

Networking: Downloading movies a hit

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Consumer spending on mobile networking applications -- mobile search, movie downloads and other innovative applications -- surged in the United States and overseas during the just-completed quarter, sources tell UPI's Networking.

Leading mobile operators including Cingular Wireless, Vodafone, Orange and Telefonica are seeing sales increases. Smart-phone users, researchers said, are driving the trend.

One mobile content supplier, New York-based Bango Inc., said consumer spending on mobile content in the United States for the first quarter of this financial year -- April-June 2006 -- was seven times higher than for the same quarter last year.

In the United Kingdom, spending was more than 50 percent higher, and in continental Europe, the Far East and Australia, end-user spending was four times higher than the same quarter one year ago, according to statistics from Bango.

Globally, there is a massive influx of new users -- at perhaps 100,000 per week -- as consumers purchase pay-per-download films with their one-off charges.

"A more transparent means of paying for mobile content is driving the uptake of our browse and buy services by content providers," said Ray Anderson, chief executive officer of Bango.

Consumers using smart phones are not using them just for business and productivity applications -- they are using them to view mobile video, mobile games and wireless Web access, according to research from Seattle-based M:Metrics, a mobile marketing consulting company. In France and Germany nearly half of smart-phone owners last quarter sent a video over the phone network, M:Metrics said. "Mass market Symbian devices have flooded the European market," said Seamus McAteer, senior analyst and chief product architect of M:Metrics. "The smart phones in the hands of U.S. consumers are high-end devices produced by Palm and RIM."

The United States, interestingly, lags behind Europe in smart-phone usage, with just 2 percent of the population using the devices. Britain leads all countries, with 6.6 percent of the populace employing smart-phone devices. France and Germany are just behind the United Kingdom. New devices coming to market may change the dynamics, however.

Researchers said content providers who use this new mobile Internet marketing model benefit from its networking effect wherein users discover new, pay-to-play services through mobile search and advertising and then spread the word themselves, as they push links for their favorite sites to each other.

"Our first quarter results are in direct contrast with recent news from companies reliant on subscriptions that have seen their incomes fall as the public's irritation and distrust of subscriptions rises to an all time high," said Anderson.

This is a real win for organizations deploying mobile data applications, too, Andy Feit, vice president of mobile content developer Adomo Inc., based in Cupertino, Calif., told Networking. The pay-to-play applications are allowing content distributors to leverage the existing

infrastructure. Over time, that will drive down costs for all users.

Feit said that, until recently, the industry has been concentrating on mobile data access, getting e-mail to the mobile professional to improve responsiveness to customer inquiries. "But, just giving someone a BlackBerry or a Treo won't solve all the challenges of remote worker productivity -- the key is to fully integrate the voice tools and voice data as well," said Feit.

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