

Viewdini Could This App Be Verizon's First Pass At Mobile Toll Free Data

Verizon Wireless revealed a new incarnation of its old V Cast streaming mobile video service on Tuesday. Called Viewdini, the Android app aggregates content from premium video services like Hulu and Netflix and could represent Verizon's first attempts to charge content providers to carry their traffic.



Verizon Wireless revealed a new incarnation of its old V Cast streaming mobile video service on Tuesday; this one built on the back of its new LTE network. Called Viewdini, the Android app aggregates content from premium video services such as Hulu, mSpot — [now a Samsung-owned property](#) — and Netflix as well as Comcast's Xfinity and Verizon's own FiOS programming. Verizon didn't reveal any details about how this high-quality, long-form content would gel with its restricted data plans when the app launches later this month, but I suspect Viewdini may be Verizon's first venture into the 'toll-free' mobile broadband: Rather than charge the customer for the gigabytes of video consumed, it charges the content provider.

Lately Verizon has been [talking up the idea](#) of reversing the mobile data business model ([as has AT&T](#)), giving its customers unlimited access to any video or over-the-top content service so long as the owner of the service pays the carriage charges. So far

Verizon hasn't implemented any specific policies – that we know of – but if it can secure the cooperation of content providers, it's only a matter of time.

Viewdini would fit perfectly with that model because video consumes enormous bandwidth relative to other services. If Verizon customers were to make regular use of TV show and movie streaming they would quickly max out their data plans (or enter into throttling territory in the case of its [grandfathered unlimited customers](#)). Without any kind of tweak to Verizon's capping policies, Viewdini practically invites customers to run up huge overage charges, which would hardly be a customer relations coup.

But the apps-charging structure provides a clue as to how Verizon might offer that pipe for free. "By simply searching for a title, topic, or star's name, viewdini will let customers know which services have mobile video for streaming, and whether it is available at no additional charge, by subscription, to rent or for purchase," Verizon stated in its press release.



In each case, Verizon could skim a little from the top of each purchase, for instance collecting a portion of a movie rental or purchase fee. In the case of subscription video services like Hulu Plus or Netflix, Verizon could take a share of monthly revenue from every subscriber that used Viewdini or just charge the video providers flat per-gigabyte or per-stream fees.

Verizon plans to expand its initial line-up to movie studios and other TV sites. If it is able negotiate revenue sharing deals with every service it aggregates, Verizon could easily offer Viewdini as completely toll-free app.

That would make a lot of consumers happy, as they'd be free to stream away without worrying about their data caps, but it could have a chilling effect on the application developers. Netflix and Comcast may be able to afford bandwidth fees, but smaller companies may not be able to – especially if they're offering up their content for free. Comcast is already facing criticism that it's [running afoul of net neutrality rules](#) for capping residential broadband data while giving a free ride to its own Xfinity traffic. But

the net neutrality rules don't apply wireless, so if Verizon wants to go the toll-free route, there's nothing to stop it.