

Mobile devices star in prime time at home

June 1 2012, By Edward C. Baig and Mike Snider

His kids might commandeer the TV before bedtime, but online game designer John Comes still gets his prime-time fix. Just on a smaller screen.

Using his [iPad](#), he can watch content from traditional TV and cable channels such as ABC, TBS and HBO, as well as newer options such as Hulu and Netflix. As for the family's 46-inch HD-TV at their Seattle-area home, "I watch it when (they) are asleep for items I can't watch on my iPad," says Comes, 37.

Internet [video](#) is changing the face of prime time. Online junkies are no longer turning to cyberspace just to watch cute clips of kids, pets and movie trailers on YouTube.

New research made available exclusively to USA Today shows how consumers are using tablets, smartphones, [game consoles](#) - and, yes, Internet-connected televisions - to devour live sports, network TV and cable fare. And most of this is happening during the same prime-time hours that were dominated decades ago by the major networks' over-the-air [TV broadcasts](#).

Meet the new prime time. Same as the old prime time. What is changing is that smaller screens on mobile devices are being used at home more than ever expected. And, surprisingly, people are watching longer and longer videos on their mobile devices, even the smallest screens.

This new cyber audience that has grown up with on-demand video and

DVR time-shifting scorns appointment TV in favor of a user-generated viewing experience in which they are in control. "People are consuming their content at the time they prefer, on the devices they prefer and increasingly in the context they prefer," said Jay Fulcher, CEO of Ooyala, the video management company for networks, broadcasters and content providers that shared its user consumption data with USA Today.

The newfangled prime time extends beyond weeknights. To the digital viewer, Saturday night is increasingly a prime viewing time. Those watching aren't necessarily glued to the 50-inch television in the living room, and if they are, they still often peek at the tablet on their lap.

Video viewing on tablets rises in the morning, tails off midday, then surges again in the evening, according to first-quarter data compiled by Ooyala. On a typical weekday, one-third of tablet video-watching occurs from 7 to 11 p.m., with only about 17 percent of computer video viewing taking place at that time.

Viewers on connected TVs watch nearly one-third more video from 4 to 11 p.m. on Saturdays than on a typical weekday evening. Ooyala's takeaway: Programmers should remember this when they plan content and monetization strategies.

ESPN is among the more than 1,000 global clients that rely on Ooyala to help power their online video, and it takes the findings to heart. If you already subscribe to ESPN through the likes of Time Warner, Comcast, Verizon or Bright House Networks, you can take advantage of the free Watch ESPN app on an iPad to watch the network's sports programming on the go.

"The way we look at this is about trying to serve sports fans whenever and wherever they are," said Damon Phillips, who heads ESPN's

digital/Web video content strategies and product development. To Phillips, that means delivering programming, often live sporting events, to the "best available screen."

During the workday, he said, that's likely the computer at your office. If you're commuting, it could be an iPad or smartphone. But even at home, it might not be the traditional TV, especially if you lose the battle over the remote control to your spouse or your kids. "We call it subways and sofas," said Ooyala's Fulcher.

The trend of mobile devices serving up prime-time video at home is corroborated by a survey from research consulting firm Frank N. Magid Associates. More than half (52 percent) of all smartphone video is viewed at home, according to its survey of 1,010 adults who watch video weekly on smartphones, tablets or Internet-connected TVs. The peak viewing happens from 8 to 11 p.m.

"Mobile isn't just mobile anymore. It is happening in the house," said Doron Wesly, head of market strategy for online advertising company Tremor Video, which commissioned the Magid survey. "When they are on their couch or watching something else, they are actually watching video as well on their mobile device."

While the in-home TV and computer remain the most popular devices for watching video content, more than half (56 percent) of people with online access say they watch video on a mobile phone at least once a month and 28 percent at least once a day.

Another mobile-viewing shift: Smartphone viewers have historically gravitated toward short-form content, but long-form video - full-length TV shows and movies - now accounts for nearly 40 percent of smartphone video viewing every week, Magid found. In a similar finding, Ooyala found that videos lasting longer than 10 minutes

accounted for half the total time folks spent watching online video. And video viewing on tablets jumped 26 percent after Apple released the latest iPad in March. In all, iPads account for 95 percent of all tablet viewing, Ooyala says.

All this runs counter to what we thought Internet-connected devices would be used for: snacking on short videos while (mostly) away from the home TV. It also makes the strategies of Netflix, Hulu and YouTube - to create original content for their networks - look smart.

[Netflix](#) led the drive to create original content with its resurrection of the acclaimed-but-canceled Fox series "Arrested Development" with new episodes scheduled for next year. It has already released "Lilyhammer" starring Steven Van Zandt ("The Sopranos") and has three other original series in the works.

YouTube is spending \$100 million to create up to 100 channels with the likes of Jay-Z and Madonna. Among the upcoming launches is the July 2 debut of "K-Town," a reality series based in the Koreatown section of Los Angeles. The show, from actor Tyrese Gibson's HQ Productions, will play on the Loud pop-culture channel masterminded by Ben Silverman, former NBC Entertainment president and "The Office" executive producer.

Across all devices, more than half of YouTube viewing in the U.S. takes place during traditional prime-time evening hours. "In prime-time hours, you're more inclined to kick back and watch for a while," said Shiva Rajaraman, a director of product management at YouTube.

Video game entertainment network Machinima, which has one of the most-viewed channels on YouTube, has been adding longer, episodic series, such as zombie action show "Bite Me" and sci-fi series "RCVR," to its steady stream of game demos, reviews and tips videos. More and

more viewers are watching content on the iPad and tablets, said CEO Allen DeBevoise.

"The old television model was: You go home and watch TV when they want you to," he said. "Our model is: You can be anywhere in the world, on any device you want, and we'll let you watch the content whether it's on a mobile phone, a tablet, a computer or a connected television."

The lean-back experience of regular TV compared with computers or even smartphones is why Alok Ranjan, the founder of ifood.tv, says viewers of the company's connected TV channels - delivered via Samsung connected TVs, Google TV and Yahoo television platforms or on Roku and Boxee set-top boxes - are likely to watch three to four instructional cooking videos for 15 to 20 minutes. That compares with a website or app viewer willing to devote about five to seven minutes to watch one or two video recipes.

Video snacking still persists on Hulu, and the best Saturday Night Live skits are favorites, said Andy Forssell, senior vice president of content. But [Hulu](#) is also investing in long-form programming with the half-hour series "Spoilers," a show about movies starring filmmaker Kevin Smith. Its debut is Monday.

Net video is a bit like the independent film scene a decade ago, Forssell said, where "a creator has an idea and wanted to get the story told. In traditional TV, that hasn't (usually) been the case. Here, there's a chance for that (idea) to bloom."

As mobile devices become more entrenched, he said, "I think you are seeing the U.S. start to edge toward something like the Japanese situation where you have kids watching a movie on a smartphone 10 feet from a 60-inch TV."

Ooyala's Fulcher said, "We see traditional media businesses who didn't necessarily want to embrace this (online video) trend now being motivated to make investments and get their state of readiness around reaching consumers more effectively." And there's untapped opportunity for online video publishers to grow revenue by serving more digital ads, especially on the longer-form content.

Gartner media analyst Mike McGuire agrees. "In terms of advertising, TV is still the king," he said. "Advertising dollars are increasingly social and going online but are fractions of (regular TV)."

More programming and better mobile apps will lead to increases in video viewing. Smartphone users plan to increase consumption by 36 percent in the next 12 months, tablet users by 32 percent, Magid found. People with smartphones find themselves "folding the smartphone into the media ecosystem in (their) living room," said Magid senior analyst Andrew Hare.

A smartphone and iPad help Dallas event coordinator Mike Duchock keep the peace with his girlfriend. When she wants to watch "Grey's Anatomy" on his 50-inch plasma HD-TV, he uses his [mobile devices](#). "Just the other night I watched my South Carolina Gamecock baseball game on the Watch ESPN app while I half-watched 'Glee' with (her)," he said. "There have even been occasions where I had one game on my iPad, another on my iPhone, and something else on TV."

Networks ultimately benefit by making content available in multiple ways. That way viewers don't have to choose between beloved content and their beloved. "Watching shows on my iPad," Duchock said, "means we still get to be together, vs. me going to another room to another TV."

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Citation: Mobile devices star in prime time at home (2012, June 1) retrieved 10 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-06-mobile-devices-star-prime-home.html>

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