

MEDIA RELEASE

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pay for electricity with your mobile phone - mHITs powers electricity payments in PNG

mHITs (pronounced Em-HITS) has marked the 1 year deployment of Easipawa (pronounced Easy-power), a payment service which allows consumers to purchase pre-paid electricity using their mobile phone in Papua New Guinea.

The Easipawa service was developed in conjunction with PNG telecommunications provider DataNets Limited. The service allows subscribers of the mobile carrier Digicel PNG to purchase pre-paid electricity by using their Digicel pre-paid airtime credit.

The service accounts for the purchase of an estimated 40% of pre-paid electricity in PNG. The phenomenal take-up of this service highlights the suitability of mobile payment technology in developing countries, which often do not have access to the same payment methods and services available in developed markets.

The Easipawa service is available to all pre-paid subscribers on the Digicel PNG network. More information on the service is available from the Digicel PNG website at <http://www.digicelpng.com/en/services/easipawa-easipay>

about pre-paid electricity

In many countries, electricity is only available to consumers as a pre paid service. Houses are fitted with a pre-paid electricity meter with a keypad and a display. Consumers purchase a quantity of pre-paid electricity units at their local electricity shop where typically a receipt is printed containing a unique code or number. This code or number is then entered into the meter. Electricity is dispensed and metered until the pre-paid amount runs out.

Electricity shops or agents are often sparse and have limited opening hours. As a consequence, queues for the purchase of electricity are often very long – particularly in late afternoon. Often consumers must travel (on foot) from their village to the nearest town with an electricity shop or agent.

In developing markets, electricity is often purchased in small quantities at a time. Consequentially this means that the meter frequently runs out of credit and regular electricity re-charges are required. Furthermore, if the electricity runs out at night or over the weekend, it is often not possible to purchase more electricity until the next business day.

The Easipawa service now means pre-paid electricity can be purchased 24 hours a day, 7 days a week from anywhere in PNG with Digicel coverage.

how it works

The Easipawa service uses a combination of USSD and SMS technologies. The consumer enters a service code, followed by their meter number and the amount of electricity they wish to purchase. A confirmation request is required and once authorised, the voucher containing the unique re-charge code or number is sent as an SMS text message to the mobile handset.



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The technology used is very simple and ubiquitous – in other words the service works with any mobile handset. This is critical in developing markets where consumers do not have access to smart phones or mobile internet services. The model means the technology can also be readily deployed in other markets around the world.

mobile payments and the unbanked

Use of the mobile phone as a payment device is acknowledged as a logical payment solution for the unbanked (people who do not have access to traditional banking services). People in developing countries often lack the formal identity requirements that traditional banking services require. The lack of bank branches, limited number of ATM's, reduced access to the Internet and the general low level of financial literacy in developing countries are contrasted by the large-scale uptake of mobile phones in these same markets.

Papua New Guinea offers further unique challenges due to it's isolated geography and high proportion of unbanked citizens. Easipawa offers a payment solution where traditional payment services and products are not suitable or not available to the majority of consumers.

about mHITs

mHITs Limited is an Australian based developer and operator of mobile payment services.

In Australia, mHITs operates the mHITs SMS payment service that allows consumers to send and receive payments by SMS text message.

For retail transactions, mHITs allows consumers to pay for coffee or other food and beverage items using their mobile phone simply by sending an SMS. Consumers can also use the mHITs service to pre-order their items before arrival at a venue, meaning less queuing and waiting and faster service.

A variant of this solution, Easy Canteen, uses the same technology to provide parents and students the ability to order and pay for school canteen lunch orders by SMS

Consumers can also send and receive money instantly via SMS text message between mHITs members. This makes mHITs ideal for applications such as splitting bills, IOUs and taking collections for payments. The service works on all mobile phones, all Australian mobile networks and on both pre-paid and account plans.

As well as the purchase of food and beverages at retail Point Of Sale, mHITs is also an ideal payment method for purchase of mobile content, MP3 and other electronic downloads, or for making purchases for goods and services from Internet websites. Other applications include cashless vending, parking, taxi fare payment, charity donations and cash back offers.

mHITs recently launched it's "pay for coffee by SMS" service in Sydney, Canberra and Adelaide and has plans for rollouts in other cities.

Details of venues currently using the service in Australia are available via the mHITs website at www.mhits.com.au.

contact details

For more details, visit www.mhits.com.au or contact Harold Dimpel on 0410 622 272 or via email at harold@mhits.com.au.

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