The Evolution of Television Viewing:
Social TV, Time-Shifted Viewing and Advertising Responsiveness

Abstract

Technological advancements such as the digital video recorder (DVR) and social media have changed when and how viewers engage with television programs. Given the potential impact of social media on television viewing decisions, we investigate the relationship between social TV activity and consumers’ decisions to engage in live and time-shifted television viewing. Using television tuning data, we examine the impact of social TV activity on (1) the total audience size of an episode, (2) the proportion of devices engaging with live vs. time-shifted viewing and (3) the extent of advertising avoidance. We find that higher levels of social TV activity are associated with a larger audience, more live viewing relative to time-shifted viewing, and earlier viewing among those who engage in time-shifted viewing. We also find that higher levels of social TV activity are associated with reduced advertising avoidance, suggesting the value of a social media strategy for television content producers.

In a second study, we investigate the relationship among television advertising, social TV activity, online traffic, and online sales. Specifically, we investigate how television viewers’ online engagement with programs impacts online shopping behavior at retailers that advertise during the programs. We find that that online program chatter has a significant impact on online shopping behavior following advertisements. While increased online engagement with a program prior to an ad’s airing is adversely related to subsequent traffic to the advertised retailer’s website, we find an overall positive effect on sales at the retailer’s website. We discuss the implications of these studies for both networks and marketers.