

Kenya Airways and Airtel sign MVNO agreement

Bharti Airtel, a telecommunications services provider with operations in 20 countries across Asia and Africa and Kenya Airways have opened a new innovative chapter in the telecoms industry in Africa with the announcement that Airtel will host Kenya Airways as a Mobile Virtual Network Operator, (MVNO) on its Kenyan Network.



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In a unique move geared at deepening mobile penetration and providing innovative value added services, Airtel and Kenya Airways have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to deliver an MVNO service for the airline, subject to regulatory approvals.

The MOU between the two companies was signed by the Kenya Airways CEO and MD, Dr. Titus Naikuni and the Airtel Africa CEO, Christian de Faria, at the Kenya Airways Headquarters in Embakasi, Nairobi.

Under the agreement Airtel will provide network infrastructure services to Kenya Airways, the leading African airline flying to more African destinations than any other carrier. This means the Kenya Airways MVNO will provide cellular mobile services including customer registration, SIM card issuance, billing and customer care to end users without holding a spectrum license.

Dr. Naikuni pointed out that further details on the official launch and related details will be announced at a later stage once the necessary regulatory licensing and related requirements have been completed, a process which has already been initiated with the Communication Authority of Kenya (CAK).

In this venture, Kenya Airways will rely on its existing customer service and sales infrastructure such as its sales offices and customer contact centre.

In a joint statement issued by the two companies, Airtel, noted that it was delighted to be the mobile operator that is pioneering this innovation in the Telecoms Industry in Africa, clarifying that the MVNO services will run on the unused capacity on its network, ensuring that it maintains seamless quality experience to consumers.

Finding solutions

Airtel Africa CEO Christian de Faria said "We are greatly encouraged by the shared vision with Kenya Airways and the common urgency to find solutions that will enable travelling customers stay connected to their loved ones and businesses whilst they travel."

Dr Naikuni explained that the roll out of a mobile service by the airline is part of a strategic direction geared at enhancing customer value for its guests while diversifying its revenue streams.

The MVNO solution will specifically appeal to millions of Kenya Airways guests seeking a convenient, available, accessible and affordable roaming service and experience. Last year, Kenya Airways offered to the market a capacity of 14.1 Million Available Seats Per Kilometre which represented a 1.8% growth from the previous year.

"At Kenya Airways, we are now moving towards a strategic direction that affords us an opportunity to meet our guests' needs aboard our aircrafts and also extend the same brand value to their communication need through an affordable option," Dr Naikuni stressed.

Adding that: "through this partnership with Airtel, we are optimistic that our guests will soon be enjoying a service that allows them better calling rates while in Kenya or roaming within the wide Airtel network."

The airline which is currently rolling out a strategy geared at providing seamless connections between Intra Africa points to destinations in the Far East and beyond will through KQ MVNO, further raise its brand positioning as the leading African Airline.

The MVNO details come hot on the heels of the recent announcement that, Kenya Airways, has picked a global airlines excellence award in the prestigious World Airline Awards this year. Kenya airways recently, grabbed a top ten slot in the Most Improved Global Airline category emerging as the only African airline category on the global roll of honour.

The World Airline Awards are regarded as a benchmark of Passenger Satisfaction levels of airlines throughout the world - delivering a unique survey format based on analysis of business and leisure travelers across all cabin travel types (First, Business, Premium Economy and Economy class passengers).

In April this year, The CAK licensed Zioncell, Tangaza Pesa and Finserve Africa, (a subsidiary of Equity Bank) as MNVOs, allowing them to provide all forms of mobile cellular services to customers using the communications infrastructure of an existing mobile network operator.

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