

Sports fans get closer to the action – in real time

November 22 2005

Sports fans can now interact with their favourite broadcasts in real time through digital TVs and 3G mobile phones thanks to a newly developed infrastructure that opens up a realm of commercial opportunities for broadcasters and advertisers by providing additional revenue streams for the sports publishing value chain.

The IST programme-funded MELISA project provides a wide range of services related to cross-media sports broadcasting, featuring visual enhancements, interactive embedded advertising and sports-related in-play services in real time. The system also ensures real time secure transactions for betting and e-commerce, as well as service subscriptions.

“We have created the infrastructure to support the virtual value chain for sports events broadcasting over wireless and digital television networks by offering valuable, revenue building services,” explains project coordinator Emmanuel Papaioannou, Intracom SA, Greece.

By using MELISA, viewers are fully engaged in the event and kept up to date with every development. For example, in a car race, users click on a button to access the Drivers Classification Panel to display the current drivers’ positions. In the graphical representation mode, the exact position of all cars is shown on a virtual track in real time.

Visual cues, such as colour and car number, show the relative position of all drivers in the track. Users click on their favourite drivers’ car to display available statistical information. They then see the drivers’

sponsor and click on the logo to receive more information, which directs them to a website for online shopping.

“This innovative way of interactive in-content - or embedded - advertising increases the effectiveness of advertising by narrowing the gap between the advertisement and consumption,” he adds. “Users can place bets in real time as the game or race develops. This is a novel way to interact with one of the most popular activities of sports fans.”

Project partners created an end-to-end solution for authoring, delivery and consumption of enhanced media content in a multi-platform environment, following the client-server paradigm. They developed a complete server platform for broadcasters and an innovative client platform for viewers and consumers. Receiver platforms are high end Set Top Boxes, PDAs and Mobile Information Device Profile-enabled mobile phones.

The system architecture separates the business logic and user interface from the underlying data storage and provides a platform-independent system for broadcasting. Intelligent, real time game statistics and enhancements are supported using information from various sources, both historical and during the event.

The server allows dynamic scene generation based on predefined templates, which enables broadcasters to prepare visually-enhanced interactive broadcasts well in advance, which enables them to provide this service during live events.

“Since MELISA ended in January 2005, we are in the marketing phase,” says Papaioannou. “We are working with broadcasters and service providers. The system has been well received so far. France Telecom has already created a streaming server to accommodate MELISA and several betting operations are involved, including Ladbrokes.”

Source: [IST Results](#)

Citation: Sports fans get closer to the action – in real time (2005, November 22) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2005-11-sports-fans-closer-action-real.html>

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