

Why micro-content is big business



Indian girls engage with their mobile phones in New Delhi, India. The world of mobile video is now exploding with innovation, matched only by the voracious appetite of connected consumers.

Photograph: Tsering Topgyal/AP

Mobile video is changing the content industry from the ground up, from creators to advertisers, from interaction to infrastructure. I spoke to some of the people making big business from small content.

"We have a long history of technology influencing the content that's created, it's always been that way," said Scott Cohen, founder of The Orchard, home to a digital catalogue of more than 1.3 million songs.

"Now instead of making longer form content, we are seeing a trend for shorter form. Technology facilitates it and the consumer demands it. Because of the limited amount of time they have, the device they are on, and the location they are at, consuming long-form just doesn't make sense."

Small content was big news earlier this year when the Harlem Shake meme hit over a billion YouTube views in 40 days, helping Bauer debut on the Billboard Hot 100 at number one, and forcing the inclusion of YouTube data in chart metrics for the first time. Global brands such as [Mondelēz](#) use microcontent as part of their marketing strategies. Trident & Fuse successfully used content on the Vine app as a means to reach consumers when they were commuting or eating lunch. The mobile consumer is never far from an advertising opportunity.

According to Ooyala's [Global Video Index](#), mobile devices are on track to double their annual share of streamed and downloaded video. It follows that [video advertising](#) to mobile is one of the hottest topics in the ad industry. Innovators such as [SpotXchange](#) offer "programmatic" buying to automate and optimise video adverts for each individual viewer, device and location.

Indeed, the current economics of the content and advertising industries are going to be turned on their head by the new mobile video paradigm, according to futurist and Guardian contributor Gerd Leonard.

He said: "We are no longer in the business of distribution, we are in the business of attention. Advertising as we know it is not going to survive on these personal devices, because it was based on interruption, on noise, on pollution. You are going to see complete fragmentation of all video, which means that you will have tens of thousands of channels at your disposal. Good brands like RedBull, Nike and Amex are already becoming broadcasters, every brand is becoming a TV producer now."

Gerd also sees a change in our telecoms infrastructure: "Internet traffic is pretty much moving to a mobile world, so in five years 80% of all web traffic will be mobile. The three billion people that are coming online in developing countries will go straight to always-connected mobile devices, and will never become cable or satellite TV users. Mobile video is inevitable because people are switching to mobile devices. The networks will need to be better to make that happen on a large scale. Operators that think of themselves as infrastructure companies have to start thinking of themselves as a platform. As just a pipe they become useless."

Startups today are looking at innovative ways to engage with this new mobile-first demographic. 45 Sound are on a mission to democratise video creation, their CEO Cathal Fury explained: "Instagram, Twitter and Facebook have democratised photography, its no longer perceived as something only for specialists. Video is next with Vine, Instagram video, and now with 45 Sound."

Their app enables users to record live video at concerts, and upload to a platform where it is synchronised and edited together with other uploads, and published with the professional sound mix. "Now the performers, the sound engineers, and the entire crowd are working together to tell the story of this show." 45 Sound has already been used by Bon Jovi on the highest grossing live tour of 2013.

Mativision are also working with live events, but providing a uniquely interactive multi-viewpoint live experience. Their CEO Anthony E. Karydis explained: "We give the viewer a choice of different physical positions on stage and from the audience, they have the option to control what they see. Mativision demolishes the idea of the editor, every viewer can have a different experience." Muse, Pendulum, Slash and Sigur Ros have all used the technology, the latter generating 145,000 live streams from their Dresden concert this June.

Its clear that smartphone mobile video use is dramatically influencing the content that's created, and changing the entire distribution ecosystem. Gerd continued: "This is part of the emphasis of my new book, called "From Ego to Eco", if we don't have an ecosystem that fits the digital domain then the ecosystem is incomplete and it will crash. This is basically what we have in music, the ecosystem is incomplete because the legal structures are messed up, the business objectives are not aligned, so that

ecosystem is dysfunctional, as you can see now its only working for some of us."

It looks like the world of mobile video is now exploding with innovation, matched only by the voracious appetite of connected consumers. Our tiny mobile devices give us a uniquely personalised and interactive gateway to huge amounts of exciting content. Small is big, and getting bigger.

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