

Paving the Way to a Cashless Society: du Pay's Road to Success



du, the leading telecom operator in the country, launched the du Pay app in April 2024, catering to a large population not well served by traditional banks. It has made its mark by offering six languages, the only app on the UAE market to do so. Its explosive popularity has garnered it international attention. In this article, Nicolas Levi, CEO of du Pay, delves into the creation and vision of du Pay, and what the future holds for a cashless society.

■ By Nicolas Levi,
CEO, du Pay



When we talk about what it means to be a cashless society, people generally think of three major things: convenience, the environment, and traceability. There's never a worry you're carrying too much or too little, and with card and mobile payment, you're always carrying the correct amount. The ecological impact of using less paper and plastic is invaluable. And by creating a digital footprint with our accounts, transactions become entirely traceable. The UAE has made its own commitment that by 2031, its entire economy will be cashless. This is where du Pay comes in.

Mobile Money: The Natural Next Step

Though telecom operators are not banks, operators across the world have launched successfully mobile financial service. They already have an enormous customer base across an immense distribution network, which has left them in the unique position to fill a gap in the market prime for mobile payment services. The cost of customer acquisition is much lower than for traditional banks, and they already have an established brand and data that can be capitalized on by empowering their fintech company. The telecom company can hence bring a unique value proposition to consumers to use their financial services, which is why we launched du Pay. Our journey started with getting the license from the Central Bank of the UAE and creating the company along with an app. Customer experience is key, and we built this app upon it as a foundation.

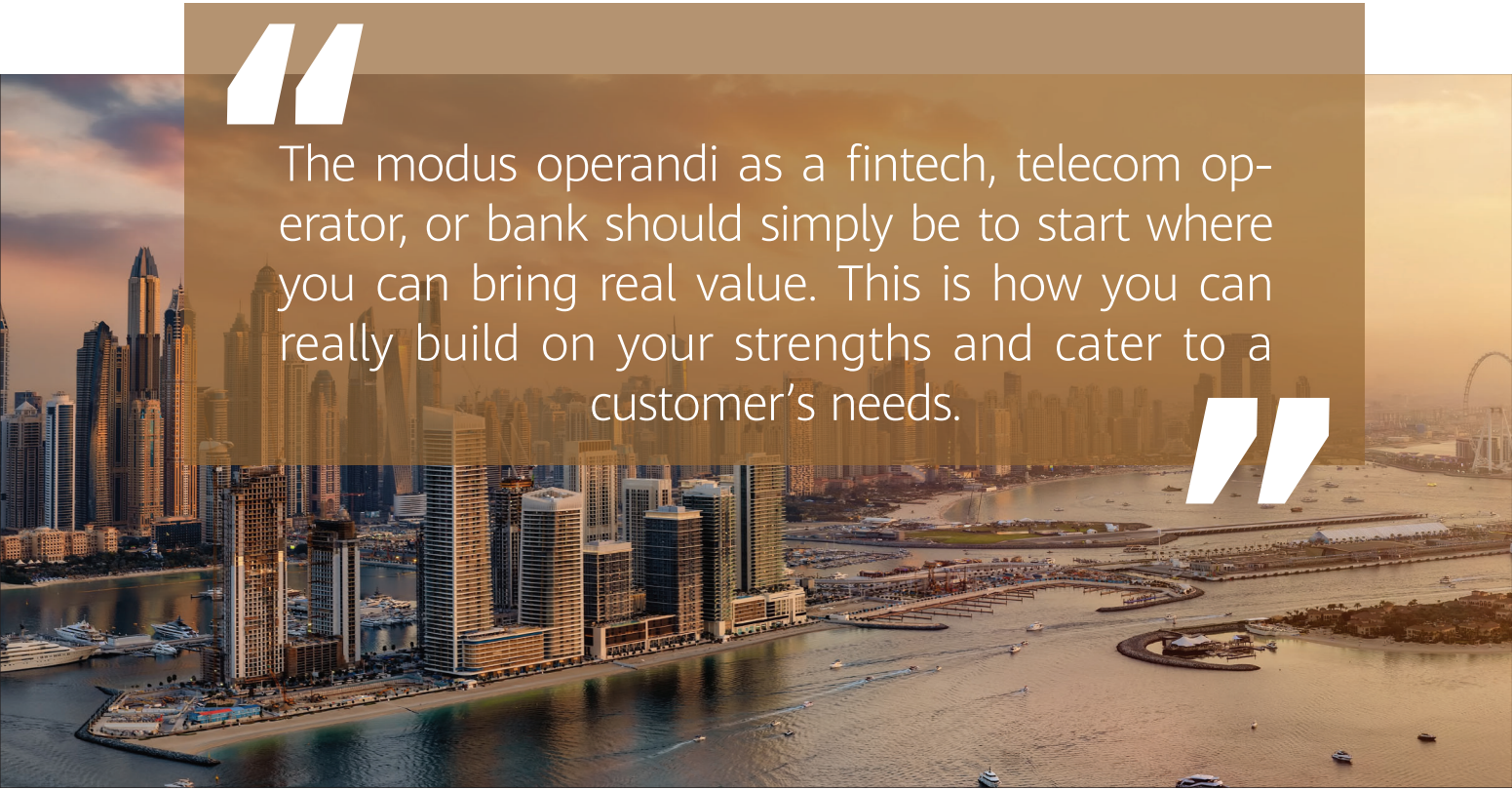
The Road to Financial Inclusion

Currently, with a population of 10.2 million people, about

60 to 70% of the UAE is not well served by traditional banks. Many are migrants who use salary cards and manage their finances entirely in cash, sending a large portion home each month. In fact, 88% of the entire population are migrant workers, making the UAE the second largest remittance market in the world after the US.

Surveys show that migrant workers have found financial services and remittance frustrating. The threshold for opening a bank account or heavy journey to go to physical branches are still painful. The government initiative to support unbanked workers, the Wage Protection System, was a step in the right direction, but did not provide remittance services. This meant they still had to spend their time and money trekking to a remittance agent.

While most of these customers may not have cards or lending capabilities, all of them will have a smartphone. Our app is very easy to use, and is the only one on the market to offer six languages, making it accessible and



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convenient. By offering bundles to our mobile customers who choose to use our financial services, it's great value for money, with attractive tariffs for remittance when sending money back home. du Pay offers the convenience of peer-to-peer transfers, mobile top-ups, bill payments and salary deposits, as well as a digital payment card. This even opens the gate to e-commerce for many who have never had the means to benefit from it.

Paving the Way to Success

Having a strong team and fostering strategic partnerships were key components to our successful launch in the market. Take for example our partnership with Huawei, by leveraging its technical expertise, we were able to develop an app with advanced and reliable core functionalities, which allowed us to focus on ways to adapt du Pay for the UAE market and accelerated our rollout.

The modus operandi as a fintech, telecom operator, or bank should simply be to start where you can bring real value. This is how you can really build on your strengths and cater to a customer's needs. We've realized just what we can do for this particular population, and in providing something different that's truly useful, we have had roaring success as a result and have received incredible feedback from our customers. Of course, this is just

the beginning. du Pay can also be used to pay domestic workers and beyond. We are looking into how we can innovate in other financial services becoming at some point a super app for financial services.

Even Greener Pastures

It makes sense for customers to have both du as a mobile network and du Pay as their mobile wallet. du Pay gives the unbanked access to a convenient and safe digital alternative. We provide bundles with perks like additional gigabytes, and are the only one in the market doing so. With a large range of benefits, there's something for everyone; not just those who meet a traditional bank's threshold.

The link between du and du Pay is quintessential to all of this. Leveraging on each other's strengths is beneficial to both of us. From here, the only way is up.

