Smarter TVs to redefine entertainment in future: Expert

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Ahmedabad : Television in the future may be a screen mounted on your wall that you can control with a hand-held device, with multiple windows showing everything from cricket to news to music to Facebook and Youtube simultaneously. Or it could be the same thing but might operate like a touch phone.

This is Nikhil Balram's vision for the future. Balram has won at least eight awards for his work in the field of consumer electronics, especially television.

Balram, who was formerly the vice-president and general manager of California-based Marvell Semiconductor Inc's Digital Entertainment Business Unit, was delivering a lecture titled 'A vision of the future of Television' at the IIT-Gandhinagar on Monday.

The brain behind the award-winning Qdeo technology, Balram said he believes that television in the future will evolve into what he terms the "media wall" with n-number of applications, including an inherent ability to respond to gestures of the watcher instead of a remote control.

Balram said innovations in TV technology and the larger consumer electronics sector are on even through the recession period because of the "cocooning effect" — where most people stopped spending on expensive vacations and switched to forms of entertainment that are cheaper but can be enjoyed at home.

"For consumer electronics, recession doesn't count. It might actually help," he said.

He also said the tendency of tier one electronics companies to create portals for themselves by creating hardware that will respond to only their software will not work, as far as the history of personal computers is referred to.

On the other hand, tier two companies that create hardware to cater to and use open source software technology would be much more successful since today's consumer wants something that is customised but can be brought at the mass-market price.

He gave the example of today's smartphones that have the same hardware, but enable the owner to practically customise it by using thousands of applications that are available for download.

However, Balram also took the example of Netflix, which has more than 100,000 physical discs in its library but is only able to offer 17,000 of these for streaming or download.

"Contractual arrangements are still the main barrier," he said.

Balram also said that as far as the environment was concerned, much could be done to reduce environmental-costs if hardware is designed to adapt to countless innovations in software, where in hardware would not have to be discarded whenever a new technology is developed.

"But that is not where the industry is headed," he said.