The third annual Cisco Global Cloud Index (2012-2017) reports cloud traffic is set to explode-- growing at a 35% CAGR from 1.2 zettabytes of annual traffic in 2012 to 5.3 zettabytes by 2017.

Meanwhile overall global data centre traffic should grow with a 25% CAGR during the same period to reach 7.7 zettabytes annually by 2017.

How big is a zettabyte? A zettabyte is the second-to-largest term used in data storage quantification (the largest is the yottabyte) and amounts to a billion terabytes. As for 7.7 zettabytes, Cisco says that mount is equivalent to 107 hours of streaming music, 19 trillion hours of business webconferencing and 8 trillion hours of HD video streaming.

Fuelling around 17% of data centre traffic are end users accessing clouds for web surfing, video streaming, collaboration and connected devices-- in other words the connections of people, data, processes and things making the so-called "Internet of Everything."

Accounting for 7% of traffic for the 2012-2017 period is traffic generated by data replication and software/system updates between data centres, while an additional 76% stays within data centres for use in storage, production and development data in virtualised environments.

"People all over the world continue to demand the ability to access personal, business and entertainment content anywhere on any device, and each transaction in a virtualised, cloud environment can cause cascading effects on the network," Cisco sats. "Because of this continuing trend, we are seeing huge increases in the amount of cloud traffic within, between and beyond data centers over the next 4 years."

MEA regions will see the highest cloud traffic growth rate during the 2012-2017 period (57% CAGR) followed by Asia/Pacific (43%) and E. Europe (36%). In 2012 W. Europe generated 225 exabytes of annual cloud traffic, an amount set to reacy 770 exabytes by 2017.

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