

## ***Still Popular***

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DESPITE being one of the basic mobile services, SMS continues to be a popular service among Malaysians, and is not about to go out of fashion anytime soon.

According to a survey done by the MCMC last year, 84.9% of cellphone users also use SMS.

"SMS is almost 11 years old now and it has enjoyed a great 11 years," Lester Neil Francis, group chief operations officer for AKN Messaging Technologies Sdn Bhd.

Francis attributes SMS' longevity to its basic simplicity - it is one of the easiest, most convenient and accessible services.

"Though, MMS and EMS are expected to gain popularity, users will continue to use SMS more than other complicated messaging system," said Janice Chong, industry manager for Frost and Sullivan's ICT practice section.

Francis added SMS is also the only push technology out there.

"Information gets 'pushed' to the SMS service subscriber instead of the user having to 'pull' them," Francis said.

For example, if a user subscribes to a service for the latest football results, an SMS is "pushed" by the telco to the subscriber alerting him or her that a goal has been scored.

GPRS and WAP, instead, relies on pull technology to deliver its service, so users have to access WAP sites to get the football results, said Francis.

Even the basis of WAP "push" messages - sending of WAP links to the phone - is done via SMS, he added.

Furthermore, SMS can cut the cost of organising a competition - which is good news for market research companies because the conventional way of organising quizzes is really long and tedious.

Usually after a contest is over, the organisers have to spent a lot of time manually sorting the forms.

But in an SMS contest, sorting can be done by a computer and even the winner can be picked based on the criteria set by the organiser - for example, the fastest respondent.

Overall, SMS is still a very popular form of communication because it is simple, non-confrontational and less intrusive and suits Asians who are generally less forward in nature, said Francis.