

Equities

29 June 2012 | 19 pages

Vodacom Group Limited (VODJ.J)

Losing Its Voice

- Company Update
- Target Price Change
- Estimate Change

- **Seeds for the early bird** — In [The Early Bird Catches The Worm - Sell](#), we argued that VOD, could come under pressure on consumer and competition challenges in SA; Cell C's recent voice tariff cuts (Figure 2) offer evidence of the latter. While the share (-15% since Apr) has started to reflect this, we think there could be further downside.
- **What can happen when competition heats up** — Israeli telco's provide a recent example of the potential destruction when competition rises. In 1H11, the regulator cut MTR's by 74%, reduced contract cancellation fees and issued new 2 MNO licenses (see p4). As operators slashed prices, the aftermath reads as follows: ARPU's and service rev's, -30%; EBITDA margin, -10ppts (qly) and share prices, -77%. All this in the space of the past 18 months, and even before the new MNO's launched in May-12.
- **So what about SA?** — It is unlikely to be as severe for Vodacom as the Israeli developments were particularly aggressive. We have already started factoring stronger price erosion in voice, but look at some scenarios using estimated billed outgoing minutes for Vodacom SA where our base case assumes a price decline of 20% on this basis for FY13. Roughly, the downside to our base-case EBITDA for Vodacom SA could be as much as 25% if we factored in the full extent (-45%) of Cell C's cuts to headline tariffs (Figure 8). This is before making any market share assumptions, where a 5% loss could on its own result in c5% downside to our SA EBITDA (Figure 9).
- **Earnings** — We cut our earnings estimates by an average of 5%, forecasting +10% in FY13E, and -7% in '14E. Our HEPS are c15% below consensus.
- **Don't wait** — European telco share prices started falling before the impact of competition was felt, and despite high DY's (Figure 15). The yield argument in favour of VOD may thus be insufficient to support the share, and we expect further downside as the impact of competition is reflected in results over the coming year. For the "early bird", however, the lessons from Europe suggest that it does not pay to wait for this.
- **Remain Sellers** — We reiterate our Sell rating on VOD and cut our DCF-TP to R80 from R85, implying an EV/EBITDA of 5.8x (FY13E). VOD currently remains expensive relative to peers: its CY12E EV/EBITDA of 6.2x compares to the CEEMEA avg of 3.8x, and PE of 12.1x is against 7.4x.

Sell	3
Price (28 Jun 12)	R93.75
Target price	R80.00
from R85.00	
Expected share price return	-14.7%
Expected dividend yield	7.6%
Expected total return	-7.1%
Market Cap	R139,496M
	US\$16,524M

Price Performance (RIC: VODJ.J, BB: VOD SJ)



Vodacom Group Limited (ZAR)

Year to 31 Mar	2011A	2012A	2013E	2014E	2015E
Sales (RM)	61,197.0	66,929.0	65,315.1	65,741.9	68,914.3
Net Income (RM)	9,626.0	10,374.0	11,847.1	11,049.0	11,405.0
Diluted EPS (¢)	656	709	810	755	780
Diluted EPS (Old) (¢)	656	719	804	794	na
PE (x)	14.3	13.2	11.6	12.4	12.0
EV/EBITDA (x)	7.3	6.4	6.1	6.3	6.1
DPS (¢)	460	710	710	710	710
Net Div Yield (%)	4.9	7.6	7.6	7.6	7.6

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See Appendix A-1 for Analyst Certification, Important Disclosures and non-US research analyst disclosures.

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VODJ.J: Fiscal year end 31-Mar						Price: R93.75; TP: R80.00; Market Cap: R139,496m; Recomm: Sell					
Profit & Loss (Rm)	2011	2012	2013E	2014E	2015E	Valuation ratios	2011	2012	2013E	2014E	2015E
Sales revenue	61,197	66,929	65,315	65,742	68,914	PE (x)	14.3	13.2	11.6	12.4	12.0
Cost of sales	-27,600	-30,368	-29,989	-30,537	-32,376	PB (x)	8.8	7.4	6.9	6.8	6.5
Gross profit	33,597	36,561	35,326	35,205	36,538	EV/EBITDA (x)	7.3	6.4	6.1	6.3	6.1
Gross Margin (%)	54.9	54.6	54.1	53.6	53.0	FCF yield (%)	7.4	8.7	7.0	7.8	8.0
EBITDA	20,594	22,838	24,080	23,487	24,257	Dividend yield (%)	4.9	7.6	7.6	7.6	7.6
EBITDA Margin (%)	33.7	34.1	36.9	35.7	35.2	Payout ratio (%)	70	100	88	94	91
Depreciation	-4,515	-5,022	-5,372	-5,742	-5,944	ROE (%)	56.2	59.5	61.8	55.1	55.1
Amortisation	-840	-935	-1,000	-1,069	-1,106	Cashflow (Rm)	2011	2012	2013E	2014E	2015E
EBIT	15,239	16,881	17,708	16,677	17,207	EBITDA	20,594	22,838	24,080	23,487	24,257
EBIT Margin (%)	24.9	25.2	27.1	25.4	25.0	Working capital	475	1,423	-354	404	110
Net interest	-755	-639	-277	-392	-387	Other	-4,338	-4,756	-5,007	-4,678	-4,831
Associates	0	0	0	0	0	Operating cashflow	16,731	19,505	18,720	19,213	19,536
Non-op/Except	-1,846	-309	0	0	0	Capex	-6,548	-7,568	-9,088	-8,504	-8,559
Pre-tax profit	12,638	15,933	17,431	16,286	16,820	Net acq/disposals	-24	-23	0	0	0
Tax	-4,659	-5,730	-5,526	-5,163	-5,332	Other	-9	-411	-176	-176	-176
Extraord./Min.Int./Pref.div.	266	-47	-58	-74	-83	Investing cashflow	-6,581	-8,002	-9,264	-8,679	-8,735
Reported net profit	8,245	10,156	11,847	11,049	11,405	Dividends paid	-5,283	-7,947	-10,565	-10,565	-10,565
Net Margin (%)	13.5	15.2	18.1	16.8	16.5	Financing cashflow	-10,119	-8,556	-11,315	-10,565	-13,565
Core NPAT	9,626	10,374	11,847	11,049	11,405	Net change in cash	-84	2,947	-1,859	-31	-2,764
Per share data	2011	2012	2013E	2014E	2015E	Free cashflow to s/holders	10,183	11,937	9,631	10,709	10,977
Reported EPS (¢)	562	694	810	755	780						
Core EPS (¢)	656	709	810	755	780						
DPS (¢)	460	710	710	710	710						
CFPS (¢)	1,140	1,333	1,280	1,313	1,335						
FCFPS (¢)	694	816	658	732	750						
BVPS (¢)	1,064	1,267	1,354	1,387	1,445						
Wtd avg ord shares (m)	1,468	1,463	1,463	1,463	1,463						
Wtd avg diluted shares (m)	1,468	1,463	1,463	1,463	1,463						
Growth rates	2011	2012	2013E	2014E	2015E						
Sales revenue (%)	4.5	9.4	-2.4	0.7	4.8						
EBIT (%)	4.3	10.8	4.9	-5.8	3.2						
Core NPAT (%)	27.3	7.8	14.2	-6.7	3.2						
Core EPS (%)	28.9	8.1	14.2	-6.7	3.2						
Balance Sheet (Rm)	2011	2012	2013E	2014E	2015E						
Cash & cash equiv.	870	3,781	1,922	1,891	1,891						
Accounts receivables	10,773	11,379	10,923	10,812	11,334						
Inventory	799	832	812	817	857						
Net fixed & other tangibles	22,271	24,907	27,608	29,307	30,828						
Goodwill & intangibles	5,215	5,123	5,123	5,123	5,123						
Financial & other assets	1,507	2,208	2,201	2,195	2,188						
Total assets	41,435	48,230	48,590	50,145	52,220						
Accounts payable	10,292	12,438	11,603	11,890	12,566						
Short-term debt	3,114	2,413	1,663	4,663	1,663						
Long-term debt	7,280	9,012	7,758	4,758	7,522						
Provisions & other liab	4,569	5,437	7,295	8,005	8,717						
Total liabilities	25,255	29,300	28,319	29,316	30,468						
Shareholders' equity	15,622	18,530	19,812	20,296	21,137						
Minority interests	558	400	458	532	615						
Total equity	16,180	18,930	20,270	20,829	21,752						
Net debt	9,524	7,644	7,499	7,530	7,294						
Net debt to equity (%)	58.9	40.4	37.0	36.2	33.5						

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For definitions of the items in this table, please click [here](#).

In our view, the main supports to Vodacom's valuation have been (a) doubts about a meaningful increase in (especially voice) competition and therefore the expectation of earnings stability, and (b) its dividend yield. Recent developments suggest that (a) no longer holds, and past experiences have shown that (b) is not enough in the absence of (a). Vodacom's share price has started to reflect this (-15% in the past three months), but we think there could be further downside. Sell, R80 TP (from R85).

Figure 1. CEEMEA Valuation Comp Table, CY

Company	Country	PE (x)			EV/EBITDA (x)		
		2011	2012	2013	2011	2012	2013
Bezeq	Israel	4.6	5.7	6.1	3.3	3.8	4.1
Cellcom Israel	Israel	2.6	4.1	5.2	2.6	3.4	3.7
Partner Comm	Israel	4.8	4.3	5.7	3.3	3.4	3.7
Telefonica O2 Czech	Czech Rep	10.3	10.2	9.5	4.5	4.6	4.4
Mobinil	Egypt	7.5	7.1	6.1	3.5	3.2	2.9
Orascom Telco	Egypt	3.5	2.6	4.7	3.9	3.3	2.5
Magyar Telekom	Hungary	9.7	8.9	7.5	3.5	3.5	3.7
Wataniya Telco	Kuwait	10.6	10.4	8.6	3.7	3.5	3.0
Telekom Polska	Poland	10.1	9.7	17.3	3.6	3.6	4.3
QTEL	Qatar	7.5	6.4	7.1	4.9	4.1	4.1
Mobile Telesystems	Russia	11.5	10.1	9.6	4.5	4.3	4.2
VimpelCom	Russia	6.7	6.9	5.2	3.6	3.5	3.3
Turk Telekomunik	Turkey	11.0	9.4	9.2	4.9	5.1	5.0
Turkcell	Turkey	14.0	10.6	9.0	5.6	5.0	4.6
CEEMEA AVERAGE		7.8	7.4	7.7	3.9	3.8	3.8
EM AVERAGE		14.4	12.9	11.1	5.6	5.3	5.0
DVPD EUROPE AVERAGE		10.0	9.6	9.1	4.6	4.9	4.9
MTN Grp Ltd	SA	11.1	11.2	10.3	5.0	4.8	4.2
Vodacom Grp	SA	13.6	12.1	12.3	6.7	6.2	6.3

Source: CIRA Estimates

The game's begun, with Cell C dishing out the Aces

Competition happening sooner than expected

In [The Early Bird Catches The Worm – Sell](#) (16/04/12), we stressed our concerns around Vodacom's outlook given (i) a tough consumer environment, (ii) a maturing sector, and (iii) rising competition, with Cell C as the wildcard. With Cell C's recent raft of voice tariff cuts — we touched on in our notes from [18-May](#) and [21-May](#) — point (iii) is playing out sooner than expected, and in earnest, with Cell C introducing material reductions in headline tariffs in the voice space for just about the first time in the industry's history. This introduces a fresh threat to Vodacom's voice revenues which make up c60% of SA service revenues.

Figure 2. Cell C Moving, Shaking...

16May - Introduces new per sec, flat-rate, all-net, anytime tariffs in prepaid at 99c/min. Implied cut of as much as 65% on peak cross-net rates
29May - Announces per sec, flat-rate, anytime international non-VoIP call rates at 99c/min. Implied cut is upward of 75% to normal rates.
6Jun - Plans new per sec flat-rate, all-net, anytime postpaid tariffs at 99c/min (packages incl 'free' SMS' and data bundles. Implies at least 40% discounts vs prevailing voice cross-net peak rates
22Jun - Follows 8ta in introducing special tariff plan for Blackberry users. Plans start at R27/mo for reduced BIS services incl access to social n/works and internet. Normal package at R59/mo
All the above in addition to ongoing data price cuts and promotions

Source: CIRA

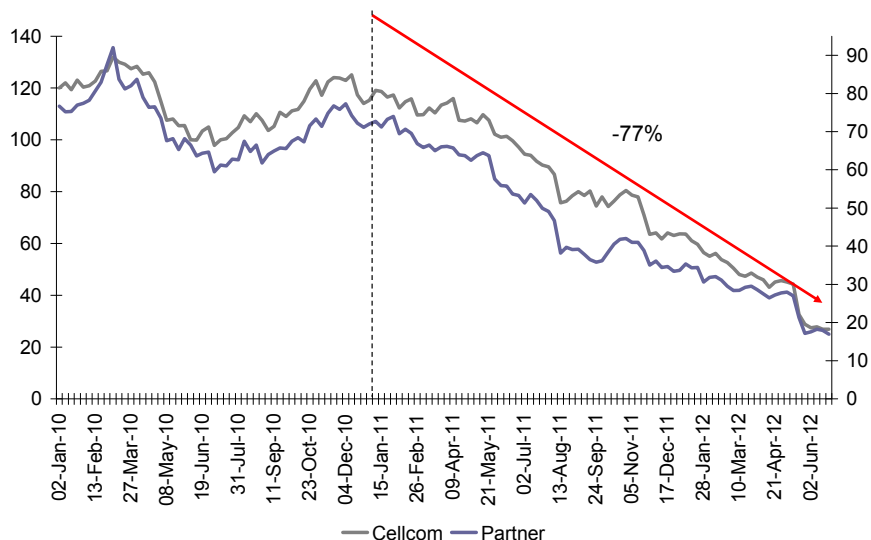
Pricing environment promises to get more competitive, with government also potentially playing a role

Ominously for Vodacom, Cell C's commentary suggests that this may only be the start of things to come over the next year or two and that the company (Cell C) will lobby for further MTR reductions over the next few years to help bring prices down further. As if that weren't enough, the Communications Ministry has also weighed in and urged telco's in SA to further cut voice and data prices with a warning that it would otherwise look at having the regulator force these down.

We expect Vodacom and MTN to follow Cell C's lead at some point, if not necessarily exactly match the price cuts suggesting that the leading incumbents' path ahead could feature both price and market share erosion. This has in fact been the experience in various European markets when the competitive ante has been upped.

Following Israel's footsteps

Figure 3. Share Price Performance of Israeli Telco's, Cellcom and Partner (NIS)



Source: Powered by dataCentral.

Israel offers an extreme example of what can happen when competition heats up

Israel offers a contemporary example of what can happen in a telecom market when competition increases. We have borrowed from some of the analysis in a [7-July-2011 report](#) on Israeli telcos, where our analyst highlighted the plight of telcos in that market given a sharp rise in competition. Figure 4 summarises some of the similarities we see between the SA and Israeli telecom markets, where the latter is probably ahead by around 12 months in terms of the impact on telcos.

Figure 4. Telecom Market Dynamics – South Africa's Parallels With Israel

	Israel	South Africa
No/weak competition	Pre-2010 competition was weak, market share of Partner (#3 telco) flat at 32% for eight years, service rev grew 10% pa, ARPU only declining 5% in the 5 years to 2010, EBITDA margin from 31-39% betw '05-10.	VOD service revs +8.5% p.a '07-10; EBITDA margin up from 34.4% to 37.3%
Regulatory/competitive intervention	Regulator steps in slashing MTR by 74% in Jan-11; cancels early contract exit fees; 2 MVNOs to launch in H211; prospect of 2 new MNOs for 2012.	2010 regulator legislates glide path that will see MTR fall 55% by 2013. Cell C hires Alan Knott-Craig as new CEO (2012) - not quite a new competitor, but may as well be. Interventions and changes not quite as aggressive as Israel, but quite significant for SA.
Operator behaviour	Incumbent operators slashed prices even before new competitors arrive; trend to unlimited fixed-price voice, SMS and data plans - lines between data and voice blurred, MOU and APPM become less relevant.	Lagging Israel by about a year; no real response initially but competition has heated up in the past 12-18months (promo's etc); now more aggressive in H112 as Cell C launches various 'game changing' per second billing 99c/min flat call rate products across its prepaid, contract and international offerings - slashing headline voice tariffs by upward of 45%; VOD introduces similar promo's in prepaid (not per sec); first time market sees aggressive cuts to headline voice tariffs; also change in packaging (flat rate, all-net, anytime, eliminates out of bundle rates etc), a step in the 'Israel direction
Impact	ARPU's have dropped more than 30% in the past year; service revenues -30%; EBITDA margin -10ppts. Share prices.....-77%!	VOD SA ARPU was already softening -17% in 12m to Q112 (R144), partly on lower MTR; -15% excl interconnect revs; we think the worst is yet to be seen in '13-14 as new voice pricing developments take effect.

Source: CIRA

Israel's developments have been much more severe than SA

... But offers a glimpse of what could lie in store for SA telco's

Our HEPS are up to 15% below consensus

We continue to forecast a reversal in earnings in FY 14

Flat DPS at R7.10/sh as FCF comes under pressure; implies rising p/o ratio

The intensifying of competition in Israel has resulted in quarterly ARPU's and service revenue falling by more than 30% over the course of the past year; EBITDA margin has also somewhat collapsed, falling in the region of c10ppts since Q4 10. It is important to note that the measures and developments seen in Israel happened more quickly and aggressively than in SA, as described in Figure 4 comparisons (eg immediate 74% cut in MTR, scrapping of contract cancellation fees and unlimited use fixed-price offerings).

Another difference is that MOUs in Israel were already toppish (in excess of 300 minutes) whereas SA (Vodacom, 114 minutes) still has some upside, which could help cushion ARPU erosion. Nevertheless, the Israel example offers a glimpse of what could lie in store for SA telco's, at least to some extent, over the next couple years, in our view. We had already factored in some decline in voice pricing for Vodacom over the medium-term, but Cell C's moves suggest that it could be sharper (and quicker) for Vodacom than even we anticipated.

Market may be optimistic on earnings

In light of the above, we believe that consensus earnings forecasts for Vodacom may be optimistic. The revisions we make in this report, and laid out in Figure 5, put our medium-term forecasts as much as c15% below consensus after FY 13.

Figure 5. Vodacom HEPS Forecasts

	FY 12	FY 13E		FY 14E		FY 15E	
R/sh		New	Prev	New	Prev	New	Prev
Citi HEPS	7.09	8.10	8.04	7.55	7.94	7.80	-
% Change, y-y		14.2%		-6.7%		3.2%	
Consensus HEPS	7.09	8.26	8.03	8.76	8.81	9.28	-
% Change, y-y		16.5%		6.1%		5.9%	
Citi DPS	7.10	7.10	6.91	7.10	7.05	7.10	-
% change, y-y		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%	
Consensus DPS	7.10	7.68	6.62	8.27	7.14	8.67	-
% change, y-y		8.2%		7.7%		4.8%	

Source: CIRA Estimates, I-Net Consensus. *As at [16-Apr](#)

Our FY 13E HEPS now sits at R8.10/sh, a slight increase of 1% on our previous estimate, and reflecting growth of 14.2% y-y. Remember that this is boosted by the change in accounting for STC to a dividend withholding tax regime, as well as a reduction in finance costs on our estimates. We expect earnings growth at the EBITDA level to be slower at +6% in FY 13. We have cut FY 14E by 5% and now forecast a 6.7% y-y drop in HEPS, following which growth may turn positive, albeit subdued, again in FY 15 (+3.2%, y-y). See page 11 for more detail on our forecasts

We have upped our DPS forecasts for Vodacom to reflect the company's new policy of paying out at least 90% of earnings. Our forecasts hold DPS flat at R7.10/sh over the medium-term, as we expect free cash flow to come under pressure. This actually implies that Vodacom's dividend payout will rise towards 100% in FY 14 and FY 15 on the assumption that the company will at least look to maintain its dividend despite pressure on cash flows (on our expectations). We elaborate on this a little more on page 9.

Reasons to worry

It could be worse

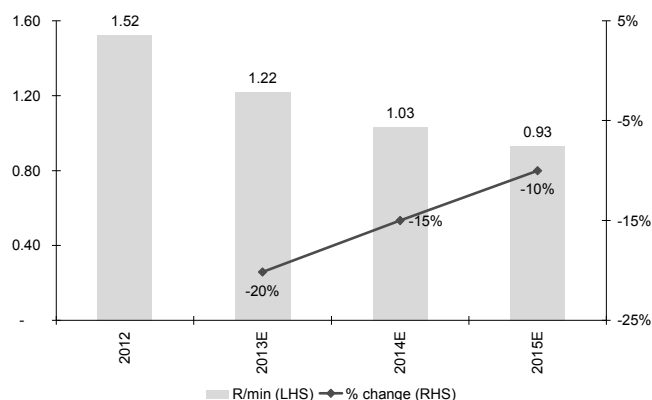
It could be even worse for Vodacom as our inputs around voice pricing are arguably quite benign in light of what we have seen from Cell C; even more so if one starts to factor in unfavourable assumptions around market share. We have used FY 14 to run some scenarios around the possible impact on Vodacom's EBITDA when flexing key inputs like voice prices and market share (South Africa specifically).

Voice prices: Competition fears are materialising

Our forecasts do not factor in the full extent of Cell C's cuts

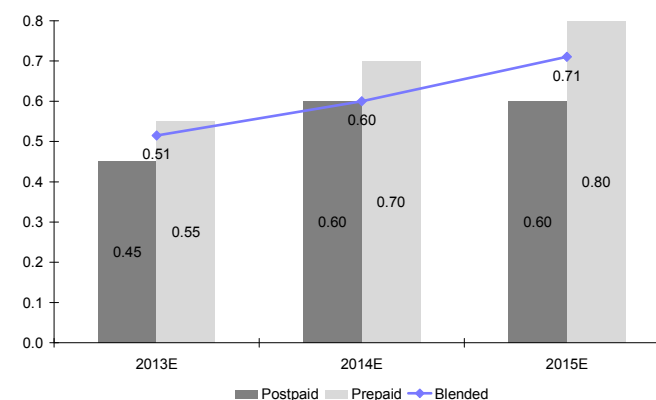
Cell C's 99c/min flat rate tariff plans across its voice product offerings in SA calculate to a reduction of more than 70% depending on bases of comparison. The potential impact on Vodacom is not straightforward as it can be affected by factors like free minutes, out-of-bundle rates and the extent to which Vodacom follows (or not) Cell C's price cuts, for instance. The contractual nature of the postpaid market is also a consideration, which could result in lags where price cuts may not be fully felt on a "linear" basis.

Figure 6. Vodacom SA, Outgoing Voice P/min



Source: CIRA Estimates. CIRA Estimates. Based on billed outgoing minutes

Figure 7. Our Elasticity Assumptions



Source: CIRA Estimates

We try to assess the impact of price reductions using billed outgoing minutes estimates

To try simplifying things, our approach uses *billed* outgoing minutes (i.e. excluding free minutes) to evaluate the effects of voice price movements on Vodacom's SA EBITDA. As a starting point, we estimate that Vodacom's tariff on this basis was Vodacom realised cR1.52/min in FY 12. On this basis, factoring in Cell C's new tariffs would infer a c35% cut to Vodacom's average price for outgoing minutes.

Our base case forecasts assume milder voice price cuts than those implemented by Cell C

Our base-case forecasts factor in a 20% cut in FY 13 to this average voice price for Vodacom (Figure 6), followed by 15% in FY 14 — in other words, much milder reductions, and spread over a couple years, than those immediately implemented by Cell C. This is potentially a benign assumption given Cell C's cuts, although the feed-through to effective pricing is not straightforward, as mentioned.

We think elasticity could be low for now, given a poor economic and consumer outlook

We factor in an implied elasticity of c0.5, which reflects (i) our concerns around the consumer's ability to increase usage even with price reductions, and (ii) new lower usage subscribers coming on to the network.

Figure 8. Vodacom SA – EBITDA Sensitivity, Voice Price and Elasticity Scenarios

		Elasticity			
		0.45	0.50*	0.70	1.00
y-y % change	-15%	3.0%	3.9%	6.3%	10.2%
Voice price	*-20%	-1.2%	0.0%	2.8%	7.7%
	-30%	-10.5%	-9.1%	0.4%	0.9%
	-45%	-26.5%	-25.0%	-20.8%	-13.8%

Source: CIRA Estimates. *Base case on FY 13e.

The potential downside to Vodacom SA's EBITDA could be as much as c25% vs current FY 13 estimates if full extent of price reductions is factored in

Figure 8 shows the potential impact on our FY 14E EBITDA for Vodacom's SA operations under different voice price movements. On our scenarios, Vodacom's SA EBITDA could be as much as 25% lower than our current forecast if we factored in a more aggressive price decline of say c45% in voice prices.

An increase in elasticity as the economy improves could provide some offset

Recall from our earlier discussion on the more severe case of Israeli telcos (Figure 4) that operators saw EBITDA margins fall by as much as c10ppts, which resulted in average downside of nearly c20% in EBITDA over the course of a year.

We have included elasticity scenarios in our analysis and Figure 8 shows that there is some offset under higher elasticity scenarios. To be fair, elasticity is likely to improve as and when economic and consumer conditions improve, which could provide some offset. Our underlying elasticity assumptions are captured in Figure 7.

Potential market share losses

We have assumed a stable market share for Vodacom, but what if Cell C achieves its market share targets?

We have made what are probably favourable market share assumptions for Vodacom. On our estimates, Vodacom may have gained about a percent of market share in FY 12 on a total subs basis, which we assume will be given back in FY 13 (back to 50%) and held steady over the medium-term horizon. In reality, Cell C is clearly being aggressive in its pursuit of market share — targets a 10% gain in the next 3-4 years — which would impact negatively on Vodacom. Let's see what the impact on Vodacom could be if it lost market share (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Vodacom SA EBITDA Sensitivity to Market Share Assumptions

	Market share				
	45.0%	47.5%	*50.0%	52.5%	55.0%
EBITDA (Rbn)	21.0	21.5	22.1	22.6	23.1
% from base case	-4.8%	-2.4%	-	2.4%	4.8%

Source: CIRA Estimates. *Base case on FY 14e

5% market share loss could result in a 4.8% hit to SA EBITDA

Cell C is not quite a new operator, but is a rejuvenated one, which could amount to the same thing, in our view. If Cell C achieves its target of 10% market share increase — and assuming it erodes equally from Vodacom and MTN — our scenario analysis in Figure 9 suggests that this could knock Vodacom's SA EBITDA by c4.8% on our base-case forecasts.

...This would be worse if combined with price erosion beyond our forecasts

Bear in mind that this is even before factoring in further price erosion, per our analysis in Figure 8. The experience in some European precedents was that new MNO's managed to gain an average of 6% market share by the end of the third year after launch, see Figure 10.

Figure 10. European Examples, Market Share Impact

Country	New entrant	Launch	New entrant mkt share gain (+3yrs)	Approach
UK	"3"	2003	5.5%	Quickly gained mkt share via subsidised handsets and discounting
Italy	"3"	2003	8.5%	Quickly gained mkt share via subsidised handsets and discounting
Poland	P4	2006	7.0%	Benefitted from steep and asymmetric MTR cuts, easier migration between operators (regulator) and cheaper costs
Spain	Yoigo	2006	2.5%	Less appetite for initial losses, but high prices made mkt susceptible to discounting strategy, Yoigo reduced and simplified tariff plans and gradually started gaining mkt share

Source: CIRA

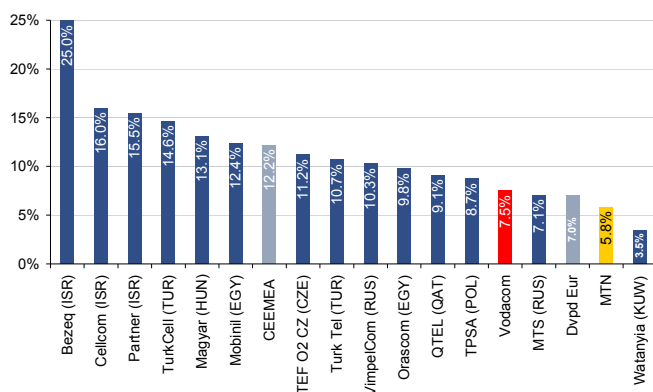
The yield is not enough

Vodacom's DY is attractive, but still light in CEEMEA context

Vodacom's DY has increased to 7.5% on share weakness, but still quite low vs CEEMEA peers (12.2%)

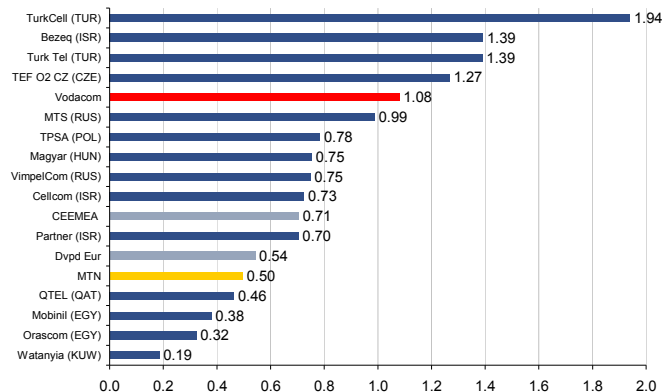
With the recent weakness in Vodacom's share price, its implied CY 13 dividend yield has risen to 7.5%. Although this measures favourably in a South African context — and in line with Developed European telco's (simple average of 7%) — Vodacom's yield remains lightweight when compared to CEEMEA names, which average c12.2% (Figure 11).

Figure 11. Peer Group DY Comparisons, CY 12 (%)



Source: CIRA Estimates

Figure 12. Yield Ratio: Dividend to Free Cash Flow, CY 12



Source: CIRA Estimates

Vodacom already paying out all of its free cash; what if this comes under pressure?

Furthermore, Vodacom has arguably shown its hand in that our forecast payout for the company means that it is already paying out all of its free cash. Figure 12 shows that Vodacom's dividend-to-FCF yield ratio is around 1.08, placing it amongst the highest in the universe and sitting above the majority of its CEEMEA peers.

Debt for dividends and the risk to free cash

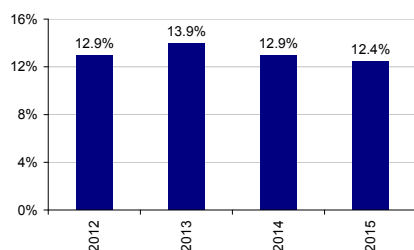
In other words, Vodacom's flexibility in maintaining its DY is reduced in the event that free cash flow comes under pressure. In fact, looking at our free cash flow forecasts for Vodacom, this could happen sooner rather than later.

Figure 13. Vodacom Free Cash Flow Forecasts

Rm	2012	2013E	% change	2014E	% change	2015E	% change
EBITDA	22,994	24,116	4.9%	23,524	-2.5%	24,295	3.3%
less Capex	-7,568	-9,088		-8,504		-8,559	
Working Capital	1,508	-360		393		115	
OpFCF	16,934	14,668	-13.4%	15,413	5.1%	15,851	2.8%
Less tax	-5,192	-5,526		-5,163		-5,332	
Less Finance Costs	-771	-277		-392		-387	
EFCF	10,971	8,866	-19.2%	9,859	11.2%	10,132	2.8%
ECFC Yield		6.3%		7.0%		7.2%	
<i>DY to FCF-Y</i>		1.19		1.07		1.04	

Source: Company Data, CIRA

Figure 14. Vodacom Capex to Sales Ratio



Source: CIRA Estimates

On our estimates, Vodacom's free cash flow yield could actually deteriorate over the medium-term on earnings pressure and magnified in the event that capex remains elevated. In addition to ongoing capacity and quality upgrades, Vodacom will also need to invest in new technology over time. Capex intensity could, therefore, skew towards or (as we forecast) even exceed the top-end of Vodacom's indicated range (11-13%); especially if revenues stall as we expect. Our earlier scenario analysis highlights the risk to free cash flow if earnings deteriorate more than we expect.

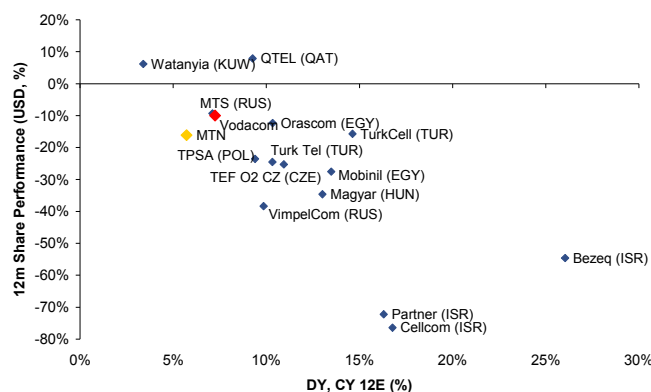
We assume that Vodacom's group capex-to-sales ratio will average c13.1% over the medium-term horizon, though there could be upside to this in our view. In this light, we believe that Vodacom's cash flow yield could remain below 7.5%, resulting in a DY/FCFY of over 1 for the stock. In other words, Vodacom would effectively need to borrow to in order to fund dividends if the current level is to be maintained.

Dividend yield could rise further, but on share weakness

Poor earnings outlook = poor share price performance; regardless of yield

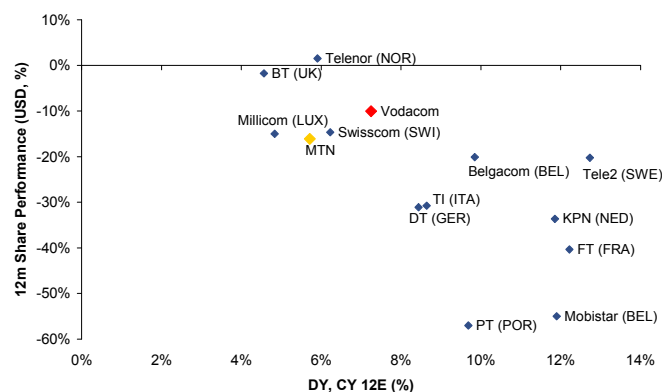
Coming back to our case study again, Europe offers up several examples of share prices falling despite attractive dividend yields being offered; the main reason being a poor outlook for earnings — and lack of visibility on a bottoming out — in those markets. Just the past 12 months have demonstrated this dynamic where Figure 15 and Figure 16 show that even stocks with relatively high dividend yields in CEEMEA and developed Europe, respectively, have performed poorly.

Figure 15. CEEMEA – Share Performance vs CY 12 DY (USD)



Source: CIRA

Figure 16. Developed Europe – Share Performance vs CY 12 DY (USD)



Source: CIRA

We thus believe that the “yield argument” in favour of Vodacom is not strong enough to prevent further downside in the share price as risks to the company's earnings remain high, in our view.

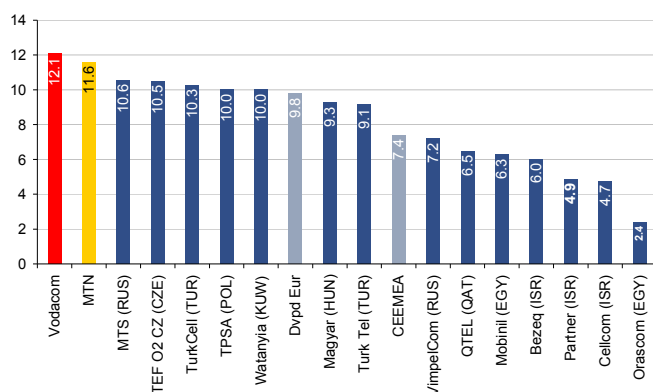
Valuation

Still at a premium

Vodacom's premium valuation unjustified, in our view

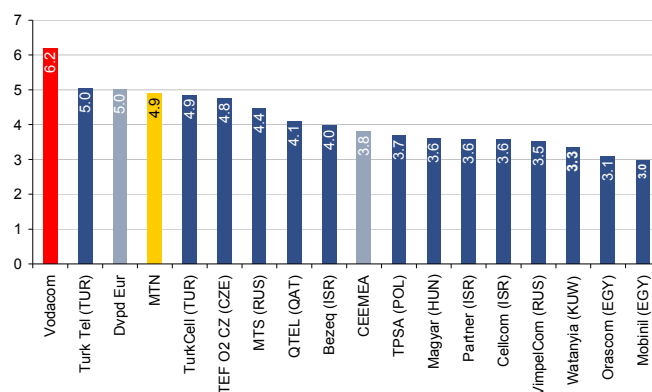
Despite the share's recent underperformance, therefore, we believe that Vodacom warrants a further de-rating given its valuation. Vodacom remains expensive relative to its CEEMEA and European peers. On a PE basis, Vodacom's CY 12E multiple of 12.1x is a premium of c60% compared to the CEEMEA average and c30% versus developed European telcos. Vodacom's EV/EBITDA of 6.2x (Figure 18) also remains at the top-end of the peer group comparison.

Figure 17. PE Comparisons (CY 12)



Source: CIRA Estimates

Figure 18. EV/EBITDA Comparisons (CY 12)



Source: CIRA Estimates

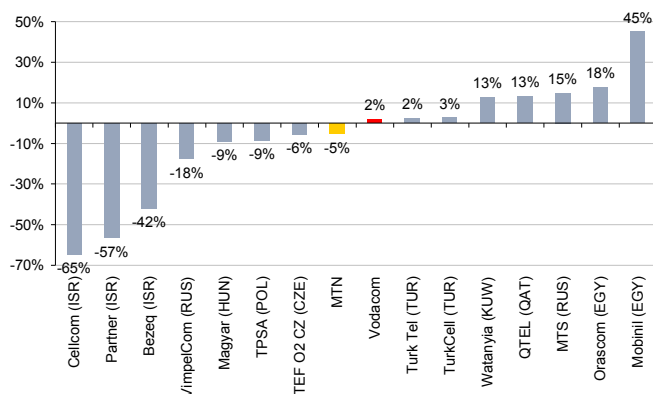
Downgrade target price, maintain Sell rating

New TP R80, Sell maintained

We cut our SOTP-DCF price target for Vodacom to R80, from R85, and reiterate our Sell rating on the stock. As mentioned, we believe that the share price warrants a further de-rating. Our new target price points to downside of 15%, which computes to an expected total return (ETR) of -7.5% when our forecast DY is added.

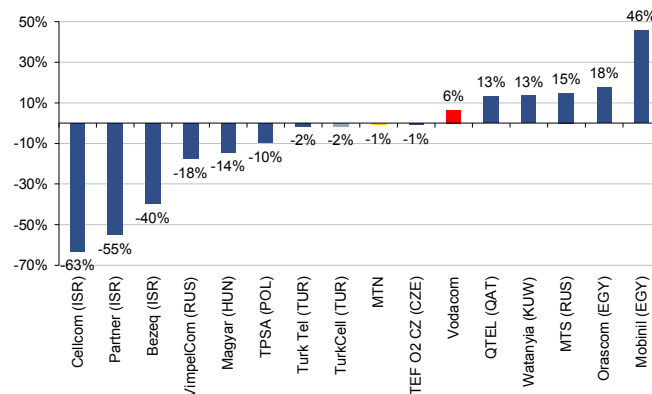
On our FY 13 forecasts, our target price implies a dividend yield of 8.9% which is closer to, but still below, the CEEMEA average of 12.2%. Our target price further implies a PE (on FY 13) of 9.9x and EV/EBITDA of c5.8x.

Figure 19. CEEMEA Telecoms YTD Share Performance (USD)



Source: CIRA

Figure 20. CEEMEA Telecoms YTD Share Performance (local currency)



Source: CIRA

Finance costs to drop further in FY 13, but could rise again in FY 14 on higher gearing:

- Earnings pressure
- Ongoing capex
- Sustaining dividend

Impact of Gateway disposal: knock to International revenue growth, boost to EBITDA

Voice – pricing pressure to take its toll

Data – we expect price competition to mitigate volume growth, dampens overall growth

Equipment – '13 growth to reverse given ultra-low cost handset (ULCH) “blitz” in the '12 base

Margin could hold up for now – mainly boosted by ULCH reversal; but -ve impact from slower topline over the medium-term

Forecasts

Income statement

Figure 21. Vodacom P&L Summary

Rm	2012	2013E	% change	2014E	% change	2015E	% change
Revenue	66,929	65,315	-2.4%	65,742	0.7%	68,914	4.8%
Op Profit	16,617	17,708	6.6%	16,677	-5.8%	17,207	3.2%
Op Margin %	24.8%	27.1%		25.4%		25.0%	
Net finance costs	-684	-277		-392		-387	
PBT	15,933	17,431		16,286		16,820	
Tax	-5,730	-5,526		-5,163		-5,332	
Tax rate	36.0%	31.7%		31.7%		31.7%	
Minority	-47	-58		-74		-83	
Net Profit	10,156	11,847	16.7%	11,049	-6.7%	11,405	3.2%
Headline Earnings	10,374	11,847	14.2%	11,049	-6.7%	11,405	3.2%
Headline EPS	7.09	8.10	14.2%	7.55	-6.7%	7.80	3.2%
DPS	7.10	7.10	0.0%	7.10	0.0%	7.10	0.0%

Source: Company Data, CIRA estimates

Operating summary

Figure 22. Vodacom Operating Forecast Summary

Rm	2012	2013E	% change	2014E	% change	2015E	% change
Revenue	66,929	65,315	-2.4%	65,742	0.7%	68,914	4.8%
SA	56,932	57,742	1.4%	57,356	-0.7%	59,731	4.1%
International	10,426	7,982	-23.4%	8,796	10.2%	9,610	9.2%
Corporate	-429	-409		-410		-427	
EBITDA	22,763	24,116	5.9%	23,524	-2.5%	24,295	3.3%
SA	21,254	22,055	3.8%	20,919	-5.2%	21,379	2.2%
International	1,461	2,017	38.1%	2,565	27.2%	2,879	12.2%
Corporate	48	44		40		36	
EBITDA margin %	34.0%	36.9%		35.8%		35.3%	
SA	37.3%	38.2%		36.5%		35.8%	
International	14.0%	25.3%		29.2%		30.0%	
Corporate	-	-		-		-	

Source: Company Data, CIRA estimates

South Africa

Figure 23. Vodacom SA Operational Forecast Summary

Rm	2012	2013E	% change	2014E	% change	2015E	% change
Voice	29,395	30,652	4.3%	30,105	-1.8%	30,655	1.8%
Interconnect	6,062	5,400	-10.9%	4,478	-17.1%	5,021	12.1%
Messaging	3,143	3,304	5.1%	3,310	0.2%	3,401	2.7%
Data	7,639	8,624	12.9%	9,343	8.3%	10,193	9.1%
Other Service Rev	2,188	2,399	9.7%	2,554	6.4%	2,631	3.0%
Service Revenue	48,427	50,379	4.0%	49,790	-1.2%	51,901	4.2%
Equipment sales	7,817	6,674	-14.6%	6,878	3.0%	7,143	3.9%
Non-service revenue	688	688	0.0%	688	0.0%	688	0.0%
Total Revenue	56,932	57,742	1.4%	57,356	-0.7%	59,731	4.1%
EBITDA	21,254	22,055	3.8%	20,919	-5.2%	21,379	2.2%
EBITDA Margin %	37.3%	38.2%		36.5%		35.8%	

Source: Company Data, CIRA

We strip Gateway out of our forecasts,
following its disposal

Ex-Gateway revenue +15.6%; EBITDA
+23.8%

International

Figure 24. International Revenue and EBITDA Forecasts

Rm	2012	2013E	% change	2014E	% change	2015E	% change
International Revenue	10,426	7,982	-23.4%	8,796	10.2%	9,610	9.2%
Tanzania	2,653	3,139	18.3%	3,452	10.0%	3,751	8.7%
DRC	2,201	2,478	12.6%	2,830	14.2%	3,201	13.1%
Mozambique	1,411	1,646	16.6%	1,722	4.6%	1,806	4.9%
Lesotho	640	720	12.6%	793	10.1%	852	7.4%
Gateway	3,522	-	-	-	-	-	-
EBITDA	1,461	2,056	40.8%	2,608	26.8%	2,939	12.7%
EBITDA Margin %	14.0%	25.8%		29.6%		30.6%	

Source: Company Data, CIRA estimates

SOTP DCF

Figure 25. Vodacom DCF Valuation

Country	WACC	Term growth	100% Valn, Rm	Ownership, %	Prop Valn, Rm	Valn % of Total	EV/EBITDA 13E
SA	10.1%	2.0%	126,774	94%	118,851	94%	5.7
Tanzania	12.4%	3.5%	5,993	65%	3,896	3%	6.4
DRC	17.0%	3.0%	2,495	51%	1,273	1%	5.6
Lesotho	14.3%	3.0%	2,017	80%	1,613	1%	6.2
Mozambique	12.4%	5.0%	1,293	85%	1,099	1%	4.1
TOTAL					126,732		5.8
Net debt			(7,499)	FY13F			
Valuation - equity			119,232				
			15,792	USD m			
Per share (R)			81.22				

Source: CIRA Estimates

- We set a new TP of R80/sh (rounded)
- Gateway sold and now excluded (we previously valued this at zero anyway)

Companies mentioned

Figure 26. Companies Mentioned

Company	Code	Share P	Rating	Company	Code	Share P	Rating
Bezeq	BEZQ.TA	4.15	Neutral	Wataniya Telco	NMTC.KW	2.20	Buy
Cellcom Israel	CEL.TA	23.53	Sell	Telekom Polska	TPSA.WA	15.63	Buy
Partner Comm	PTNR.TA	15.65	Sell	QTEL	QTEL.QA	107.00	Buy
Telefonica O2 Czech	SPTTsp.PR	384.50	Buy	MTS	MBT.N	17.08	Buy
Mobinil	EMOB.CA	122.43	Buy	VimpelCom	VIP.N	8.01	Buy
Orascom Telco	ORTEq.L	2.40	Buy	Turk Telekomunik	TTKOM.IS	7.00	Neutral
Magyar Telekom	MTEL.BU	435.00	Buy	Turkcell	TCELL.IS	8.98	Buy
Vodacom Grp	VODJ.J	94.30	Sell	MTN Grp Ltd	MTNJ.J	142.49	Buy

Source: CIRA

Vodacom Group Limited

Company description

Vodacom is the leading cellular operator in South Africa, with 54% of the market and over 28m subscribers in South Africa. Vodacom is also a leading operator in Tanzania, DRC, Lesotho and quickly gaining share in Mozambique. Its subscriber base stood at 41.3m at the end of June 09. Vodacom operations also include Gateway, African satellite network operator, acquired in Dec 08.

Vodacom is 65% owned and controlled by Vodafone, which acquired control in May 2009. Telkom simultaneously agreed to unbundle its shares to its shareholders, thus bringing about a listing of Vodacom on the JSE on the 19th of May 2009.

Investment strategy

We rate the stock Sell with an R80 price target. The South African market has started to mature and offers fewer growth opportunities. The medium-term consumer landscape has also gotten tougher, which we believe could impact on telecom spending. Importantly, against this backdrop, we expect a rise in competition to put further pressure on Vodacom's prospective ARPU and growth. Although growth could hold up for now, we believe the risks have increased and expect earnings to go backwards in FY 14.

Vodacom's stock looks expensive on valuation and we believe that the share should de-rate to reflect its increased risk profile.

Valuation

Our DCF valuation R80 per share. Our valuation incorporates WACC of 12.8% and a terminal growth rate of 2% for South African operators and 14%/3.5% for its other operations.

94% of our DCF is driven by South African operations. At our target price, Vodacom would trade at an implied 2013e EV/EBITDA of 5.8x, which is towards the upper ranges of our valuation benchmarks for Vodacom's emerging market peers.

Risks

We see the following as the main risks to the share price falling to our target price:

An improvement in the economic and consumer landscape, improved dividends and potential special dividends, strong cost and margin management and a continued benign competitive environment.

More generally, we highlight the following risks:

Not being able to recover the loss of revenue from interconnection. As seen in markets like Egypt, it can take a one or two quarters to make up for loss in revenue from tariffs as prices are cut.

Cell-C has become more aggressive. Cell-C has not been able to make inroads into the South African market, and has seen its market share remain low since 2007. Cell-C is in a strong position to cut tariffs, which may put pressure on Vodacom as it targets an increase in market share to 25% from c13-14% currently.

Expansion may reduce returns. Vodacom has a patchy record in pursuing acquisitions and expanding outside of South Africa. It has had to impair Mozambique in the past, as well as the recent Gateway acquisition. We see a risk to dividends and cashflow if further acquisitions are made and believe Vodacom would benefit more from increasing its dividend and returning cash to shareholders.

Increasing regulatory noise - ICASA has had a limited impact on the South African market so far. But it has become more vocal (along with the government) in wanting to reduce pricing on mobile. A more hostile regulator may change the favourable dynamic operators have enjoyed since mobile started in 1993/4.

Appendix A-1

Analyst Certification

The research analyst(s) primarily responsible for the preparation and content of this research report are named in bold text in the author block at the front of the product except for those sections where an analyst's name appears in bold alongside content which is attributable to that analyst. Each of these analyst(s) certify, with respect to the section(s) of the report for which they are responsible, that the views expressed therein accurately reflect their personal views about each issuer and security referenced and were prepared in an independent manner, including with respect to Citigroup Global Markets Inc and its affiliates. No part of the research analyst's compensation was, is, or will be, directly or indirectly, related to the specific recommendation(s) or view(s) expressed by that research analyst in this report.

IMPORTANT DISCLOSURES

Vodacom Group Limited (VODJ.J)

Ratings and Target Price History Fundamental Research

Analyst: Thato Motlanthe
Covered since October 9 2011



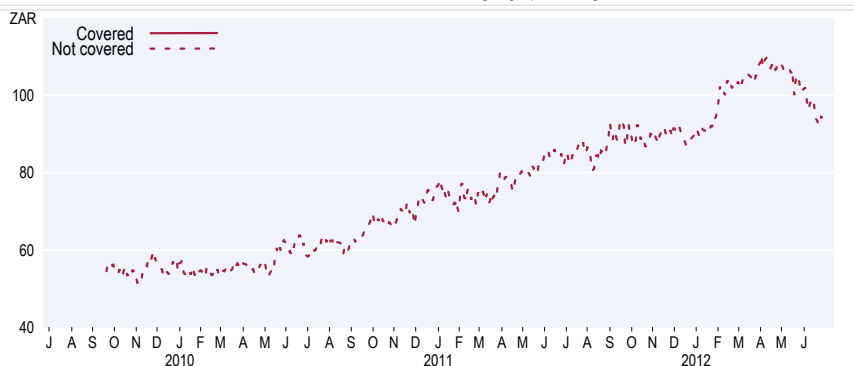
* Indicates change

Rating/target price changes above reflect Eastern Standard Time

Vodacom Group Limited (VODJ.J)

Ratings and Target Price History Best Ideas Research Relative Call (3 Month)

Analyst: Thato Motlanthe
Covered since October 9 2011



* Indicates change

Rating/target price changes above reflect Eastern Standard Time

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