

TELECOMMUNICATIONS NUMBERING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Transfer of Ported Mobile Numbers

Purpose

This paper discusses the issue on whether customers of mobile services would be allowed to transfer their ported mobile numbers which have been ported from a donor mobile network to a recipient mobile network to their preferred customers.

Introduction

2. At present, if a customer wants to transfer its numbers to its friend, relative or business partner for use, it can make a request to its network operator or service providers to change the registered name and details. Usually, network operators or service providers would entertain this kind of request from customers and may charge a one-off service handling fee for the registration and transfer of the numbers concerned. After the registration, the new customers will be able to use the previous assigned numbers of the old customers to continue subscribing to the services.

3. Starting from 1 March 1999, mobile number portability (MNP) will be introduced in Hong Kong. From this date onwards, all mobile telephone numbers assigned to customers would be able to be ported across different mobile networks. Recently, some mobile network operators make an enquiry to OFTA on whether customers would be allowed to transfer their ported mobile numbers within the recipient network to other customers.

Transfer of Ported Numbers

4. From an operational viewpoint, the transfer of a mobile number is the process of termination of service by the original customer followed by the service activation of another customer with the same mobile telephone number. Some mobile network operators consider that ported mobile numbers should not be transferred and should be returned to the original donor network operator within 3 months' time from termination of service by the customer.

5. However, on the other hand, some mobile network operators consider that there is no need to impose any restriction on the transfer of ported mobile numbers as there is no restriction imposed on the transfer of non-ported numbers. If restriction of transferring mobile numbers were applied to ported numbers, it would be difficult for the recipient network operator to explain it to customers. In addition, such restriction would limit the deployment of ported numbers to serve their customers in the recipient network and might affect free competition in the market.

The TA's Initial View

6. In administering the numbering plan, the Telecommunications Authority (TA) needs to ensure that number assignment would take care of consumer interest and to promote competition in the market. In this connection, the TA considers that mobile network operators should treat all mobile numbers, including ported and non-ported numbers, in a fair and consistent manner. Since there is already an industry practice allowing non-ported customers to change the registration and transfer the numbers to their friends, relatives or business partners, there is no reason why ported customers would be imposed such restriction. The TA considers that there would be no need for the recipient network operator to return the ported mobile numbers back to the original donor network operator if the ported mobile numbers would continue to be used by ported customers or transferred to new customers through a proper process of nomination by original customers and registration of names and details of new customers by the recipient network operator.

Advice Sought

7. Members are invited to give their views and comments on the issue of transfer of ported mobile number as mentioned in para. 4-6.

Office of the Telecommunications Authority
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