

Mobile Number Portability (MNP) is the ability of a mobile subscriber to retain his/her number when changing network operators within a country. Mobile Number portability is a key aspect of deregulation to ensure competition in the telecom industry.

MNP is not a subscriber service. It is a network feature that allows the subscriber to keep a unique mobile phone number. The absence of MNP may give the existing cellular mobile operators a significant competitive advantage over new entrants in the market. MNP is the important mechanism to enhance fair competition among different cellular mobile operators to improve customer service quality.

In Pakistan, mobile subscribers can broadly be classified into the following categories, depending on their satisfaction levels and loyalty towards the cellular mobile operators:

- Subscribers who are satisfied with their service provider and are loyal to them
- Subscribers who are neither satisfied with nor loyal to their cellular mobile operators
- Subscribers who are satisfied but not loyal at all — such people tend to regularly shop around for better offerings and shift when one comes their way
- Subscribers who are dissatisfied from their cellular mobile operators but still have to be loyal. There could be many reasons for this `forced' loyalty such as monopoly markets and unwillingness to change numbers when shifting and
- Subscribers who are held hostages by their cellular mobile operators would be the main beneficiaries of MNP. Typically, these are business-class people who have circulated their numbers to all their contacts and who depend to a great extent on carrying out their business through the mobile phone. It is simply impossible for them to inform everyone about the change in number and MNP when introduced, should see a major usage by this segment.

Mobile Number Portability is essential to introduce healthy competition, improve customer service quality among the different cellular mobile operators. It provides significant benefits such as:

- It eliminates the cost of informing other parties of the number change by the porting user.
- It eliminates the need to consult the directory enquiries and /or change entries in their address books or computer systems by the callers.
- It increases competition, with significant benefits for all users, by lowering the cost to users of switching cellular mobile operator.

It is pertinent to mention that before changing from one cellular mobile operator to other cellular mobile operator, customer must be satisfied that the service, terms and conditions offered by the new operator are acceptable, because it is only the number that is being ported rather than the service associated with the number.

Background

Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), established in 1996, has been entrusted with the task of regulating the telecommunications sector to promote and protect the interests of users of telecommunication services; promote the availability of a wide range of high quality, efficient, cost effective and competitive telecommunication services

throughout Pakistan; promote rapid modernization of telecommunication systems and telecommunication services throughout Pakistan.

The GoP has announced the Mobile Cellular Policy (hereinafter referred to as “the policy”) on January 28, 2004. As per clause 6.8 of the policy, Government of Pakistan has directed PTA to implement Mobile Number Portability (MNP) by January 27, 2006.

Types of Mobile Number Portability

There are three types of mobile number portability:

- **Location Portability** - This enables a mobile subscriber may move from one location to another without changing its mobile number
- **Service Portability** - This enables a mobile subscriber to keep the same mobile number when changing different telecom services
- **Operator Portability:** This enables a subscriber to switch mobile operator without changing its mobile number

In most of the countries, location and service portability are not enforced by the regulator and only operator portability is implemented due to following reasons:

- Operator Portability is considered essential for fair competition among mobile operators
- Location Portability and Service Portability are typically treated as value added services
- Implementation and operation costs can be significantly reduced if Service Portability and Location Portability are not considered

Basic Number Portability Terms

- **Number Range Holder** - a mobile number assigned to a particular mobile network operator is called the Number Range Holder (NRH) network.
- **Subscription Network** - The network, which is currently contracted to provide service for a given mobile number.
- **Recipient Network** - The network, which is providing service for the subscriber's number after porting.
- **Donor Network** - The network, which was providing service for the subscriber's number before porting.

Explanation

Suppose a mobile number is ported from mobile operator A to mobile operator B; in that scenario the network A is called Donor Network and the network B is called the Recipient Network. Before the porting process, network A is the Subscription Network. After porting, network B is the Subscription Network. The “moved” number is referred to as ported number indicates the routing information to the NRH network. The diagrams of donor & recipient operators connected with centralized database are attached at Annex A.

Porting Process

- i. The Subscriber shall choose a new network operator (referred to as Recipient Operator).
- ii. The Subscriber shall fill out and submit the prescribed Porting / subscription application form to the Recipient Operator.
- iii. Present original primary identification (CNIC / NIC / Passport – in case of a foreigner / NICOP – for overseas Pakistanis) to the Recipient Operator.
- iv. Copy of the same required shall be submitted along with the Porting application form to the Recipient Operator.
- v. Provide the SIM number to the Recipient Operator.
- vi. SIM of the mobile number to be ported may be required to be presented to the Recipient operator on the spot for verification purposes only.
- vii. In case of corporate Subscribers, the company/organization shall submit a copy of the primary identification of the chief executive / authorized signatory along with a request on the Prescribed Porting request application or company letterhead duly signed / sealed requesting porting of number(s) issued on the name of the same company/organization.
- viii. The Recipient Operator and the Donor Operator will process the porting application and in doing so, the porting request may be rejected or put on hold due to various reasons as described in the next section.
- ix. In case of rejection or hold, the Donor Operator may contact the Subscriber to settle the financial, contractual or any other issues / reasons related to the said rejection or holding of the porting request.
- x. The Subscriber may also contact the Donor Operator to settle the financial, contractual or any other issues / reasons related to the said rejection or holding of the porting request.
- xi. The Subscriber shall be provided with a SIM from the Recipient Operator during the porting process.
- xii. At the completion of the porting process, Subscriber's number will be active on the new SIM provided by the Recipient Operator and will be ready for use.
- xiii. The porting process shall be completed within 4 business days from the time a Number Porting Request is successfully initiated electronically from the Recipient operator system; excluding any time for which the Number Porting Request may be put on hold by the Donor Operator.

Fig.1 Donor & recipient operators connected with centralized database (CDBA)

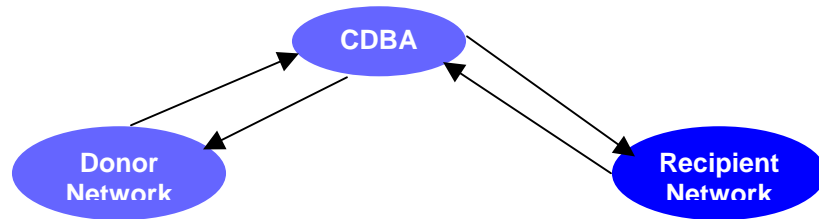


Fig.2 MNP network diagram

