

Yahoo! and Samsung expand Internet TV territory

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Samsung's television is seen here at the 2009 International Consumer Electronics Show at the Las Vegas Convention Center. Yahoo! and Samsung have announced they will sell Yahoo! Connected TV sets in 26 more countries in Europe, raising to 39 the number of countries where Samsung sells television sets embedded with Yahoo! software "widgets."

Yahoo! and Samsung on Tuesday raised their bet that television viewers want to easily link to websites such as Facebook without having the entire Web crammed into TV sets.

The faded Internet star and the South Korean consumer electronics giant announced they will sell Yahoo! Connected TV sets in 26 more countries in Europe.

That raises to 39 the number of countries where Samsung sells television sets embedded with Yahoo! software "widgets" that let users connect over the Internet to favorite websites.

Yahoo! and Samsung launched their Connected TV partnership at a major Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas in early 2009.

Yahoo! is building on its strategy as Google weighs into the arena with Logitech boxes or Sony televisions that merge broadcast, cable, and online content.

"We don't think people want the whole Web browser experience crammed in a TV," said Yahoo! senior director of Connect TV marketing Russ Schafer.

"It is a best-of-the-Web not all-of-the-Web comparison; which is similar to how people consume television," Schafer said.

While cable television services typically offer hundreds of channels, research indicates that households stick with no more than 15 favorites and essentially ignore the rest, according to Schafer.

Yahoo! believes that similar behavior will play out on Internet-connected televisions, with people staying faithful to online locales such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter instead of sifting through thousands of websites.

"Feedback tells us we have the right kind of solution," Schafer said.

Samsung Electronics, the world's largest maker of memory chips and flat-screen televisions, on Friday posted a record third-quarter net profit of 3.98 billion dollars, a 17 percent rise year-on-year.

Sony, Vizio, Toshiba, and LG Electronics are among the heavyweights that make televisions embedded with Yahoo! software widgets.

This year, Yahoo! began making alliances with computer chip makers with a goal of getting Connected TV software built into DVD players and other entertainment content delivery devices.

Schafer said to expect a number of competitively priced Blu-ray or set-top boxes featuring Yahoo! television widgets at the Consumer Electronics Show set to take place in Las Vegas in January.

Yahoo! is distinguishing itself from the Internet television offerings by rivals Apple and Google.

"Apple TV, at one end of the spectrum has a very simple interface, limited offerings but deep content that is very connected to other devices in the Apple ecosystem," Schafer said.

"Google, on the other side, wants to take the PC experience in the browser and put it in the TV. We fit right in the middle."

The Mountain View, California-based Google unveiled Google TV in May in San Francisco.

Developed in partnership with Sony, Logitech and Intel, Google TV allows users to mesh television viewing with surfing the Web.

Google TV, which is powered by Google's Android software and Chrome Web browser, can be accessed using the Sony TVs or set-top boxes from Logitech that route Web content to existing TV sets.

A number of electronics manufacturers offer Web-enabled televisions or digital set-top boxes.

"People can't even go through 120 channels on cable," Schafer said. "Do you think they will go through 120,000 websites? People want video and social networking."

Apple chief executive Steve Jobs unveiled a second-generation Apple TV in September at an event in San Francisco. The Apple TV price was cut to 99 dollars from the 229 dollars charged for its predecessor.

Apple released the first version of its digital media receiver that routes TV show and movies from computers to HD TVs in 2007 but it never really caught on with the public.

Apple TV owners can rent HD movies or television shows from the Cupertino, California, company's iTunes online shop.

The Sunnyvale, California-based Yahoo! has its software widgets in televisions in more than 130 countries.

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