

SCHUDELEAKS

Tutto ciò che avreste voluto sapere sulle schede telefoniche

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Everything you ever wanted to know about calling cards

1 - Magnetic stripe technologies

1.0 - Introduction

1976: this is the year in which for the first time in the world, after years of preliminary studies, the prepaid telephone card appears on the market.

The idea of the prepaid telephone card was born in Italy from the collaboration between the Italian Society for Telephone Operations SIP and a company specialized in the production of automatic vending machines, SIDA of Montichiari (BS).

After the laboratory tests in SIDA in the years 1974/75, the first field trials were started in 1976 at the Galoppatoio di Villa Borghese in Rome and at the Guglielmo Reiss Romoli high school in L'Aquila, obtaining encouraging results.

This is a revolution: for the first time in the world, the user buys a service for a value of 2000, 5000 or 9000 Lire, which he will use to make calls when and where he wants.

Success was immediate: the awkward and heavy token was quickly replaced by the light telephone card, a thin rectangle of cardboard (and, later, of PVC) with a magnetic strip on which the remaining value available for calling is stamped. This is a real revolution for Italians, which in the following years will change the way of communicating for entire generations.

SIP, with the introduction of the prepaid card, obtains an enormous advantage: it limits the theft of tokens / coins and the consequent damage to telephone booths. The user, on the other hand, has the possibility to call for several minutes without being afraid of running out of heavy tokens.

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The technology is revolutionary: on a simple rectangular cardboard support a magnetic strip is applied in the middle of the paper, parallel to the short top of the same. The magnetic band is made up of a layer of PVC and many magnetic particles of resin, on which the data that are thermally impressed can be stored, by applying a magnetic field near the band.

In the next chapters we will retrace the main technological changes that have led the telephone card to be an indispensable object for entire generations of Italians.

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