

Viber spreads good vibes in Africa & the Middle East with the introduction of Public Chats

Viber, one of the leading messaging and calling apps with more than 664 million unique users worldwide, announced today that it has opened its latest social channel 'Public Chats' to partners in Africa and the Middle East. Brands, organizations, celebrities, public figures and social influencers from these countries can now join Viber's global platform to reach a local and regional audience.



Public Chats are live discussions that Viber users can follow, like and share with their community. Released in beta version in November 2014 with select global partners, this feature offers a new kind of social experience - tapping into live conversations from celebrities, personalities, brands and organizations. Mobile users can discover new communities, follow interactive chats in real-time and share original pieces of content with friends and contacts.

"The Middle East and Africa are important markets for Viber, and we are pleased to welcome local influencers and brands to our Public Chats platform," said Mark Hardy, CMO, Viber. "We are sure they will enjoy chatting, commenting and debating live on this active social channel whilst sharing tips, news, and local content to our constantly connected mobile audience across the region."

Selected partners in Africa and the Middle East, at Pan-African level and in key markets such as South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, Ivory Coast and Egypt, have joined Public Chats for this regional launch in a bid to be the first players to offer local conversations on Viber. African users can now start to follow them from the Viber Public Chats explore page.

Super star of African Music, Youssou NDour, the internationally acclaimed Senegalese singer and composer just joined Viber Public Chats. "The Viber Public Chats channel will enable my fans to follow in real time my music and artistic activities; it will also represent an opportunity for me to engage in discussions designed to forge a peaceful and open world."

Jumia, the leading ecommerce platform in Africa, recently opened Public Chats in Egypt and Nigeria and were one of the first partners to join this new social channel in the Middle East and Africa. Viber users can expect more Jumia Public Chats to open in the African continent in the coming months.

"We are really excited with this partnership," stated Jeremy Doute, CEO of Jumia. "As new African customers discover the Internet first through their mobile, we want to address them wherever they are. Viber is a mobile first company with an outstanding reach in Africa. Jumia is also a mobile first company and the first online shopping destination in Africa. Joining forces will enable both Viber and Jumia to deliver quality content and good vibes to our users."

In the continent, Pan-African media such as AllAfrica.com and TRUE Africa have joined as partners and are now live on Public Chats. "We're excited to be an early adopter of this new Viber platform," said Amadou Mahtar Ba, Chairman of AllAfrica Global Media. "We look forward to inviting African media to comment on current affairs and national events as they happen in their country. Public Chats promise to be an excellent tool to bring together our community of African media."

"Opening a Public Chat on Viber is an exciting opportunity for us to introduce our editorial team and journalists, all the minds and souls behind TRUE Africa. It will represent an ideal platform for us to comment and debate on the latest news and trends in Africa and among the diaspora," shared Claude Grunitzky, CEO and Founder of TRUE Africa.

Other Pan-African partners include Brand Africa a non-profit organisation and intergenerational movement to create a positive image of Africa, celebrate its diversity and drive its competitiveness; fashion influencer and stylist Louis Philippe de Gagoue; as well as Gareth Pon, Africa's top instagrammer, filmmaker and social influencer with proficient knowledge in the use of mobile photography apps.

"One of my many passions is to connect and grow the mobile photography community," says Gareth Pon. "I see Viber Public Chats as a great way to share, learn, explore and spread creativity of photography through mobile. I look forward to growing my Viber community!"

In addition, more than 50 partners have joined Public Chats in key African markets. Viber users can now follow Vanessa Haywood, Actress and Model in South Africa, Xtian Dela, Radio Presenter, Blogger & Social Influencer in Kenya, Bella Naija top lifestyle media in Nigeria, Filfan the first entertainment platform in Egypt, Live FM radio in Ghana, WIW Sport the number 1 Sport news portal in Senegal and Serge Beynaud, Afro Pop Musician and Composer from Ivory Coast.

Public Chats are easy to follow from within the Viber app. Anyone on Viber can follow as many Public Chats as they like. Conversations are multi-media and include text, photos, audio, video, stickers, web links and geo-localization. Users can invite friends to follow their favourite Public Chats and share parts of these conversations. The most popular chats are featured on the home screen of Viber's Public Chats section. Users can easily find new Public Chats through the search tab or access a chat directly via a customized URL.

Global brands, celebrities and public figures on Public Chats include online media platforms such as Huffington Post, Mashable, BuzzFeed and the BBC; the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi; Pop star Pixie Lott and Model and Actress Karolina Kurkova.

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