

Car GPS Sales Zoom Ahead

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PETALING JAYA: IF SALES numbers from M3 Asia Sdn Bhd's are anything to go by, GPS car navigation unit sales are really taking off in the local market.

According to Lester Neil Francis, group chief operations officer and executive director of M3 Technologies (Asia) Bhd and its subsidiary M3 Asia Sdn Bhd, the company's sales of GPS car navigation units have been -steadily increasing since last November and now averages about up to 355 units a month for the Altina and Papago! GPS units that the company distributes.

Apart from an obvious demand for portable GPS car units, part of the success of the Altina and Papago! brands in this country is due to M3 Asia's large dealer base - currently M3 Asia has some 40 dealers in Malaysia, mostly in the main towns and cities.

The company also has a growing online sales e-store (www.m3shoppe.com) where customers can purchase GPS car navigation devices, as well as other electronics goods like iPods, memory cards and even selected netbooks.

Online sales currently account for some 40%, with the majority of GPS units sold through retail channels, Francis said.

Latest models

M3 Asia's latest products include the top-of-the-line Papago! R5800, a GPS unit with a whopping 5in screen and the very latest SiRFAtlasIV all-in-one chip which not only has the latest GPS chipset from SiRF, but a speedy 500MHz Arm11 core built in and the ability to play a variety of audio and video files.

Those with a smaller budget can opt for Altina GPS car navigation units such as the Altina A8010 that comes with a 4.3in screen, or the A1130 with a 5in screen.

The Papago! and Altina units come shipped with the highly-regarded M3GPS X3 software that has support for 3D-rendered buildings and a 3D junction view feature for easier navigation.

The M3GPS X3 software is currently supported by MalFreemaps.com, the local mapping community which provides regular and free map updates for the device.

Alternatively, buyers of the Altina units can opt to buy the device with the iGO mapping software, which has more extensive European navigation maps.

Francis added that the company is due to introduce a GPS car navigation device under their own brand by the end of next month, to be targeted at the young and trendy.