

NTT DoCoMo, Nippon TV bet on mobile TV

February 10 2006



Long train commutes are part of daily life for many Tokyo residents, so perhaps hopes are high in Japan for mobile TV to become a reality.

Certainly, the country's biggest mobile carrier and one of the major television networks are prepared to invest more time and money into the project. On Thursday, NTT DoCoMo and national broadcast network Nippon Television announced a deal to work together on developing the technology and content of TV on the road.

Specifically, the two companies are putting up \$42 million each for a total of \$84 million in a special fund to move the project forward. The plan is for the television network to produce programs that are targeted for the mobile audience that will be watching shows on small screens, while the telecommunications giant will focus on developing the technology to make seamless viewing while traveling at high speed as

well as underground possible.

Of course, DoCoMo and Nippon TV are far from alone in having high hopes for developing a culture of mobile television viewing, but there have been few direct tie-ups between mobile carriers and television networks that have resulted in making a significant financial commitment to get the project under way.

For mobile carriers, the challenge will be to make sure that programs can be seen on trains that travel at high speed and in underground subway systems, while for program producers, they need to take into account that commuters only have about a half an hour to focus on watching a show, so that may well mean that they need to come up with shorter programs. In addition, screens on mobile handsets are tiny and their definition is certainly not as crisp as a wide, flat-screen TV at home, so producers need to take those limitations into consideration.

At the same time, there is no doubt of the urge for both networks and mobile carriers to press ahead with developing mobile television into something that might perhaps be the next iPod.

Earlier this year, for instance, Intel, Motorola, Modeo, Nokia and Texas Instruments announced that they will be working together to develop mobile TV by setting up an organization called the Mobile DTV Alliance.

"The mobile TV market is heating up, with both trials and deployments accelerating over the next 12 to 18 months," said David Linsalata, research analyst for mobile markets at Framingham, Mass.-based technology research group IDC. "The support of key industry players in promoting the advantages of the digital video broadcasting-handheld standard will significantly aid mobile TV deployment efforts in North America."

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Citation: NTT DoCoMo, Nippon TV bet on mobile TV (2006, February 10) retrieved 18 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2006-02-ntt-docomo-nippon-tv-mobile.html>

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