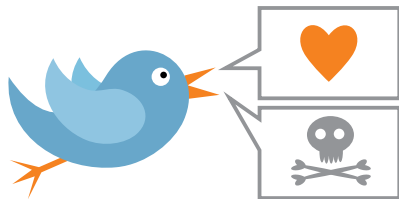


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The guilty pleasure of impulse calling

Retailers put some of their fastest-moving, highest-profit items next to the cash register, so that they are always in reach of undisciplined impulse shoppers. Mobile-phone operators do something similar. They have contrived to have their services always in reach of the consumer. No one would argue that point-of-sale candy bars should be regulated, but Czechs have been complaining for years about inadequate regulation of the telecoms market. These complaints are entirely valid, but they nevertheless overshadow the fact that Czechs are often extremely irrational about using their cellphones. They use them when other forms of communication would be cheaper, and then they complain about how much they are spending. The new flat rates by the three incumbent operators are a welcome development. They will make it all that much easier to engage in the guilty pleasure of profligate telephoning.

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