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Mobile IM drives adoption of flat rate data - TJAT

By Nick Wood , Total Telecom

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Mobile messaging intermediary says its users consume significantly more data than other mobile users.

Mobile instant messaging (IM) is a catalyst for mobile data usage and could be the killer app that the mobile Web is lacking, according to self-styled messaging portal provider TJAT.

"Users in Western Europe and Israel on average use 50 kilobytes of data a month. TJAT users on average get through 2 megabytes per month," said Gideon Drori, CEO of TJAT, on Monday.

Furthermore, the mobile messaging company said mobile IM is driving the demand for flat-rate data tariffs, which many highlight as an important factor in driving mobile Web uptake in general.

"In Israel TJAT had 48,000 active users with an operator that had 3 million subscribers in total, and they were all paying per kilobyte," said Drori.

Subsequently, the operator in question rolled out its flat rate data plan and it was adopted by every single active TJAT user, he claims, adding that compelling applications are needed in order to attract customers to all you can eat packages.

"At the moment consumers aren't buying flat [data] rates because there's nothing to consume," he commented.

Drori also said that IM had a similar effect on the Internet when messaging clients like ICQ were launched.

"Until 1996 the net was like one big library full of information, then ICQ, MSN and Yahoo came out and all of a sudden the net became this community, and now today we have this thing we call Web 2.0," he said.

TJAT provides a link between the mobile operators' portal and existing instant messaging services without the need to download a client to the handset.

Furthermore, Drori believes that it would be fruitless for mobile operators to try and compete by launching their own applications.

"Consumers don't want to create yet more buddy lists, mobile operators would love their own proprietary service but it wouldn't work – consumers want their own unified list of contacts," he said.

"Mobile is not a community itself but a way of connecting existing networks," he added.

Indeed, his sentiments echo a report from Capgemini [published last year](#), which recommended mobile operators extend the reach of existing IM services, rather than attempt to launch their own.

The analyst firm also forecast mobile instant messaging to generate revenues of €775 million to €800 million by 2012, although it doesn't expect it to impact SMS in the near future.

"SMS will still be popular...but the advantage that IM has is presence," said Drori.

"SMS is asynchronous. I don't know if you have your phone with you, but I might send you a message which you will eventually get around to reading and then you'll choose whether or not to reply," he said.



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