

Marketing to Malaysian inbox: Internet Policy in Malaysia

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Internet infrastructure in Malaysia needs to be improved in order for the online population to continue its growth and encourage greater usage of the Internet.

Malaysia's e-Mail marketing laws

With globalisation and online marketers realising the huge potential that expanding their efforts internationally has, it is of utmost importance to realise that what constitutes eMail best practices in one country is different than in others.

Clearswift has released a poll of over 1,200 business people around the world, concentrated in Germany, France, Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom. The poll found that 84 percent of businesses are unaware of local spam laws.

However, upon looking at Malaysia's increasing Internet growth rates as well as broadband fast growing availability to all, there is a "...need to address the call for greater info-security; to arrest the misuse of the Internet, and the issue of domain name that gives assurance of maintaining national sovereignty in a globalised world," according to H.E. Datuk Amar Leo Moggie, Minister of Energy, Communications and Multimedia, Malaysia.

Aside from broadband access, the Malaysian government has been supportive of the high tech industries with the Multimedia Super Corridor initiative (conceptualised in 1996), which has helped propel many new industries in this area including that of online related companies. The Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) is Malaysia's initiative for the global information and communication technology (ICT) industry. Currently, the MSC is hosting more than 900 multinationals, foreign-owned and home-grown Malaysian companies focused

on multimedia and communications solutions and research development.

According to the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), they have no specific provisions on the illegality of spam and no immediate plans to legislate. However, with Malaysia's increasing Internet connectivity and mobile penetration, the MCMC should be prepared to deal with eMail marketing laws.

According to the Computer Industry Almanac, as of March 2005, 37.9 percent of Malaysia's population is online. The number of users has tripled in just five years. One of the reasons for such rapid growth is the Malaysian government's involvement in bringing broadband access to its people. In July of 2005, Datuk Seri Lim Keng Yaik, Malaysia's Minister of Energy, Water and Communications, announced plans to bridge the countries' digital divide by making broadband available to all.

Additionally, according to Huei Min Lee, research manager, telecommunications research, IDC Malaysia, "In the next five years, Malaysia's broadband subscriber market is expected to increase at a healthy compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 32.9 percent from 2004 to 2009."

Immediate need for Internet

Malaysia has over eight million users online, about one-third of the total population. The online population is two times that of the entire Singapore population already. Having said that, the Internet infrastructure needs to be improved in order for the online population to continue its growth and encourage greater usage of the Internet. This also means that the MCMC needs to take preventive measures such as self regulation by users through education and awareness initiatives; and management of email service providers. Aside from email marketing, mobile marketing in Malaysia has a promising future.

The late introduction of broadband and lack of spending in infrastructure presents the greatest barrier to wide adoption of Internet beyond office usage in Malaysia. Compared to the USA, Internet in Malaysia is not popular. As more Malaysian people have mobile phones than PC's, this presents an ideal opportunity for mobile marketing as the mobile phone is more easily available than the Internet in Malaysia.

The AT Kearney Global Outsourcing Survey on mobile marketing has given Malaysia the third highest ranking due to its aspiration to be the world's leading mobile content and applications centre. It certainly seems that Malaysia is poised to reach its goal. In December of 2004, NEC Corporation and NEC Malaysia announced its new mobile phones and branding strategy to further expand its mobile business in Malaysia.

Hiromi Orikasa, general manager of mobile terminals marketing & sales division, NEC Corporation states: "Malaysia is one of NEC's most important markets where NEC can demonstrate its full competence in mobile Internet. NEC expects further strong initiatives by NEC Malaysia will help create the market and aid NEC in obtaining a leading position there."

Additionally, in August of 2005, Samsung entered Malaysia's 3G mobile phone market with its introduction of the world's smallest 3G handset. Samsung has had much success in the Malaysian market: in 2004, Samsung had achieved 26.5 percent market share, up from 19 percent in 2003.

It is evident that Malaysia has a very promising future - both for online advertising opportunities as well as mobile marketing. Malaysia is becoming a major player in these industries and will grow dramatically in the foreseeable future. Not only do the number of Internet and mobile users increase daily, but the many initiatives that are taking place to penetrate this market are incredible. With all the news lately focusing on China's lucrative Internet opportunities, it would benefit marketers to start analysing other countries in APAC.

DAISY Digital Talking Books in aid of visually challenged people

Digital Accessible Information System (DAISY) consortium in 1996 has come out with a solution for visually challenged with the main objective of propagating the DAISY philosophy and make DAISY books available worldwide. There are about forty countries including Sri Lanka either full or associate members of the consortium, dedicated to the production and dissemination of Digital Talking Books [DTB] in DAISY format worldwide. DAISY DTBs make it easy to find the way to the book, chapters, subheadings, paragraphs, sentences and even a word or page in an instant. There are six types of DAISY DTBs ranging from voice only to synchronised voice and text formats. One can listen to a DTB, listen and see it simultaneously or read it on a Braille display.

DAISY Lanka Foundation was established in Sri Lanka to implement the DAISY programme. The Chairman, Vice-chairman and some of its other members were trained in India and Thailand in DAISY production and playback techniques. These trainees are now functioning as resource persons in spreading the DAISY philosophy, training DTB production technicians and helping DAISY users utilise hardware and software players to read DAISY books. The facilities for this colloquium were provided by the Advanced Media Technology Centre of the School of Computing at the University of Colombo (UCSC). A project submitted by the DLF was approved by the Information and Communication Technology Agency of Sri Lanka (ICTA) and a grant of five million rupees was awarded to the foundation in March 2006 by His Excellency, The President, Mahinda Rajapaksa that will be used for the production of two hundred DAISY DTBs in Sinhala, Tamil and English. It is also expected to set up a Library consisting of five hundred DTBs by the end of the year 2009.

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