

How BlackRhino is building Kenya's VR industry

Kenyan startup BlackRhino VR is playing a key role in developing the country's virtual reality industry, working with a number of local and international companies to develop innovative ways of delivering content.

 By Tom Jackson 8 May 2017



Launched in 2015, the Nairobi-based [BlackRhino VR](#) uses immersive virtual reality technology to develop documentaries, educational material and marketing campaigns.

The startup's innovative approach has certainly paid off, with head of business development Brian Afande telling Disrupt Africa BlackRhino had worked with companies and organisations of the calibre of UNICEF, Shell, Safaricom and Kenya Wildlife Services (KWS).

Absence of authentic African VR production companies

"There was an absence of authentic African virtual reality production companies in Africa, more so in Kenya," he said.

"After our R&D period, we decided to venture into this business because VR was and still is in its infancy stages worldwide. We wanted to start a company that would position itself as one of the leading African VR storytellers."

Whereas previously VR production crews had to fly into Africa from abroad, costing a lot of time and money, BlackRhino has positioned itself as the go-to production company whenever international news agencies need to create content in Africa.

The self-funded company has seen the appetite for VR in Kenya steadily increase.

"We believe that this can be the beginning of the widespread VR adoption into the country and into the rest of East, Central and West Africa," Afande said.

Corporate uptake for VR steadily increasing

“The corporate uptake for VR is also steadily increasing here, with emphasis on creating immersive brand messages. We have been contacted by some international companies that are interested in partnering with Africa-based VR production companies that are willing to create content for a target audience that is based in the West.”

With this in mind, BlackRhino plans to expand across the continent. Funding will not be necessary given the initial success of the startup.

“We have been fortunate enough to create VR content for local and international companies and this has helped us recoup our initial investment in VR equipment, as well as plough back profits to help us with our scaling plan,” said Afande.

“In addition, we run a traditional video services company that produces high-end documentaries, corporate videos and online commercials for major companies in East Africa.”

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ABOUT TOM JACKSON

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