

#datafree Messenger launched in South Africa

Moya Messenger is a new mobile messaging app that allows users to communicate without incurring data costs. The app, developed in South Africa by biNu and released in July 2018, provides #datafree text messaging that works even when a mobile user has no airtime or data balance on their smartphone device.



The Moya app provides a similar messaging experience to market leader WhatsApp but with the key distinguishing feature that text messaging is #datafree across all four major mobile networks.

"We are profoundly motivated by the positive social impact of enabling ubiquitous #datafree mobile messaging, developed in Africa, for Africans", says Gour Lentell, CEO of biNu.

“ *"We do it by utilising telco reverse billing which allows us to pay mobile messaging data costs."* ”

Reverse billing agreements with networks

biNu has reverse billing agreements with MTN, Vodacom, Cell C and Telkom, and has built a technology platform that enables partners and customers to make their apps and websites #datafree for end-users.

Says Lentell, "Despite a multi-million dollar marketing budget WeChat struggled to gain a foothold in the South African market largely because the incumbent network effect of WhatsApp proved too competitive to overcome. But we definitely see a place for a challenger like Moya where the data-cost barrier of mobile messaging is removed completely for South African consumers, particularly in an era of #DataMustFall and increasing pressure on consumer incomes".

How does it work?

Moya Messenger was built using proven, industry-standard open-source messaging technology, and adapted to be #datafree.

The app offers unlimited texting, group chat, end-to-end security with automatic encryption of all messages, and automatic contact discovery that allows users to connect with others also using the Moya app. Moya users are always logged on, never miss a message, and all their messages are saved when their phones are switched off.

However, whilst message attachments like photos, videos, voice notes, documents and the like are fully supported, sending media attachments is not be data free. Moya users will be pre-emptively warned when they will incur mobile data costs or need to switch to WiFi to send media files.

Business-consumer communication

The commercial model around Moya is to provide rich, programmatic access to businesses and enterprises of all kinds so they can engage at scale with their audiences through messaging, without a cost implication for their users, members and customers.



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"We see opportunities for organisations to benefit from a #datafree platform, for example, financial institutions delivering customer support and document exchange; trade unions and political parties wanting to communicate with their members; government agencies to disseminate information and implement service delivery; NGO's for reaching target communities, and the FMCG sector to reach their audiences," Lentell says.

Key feature that sets Moya apart is that sending and receiving messages from businesses or other enterprises remains #datafree for the end-user.

"It's counter-productive for organisations to try and engage their customers and mobile audiences on other messaging platforms when they have no airtime available," says Lentell.

A core standard that will be applied rigorously to Moya Messenger is that all business communication will be on a consumer opt-in basis only.

Download Moya Messenger via www.datafree.co.za or the [Google Play Store](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.moya).