



SCREEN TEST

World Cup success for 3 Italia's groundbreaking mobile TV service



ON A WARM JUNE evening in Munich a single shrill blast of the referee's whistle signalled the start of the 2006 FIFA World Cup. In the month that followed 32 countries played out a global drama in front of a television audience that numbered billions.

Among those glued to their screens was a new breed of elite viewer – soccer fans who watched the matches live on their mobile phones thanks to new digital technology called DVB-H – Digital Video Broadcasting - Handheld.

In Italy, 3 Italia led the way, showing all 64 games via its own separate DVB-H broadcast network. The consumer re-

sponse was immediate.

"The launch of the first DVB-H Digital Mobile TV has been a tremendous success," said Vincenzo Novari, Chief Executive Officer of 3 Italia. "Soccer fans filled 3 Italia's shops to buy TV phones. The idea of watching a World Cup match when you are outdoors really took off and an increasing number of fans followed the matches on 3 Italia's Digital Mobile TV.

"Our customers were fascinated by the digital quality of the images and of course the fact that Italy was one of the favourites for the World Cup was also a factor. The Italian public's passionate support for the national soccer team was matched by the response to the TV phones.

"And for those who aren't interested in soccer there is news, reality shows, movies and every kind of entertainment available 24 hours a day. Commuters, people working for public services and technology buffs are the first target market for this new way of broadcasting television content."

3 Italia's Digital Mobile TV is available on special LG and Samsung handsets offering a selection of the best channels of the main Italian broadcaster (RAI, Sky and Mediaset) plus a couple of channels produced by 3 Italia itself called La3 Live and La3 Sport.

La3 Sport shows original programming as well as sporting showpieces such as the FIFA 2006 World Cup, followed by live matches from the Serie A Italian football championship and the UEFA Champions League.

La3 Live is a completely live TV channel that lets viewers know in real time what is on air or what's coming up. Twenty "3jays" rotate during the day, entertaining and informing the public with details of the day's programming.

The handsets are keeping in step with the latest digital breakthrough. For example, LG's new LG-U900 DVB-H handset features a 2.2-inch wide-swing screen for mobile TV viewing. Its premium digital broad-



casting functions include ESG (Electronic Service Guide) and CAS (Conditional Access System). Users can watch TV for up to three hours because of the phone's long battery life. Samsung's SGH-P910 handset comes with a wide screen design for better viewing pleasure.

Mobile TV is increasingly spoken of as the next vital application for the cell phone industry that is keen to grow revenues from sources other than voice and text messages. Using the World Cup as a hook to boost mobile TV services made a lot of sense, given its potential to appeal to a mass market.

DVB-H allows mobile users to receive TV signals and traditional mobile signals at the same time, meaning a handset can be used to watch a soccer match and make a phone call; it can also be used while a viewer is walking down the street and in cars and trains. With DVB-H, a broadcaster can transmit 20 or more interactive channels at the same time.

The consumer appetite for mobile TV is expected to be enormous and mobile phone networks are conducting DVB-H trials in Spain, Germany, Britain, France, Singapore, Malaysia, Australia, the United States and other countries. Independent research organisation Datamonitor forecasts that in 2009, 90 million DVB-H phones will be shipped worldwide.

The arrival of DVB-H marks a significant milestone in a long hi-tech journey. In 1991, broadcasters, consumer electronics manufacturers and regulatory bodies came together to discuss the formation of a group that would oversee the development of digital television in Europe. The DVB Project was born and DVB-H is the latest product to emerge from the digital revolution.

Judging by the reaction of the Italian football fans, mobile TV is going to be a big hit with consumers.

As Mr Novari told the Italian media, "Television is changing. The age of cell-phone TV has begun, and I think this will really change the history of TV.

In a few years, mobile TV will become a mass product. I don't think it will remain a niche market. According to some cautious forecasts, in 2010 there will be 15 million subscribers to mobile TV in Italy. This means that we will go from zero to 15 million in only four years. This is a very big market, and I am sure of its success."

3 Italia's launch of DVB-H coincided with the build up to Italy's successful FIFA World Cup campaign.

