

## Asia: leaders in technology adoption

by Matthew Tonkin, area vice president, Asia-Pacific, Sybase 365

Asia-Pacific (APAC) countries, are leading the way in mass adoption of new technologies. Mobile TopUp and Remittance services have flourished in the region, enabling commercial transactions for the unbanked. Asians, far more than their Western counterparts, are open to mobile commerce, receiving promotions and coupons on their handsets and mobile CRM is very popular in the region. Underpinning these fast-growing services is the ability to support the early adoption of LTE across the region, which requires an LTE roaming solution that is deployed over the IP eXchange (IPX).

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Technology continues to change at an increasing rate and these changes continue to benefit us all, improving convenience in our lifestyles as well as productivity in the workplace. Over the years we have experienced an accelerated change of technology that affects our everyday lives - handsets and tablets, social networking and the social inbox, Cloud services, mobile commerce, mobile applications (including Angry Birds!)... the list goes on.

As these new technologies come to market, we often find the early adopters and initial mass markets tend to come from Asia. Asian consumers and companies are known for their appreciation of technology, quickly adopting the benefits to their everyday lives, whether personal or in the workplace.

Let's take a look at some examples. Internet usage and mobile adoption is sky-rocketing

throughout the Asia-Pacific region, making the growth of social media the fastest in the world, including Facebook that is still leading the way across the Asian region. Facebook in the US undoubtedly has still got the largest number of users (20 per cent of total users), but the Asian countries of Indonesia, India and the Philippines consist of 13.5 per cent total users (source: checkfacebook.com). If Facebook weren't officially banned in China, the Asian region would undoubtedly exceed the US.

Cloud services have proliferated across Asia. According to Microsoft's global SME IT and Hosted IT Index 2010, businesses in Asia managed to perform better than their Western counterparts did, and used IT to improve both business productivity and effectiveness. Currently about 30 per cent of Asian SMEs are already using Cloud services.

Remember the 2G era? Who were the first countries to have 100 per cent handset penetration? Yes, they were in Asia, specifically Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan. This adoption trend continues as phones become smarter. Whether handsets or tablets, Apple or Samsung, iOS or Android, we are seeing the immediate adoption across Asian markets. The same applies to the innovation that many companies continue to bring to markets across various lines of business such as mCommerce, Enterprise Services and Operator Services.

### mCommerce

mCommerce generates a high level of interest amongst telcos and banks across the majority of areas of mBanking, mPayments, mTopUp and mRemittance. The adoption and proliferation of these solutions across the Asian region has largely been driven

by economic necessity. Mobile TopUp and Remittance services enable the unbanked to transact via mobile phones and provide the means for transferring funds across geographies. Working together with service providers, many Asian operators have now launched TopUp and Remittance services.

Financial institutions are also changing the way they interact with their customers. Banking services and purchasing goods on mobile devices have become quite prevalent across many Asian countries. Services have evolved beyond merely checking a bank balance, to provide a range of payment solutions for merchants and individuals. Solutions in this area would include the consumer's ability to pay government fees or utility bills as well as governments enabling the payment of salaries. Mobility is simplifying lifestyles in both developed and emerging Asian markets.

#### Enterprise + Mobile CRM

Mobilising existing CRM (*Customer Relationship Management*) solutions is another area that many Asian enterprises are actively working on in order to stay ahead of the ever-changing consumer communication. A 2010 global survey conducted by a mCommerce technology leader showed that consumers are willing to be engaged via the mobile handset, with the Asians' acceptance being far greater than that of consumers in Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) and the Americas regions. About 54 per cent of Asian consumers who responded to the survey revealed that they were happy to receive special offers and coupons from their favourite retailer directly to their phones, and 46 per cent confirmed that they would like to have loyalty scheme updates sent to them via the handset. Executed correctly, this would provide the ability for companies to deliver a unique and personal customer engagement experience.

Some mobile CRM (*mCRM*) offerings available in the market bring the power of customer engagement technology to enable enterprises to engage customers through the mobile phone at every point in the customer lifecycle. This enables retailers, brands, agencies and any other consumer-focused enterprises to create awareness, assist purchases, support consumers' post-purchase and boost customer retention.

Many Asian enterprises welcome the ability to personalise communication with their consumers through a mobile environment. We

are seeing the adoption of mCRM capabilities across a number of Asian vertical industry sectors. Clients in the retail banking industry have implemented mobile surveys to the consumer to obtain real-time feedback of their call centres' experience. Major brands are capturing immediate responses-based on the consumer's retail outlet experience. Across the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) markets, many companies are using mCRM campaigns to capture additional market share and to improve loyalty. One successful campaign increased market shares by eight per cent - which is quite substantial in the FMCG field.

#### Mobile operators - IPX + LTE roaming

An 'All-IP' world is fast becoming a reality. Part of what is driving it is IPX (IP eXchange), which is proving to be an integral part of the industry-wide migration to IP. A Global Operator survey conducted in 2011 confirms that operators have a strong perception of IPX and over 71 per cent of those surveyed are planning to deploy IPX in the next one to three years. In an IPX environment, operators would also be able to run a full suite of traditional services including Voice, signalling and SMS. Whilst IP convergence of traditional services is an option, we are seeing many Asian operators recognising the clear benefits of quality and control that IPX deployment brings.

With the proliferation of data services, the mobile operator community is working to address this need with the rollout of next generation 4G networks, known as Long Term Evolution (LTE) networks. This will drive further the move to full IP convergence. Once again, due to consumer demand, Asian operators have taken the role of early adopters of this new LTE technology, with initial markets launching live networks in South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore and Australia. To stay ahead of the technology curve, the mobile operator community needs to support LTE roaming. As operators launch LTE services in their home counties, consumers will naturally expect the same service experience while abroad. This includes the ability to roam internationally.

To enable LTE roaming, operators would need a hosted LTE roaming solution deployed over the IPX environment to provide seamless connectivity to other operators in the IPX ecosystem. This accelerates the time-to-market to launch new LTE roaming destinations, driving customer satisfaction and revenues. With Asia being the early

adopters of LTE network rollouts, it is very likely that Asian operators will lead the industry with LTE roaming solutions.

Technology will continue to innovate and change our lives, both at home and in the office. Driven by the Asian consumers' acceptance of technology, all three areas - mCommerce, Enterprise Services and Operator partners - will continue to work together to bring benefits and value to the Asian consumer. ●



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