breaks through these barriers and leads to scientific breakthroughs. For example, Nigerian researchers collaborate with an Italian professor to discover new kind of 'bird flu'. This creates a tree of science and it is possible to taxonomise data sets.

"We need open science- we already have open source, they want to disrupt the scientific publishing world to create the highest standards," comments Rademeyer.

Speakers from whom the insights above were gleaned include:

- Arianna Huffington (The Huffington Post Media Group)
- David Kirkpatrick & James Whittaker (Microsoft)
- Diane Brady (Bloomberg)
- Evgeny Morozov (Stanford University)
- Fabien Costeau (Bonnet Rouge)
- Greg Harper (Haper Vision)
- Ijad Madisch (ResearchGate)
- Jan Koum (WhatsApp)
- Jeremy Stoppelman (Yelp)
- Jimmy Wales (Wikipedia)
- John Brockman (Edge)
- Kathy Xiaosi Gong (KG Inc)
- Markus Siebrecht (AUDI)
- Nassim Taleb (NYU)
- Noam Bardin (Mapping/Google/ Waze)

- Paulo Coelho (Author)
- Rob Glaser (Realplayer)
- Rod Beckstrom (Obama's digital security)
- Shyam Sankar (Palantir Technologies)

- Tony Faddell (Nest)

"The pace at which our lives become more digital is breathtaking. Big data has gone from cutting-edge to commodity and mobility and modernity are the new buzzwords in our increasingly digital lifestyles. The quality of networks will determine the pecking order of countries and is a key factor of economic growth," concludes Rademeyer.