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<th>Bringing internet to TV : war for the eyeballs</th>
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Paper No. 23
First of all, I wish to express that it is a great pleasure and honor for me to participate in this discussion on the most timely topic of our industry. Please allow me to begin my presentation by introducing an article from an European study group which I read about a year ago.

The title of the article is “Internet and Television, Competition or Convergence.” In this article, it argues that the dominant power of television in our modern society will soon be conquered by the growing strength of the internet. Furthermore, the article states that the present relationship between the Internet and television seems to be a competitive one. Moreover, sooner or later the traditional television would become a consolidated part of the internet which will act as the central nerve system of our human system.

Secondly, I wish to introduce another interesting report written by a prominent Japanese scholar of media and information technology. This report notes that television is like a dinosaur whose very existence would soon be in peril of extinction by the emergence of internet.

Having read these studies, a single question came up to my mind, could be true? In my opinion, these arguments look like caused by misconception of television and internet. It appears as through, they regard television as a mere box of screen and wires, and internet as an all mighty power.

In my view, television is not just a box of screen and wires. This box becomes television when various pictures and sounds are produced, edited and transmitted by professional broadcasters. Moreover, television has acted as a powerful medium for the advancement of humanity and will continue to do so in the coming century.

Nevertheless, one must admit that television has its own Achilles’ heel, that it lacks interactivity. However, now with the introduction of the internet, television can overcome this weak point and enable itself to make further progress towards the future.

Candidly speaking, my view point might somewhat be in favor of television, due to the fact that I have been involved with the television industry for over thirty five years. Yet, I wish to emphasize that television and internet are neither enemies nor rivals. They are meant to coexist and to complement each other for the betterment of
mankind and enrichment of our society. In other words, they are not to play a zero-sum game but to play a plus-sum game.

At NHK, many of our young producers are well aware of the relationship between television and internet. They have initiated various experimental programs that allows interactivity in television. By adopting internet capability into program productions, the traditional one-way street television is now transformed to a two-way street television. To put it concretely, the program uses the internet as a tool to bring together television and its viewers. As a result, this new generation television program allows closer and better responsive relations with our viewers.

I wish to give you an example of this experiment. The program is a biweekly educational television program for our nationwide educational channel. The program is entitled “Only One Earth”, (http://www.nhk.or.jp/sch/) and is intended to be used as educational program on environmental studies for those students in the 5th and 6th grades elementary school. The program is 15 minutes long. The first 12 minutes is a studio presentation of a video program on current environmental topics. The remaining 3 minutes is designed to reflect the voices from the classrooms to the studio and reciprocally to exchange view points. In doing so, the students in classrooms and the studio are connected through the internet. Hence, they are able to communicate with one another and to engage in inter-activities such as open discussions, Q&A and online surveys, etc.

The program started last month, in April 1998. Currently, 10 schools from different parts of Japan participates in this program. Having said that, I would like to show you a portion of the program which features the internet inter-activity.

Presently, four university professors acts as advisors to the program. According to these professors, the introduction of the internet accredited the program by enabling itself to be more attentive to student’s reactions, making the program much stimulating, attractive and educational.

Encouraged by these favorable reactions, the producers and the staff members of the program decided to embellish the final episode of the year by fully using the internet with real time inter-action between the students and the studio. This is scheduled to be broadcast in March 1999. Not only that, but they are planning the future stage of the program to be inter-activated by every school in Japan. Undoubtedly, when this materializes it will become a prototype of educational television program for the coming generation.

Not only are we experimenting the use of internet and television in educational programs, but we are doing so in cultural, entertainment and current affair programs as well. To give you an example, here is a program broadcast in August 1997, entitled “Global Court: a Special Internet Documentary on Legitimacy of Nuclear Armaments.” (http://www.nhk.or.jp/nuclear)

The producer’s basic idea was that of an imaginative one. He portrayed the internet as an effective tool in creating a new format of television documentary program. Following this belief, he produced a unique two part documentary covering various issues on nuclear armaments.
In this program, the web-site specially set up by NHK’s Tokyo Headquarters in both English and Japanese played an essential role. The site opened four months prior to the broadcasting of the program. It contained all the basic facts and figures of nuclear weapons. It also contained an in-depth information on nuclear history with moving pictures, texts as audio as well.

In addition to it's main feature, the site provided tow special corners which was established to further attract the attention of the users. One was the virtual exhibit history of the first atomic bombing of Hiroshima, originally planned by Smithsonian Institute of the U.S. but was subsequently cancelled due to strong oppositions from the conservative groups. The production team was successful in obtaining permission to reconstruct the planned exhibit on their web-site. The virtual exhibit was intended to be food-for-thought for users in participating in a on-line discussion on the legitimacy of nuclear arms.

The other special corner was a virtual International Court of Justice. In 1994, the International Court of Justice was mandated to contemplate the legality of the use of nuclear weapons. The court was not able to give a decisive verdict since one of the Justice passed away during the deliberation. Thus, the verdict was left undecided as seven in favor and seven against.

Providing the users with these information, we invited the users to imagine himself or herself as the 15th Justice and to vote whether he or she believes the legality of the use of nuclear weapons. There were more than 50 thousand access from various parts of the world expressing various kinds of opinions. The staff of the project team were intensely busy translating these messages into English and Japanese. A special team was organized to record and to state these opinions on the web-site as fast as possible to reflect the on-time data.

These grave efforts produced an extremely unique television documentary. We believe that programs such as these provides an opportunity for everyone around the world to participate in the discussions on global issues such as nuclear armaments.

Consequently, the program received many favorable responses. A year has passed since our endeavor yet, the web-site still exists and is still visited by many people. We have been greatly encouraged by these positive responses and hence decided to produce another documentary program in the same manner this coming summer and the following. The next program will deal with nuclear power plants. The program following that will deal with genetic engineering. We firmly believe that all of these topics are issues of global concern and urgency. The web-site for this summer’s program commenced this April and has already been visited by thousands of concerned citizens around the world.

Lastly, I wish to explain another brief example as to how we at NHK are trying to embrace internet into our TV programs. One of the main reasons why we are so eager in adopting the internet is because the internet provides a new impulse in our program production. We believe that the vast population of internet user’s and it’s interactive capabilities will greatly enhance our understanding in people’s beliefs and
opinions. Not only that, but we as the content provider are able to reach out to a wider public through the net.

Furthermore, we believe that the use of internet will greatly enhance the ability of broadcasting in the coming digital technology era. Digital technology with it's immense potential multiplicity in hand, we broadcasters need to better understand our viewer's interest in order to satisfy our viewer's interest. This as a result, will enable broadcasters to be closer in contact with our viewers.

Following this idea, in November 1997, NHK produced another experimental program to explore new possibilities of the integration of television and internet. This experiment took place on four of our regular broadcast educational programs. The duration of the experiment was sixteen days. We repeatedly advertised this experimentation on our station breaks.

One of the four programs was a women's program providing on-line guidance on health and nutrition facts. Another program was a language education program which provided it's textbook on line. Consequently, we received more than 560 thousand hits per day, approximately nine million hits in total on our web-sites during the sixteen day period. Normally, in average our web-site receives about 150 thousand to 200 thousand hits per day. Thus, as you can see, by advertising the program on both air and the web, and inviting our viewers as well as those people who normally are not our viewers but are internet users to take part in the program, attracted a wide range of people's interest.

To this end, through our various experiments, we learned that the internet is capable of not only complementing broadcasting, but the internet itself can also be complemented by television. I firmly believe that the relationship between television and internet is not to compete or to conquer one another, but to co-exist, to complement, and to progress hand in hand towards a better future.