

## Broadband map reveals extent of digital divide

The north-west is Ireland's broadband blackspot, with adoption levels among consumers up to five times lower than in certain parts of Dublin. A colour-coded map, produced for State of the Net and based on the 2006 Census, illustrates the extent of the urban/rural divide in broadband uptake.

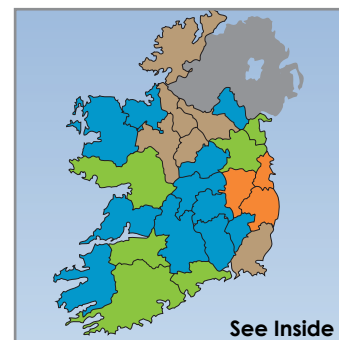
Leitrim with just 7.8% broadband usage has the lowest penetration, while Dun Laoghaire Rathdown is the highest at almost 40%. Generally, adoption levels in the eastern seaboard are better than the West with one notable exception – Wexford, at 10%

Separately, new international data shows that broadband speeds in Ireland are among the slowest among the 30 OECD countries. Ireland's speed of 3Mbit per second (based on the fastest consumer connection from the incumbent telecoms operator) puts us at 23rd spot, which pales into insignificance against Korea and Japan with a phenomenal 100Mbit per second.

Fergal O'Byrne, the Irish Internet Association's chief executive, comments: "The latest edition of State of the Net shows the continuing emergence of a digital

divide on two main fronts. In Ireland the divide is based on broadband availability – the emergence of the 'haves' and the 'have nots'. The IIA has consistently campaigned, and put its case to Government, for the recognition of affordable, high-speed broadband as a basic right. We regard it as a utility service like water and electricity.

"The second divide appears when we zoom out of Ireland and look at access speeds and affordability in relation to the global picture. Having broadband is only the first step. To engender real take



up of the service and to exploit it as a killer business tool, broadband offerings here must be among the fastest access speeds and most affordable possible to maintain our position as a knowledge economy."

## Irish websites fail to embrace the mobile internet



Aileen O'Toole,  
Managing Director,  
AMAS

Leading companies and government bodies have a poor mobile and PDA internet presence, according to research conducted by AMAS.

Increasingly, companies and public sector bodies have to factor convergence into

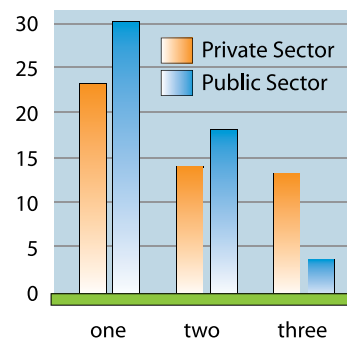
planning and managing their online channels. With lines blurring between the offerings of telecoms, electronic media and web providers, and a greater array of devices in use by consumers to access online content, mobile and multi-channel access are becoming increasingly important.

A survey of 100 organisations, split evenly between public and private sectors, shows most have adopted a mainly defensive strategy to the mobile internet to date. A majority of both public and private companies have registered a .mobi mobile domain, presumably to protect their brands. However, fewer than five organisations appear to have used their mobile addresses and launched mobile websites. Existing websites from the

sample do not display well on mobile browsers. The graph shows the scores on a .mobi tool which ranks sites on a scale of 1 – 5. A simple graphical interface, such as Google's, would earn a score of five, for the clarity of its display on a mobile phone. A more cluttered and complex home page would earn a one in the .mobi test, as it would "definitely" display badly on a mobile.

None of the sites earned scored four or five. As shown in the graph, most get scores of either one or two, with 17 earning a score of three. A score of two means that a site will "probably" display poorly on a mobile, while three indicates that it will "possibly" not render well.

While mobile ratings were poor, a better picture has



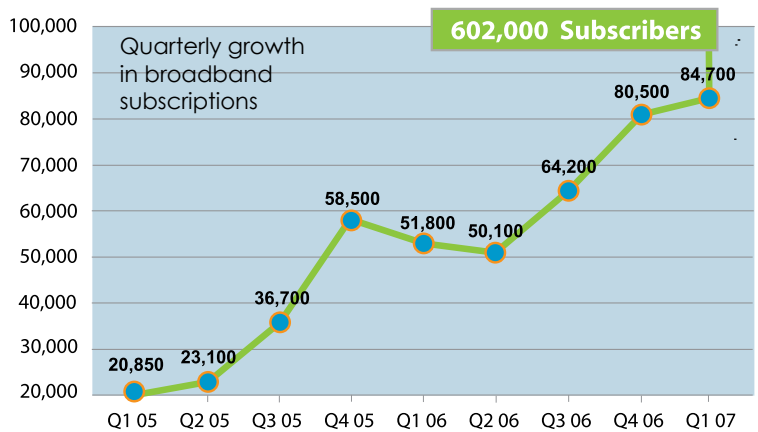
emerged in terms of use of Cascading Style Sheets (CSS). CSS is a series of instructions that specify how text should appear on a web page.

Used properly, CSS allows for some "future proofing" and for content to be more easily displayed across different platforms and browsers. All the public sector websites reviewed by AMAS passed the CSS test, with 13 of the private sector sites failing to use it.

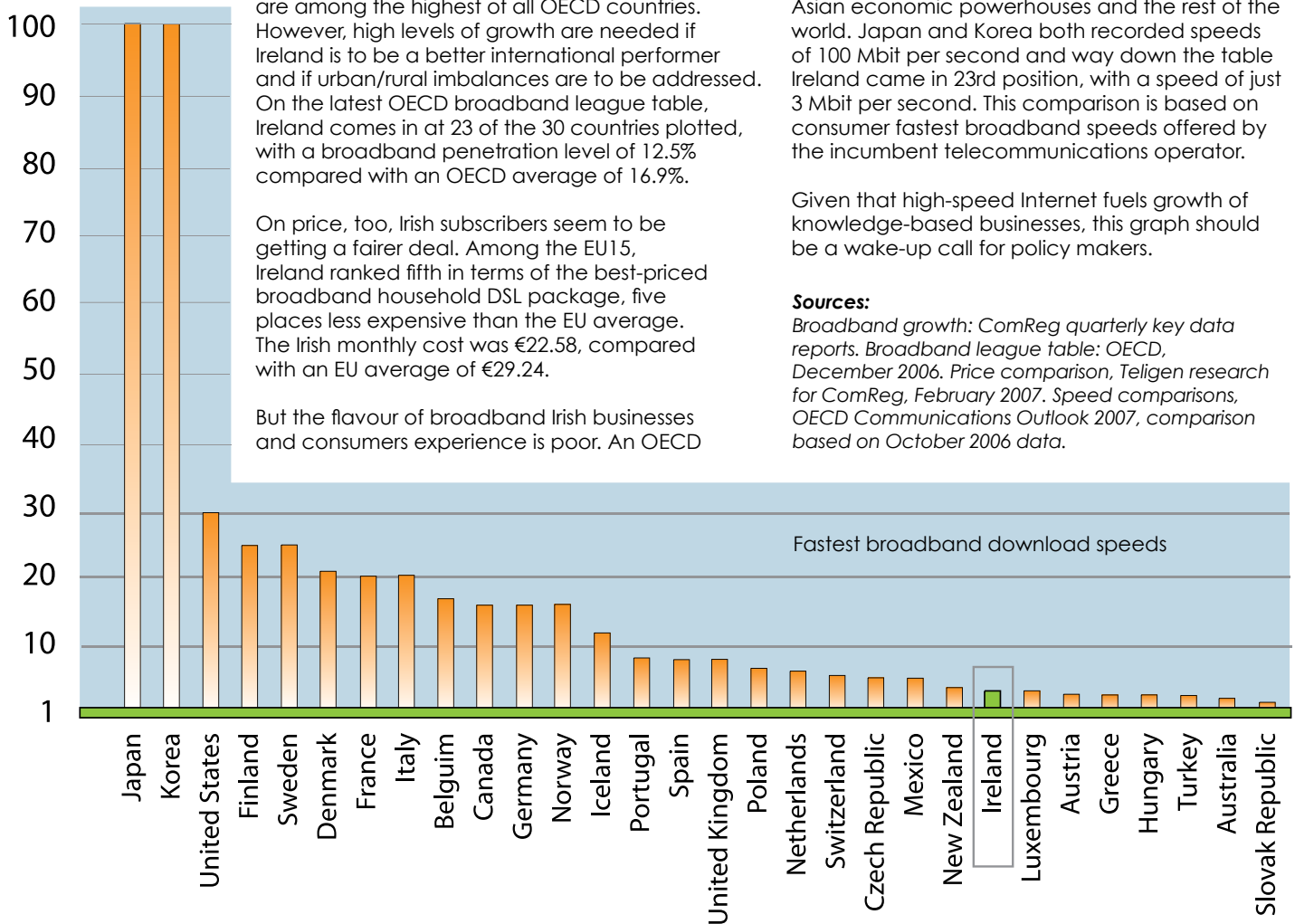
## 1. Broadband

Uptake, price and speed – these three indicators about broadband tell much about a country's online maturity. For two of the three, the message is becoming more positive for Ireland.

Broadband subscriptions showed the highest quarterly growth levels in the first quarter of 2007 since broadband was launched in Ireland five years ago. Total subscribers stood at 602,000 at the end of March, an impressive 84,000 gain on the previous quarter. Broadband subscription levels have practically doubled within a year.



Mbit/second



We're playing catch-up. National growth levels are among the highest of all OECD countries. However, high levels of growth are needed if Ireland is to be a better international performer and if urban/rural imbalances are to be addressed. On the latest OECD broadband league table, Ireland comes in at 23 of the 30 countries plotted, with a broadband penetration level of 12.5% compared with an OECD average of 16.9%.

On price, too, Irish subscribers seem to be getting a fairer deal. Among the EU15, Ireland ranked fifth in terms of the best-priced broadband household DSL package, five places less expensive than the EU average. The Irish monthly cost was €22.58, compared with an EU average of €29.24.

But the flavour of broadband Irish businesses and consumers experience is poor. An OECD

study shows an astonishing gap between two Asian economic powerhouses and the rest of the world. Japan and Korea both recorded speeds of 100 Mbit per second and way down the table Ireland came in 23rd position, with a speed of just 3 Mbit per second. This comparison is based on consumer fastest broadband speeds offered by the incumbent telecommunications operator.

Given that high-speed Internet fuels growth of knowledge-based businesses, this graph should be a wake-up call for policy makers.

**Sources:**

Broadband growth: ComReg quarterly key data reports. Broadband league table: OECD, December 2006. Price comparison, Teligen research for ComReg, February 2007. Speed comparisons, OECD Communications Outlook 2007, comparison based on October 2006 data.

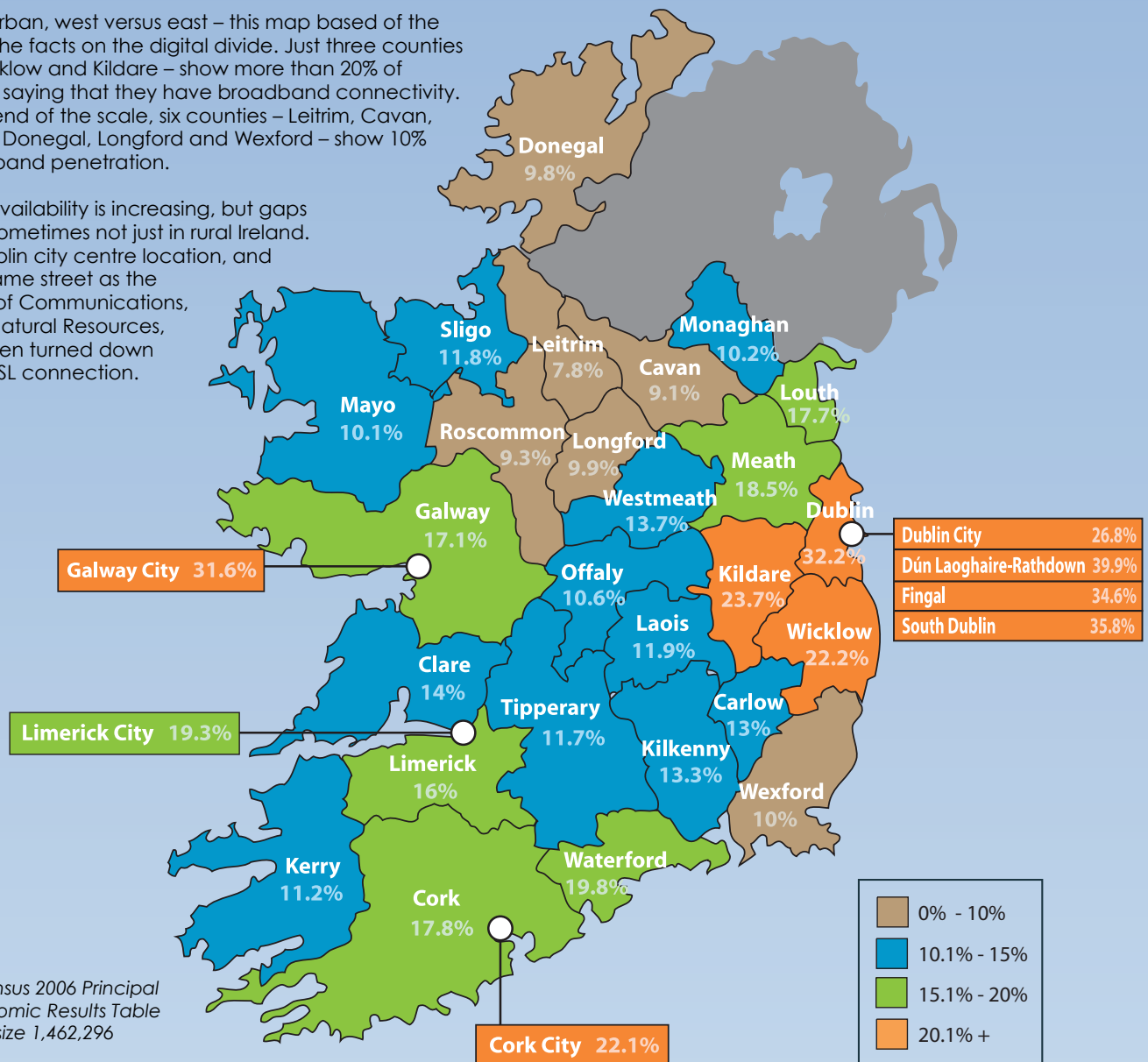
# Top Trends

## 2. Digital Divide

Regional disparities in broadband usage are evident from Census 2006 and undermine the increasingly rosy view of Ireland's broadband status.

Rural versus urban, west versus east – this map based on the Census 2006 data on the digital divide. Just three counties – Dublin, Wicklow and Kildare – show more than 20% of householders saying that they have broadband connectivity. At the other end of the scale, six counties – Leitrim, Cavan, Roscommon, Donegal, Longford and Wexford – show 10% or less broadband penetration.

Broadband availability is increasing, but gaps remain and sometimes not just in rural Ireland. Despite a Dublin city centre location, and sharing the same street as the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, AMAS has been turned down again for a DSL connection.



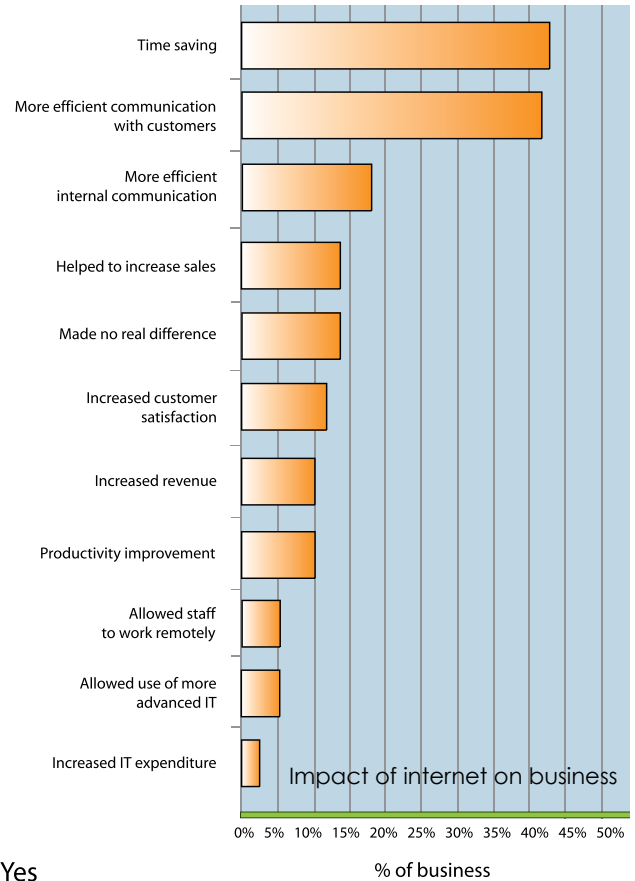
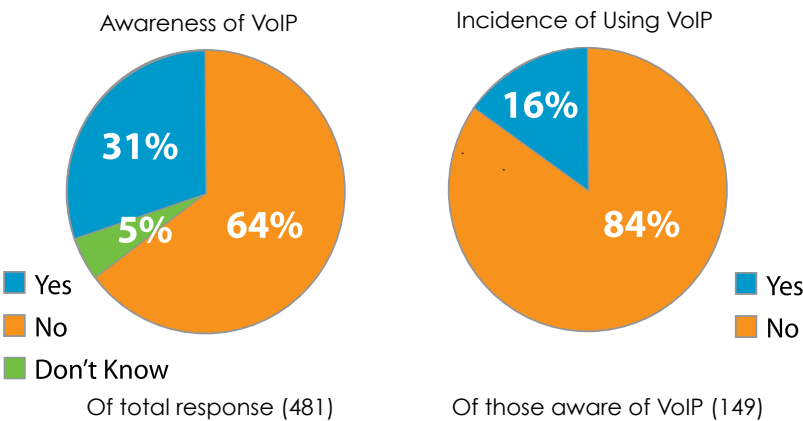
the opportunity to win online

### 3. Business Online

Online technologies have had a positive impact on Irish businesses, in particular by saving time and making external and internal communications more efficient. However, fewer businesses than would have been expected – just one in ten – say that the Internet has resulted in greater sales, according to research commissioned by Chambers Ireland and ComReg.

Awareness and usage of Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) appear to be relatively low among businesses. Around two-thirds of the businesses with internet connection were not aware of VoIP and only 16% of those who were aware of it actually use it.

The same survey also showed that email is the top online application among businesses, with an 89% usage level. Almost a third of the sample say that they bank online. Surprisingly, given the high profile of the government's eTenders website, just 4% of businesses said that they had used online tendering websites.



Source: eBusiness survey 2007 volume 1, commissioned by Chambers Ireland and ComReg. Graphs based on sample of 481 businesses with internet connections

### 4. Gadgets

Two out of three Irish people have an iPod or another MP3 player, while two out of three subscribe to a digital TV service. The Irish love affair with electronic gadgets is evidenced in research undertaken primarily to track radio listenership and influence where advertising budgets are spent.

Fifty two per cent of the 15,000-strong sample say that they have an internet connection, which corresponds with

findings from the Central Statistics Office. ABC1s outstrip other social classes in their use of the Internet and their ownership of electronic devices, as do urban consumers compared with their rural counterparts.

Digital radio (DAB) seems to have higher usage levels than would have been expected, while Blackberrys have yet to enjoy widespread consumer appeal.

|                 |     |
|-----------------|-----|
| Internet access | 52% |
| Digital TV      | 63% |
| Blackberry      | 4%  |
| iPod / MP3      | 38% |
| Digital radio   | 13% |

Source: TNSmrb / Joint National Listenership Research Special Interest Groups report Aug 2007

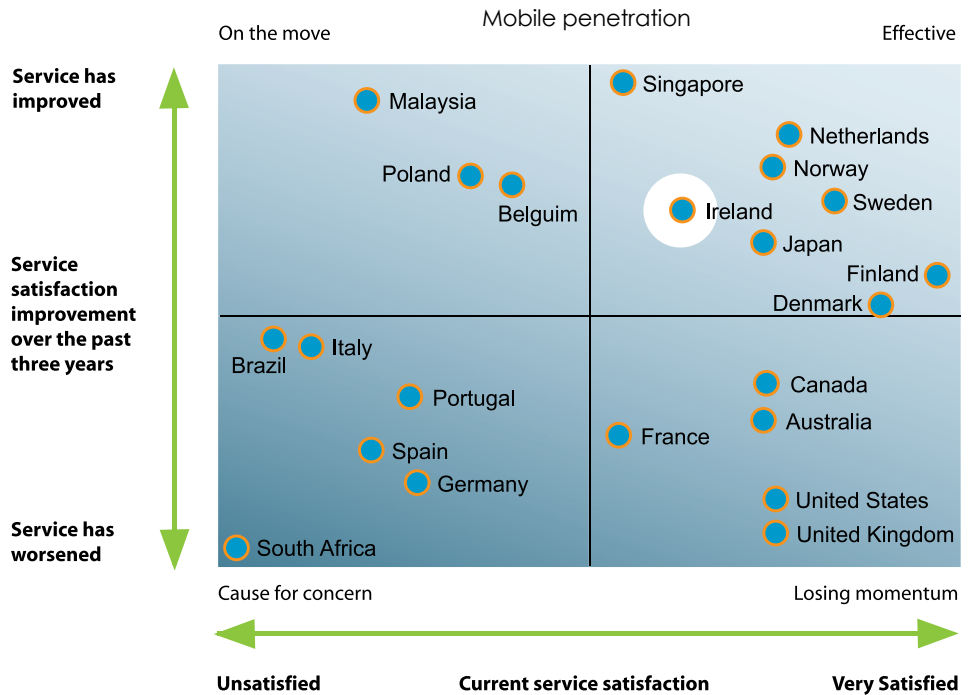
# Top Trends

## 5. eGovernment

Good news for the Irish government. Irish citizens believe that the quality of customer service is improving, with 78% stating that they are satisfied with the service they receive and 62% noting an improvement in service quality in the past three years. The research is part of Accenture's global review of government service delivery, of which eGovernment is an important component.

Ireland was given an overall customer service maturity score of 53%, placing us at 11th spot in the league table of 22 countries covered by the survey. That helps to position Ireland in the "effective" quadrant in the comparative graph, in the company of Singapore, the perpetual top performer in this annual review.

There's a slight sting in the tail. Ireland's future leadership in customer service will depend on a "more aggressive approach to implementation than it has over the past several years," Accenture warns.

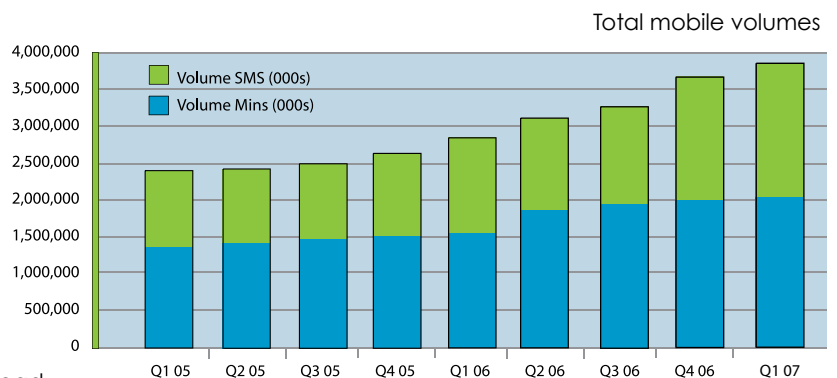


**Source:**  
*Leadership in Customer Service, Delivering on the Promise, published by Accenture, 2007.*  
 Graph shows citizens' perceptions of their countries' customer service performance

## 6. Mobile

Its gud 2 TXT. That's the pattern of usage on Irish mobiles. The volume of voice minutes and SMS messages on Irish mobile networks grew steadily through 2005, 2006 and into the first quarter of 2007. While both minutes and messages grew, SMS messaging volume increased relatively much more strongly.

At the start of the period, minutes were 21% ahead of messages. By the end, minutes were ahead of messages by just 11% of the number of minutes. Almost as striking as the SMS catch-up were the sheer volumes for the quarter – two billion voice minutes and 1.8 billion SMS messages. What were we all on about?



**Source:**  
 ComReg Quarterly Key Data Report June 2007

## Cross-media: what it is, why should you care?



**Fiachra Ó Marcaigh,**  
Director,  
AMAS

Nowadays, most companies and public-sector bodies see online channels as vital tools in reaching their audiences and markets. But many organisations still struggle to create the right balance between newer and more traditional channels.

Striking that balance – coming up with the most appropriate multi-channel (or cross-media) strategy – is not easy.

On one hand, a total focus on costs would favour “pure play” online-only service offerings.

However, over-emphasis on online-only service can be a real turn-off for customers. Far too many online channels are poorly designed, badly managed and offer no proper alternative when online service doesn't work for the customer.

Customers know this – and the business benefits cannot be ignored. Research shows that success in eCommerce, service delivery and marketing/sales lies in using multiple channels together

– online, plus call centre, plus print, plus shopfront.

Here are some best-practice principles for cross-media operations:

### 1. Support the most efficient channel with other channels

Don't just promote it - support it. That includes customer support and technical support. When the online help and FAQs run out, offer a phone or offline alternative.

### 2. Identify customers across channels

Don't start with the same long identification process. Know your customers and recognise them when they move between channels.

### 3. Never ask the customer for the same info twice

Make sure customer information is available across channels. Make sure your customer relationship management – and your organisation's customer service attitude – are multi-channel and work smoothly across those channels.

### 4. Learn how customers use your channels

Ask, and keep asking, about how customers perceive your channels relative to each other, how they use them and what would make for a better customer experience.

### 5. Channels must work together, but they work differently too

Try hard to understand the strengths and

weaknesses of each of your channels. Work to the strengths of each channel. Can an offer promoted on one channel (e.g. retail) be fulfilled most cost-effectively online?

Successful multi-channel strategies are built over time, not delivered ready-made. As is often the case, overall success depends on doing many small things well.

Online is often the most difficult channel to get right. It is newer, is changing very rapidly and has less broadly accepted conventional wisdom.

Within online itself, there may be multiple channels working for the organisation – website, eNewsletter, blog, banner advertising, paid search, microsites, social media, viral marketing, affiliate marketing, for example.

There is no substitute for careful planning and then executing the strategy in a way that includes measurement, research and a determination to improve continuously.



## AMAS: multi-channel strategies in practice

The AMAS team understand the challenges and opportunities of cross-media channel management. Our senior team have operated at senior levels in both print and online media and help clients devise and execute successful cross-media strategies. Examples include:

- For a large company, evaluating and

repositioning online and print channels to take account of business imperatives and customer needs

- Developing strategy that puts online at the forefront of information dissemination by a high-profile client, supported by other channels as appropriate
- Assisting a state regulator to transfer regulatory data from paper to soft copy

online and put appropriate governance around content management

**AMAS is a consultancy specialising in online channels and is retained by leading businesses and government agencies. Contact AMAS today about developing a cross-media strategy on 353 1 6610499 or [crossmedia@amas.ie](mailto:crossmedia@amas.ie)**