# Buffering Is the Streaming Snafu that Won't Go Away

**Technical issues make loading video a persistent scourge**

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**T**here are few things more frustrating for cord-cutters than getting home from a long day's work and queuing up their favorite show online as they kick back on the couch, only to realize they can't watch in peace and harmony because the video won't load correctly.

According to a survey of US mobile video viewers by Penthera, what annoys people most when they stream video is the frequent buffering.
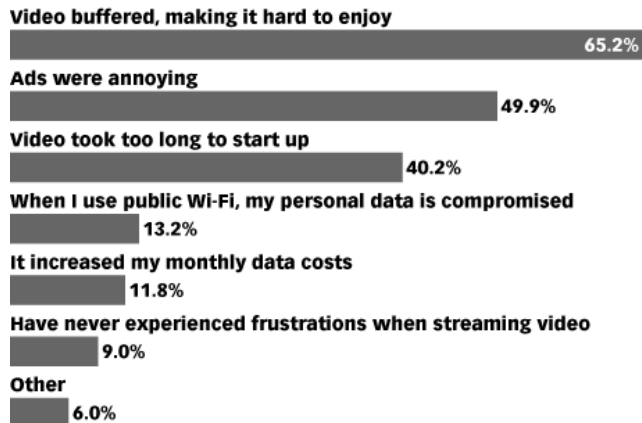
Almost 60% of respondents said they're frustrated with their mobile video viewing experience at least half of the time. And when these viewers get frustrated with streaming services, 53.5% of them give up on the video and try it again later. What's more, roughly one-fourth said they stop using a particular service altogether.

**US Mobile Video Viewers' Frustrations When Streaming Mobile Video, Jan 2018**
*% of respondents*

Video buffered, making it hard to enjoy
**65.2%**

Ads were annoying
**49.9%**

Video took too long to start up
**40.2%**

When I use public Wi-Fi, my personal data is compromised
**13.2%**

It increased my monthly data costs
**11.8%**

Have never experienced frustrations when streaming video
**9.0%**

Other
**6.0%**

*Note: n=804 who stream video on mobile devices*
*Source: Penthera, Feb 22, 2018*

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The reasons why digital video buffering remains a scourge are plentiful, especially if there are ads being served alongside the video. Publishers want more ads in videos to boost revenues, advertisers want more measurement pixels embedded into videos so they can better track key performance indicators (KPIs), and tech vendors try to keep their tags on publishers' webpages.

The ads themselves get bogged down by poor page design and heavy ad creative, as well as ad serving issues. Unlike display ads, which occur as a webpage loads, video ad calls often don't take place until the user clicks the play button, and this prompts the buffering cycle.

And there are issues with video player ad-serving interface definition (VPAID) tags that contribute to advertisers installing more ad measurement tags on publishers' pages, slowing down load times. Part of the reason header bidding has been slower to take off for video than for display is because it creates latency, and publishers are aware that slowing down video ad load times any further is problematic since prices are higher for video than display.

Aside from issues with the ads, video streaming is complicated by the high demand for streaming during peak viewing periods, which leads over-the-top (OTT) video platforms to hog bandwidth in order to meet their demand. And unlike in linear TV, where the content essentially

flows through the same set of pipes to reach its viewers all at once since cable providers own much of the back-end pipework, fighting this problem in digital streaming involves getting a lot of different companies aligned.

The results of the Penthera survey mimic those of an April 2017 study of digital video viewers by Mux, in which 85% of respondents said they'd given up on watching a video that took too long to load. Similarly, about 80% of US adults surveyed by Adobe last December said that if a piece of content takes too long to load, they'll either stop viewing it or switch to a different device.

eMarketer forecasts that digital video ad spending in the US will top $17 billion this year and is on pace to grow to $24 billion by 2020. The publishers that reduce buffering and keep users on their sites longer will be in better position to profit from the growing pot of video ad dollars than those that make viewers wait.