




# InteracTVity

Bite Sized Thought Piece  
2012

## CONSTANT CONNECTIVITY

When the Twitter site crashed for a few hours towards the end of June, the outpouring of anger and frustration amongst its users was striking. Many felt lost without it (one user compared the feeling to being without oxygen), illustrating the extent to which many people now feel dependent on constant connectivity. To be disconnected from sites like Twitter is, for some, to be reacquainted with a less convenient and interesting time that they now find antiquated. Indeed for an increasing number of others, there is no memory of such a time. Twitter's statement of apology conceded that the point of their site is that it is always available to its users, and that therefore any glitch that compromises that is unacceptable.

Social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook are clearly affecting the way people consume and share information, and their effects are being felt significantly in the home. It's quite rare now to see a TV series that does not offer some kind of interactivity, such as a Facebook page that viewers can 'like', or a Twitter hashtag to focus tweets around. TV viewing has become more inclusive for the audience, with viewers able to voice their opinions and discover more about programming before, during and after it is aired. The combination of more sophisticated smartphones and tablets being released, and the continuing collaboration between social media and TV networks suggests that we're witnessing the emergence of the future of television viewing.

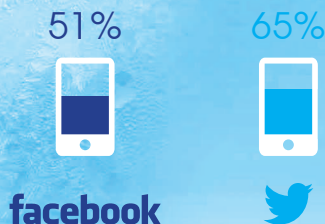


*Twitter is about spontaneity. You can think of something and post it immediately.*

Ipsos MORI technology focus group  
with the public (May 2012)



## USERS ACCESSING THE SITE ON THEIR MOBILES



*"I think it is human nature to want to be connected to other people. You don't want to just be watching a programme and feel it's just you watching, so you connect to Facebook or Twitter. It's all about interaction."*

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## SHARING OPINIONS ONLINE

At Ipsos MORI we know that the advent of more sophisticated mobile devices has made it easier and more convenient for people to access social networking sites. Our quarterly Tech Tracker data (April 2012) tells us that just over half (51%) of Facebook users access the site on their mobile, while amongst Twitter users it is more like two-thirds (65%). Many see smartphones as the perfect device to access these sites (Twitter in particular), as they are designed for spontaneous sharing of information. This has helped to create a completely different experience for people watching TV, as they no longer focus on just one screen, but have another one in their hand that can be used to share opinions 'in the moment'. Many viewers would traditionally have looked forward to discussing a programme

with friends, but they now have a more immediate outlet that is visible to millions.

Many in the TV industry are beginning to see the value in so many opinions being circulated about their shows. Not only do they see the potential to use the comments to make improvements, but they also understand that the increasing interactivity of TV is making it more exciting for the viewer, so developing this interactivity via hashtags and dedicated Facebook pages can help boost their viewer numbers and viewer engagement. Like many brands that, in the last couple of years, have become more receptive to initiatives such as co-creation and have embraced a more open conversation with their consumers, TV producers now have a similar mindset, with social media divisions a common sight within TV networks.

## THE SECOND SCREEN

There is an argument that a second screen such as a smartphone or tablet could divert attention from the TV and cause people to miss out on content. Potentially, though, the programmes during which people tweet would not be as entertaining if it were not for the mass sharing of opinions that takes place while they air. Simon Cowell is one notable producer who has spoken about the social aspect increasing the sense of 'excitement' in TV. Interactivity doesn't stop with Twitter though. Conversations on social media sites such as Facebook and Google+, together with dedicated pages for TV shows, help create a 'buzz' around a programme which can build anticipation and excitement and offer more information about a show.

People now have a convenient device in their hands for researching in further detail a topic covered by a programme. There are obvious benefits here for companies advertising on TV, as they are aware that many of their target market can connect to the internet and search for their product or service in seconds, rather than waiting for their laptop to boot up. Arguably this reflects a wider benefit of what is becoming 'social TV'; though there's still a greater number of people with laptops and computers, each year more people are owning smartphones (now up to 45% in GB) and the convenience with which the digital world is available to them will only make multi-tasking in the home more common in the coming years.



*Sometimes when you're watching a TV programme, you want to know more about the subject if it's a documentary, so you can use Google. Or I could be watching a film and wonder where I've seen the actor before, so sometimes I search for that on my phone or tablet as I'm watching.*



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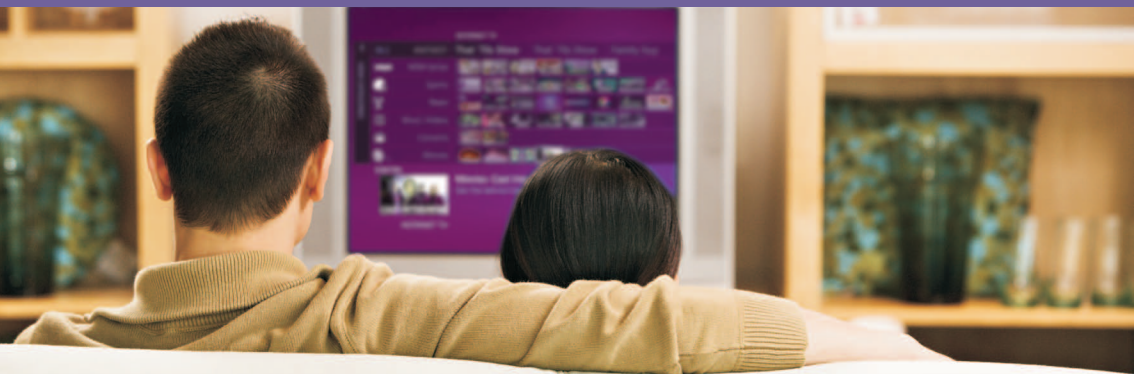
## THE TV AS A PORTAL

Social TV is all about people interacting with TV programmes through sharing opinions and getting more information about them online, mostly using social media. It is possible now though to connect to the internet directly via a TV. 12% of people in GB now connect to the internet this way, mostly through a games console. Online gaming is a common activity, but people are also watching catch-up TV and video clips.

Catch-up TV services such as BBC iPlayer, as well as recording functions on DVR players, are becoming more popular as people live increasingly hectic lives and struggle to watch TV shows when they are scheduled. In the same way that the immediacy of sharing opinions online without having to wait has

changed the way people view TV, the flexibility of choosing to watch a program when it suits the viewer has also had a profound effect in the last few years.

TVs are used now for a much broader range of activities than would have been thought possible several years ago. Viewers can now play games via their TV, and download apps. We know that in the last few months, ownership of internet TVs and 3D TVs has also increased. Ipsos MORI will continue to track the ownership and usage of these devices as the market matures. Exactly how widespread the use of connected TVs will become remains to be seen, but it is certainly likely to become a hotly contested market, particularly with the increased sophistication of DVR players and the introduction of more catch-up services such as You View and Now TV.







## A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR TV

Many see the advent of increasingly sophisticated mobile devices as a threat to television's long established dominance in the home. Arguably though, what we are seeing is a successful collaboration in the form of social TV. Certainly, people aren't glued to just one device anymore, and so attention might not always be on the TV, but the second screen can make their viewing more interactive, involving and exciting.

As well as the benefits for viewers, social media and TV networks also understand that this new form of TV viewing will help them too. Many shows are being planned now with a hashtag and Facebook/ Google+ page already prepared, such is the confidence that people will want somewhere to discuss and share their excitement about upcoming content.

If Twitter's site suffers from problems during an important live event, there could be trouble.

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