



EXPERT OPINION:

India bridges gap between service and security as new model unfolds

Following the successful launch of mobile number portability, new challenges stemming from the need for reliable SMS delivery to India have turned into a win-win scenario for operators, regulators and content providers, writes Joel Fisher.



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How important is it for 700 million users, in a single country no less, to receive text messages? A case in point is India in 2011. Mobile number portability is finally a reality for Indian mobile subscribers. However, due to new regulatory guidelines, port corrected routing data will not be accessible to companies who send SMS traffic into India. Inbound international SMS messages may not get delivered to subscribers who have ported their number as mobile network operators within India will not forward incorrectly routed messages to each other.

Not allowing subscriber and related port routing information from being distributed outside the country is a security measure that certainly gives more control and protection. However, ensuring seamless service and connectivity is essential as more than 700 million Indian mobile subscribers greatly rely on mobile communications. Considering that the mobile device is the only form of communication for many subscribers, the need to ensure that messages are delivered is paramount. So, is it possible to get the best of both worlds? Security and control of country data with seamless service delivery of content sent by foreign operators, SMS providers and enterprises?

The answer, of course, is yes. Let's look at the approach Airtel, India's largest mobile operator and Telcordia Technologies, a worldwide leader in mobile communications, took as an example of achieving that critical balance between access, security and delivering a seamless customer experience to subscribers.

Airtel and Telcordia partnered to ensure that SMS messages will always be delivered to the proper network provider, regardless of whether or not a subscriber has ported his number. Airtel and Telcordia set out to create an SMS infrastructure service hub in India that can receive mobile messages from any international provider, apply port corrected routing data and deliver the message to the proper subscriber located on any mobile network in India.

Message hub benefits

The concept of a message hub is certainly not new and the advantages can be very compelling, such as:

- Significant cost and time saving by having a single contract for global termination compared to hundreds of bilateral contracts.
- Operational cost savings by avoiding having to set up, test and maintain numerous physical links to operators across the globe
- Faster time to market by instantly getting access to operators that already have connectivity to a message hub
- Improved customer satisfaction due to the highest possible message delivery rates

By ensuring that foreign-originated messages are always routed correctly, the hub provides Airtel with a level of message delivery reliability that will help them differentiate themselves in the crowded Indian communications market. That unprecedented level of reliability will further improve Airtel's capability to attract and retain customers for whom SMS messages are must-have ways of communicating. In addition, it will put in them the best position to capture the revenue stream associated with the global messaging explosion.

The new telecommunications environment in India definitely seems like a win-win. Operators can compete more aggressively for customers with the availability of mobile number portability. Regulatory and government interests around security and quality of service can be met. Consumers have more flexibility to choose different service providers. And, all of this is only meaningful due to the ability to guarantee delivery of critical SMS traffic. 2011 will be an exciting year for telecommunications growth in India and the new message hub combined with the availability of mobile number portability finally bridges the security, reliability and quality of service requirements the country expects.

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