

INTERNATIONAL THE NEWS

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SMS: communication made quicker!

ISLAMABAD: The Short Message Service (SMS) is an exciting service, which provides people with an opportunity to send and receive text messages through the mobile phone.

The short message service is developing very rapidly throughout the world. In 2000, it was particularly popular in Europe and Asia. The public has also become part of the bigger mobile community worldwide.

The text messaging service has become so popular that advertising agencies and advertisers are now jumping into the text message business.

As long as the recipient of the SMS has this service, the recipient would be able to send and receive countless number of messages, containing as many as 160 alphanumeric characters.

The idea of adding text messaging to the services of mobile phone users was latent in many communities of mobile communication services at the beginning of the 1980s.

Experts from several of those communities contributed to discussions in which most thought of SMS as a means to alert the individual mobile phone user.

However, few believed that SMS would be used as a means for sending text messages from one mobile phone user to another.

As early as February 1985, after having already been discussed in GSM subgroup WP3, SMS was considered in the main GSM group as a possible service for the new digital cellular system.

The first commercial SMS was sent over the Vodafone GSM network in the United Kingdom on December 3, 1992, from Neil Papworth of Sema Group (using a personal computer) to Richard Jarvis of Vodafone (using an Orbitel 901 handset).

The text of the message was "Merry Christmas".

The first SMS typed on a GSM phone is claimed to have been sent by Riku Pihkonen, an engineer student at Nokia, in 1993.

Initial growth was slow, with customers in 1995 sending on average only 0.4 messages per GSM customer per month. One factor in the slow take up of SMS was that operators were slow to set up charging systems, especially for pre-paid subscribers, and eliminate billing frauds.

SMS is a great way of expressing thoughts, feelings, moods and emotions. An ideal medium of communication, when it is difficult to make or respond to a voice call, while attending a seminar or in many situations, said a college teacher.

Text messages are often used by telecommunications companies to provide services for mobile phones or participating in contests.

There are also many services available on the Internet that allow users to send text messages for free, said a student of IT.

SMS is widely used for delivering service messages such as news alerts, financial information, logos, ring tones and horoscopes, and subscribers are charged extra for receiving such messages, said Umair Shahzad, an official in a telecommunications company.

Books, including hundreds of short messages, which could be sent in SMS, are available in markets, which shows a major increase in such services, said a shopkeeper.

SMS was also used in some examination halls for cheating purposes by students, but now the managements of examination halls have controlled the situation and cellphones are no more allowed in educational institutions, said a teacher of a local institute.

Services of this kind provide a popular way for associations and advertisers to quickly reach a group of subscribers. This type of advertising has proven to be extremely effective, but some may worry that advertisers may misuse the power of mobile marketing.