

Western Europe tops IPTV market

WESTERN EUROPE is currently the world's leading IPTV market, according to a report from Strategy Analytics. IPTV growth in Europe is being helped by the success of free Digital Terrestrial TV (DTTV) services in several markets. Operators such as BT, Telefónica, and Neuf Cegetel are all deploying hybrid DTTV-IPTV services that give consumers access to a mix of free channels broadcast via DTTV, as well as on-demand IPTV content delivered via broadband networks.

In contrast, US telcos such as AT&T and Verizon are offering IPTV on a for-pay basis only. The TV packages developed by these companies are designed to compete directly with existing offers from cable and satellite TV providers, offering comparable channels, features and price points.

The combined audience of connected IPTV households globally will grow dramatically over the next five years, rising from just under 6 million in 2006 to more than 80 million by 2011. Penetration of pay-TV subscribers within this larger group will reach 51 percent over this period, producing a total subscriber base of 41 million by 2011. •

WiFi operator built on sharing

WiFi OPERATOR FON says it reached 150,000 registered users in 144 countries in December 2006. The business idea behind FON, which was founded in November 2005 and is sponsored by Google/Skype, is to let its users build the company's WiFi network and share it with other FON users. Subscribers pay a membership fee and get free roaming. Those who want to make money from their WiFi networks get a 50 percent share of the money that non-members pay to access the community through their FON access points. In many countries, Fonero routers are supplied free of charge to give the service a kick start. •

US firm launches video syndication service

VEOH NETWORKS is launching a web video syndication service that uses peer-to-peer technology to distribute large, high-quality video files more efficiently and publish them on popular sites. Veoh hopes to become an online television service, allowing content creators to build their own channels and viewers to find and download videos easily.

Once content creators upload their videos to Veoh, the content can instantly be syndicated across the web to popular sites such as YouTube and Facebook. The videos can also be distributed to blogs and portable devices such as Apple iPods. •

Social networking making mobile push

ABI RESEARCH estimates there were nearly 50 million users of mobile social communities worldwide in December 2006. Mobile manifestations of social networking are springing up as both a cellular extension of existing websites and communities that exist only on mobile devices. There is no strict definition of mobile social networking, but some well-known examples are MySpace, Facebook and Hookt. •

BlackBerry still top-selling PDA

GLOBAL SHIPMENTS of handheld computers rose 18.4 percent to 17.7 million in 2006, with Research in Motion's BlackBerry showing strong growth, according to a report by research firm Gartner.

In terms of operating systems for personal digital assistants (PDAs), shipments of devices based on Microsoft's Windows platform grew by 38.8 percent to nearly 10 million, the report states. That increased Microsoft's market share to 56.1 percent, up from 47.9 percent in 2005.

BlackBerry retained the top spot for PDA devices shipped, growing 10 percent to 3.5 million for the year, but its market share slipped from 21.3 percent in 2005 to just below 20 percent during 2006, Gartner states. Palm saw PDA shipments fall to 11.1 percent from the previous year's 18.5 percent.

Gartner states the overall increase in shipments of PDAs was driven by growing demand for wireless access to e-mail and the internet. It found that 60 percent of devices shipped were equipped with cellular connectivity, up from 47 percent in 2005. •

