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## **New online platform to save cash-strapped students money**

A novel start-up that aims to save cash-strapped students money by connecting them to cheaper and suitable products and services is set to take the campus community by storm for its nifty and innovativeness.

Pioneered by two University of Cape Town (UCT) students, the online promotional platform connects students to businesses that sell products suited to their needs and reciprocally connects these businesses to the student market.

Mr Kennedy Muranda, co-founder of Vhuka Africa, says the platform should be every student's new best friend as it provides a one-stop shop for promotional deals that has been developed specifically with students on a budget in mind. It aims to help students save time and money.

The idea was sparked when Mr Muranda and brothers Messrs Tariro and Kudzai Mukute experienced a "massive" missed promotional opportunity involving a cell phone. "After Kudzai bought a cell phone, a day later he realised another store was offering a promotion on the same phone that would've saved him almost R2 000," explains Mr Muranda.

After some market research and conversations with students on campus to determine whether they were experiencing similar challenges, the trio knew they had identified the perfect business opportunity, and their start-up was launched in August last year.

"Everyone, especially students, needs to save money and know where the good deals are. We knew we were onto something," says Mr Muranda.

He says Vhuka is focused on attracting small businesses in the Rondebosch and surrounding areas with which students are not yet familiar, but which offer services suited to their needs. The response is overwhelming; several food and beverage outlets, clothing retailers and service providers like hair and beauty salons have already signed up to list their promotions on Vhuka on an ongoing basis.

Messrs Muranda and Tariro Mukute are both UCT students, the former an honours student in the Faculty of Commerce and the latter completing his master's in electrical engineering in the Faculty of Engineering & the Built Environment.

“It’s a two-way street. We connect consumers to businesses and businesses to consumers. It’s a way of making money and saving money,” says Mr Muranda.

Vhuka is also negotiating with a few outlets in Access Park – an affordable-clothing retail centre in Kenilworth – to sign up to list their store promotions on the platform. And with a mobile app in the pipeline, Mr Muranda says his team hopes to reach additional students who prefer to communicate using their cell phones as opposed to their laptops.

The trio hopes to expand the service beyond the Western Cape, to reach students at universities in other provinces. Thanks to the work of Mr Kudzai Mukute, they already have a presence at the University of Zimbabwe and hope to also extend the business to other tertiary institutions in that country. Their long-term plan includes expanding further into Africa.

“Everyone’s looking for a deal to save money. It’s the nature of the tough economic times we’re living in. When you’re a student, every penny counts, and this platform allows them to save those pennies easily,” says Mr Muranda.

[High-resolution photo](#)



UCT student and Vhuka co-founder Kennedy Muranda  
May

Photo: Je’nine

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