

# TELEVISION AND ONLINE: MEDIA IN SYNCHRONY

Does Internet usage threaten to push TV to the adspend sidelines? Or does the Internet work as an effective partner to TV, offering a further dimension as both platforms continue to develop?

**Matthew Carver** of **egta**, the trade association of TV and radio sales houses throughout Europe, makes the case for synchronicity between the two media



Is television becoming an increasingly irrelevant medium suffering falling viewing figures? In April 2009, Microsoft published a report entitled 'Europe Logs On', in which it predicted that Internet consumption in Europe will outstrip traditional TV in June 2009. The report, based in part on research carried out by Forrester, draws on claimed behaviour of an online access panel to conclude that average TV viewing time currently stands at 11.5 hours per week, and that it will remain at that level. It forecasts an increase in Internet consumption to 14.2 hours per week in 2010 and makes the bold claim that Internet use in Europe will overtake TV viewing in June 2010.

Convincing statements, one might say, and the research was widely reported in the trade and mainstream press with little reflection at the time. However, two

critical factors make this research unsound and, as such, an unhelpful and damaging contribution to the debate on how the two media are developing.

Firstly, claimed behaviour is an inaccurate and unreliable method of measuring media consumption that consistently undervalues the passive, relaxed pursuit of TV viewing. By relying on an online access panel, the results are inherently skewed towards heavier users of the Internet.

Secondly, online consumption by Internet users cannot accurately be compared with TV viewing per individual; the 'Internet usage' sample population includes Internet users only, whilst the 'TV viewers' sample includes the entire population, many of whom are either too young to watch TV or do not possess a set. Solid conclusions can only be drawn by comparing like with like, and for this it is necessary to compare Internet

usage with TV viewing time per viewer.

## TV AND INTERNET - THE TRUE PICTURE

For a more accurate picture, we can draw on data from egta's 2008 database of audience measurement. This data is compiled by independent, universally recognised bodies and used by advertisers and media buyers to determine the level of their investments.

Even the lowest European average TV viewing time per viewer, in Switzerland, is almost 25 hours per week, more than twice the amount reported by Microsoft. Comparative data from France puts average viewing time at over 31 hours per week, the UK at over 34 hours per week and Germany at a little over 35 hours per week. The graph shows Microsoft's data alongside the nationally collected TV audience figures.

“TV through Internet is an important growth sector for TV”

**INTERNET GROWING PLATFORM FOR TV**

That said, beyond the issues mentioned above, there are some interesting findings in Microsoft's report. egta agrees with the report's assertion that increasing penetration of broadband Internet is changing the way TV content is accessed. Alongside mobile TV and time-shifted viewing on PVRs, increasing availability of IPTV and Video-on-Demand on the Internet allows an ever larger audience to watch at anytime, anywhere, and on any device, increasing the reach of broadcast TV. As was reported by the Internet Advertising Bureau (IAB) earlier in the year, TV through Internet is an important growth sector for TV. In addition, watching TV is the fastest growing online activity.

Beyond providing a further platform for delivering TV content, how can the Internet and television work together for advertisers? A report published in 2008 by Thinkbox and the IAB in the UK explored the behaviour of medium to heavy users of both digital TV and broadband Internet and found that concurrent use of the media was high, with almost half of the sample watching broadcast TV whilst online most days. The research found evidence that when used in this way, both TV and Internet advertising significantly increase their efficiency:

TV viewers are driven to online searches, and online advertising

can create a significant uplift for brand metrics. In a key finding, the research indicates that the use of TV and online advertising together can increase the likelihood of buying or using a product by over 50%.

This emerging community of 'viewers' offers broadcasters new cross-platform opportunities to engage with their audiences, combining television's power to connect with the Internet's search functionality.

**CONTENT IS KING**

In a time of rapid technological development and changing, not to mention diverse, patterns of media consumption throughout Europe, it is unwise to make predictions unless they can be based on reliable evidence.

We can be confident that as long as audiences want to consume broadcast media together, television has a bright future. We can be sure that whilst the penetration of high speed broadband and the increasing sophistication of online applications continue along current trends, the Internet will attract an ever larger audience. And we can say with certainty that as a consequence of an increasing amount of choice and availability, no medium can afford to become complacent or fail to put the consumer at its heart and content as its highest priority. The sidelines await those that do. ■

**“No medium can afford to become complacent”**

**IS THE INTERNET VERSUS TV DEBATE MEANINGLESS TO THE CONSUMER - DO WE HAVE TO REDEFINE WHAT 'WATCHING TV' MEANS?**

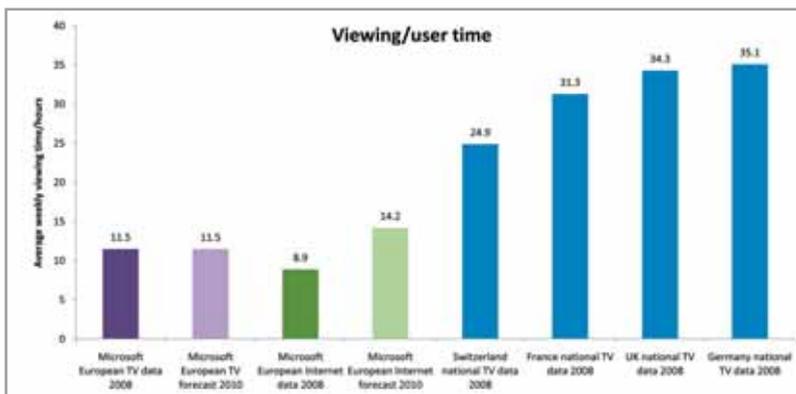
“While time spent on the web is set to surpass time spent in front of the TV, this does not mean that people are watching less TV content, but rather, the way people consume it is changing. The PC is increasingly becoming a screen for watching TV.”

“For 'Generation Digital', content is as likely to be pulled from other devices as it is to be consumed via a traditional TV schedule set. To this generation, TV means video, delivered on demand. In fact, one in seven 18-24 year-olds now watch no live TV at all. This video content is increasingly likely to be consumed online, either as short clips, downloads or streamed full-length content. Already 42% of young adults regularly watch TV online, through a PC. Of the 65% who stream or download TV content once a week, 26% do so every day.”

“All content is now becoming digital, through user-generated, peer-to-peer and on-demand services available via the web.”

“The web is creating a 'social media revolution' – from mass media dictating the agenda we have moved into a user generated social media landscape.”

Source: Microsoft report 'Europe logs on' (April 2009) – the findings can be downloaded at [www.microsoft.com](http://www.microsoft.com)



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