Data and analytics are definitely not buzzwords which will slowly fade into extinction. Rather, these two concepts are Siamese twins which companies across all industries would have to embrace to stay relevant in a changing world. These concepts provide a definite path towards growth in revenue, profit and overall shareholder value. According to the International Data Corporation (IDC), the analytics market is expected to grow at a cumulative annual growth rate of 12% to reach about USD 203 billion by 2020.

In Nigeria, data and analytics is still quite nascent but it holds significant potential for the future. It offers a tremendous opportunity to improve decision-making and it can play a role across several industries. In the not too distant future, we are eager to see utility service providers and consumer industries leverage the depth of data and analytics to unlock the ‘Voice of the Customer’ hidden in the various webchat conversations. This will drive real-time, contextual, personalised and better services to their customers. We are also eager to see commercial banks redefine banking with keen application of customer analytics to set key retail banking priorities.

Predictive analytics offers advice on possible outcomes and specifies the preferred course of action. Prescriptive analytics has been referred to as the next frontier of analytics because it not only predicts what will happen, but also why it will happen whilst providing recommendations on the course of action that will take advantage of the predictions.

Although prescriptive analytics may be slightly complex, it can significantly improve an organisation’s decision-making process and overall performance. Large organisations are using prescriptive analytics to optimise production, scheduling and inventory in the supply chain to ensure the right products are delivered at the right time and customer experience is optimised.

Conclusion

The promise of data and analytics is alluring, but many organisations especially in Nigeria still fail to capture the full value. Better decision-making, exceptional customer insights, higher productivity and performance are bold promises which data and analytics hold for today and tomorrow. One thing is clear, data and analytics is fast becoming the path to gaining competitive advantage in this new data economy. To stay competitive and relevant, organisations must embrace ongoing disruption and change by leveraging analytics.

The competitive advantage today is for organisations that are able to be the first at learning about the customer and fastest at translating the knowledge into its commensurate value. Many organisations will be at the brink of danger if they continue with “business as usual”. Data and analytics is a “must-have” for all organisations and Nigerian organisations are not left out. Data and analytics is already changing the dynamics of several industries and forward thinking companies are embracing it.

The message is clear: Organisations must embrace data and analytics to remain competitive and relevant in an ever changing world.