

WIRELESS APPLICATIONS IN THE PHILIPPINES

ABSTRACT

Mobile. There are 70 local fixed line local operators and 5 cellular service providers in the Philippines: Extelcom, Piltel, [Globe](#), [Smart](#), and [Nextel](#). Analog, CDMA, iDen, GSM phone services are available throughout the country. At present, Globe and Smart dominates the subscriber base with its GSM-based service. The country has around 15 million mobile phone subscribers and 4 million fixed line subscribers. Digitel is expected to launch its GSM based service soon.

In the year 2002, Smart and Talk `N Text had an aggregated total subscriber base of 8,000,000 (6,369,000 in the year 2001).

Globe, on the other hand registered nearly 7 million subscribers in 2002. (4.6 million 2001)

Out of the 14.6 million mobile phone subscribers as of end 2002, we estimate that 90% are in prepaid plan.

The Philippine wireless application developer community skills cover short messaging service (SMS or text messaging) to Web, Unix and Microsoft-based for the wireless and fixed line, WAP, GPRS, Palm, IPAQ. Languages used are C++, Java, Visual Basic, J2ME, Brew, Symbian, among others.

Text messaging capital of the world. In the year 2000, the country was referred as the text messaging capital of the world. Close to 300 million text messages are sent through the country's mobile networks everyday.

SMS growth in the Philippines is driven by content provider applications. It is all about bringing the content within the reach of the mobile phone user anytime, anywhere.

As majority of the subscribers are using prepaid cards, carriers are finding ways to make it easier for subscribers to refill their phone cards. Globe allows its subscribers to reload their prepaid phones through [BPI Express Online](#). Smart does it as well with its SmartMoney card. Reloading online is also becoming a popular option. [Yehey.com](#) and [Estore-Exchange](#) are just some who are offering this option.

The number of mobile phone subscribers is expected to reach 18 million in 2003. This continuous growth trend makes carriers and application service providers creative in its services offering and have it accessible to the simplest phone.

There are a lot of talks about the mobile phone replacing the PC. Though this is not so. The Internet and the personal computer will still remain as the medium of choice for sit-down and complex operations. Although the mobile phone will be perfect for personalized on-the-go services and applications. Instead of bringing the Internet to the mobile phone, the strategy should be on how it can compliment each other.

The power of wireless. Wireless technologies has helped bridge the digital divide in the Philippines as various Internet applications were made accessible to the cellular phone despite its limitations.

Filipinos, young and old, became more appreciative of information technology. If the Internet is all about user empowerment, mobile technologies such as cellular is all about operator driven empowerment. It is that way for the user is limited to what her service provider has to offer. However, as technologies move forward in lightning speed, it will be all about user empowerment once the wireless Internet fully takes off.