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## Vodafone Launches Kirusa's Voice SMS; Some Thoughts On Voice SMS

Posted By [Nikhil Pahwa](#) On November 18, 2008 @ 11:34 am In [Airtel](#), [Mobile](#), [Telecom Operators](#), [Vodafone](#) | [9 Comments](#)



[1] Vodafone has [2] [announced](#) the launch of its Voice SMS service in 16 circles with [3] [Kirusa](#). What's interesting from a marketing point of view, is that [4] [Airtel](#) has been promoting its Voice SMS service, powered by [5] [Bubble Motion](#) for a few weeks now, and Vodafone will be able to take advantage of that buzz now. What we're not sure of, is whether Vodafone is deploying the Voice SMS service in one shot, or like Airtel, has been deploying the service circle by circle. Airtel [6] [first began](#) deploying Bubble Talk in 2006, in Goa and Maharashtra.

Both companies have priced the service at Rs. 0.75 per minute, and it is available to both Prepaid and Postpaid subscribers. Details of how Vodafones service works:

- Does not require any special handsets, or handset settings
- Vodafone subscribers have to dial\* and the mobile number of the person for sending the message.
- If the recipient is a Vodafone subscriber, he will receive a text SMS notification and can dial \*0\* to hear the Voice SMS.
- Old Voice SMS can be retrieved by dialing \*1\*.
- Users can replying, forwarding, saving or deleting the Voice SMS messages.
- Subscribers not on the Vodafone network will get a text SMS notification with an embedded DirectListen number

**An issue for Airtel:** Twice in the last 30 minutes, I've been unable to send a voice SMS since "All lines are currently busy". Looks like they don't have enough capacity for the service.

### Some thoughts on Voice SMS

- 1. Cross Operator Service:** What's key about the Voice SMS service is that it is available across a few mobile operators (Idea Cellular, Airtel, BPL, MTNL and Vodafone) and service providers (Bubble Motion and Kirusa).
- 2. Inter-operability** - one of the issues with MMS was the lack of interoperability. Because Voice SMS is a hosted service and not handset dependent, it doesn't have such issues. Also, by integrating with SMS and a voice portal (example: Kirusa's DirectListen), users can still send messages to those who are not on their network.
- 3. Ease of usage** - Both Airtel and Vodafone have made it incredibly simple to send a voice message - by just adding a \* before sending a message. It actually requires less thumbing of the keypad than sending an SMS
- 4. VoiceMail?** Answering machines and voice mail never really took off in India, and with the massive marketing push behind Voice SMS from the operators, this just might be the voice mail for this market.
- 5. The pricing:** is quite low at Rs. 0.75 per minute. I pay more for sending an SMS.

**Just a thought:** It's interesting that Bubble Motion is deployed with Vodafone in Egypt. I wonder if, as a consequence of deployment with Vodafone India, Egypt will also go the Kirusa way.

### Funding status:

**Bubble Motion** [7] [raised \\$14 million](#) in a second round of funding in March 2008, from Sequoia Capital, Comcast Interactive Capital and NCD Investors.

**Kirusa** [8] [raised \\$13.3 million](#) from Qualcomm, Accel India (Erasmic), Eastven Partners, Helion Ventures and Nexus India Capital.

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URLs in this post:

[1] Image: <http://www.vodafone.in>

[2] announced:

<http://www.marketwatch.com/news/story/Vodafone-Launches-Voice-SMS-Subscribers/story.aspx?guid={03EC111B-9B96-4C3C-A90C-6506F898A4CB}>

[3] Kirusa: <http://www.kirusa.com>