

TiVo is making its case as a smart TV platform

Remember TiVo? It still exists, even if you probably haven't used a TiVo device in quite awhile. (Unless you're one of the few who tried the company's Android TV dongle.) Even though the vast majority of people have since moved to TV software that is built into their device or runs on a dedicated piece of hardware like the Apple TV, TiVo owner Xperi is getting into the TV software game with TiVo OS.

Yes, that means there will be yet another company vying to run the software that powers your TV. But TiVo's angle with TiVo OS is to be a "first-of-its-kind neutral platform," which means in part that equipment manufacturers will have more control over the experience.

Right now, the US TV software market is largely dominated by Roku, which said at the beginning of this year that it's the top-selling smart TV OS in the country for the second year running. Roku hasn't been shy about actually being an advertising company, which means that it earns a lot of money from customers who see advertising on its OS and in the ad-sponsored Roku channel while watching things on a TV by a vendor like TCL or Hisense. And companies like Samsung and LG have their own software platforms that they use with their own TVs, so they own that customer relationship from beginning to end.

Xperi wants to give power back to equipment manufacturers

With TiVo OS, Xperi wants to give more power back to the equipment manufacturers (or at least the ones that aren't on the level of a Samsung or LG. "You're at a huge disadvantage

competitively if you're not participating in shaping the experience and retaining some level of customer ownership during the life of the product," Geir Skaaden, Xperi's executive vice president and chief products and services officer, said in an interview with *The Verge*. "So our platform allows them to brand the experience, retain the customer relationship, and have a rev share on the monetization on the platform." For consumers, TiVo OS will also offer an alternative to software made by companies like Roku, Apple, or Amazon.

The thing is, TiVo still seems a long way from making that vision a reality. You can't actually buy a TiVo OS-equipped TV yet, as there aren't any on the market right now. Vestel, which makes TVs sold under licensed brands like Toshiba and JVC, is the first OEM that has committed to shipping TVs with TiVo OS, but those won't be released until 2023, and they're coming to Europe first. Xperi hasn't announced a launch date for TiVo OS in the US, but that's "definitely on the roadmap," according to Skaaden.

Xperi expects to announce more TiVo OS hardware partners before or around the Consumer Electronics Show (which takes place in early January), according to Skaaden. But it's unclear when those might hit the market or how many offerings there will be. And even if more TiVo OS devices are announced and actually come out next year, I just don't think many people are chomping at the bit to switch over.

TiVo is going up against heavyweights like Roku and Samsung

Roku is immensely popular, Samsung is licensing its Tizen smart TV OS, and big tech companies like Amazon and Google use their TV software in smart TVs as well. Xperi does tout TiVo OS' integration with linear content, so perhaps that could be an advantage over those other platforms, which prefer to focus on streaming. "A TV Powered by TiVo can deliver better viewer engagement with an unbiased content-first user experience

where live hybrid TV and streaming services are fully integrated,” Xperi said in a press release in August. But since we can’t actually use TiVo OS yet, we’ll have to wait and see if the promises of a neutral platform turn into a compelling argument for TV buyers.

And that being said, Xperi is aiming TiVo OS more at OEMs that don’t already have a smart TV platform that they rely on. “We do not expect people that have their own operating platform to switch to ours,” he said, but Xperi does expect that TiVo OS will win marketshare among OEMs that “are not developing their own platform.”

In addition to TiVo, Xperi owns brands including the DTS audio compression technology, HD Radio, and the IMAX Enhanced standard. Xperi’s recent split separated its patents business into a separate company called Adeia.

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