



Each year at NAB I focus either on the trade floor or conference sessions. This year the draw was the conference to satisfy my yearning for more information regarding media trends on the Internet and how they will affect the evolution of broadcasting.

Living in a highly regulated world as broadcasting does, with its small number of players, change moves slowly. There seems to be less room for entrepreneurial ventures. While the consumer is considered, (s)he certainly doesn't (yet) drive the business as we see in other industries.

Times have changed and younger generations (and more increasingly older generations) are saying "to heck

By Laurie Kennedy

**Watch out
for those
new
rays!**



with that, let's check out some other options". The consumer is slowly but surely taking the reigns of control as to how this new world will play out. Look no further for proof than at the adoption and growth of Netflix, Hulu and many other VOD providers on the Internet.

These providers are typically subscription-based; pay a monthly fee to get access to any content within their library. There are also many so-called "free" options which put parents into shock and awe at how their offspring can find them. Looking at cable bills becomes irksome when they know their children have been spending free time watching TV content streaming on PCs from those "free" providers.

UltraViolet

Among the new offerings and business models that caught my eye at NAB2010 and again at this year's convention was UltraViolet.

What is UltraViolet?

The broad stroke is that UV will allow consumers to purchase digital content and watch it wherever and whenever. It is a combination of a new format standard for content distributors and manufacturers, along with a video storage locker and rights management outlet within the Internet cloud.

Though not the same, similar online models include Apple's iTunes and Disney's KeyChest (in development), as well, KOKO e-books.

UV a New Standard

For the past couple of years, the consortium known as Digital Entertainment Content EcoSystem (DECE) has been endeavouring to develop a user-friendly digital standard for collecting movies and TV shows.

DECE includes over 60 cross-industry members and growing, including Adobe, Akamai Technologies, Best Buy, BSKyB, Cineplex Entertainment, Cisco, Comcast, Cox Communications, Dell, Dolby Laboratories, Fox Entertainment, HP, IBM, Intel, LG, Lionsgate, Microsoft, NBC Universal, Netflix, Neustar, Panasonic, Paramount Pictures, SONY and Toshiba, to name only the more prominent members.

The consortium's new digital media specifications, logo program and interoperable digital rights locker will enable consumers to purchase digital video content from a choice of online retailers and play it on a variety of branded devices and platforms from different manufacturers.





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How Will UV Work?

DECE believes that consumers like and need to have collections. The consumers' video rights collection will be housed and managed within an UltraViolet digital rights locker and, from what I have read, Akamai will be one of the delivery platforms.

Each household will create an account for up to six family members who can access the household's UltraViolet movies, TV shows and other entertainment. This can be done via participating online retailers, Internet streaming providers and devices with the UV logo. Per household account, you can register up to 12 devices.

The consumer will be able to download content to an UltraViolet-enabled device or, if preferred, to stream (playout) content from one's collection (within their UltraViolet online locker) to a set-top box, PC, web-connected devices (Internet TV, Blu-ray) and mobile apps for smartphones and tablets.

Content rights can be on a rental basis (e.g., one run within a household per family member) or own-with-rights in perpetuity. The advantage to own in perpetuity is that you can remove and add devices as time goes on and technology changes, with an unlimited number of runs.

Availability

The UltraViolet consumer account system is targeted for its U.S. launch at mid-2011 allowing for download to existing devices and, as well, streaming services. Canada and the UK are to follow later this year. In early 2012, we will likely begin to see the first devices designed with the UltraViolet standard, identified with the UV logo.

Possibilities

This may just have the potential to reduce or eliminate the need for traditional TV distribution layers. Perhaps it may evolve as a direct to consumer distribution channel for first run TV content.

The current content model is the **content producer** (via distribution house or direct) sells the **rights** to many **distribution channels** (broadcaster, OTT, wireless, retail) taking into consideration **geography, delivery method** and **playout device** in their rights agreement. The broadcaster also goes through another layer of distribution via **cable** and **satellite** (and associated costs to the consumer).

As I see it in the UltraViolet model, the content producer (via distribution house or direct) sells the rights to the consumer via many online retail outlets with the ability to download or stream/playout (delivery method) on a wide range of devices.

This could open up a whole lot of possibilities, including a more cost effective way for the smaller independent production companies to distribute their content. Internet providers will also be affected. Perhaps they are seeing the light already as they try to position themselves for a pay per usage model.

The key success factor, of course, is if it will truly be user friendly and if the consumer will adopt it.

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