

100 million TVs will be Internet-connected by 2016, report predicts

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Soon, the living room TV will become as hyper-connected as the people watching it.

A new report from researcher NPD In-Stat predicts that 100 million homes in North America and Western Europe will own [television sets](#) that blend traditional programs with [Internet content](#) by 2016. These new hybrid devices, capable of displaying interactive content related to TV shows, are a bid to hold the viewer's attention in a device-cluttered world.

"The TV people figured out nobody's just [watching TV](#) anymore," said Gerry Kaufhold, NPD In-Stat's [digital entertainment](#) research director. "They're watching TV with a tablet or a smartphone or a laptop in their hands. They've completely lost control."

Indeed, more than 60 percent of viewers check their email or surf the Web while watching TV, according to Nielsen's 2011 consumer usage report. Programmers realize they need to do something to draw the viewer's eyes back to the TV screen - even as they develop apps for tablets and smartphones to deliver content related to the show that's airing.

"The level of engagement with the TV show goes down unless you've got something on the [handheld device](#) that ties them back to the TV show, somehow," Kaufhold said.

A tablet application developed for Simon Cowell's reality series "The X Factor" synchronizes the device with the singing competition and allows viewers to rate performances, vote and interact with other fans.

"Two things are starting to percolate in the television industry," Kaufhold said. "First is the awareness that it's not just about the big screen anymore. You've got to get something to these second screens. Second is how can we control as much of the screen real estate as possible."

Kaufhold pointed to a European connected TV standard (known as Hybrid Broadcast Broadband TV) as a bellwether of things to come in North America.

Broadcaster France Televisions will use the new hybrid standard during the French Open, which begins in May. Tennis fans can push a single button on their remote controls to bring up an interactive screen that will display real-time scores of other matches, bios of tournament players and news, photos and Twitter streams describing the action.

Kaufhold said he could see the same technology being employed for such high-interest competitions as the NCAA men's basketball championship.

In the U.S., only about 12 million U.S. households have their Web-capable TVs connected to the Internet, although NPD In-Stat estimates about 25 million U.S. TV households own a set with the built-in network capability.

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