

# Yahoo! banks on mobile devices for future growth

June 16 2010, by Martin Abbugao

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Irv Henderson (L), vice president for product management at Yahoo, and Matthias Kunze, Asia-Pacific managing director for Yahoo! Mobile, at the CommunicAsia 2010 conference and exhibition in Singapore on June 15. Yahoo! is banking on mobile devices for future growth -- particularly in Asia -- as consumers leapfrog cumbersome computers to access the Internet via feature-packed handheld gadgets.

Yahoo! is banking on mobile devices for future growth -- particularly in Asia -- as consumers leapfrog cumbersome computers to access the Internet via feature-packed handheld gadgets.

The US Internet giant believes "smartphones" with better operating systems, high-speed [Internet networks](#), falling prices and a plethora of content will fuel the mobile boom.

Markets in India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand and Malaysia will lead the way, [Yahoo!](#) executives said at a telecom trade fair in Singapore.

"We see a significant number of people who will have their first Internet experience on their [mobile phone](#)," said Matthias Kunze, Asia-Pacific managing director for Yahoo! Mobile.

In Indonesia, mobile data subscribers have outnumbered users of personal computers, Kunz told AFP on Tuesday on the sidelines of the CommunicAsia 2010 technology conference and exhibition.

India has about 40-50 million PCs but this is far fewer than the estimated 550 million mobile subscribers, of whom around 20 million use their handheld gadgets to access the Internet.

Industry players said companies like Yahoo! will be well-placed as Asia gets increasingly wired into high-speed Internet technology.

The Broadband Forum, a consortium promoting high-speed Internet access, said Wednesday that Asia now accounts for almost a third of the global market, challenging Europe's dominance.

"New applications such as video, [social networking](#), many of these things that are coming onscreen, the critical driver... will be broadband," said Bill Barney, chief executive of telecommunications service provider Pacnet.

Kunze said mobile phones play a crucial role in information technology because they are the world's most ubiquitous devices.

"Maybe there are only more toothbrushes in the world than mobile phones," he said.

Irv Henderson, vice president for product management at California-based Yahoo!, said the Asia-Pacific currently accounts for 25-30 percent of the company's global mobile audience.

This is projected to grow by "double or triple digits" in the next two to three years, Kunze added.

Yahoo! Mobile is positioning itself to be ahead of the game, with special focus on India, Indonesia and other emerging Asian markets.

At CommunicAsia, it announced the availability of a mobile phone made by China's TCT Mobile under the Alcatel brand.

It features an embedded one-touch button that links users directly to a suite of Yahoo! services such as Yahoo! Mail and Yahoo! Messenger.

The phone, priced at under 100 US dollars, will be launched in India by the end of July and subsequently in Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam and Thailand within this year.

Yahoo! also announced a scheme in which the Yahoo! Messenger application programme interface, or API, will be made available to "partners and third-party developers" in the Asia-Pacific.

"We believe by opening up our API it will foster innovation in this region," said Henderson.

Last month, Yahoo! announced a "strategic alliance" under which Nokia will supply maps and navigation services to the web company. Yahoo! will then provide email and chat to the world's top mobile phone maker.

Yahoo! has also acquired Koprol, an Indonesian Internet service that lets people use mobile phones to instantly connect with nearby users.

"We are operating on the thesis that tens and hundreds of millions of users will come to mobile data over the next five years. We see a phenomenal opportunity through our partnerships," Henderson said.

Kunze added: "The world has changed in the last 24 months and that's why we also have to embrace this change and make sure that the whole company breathes and lives mobile. I think this is happening."

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