Can satellite be an integral part of OTT era?

BY HANS MASSART

As millions of subscribers continue to indulge in streaming sites, over the top (OTT) services are replacing traditional viewing behaviour. The demand for streaming services is skyrocketing, as people binge on applications to watch the latest and most talked-about shows.

In Asia specifically, the number of users streaming services is expected to reach 693 million by 2024.

Streaming has opened new possibilities for content creation and distribution, with iflix – the Malaysian streaming service – heating up regional competition. South-east Asia is now firmly a part of the global streaming industry.

The expected growth of OTT services, however, did not take into account the current global pandemic uncertainties. And as a result of this, demand has suddenly spiked significantly. With several stay-at-home initiatives in place across the world to slow down the spread of Covid-19, streaming services are being used more than ever before. This can create challenges if everyone wants to use the service to its full potential at the same time.

The question for broadcasters is, how can they meet this demand both in the short and long term? Previously, satellite wasn’t thought to be compatible with OTT services – but it actually has a critical role to play as we move towards the future of video delivery in the OTT era.

Rising to the challenge

As millions of people go online for entertainment, utilising streaming services such as Netflix and Amazon Prime Video, Internet usage has surged between 50% and 70% amid the global pandemic.

It is widely expected that OTT services were still in their early stages, and the announcement of a global lockdown was unimaginable. Today, growing traffic is a profound challenge for service providers, especially when they have to broadcast popular content to wider audiences.

The solution, thus, lies with satellite – and the industry is already out there working where it fits into the future of broadcasting. Indeed, satellite is constantly developing and evolving, making it the perfect solution to provide streaming services and, ultimately, remains an integral and critical part of the OTT era.

Unrivalled connectivity

Video consumption on second screens, such as smartphones, tablets, and PCs, is also increasing dramatically. In addition to being able to stream content onto a range of devices, consumers expect to receive their content on-demand, at any time, at any location and with the best image quality and uninterrupted playback.

Satellite transmission is the ideal solution for keeping costs under control, which is something operators and service providers have historically struggled with. And as satellite’s ability to multicast is unrivalled, it is integral to successful content distribution.

It is widely expected that OTT viewership will replace traditional TV globally within a matter of years. The attractive price point of satellite transmission is just one advantage it brings, with the capability to multicast as one of the main drivers.

Another benefit is that the technology can also deliver content efficiently over a vast geographical area, which is essential for the major South-east Asian markets. It can be cost-effectively scaled to a growing population of receivers and can be easily scaled to address more content.

For example, as almost the entire global sporting calendar has been suspended to help reduce the spread of the coronavirus, media organisations have had to react quickly with new programming schedules to fill the void and to stay in touch with fans at home.

The future of broadcasting

A decade ago, online streaming services were still in their early stages, and the announcement of a global lockdown was unimaginable. Today, growing traffic is a profound challenge for service providers, especially when they have to broadcast popular content to wider audiences.

This being the case, bandwidth needs to be used efficiently and traffic needs to be minimised as the hours of content being streamed rise exponentially and stay-at-home initiatives continue to expand across the globe.

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