

Can wireless networks handle World Cup fever on mobile video?

June 23, 2010

By [Patrick Lopez](#)

There are few events on the world stage that have the ability to shine a spotlight on technology and innovation. Over the last several years, mobile phone technology has been at the center of many of these global events.



Certainly, the Beijing and Vancouver Olympics, as well as the 2008 political elections in the United States have generated much attention around the potential that mobile messaging and mobile content can have on shaping public opinion. This month's World Cup in South Africa is another great example.

Cup floweth

Consider that in the first weekend of play, ESPN's World Cup coverage is reported to have garnered more than 550,000 mobile video views.

Patrick Lopez is chief marketing officer of Vantrix

Nielsen estimates that at least one in five mobile subscribers around the world will use the mobile Web to follow the World Cup action and stay on top of this event's games and happenings.

According to statistics released from Mob Gold, a mobile advertising network involved in World Cup activities, there is already an increase of close to 300 percent of click-through rates on World Cup-related mobile content. These numbers underscore the interest in mobile video.

In fact, we have already started to see demand from subscribers for even more content.

With video now responsible for up to 50 percent of mobile traffic, combined with World Cup fever, it is fast becoming a premium channel for mobile marketers with its ability to target and engage captive audiences.

It seems like mobile video and marketing are a perfect fit, right? It certainly is, but with this record increase in content and mobile viewership comes a tax on carrier networks and some carriers are not able to meet the demand for mobile video.

How strapped are carrier networks?

The answer to this question is easy: very.

Carriers are experiencing the biggest bandwidth strains since launching mobile data. Much of that strain is coming from video.

Sites such as Netflix, Hulu and YouTube account for a significant portion of mobile traffic – traffic that, ultimately, mobile operator networks were not built to handle. But that is not stopping video sites from pushing their services to mobile subscribers.

Fueling the content frenzy

End-users armed with Web-enabled mobile devices such as the iPad, iPhone and other smartphones are creating a groundswell of demand for video content. They are hungry applications and mobile marketers are feeding that hunger by delivering engaging mobile campaigns and content in ways that is appealing for subscribers.

This scenario would be a mobile marketer's dream if not for the one significant hurdle: the state of carrier networks.

The video tsunami that is unfolding in mobile today is, in my opinion, the biggest challenge facing carriers.

Bandwidth issues to mobile marketers

For most end-users, the carrier bandwidth struggle is already being seen, even if they are not aware of what is happening at the infrastructure level.

Inability to connect and jumpy or buffering video are signs of the bandwidth crunch. This is a problem mobile marketers need to understand.

As we speak, campaigns are being planned with video as a major component. But without an accurate understanding of carriers' network capacities, those campaigns might be marred by sub-par viewer experiences, ultimately causing, in the best case, missed opportunities and, in the worst case, brand damage.

It would seem, then, that mobile marketers are put in a precarious position: capitalize on the excitement around mobile video, yet run the risk of that excitement contributing to a bandwidth crisis that will inhibit potential buyers from accessing their content in the first place.

Patrick Lopez is chief marketing officer of mobile video specialist [Vantrix](#), Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Reach him at patrick.lopez@vantrix.com.