

Vodacom simplifies mobile Internet, buys into Zoopy

 By [Simone Puterman](#)

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Vodacom has acquired a 40% stake in South African startup Zoopy.com, a South African-based social media community website, it was announced this morning, Thursday, 26 June 2008. This follows hot on the heels of yesterday's announcement of Vodacom's new Mobile Internet service which allows accurate representation of the Internet on a cellphone through technology that adapts the PC-screen format of any website into a smaller, cellphone-friendly format.

Coming on top of Bizcommunity.com's scoop earlier this week that Vincent Maher, strategist at the *Mail & Guardian Online*, will be taking on the challenge of managing Vodacom's social media portfolio from 1 July, these are yet more affirmations of the cellular network operator's change in strategy to become a content provider in the multimedia market and how seriously it takes social media.

"Revolutionise"

"Vodacom's Mobile Internet will revolutionise the way South Africans use the Internet," says MD Shameel Joosub.

"Vodacom customers now have the freedom to explore a much wider world on an extensive range of cellphones, experiencing the familiarity of the Internet they previously enjoyed via a computer.

"It's important for customers to understand that technologically, this is a whole new ball game compared to the limited mobile Internet access that has been available in South Africa up to now," says Joosub.

"It is not the same as 'Made-for-mobile' pages, which have been specifically designed to work on a cellphone and which are much smaller than standard web pages. A made-for-mobile site offers and will be limited to only services suitable for use on a cellphone, while Vodacom's new Mobile Internet service automatically reformats any web page so it fits the cellphone screen."

Billing will be based on existing data tariffs. It will not be necessary for most customers to upgrade their cellphones; however, the quality of the user experience will depend on the capabilities of customers' cellphones. For more information, go to www.vodacom.co.za or dial Vodacom's data call centre on 155, free from a Vodacom cellphone, or 082 155 from any other phone.

Important move

According to Thabeli C. Ralebitso, MD of Vodacom Ventures, the investment in www.zoopy.com is an important move at just the right time for both parties. "Zoopy.com has established itself as a key role-player in the online social media arena and

has a growing community that will now be able to grow bigger, better and faster.

Launched in March 2007, Zoopy allows its users to upload and share videos, photos, podcasts and blogs. In just over a year, Zoopy has established itself as a significant player in the user-generated content space in Africa, with Nokia selecting it as its regional imaging partner for South and West Africa. More recently, Zoopy.com was also chosen as the *Mail & Guardian Online's* video delivery partner.

CEO of Zoopy.com Jason Elk is thrilled at having found the 'perfect partner'. "At the beginning of this year, we realised that we needed investment to roll out our strategy to its full potential. But from the start we were quite specific about the partner we were looking for.

"Funding was important, of course, but we wanted our investor to add value to the overall Zoopy.com user experience too. With Vodacom at our side, we'll be able to bring many new features and opportunities to both their users and ours. This is exactly what we were looking for and we can't wait to make it happen."

Adds Ralebitso, "Vodacom puts great value in what has been achieved online thus far, and we look forward to combining mobile and Internet strengths to create an even more valuable destination for all Zoopy.com users."

"Evolutionary step"

Commenting on Vodacom's new Mobile Internet service, Elk told Bizcommunity.com, "[This] product is an enormous leap forward for both mobile users and website owners alike. It's an evolutionary step that has to take place in the development of mobile as a platform, if it intends to be on an even keel with online. The future will be about designing one website or application that is viewable on PC, mobile, PDA or any other advanced communication device."

Zoopy has also launched the [beta version](#) of its mobile application, which allows many more handsets to upload to the social media site.

ABOUT SIMONE PUTERMAN

Simone Puterman (@SimoneAtLarge) is currently editor-at-large at Marklives.com and deputy chair of the SaneF online editors subcommittee. After majoring in psychology and linguistics at Rhodes University, and then completing her honours in psychology, she has been in the world of B2B publishing since 1997, with 7.5 year stints at both WriteStuff Publishing and Bizcommunity.com (March 2006-August 2013). Email her at simone@marklives.com.

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