

Tuluntulu now has ten channels

Tuluntulu, one of South Africa's top 10 startup companies this year, has recently launched ten channels that are available 24/7 on mobile.

The content ranges from international news, African documentaries to fashion and music channels. The app is available on Apple iOS and Google Android App Store.



Tuluntulu is set to revolutionise mobile broadcast in the developing world by bringing free TV to users, specifically designed to minimize data costs and automatically adjusts picture quality to ensure that video does not buffer or break. It works on 3G, 4G and Edge an early generation mobile phone protocol prevalent in most of Africa. This reportedly gives often-neglected rural users access to the platform, and opens up significant opportunities for educators and entertainers to expand their reach across the continent.

The app offers users cheap, fast and easy access to mobile video and content creators and advertisers access to a potential audience of millions of people across the continent.

Viewers do pay data costs, which vary according to mobile network providers. The technology has been specifically designed to minimise data costs and to operate within the limitations of Africa's underdeveloped telecommunications infrastructure.

Accessing YouTube

Africa is at the wrong side of the digital divide, with mobile bandwidth costs amongst the highest in the world, limiting consumers' ability to access content on their phones.

Most popular sites, such as YouTube, are designed for use in the developed world, where the majority of users have access to Wi-Fi 3G and 4G networks. Site owners presume that users want high quality content; they stream content to users at between 140 kilo-bytes per second (kbps) and 280 kbps, which are too high for most of the developing world's congested networks and low-bandwidth environments. This is why users often spend as much time watching content buffer as they do watching the content itself, incurring costs as their device burns data.

Tuluntulu overcomes this problem in a number of ways. The technology is rate-adaptive, which means that the rate at which the video streams to the phone adapts to the available bandwidth, which can be as low as 50 kbps. The technology automatically adjusts picture quality to ensure that video does not have to buffer or break. Users can increase video quality with a simple volume-like button, controlling their data costs themselves. Watching video content can cost as little as R5 per hour.

Multiple research

The platform, Adaptive Real-time Internet Streaming Technology (ARTIST) has been in development for over six years. It is the product of a consortium of researchers and engineers from the CSIR, UCT and East Coast Access (ECA), a BEE Internet service provider. The Technology Innovation Agency (TIA) supported the consortium by providing R14.5m funding. Media entrepreneur, Pierre van der Hoven created the company Tuluntulu to take the platform to market. The purpose-built company holds the licence to ARTIST, which has been patented in several countries across the globe.

"My real excitement is that this technology will unlock video streaming as an industry in Africa. No licenses or new transmitter networks are required, opening the industry up to new players. Of the launch channels, only two are established

broadcast TV channels. The rest are new players in the market that would not have had a chance on conventional television platforms. It will open the way for new voices, new content and new business models. The reach offered by this medium can also have a quick and significant impact in areas such as education," said van der Hoven.

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