

NTU scientist invents pocket living room TV

Eurekaalert!

Leaving your TV show midway because you had to leave your home will no longer happen as you can now 'pull' the programme on your TV screen onto your tablet and continue watching it seamlessly.

You can also watch the same TV show or movie together with your family and friends, no matter which part of the world they are in. Not only that but you'll be able to discuss the show, whether you are on your personal tablet or smart phone, through a channel of your choice, be it video chat, voice or text.

The world's first 'pick up and throw back' video feature allows your video and chat sessions to be screened wherever you go, providing continuous social engagement in today's world.

This innovative multi-screen mobile social TV experience is now being made into reality by Assistant Professor Wen Yonggang from the School of Computer Engineering, Nanyang Technological University (NTU). It has already attracted the attention of both local and international telecommunication giants who have expressed interest in integrating this technology into their existing cable networks as a market differentiator for cable television and mobile networks. With discussions currently underway, the public here can expect to see videos and TV shows on the go together with their friends on the 'cloud' in about two years' time.

According to a 2012 report by Global Industry Analysts Inc, the global entertainment industry is set to reach US\$1.4 trillion by 2015. This system will be designed to tap on the technology convergence in the multimedia market, which includes smart phones, tablets, computers and television, and help to boost Singapore's ambition to be a digital media hub in Asia.

Assistant Professor Wen has described his invention as the next frontier of television experience as you can now "bring the social experience of watching television in your living room wherever you go".

Named the "Social Cloud TV", this system allows you to watch TV programmes and online videos with your family and friends at the same time. The system leverages a cloud backend for media processing (e.g., video transcoding), such that the same video can be streamed into devices in the most suitable format. When viewing a TV show or perhaps a live soccer match, you can invite family and friends to join your session, from either your phone book or social networking contact lists.

Currently patent pending, this human-computer interaction technology enables the same show on the TV or computer to be brought to mobile devices seamlessly and migrated across multiple screens (e.g., TV, laptop, smartphone and tablet) without a hitch.

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"You could watch a video with your class mates on the computer, and just before you leave school, 'pull' the show into your tablet and continue watching on the go," said Assistant Professor Wen.

"Upon reaching home, you could just turn on your television and 'throw' the video back to the TV, and continue watching the programme there."

"With the increase in online video and personal multimedia devices, we have lost out on the experience of watching TV shows together as a family and as a social activity with friends. So I hope that with my invention, people can now reconnect with each other socially using videos."

The social TV software will also allow users to share their own content, online videos and TV programmes with others easily over social networks such as Facebook and Twitter.

This prototype took one and a half years to develop. The research team, inclusive of Assistant Professor Wen, consists of nine members, of which three were undergraduate students.

To further improve and commercialise the technology, Prof Wen will be setting up a start-up company to seek additional funding and to collaborate on projects with industry partners.

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