



# Informa comment on launch of Facebook Messenger

LONDON, UK: Pamela Clark-Dickson, senior analyst for messaging at Informa Telecoms & Media, comments on launch of Facebook Messenger.



Facebook has taken the wraps off Facebook Messenger, a separate mobile messaging application which has been developed by the same team that developed the Beluga group messaging application (Facebook acquired Beluga in March 2011). Facebook Messenger will compete with BlackBerry Messenger and Apple's forthcoming iMessage, in that it will provide a messaging-over-IP (MoIP) capability. However, Facebook Messenger will have the edge over both RIM and Apple in that it can provide a cross-platform messaging application, specifically for the iPhone and Android mobile operating systems, and so it will therefore also compete against applications such as WhatsApp and KakaoTalk.

## Potentially, it has the edge

Assuming that Facebook Messenger provides a compelling messaging experience, it has the potential to achieve a greater reach than BBM, WhatsApp, KakaoTalk or the as-yet-unlaunched iMessage. According to Facebook, it has more than 250 million active mobile users, and these users are twice as active as non-mobile users of Facebook. In addition, the company has partnerships with 200 mobile operators in 60 countries. Facebook Messenger's integration with Facebook Messages and the phone address book, and its inclusion of Beluga's group messaging capabilities, also gives it a potential edge over all of the above applications.

It is possible that, owing to the high penetration of Facebook on mobile devices, the current users of applications from smaller companies such as WhatsApp and KakaoTalk may churn to Facebook Messenger - assuming that they are also Facebook users.

Facebook Messenger's integration with the phone address book may also be a key factor in inducing either churn among the existing users of other, similar applications, or in encouraging adoption by new users.

## Mobile operator partners likely to benefit

However, Facebook Messenger is a separate application, and so it is possible that mobile Facebook users may not see enough additional value in Facebook Messenger that they would download and use it. Facebook does have the advantage of a significant installed base of mobile users, but it will face the same challenges as its competitors with regards to growing the penetration of Facebook Messenger.

With regards to Facebook's mobile operator partners, these will likely also benefit from the way in which the new Messenger application will work, in that messages will continue to be delivered via e-mail notifications and texts. That means that the mobile operators will still generate data and SMS traffic, and revenues, from their subscribers' use of the Messenger application.

