

The changing broadcast media

It's not the outcome of nature. But broadcast media follows the law of nature and changes its form day by day. Technology made it easy to showcase any incident instantly through the internet. Now the changed media enables people to control the extent of the video's content

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THE broadcast media is changing rapidly worldwide. Once people played the wind-up gramophone for entertainment; then entered the radio, television and a host of more versatile gadgets for popular entertainment and information provision.

The digital television has replaced all other televisions. The ever-aggressive race of technology has converted the traditional entertainment box into an on-demand-video-device. One may witness whatever he/she likes, no matter when it was televised or recorded. It is IPTV or internet protocol television.

Internet protocol is a method that exchanges information between two computers on the internet.

IPTV delivers digital television services to registered end-users by broadband. The programme is sent through the network in the form of IP packets and then at the end of broadband connection a set top box re-assembles it to

be shown on the television.

The method has a great capacity for extensive interactivity, which is a clear differentiator. Its two-way nature opens up the possibility for a range of rich interactive services, including video-on-demand, web browsing, advanced email and messaging services.

All these services rely on internet protocol, the universal standard for inter-networked devices.

IPTV subscribers can therefore have access to a range of video, voice and data services with elaborate mechanisms for interactivity both for broadcast channels and also on demand services, as per Pace Micro Technology: IPTV White Paper, written by Mark Rooney, head of IPTV.

If one has ever watched a video clip on computer, he has used an IPTV system in its broadest sense. When most people discuss IPTV, they are talking about watching traditional channels on television where people demand a smooth, high-resolution, lag-free picture, and it is the telecom operators who are jumping headfirst into this market.

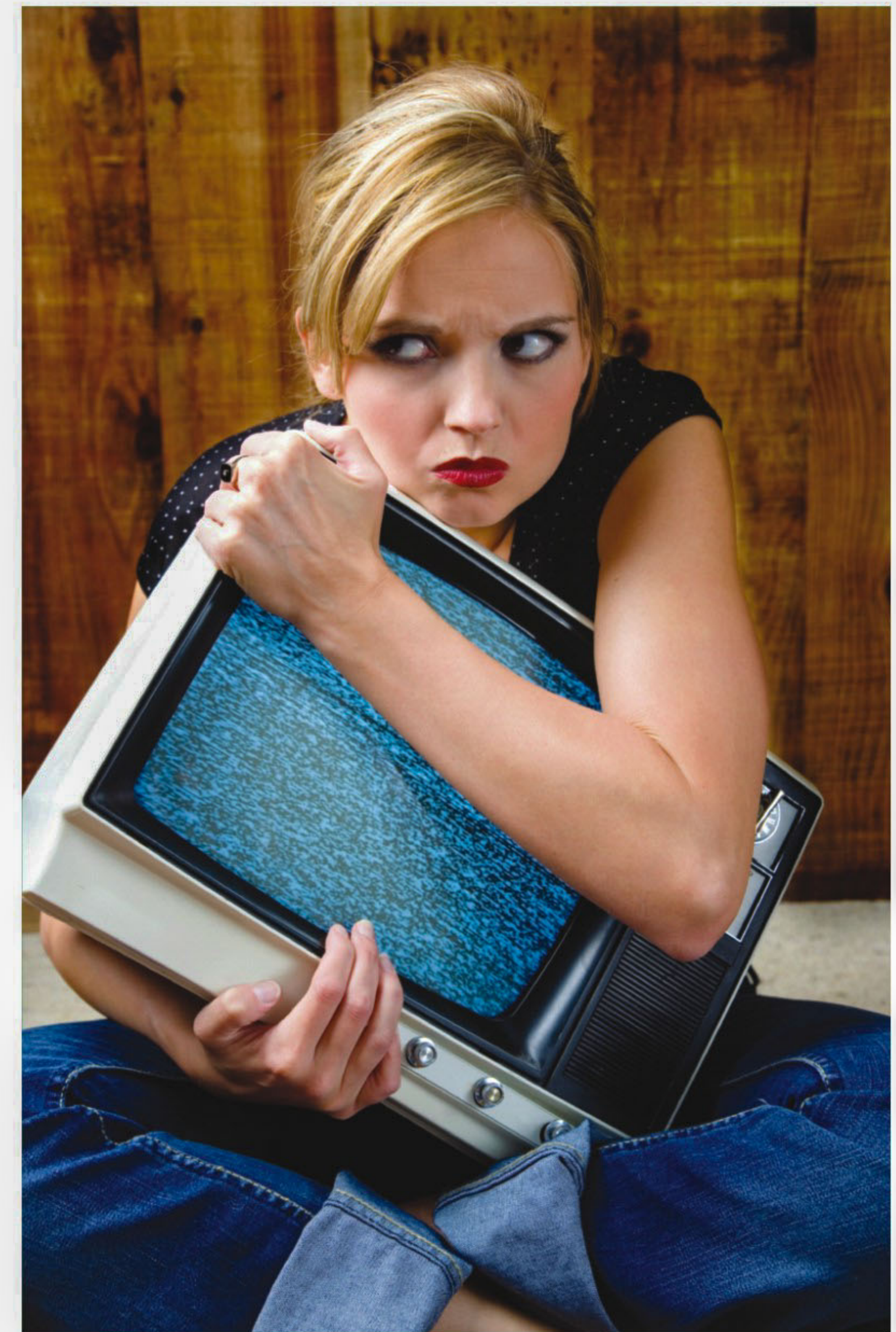
But IPTV and internet TV are not the same. IPTV is a secure closed system with premium content and a managed quality service, particularly for video. End consumers have unique personal profiles to the operators enabling targeted marketing. Internet TV through the streaming of video is a radically different concept and perceived as public and "free". YouTube is an example of internet TV.

In marked comparison with IPTV, the latter one maintains a limited quality and no real control over production quality. Streaming of video over the internet has already seen the development of new formats, such as those provided by Microsoft Windows Media Player, to further support this type of video viewing.

The number of global IPTV subscribers is expected to grow from 28 million in 2009 to 83 million in 2013. Europe and Asia are the leading territories in terms of the number of subscribers while all major western countries and most developed economies have IPTV deployments. A number of Asian countries, including Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka, have also deployed the technology.

In the past, this technology was restricted by a low broadband penetration and relatively a high cost of wiring that is capable of transporting IPTV content reliably to customer's home.

Many major telecom providers in the world are exploring IPTV as a new revenue earner in addition to their existing mar-



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kets and as a defensive measure against the encroachment of more conventional cable TV services.

Why new regulation?

Both managed and unmanaged TV value chains face a number of different but crucial challenges, said Rene Summer, director of Ericsson, in a write-up titled "Reshaping the business of television" in Ericsson's website.

Many are commercial, but some are pivotal for the business environment that defines the scope of available strategies and business models for value chain stakeholders, Summer added.

"In addition, symmetry or asymmetry in the business environment is of central essence. It defines, for each step in the value chain and possibly for each player in the value chain, its range of strategic options, available businesses

models, and return on investments. All this brings regulation into the picture, as regulation is about exerting control over business environments."

State-owned Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Ltd declared three to four years ago that it would go for a triple play. As a sequel to that, the company is working on laying fibre optic cables across the country. But its destination is not clear yet.

The government has not yet said anything about the IPTV service in the country. Experts say television-related equipment will be converted into IP-based system by 2015. If the country's broadcast society lags behind then the whole process will collapse.

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As digitalisation takes place

Ericsson high official shares his views with The Daily Star

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DIGITALISATION is a transformational process, fundamentally changing and relegating yesteryear realities to museums, said Rene Summer, director for government and industry relation of Ericsson.

One key implication of digitalisation is convergence, a process that breaks up vertical service specific value chains and technologies into a horizontal multitude of service offerings agnostic to a value chain and technology, he added.

Recently Summer arrived in Dhaka to meet with some of the policymakers and regulatory bodies in the country. So far he has toured 40 countries across the globe advocating the convergence of the broadcast media.

The Ericsson official said his meeting with

the policymakers and regulators was fruitful. "As the subject matter is new, it would take time to understand and appreciate the pros and cons -- it's more or less the same situation everywhere."

End-users are gradually adapting to realities of the digital age and forming new behaviours, altering their expectations and creating new demands, he said. "This is both an opportunity and a threat! This change is already acknowledged. The behaviour of the so-called digital natives -- a new generation of end-users that today makes up a small part of the mass market -- is continuously changing."

With time, the behaviour of the digital natives will become the mass-market behaviour as new generations replace old ones; an inevitable and permanent shift awaits us.

As digital natives age, their habits and demands will also impact how and where people today interact with employers, govern-



Rene Summer

ments, public health and education service providers, he said. "When the changes take places, we can truly talk about the digital society and the digital nation."

A huge bandwidth is required to deploy internet protocol television, said Summer. Optical fibre-ware, satellite or wireless line can be a way to meet the service. But the bandwidth will have to be definitely speedy. "It can be provided or operated by the telecom operators, cable operators or by the television stations too," he added.

The IP-based broadcasting facility could be served by enabled TV sets, computer screens or even with mobile set screens. It is very important for health, education, conferencing and corporate houses while entertainment is also a focus.

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