

Smart phones to track friends, kids, buildings

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Bangalore: Global positioning system-enabled navigation devices and mobile handsets, used for navigation purposes, are truly a costly proposition for consumers today.

But, with the market for such handsets slated to reach 250,000 to 500,000 devices a year in the next two or three year, they will become cheaper and affordable.

And luring consumers in to the age of GPS smart phones would be value propositions such as location-based services and mobile advertising. Friend finders, traffic updates, marine information, camera finders on the road, child security and tracking are going to be some of the most sought-after applications.

Joining the GPS bandwagon

is the Finland-based mobile major Nokia, that is launching a slew of smart phones loaded with maps of 150 countries.

"In India we have launched



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about five mobile phones with GPS capability while globally we have 15 such devices. We will launch more number of GPS capable phones in the country and ship nearly 1 mil-

lion devices by end of 2008. Also our maps in India covers eight cities providing the drive and walk services," said Thomas Leliveld, director, sales & marketing, Nokia Germany. Moving into the future, Leliveld said, "We also have built applications that provide traffic updates in real-time. Creating a history of all the traffic data, we can provide users with information as to what time he should leave a particular destination to avoid traffic jams."

Motorola is also quite bullish on GPS-enabled devices. "Since the market is demanding we will be launching GPS-enabled phones by the end of this year," said Malcolm Dawe, VP (mobile devices), India & south west Asia, Motorola.

More than just local usage,

a GPS device gives a user a foothold in to web related applications like Facebook. "Using GPS solutions users can be directly connected to social networking sites such as Facebook. In North America and Europe we are seeing users allowing their friends to see their positions and movements on the map. You can also upload photos, routes and give reviews about fast food joints. One of our solutions is for blind users who can find their way easily, using the voice-enabled devices," said Magnus Nilsson, CEO of Wayfinder, a company providing location and navigation services for mobile phones.

Speaking about the situation in the country, Amit Kishore Prasad, founder CEO and MD, SatNav Technologies said, "Before any of the serv-

ices see success there needs to be a large user base. Mobile advertising can be a factor to drive down the GPS usage cost and help create volumes of consumers. While a person is travelling he can get ads from hotels or restaurants in the vicinity and even get food reviews from social networking sites."

Even auto majors have not been spared from the growing awareness of the GPS devices. For instance, General Motors is providing car-based navigation devices in their hi-end segment as an accessory in association with Map My India, a company that provides maps and navigation devices.

"By the end of 2008, we will see more car makers making announcements to this effect," said Prasad. Maruti, Hyundai and Mahindra & Mahindra are