

TELCO MARKET INSIGHTS

# RSA & Africa

## 2015–2025

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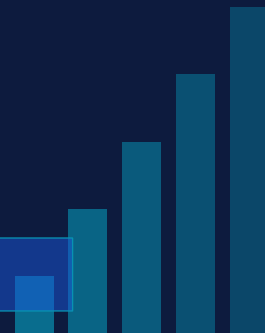
Market Share, Device Performance & Customer Shifts

Opportunities for Business & Product Leaders

Business Intelligence

Product Strategy

Market Opportunity



# Executive Summary

# 116.8M

## Total Mobile Connections in South Africa (2024)

+7.5% YoY | R232.7B total telco revenue | MTN + Vodacom = 70% duopoly

### Duopoly Holds

MTN & Vodacom have maintained 70%+ combined market share for a decade. Stability is their moat — and new entrants' ceiling.

### Samsung Dominates Devices

50.3% of all SA smartphones are Samsung. Apple growing at premium. Chinese brands (Honor, Xiaomi) are the new mid-tier challengers.

### Africa Is the Growth Engine

527M unique subscribers in 2023 → 751M by 2030. Smartphone penetration doubles. SA leads the continent in 5G and ARPU.

# SA Telco Landscape 2025 — Market Size & Revenue

Total Connections

**116.8M**

+7.5% YoY

Total Telco Revenue

**R232.7B**

2024 total

Prepaid Share

**83%**

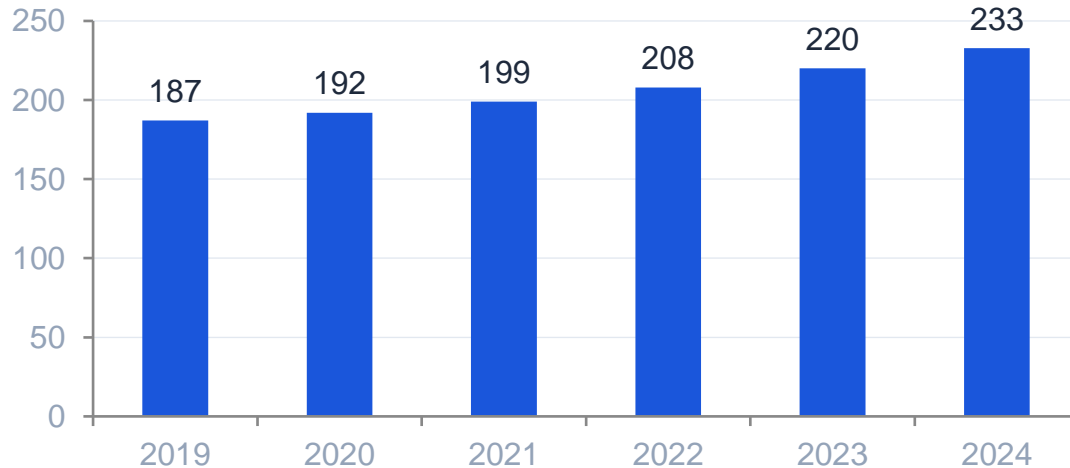
of all connections

5G Coverage

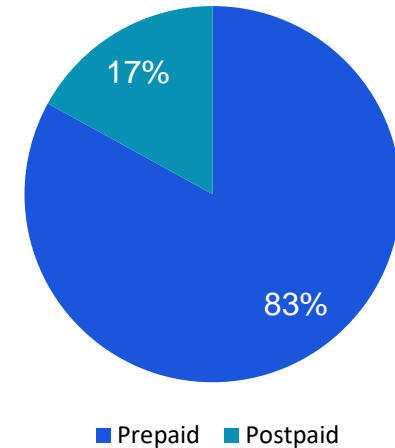
**44%**

population (MTN)

Telco Revenue Growth (R billions)



Connection Mix



# Operator Market Share — 2025 Snapshot

Vodacom

50.7M

43% | Largest MNO

MTN SA

39.2M

34% | 5G leader

Telkom

24.0M

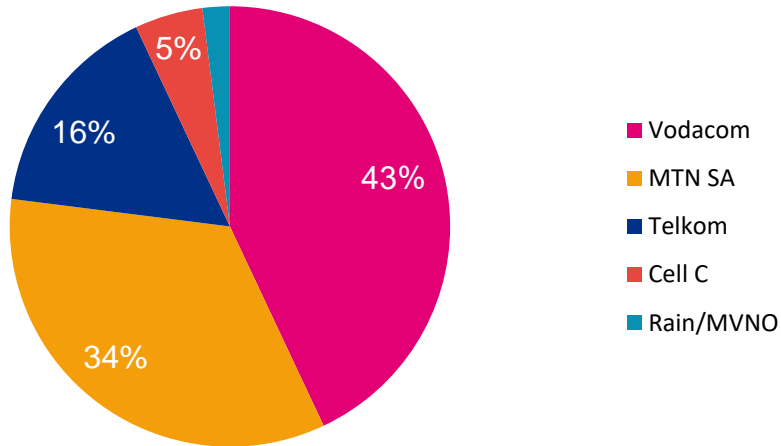
21% | +21.6% YoY

Cell C

7.7M

7% | MVNO pivot

Mobile Subscriber Share 2025

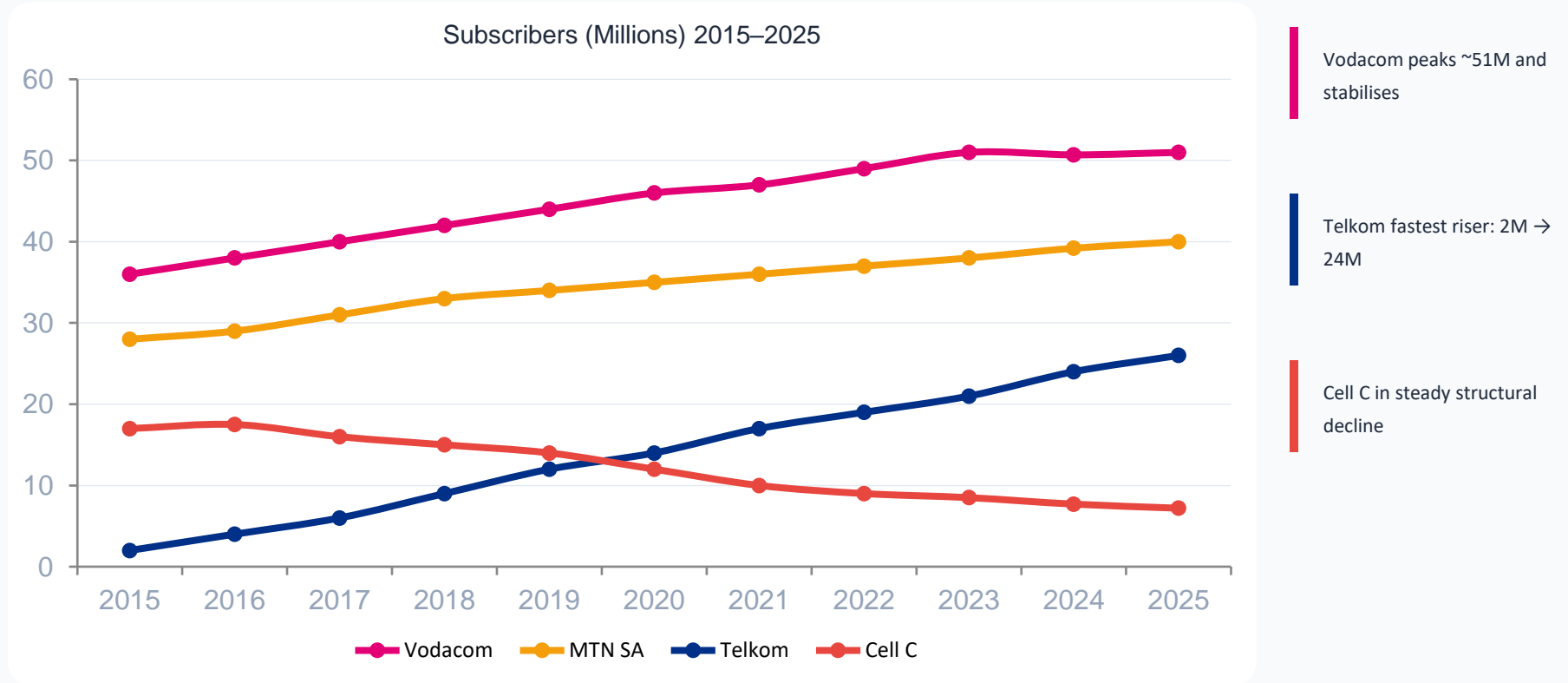


## The Resilient Duopoly

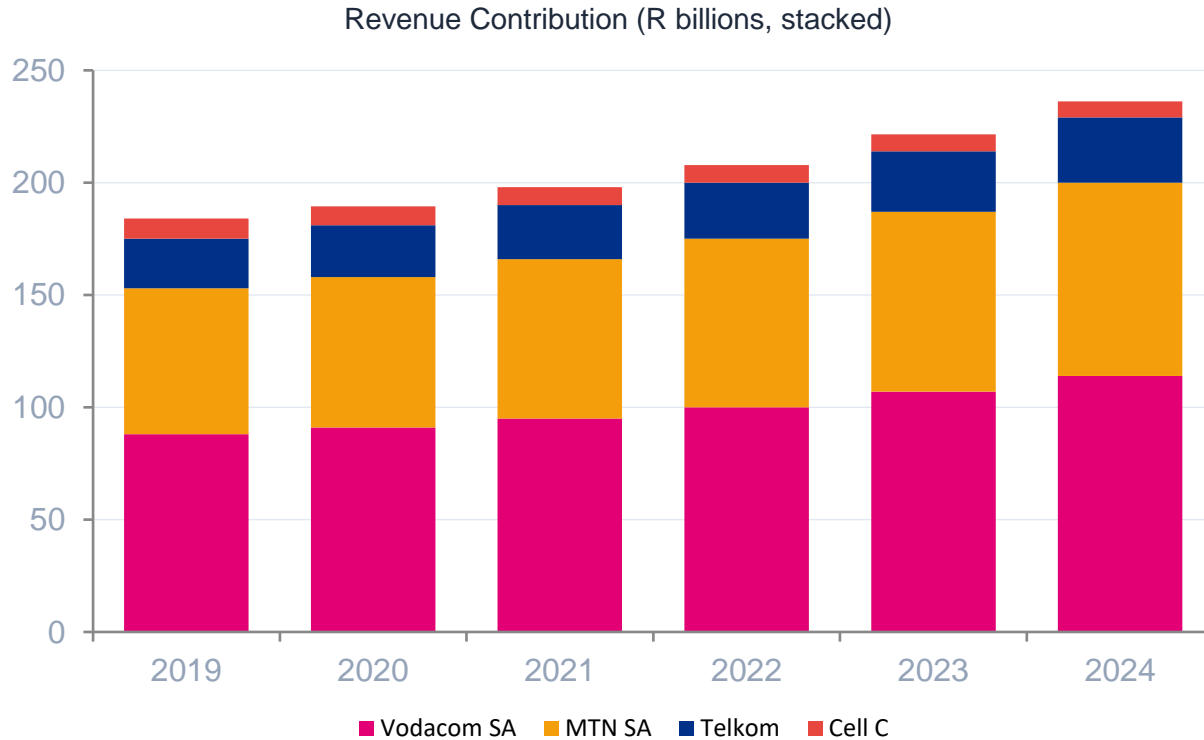
MTN + Vodacom together command 77% of subscribers — a position held consistently for over a decade.

Rain remains a niche data-only play (~750K). MVNOs (Capitec Connect, FNB Connect) are the real disruptors — they don't build networks, they steal ARPU.

# 10-Year Subscriber Journey — 2015 to 2025



# Operator Revenue Growth — The Data Era (2019–2024)



## Revenue Story

↑ Data revenue now >60% of total mobile revenue

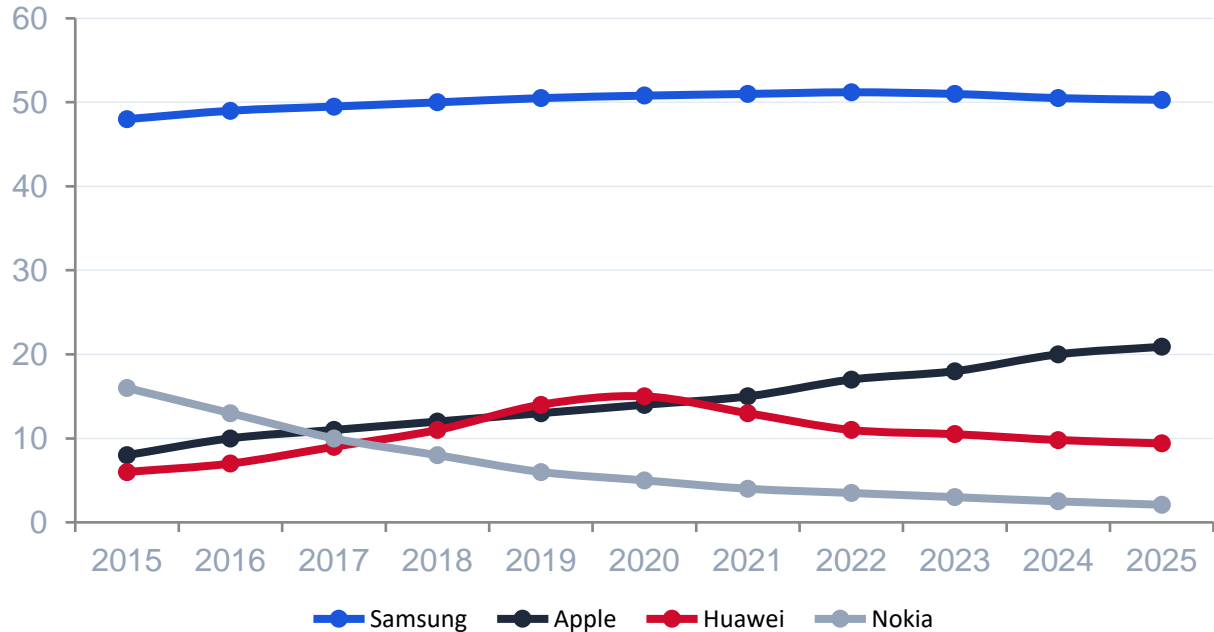
⚠ Voice revenue declining YoY across all operators

🔥 WhatsApp earned operators R49B in data traffic (2024)

→ MTN 5G sites >4,000 — monetising network premium

# Device Leaders 2015–2025 — Who Owns the Screen?

Smartphone Market Share % — SA (2015–2025)



## WINNERS

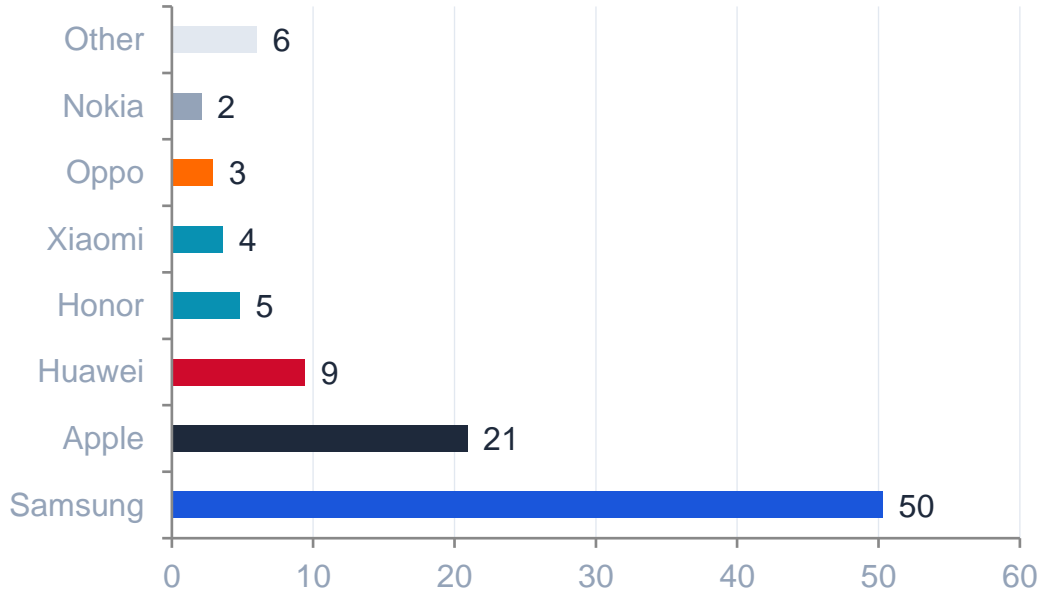
- ✓ Samsung A-Series (vol leader)
- ✓ Apple (premium +12pp in 10yr)
- ✓ Refurbished segment
- ✓ Honor & Xiaomi (rising)

## LOSERS

- X Nokia (-14pp over 10 years)
- X Feature phones (structural exit)
- X Huawei (post-ban plateau)
- X BlackBerry (gone)

# New Entrants — Chinese Brands Carve the Mid-Tier

SA Device Market Share % — Feb 2026 (Statcounter)



## Honor 4.8%

Huawei spin-off with GMS restored. Fast growth in R2,500–R4,500 range.

▲ +2.1pp since 2022

## Xiaomi 3.6%

Redmi series dominates budget. +32% Africa shipments in 2024.

▲ +1.8pp since 2022

## Oppo 2.9%

A-series style play. Strong camera marketing to youth segment.

▲ +1.2pp since 2022

🔄 Refurbished phones: ~8% CAGR — expected 40% of price-sensitive segment by 2027

# Customer Behaviour Evolution — 10 Years of Shifts

2015

2G still dominant; feature phones peak

2017

Data bundles become competitive; smartphone crossover

2019

WhatsApp becomes primary comms layer; data hunger ↑

2021

Covid drives digital surge; mobile money accelerates

2023

AI features drive upgrade cycles; refurb market matures

## Data > Voice

Data now >60% of mobile revenue. Voice ARPU declining annually since 2017.

## Value Hunting

83% prepaid + refurb boom = price-sensitive, savvy consumers switching fast.

## Social-First

WhatsApp + TikTok + YouTube drive 70%+ of mobile data traffic. OTT is king.

## Longer Upgrade

Average device held 28 months in 2025 (up from 18 in 2019). Economic pressure.

# The Two Big Splits — Connection Type & Device Market

Prepaid Connections

**83%**

↑ stable 10yr

Postpaid Connections

**17%**

Higher ARPU

New Devices

**~70%**

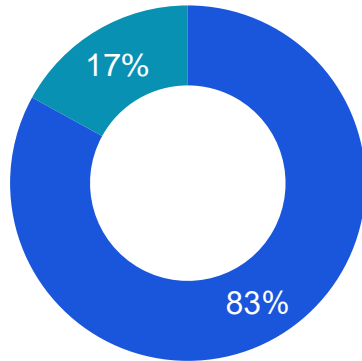
Shifting down

Refurbished/Pre-owned

**~30%**

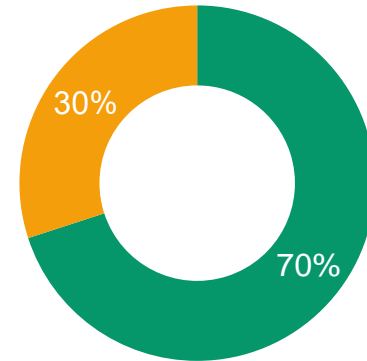
CAGR 8%

Prepaid vs Postpaid Split



■ Prepaid 83% ■ Postpaid 17%

New vs Refurbished Device Sales



■ New Devices ■ Refurbished/Used

# The Africa Opportunity — 527M Subscribers and Counting

Unique Subscribers (2023)

**527M**

→ 751M by 2030

Smartphone Adoption 2023

**27%**

→ 51% by 2030

Mobile Internet Users

**393M**

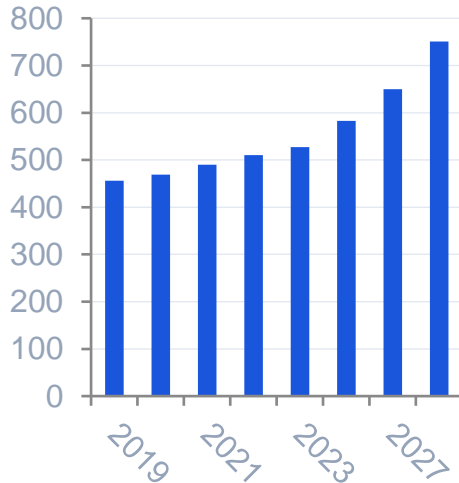
+17% YoY Africa

SA as % of SSA Revenue

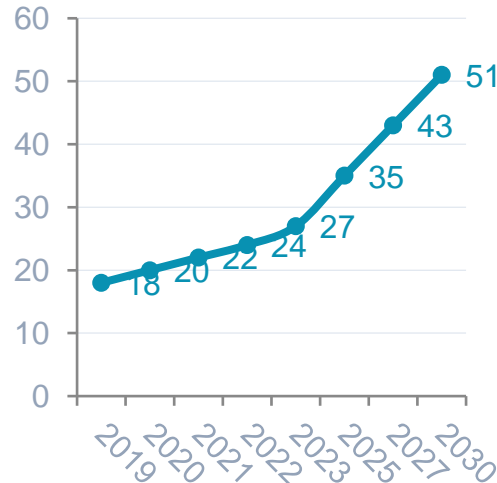
**~18%**

Highest ARPU on continent

Unique Subscribers (M)



Smartphone Adoption %



## SA Leads the Continent

- Highest mobile ARPU in Sub-Saharan Africa
- Most advanced 5G rollout on continent
- Sophisticated MVNO regulatory framework
- Digital finance integration (banking MVNOs)
- English-first internet — global product fit

# Key Market Opportunities for Product & Business Leaders

## WhatsApp-Native Products

R49B data traffic in 2024. Build products that live in the channel, not beside it. 83% prepaid = zero-friction must be default.

## Mid-Tier Device Ecosystem

R1,500–R4,000 price band is fastest growing. Chinese brands are winning it. Opportunity: accessories, insurance, device finance.

## Refurbished Device Market

8% CAGR, underdeveloped infrastructure. Certified refurb + data-wiping + warranty = premium play in a budget market.

## Banking MVNO Model

Capitec Connect: 1.6M users. FNB Connect growing. The banking-telco bundle is the stickiest product in SA right now.

## Pan-Africa Expansion

Use SA as product lab. 224M new subscribers in SSA by 2030. WhatsApp, mobile money, and data tools export perfectly.

## **5G 5G Business Services**

Only 6% of MTN users have 5G devices despite 44% coverage. First-mover opportunity in enterprise: IoT, fixed wireless, edge.

# WhatsApp Intelligence + Data Insights

Where the Market Data Meets Real Product Opportunity

## The Data Proves It

83% prepaid + R49B WhatsApp traffic = your customers are already on WhatsApp. Products must live there.

## Operators Need It

Telcos earn from data pipes. Products that drive WhatsApp usage = direct ARPU contribution.

## Africa Ready

Same WhatsApp layer, 527M potential users. Build once in SA, distribute across SSA.

## What I Bring

- Market intelligence distilled from 10 years of SA & Africa data
- Product thinking built on real customer behaviour shifts
- WhatsApp-first solution frameworks for prepaid-dominant markets
- Data insights pipeline connecting telco signals to product decisions
- A clear Africa expansion lens: SA as the product lab

# Strategic Recommendations — Act on the Signals

## For Telcos & Network Operators

01

### Accelerate MVNO Enablement

ICASA now mandates MVNOs. Don't treat this as a compliance burden — use it as a monetisation lever. Banking and retail MVNOs drive stickiness and data revenue.

**Target: 3+ premium MVNO partners by 2026**

02

### Monetise WhatsApp Strategically

R49B in traffic already flows through operator pipes. Build bundled WhatsApp data products, zero-rated business APIs, and WhatsApp Business SME packages.

**Opportunity: R5–8B incremental ARPU**

03

### Lead the 2G/3G Sunset Transition

December 2027 deadline. Millions of devices will need migration. Offer subsidised 4G handset upgrade programmes — drive retention and ARPU uplift simultaneously.

**Risk: 15–20% churn if unmanaged**

04

### Build Africa-Ready Product Stacks

SA-developed digital financial products (InsurTech, lending, mobile ID) have direct export paths to 12+ SSA markets with similar WhatsApp/prepaid profiles.

**Market: 224M new subs in SSA by 2030**

# Strategic Recommendations — For Device & Product Teams

## For Device Brands, Distributors & Product Leaders

05

### Own the R1,500–R4,000 Sweet Spot

Samsung's A-series dominates here. Chinese brands are closing fast. Brands that can deliver 5G-ready, good-camera, long-battery at under R4,000 will win the next 5 years.

~65% of all SA shipments in this band

06

### Build a Certified Refurb Channel

8% CAGR with zero institutional infrastructure. First-mover with warranty + trade-in + device-wipe certification wins. Partner with operators for financing.

→ 40% of price-sensitive sales by 2027

07

### Design for 28-Month Hold Cycles

Consumers are keeping phones longer. Software updates, battery longevity, and repairability are now purchase criteria. Products that age well retain loyalty.

Upgrade gap up from 18 to 28 months

08

### WhatsApp-First UX as Standard

Any product touching >50M SA mobile users needs WhatsApp as primary channel. Not as an afterthought. Build onboarding, support, and transactions into WA Business API.

R49B traffic | 30M+ active WA users in SA

# Data Sources & Methodology

## Regulatory & Market Data

- ICASA Annual Report 2024 — SA operator subscriber counts, revenue
- Mordor Intelligence Telecom RSA Report 2025 — market sizing
- Operator Annual Reports: Vodacom FY2024, MTN Group FY2024, Telkom FY2024

## Device Intelligence

- Statcounter GlobalStats — Device market share (Feb 2026 snapshot)
- IDC Africa Mobile Tracker Q4 2024 — shipments, brand trends
- Intelpoint SA Smartphone Report 2025 — refurbished market analysis

## Africa / SSA Intelligence

- GSMA Mobile Economy Sub-Saharan Africa 2024 — subscriber forecasts
- GSMA Mobile Economy Africa 2025 — 5G rollout, internet penetration

## Consumer Behaviour

- GSMA Consumer Survey SA 2024 — device hold cycles, upgrade intent
- MTN & Vodacom Investor Day Presentations 2024 — ARPU, WhatsApp data

Methodology: All subscriber and revenue figures use latest available operator disclosures cross-referenced with ICASA filings. Device share from Statcounter (usage-based web analytics) may differ from IDC (shipment-based). Forecasts sourced directly from GSMA Intelligence (not extrapolated).

# Thank You

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Africa's mobile market is not a footnote.  
It's the next frontier.

## Open to collaborate on:

- Market intelligence & telco data projects
- WhatsApp Business API product builds
- Africa go-to-market strategy
- Investor deck preparation for telco/tech

# 10

Years of Data.

**One Clear Direction.**

# Appendix — Supplementary Data

## MVNO Landscape — South Africa 2025

MVNO	Host MNO	Subs (est.)	Differentiator
Capitec Connect	Cell C	~1.6M	Non-expiring data + banking bundle
FNB Connect	MTN + Cell C	~900K	eBucks up to 40% mobile spend cashback
Spar Mobile	MTN	Launch 2025	Grocery-linked top-ups, Xtra Savings rewards
Mr Price Cellular	Vodacom	Launch 2025	First brand on Vodacom enablement platform
Virgin Mobile SA	Cell C	~400K	Premium youth brand positioning

## SA Device Price Band Analysis (2025)

Price Band (ZAR)	% of Shipments	Key Brands	Trend
<R1,500	18%	Transsion (Tecno, Itel), entry Huawei	Declining as 4G floor rises
R1,500–R3,000	42%	Samsung A-series, Xiaomi Redmi, Honor	▲ Fastest growing segment
R3,000–R6,000	23%	Samsung A/M-series, Oppo, mid iPhone	Stable — Chinese brands entering
R6,000–R14,000	11%	Samsung S-series, iPhone 14/15 base	▲ Growing (AI features drive upgrades)
>R14,000	6%	iPhone 15/16 Pro, Samsung S25 Ultra	▲ +57% YoY (premium surge)