

Mobile service providers bag marketing awards

By [Carole Kimutai](#)

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The big boys of Kenya's mobile telephone industry scooped six of 15 marketing awards during this year's Marketing Society of Kenya (MSK) Warrior Awards gala. The event was held at the Kenya International Conference Centre grounds on Friday, 30 November.

Nairobi – In the five categories, Safaricom bagged four awards; 1st runner up – Best new product/ service launch, 2nd runner up – Best social marketing effort and Overall winner (Warrior) and 2nd runner up – Best brand/service innovation. Celtel took home two awards: Overall winner (Warrior) – Best new product/service launch and 2nd runner up – Best marketing campaign. In the Best new product/service launch category, Celtel's One Network service trampled Safaricom's MPesa service and took the Warrior award. Safaricom was named 1st runner up.

The mobile phone subscriber base in Kenya has been growing steadily every year and both companies (Celtel and Safaricom) have put up various marketing campaigns to grow subscriber base and maintain consumer loyalty. Safaricom recently concluded a multi million promotion known as *Kwachua Millions* (win millions in Swahili) where subscribers were winning cash prizes. The grand winner walked away with KSh 10 million. Celtel on the other has held promotions where subscribers have won houses worth millions and other items.

According to the Communications Commission of Kenya (CCK), as at June last year both Safaricom and Celtel had a combined subscriber base of 6.48 million and by January this year, subscriber numbers had hit eight million. Celtel is a pan African brand and boasts 24 million subscribers in 14 African countries. The One Network is a borderless phone network service that allows customers to move freely across geographic borders without roaming call surcharges and without having to pay for receiving incoming calls.

Both Safaricom and Celtel are big spenders with advertising budgets running into millions of Kenya shillings. Safaricom happens to be the most profitable company in the region having posted KSh17bn pre-tax profit. As a pan African business, Celtel also spends a tidy sum on advertising and marketing.

For a long time, both mobile service providers have been known as 'enemies' as they fight to win subscribers. Both boast of having wide network coverage in Kenya and other goodies like internet access services, cash transfers, multi media messaging and different tariff plans to suit dynamic consumer needs. Celtel has the *Sokotele* money transfer service while Safaricom has MPesa – both services enable subscribers to send or receive money using their cell phones.

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