

Viewers seen taking power in connected TV revolution

April 8 2011, by Audrey Stuart



A woman watches screens in Cannes, southern France, during the MIPTV, one of the world's largest broadcasting and audio-visual trade shows.

Television is on the threshold of a revolution, with a plethora of mobile devices putting viewers firmly in the driving seat and opening up the possibility of a whole new connected entertainment world, digital and audiovisual industry leaders say.

"The audience is taking the power. If we want to do real connected TV, we have to let them be the boss," Gary Carter, chief operating and creative officer at FMX FremantleMedia, said at this week's MIPTV industry trade fair.

Driving the sea change have been innovations over the past 12 to 18 months triggered by the launch of Apple's tablet [iPad](#), which offers both

mobility and [television](#) quality images.

"The development of television, PCs, tablets, gaming devices, and mobile technology is changing the relationship between content providers and audiences. If companies can harness the multi-platform audience engagement they will be well positioned to reach audiences," Laurine Garaude, who heads up show organizer, Reed MIDEM's television division, said in Cannes.

But no one should write off traditional TV just for the moment.

"Overall, TV viewing has risen to record highs," Luke Bradley-Jones, managing director of BBC.com and Global iPlayer, told a MIPTV conference.

Connected television means that a family television set in the living room will be either Internet-enabled or have a set-top box that will allow it to navigate seamlessly between broadcast programming and the web.

"Potentially, this could completely change people's viewing habits," Mathieu Bejot, chief executive at TV France International, which exports French audiovisual content abroad, told AFP.

The audiovisual industries are moving from one-way broadcasting to two-way dialogue, interactive content producer Robert Tercek, president of General Creativity, said at MIPTV's inaugural Connected Creativity global forum.

This year, he said, "is clearly the year that dozens of new devices are arriving that will enable a variety of new experiences at different price points."

A packed conference schedule in Cannes focusing on connected

entertainment took an in-depth look at potential obstacles such as Internet piracy and audience apathy.

But it also took a long look at exciting new opportunities, particularly those offered by social media websites such as Facebook and Twitter, to engage traditional and new audiences.

"The Internet can be a friend of TV, enhancing experiences for viewers and bring back people to the television," said Claire Tavernier, senior digital entertainment executive at FremantleMedia.

"We're looking for shows that understand audience engagement and also get people really involved."

Sylvain Audigier from the French commercial broadcaster TF1 forecast that connected TV and second-screen viewing would be norm within five years, although regulatory issues between broadcast and Internet players could be a problem.

There were also questions about connected television's profitability.

"It used to be about promotion but now it is about monetisation and YouTube partner revenues are going through the roof," UK YouTube/Google senior executive Patrick Walker said at one event titled "Entertainment Everywhere: Can In, Cash Out!"

FremantleMedia's Tavernier emphasized that television has always been a very strong experience. "TV has always been social; what is new is the way we socialize content," she noted.

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Citation: Viewers seen taking power in connected TV revolution (2011, April 8) retrieved 17 July

2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-04-viewers-power-tv-revolution.html>

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