Brief Project Description

Our group is interested in designing a social TV watching system. We live in an age surrounded by constant stimulation from technology, and many times, this technology aims to connect us with others. However, one very common technological pastime of our generation is watching TV, and TV watching isn't exactly a social activity. Our group seeks to design a system that introduces a social aspect to TV watching. We envision a system or app where users can connect while watching a show and chat about the show, almost as if they were together while watching. A chat room would also allow people to ask questions, or post interesting thoughts.

Research Findings

1.   The use of social media while watching TV

One study points out the fact that while social networking is on the rise, so is technological multitasking. The study found that many social media users have used social networks while watching television, and that "…a significant portion of these users were specifically using social media to talk about the content they were viewing on television" (eMarketer). The percentage of users engaging in online socializing while watching TV was 15 to 17 percent. Some social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter are attempting to bridge the gap between social media and TV watching, but are doing so in a small way. Facebook, for example, is expanding their use of hastags to show users how much conversation is taking place online (eMarketer). Another study showed that among smartphone owners, 29 percent said they emailed or texted friends about a program while watching it (Nielsen). It is becoming evident that people are seeking connection with others while watching a program.

2. Communication through social media increases awareness of TV programs

Not only do users admit to communicating while watching TV shows, one study shows that ¼ of TV viewers stated that they were more aware of TV programs because of these social media interactions. In addition, "…15 percent of viewers said they enjoyed watching television more when social media was involved" (Nielsen). In 2012, 18% of TV viewers agreed with the statement "I am more aware of programs", and in 2013, 25% of viewers agreed with that statement (Nielsen). Based off of this evidence, it is possible that a social TV viewing system would not only add value and social connection for viewers, but it would help many TV programs and movies gain popularity.

3.   Second screen apps

One article I read talked about the relationship and differences between second screen and social TV. According to the article, second screen is any application where there is a second

screen that compliments the main content you are viewing (McHugh). Anthony Rose, founder and CEO of Zeebox lists five factors that users need in a second screen app:

- · Discovery (help finding what to watch)
- · Information (plot summaries, characters)
- · Participation (when users can interact with the show, usually through voting)
- · Shopping (allows you to buy something from an ad)
- · Social (able to talk with others about the show)

The author makes a point that the term "social TV" is too vague, because this term can involve anything where a social interaction and TV collide. For example, tweeting that you are watching a certain show can be considered social TV, but the author argues this is not actually social; it is just passive activity (McHugh). I found this idea very interesting, and it led me to create my own criteria for what is and is not social. This article seems to hint at the idea that interaction between two people, usually some sort of conversation, is what can be considered social.

Sources

Exploring the social tv viewing phenomenon. (Oct 10, 2013). *eMarketer.* Retrieved from http://www.emarketer.com/Article/Exploring-Social-TV-Viewing-Phenomenon/1010286

Living social: how second screens are helping TV make fans. (Aug 4, 2014). *Neilsen.* Retrieved from http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/news/2014/living-social-how-second-screens-are-helping-tv-make-fans.html

McHugh, M. The difference between second screen and social TV apps is that there isn't one. (April 2, 2013). *Digital Trends.* Received from http://www.digitaltrends.com/home-theater/the-difference-between-second-screen-and-social-tv-apps/