

Effect of technology development on entertainment



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Introduction

Over the years, the advancement of the digital technology has created a revolution in TV. Nielsen's 2012 report stated that the number of homes with high definition TV grew in the US by more than 8 million (Nielsen 2011). This suggested that TV continues to be the dominant platform media for many households. Watching live or time-shifted TV programmes or games connected online via Internet are now using more of this conduit to deliver their contents to the many TV users.

The continuous development and advancement in the digital technology continue to make a tremendous impact on television, playing an important part of family lives' by offering quality entertainment and increasing the way of family bonding. They are achieved through delivering superior content, enhancing the user experiences' in watching TV and offer excellent platform mobility for both network producers and users.

Delivering superior content

With the advancement of technologies like streaming video, high-quality video and Internet, it has offered different delivery platforms to deliver TV programs and dramas. However, the real focus remains on the content. In Kelly Scott Madison's State of media report, it reiterated that "content is and always will remain, king" (Madison 2013).

With quality programming content like 'Who is HBO's Girls for?' (Smith 2012) that shows about different women and their lives, the show has differentiated itself from other media programming content. The show not only caters to mostly female audience demographics where most females are at home watching TV; the audience are able to relate their lives to the series show and this creates the 'stickiness' to the television drama series because of its content. This is similar to other shows like "Sex and the City".

Subscription TV penetration of TV households in Australia is increasing over the years. It is forecasted to increase from 30% in 2008 to 35% in 2017 (Maurer, Emmanuel & Parker 2013). Through subscription TV, it provides different content and choices to the viewers like sport, movies, cartoons, variety shows. It also allows, through digital set-top boxes, the viewers can record and view the program as and when he prefers. This is not available in the traditional broadcast TV when the viewers have to watch a show through a fixed schedule.

The regulatory environment for free-to-air television in Australia continues to change. In 2012, the Convergence Review highlighted the need for diversity in media and more Australian content (ABC News 2012). With digital and

primary channels, it allows broadcasters the flexibility to provide more Australian content. (Cosgrove, Schaffer & Horlin 2013)

Through digital technologies, viewers can watch 'live' broadcast shows like Formula-1 racing, AFL, English Premier League or Australian Open Tennis. In most networks, it also allows viewers to have video-on-demand in which the viewer can select the movies at their own convenience. Viewers can also use time-shifting features in their set-top to skip the advertisements if they would like to.

Thus, with superior content and rapid advancement in technology, TV providers and networks can create more value to the TV consumers (Maurer, Emmanuel & Parker 2013). Consumers will now spend more hours watching TV and be willing to spend more money in subscription or video-on-demand fees.

Enhancing user experiences

TV has advanced tremendously in recent years because of digital technologies advancement. From traditional black and white or colour TV, it now has features like high definition multimedia interface (HDMI), Dolby surround effects to 3D technology offering real-life effects to viewers. In addition, in the digital era, TV has provided more connectivity with other devices such as Nintendo wii or Xbox 360 game machine, Internet access for online games, music and many more. Many of these devices provide multi-user games that allow family members to enjoy playing the games in the living room together. Imagine the effects on family bonding when parents

and their children can enjoy a game of tennis for several hours in front of the television in the living room.

Through technologies, TV has created a 'cocooning impulse' (Tryon 2012, p. 291) that unite families and brings them together (Cosgrove, Schaffer & Horlin 2013), creating bonding and harmony in the family. User experiences are also enhanced through the superior content delivery through digital technologies. Movies are more readily available in household TV through Pay TV or Subscription TV options. TV drama series like 'Serangoon' made by Australian TV or Lena Dunham's 'Girls' are some examples where these sitcoms series which are made for television (Mundell 2013) have created a 'glueing' effects on user experiences to the TV.

Technologies like video-on-demand and built-in program recorders of TV show allows time-shifting, thus watching TV becomes a 'pleasure and a treat' for housewives (Venkatraman 2013). Statistics have also shown that users are now more than doubled spending time watching time-shifted TV using their DVR (digital video recorder) (Madison 2012). Interactive TV also allows viewers to interact with other viewers through polls, chats, online shopping or voting.

3D technology in TV has now experienced a worldwide resurgence together with high definition video capability and superior sound quality standards. It also brought about a drastic change in television viewing, creating vibrant three dimension and captivating real life effects on the viewers. This has created a '3D revolution' (Uniyal 2012) in the user experiences watching TV at home and not only in cinemas. Technological innovations in 3D technology

for TV offer a more interactive television user experience through captivating user interfaces like 3D animations or real-time interaction with online apps like Facebook and Twitter (Connected Media World 2013).

Platform mobility

Traditional scheduled television broadcasts and viewing through receive-only television sets have been increasingly supplanted by digital technologies offering viewer engagement and convenience through video-on-demand, viewing of television programs across a multitude of devices such as smart mobile phones, Apple iPad tablets, Smart Internet-Ready Television, and sophisticated digital set-top boxes provided by cable and internet television operators.

As pointed out by Sterne, people can spend many hours of their time watching specific programs using their mobile devices and still not realizing and thinking of themselves 'as watching television' (Sterne 2012). Tyron defines "platform mobility" as the "idea that films and television shows can move seamlessly from one device to another with minimal interruption" (Tyron 2012). He also noted that digital delivery technologies allowed workers and families with hectic schedules, the ability to watch television programs 'wherever and whenever they would like' (Tyron 2012). This provides them the individual and personalized experiences that cater to their own tastes and needs, enhancing the overall compelling user viewing experiences.

Tyron (2012) further argues that the viewer empowerment through digital technologies has an overarching impact on viewer engagement as more

mobile devices like iPad tablets, laptops and smartphones can provide the platform mobility to the users. Members of the family can watch different or same television program in different places within the house. This also empowered individual viewer to access to a wide range of choice selection like viewing on-demand movies on personal mobile device, online chat using social media applications such as Twitter and Facebook or speaking with their friends on their mobile phones while watching a sport game.

Platform mobility also allows producers like Warner to sell their films through this mode of digital delivery to viewers who can purchase them via iPhone apps. Viewers can choose to view their favorite movies as and when they would like, in the living room or on a bus.

Thus it can be said that the resurgence of TV as a home for “ quality” entertainment can be partly attributed to demand spawned by viewers’ mobile and digital era lifestyles, and their desire to be an engaged viewer instead of being a passive one.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is apparent that digital technologies will continue to remain a dominant force in the television industry as a home for ‘ quality’ entertainment. TV network services providers continue to capitalize on the advancement of the digital technologies so as to explore and offer more innovative and value-add services to TV subscribers.

Advancement in the Internet or other media delivery channels like satellite, broadcast via cable, allows service providers to increase their revenue

streams by offering more superior content and options and enhancing user
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experiences by making use of newer technology like 3D. Platform mobility remains the focus of the future research in the digital technologies in the TV industry. This is because of the ever changing lifestyles and demanding needs of the younger generation for more contents and mobility.

Hence, we will not see the demise of the television but rather a revolution that television plays an important part in the home for quality entertainment, through the digital technologies; and it continues to provide intrinsic value in family bonding.

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