Chapter VII

Ambient Media and Home Entertainment

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Abstract

Media are “[media] means effecting or conveying something such as (1) a surrounding or enveloping substance; or (2) a condition or environment in which something may function or flourish; or (3) mode of artistic expression or communication.” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.) In the case of ambient media, the humans’ natural environment becomes to the “enveloping media” as an environment in which content functions. This work therefore deals with the development of ambient media, far beyond seeing TV as a major entertainment platform in consumers’ homes. To satisfy the entertainment-hungry consumer, more and more advanced home entertainment (HE) systems and facilities are required to provide interactive and smart leisure content. This chapter glimpses the future of modern ambient HE systems. Experts in the field of ambient media discuss and contribute to four major lines of the future development of ambient media: (1) social implications, (2) converging media, (3) consumer content, and (4) smart devices.
Introduction

Rather than the consumer explicitly telling a computer system what to do, the system will act autonomously in the way the consumer desires. Natural interaction, personalization, smart metadata, wireless technology, ubiquitous systems, pervasive computation, and embedded systems are technologically enabled. The vision for ambient media or ambient intelligence has been developed by the European Commission as goal for research projects until the year 2010. The IST Advisory Group (ISTAG) developed the components (see Figure 1) contributing to this vision in their working documents in the beginning of this century (ISTAG, 2001, 2003). The goal of this book chapter is to look far beyond the scope of the utilization of compression techniques for transmitting content or digital television in consumers’ homes (Lugmayr, Niiranen, & Kalli, 2004). Ambient intelligence or ambient media seek to make smart technology available for the consumer throughout their natural environment.

Currently many European projects are contributing to this vision with the realization of ambient-media-related projects ranging from digital TV, smart living spaces, media content management, and so forth.

Figure 1. Components of ambient intelligence or ambient media according ISTAG

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