

Free access to Wikipedia for Airtel customers

Airtel's customers will now be able to access information available on Wikipedia free of data charges through their mobile phones thanks to a strategic partnership between Airtel and the Wikimedia Foundation.

WIKIPEDIA



This partnership is part of the Wikimedia Foundation's Wikipedia Zero program, which focuses on reaching the billions of people around the world whose primary opportunity to access the internet is via a mobile device. The partnership between Airtel and the Wikimedia Foundation will help provide Wikipedia to 70 million new users in the region, starting in Kenya.

Airtel customers with internet-enabled handsets can now access the Wikipedia mobile site on their mobile browsers without incurring data charges by going to m.wikipedia.org

Wikipedia by text message

For customers who do not have internet-enabled handsets, Airtel will offer Wikipedia by text message as a pilot program in Kenya. This unique service will allow customers to search Wikipedia using a plain text menu, without the need for a mobile browser. The service, available for GSM subscribers, utilizes USSD (Unstructured Supplementary Service Data) technology and allows users to dial *515# to search Wikipedia and receive article summaries via SMS.

"We are thrilled that Airtel has joined us in removing two major barriers to accessing Wikipedia on mobile phones. Not only are we making it freely available on the mobile web but we are also launching our first Wikipedia via text service that will allow people without data enabled phones to access Wikipedia," said Kul Takanao Wadhwa, head of Mobile, Wikimedia Foundation. "Improving access to the Wikimedia projects in sub-Saharan Africa is a strategic priority for the Foundation and this partnership is another step forward in our mission to enable everyone on the planet to access free knowledge."

Andre Beyers, chief marketing officer, Airtel Africa said: "Airtel is committed to using its infrastructure to expand knowledge across the countries that it operates in. Due to the fact that most of the population has access to a cell phone, it is the best way to reach out and educate our communities. We will offer this service free of charge to our customers to enable access

to all."

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