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ASIAN SMS USERS

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Asian consumers most prolific SMS users

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Consumers across Asia are the most prolific users of mobile messaging and are forecast to further drive message volume in 2008, a research firm said on Thursday.

Nearly 1.5 trillion mobile messages were sent in the Asia-Pacific region over the past 12 months, accounting for 78.9 per cent of all SMS traffic globally last year, said a Gartner's report.

Nearly 2.3 trillion SMS messages are expected to be transmitted in 2008, a 19.6 per cent increase from the 2007 figure.

The usage of text and picture messaging is also forecast to increase across Asia, Gartner said, but growth rates are likely to slow down as the mobile market becomes increasingly saturated.

Outside Asia, mobile messaging usage is set to increase in North America, Western Europe and Africa.

The annual growth rate for SMS revenue in major markets was 29 per cent from 2002 to 2006, the company said, but this is expected to fall to 9.9 per cent over the next five years.

"Consumers have grown accustomed to large or unlimited bundles of inclusive SMS as part of their basic cellular service package," The Business Times quoted Nick Ingelbrecht, Gartner research director, as saying.

"Carriers should plan for a future of much reduced margins on messaging services," he said.

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