Lambda Marketing Brings Real-Time Content to Millions in Pakistan

To satisfy the booming demand for digital content in Pakistan, Lambda Marketing Solutions is providing consumers with local content served alongside advertisements. It started by bringing on-demand entertainment to passengers on inter-city buses, with the ads hosted offshore. But connectivity issues and expensive bandwidth hampered the company's growth.

By moving to Jazz Cloud, a private cloud that utilizes VMware Cloud Foundation™ and VMware Cloud Director™, Lambda Marketing is not only able to improve its offering on the buses but it can also expand media on demand to for-hire vehicles, hotels, restaurants and malls.

Lagging behind
As Pakistan rapidly becomes a digital-first nation, the appetite for digital content has also grown in tandem. Aiming to be the “YouTube of Pakistan,” Lambda Marketing Solutions started building a digital content platform in 2013 to provide consumers with local content. It also developed a complementary digital ads platform, which gives local advertisers an alternative to foreign social media platforms.
Lambda Marketing began by catering to the millions of passengers who travel across the country by bus. The inter-city public transport is the most common mode of domestic travel, far more developed than air or rail.

Working with leading transport companies such as Daewoo Express and Bilal Travels, Lambda Marketing installed an in-bus entertainment system, much like an in-flight entertainment system, to make the long journeys more enjoyable.

With screens fixed to the back of the seats, passengers can watch the latest movies or sitcoms, which are streamed from a computer on the bus. Ads are displayed when the content is played.

"The ads were hosted offshore but they could only be played through local servers. So the local servers had to sync with the offshore servers and it was very messy," said Shoaib Sarwar, CEO, Lambda Marketing.

Moreover, the company frequently experienced lag, and connectivity was susceptible to submarine cable disruptions.

"We’re the first – and so far the only – company to offer media on demand in Pakistan," he explained. "Hosting our services offshore has made it impossible for us to expand to other verticals or develop new products."

Moving to a local cloud
To be able to grow its business and improve its current service, Lambda Marketing knew it needed a local solution. Offshore hosting was too expensive and unreliable.

Jazz stepped in and provided Lambda Marketing with an onshore virtual data center for its platforms.

“Since the consumer base of Lambda Marketing is primarily within Pakistan, we wanted to give them a hosting solution that is within the country,” said Nabeel Amjad, Director, Cloud Business, Jazz.

"Jazz Cloud has become the backbone of our services. We can now offer real-time content and real-time ad synchronization because of VMware cloud technologies."

SHOAIB SARWAR
CEO, LAMBDA MARKETING SOLUTIONS

By moving its content and services to the local Jazz Cloud, Lambda Marketing can effectively solve the challenges of latency, performance, connectivity and costs. With VMware Cloud Director, Jazz is able to offer Lambda Marketing a pool of resources in the form of virtual data centers, so that the company can customize the virtual machines based on its needs.

“Content streaming requires a strong, cost-effective communication network with extensive coverage,” said Sarwar. "Jazz fits the bill as the biggest telco in Pakistan and the only one in the country that provides hosting services."

Jazz is in the process of migrating Lambda Marketing to VMware Cloud Foundation, which will enable faster app development as well as easier lifecycle management.

“The VMware platform has the exact recipe and ingredients to build a unified cloud experience,” said Amjad. "It will give Lambda Marketing the flexibility and capability to not only run security and DevOps applications securely but also build them locally within our cloud in Pakistan."

Expanding the business
When Lambda Marketing starting providing media on demand to the inter-city buses, it also developed a point-of-sale (POS) application – similar to the digital reservation system at cinema
Lambda Marketing Brings Real-Time Content to Millions in Pakistan

counters – that bus companies could use to replace the manual and paper-based ticketing system.

Given to the transport companies for free as a value-add service, the application also provides Lambda Marketing with insights on the passenger profiles for more accurate ad targeting.

As bus companies build their own consumer-facing booking apps, they will start linking to Lambda Marketing’s ticketing app, which has been moved to the Jazz Cloud. With the expected increase in bandwidth usage, Sarwar foresees cost savings of up to 30 percent, compared to if the app were still hosted offshore.

Moreover, the local hosting service allows Lambda Marketing to be more flexible in responding to changes in demand. For example, due to the VMware Cloud Director resource pool, it can quickly and easily scale up resources for the ticketing app during peak seasons for travel.

Moving to the Jazz Cloud has enabled Lambda Marketing to expand their services to intra-city transport. Partnering with Careem, also known as the “Uber of Pakistan,” it is in the process of putting screens in for-hire vehicles to deliver entertainment and ads to urban passengers.

Since it is not feasible to place a computer in every car, Lambda Marketing is hosting its content and ads on the Jazz Cloud and streaming them directly to the screens. The connectivity is provided either by a Jazz SIM card within the screen itself or an in-car internet router with a Jazz SIM card. Lambda Marketing will pay for the consumption of cloud service, and not the mobile data, as the SIM card has access only to the content server. Jazz is able to offer this converged solution due to the VMware vRealize® Operations Manager™ Tenant App for Cloud Director.

It would have been too expensive and unreliable to stream videos from offshore servers but the Jazz Cloud offers a cost-effective and stable option.

“With Jazz Cloud, we now have persistent connectivity and we also won’t have to use international bandwidth as we’re within the entire telco system,” said Sarwar.

“Jazz Cloud has become the backbone of our services. We can now offer real-time content and real-time ad synchronization because of VMware cloud technologies.”

Now that Lambda Marketing is confident of providing a better streaming service with Jazz Cloud, it is focused on introducing media on demand to new clients such as the Lahore Metro, hotels, restaurants and malls. This is made possible by the VMware Cloud Director tenancy on the same Jazz Cloud.

“We’re aiming to expand to 100,000 screens,” said Sarwar. “And we’re looking to Jazz Cloud to help us do that.”

Looking ahead
Lambda Marketing is now working on an ad publishing platform for the tourism sector to promote Pakistan to domestic and international travelers. It would include content on where to stay and what to do. It plans to host all new products and services on the VMware-powered Jazz Cloud.

Lambda Marketing streams real-time entertainment to buses and cars from the #Jazz Cloud, built on proven #VMware technologies.