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## What streaming England vs Ukraine World Cup qualifier really means

By Jimmy Maymann, CEO at GoViral.

Soccer fans will be tuning to their laptops rather than their TVs to watch England's World Cup qualifier against the Ukraine this Saturday (October 10, 2009).

Failure to find a broadcast partner for the match means it will be shown exclusively online.

As it is often the case with debates about technology, William Gibson was spot on when he said; 'The future is already here, it is just not evenly distributed.'

Many hundreds of thousands of users already stream live global sports every month in the UK through sites like myp2p.eu and justin.tv.



Also niche sports, extreme sports and gaming is often streamed online due to the lack of mainstream distribution opportunities.

As the online video industry grows in strength and audience, it is natural to expect more and more events will also be streamed online - after all the computer and portable devices are simply alternative screens - and they are converging quickly.

According to a Microsoft study from April, one in seven among 13-24 year olds already report that they do not watch live television at all.

Online streaming may reduce video quality slightly for now, but on the other hand it brings greater interactive possibilities for the user like stats and chat. It also becomes available anywhere with a Wi-Fi connection.

Obviously having the first major sporting event to be streamed exclusively online is generating massive interest.

Just two years ago the thought of an England World Cup qualifier being streamed live exclusively online would have seemed far-fetched.

But we all know that the rapid advances in online video technology and broadband speeds (above 1,5 megabits, streaming is no problem) have made the possibility very real.

Once again technology goes first, while business models only slowly appear in its tail.

So, the most interesting fact about the event is not that it is being streamed online, but rather that Perform has opted to charge users £4.99 or more for a 90 minute online event.

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How many users will find this offer appealing, considering England has already qualified?

Thinking about the business models for online streaming of major live events, nothing should stop Perform from offering a normal in-stream advertising model that is familiar to us from broadcast television to (as users will watch the game in full screen, most display ad opportunities seem inadequate).

Another alternative would have been a pre-event sign up that provides free access to the broadcast but delivers a better ad targeting opportunity for advertisers than ever we have ever seen on TV.

That we have reached the point when major sporting events are streamed online is no surprise. What is yet to be resolved is the best way to maximize revenue opportunities.