The AFRICA NETWORK

an idea by erik hersman (aka: white african)

10% of Africa's 1 billion people have a mobile phone

WHO SAYS TECHNOLOGY CAN'T CHANGE AFRICA?

Africa represents a source of untapped potential - millions are hungry for news, information and for services that affect their lives where they live, urban or rural.

The Africa Network is a centralized web portal for information important to Africans, customized for their location, their tastes and their needs. It consists of:

- a vertical search engine
- a news portal
- a community site

All of this is made available on computer and mobile phone platforms. Income is generated through advertising and sponsorships in each of the three areas.

Africa's PC

Computers are expensive, especially when compared to the income of the average African. However, the advent of mobile phones to the continent beginning in the mid-1990's caused a sea-change in information access and possibilities for deliverability.

It can be safely said that most African families now have, or have access to, a mobile phone. **Zangu** will reach them primarily through this media portal.
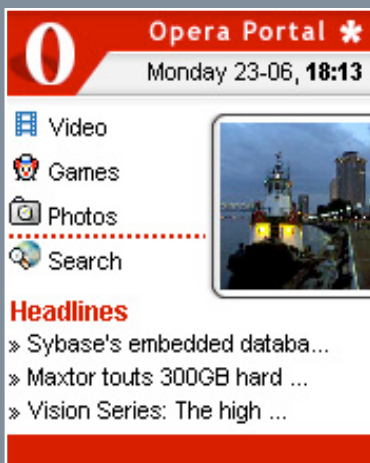
Africa
1 billion people: overlooked or forgotten by those in the Web-technology community.

MOBILE SEARCH

The African Search Engine

ZANGU

Web Images Groups News
Froogle Local **more ➤**

| Enter address |
| Bookmarks |
| Start page |
| Tools |
| Exit |

Advanced

Select   15:14   **Cancel**

What if Africans could search the Web on their phones?

Though many Africans can get onto a computer at local internet cafes, the main access point and communications tool is the mobile phone.

O Opera Portal ✳
Monday 23-06, **18:13**

🎞 Video
🎮 Games
📷 Photos
🌐 Search

Headlines
» Sybase's embedded databa...
» Maxtor touts 300GB hard ...
» Vision Series: The high ...

The mobile phone as the main access point

Company's like Opera already provide the necessary technology to make this a reality. It only needs to be licensed and implemented.

An African Search Engine

Africa is vast, unique and has a user-base not served adequately by traditional search engines. Zangu will be the information source for all things African, indexing all continent related websites, as well as outside websites that have relevant African content. Images, video, audio, maps and websites come together in one place providing a central source for African and non-African alike in their quest for information and avoiding irrelevant results.
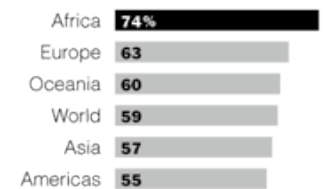
Revenue possibilities:
- Paid search
- Local and regional search

CELLPHONES IN AFRICA

In recent years, the number of people with cellphones has outpaced those with land lines.

SUBSCRIBERS PER 100 PEOPLE IN AFRICA

MOBILE

LAND LINE

'94 '96 '98 '00 '02 '04
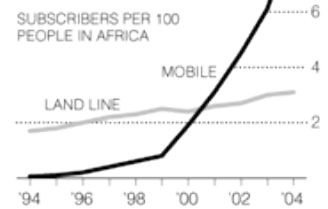
MOBILE SUBSCRIBERS AS A PERCENTAGE OF ALL TELEPHONE SUBSCRIBERS 2004

Africa	74%
Europe	63
Oceania	60
World	59
Asia	57
Americas	55

Source: International Telecommunication Union

Mobile phones are a $25 billion industry in Africa

An African News Portal

African news that isn't available elsewhere. This is not your traditional news media now placed on the web. It is a place where independents come to share information, pictures and videos of the happenings in their towns and countries. Those who submit news stories will be paid, paid by the number of users who read, watch or listen to their story.

How is it used?

Atrocities in the Congo, Sudan and Zimbabwe go unmonitored and unreported by international news agencies. There are stories waiting to be told. Whether a news submitter has access to a computer, camera, video camera, audio recording device, or just their phone they can still upload news in either text or multimedia

formats.

Much like a combination of Digg (www.digg.com) and Revver (www.revver.com), the users vote on what news is good and important. Popular news gets increased coverage and the submitter gets paid.

Revenue possibilities:

- Contextual search
- Graphical and text advertising
- Sectional sponsorships

News:
By Africans
For Africans

COMMUNITY

Smart Community: Local, Regional, National and Africa-wide

MySpace, Yahoo!, CraigsList, and many more have shown the value in creating community websites that answer a need for a particular group. There is no such thing for Africans, primarily because there hasn't been a perceived user-base. Mobile phone access, as well as internet cafés have created that base.

An Afrocentric community portal, built in a user-friendly manner, adapted to both computer and mobile phone use will fulfill that need. Mixing the best and most useful elements of Craigslist, eBay, Blogger, eSnips, and GMail will provide an online destination and home for rural and urban Africans alike.

Users will be able to search for employment, browse available goods and see what events are happening in their area – many times in their own traditional language.

How is it used?

A villager from a town in Uganda decides that they will buy a bicycle. They go to the free Zangu portal on their mobile phone and select the "marketplace".

The portal automatically recognizes their location and shows them results for both new and used bicycles available within a given area. Our buyer also has immediate access to the sellers contact information and can move on to communicating with the seller with a touch of a button.

Much like a Craigslist and eBay the **buyer pays nothing** to access the site and find what they are looking for. Unlike eBay, sellers also have the ability to place basic listings for free.

Revenue possibilities:

- Contextual search
- Graphical and text advertising
- Sponsorships
- Behavioral advertising
- Paid goods listings

Why NOT Online?

African's already have solid communities. Providing another medium with which to **connect, trade** and **communicate** would make sense.

The **informal economy offers huge potential**

CONNECTING AFRICANS WHERE THEY ARE

> "...cell phones are enabling millions of people to skip a technological generation and bound straight from letter-writing to instant messaging."
>
> **Sharon LaFraniere**
> **New York Times**

Opportunities and Challenges:

Opportunities

- Africa represents a virtually untapped base of users

- Advertisers are hungry and willing to trying to get their brand in front of potential customers in new ways

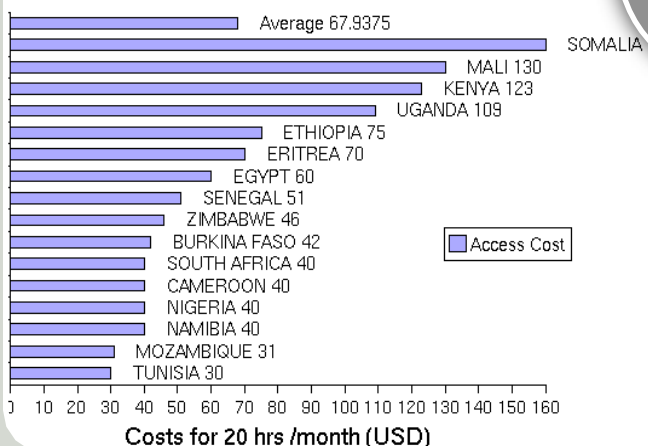- The web represents a relatively low-cost option for mass distribution

- The growth of the mobile market in Africa continues to grow at an astounding rate

- Technology in phones and online are reaching a point where functionality is adequate enough to begin development

The mobile phone is "Africa's PC"

Challenges

- Partnerships with reliable mobile phone network operators

- Licensing and/or development of the mobile delivery platform

- Licensing and/or development of the search engine that provides access to both computers and mobile phones

- Creating a network that is not overly centralized in any single country

- Development of a community site that is equally accessible and visually appealing to both computer and mobile phone users

- Creating a payment system for media generators that encourages use

Dialup Acccess Costs

Average 67.9375

SOMALIA
MALI 130
KENYA 123
UGANDA 109
ETHIOPIA 75
ERITREA 70
EGYPT 60
SENEGAL 51
ZIMBABWE 46
BURKINA FASO 42
SOUTH AFRICA 40
CAMEROON 40
NIGERIA 40
NAMIBIA 40
MOZAMBIQUE 31
TUNISIA 30

Access Cost

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100 110 120 130 140 150 160

Costs for 20 hrs /month (USD)

IN SUMMARY

Someone is going to connect millions of Africans and make millions of Dollars.

The Africa Network represents a revenue generating model in an area where no one has been able to figure out how to tap into the almost 1 billion people on the continent. It is the future marketing model in Africa.

Each of the three areas of focus; **search**, **news**, and **community**, were designed to answer the needs of the Africans as well as the needs of the companies trying to message to them as an audience. The purpose is to reach people where they are while limiting the hurdles to overcome.

Technology will be scalable depending upon the platform being used, both graphically and functionally. Language barriers are bypassed using multiple regional hubs instead of a central hub that is too general for anyone's use.

Unlike many Africa-focused organizations and programs, Zangu is revenue generating, educational and develops technological acumen in a continent where it is not the norm.
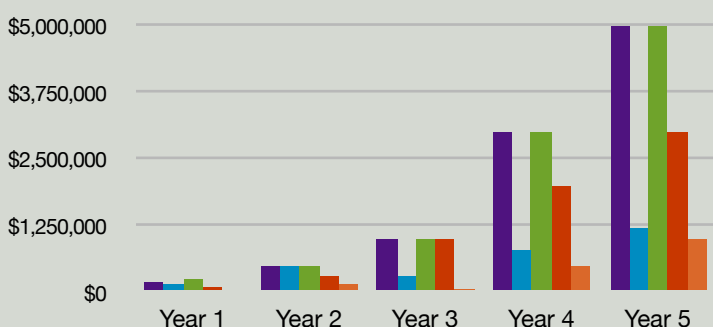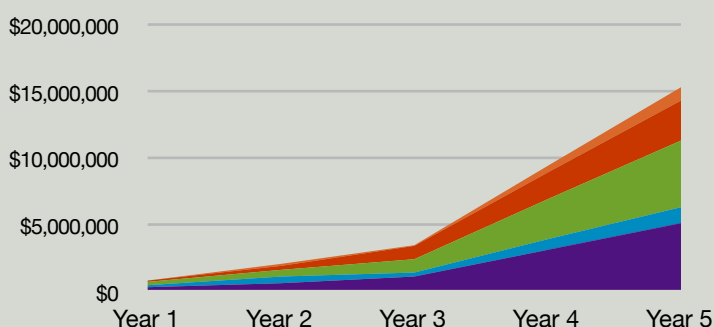
- **Paid Search**
- **Contextual Search**
- **Online Advertising**
- **Sponsorships**
- **Paid Listings**

	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5
Paid Search	$200,000	$500,000	$1,000,000	$3,000,000	$5,000,000
Contextual Search	$150,000	500,000	$300,000	$800,000	$1,200,000
Online Advertising	$250,000	$500,000	$1,000,000	$3,000,000	$5,000,000
Sponsorships	$100,000	$300,000	1,000,000	$2,000,000	$3,000,000
Paid Listings	$0	150,000	$50,000	$500,000	$1,000,000
TOTAL	**$700,000**	**$1,300,000**	**$2,350,000**	**$9,300,000**	**$15,200,000**

WHO ARE YOU, AND WHAT IS THIS?

How I can be reached:

email: **erik@zungu.com**

I keep a blog of things that interest me about Africa and technology. You can find it at **www.whiteafrican.com**

My consulting company is Zungu, LLC. (www.zungu.com)

My name is Erik Hersman. I grew up in East Africa, Sudan and Kenya to be exact.

Professionally, I am a web strategist. What that means is that I help organizations create sound business strategies that create the possibility for success.

So, What is This Anyway?

I spend a lot of time thinking about technology and Africa. This pseudo business-plan is just some thoughts that I have put together that I believe would make a large impact if put into place.

This idea is not my full-time job, Meaning that I have not had the time to deeply research every component, and therefore there are most likely errors throughout. There might be some components that are actually being done right now.

The numbers for the graphs are a guess, an educated guess, buts still a guess none-the-less. I did start my web career in marketing after all.

What's "Zangu"?

I didn't want to call this *The Africa Network* (TAN) the whole time. Since I own the domain Zangu.com, and I thought it was catchy, I named it that.

Final Thoughts

I really do believe something like The Africa Network could be created and make a huge impact. It would take a pilot project in one country with a decent infrastructure to test it in, but with a small, dedicated team it could be rolled out in under 1 year. The cost of investment depends on the licensing deal struck. My very rough guess is that it would be somewhere around $1 million to get it going. Technology moves fast though, so anyone who wants to be a part of something like this needs to start now.

I'm interested

If you plan on, or are doing something like this already, I would love to know about it and be a part of it.

WWW.WHITEAFRICAN.COM

For discussion, go to my blog listed above, and comment in the area for this article. You can always email me to at: erik@zungu.com

---