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TERMS AND DEFINITIONS: WHAT IT ALL MEANS

INTRODUCTION

One of the major obstacles for non-experts in coming to terms with the challenges of the new technologies is the proliferation of new terminology used to refer to the technologies that are revolutionising television viewing.

This document aims to set out definitions for some of the key terms used in the debate and in the other documents produced as part of the Television is Changing campaign.

INSIDE

This document contains a list of key terms relating to the new technologies that are transforming the television industry and attempts to provide definitions that will enable those not familiar with the technology to have an understanding of what these new technologies can do and why they are so important.

Equity

WHAT IT ALL MEANS

Video on Demand – (VOD)

(Also known as: *VoD, On-Demand Television, Movies-on-Demand, Content on Demand, On-demand Programming, VOD on the Web, VOD on Cable, Pay-As-You-Go, PAYG, All-day Movies, Live-streaming Video & On-demand Streaming Video, Internet-on-Demand Video, IP-based Video, IPTV Broadcasting, Internet HDTV, Internet Video, Web Video, Video Webcasting, Webcasting, Broadcast Internet, IPVBI, TinyTV, Switched Digital Video, SDV, Video Dial Tone, IPVBI, Sports on Demand, Application on Demand, Entertainment on Demand, Information on-demand, News on-demand, On-demand Services, Television on-demand, Switched-on TV*)

The Internet, intranets and a multitude of other networks can be used to distribute Video on Demand. Content can be viewed using many different electronic devices, including phones, PCs, media centres, media centre PCs, set-top boxes, certain portable media devices, etc. VOD allows viewers to select video and its accompanying content, then have it sent to their set-top box, PC, mobile phone, etc. If the VOD is to be viewed on a TV, the programme might be stored in the customer's DVR. In that case the customer would watch it from that DVR's hard drive. (This is more often the case with satellite TV and Internet distribution scenarios.) Or, in the case of cable television and IPTV, the customer typically can watch it directly from the network's the cable provider's operating, distribution and storage facility (called the "head end".

Typically those watching VOD on a TV (TV-based VOD) can pause, fast forward, rewind, etc. as if they were watching the programme on a VCR, DVD, or DVR. While in the past this was often known as Interactive Video on Demand, now it's become the standard. Typically a digital set-top box or media center is required to get TV-based VOD but one can download VOD programming to other media devices such as video iPods, game consoles (Xbox, Apple's upcoming iTV or whatever it will be called, etc.) and other media extenders. Media extenders connect one electronic device, such as your PC, to your TV or set-top box etc

Interactive Video on Demand - (IVOD)

This is the standard type of TV-based VOD today. VCR, DVD and DVR type functions, such as fast forward, rewind, and pause are offered. An IVOD system can have three components: (1) the user's "set top boxes", or equivalent (and it's components), (2) the network it is connected to, (and it's distribution components) and the (3) servers with archives of programming. Typically the subscriber's set top boxes are how they communicate with the VOD servers.

True Video On Demand - (TVOD)

TVOD is the ideal VOD service where individual users get immediate responses when interacting with the VOD system. With TVOD, the user can not only order the programme, but be able to do any VCR-like commands on the VOD system with the same quick response time as is the case when working a VCR. This increased speed of response time can significantly increase the cost of operating the VOD system. An alternative is NVOD (see below) as it reduces the cost by increasing the waiting time. TVOD is more often just known as VOD (Video on Demand).

Near Video On Demand - (NVOD)

A particular programme/movie is advertised to start a regular intervals over a particular channel. You pay your money electronically and select what time and day you want to start watching the programme/movie. A small portion of the programme/movie may be sent and stored on your DVR/Set top box buffer or hard drive, most of the programme/movie is viewed from the server of the network operator offering the NVOD service. Typically you can fast forward, rewind, pause, etc. with NVOD as with TVOD.

Subscription Video on Demand - (SVOD)

(Subscription-based Movies and/or Programming) - Generally movie/programming packages are scheduled events; SVOD can make it possible, for a fixed fee, for subscribers to have unlimited access to movies/programming during a specific time period, such as a month. The opposite would be Free Video on Demand (FVOD) where a subscriber pays no special fee for the programming.

Free Video on Demand - (FVOD)

(Also known as: *Free On-demand, FOD, FVOD, Free Video on Demand*)

Video on Demand programming that a network operator makes available as part of a basic content package. FOD (FVOD) can make it possible for subscribers to have unlimited access to movies/programming offered during that time period. The opposite would be Subscriber Video on Demand (SVOD) where a subscriber pays a standard reoccurring fee for programming that may have no, or limited advertisements.

Quasi Video on Demand - (QVOD)
Same as Near Video on Demand except that the show (programming) only will be presented if a minimum number of subscribers sign up for it.

Catch Up Service
This service allows users to watch a streamed version of a programme within a fixed period of time, either within 7 days, 28 days or 30 days from when the programme was first broadcast. This enables the consumer to catch up an episode or programme that they missed when first broadcast on television. The programme is streamed and cannot be stored for playback at a later date. Catch up services are available via cable providers (ntl:Telewest and Homechoice) and via the internet.

PVR/DVR
Personal/Digital Video Recorder
Electronic devices that record material - most commonly today onto hard drives or flash media cards for later replaying. These perform similar functions to traditional video services but may also allow the user to copy a whole series with one touch. The commercial names of these services include Sky+ and Tivo.

Series Stacking
The ability to store and view an entire series of programmes within 7 days of the broadcast of the last programme in that series. If a drama is broadcast in six parts over six consecutive weeks, it would be possible to view all six episodes up to a week after the broadcast of the last episode. As each episode in a series is broadcast it remains available online or for download, so episodes begin to 'stack up'. For example in the first week of a series the first episode is made available, in week 2 both the first and second episodes are available. By week 6 all six episodes are available. It is then possible for the viewer to watch all six episodes in one sitting.

If a series broadcasts multiple episodes each week, then the 13-week rule switches to episodes, and no more than 13 episodes can be stacked. There is no limit on the number of episodes that can be stacked within this 13-week window. If a programme has two episodes screened per week, there may be 26 episodes stacked at the 13-week drop off point. If a 20-part series of Spooks was stacked, on week 14 that week's episode would be available (episode 14), but the first episode would no longer be available as it had gone beyond the 13-week window.

Floating Window
Upon download of a programme/episode by the user within the 7-day window from any linear transmission by the BBC of the programme/episode, the programme/episode can remain on the users hardware until first accessed (or 13 weeks from download whichever is sooner) – then the user has 7 days to view the programme/episode after which the programme/episode expires.

PPV - Pay Per View
Consumers pay for content on a case-by-case basis. Consumers may choose to pay to view a single episode or a whole series.

Subscription Service
Consumer pays a pre-defined amount for access to a range of content. Subscription Video on Demand - (SVOD) - (Subscription-based Movies and/or programming) - Generally movie/programming packages are scheduled events; SVOD can make it possible, for a fixed fee, for subscribers to have unlimited access to movies/programming during a specific time period, such as a month. The opposite would be Free Video on Demand (FVOD) where a subscriber pays no special fee for the programming.

Download to Own
Material (i.e. a film or TV programme) transmitted to an individual computer, via a broadband connection, that will remain on the computer's hard-disk. This is also sometimes referred to as Electronic Sell Through (EST). Some broadcasters/providers will also send out one physical (DVD) copy of the title.

Download to rent
Material transmitted to an individual computer, via a broadband connection, that must be viewed within a certain period of time before it self-deletes. Therefore the programme cannot be downloaded and stored on any device or passed on to any other device.

Streaming Media
Streaming media allows the user to watch and/or listen to a media file without it having first been fully downloading to the user's equipment. A "player" or "browser" is most often necessary to view and listen to the files. Typically the streamed file is compressed before sent to the user and decompressed by the user's player/software for listening and viewing. Importantly, typically the received file must be decompressed by the particular media player/software specified for that file.

Streaming vs Progressive Download:There are two main methods of delivering media over the Internet. The first method, using a standard web server to transmit the file, is sometimes called 'progressive download'. The other method is a streaming media server. The server and network transportation method is the substantial differentiator. Progressive download can be

achieved using a regular web (http) server. The client handles the buffering and playing during the download process. If the playback rate exceeds the download rate, playback is delayed until more data is downloaded. Files that are downloaded over the Web are generally only able to be viewed after the entire file is downloaded. Files delivered to the server using streaming media technology are playable at the same time they are received by the computer they are being played on.

A streaming server works with the client to send audio and video over the Internet or Intranet and play it almost immediately. They allow real-time 'broadcasting' of live events, and the ability to control the play-back of on-demand content. Playback begins as soon as sufficient data has downloaded. The viewer can skip to a point part way through a clip without needing to download the beginning. If the data cannot be downloaded fast enough, a streamed web cast sacrifices quality in order for the viewing to remain synchronised with the original timing of the content.

BBC iPlayer

The BBC iPlayer (formerly known as iMP- Integrated Media Player) is an application in development at the BBC that will offer UK viewers the opportunity to catch up on TV and radio programmes they may have missed for up to seven days after they had been originally broadcast, allowing the consumer to use the internet to legally download programmes to their home computers.

The iPlayer uses peer to peer distribution technology (P2P) to legally distribute these programmes. Seven days after the programme transmission date the programme file expires (using Digital Rights Management - DRM - software) and users will no longer be able to watch it. DRM also prevents users emailing the files to other computer users or sharing it via disc.

DRM – Digital Rights Management

DRM is the technology intended to protect the copyright associated with any creative work (such as a programme or musical performance) which is distributed digitally, for example by means of downloading from the internet. For example the technology associated with a download to rent service ensures that once a title is accessed it is only available for a limited period of time before it self deletes. Therefore the programme cannot be downloaded and stored on any device or passed on to any other device.

Geo-locked or geo-filtered website

is one that can only be accessed in a certain territory. For example only users within the UK can access the website.

Time shifted

(Also known as: *+1 Services*)
Channels that provide the same content but one hour later than the original broadcast such as E4 and E4 +1.

Simultaneous broadcast

(Also known as: *simultaneous transmission, simulcast*)
Originally referred to the process of broadcasting programmes at the same time across different UK broadcasting regions the term has now come to refer to the distribution of programme content on a variety of technological platforms (digital transmission, the internet, mobile phones) at the same time as it is transmitted on traditional terrestrial television.

TELEVISION IS CHANGING

This booklet is an updated and revised summary of *The Future of Television* published by Equity in 2006. Copies of that publication remain available to Equity members interested in a more detailed analysis of the issues discussed in this booklet.

In addition to this booklet, Equity has produced a range of briefing papers that deal in more detail with many of the issues raised here and update the information contained in the original *The Future of Television* document. They illustrate the work Equity has done over the past year on the key issue of the digitisation of broadcast media and highlight the important issues still to be resolved.

These briefing papers are available to download from the Television is Changing website (www.tvischanging.com) or you can request a printed a version from the address below.

Briefing papers in this range include:

Paying for the Future: Collective Licences

Deductions in a Digital Age: Do they add up?

Broadcasters & Producers: Terms of Trade

Simultaneous Transmissions: TV on Mobile Devices

Working Conditions: Fees and payments

Terms and Definitions: What it all means

In addition to these briefing papers, we also have factsheets on all these areas that provide a basic introduction into the issues raised.

This material is available free of charge to any member. If you would like to receive a copy or would like to take part in the debate within Equity regarding the future of television, please do not hesitate to contact us - details are below.

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