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January 08, 2014

Real Reality TV



By [Erik Linask](#), [Group Editorial Director](#)

The mobile revolution has created what can only be called an age of instant gratification. We have come to expect access to information and content instantly, whenever and wherever we want it. That evolution of mobility and communication has given rise to a entire new ecosystems of activity, in the process spawning new industries. Perhaps most notable is the mobile application market.

Mobile apps deliver access to information and resources we've wished for long could be available, but, until the age of ubiquitous connectivity, has never been available. From scores from your favorite sporting events to weather reports and travel conditions and even instant coupons in retail environments, there's little that isn't available on mobile devices. Truly, the mobile device has become an extension of our being.

Until it comes to the broadcast world, where the mobile device has failed to materialize as the so-called second screen that broadcasters dream will become reality. It's not that mobile devices aren't part of our viewing experience – they are. But, the experience is being able to perform other activities while being (somewhat) engaged in our audio or video experiences.

Shazam made a quick splash with its ability to quickly engage listeners, allowing them to easily and quickly identify songs being played in the car, in restaurants, or in any other environment. Honestly, its ability to deliver accurate information in even with substantial background noise is impressive, but it has failed in its ability to truly engage listeners or effectively monetize the listening experience. As most other apps, it has become an informational tool.

While it's use on the TV screen is, perhaps a more engaging experience, in that it has allowed advertisers to easily bring viewers to websites and portals full of information about specific products, it has its drawbacks, including the short timeframe of TV commercials combined with the multi-step process of noticing the Shazam logo, picking up a device, opening the app, and then listening. Many times, the process takes far too long to present a positive experience.

That, says Yangbin Wang, CEO of Vobile, is the challenge broadcasters and advertisers face – they need to find a way to keep viewers engaged and hooked to their TVs, especially in an age of time shifting, where most advertising loses its power.



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“Broadcasters are doomed if they lose their live audiences,” he says. “Our goal is to use the second screen to help broadcasters keep eyeballs on live programming.”

Vobile’s idea is to allow viewing audiences to do something they have traditionally been precluded from doing: being participants in programming. For instance, Vobile partnered with Japan’s Asahi Corp. on a virtual reality experience, where viewers watching a TV personality catching fish with harpoon would be able to catch their own virtual fish by logging onto the show’s URL and “catching” fish on the screen with their smartphones. It not only created an interactive experience, but also built a potentially competitive environment between viewers competing against one another to see who could catch the most fish.

It’s all done by running its software in real time against broadcasters’ content to create live digital fingerprints that allow for the online interactivity.

Imaging being able to similarly balance on a narrow post against Survivor competitors, or to kick a field goal in the last seconds of the Super Bowl, or spot clues to figure out “whodunit” in the latest episode of Elementary.

Such real-time digital interactivity has the potential to not only ensure live viewership – which also increase advertising value, but similar activities can be built into ads themselves, allowing for special discounts and offers for completing certain activities during commercial spots.

“It’s really TV gamification – an extension of your TV viewing – and it draws the audience,” says Wang. “The potential is endless.”

The potential is the main reason Vobile has just completed its Series-C investment, led by IPV Capital, along with Ivy Capital. Wang says he has been approached previously by potential investors, but now that the market is ready for an advanced viewing experience (and broadcasters and advertisers are searching for ways to ensure live viewership), the time to take on funding was right.

“We want to be the enabler of these kinds of interactive programs, and it’s going to take some capital to do it,” he says.

Indeed, second screen engagement has never been the issue. What has been is the connection with the first screen. Vobile’s hope is its technology will bring a new, highly engaged, viewing experience that will transform the TV from a one-dimensional to a multi-dimensional activity, further engaging viewers and building live viewing loyalty, and ultimately allowing monetization of the second screen for its partners.

Wouldn’t it be fun to try to score the winning goal for Newcastle United a Barclay’s Premier League shootout?

Edited by [Stefania Viscusi](#)



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