

AIRTEL MADAGASCAR

MAKING WAVES IN MADAGASCAR



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Airtel Madagascar is a relative newcomer to this resource rich, ecologically diverse and culturally vibrant island nation but its ability to bring together the economic and social strands that unite the people is making a big difference

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It is hard to believe that it is only just 20 years since the Bharti group listed its telecommunications business on the Bombay Stock Exchange, soon after that bringing its cellphone operations together under the Airtel brand. At the time, just ten years from the founding of the business by Sunil Bharti Mittal, it had yet to extend its coverage to the whole of India, let alone the whole sub-continent, though by 2009 it had launched into international operations by launching a network in Sri Lanka. The rapid roll-out of the business has been attributed to its pioneering outsourcing model, whereby its infrastructure is maintained by world leading organisations like Ericsson, Nokia Siemens and IBM, enabling it to offer low per-minute rates to its subscribers, while giving them a level of functionality that is every bit as good as that available in the USA or Europe.

Nevertheless it really was only yesterday – in 2010 to be precise – that Airtel went truly international when it acquired the African operations of the Kuwaiti company Zain Telecom for \$10.7 billion. Zain had entered the African market in 2005 through the \$3.4 billion purchase of Celtel International which had operations in 13 countries in that continent. By the time the business was bought by Airtel in 2010 it had more than 40 million customers in Africa, and a presence in Burkina Faso, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia – and Madagascar, where it takes the second place in the mobile telecoms market, with 39 percent of the market and more than 1.5 million customers.



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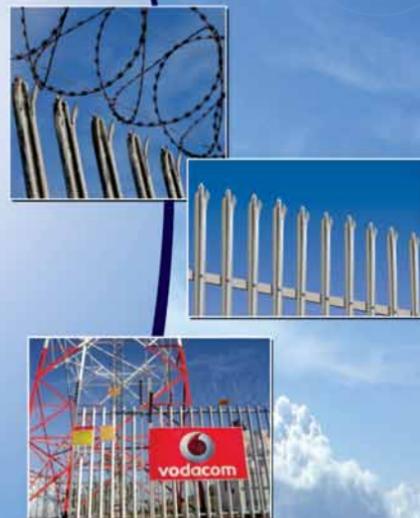
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Today Bharti Airtel is one of the largest telecommunications companies in the world with operations in 20 countries in Africa and Asia. Based in India's capital, the company is one of the four largest mobile operators in the world in terms of number of subscribers. In India, it offers a wide range of services:

including 2G and 3G mobile services, fixed line, broadband, ADSL, IPTV and DTH, and solutions for enterprises and national and international long distance services to mobile operators. In other markets, it provides 2G and 3G mobile services and mobile banking and financial services. Bharti Airtel had over 275 million customers across its markets at the end of July 2, 2013. Moving into Africa was an inspired strategy for Airtel. The needs of its subscribers in Asian markets are closely aligned to those in Africa, but as is well known, mobile telecommunications is an area in which Africa is now acknowledged as leading the world. Spurred by a lack of fixed line infrastructure and the geographical and political dispersal of populations that still rely on highly localised economic ecosystems for their livelihood Africans have found innovative ways of leveraging mobile technology to their advantage. This has made them the teachers rather than the learners in

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MADAGASCAR



\$10.7 BILLION

Cost of Bharti Airtel's acquisition of Zain

this sector, something that the top-down business development model of many western telecoms companies, anchored by generations of legacy, have struggled to take on board.

The Airtel offering was developed from scratch to meet the needs of today. It is not surprising that as a result Airtel is far and away the most innovative mobile cellular operator in Madagascar and one that can be said to be disrupting the market. It was the first operator to introduce many advanced services including a BlackBerry prepaid service, 'Validité dynamique', 'Chat' a national and international customer SMS service available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The 'Information Kiosk', which sends out smart stuff that people choose to receive via SMS is particularly popular. Examples are jokes, horoscopes, exchange rates which can be crucial in cross border African trading situations or thought for the day. 'Music Box'

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allows a subscriber to dedicate a song to someone special, and 'CpourToi' allows the transfer of credits from one person to another in a simple and secure transaction.

However if you asked small business customers and people with family living away from the island the single most important and differentiating innovation from they would probably say Airtel Money. This service allows them to pay for purchases, settle bills and access bank accounts securely and in real time, at any time. The revolutionary money transfer service also allows person to person transfers and to top up phone

credit – for the customer’s own phone or any other Airtel subscriber’s.

In the short time that has elapsed since its establishment here Airtel Madagascar, has grown from strength to strength, says CEO Heiko Schlittke, a German national with more than 20 years of experience in FMCG, media and telecommunications, including Celtel. “Making services accessible to people in remote areas is a priority,” he says. “Already Airtel has the largest mobile phone coverage, with access to major cities communities connected by the major highways. In fact ours is the only company to cover all 22 regions of the island.”

\$1.5 MILLION

Airtel Madagascar subscribers

Achieving this level of coverage, however, is merely a service goal, essential but not to be confused with the objective of really touching people's lives in a transformative way. "The remarkable growth of Airtel Madagascar is directly related to our desire to be an innovative company that works to achieve a positive difference in people's lives by facilitating communication and supporting communities." Airtel is committed, he emphasises, to providing consistently improved products and services, and opening up new worlds of opportunity. "Our goal is to expand the world of possibilities and opportunities, whether in music or culture."

The music sharing capabilities of mobile phones make Airtel the ideal partner for programmes that promote the many genres of music created by the Malagasy people, and the company invests in many of these, paying special attention to the most disadvantaged and vulnerable segments of the population. Just after his inauguration in 2002, President Marc Ravalomanana established his leadership in HIV prevention. He chairs the nation's multi-sectoral HIV/AIDS programme Conseil National de Lutte contre le SIDA (CNLS). Airtel Madagascar is an active partner in the programme, with a special information hotline. It also supports the President's fund for bringing infrastructure, including schools, to remote areas of the island. **BE**

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