

# Africa's mobile Internet growth changing lives

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For an average African a cellphone is a digital centre, a library, a laptop, a viable source of news, a vital device for mass telecommunications and a social media tool for communication, leading to self-perpetuating growth and prosperity, says Brett Loubser, Samsung product and technical support manager.

## Mobile Web Africa

Delivering his address to delegates at the Mobile Web Africa Conference, at the Michaelangelo Hotel in Sandton, Johannesburg, yesterday, 13 October 2009, Loubser said, "The mobile Internet market in the developed world is extremely saturated, so all of the growth is largely happening in the developing world, something we must seriously think about."

The cellular industry is having a huge impact on many African countries' GDP and has become an enabler of the continent's activity, with Nigeria being the case study for that growth.

## Capitalising on the 'new revolution'?

Given that mobile has become the popular way of accessing the net in Africa - 28% penetration versus 3.8% fixed-line penetration - according to Loubser, there is an impression that Samsung Mobile has capitalised on that 'new revolution' to make its mobile devices more technology-accessible to get ahead of its competitors.

Loubser said: "92% of our current range is web-enabled, are cost-effective, have a simple access to our terminals and a relevance to social networking.

"Falling costs, open mobile operating systems and interface simplification are the drivers for growth and innovation," he said, adding that SMS is a driver of literacy in Africa and that newer technologies will integrate as prices fall.

There were 285 million of cellphone users in the first quarter of 2008 in Africa, a place where SMS is still the predominant mean of communication.

"Crowd-sourcing played a huge role in Kenya during the 2008 election violence (spread via word of mouth} and Niger saw 6.4% drop in grain price due to SMS sharing of market information," he said.

"Imagine what it will do to an African child if you were to put such a device in his hands."

## Price counts in Africa

Opera chief standards officer Charles McCathieNevile said: "Price matters a lot in Africa, but you also have to take account of security concerns when designing feature applications."

The aim, he said, is to protect users from bad people.

"There are legislative challenges and trans-boundaries such as respecting people's privacy and security, and unless you meet these challenges you have to be very careful," said Sean Paavo Krepp, of Nokia emerging markets services.

McCathieNevile added: "Simplify the code, adapt better for everyone, move less data and use what is available - and ensure that people are being helped with their work."

## The omnipresent mobile

Mobile has become the seventh important medium in the world after print, recording, cinema, radio, TV and the Internet, Yonder chairman Rick Joubert said.

"As a medium, mobile is always on and permanently carried on. It captures social content of media consumption and has an accurate audience measurement," Joubert pointed out.

He added that mobile is a kind of marketing 'hero' with components such as display marketing, direct marketing (push messaging and lead generation), and integrated marketing.

"How can you call yourself an advertising agency if you don't embrace the mobile revolution?" he asked.

"It is good to see that some SA media owners and advertising agencies are beginning to 'get it', but that is not enough. You must ensure that mobile becomes a channel of engagement with audiences in the back of your print content."

Soccer Laduma is SA's most popular mobile site, with 230 000 unique monthly visits, according to Pete Case and Simon Leps, of Gloo Design and Fontera, respectively.

For more, go to [www.mobilewebafrica.com](http://www.mobilewebafrica.com). To follow live tweeting from various delegates on Twitter, click [here](#) and [here](#).

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## ABOUT ISSA SIKITI DA SILVA

Issa Sikiti da Silva is a winner of the 2010 SADC Media Awards (print category). He freelances for various media outlets, local and foreign, and has travelled extensively across Africa. His work has been published both in French and English. He used to contribute to Bizcommunity.com as a senior news writer.

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