

DIGITAL TV REVOLUTION :

As the primary purveyor of media in the 20th Century, television's ubiquity across both modern and modernizing societies lies in its instantaneous ability to meet ever-changing market demands for the myriad of gratifiers that define and sustain contemporary culture. From the provision of news and entertainment to serving as the paramount commercial broadcaster for industry, television has *defined* entire generational paradigm shifts by both creating and meeting fluctuations in consumer aspiration. However, what has remained constant is the direction by which content is distributed. Networks, broadcasters and local affiliates have maintained a uni-directional stream of media that rests the decision for how the viewer receives information on the creators of said media. In other words, viewers have traditionally assumed a passive role while networks decide not only the content, but the schedule by which it is displayed.

Until now.

The (r)evolution of television lies in a viewer's *choice* and a paradigm shift from passive media absorption to *interactivity*. Digital video recording (DVR) devices such as TiVo allow consumers to digitally record content according to consumer-initiated commands and thereby bypass advertisements and unwanted programs. In allowing viewers to watch favored shows in an order and time frame that fits *their* schedule, DVRs have afforded consumers with an augmented agency over how they interact with media.

The latest offering of digital convenience is the CableCard, which is said to be both a boon and a frustration. This new wafer-thin device is said to be troublesome because it is a uni-directional device that disallows interactive content. While allowing consumers to plug cables directly into their televisions, it does limit their ability to experience the full offering of interactive content. Regardless, the FCC has mandated cable companies to offer said CableCards to all consumers, launching concern within the multi-billion dollar communications industry over revenues lost to by-passed content (for example, programming guides will no longer come from cable companies but included with the television or DVR).

There is added concern that net-based media, while allowing consumers easier access to both television and movies by downloading them directly to their computers from a website, would lead to lost revenue (the recently announced partnerships between content recorded TiVo and content distributor Netflix is a clear example). Microsoft- ever cognizant of the reciprocal influences between technology and over consumer culture - has invested several million dollars in ways to capture "living rooms" that way they've captured offices. Internet Protocol TV (IPTV), for example, may become a reality soon given SBC Communication's recent provision of \$400 million to Microsoft to develop this service for its video-on-demand service.