

Hindustan Times

TV on my Mobile - Right here right now

04 June 2007

Good things come in small packages. Sounds clichéd. Ok I agree. How about fitting life in a 2 by 2 inches device in your pocket? No jokes, seriously, that's true. Our life as it steps into the electronic civilization is itself becoming a cell of information in a yet bigger cell of an information universe. On second thoughts we have always been a huge conglomerate of billions of cells in which information has been fed in at the time we were born. Let's make this simpler. The point I am trying to make is the cell phone is becoming a part of our own selves; it stays close to us more than anybody else in the world including our parents, spouse, friends. I won't be surprised if our soul also finds residence in our cell phones soon! The entire cell phone and the information technology is actually imitating life now. The cell phone is the first screen most of my countrymen would use as their first screen ever. The cell phone is also the most visible screen in the world now. Life in this century is lived 24/7 and life is LIVE now showing in a screen in your hand, right here right now.

Live streaming TV

Imagine a world where consumers are able to have live television or radio, news or soap opera summaries, highlights from their favourite sports teams, live feeds of their local weather and traffic, or real time stock ticker of their portfolio - delivered to their wireless mobile devices at all times. Wherever they go and whenever they want it. No more missing their favourite show while waiting in the airport, or on the train. No more missing their favourite baseball game, or their favourite radio talk show. The ability to stay tuned in to everything you care about - when you care about it. No more waiting for data connections to retrieve information. Instant On - access it immediately.

The multimedia delivery

Where Have We Been? The world of multimedia delivery continues to change. Broadband delivery of multimedia content has been offered to consumers for decades - initially based on analog technologies, but more recently has begun migrating over to digitized formats in order to offer a broader set of content to subscribers (video, music, web pages, games, etc). Today,

the most common distribution path is via the traditional cable, broadcast, and satellite distribution models which service the majority of current consumer demand for multimedia content. Over the past decade, while media was transformed into digital formats, computing devices matured, and bandwidth into the home continued to increase, multimedia access through the portal of the computer skyrocketed. The wired Internet has moved to more data-intensive forms of multimedia such as streaming video, interactive graphics like Macromedia Flash, and scores of mechanisms for the delivery of digital audio. The mobile Internet is evolving in the same way. What was once a 9.6 kbps circuit switched data network has evolved to networks like those based on CDMA2000 1xEV-DO with data rates to a cellular device comparable to landline broadband connections. There has been an explosive growth in device capability, especially for mobile cellular phones. The amount of computing power, memory, and high-end graphics functionality has accelerated the development of new and exciting wireless services.

Live streaming technologies

If the desktop war was about dominance between Microsoft, Google and Yahoo, the telecommunications next level of multimedia war is no different. Giants like QUALCOMM, Nokia, Samsung and others (there is also a consortium of who's who in the telecom world already pitted against one another). Not just this there is also an open source and a proprietary application clash here. Remember Microsoft and Open Source.

Qualcomm's MediaFLO (FLO - Forward Link Only)

Qualcomm's MediaFLO is a comprehensive, end-to-end solution to deliver live multimedia experience to the subscriber. It is promoted by the FLO Forum, which is an organisation responsible for the standardization of FLO technology. MediaFLO's forte is effectively distributing mass volumes of high-quality mobile multimedia, efficiently and at a lesser cost. Noteworthy is the alliance QUALCOMM has had with Verizon Wireless and AT&T Wireless. Powered by MediaFLO technology, Verizon has named it V Cast Mobile TV. The cost of the service with 8 Channels is \$15 a month.

DVB-H (digital video broadcast - handheld)

DVB-H is being supported by leading who's who in the telecom and technology fields across the industry. The proponents DVB-H claim that an open ecosystem in the DTV marketplace enables all companies in the value chain to increase their revenue opportunities with mobile TV services and products. The list of supporters of DVB-H is rather impressive. I can't seem to figure out a single company that matters in wireless not being in their list of supporters.

Mobile TV broadcasting in India - DVB-H takes the lead

Mobile TV has been demonstrated in India often enough - at Mobile Asia, Samsung had demonstrated Korean TV channels via DVB-SH. At India Telecom 2006 - Nokia and Ericsson had got temporary licenses for 3G spectrum for demonstrating mobile TV via DVB-H. MediaFLO has been demonstrated at FICCI FRAMES 2007 as well as at the BES Expo 2007. Last week Doordarshan launched Mobile TV in India.

Doordarshan shows the way

MediaFlo has been largely silent in the India front besides the demo. DVB-H (digital video broadcast - handheld) is already being tested by Indian public broadcaster Prasar Bharti. Doordarshan has teamed with Nokia to start a DVB-H. And trial is going in various metropolitan areas to test the reception quality of the broadcast coverage. Moreover, DD is currently broadcasting 8 channels in New Delhi. The service is currently available only to those subscribers who are within the radius of 10-12 kilometres from Akashvani Bhawan, Parliament Street, on the DVB-H (Digital Video Broadcasting-Handheld) compliant mobile handsets. The channels currently beamed are DD National, DD News, DD Sports, DD Bharati, DD Urdu, DD Punjabi, DD Bangla and DD Podhigai.

The service is being made available from 5:30 am to 12 midnight, will however be free of charge and won't incur any other levy by any mobile service provider.

The Cost of Handsets - Advantage Mediaflo

The big deterrence to Mobile TV is the cost of handsets. Cellphone majors such as Nokia and Samsung have already announced launch of DVB-H compliant handsets. At present the cost of a DVB-H compliant phone is Rs 25,000 upwards.

Mediaflo has an advantage over DVB-H as far as the cost of handsets are concerned. A MediaFlo compliant phone costs like LG VERIZON VX9400 costs roughly Rs 11,000.

Samsung Media Flow handset SCH-U620 also comes under \$250 (roughly less than Rs 10,000.)

On the other hand Nokia's N77 DVB-H handset costs roughly Rs 25,000 and a feature rich N92 with DVB-H comes anywhere between Rs 30,000 to Rs 35,000.

The last word

It's Doordarshan now on the mobile and it's going to be the future screen for other broadcasters soon. Life is now live streaming right on our handsets 24/7. It's time to sit back and watch life live streaming on our handsets right here, right now.

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