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HCDE 418

Web Research

Project Topic

On average, college students spend just under 3 hours a day watching TV. With rising social media and smartphone use, our team is interested in designing a product or system to facilitate social TV watching among friends, family, and individuals with similar viewing habits. Before designing a new interface or product, we are interested in examining current social TV apps and efforts to gain a better understanding of the current situation. With this research we can better understand what direction to take in our designs and learn from the mistakes and failures of others. A summary of my own individual research on social TV watching can be found below.

Current Status of Social TV

The general public and tech journalist once thought 2013 and early 2014 would be the year of social TV. This was due to a high number of social TV startups apps and services alongside a large push from broadcasters. Unfortunately, most of these social TV startups and services have disappeared and social TV is now considered dead, but only the shape and form it took on in that year. Specifically, social TV services tried using check-ins, tailored ads on mobile, and even stickers to add a social aspect to television. But, all these efforts failed because they failed to take into account how people were already being social with television and instead tried to create new ideas. People were already using

Facebook and Twitter while watching their television shows to share opinions, read posts written by other, and confirm or ask questions. For example, the show *Pretty Little Liars* had over 1.45 million tweets during their season four finale. This number shows people like and are willing to share their ideas online and while viewing their TV show. Equally important, another failure in social TV was the second screen app that provided extra information to the viewer while they viewed their show. The app would provide trivia information, questions, and other “fun” tidbits to the viewer. This effort failed because of two main reasons, it was difficult to do this for every TV show and the users did not want to be bothered or annoyed with questions while watching TV. This is an aspect we should avoid when we attempt to create our own take on social television.

Our Approach

After learning about the recent failure of social TV, I believe my group can learn from these mistakes and take a different approach than the failed attempts. First, there have been no attempts to create or build a social experience for people that are already in the same room or already plan to view a show together in different places or time. These individuals would be searching for an app or service to plan and make their social TV watching easier and would be a great target audience to begin with. In addition, maybe smartphones could be used to personalize the actual TV experience when watching a show. The use of Facebook and Twitter should be seen as a strength and built upon instead of trying to create a new platform to share and talk about shows.

Sources

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