TELEPHONY> THOSE WITH BUTTERFINGERS NEED NOT WORRY AS SECURITY IS RIGHT HERE

Liquid protecting phone screens trickles to Kenya

World now moving away from the too common glass sealings version

BY JOSEPH SOSI
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Smartphones are perhaps the most delicate gadgets in any Kenyan household with users being too attached and often have them closest than anything else.

Those with their phone screens intact tend to think they are the most responsible owners but a slight matter of clumsiness could ruin everything.

The small devices on which Kenyan households spend more money than what they use on electricity and water according to the World Bank, are highly susceptible to breakages.

Most manufacturers provide glass protectors but today new technology borrowed from China could soon be the much-needed remedy for the fear that grips many whenever their phones fall or hit hard objects. The nano-liquid screen protection technique is slowly penetrating the Kenyan market. It involves addition of an invisible liquid layer to mobile phone screens, making them sturdy.

Data from Calcare, the largest formal after-sales service provider in Kenya reveals that most smartphone owners seek informal repair services, at least 14,000 phones had screen replacements between the months of April and June in Nairobi.

Nairobi regional manager for Calcare, Mr George Aloo, said there were way more Kenyans who break their phones' screens given a good number of them seek the services elsewhere.

"The numbers are from our three outlets in Nairobi and for Thika. Many more go elsewhere but the risk is that in most cases spare parts given are substandard and always end up being problematic," says Aloo.

A survey by US firm SquareTrade in 2018 found that smartphone owners accidentally broke more than 50 million phone screens in the previous year. This means that nearly two phones could be broken every second in the US.

The firm's findings also revealed that replacing those screens cost those rocking broken phones a whopping $3.4 billion (Sh351.4 billion).

In the last two months, Khaclar Abdi Hukun, has been working from the leading shopping malls in Nairobi as a nano-liquid screen protector installation expert.

We meet Abdi at Embakasi's Southfield Mall where he offers the services with two of his colleagues.

Abdi is quick to note that the process of superimposing the screen protector takes just three minutes and a user would only need to replace it after three years.

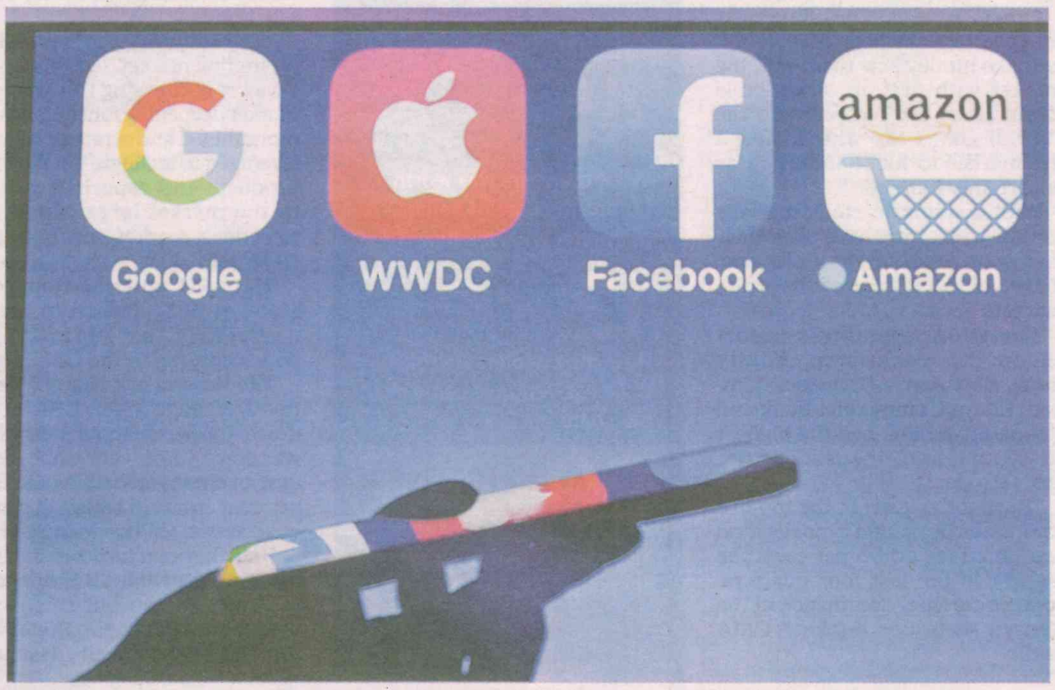
His desk has an electric drill. He switches it on and runs it on a customer's phone immediately after installing the liquid technology to prove that indeed one's phone screen would withstand any potential cause of a crack.

"We are getting customers who have the normal screen protectors but this is new technology and it is extraordinary. We remove the protectors and apply the liquid directly on the screen. It is then laminated using a machine for a few minutes and one is good to go," says Abdi.

The protective coating makes the screen ultra-scratch resistant without adding more thickness to the devices' screen.

The feature is also tipped to make devices anti-reflective such that one would easily use it even in the sun.

Abdi confirms that the liquid used in the process is imported from China, mostly comprising silicon dioxide.



A smartphone being operated in front of GAFA logos (acronym for Google, Apple, Facebook and Amazon web giants) as background.
FILE | NATION

Why Africa is now the place to pump cash

BY MEHRTEAB LEUL KOKEB AND HAANEE KHAN

Africa's economic outlook is on the up with the African Development Bank in its 2019 African Economic Outlook report forecasting sustained rise in the average GDP (gross domestic profit) growth rate for the continent — from an estimated 3.5 per cent in 2018 to four per cent this year and 4.1 per cent in 2020.

Growth in investment is one of the major factors contributing to this, with private equity (PE) investors letting the money do the talking and PE funding for African businesses having increased from 2017 to 2018, by around $300 million.

Over the course of the last six years, a total of more than 1,000 PE deals — worth in excess of $25 billion — have been concluded in Africa and close to 200 those have taken place in the East Africa region.

We see increased PE activity in the region, across a diverse range of sectors, including agro-processing, capital investment, construction, energy, financial services, manufacturing, mining, tourism and telecommunications and countries such as Kenya and Ethiopia recording markedly higher than average GDP growth rates.

With a liberal and diverse economy, a growing middle class and a relatively stable political environment, business confidence in the former is at a high. Kenya recently went up 19 places, from 80th to 61st, in the World Bank Ease of Doing Business 2019 report; and has been identified by the African Private Equity and Venture Capital Association as the second most attractive African country — only after Nigeria — for PE investments in the coming years.

With more interest, though, comes more competition. In order to maintain their competitive edge, PE firms need a shift in focus — from lowering their costs to jettison their profits to the long-term viability of the companies in which they invest. They need to find new, innovative ways of creating real value for these companies and transforming them into sustainable businesses that will continue to prosper even after those funding them have stepped away.

PE fund manager's role has been extended beyond what his or her title suggests, to include more active engagement the businesses they invest in than that of the traditional fund managers, in. At the same time, the relationship with the founders and owners, must always remain front of mind.

In East Africa PE firms need to bring their deep strategic expertise to the table to navigate the challenges around developing local human capital, cultivating local talent and allocating funds for training and development.

They need to turn their attentions to developing operational management and transforming family-run businesses into mainstream, professional, modern businesses with the right management teams.

The writers are from DLA Piper a global law firm

EVERYTHING BUSINESS>> LUCY KIRUTHU

Loyal customers will cost you less than trying to attract new ones

IT IS EVERY SMART BUSINESS wish that if someone purchases a product or service they will be back for more. Such companies also desire that these customers pass on a positive word of mouth to other people. They return for more and referrals define loyal customers. How many customers are loyal to your business? Do your clients feel the urge to come back for more? What are they saying about you?

Loyal customers are good for business. They cost much less to retain compared to the cost of attract new cones. What is more valuable is that loyal customers assist in attraction of new patrons. Additionally, loyal customers are open to sharing honest feedback with our businesses. It is their desire to see businesses they patronise and really care about get better. Do you know your customers? What makes them come back? Why are they saying what they are saying about your business? What can you do to make most if not all your customers loyal?

In most industries, customers have a choice. Smart businesses should, therefore, take up the challenge to create a loyal customer base. This can happen irrespective of the industry. To create a loyal customer base, businesses need to go beyond the traditional reward and loyalty programmes. I recently made a purchase and the staff asked me if I could apply for a reward card. I hesitated. I did not feel like getting rewards would make me want to come back. I also did not like the idea of filling in a form. Why could they not simply capture my telephone number into their system and send me a link to accept to be in their database and qualify for the rewards?

Rewards and loyalty points are not enough to drive customer loyalty. It is the end-to-end experience and engagement that drives loyalty. The depth of engagement determines how the customer feels about the business, its people and its products and services throughout the interactions. Business leaders must appreciate that how customers feel is at the centre of making them come back for more. If a customer feels unwanted, why would they want to return? What customers say is as a result of how they feel about the overall experience. If they like the experience, they will have good things to say and vice versa. Treat your customer as royals and they will stay loyal!

Businesses that want to create loyal customers need to go back to the basics. They can do so by first putting the customer at the centre of every decision and action. This position should be evident. Such businesses should be more intentional about making the customer experience effortless, painless and seamless at every point of interaction. Further, businesses have the opportunity to integrate data analytics into steering customer loyalty. Unfortunately, many are not using readily available customer data thus missing the opportunity to keep track of their loyal customers. In this era of the customer, smart companies must focus on creating loyal customers as a strategic priority. How many of your customers are loyal?

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