

Industry view

Big ideas for the small screen

How will TV advertising change and adapt in the brave new world of connected TV?

Connected TV represents one of the most fundamental changes in TV viewing and ranks alongside the introduction of colour TV in terms of its potential impact on the viewer. As always, paradigm shifts in technology such as this offer opportunities to progressive companies at the same time as posing a threat to unresponsive players.

In many ways, connected TV and associated online services are better placed to support the next generation of media consumers than existing TV viewers. Today's generation of media savvy and hungry teenagers already exhibit very different patterns of media consumption than their parents: when this generation acquire significant disposable income they will create very different drivers within the broadcast television market.

Today, it is the responsibility not only of broadcasters but also the industry built around TV advertising to make sure that the necessary technology evolution takes place so TV remains relevant in the next decade and beyond.

Staying relevant in a connected world

Today, a multi-billion-dollar industry has grown around television and the opportunities it offers to promote brands and advertise products. The challenge is how to harness the potential that connected TV and online services offer and ensure that investment in TV advertising remains effective and appealing to viewers.

This strong trend in multi-screen media consumption offers broadcasters new commercial opportunities – but only if those broadcasters have the tools to enrich the online experience and make it even more relevant to the mainstream, or broadcast product being watched. With ad revenues under pressure and online advertising and other outlets increasing in popularity, these broadcasters (or more properly named multicasters) are in need of a way to sell targeted and relevant services for the online advertising and sales market.

Attempting to take advantage of this new ad model, some forward-thinking broadcasters have already written apps designed specifically for particular TV shows. Others have leveraged new audio technologies and custom apps to identify what a person is watching and to provide relevant information. While these approaches tackled some key aspects of enriching the viewing experience with online content, they remained relatively crude in their design and efficacy.

Constrained by dependence on preset schedules, many of these apps have been unable to adapt to live programming – including the most popular music, game and entertainment programmes in which live performances are so critical – or to accommodate the dynamic insertion of commercial breaks. Such programming doesn't allow the broadcaster to build a playlist of rich and relevant information in advance.

Unable to provide rich information on a scene-by-scene basis or to adapt smoothly to changes in the live broadcast schedule,



early solutions for linking programming with online advertising were limited in the value they could bring to viewers and, as a result, to advertisers.

Reaching out to media savvy consumers

Now Snell, an independent UK company with a heritage centred on developing ground-breaking broadcast technology solutions since the 1960s, has developed a multi-screen broadcast automation solution. For the first time this enables advertisers to engage in highly targeted advertising campaigns that bridge a number of connected media devices.

The company has joined forces with The Application Store (TAS) and integrated Snell's industry-leading Morpheus playout automation system with "second-screen" apps on iPad tablets and other smart mobile

platforms. In addition to facilitating delivery of content to media consumers' TV screens, Morpheus allows broadcasters to extend the experience onto a second device, the second screen.

On this device, complementary interactive content not only drives up interest in programming and opens the door to higher revenues through polls and such, but also enables the broadcaster to sell new forms of highly targeted advertising.

The exchange of "metadata" – the information describing what is being seen or heard, timing data, and even viewing rights information – is key to this. Driving essential metadata within the TAS Screentoo app, Morpheus supplies all the real-time data essential to maintaining synchronicity between the primary broadcast and interactive and timeline-sensitive elements

displayed on the tablet or similar device.

Equally important, the Snell system also offers the volume and granularity of information required by second-screen apps such as Screentoo. The automation system makes this synchronicity between the mobile application and the TV broadcast possible by supporting rich secondary-event metadata with an unusual degree of sophistication.

In the model established by TAS, media and broadcast organisations distribute the Screentoo app as their own branded application, through which they provide services such as voting, polls, chat and e-commerce related to and customised for a specific show or channel.

The very accurately timed metadata provided by Morpheus enables the Screentoo app to provide the consumer with options that correspond directly to events within the primary broadcast.

Data provided automatically by Morpheus about both the programme and programme contents allow the Screentoo app to trigger targeted advertising, provide information

The challenge is how to harness the potential of connected TV and online services and ensure TV advertising remains effective

about a character or actor in the show, or launch a viewer poll. Viewers can vote, enter competitions, participate in quizzes and purchase items.

The fact that Screentoo has an integrated e-commerce back-end means that it's easy for broadcasters to offer a variety of financial services as part of the integrated service they offer. The ability to link through to other websites expands the commercial aspect of this model, yielding opportunities for product placement that's connected directly to the manufacturer or vendor's online presence and shopping interface.

"The integration of advanced automation technology with second-screen apps has brought greater versatility and better quality to delivery of multi-screen media content," says Neil Maycock, chief architect at Snell. "The ultimate goal is to make compelling, unmissable content for all the screens our viewers use to consume media, so while the TV screen will remain the most important to our audience, it is definitely true to say it is one of many ways in which they can watch content."

"The general convergence of the industry opens a multitude of possibilities for broadcasters and advertisers to create a deeper, enriched and more interactive relationship with their viewers. Our work with TAS is a significant contribution to this industry-wide goal."

www.snellgroup.com