TITLE: AFRICA: A Mobile FRONTIER

SUBJECT: DISCOVERING THE POTENCY OF MOBILE SOCIAL NETWORKING IN

                  DEVELOPING MARKET ECONOMIES with a focus on Africa.

                  (The Revolution will be 'mobil'-ised)

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"The impact of mobile devices in emerging markets has shown the technological growth equal to the power of a tsunami!" (Gloria Ruhrmund)

"African communities are serious about business, serious about community and economic development, serious about acting out their self-interests....."(*Thuso – www.izania.com*)

"Mobile phones seem to be a profound competitive force in developing countries and to have in many cases started the impact on socio-political aspects of these nations" (J.Hamilton)

INTRODUCTION

When the entire developed world is connected to Brad Pitt by six degrees, there will still be a chasm where the largest untapped social networks are reeling to connect to Obama in the same way. Africa has renewed hope for their aided emancipation by the new president of the world's leading economy; in the meantime it is mobile networks that can provide Africa and many other emerging markets, with its own profound level of economic, political and social emancipation. Why is this so?

PREMISE

The Mobile device is a tool of intervention for Social, Economical and Political Development in developing countries.

CONTEXTUALISATION OF THE AFRICAN AS A NATURAL USER OF MOBILE SOCIAL NETWORKS.

What can be learnt from Africa and its ability to turn the unlikely into a working business model? How does the African philosophy of UBUNTU predispose these

people to social networking? How do fundamental needs of people make for the greatest social networking opportunities with meaningful development as a bonus outcome?

1.

2. SELF EDUCATING AND THE POWER OF VERBAL KNOWLEDGE – formal Education vs. word of mouth in the uptake of MSN.

3. On UBUNTU – it is one of the core philosophical concepts and organizational principals of Bantu speaking peoples. It is a philosophy of being, wholeness, verbalness, of doing and has at once the characteristics of simultaneous multi-directional motion. (A network)

4. Globalisation generates and feeds the concepts of citizenship and nationality – both a paradox and contradiction when aligned with my intention for mobile social networks - yet UBUNTU extends beyond original cultural boundaries and mobile technology can serve as the vehicle for the transmission of cultures.

5. Already in Africa the mobile phone has created a new ubiquitous currency – Airtime! Known to be exchanged as payment for petrol: How can MSN add benefits to other 'informal' economic systems?

6. The reality of a mobile revolution "may have few takers but one should not imagine that the world's poor will remain cowed or passively accept their poverty….A world of wealth and poverty, with appalling and widening differences in living standards between the richest and the poorest nations, is unlikely to be secure or stable." (Hirst, P and Thompson, G *Globalisation in Question*)

7. EXAMPLES OF MSN applications in Africa: Pre-paid salary cards for the un-bankable; Inclusionary HR solutions (stress management or well being programmes); Agriculture; Limiting the middle man between production location and end market; counseling of drug addicts and gangsters to uplift violence in communities, crime prevention, gender applications; voting mobilization; Education; health services etc

STATISTICS
MSN usage on the African continent

CASE STUDIES:

UBYOU: MSN SOUTH AFRICA

Launched 4 February 2008 and averages approximately 3 million page impressions per month

MYMSTA: MSN FOR NGO LOVE LIFE SOUTH AFRICA

CONCLUSION: TRUE POSSIBILITY

It is my belief therefore that not only is there an opportunity to invest in mobile social networking as a business in Africa, but as a renewed effort for governments, NGO's and other CSI partners to really take their land-based efforts to another level. To take Africa out of its marginalised global status and to facilitate actualization through mobile networks. For African Governments themselves to develop each community in their country towards a positive, productive and outstanding territory by fusing the most modern technology with their natural predisposition of UBUNTU and networking. No other time in history is true democratisation, development and emancipation been possible - USE IT!