


Why are travellers still stuck on SIM cards?

 By [Craig Lowe](#)

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With the Rugby World Cup now underway, thousands of South Africans are preparing to travel to the UK and get in on the action. Many will be juggling work and play, with only a few that can afford to simply disconnect from work for even a few days at a time. As a result, mobile connectivity is a major priority for travellers.

In today's always-on business environment, being out of the office - or even out of country - is no longer an excuse for being out of touch. Most South Africans however, are still using outdated and overly expensive means to stay connected on the move.

Rethinking the SIM card strategy

Arguably, this can be most plainly seen in the continued reliance on prepaid SIM cards for smart phones when traveling abroad. Despite the fact that there are now other, more cost effective and secure options, most people still believe prepaid SIM cards are a smart strategy.

In our view, using prepaid SIMs in smartphones when abroad puts the user at greater security risk.

Fraud and cyber threats are a reality in South Africa, and if people don't have access to their normal mobile numbers when abroad, it leaves them vulnerable to identity theft and banking disasters - amongst other things. On the other hand, using prepaid SIM cards for use in tablets is a smart option, enables travellers to use data for email and voice services such as Skype and FaceTime - while still being safely connected to home with their regular SIM cards in their phones.

We believe that SMS roaming is still a very useful and affordable service for travellers when abroad especially for Internet banking and emergencies.

Bursting the Wi-Fi bubble...

Beyond the use of prepaid SIM cards for data, many travellers are also being caught out by hotel Wi-Fi that is unexpectedly poor and unreliable.

According to the 2013 iPass Mobile Workforce Report, more than 80% of respondents reported having had a 'bad experience with hotel Wi-Fi, even though most hotel guests now consider it a basic need and expect hotels to provide adequate service'.

For travellers who need to remain connected for work (and don't have reliable mobile connectivity of their own) this can be a disastrous scenario. As the same report underscored, 'vacation time is connected time'. Indeed, the iPass report confirmed that workers aren't unplugging when they go on vacation. The majority (91%) stay connected wherever they go just so they won't fall behind while they're away - and more than half 'continue regular daily project work while they're on vacation, and login several times a day to work'.

For South Africans traveling to the UK in the coming month, the same will most likely apply.

Best of Both Worlds

Naturally, the other massive issue with Wi-Fi is that it's not mobile. And for travellers who increasingly want to access voice services, social networks, email and work-related platforms on the move - mobile connectivity is critical.

Fortunately, there are an increasing number of smart and affordable options for travellers beyond the usual SIM card swops and spotty Wi-Fi connections. PocketWifi, for example, enables travellers to combine the benefits of mobile and Wi-Fi - without the security risks associated with prepaid SIMs and public Wi-Fi. Given the soaring costs of international roaming, it is also a cost-effective way of staying connected when out of the office (and out of country)...

ABOUT CRAIG LOWE

Craig Lowe is founder and managing director of execMbbile. Lowe left BT Global Services to start execMbbile, introducing innovative roaming voice and data solutions into the South African market. execMbbile offers corporate customers affordable post-paid data roaming as a managed service

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