

Viacom Media Networks' "Social TV: Viewers C's the Moment" Study Reveals Three C's To the Social TV Experience: Communication, Content, Comments

According to New Research, Live TV Viewing Unlocks Greatest Benefits of Social TV Activities

NEW YORK, May 17, 2012 /PRNewswire/ -- Viacom (NASDAQ: VIA, VIAB) today unveiled the results of its new "Social TV: Viewers C's The Moment" study exploring the social TV phenomenon through the lens of the viewer. While fairly nascent, social TV and co-viewing trends are growing rapidly, representing a shift in TV viewing from a lean-back to a lean-forward experience. Viewers engage in an average of seven different types of social TV activities — online or offline — on at least a weekly basis. The most common activities include watching TV with others (85%), searching for supplemental content (61%) and viewing TV show clips on social networks (58%). The new research reveals that consumers engaging in social TV activities "C's the moment" primarily by communicating, consuming content and checking comments.

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The two-phase study involved 24 ethnographies in Boston and San Diego with VMN viewers aged 13-52 that engage in social TV activities on at least a weekly basis. National online surveys were conducted with over 1,500 VMN viewers aged 13-54. When asked what social TV means to them, the most commonly reported words were "interactive," "friends" and "Facebook" or "Twitter." The leading source of discovery of social TV services is through search (38%), followed by social networks (26%) and ads run on shows (22%).

"One of the main goals of this research was to understand how to inspire social TV activity among our audiences," said Colleen Fahey Rush, Executive Vice President and Chief Research Officer, Viacom Media Networks. "At VMN, we're focused on leveraging our fans' attachment to their favorite shows by developing compelling social TV services and apps that deepen those connections and unlock the value of social chatter."

Communication

Communicating is a top priority for social TV users. Many respondents described cobbling together unique communication systems to interact with different social circles while watching a show. "When I'm watching Jersey Shore, I have Facebook chats with 10 friends and I'm texting a dozen people, and I can be on the phone to my best friend," said one participant.

There is no one-size-fits-all in terms of chat options. Of those interested in chat features, 56% prefer communicating through the social TV app/service, 53% through Facebook, 50% through individual or group texts and 38% through Skype or Apple FaceTime. For those that use check-in services, 71% check in to a show to let their friends know and 64% check in to let other fans of the show know. Check-in services are a unique way of communicating viewing activities while simultaneously encouraging others to tune-in and join a shared experience.

Smartphones dominate the use of social TV apps at 82%, trailed by tablets at 18%. For services that are delivered via HTML websites and associated apps, 52% of usage occurs on smartphones or tablets, followed closely by desktop or laptops at 48%.

Content

Content is king for social TV users. Viewers want something special from their social TV services rather than commoditized content that can be found through online searches. The number one request for content is full-length episodes (88%), followed by sneak peeks of new episodes (75%), and behind-the-scenes extras (71%) and highlight clips (71%).

The majority of TV socializers are interested in rewards with real value, like free merchandise or signed cast photos. When putting aside the material aspect, virtual rewards offer an emotional pay-off, described as being similar to the feeling when 'liked' on Facebook. Trivia and casual games related to a show are of greater interest if they offer some kind of reward. Real fans want to have their knowledge and skills tested, and expect the game to be challenging.

Comments

Social TV users check comments about their favorite shows for a variety of reasons. Comments provide a different point of view, can pick up on something a viewer may have missed on their own and most importantly, create a direct connection between fan and show. "I love reading Daniel Tosh's tweets while watching *Tosh.0*. It gives the show a whole other dimension," said one survey respondent.

Not all sources of comments are equally valued. The number one source viewers want to hear from is a show's cast and crew, followed by the people they know. Audiences are sensitive to the quality of comments from a show's cast and crew — they look

for authenticity and prefer the star(s) to be in character.

Social TV Users "C's the Moment" During Live Viewing

"Viewers C's the Moment" reveals that live TV show viewing unlocks the real value of social TV services and co-viewing activities. Features relating to communication, content and comments are twice as likely to be used during live than time-shifted viewing. Social TV enthusiasts reported feeling "left out" of the conversation if they missed a live airing.

One respondent said, "I'm most likely to engage with Social TV networking when it's live. So when a new show comes on, I'm very likely to check-in just before the show, see comments from other people, [and] make my own comments during the show as well."

Social TV activities also increase directly after a live show, when viewers can access exclusive content like sneak peeks without interrupting the live viewing experience. "I go to the website and watch the director's cut...after it airs as I like the extra scenes. I like to feel that I am getting something extra and it extends the show," said a participant.

Social TV can also help foster show discovery. Features like check-ins, viewer comments and shared video clips help viewers discover shows, incentivize them to watch and encourage them to join the live conversations.

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