

TELECOMMUNICATIONS NUMBERING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Short Codes for Value-added SMS (III)

Background

The issue of access code allocation for value-added SMS was discussed at the 51st and 52nd NAC meeting held in November 2003 and February 2004 respectively. An ad-hoc Working Group was established under the NAC and met in December 2003 to discuss the issue in more details. This paper summarizes the outcome of industry consultation on this subject and set out the way forward.

Industry Views and Considerations

2. In response to the last round of consultation at the NAC meeting in February 2004, OFTA received two written submissions, one from mobile network operators (MNO) and the other from the Hong Kong Wireless Technology Industry Association representing the content service providers (CSP). Including the views expressed at the last NAC meeting, OFTA received industry comments on the following aspects of access codes for value-added SMS:

- (a) Designated codes (among the options of “14”, “50” and “900” codes enlisted by OFTA);
- (b) Digit length;
- (c) Need for a field for operator identification;
- (d) Need for a field to differentiate the service type;
- (e) Migration arrangement for existing "5X" codes in use;
- (f) Number porting requirement, and
- (g) Implementation approach.

3. Separately we observed that Australia has a similar dedicated code arrangement for “premium rate messaging service”. The scope of its messaging service covers SMS and MMS. As value-added MMS has already been marketed in Hong Kong lately, we suggest that our access codes for value-added SMS should be extended to cover MMS as well.

4. The industry comments received and the view of OFTA are summarized in the Annex to this paper.

Way Forward

5. Having considered the industry feedback, the TA has decided on the way forward as follows:

- (a) “50” codes are allocated for value-added SMS and MMS, and any MNO, MVNO or FTNS operator offering SMS/MMS may deploy such code for the service;
- (b) there is no limit on the digit length for such codes;
- (c) there is no operator identification field in the access code, and the concerned industry players shall coordinate among themselves on the “50” code usage to ensure sufficient common codes are available for new applications;
- (d) there is a single-digit field for differentiating the information content (i.e. the code format shall be “50S...” where S is the concerned indicative digit). The digit designation is based on that of the “900” code¹ where applicable, such as digit “9” for special information services, including adult service. Other digits including those not defined in “900” code are to be designated for new service type or resource expansion for existing service types;

¹ The digit designation for service content in “900” code is as follows,

- digit “0” for sponsored services
- digit “2” for children information services
- digit “3” for mass calling services
- digit “4” for interactive information services
- digit “6” for general information services
- digit “9” for special information services

- (e) no more new codes in the “51”-“59” range should be deployed. Any codes other than “50” codes already deployed with services should be migrated to the appropriate “50” level within a period of 18 months, except for those services of adult nature which should be migrated immediately to the “509” range, and in any case no later than end October 2004;
- (f) the intra-network or inter-network routing mechanism for value-added SMS/MMS access shall be settled among operator and CSP on commercial basis;
- (g) for “number porting” i.e. host change, which is only applicable in case of inter-network value-added SMS/MMS routing, CSP shall settle with MNO on commercial terms;
- (h) the interconnection and number porting arrangements for value-added SMS/MMS are subject to review in future as and when required.

6. MNO, MVNO or FTNS operators offering value-added SMS/MMS are required to follow the action plans as set out above. The TA would consider taking regulatory actions as appropriate against any violation of the above numbering assignment.

7. The arrangement of an indicative field in the “50” code for content differentiation will be brought to the attention of the Telecommunications Users and Consumers Advisory Committee. The Numbering Plan for Telecommunications Services in Hong Kong will then be updated in due course to incorporate the assignment of access codes for value-added SMS/MMS.

Office of the Telecommunications Authority
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<i>Subject</i>	<i>Industry Comment</i>	<i>OFTA's View</i>
Designated Code	<p>ITAHK and FTNS operators prefer “900” codes, on the ground of its concerned charging and consumer protection arrangements being already in place. In contrast, MNO consider that “900” code being used for both voice and SMS access services may potentially cause confusion to consumers, apart from its undesirable lengthy nature.</p> <p>MNO and CSP prefer “50” codes for its shorter digit length. MNO further suggest its classification as category 3 code, i.e. for internal routing only.</p>	<p>The existing value-added SMS code usage largely falls into the “50” level, while the “900” level is so far limited to infoline voice application only. Both MNO and FTNS operator offering SMS are now providing access to some “5X” levels.</p> <p>As both MNO and CSP have a strong favor for “50” codes, and such code assignment is compatible with the longer digit migration plan if either digit “5” or digit “7” is allocated for mobile service, “50” code may be allocated for value-added SMS and MMS. However, the “50” codes should be applicable for both internal routing and cross-network routing, subject to commercial arrangement between MNO and CSP.</p>
Digit length	<p>CSP prefer a digit length of 7 or less.</p> <p>MNO suggest no limit on the length.</p>	<p>It is noted that SMS codes with the same leading digits but of different length (say “5081” and “50811”) may coexist in the same network, so the related number pool capacity may be expanded simply by varying the digit length of the SMS code. MNO/CSP may therefore decide the digit length required according to its own operational need.</p>

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Industry Comment</i>	<i>OFTA's View</i>
Need for an operator identification field	<p>MNO and CSP see no need for it.</p> <p>MNO consider such field limit CSP's choice of codes and the two-digit usage reduce the overall utilization.</p>	<p>If there is no operator identifier, a pool of numbers is to be shared by all operators providing SMS/MMS. In such case the MNO and CSP industries should coordinate among themselves on the use of access codes in the pool to ensure the resources are managed properly, including availability of sufficient common codes for new CSP application.</p>
Need for a field to differentiate the service type	<p>HGC support its existence.</p> <p>MNO see no need for it.</p> <p>CSP do not prefer it but foresee social pressure on the need for it.</p>	<p>The inclusion of a single digit field in the access code for service differentiation should be kept for the sakes of consumer alertness and call screening arrangement where applicable.</p> <p>Digit "9" shall be designated for special information services including adult service, as in the case of "900" Infoline codes. Other digits shall also follow the existing "900" designation where applicable. Any digit not yet utilized including those not defined in "900" code is to be designated for new service type or resource expansion for existing service types.</p>
Migration arrangement for existing "5X" codes in use	<p>MNO suggest "50" codes be kept for SMS, and migration of "51"- "59" codes already allocated be triggered only by actual need of such range for longer digit migration, i.e. no immediate action and no definite timeframe.</p>	<p>With the allocation of "50" code for such services, the "51"- "59" range should be vacated as it hamper the deployment of the "5" level which may be required in the near future. A period of 18 months for migration is considered reasonably sufficient for the MNO to vacate such range. On the other hand, there is an immediate need to migrate those existing services that the MNO consider as of adult nature to the "509" range in the interest of the public. Accordingly, migration of those services to the "509" range should be completed within 5 months' time.</p>

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Industry Comment</i>	<i>OFTA's View</i>
Implementation approach	<p>MNO raise that existing value-added SMS access is routed internally within a network, while inter-network SMS access is a new subject and ask for further consultation on this.</p> <p>CSP ask for a licensing scheme whereby they can apply for access code, thus avoiding rejection by MNO or unavailability of common code as experienced currently.</p>	<p>The routing mechanism should be an issue to be settled among MNO and CSP on commercial basis. While there is no cross-network routing in use currently, such practice in future should not be precluded.</p> <p>Licensing of CSP is an issue to be further reviewed. On the other hand, number assignment by operators to CSP is considered to be more effective in numbering management and in line with principles laid down in the Code of Practice relating to the Use of Numbers and Codes in the Hong Kong Numbering Plan.</p>
Number porting requirement	<p>CSP ask for such provision.</p> <p>MNO see no need for it.</p>	<p>There is no issue of number porting for SMS/MMS access code if the code is not operator-specific and the access is only routed internally by an MNO, as what the industry runs currently.</p> <p>On the other hand, if the access to content involves routing across network and the CSP opts for a change of its host MNO, the CSP would need to settle with all the MNO concerned the revised interconnection arrangement, including the charging rates. Such "number porting" from one MNO to another should therefore be settled commercially rather than on mandatory basis as in the cases of porting subscriber telephone number.</p>