



The three things that will make an impact on Niche Television Channels, on the road to 2010



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Instead of looking at 3 changes I expect to happen over the next 3 years, I would look at a fundamental change that would occur, which in turn would have a cascading effect across the industry. This fundamental change, which would happen over the next 3 years, is the very way people would view/understand the topic itself. Ergo, over the next 3 years I expect Niche to be synonymous with Content and Channel synonymous with Conduit. This therefore translated into slivers of content (meaning content that appeals to a particular audience set (demographic/psychographic/which-ever-way-you-cut-it)) being delivered by any means that reaches its defined audience. We are already witnessing the first phase of this a la the addressable systems (CAS/DTH). Over the next few years, players of this segment will have defined channels for a defined audience set. This therefore gives these players the power of a differentiated, monetizeable product and for consumers, content of their choice. As I write this article, I see the ad of the new Nokia N92 Series, which promises to bring in the power of TV to the mobile handset. Technology/infrastructure/bandwidth over the next few years would improve to make the long tail of content possible and more importantly profitable. As this scenario becomes more and more real, some fundamental changes will occur in the **CONTENT** side of the business.

Going forward, the lines between content creators and content aggregators will blur. Unless content aggregators are able to control the delivery of content across all platforms, they wouldn't have much of a say (and hence a future) in the new digital space. Content creators on the other hand, already know this reality and are hence already protecting their distribution rights in this new, untested, the next big thing landscape.

Evolution of consumer habits have always lead to complexity, since this evolution of habits and tastes has always been about individuality (I am unique and hence so are my habits)! This in turn raises basic questions for our industry in the new Content and Conduit era:

If consumers want specific slivers of content, then what is really the role of a content aggregator? So in the future, would a content aggregator be known by the nature of the

product that he delivers or by the emotional connect that he has with his consumer? If it is the **ONLY** former, then he'll be history in the years to come or at best constrained to limited delivery vehicle. Of course, the user generated space is in opposition to this entire theory, but as of now a) its been a revelation only in the Internet space (or a single medium space) and b) it's a rather new phenomenon.

If it is the latter, then the content aggregator has become a brand in his own right and not linked only to the product that he delivers (Meaning that if the connect that a brand has with his consumer is that Brand = Product, then his future is limited, since he doesn't own the content, but if Brand = Proposition, then he can consider delivering the proposition across platforms and hence is not limited to the content that he delivers. To quote an example, if tomorrow technology was to enable us to access any movie of our choice at our convenience, a Google search for movies on your TV set perhaps, then what is the role of a movie channel in the life of a consumer?). And by going with the train of thought, the coming years would redefine the role of content aggregators. At some fundamental level, content aggregators will have do to either one of a) Move from a content aggregator only to a content creator or b) Own a distinct proposition in the minds of the consumer that transcends media boundaries. The fact that some media companies are already making headway into creating a consumer experience that is not limited to current delivery vehicle is a testament to this above. You could type "Virtual Laguna Beach" on your favorite search engine to know what I'm talking about. So if I was to paraphrase all of this to keep in adherence to the topic, the coming years will herald 3 fundamental changes:

a) What content the consumer wants
b) When does he plan to consume it (also called time shift)
c) Where does he plan to consume it (also called place shift)

This change, however, will not be about the consumer, but will instead be about the role that media brands (both creators and aggregators) will play in his life. Think again.

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