THE COMPUTER AS THE NEW TV SET: EXPLORING GRATIFICATIONS FROM STREAMING NETWORK TELEVISION SHOWS IN AN ON-DEMAND AGE

by

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(Under the Direction of Itai Himelboim)

ABSTRACT

TV networks now offer many of their shows online as free, on-demand streams, making the Internet a viable alternative to the television set for watching broadcast and cable programs. This study looks at gratifications sought from streaming TV shows online, with a focus on both human-computer interactive (HCI) and computer-mediated communication (CMC) interactive features. A survey of these features from Web sites of the top broadcast and cable networks was conducted, and 274 students were surveyed on their TV-streaming habits. Results suggest streaming for entertainment and diversion best predicted using HCI features, and streaming for social purposes best predicted using CMC features. The need for surveillance of both current events and TV programs, however, predicted the use of CMC features—going against the one-way flow of information commonly associated with research findings on surveillance through the media. Implications for the television industry and directions for future studies are also discussed.

INDEX WORDS: Television, Streaming, Internet, Uses and gratifications, Surveillance, Entertainment, Social utility, Interactive, On-demand

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INTRODUCTION

"TV is everywhere" is a statement that could not be taken literally 10 years ago. For decades now, many people have been accustomed to having a television set in their homes, or at least in their lives. Recently, however, access to arguably the most popular form of mass media has changed, as broadcast and cable TV networks alike have mutually adopted the computer-Internet platform to allow viewers the option of watching much of the same programming available through traditional means, through their own personal devices, including the computer. This transmutation of the viewing process is still fresh and continually evolving. Networks attempt to come to terms with the effects this is having on their production and distribution models, while viewers adapt their habits of watching their favorite programs in this on-demand world.

The television and the Internet are two media that have recently become blurred. Their convergence suggests that the potential of new motivations for watching TV content might exist. Options to satisfy those motivations are now more abundant as the TV has become an often-mobile device, giving viewers access to network programs when and where they desire—on demand, and for free.

This study looks at the phenomenon of streaming network television content online, using a Uses and Gratifications approach to unearth motivations that might affect when, where, and how consumers choose to (or not to) stream their favorite programs online, through computers. Although multiple devices (and screens) are currently capable of streaming video, for the purpose of this study I will focus on the personal computer as the primary device.

In chapter one I will explore the Uses and Gratifications approach to mass communication, starting with a general look at media consumption studied under this lens, followed by the specific acts of both watching TV and using the Internet to satisfy needs. Criticism of Uses and Gratifications will also be covered.

Chapter two will move toward the television-watching process as an interactive, online process. The way individuals can stream their favorite TV shows online seemingly changes from week to week, and even from day to day. Both human-computer interactive options that enhance the personal viewing experience, as well as computer-mediated-communication choices that allow individuals to interact with each other and with content producers, currently exist. I will explore both of these types of interactive features in order to uncover why viewers might choose to watch TV online.

Chapter three will then synthesize both classic and more recent Uses and Gratifications models with current online streaming platforms. This will bring me to a revised conceptual framework from which I will draw research questions for the study.

Chapter four will cover methods for the study. A survey of Web sites to identify interactive features available for streaming TV content will accompany a survey questionnaire that will attempt to further identify the reasons why this streaming option has been increasingly utilized as a choice for satisfying the TV-viewing experience.

Chapter five will include results of the study, followed by a discussion of the findings.

CHAPTER 1

THE COMPUTER AS THE NEW TELEVISION SET: EXPLORING GRATIFICATIONS FROM STREAMING NETWORK TV SHOWS IN AN ON-DEMAND AGE

Individuals turn to media when seeking information and entertainment, whether from the daily newspaper, the evening network news, or the Internet, to name a few. From a theoretical perspective, much credit has been given to, among other factors, public influence and the media and their messages when identifying why people consume the media that they do. But it was the Uses and Gratifications theory that turned the focus away from the media and on to consumers by looking at what people do with media instead of what the media do to people (Katz, 1959). This began to provide a different and useful lens for studying individuals' media consumption behaviors. Still, criticism of Uses and Gratifications became common, often arguing that the model is outdated for the 21st century. Today's changes in technology demand a revised model in order to effectively evaluate both traditional and new media—specifically the Internet and mobile digital communication—that have developed since Uses and Gratification's inception. For example, no longer is the television merely a medium that delivers content in one direction—from producer to consumer. Nowadays the consumer has more control over the delivery of content than ever before, including when and where TV shows can be watched.

In this chapter I will discuss Uses and Gratifications, or U&G, as it will henceforth be referred to. First I will map and review U&G's historical routes, then examine the theory's major lines of criticism. Next I will examine more recent theoretical attempts to bring up to date

U&G to better fit new and changing media technologies. Last I will review research relevant to U&G and the Internet, including user motivations.

Historical Routes of Uses and Gratifications

The U&G approach to communication studies came to the forefront of media research in the late 1950s and early 1960s, following disappointments in attempts to study short-term effects of people's exposure to mass media campaigns (Blumler, 1979). In 1959 Katz turned the question of "What do media do to the people?" around to ask, "What do people do with media?" This allowed the focus of communication research to be turned from communication itself to consumers. Prior to this, however, research related to gratifications sought through media consumption had already been conducted, before U&G had been named as such.

Needs

As this research deals with needs and how they are gratified through the media, a brief discussion on what is meant by the word "needs" is relevant. Maslow (1943) conceptualized basic human needs into five sets of interrelated goals, arranged in a hierarchical manner so that the most prepotent goal monopolizes the consciousness until it is satisfied. The most prepotent needs are physiological, followed by needs for safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. Baumeister and Leary (1995) conceptualized the need to belong as a fundamental human motivation that seeks goal-oriented behavior to satisfy it. Further, a fundamental need "would presumably be innate, which would entail that it is found in all human beings and is not derivative of other motives" (p, 517). Throughout this research the terms "needs" and "motivations" will appear, and numerous needs uncovered through the literature will be cited. For this and other studies related to U&G, it helps to understand needs from this framework—

as fundamental human motivations that can be at any of various levels of importance, with some possibly gratified through media.

U&G Main Concepts and Studies

Earlier U&G research was descriptive and unsystematic, focusing more on audience motives and less on media effects (Rubin, 2002). It was not operationalized into theoretical-based conclusions that could be measured quantitatively or applied to larger populations (see for example Herzog, 1942; Suchman, 1942; Wolfe and Fisk).

Some of the earliest empirical studies were conducted in the 1940s. Herzog is often credited as the originator of the U&G approach, though she did not coin the term (Baran & Davis, 2006). Her study of daily radio soap opera fans in the 1940s yielded three major types of gratifications: Listening was simply a means of emotional release; a commonly recognized form of enjoyment concerns the opportunities for wishful thinking; and advice is obtained from listening to daytime serials (Herzog, 1944). Suchman (1941) studied the motives for listening to serious radio music; Wolfe and Fiske (1949) studied children's interest in comic books; and Berelson (1949) studied newspaper reading.

This first phase of U&G research gave way to the transitional studies of the 1950s and 1960s, which emphasized "operationalization of the social and psychological variables presumed to give rise to differentiated patterns of media consumption" (Blumler & Katz, 1974, p. 13), allowing for U&G research to be deployed and measured quantitatively. Riley and Riley (1951) explored the notion that individual opinions result from group affiliations. They found that small children who were not integrated into peer groups used media differently than those who were. The non-peer group children used the media primarily for fantasy, and were attracted more to violent themes. The peer-group children used the media for ideas related to peer-group

interactions. They concluded that non-integration into peer groups caused strain related to social structure, which in turn resulted in higher fantasy production and the seeking out of media content to nurture them. Maccoby's (1954) study of the relationship between frustration among children and using television to seek out fantasy found that the relationship varied with social class.

Starting around the early 1970s, more quantifiable, outcome-based empirical research of U&G began to be conducted. Blumler and McQuail (1968), in an effort to find out why people watch or stay away from political party broadcasts, and how they prefer politicians to be presented on television, interviewed 748 registered voters in 1959 and 1964 prior to the 1964 British general election. They found that the TV was the preferred source for news, and that surveillance of the political environment was found to be a major reason for watching television. They also found that middle-aged voters and those holding non-manual jobs were more concerned with image and personality of the politician than were younger voters and those holding manual labor jobs.

Katz et al. (1973) integrated many of the theory's assumptions into a more streamlined, quantifiable description of U&G: It became more concerned with the social and psychological origins of needs. These needs were then seen to generate expectations of the mass media or other sources, leading to differential patterns of media exposure. This results in need gratifications and other mostly unintended consequences. These more synthesized approaches differ from the earlier approaches to mass communication effects, such as the two-step flow and agenda-setting model, for example. The foci continued to remain on the audiences and their own assessments of the media.

In 1974 Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch outlined main purposes for looking into U&G, mainly to explain how people use media to gratify their needs, to understand motives for media behavior, and to identify functions or consequences that follow from needs, motives, and behavior. U&G theory presumes that audiences actively seek out media in a goal-directed way that provides them with the means of gratifying a wide variety of needs (Katz et al., 1974; Palmgreen, Wenner, & Rosengren, 1985; McLeod & Becker, 1981). "The person follows his/her interests, choosing media content according to needs and synthesizes that content to satisfy those needs" (McLeod & Becker, 1981, p. 69). While there is general agreement in the basic concept of U&G, according to McLeod and Becker, "there is no coherent U&G theoretical perspective. Rather, there exist various formulations of just what should be included in any eventual theory carrying this label" (p.71). Early research into U&G was diverse, but the foci soon turned toward the television and the child audience (McQuail, 1984).

McQuail, Blumler, and Brown (1972) named four definitive categories that identify gratifications sought through the media. They are: " […] diversion (including escape from the constraints of routine and the burdens of problems, and emotional release); personal relationships (including substitute companionship as well as social utility); personal identity (including personal reference, reality exploration, and value reinforcement); and surveillance" (p. 445).

In a U&G study conducted by Katz, Haas, & Gurevich (1973), 35 "media-related needs" were classified through a combination of three facets: "Mode," which is broken down into the categories to strengthen, to weaken, or to acquire; "connection," which is defined as information, knowledge and understanding, gratification and emotional experience, credibility, confidence, stability, and status, or contact; and "referent," which is either to the self, family, friends, state or society, tradition or culture, world, or others. For example, a gratification sought through media

could be classified as "to strengthen the understanding of friends." This research has investigated what needs certain people feel are important, and whether or not individual media help satisfy those needs. The needs were broken down into five groups: The need to strengthen information and knowledge (cognitive needs); to strengthen emotional and pleasurable experience (affective needs); to strengthen credibility, confidence, stability, and status (an integration of cognitive and affective needs); to strengthen family and social ties (also an integration of cognitive and affective needs); and the need for tension release, escape, and the weakening of contact with the self and other social roles. This study and others will be further reviewed in the next section.

Rosengren (1974) developed a more elaborate conceptual model for U&G, one that starts with basic human needs and how they interact with individual and societal characteristics. It includes patterns of media consumption and individual behavior, as well as motives for dealing with perceived problems and solutions. According to Rosengren, it was a paradigm made more elaborate so as to provide "examples of research relevant to them, criticisms of such research, and also, perhaps—where the paradigm directs our attention to lacunae within the work carried out to date—suggestions for new research" (p. 269).

The phase of U&G development associated with Katz, Gurevitch, Rosengren, et al., is typically referred to as a more matured phase of its development (Palmgreen et al., 1985). This work further defined key assumptions about U&G that grew out of the growing number of media gratification inquiries. These assumptions were "that (1) the audience is active, thus (2) much media use can be conceived as goal directed, and (3) competing with other sources of need satisfaction, so that when (4) substantial audience initiative links needs to media choice, (5) media consumption can fulfill a wide range of gratifications, although (6) media content alone

cannot be used to predict patterns of gratifications accurately because (7) media characteristics structure the degree to which needs may be gratified at different times, and, further, because (8) gratifications obtained can have their origins in media content, exposure in and of itself, and / or the social situation in which exposure takes place" (p. 14). To oversimplify this, there is no quick way to attribute gratifications sought with gratifications obtained. Many individual and societal factors must be considered, as well as what goes into the media content used to gratify.

McLeod and Becker's (1974) illustrative study during the 1972 American presidential campaign built upon Blumler and McQuail's (1968) study on the use of television for political gratification and avoidance. 389 potential voters in Madison, Wisconsin were interviewed on a variety of communication and political topics, including media exposure, gratifications, avoidances and attitudes, and perceptions of political issues in the upcoming election. Among their findings was that no matter the age group (under 25 vs. 25 and older), surveillance was a high-priority gratification sought.

When surrounded by countless choices of media, consumers tend to migrate to the same choices (habitual) over and over again to satisfy their needs and thereby reserve mental resources (Diddi & LaRose, 2006). "People will engage in repeated behavior of media choices once they have been accustomed to consuming their daily news from a specific source, rather than constantly vacillating between the various sources made available to them on a daily basis" (p. 195). While this might seem to go against the U&G paradigm, it actually serves to reinforce the notion that individuals, once content with their choices of media consumption, will become creatures of habit in gratifying their needs through those same choices.

Criticism of Uses and Gratifications

While many scholars dispute the specific origin of U&G research, there is much common agreement that the basis of the research warrants much criticism in its approach. With little theoretical backbone, the early studies were mainly descriptive in nature, focusing on individualistic behavior, with audience responses classified into pre-designated categories in order to make them fit a pre-conceived model of U&G (McQuail, 1994; Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955; Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1948). What is fundamentally missing from early U&G research is the attempt to identify the connection between the gratifications discovered through research and the psychological and sociological source of the needs that required satisfying (Ruggiero, 2000). Another perspective is that U&G research often studies the media and its uses in a singular, psychological way, without taking into consideration its uses in social settings (Grossberg, Wartella, Whitney, & Wise, 2006, p. 266).

Elliot (1974) also argued that the U&G approach is individualistic, dealing with intra-individual processes that, although they can be generalized to larger populations, cannot be done so meaningfully into social structures and processes. He suggests that the approach is empiricist, with methods imposed upon subjects rather than taken from them. He uses the Katz et al. study (1973) as an example, suggesting that the questions "How important is it for you to understand the true quality of our leaders" and "How important is it for you to feel satisfied with the way of life in Israel as compared with other countries" could not be answered and that "no self-respecting researcher would (or should) consider trying to answer himself" (p. 252).

Looking back at the early U&G approaches, Katz (1987) suggested that they relied too heavily on self-reporting, were unsophisticated about the social origin of needs that audiences bring to the media, were too uncritical of the possible dysfunctions both for self and society of

certain kinds of audience satisfaction, and were too captivated by the inventive diversity of audience uses to pay much attention to the constraints of the text.

McQuail (1984) posits that to truly understand how U&G can be explained, it is important to make connections between quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis: A cultural model which links motivation for uses to individual personal taste in order to achieve satisfaction (gratification) and; a cognitive model which links motivation for uses to personal interests and available media content, resulting in satisfaction (gratification).

While much of this negative criticism on U&G—specifically the early studies—might be warranted, it is also significant to point out how the U&G approach has been adapted in ways that can counter much of this early criticism. Baran and Davis (2006) cited three developments that U&G's early revival in the 1970s can be traced back to: New and improved survey methods and data analysis techniques allowed for respondents' reasons for using media to be more quantifiably and systematically measured, turning the mostly subjective analyses into more objective ones; increasing awareness by researchers that society's active use of media could be a factor in making effects more or less likely. In other words, active audiences can decide whether certain media effects are desirable before they set out to attain those effects; and researchers' concerns that "negative" effects of media were being too heavily studied while "positive" effects were being ignored, that much less was known about how audiences were using media to their benefit.

A second revival of the U&G approach by scholars has much to do with the Internet, communication scholars' interests in online audiences, and how those audiences obscure the line between sender and receiver of mediated messages (Singer, 1998). Ruggiero (2000) cited three attributes not commonly associated with traditional media that have for so long been a focus of

U&G. They are: Interactivity, which "significantly strengthens the core U&G notion of active user" (p. 15); demassification, which Williams, Rice, and Rogers (1988) defined as the control by the individual over the medium, "which likens the new media to face-to-face interpersonal communication" (p. 12). Through demassification, the individual media consumer can choose from a large selection of media, previously shared only with other individuals as mass media, through newer technologies; and (3) asynchroneity, the ability for senders and receivers to send and receive messages at their own convenience. This can be applied to a number of media choices, including e-mail, the VCR (DVR), and the Internet.

Television Viewing Motivations

Daytime TV soap operas have been included in numerous studies linked with U&G. This is perhaps as an extension of some of the earliest U&G research that studied gratifications sought from listening to early daily radio serials (see Herzog, 1944). Lemish (1985) studied viewing motivations by undergraduate college students for the daytime TV soap opera—specifically ABC's popular *General Hospital*—through participant observation in natural settings, in-depth interviews, and the use of informants. She found motivations that paralleled U&G literature, including content gratification—a preference and attachment to a particular soap opera, and time consumption—relaxation not tied to a particular program.

Rubin (1985) interviewed 1,023 U.S. university students and found four primary motives for watching soaps: Orientation—seeking to determine how others think and act; avoidance—time consumption and escapism from boredom and problems; diversion—entertainment and amusement; and social utility—a way to interact with others.

Compesi (1980) surveyed 221 viewers of the *All My Children* TV soap opera, and found, in this ranked order, these overall important reasons for watching: Entertainment; habit—normal

routine or something looked forward to; convenience—the program was on at a convenient time; social utility—gratification derived from watching and talking about the program with friends; relaxation or escape from problems; escape from boredom; and reality exploration or advice—using the program to help solve a personal problem or provide an accurate depiction of reality.

Comparable to Compesi, Perse (1986), through a survey of 458 undergraduate college students, recognized exciting entertainment, habit (pass time), information (using soap operas for reality exploration), relaxation and escape, and voyeurism as soap opera viewing motives. Interestingly, the voyeurism motive was related to sexual-interest statements of the survey, and was tied to the sexual appeal of both content and characters in soap operas. Carveth and Alexander (1985) surveyed 265 college student TV soap opera viewers, and identified enjoyment, boredom prevention, reality exploration, escape, and character identification as motivations for watching.

Gratifications linked to watching TV religious worship services have also been the focus of U&G research. Petterson's (1986) nationwide Swedish survey of 946 respondents uncovered that watching services on TV was less burdensome than attending in person, while still achieving the same levels of overall gratification as being in church, but not necessarily the same specific gratifications. For example, attending services becomes more instrumental in gratifying when one wants to be in a more solemn atmosphere, experience community with others, and experience God—needs deemed less likely to be obtained by watching services on TV. Abelman (1987) sampled 210 respondents who were frequent religious TV program viewers, randomly drawn from cable TV subscribers. Motives for watching religious programming were found to be: Information and learning; dissatisfaction with commercial TV programming; spiritual guidance; entertainment; avoiding commercial TV; feeling close to God; religiosity (the

importance of religion in one's life); moral support; companionship; convenience; economics (a less expensive experience); pass time; arousal/excitement; salvation; habit; escape/forget; topic for communication/discussion; behavioral guidance; product advertising; relaxation; replaces church attendance; and social interaction.

Greenberg (1974) studied gratifications and motives for television watching among 9, 12, and 15-year-old children in England. In 1972, 726 children in a London school district took a self-administered questionnaire, the purpose of which was to find if motivations are independent of each other, how predominant these motivations are in the children, and if any other media- and non-media-related behaviors are associated with the motivations. Major gratification factors identified were: Learning habit; arousal; companionship; relaxation; to forget; and to pass time. Overall, similarities in findings were evident across all ages in the study.

Gantz and Wenner (1995), in documenting the differences between sports fans and non-fans, linked gratifications from watching television sports with fandom, finding through a survey of 707 adults in Los Angeles and Indianapolis that fanship correlated with active TV sports audiences: Watching "to see how my favorite team does," and because of "the drama and tension involved," were high. However, unlike other studies cited here, watching was not related to "passing time."

With the advent and subsequent popularity of television reality programming came research designed to break down motives specific to watching the genre. Nabi, Biely, Morgan, and Stitt (2003) sampled 252 Tucson, Arizona residents on gratifications sought from reality-based programs. They found that regular viewers watch for entertainment, find the programs suspenseful, and enjoy the unscripted nature of the genre. Regular viewers were not, however,

citing boredom, escapism, information gaining, or social utility as gratifications sought. Casual viewers were found to watch more out of curiosity and for entertainment.

Lundy, Ruth, and Park (2008) analyzed interactions among a focus group over a four-month period in 2004. They found that while there was a perception among participants of a social stigma related to watching reality shows, is was not enough justification to disengage from watching them—primarily for escapism and the social interaction resulting from watching with friends and family.

Barton (2009), in seeking gratifications obtained through viewing competition-based reality programs, surveyed 689 college students at a large southeastern university, each of who admitted to watching at least one competition-based reality program. She came up with a motivation sought not previously uncovered in U&G research—personal utility—which refers to that which is personally provided to the viewer. In this case, personal utility included: To make one feel less lonely; because there is nothing else on TV; to help forget about problems; and to help relax. While all of these items under "personal utility" are not necessarily new motivations for watching, as they have been cited in previous U&G studies, the variable "they are different than anything else on TV" was not cited as having been uncovered through previous research.

Cooper and Tang (2009) conducted a Web survey among students, faculty, and staff at a large midwestern university. They found that while no single theoretical construct played a role in audience TV exposure, seven factors—ritualistic motivations, use of the Internet, audience availability, the cost of multi-channel service, age, instrumental motivations, and gender—accounted for 30% of variance in audience exposure to television. They offer an integrated model of TV exposure to further break it down. Motivations refers to both instrumental use and ritualistic use, as identified through U&G research. Rubin (1984) suggested that, ‘‘instrumental

media use reflects more active patterns of using media content to select information from realistically perceived messages. Ritualized media use reflects less active patterns of using the media to fill time and relieve boredom'' (p. 67).

Cohen (2002) conducted a principle component analysis of 750 Israeli adults to identify groups of TV shows watched by the same viewers. He found that both channel and genre loyalty are determinants of program viewing preferences.

Roe and Minnebo (2007), in an effort to test whether social factors can directly explain aspects of media use, surveyed 1,888 high school students in Belgium to measure level of effort in school, perceived negative relationship with parents, and mood management through TV viewing. The dependent variable was adolescents' use of TV as a source of mood management. It was found that, indeed, TV viewing was directly related to tensions within the home and school life.

In an effort to cast a U&G lens on patterns of TV viewing related to environmental concerns, Holbert, Kwak, and Shah (2003) found that such concerns are predictors of TV news and nature documentary viewing, and that these programs contribute to pro-environmental behaviors.

Motivations for Watching TV: Summary

With the countless studies conducted since U&G research's early stages of development comes a longer list of motivations for watching television. What is interesting, and even reinforcing of the U&G approach as having withstood the test of time, is that many of these motivations can be closely traced back to the four definitive categories that make out gratifications sought through the media, as identified by McQuail et al. (1972). They are

diversion, personal relationships, personal identity, and surveillance. We will explore these categories more closely and relate subsequent studies to this typology.

Diversion, further classified by McQuail et al. (1972) as escape from routine and problems, as well as emotional release, has often been cited as a motivation for TV watching. In fact, the notion of escaping and forgetting, even if only for a short while, has come up as a popular reason in many studies, as indicated by the preceding literature review of U&G research. Diversion for entertainment purposes and to escape boredom is also frequently cited.

Personal relationships are further broken down into companionship and social utility, since they both refer to the "viewer's relationship with other people—either real-life persons or media personalities" (p. 448). Social utility—using TV programming as a catalyst for social interaction with others, and companionship—whereby television characters and personalities stand in for real persons in ways that allow the viewer to enter into relationships with them as if they were friendly toward each other, are also still cited as determinants of TV watching and gratifications often sought by viewers.

Personal identity refers to personal reference, reality exploration, and value reinforcement, which also still appear in U&G research. Studies cite using TV program content to learn about reality (perceived or otherwise) and to learn about new or reinforce existing values held by the viewer.

Surveillance as a motivation for TV watching, as one might expect, is also still cited in U&G research. Additional motivations often cited include habit, convenience, dissatisfaction with certain types of TV programming that make a viewer gravitate toward a specific type of program over others, curiosity, and loyalty to a genre or TV channel.

These motivations, while not a complete list, are abundant in U&G research related to watching traditional television. They tend to support traditional and early empirical research findings on the theory, while occasionally uncovering additional determinants of viewing.

As technologies change, so do ways of communicating. With the advent and popularity of the Internet and World Wide Web come different gratifications sought by using them. Next, we will look at research showing how U&G is applied to the Internet.

Uses and Gratifications and the Internet

The Internet offers different media options—including newspaper, television, radio, and books—through one platform. Of course, the Internet is not limited to these choices. It also allows individuals to communicate with others across the hall and around the world. Through it we share pictures, personal stories, and music. We use it as a video-telephone device, talking with (and seeing) others in real time, and as a home monitor when we are away. It is no surprise, then, that a second revival of the U&G approach to media use has much to do with the Internet, communication scholars' interests in online audiences, and how they obscure the line between sender and receiver of mediated messages (Singer, 1998).

For many, the Internet is a tool used daily. Since its establishment as a household word, it has been lauded because it is convenient, informative, resourceful, and entertaining (Sun, Rubin, & Haridakis, 2008). According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project (2009), 74 percent of adults and 93 percent of teens (12-17) in America use the Internet. 56 percent of adults have accessed the Internet wirelessly, using a mobile device, laptop, or game console. 39 percent go online wirelessly through a laptop. The Internet is as mobile as the user who has access to it wishes it to be. Through the Internet one can access information from a seemingly endless variety of sources. Nearly any question can be searched through search engines, which,

alongside e-mail, have become the most widely spread online activity (Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2009).

We find traditional forms of entertainment and information through the Internet. We watch our favorite TV shows through network television Web sites. We listen to our favorite artists through their own Web sites or through MySpace, and via a variety of online music radio stations such as Pandora and Slacker. We read books that have been made available online. We send asynchronous letters through e-mail. We can give up traditional print models in favor of online editions of newspapers and magazines. No longer must we go to the newsstand, record store, post office, or even to our own living room TV sets if we do not wish to.

The Internet has also opened up a world of non, or neo-traditional forms of media consumption. YouTube allows us to peak inside the creative (or mundane) minds of citizen moviemakers. Facebook lets us act as voyeurs and see as little or as much of what goes on in our friends' lives as they will allow us to see. Musicians now have the freedom to distribute their own music, through the Internet, without the aid of record labels. Synchronous communication with our friends and loved ones, through online text and video chats, affords many of us the ability to keep up with people next door and around the globe, all at the same time.

So how, then, with all that the Internet has to offer, do we affix the classic U&G model to this medium? One of the most important and fundamental assumptions of U&G is that the audience is active (Palmgreen et al., 1985). But what of the audience when it goes beyond "active" and becomes "interactive?" Technology has changed significantly, and will continue to evolve, since the U&G model was first put to the test. How have these evolutions affected the theory overall? Katz et al. (1973) suggested that people bend the media to their needs more readily than the media overpower them. As active consumers of media, how does the Internet, if

at all, affect this statement? The U&G approach may well be suited to studying the Internet, since the two-way nature of online technologies requires users to be active (Kaye & Johnson, 2002). So then, are motivations for watching network TV programs online at all different from the motivations for watching them in the more traditional manner—on actual TV sets?

In the next section we will look at research linking U&G to new media—specifically the Internet and the technologies that use it, for the purpose of uncovering differences between gratifications sought and obtained through traditional and new media.

U&G and New Media

U&G research has demonstrated systematic progression since the early 1970s (Rubin, 2002). While this research might have lessened over the past several decades, innovations in communication technology—specifically telecommunications technology—might have been the catalyst for its revival of sorts. These new technologies present the consumer with many more media choices to satisfy their communication needs, making motivations and satisfaction crucial elements of audience analysis (Ruggiero, 2000). Ruggiero discovered through research that five different interactive dimensions exist that can apply to U&G as it is related to the Internet. They are playfulness, choice, connectedness, information collection, and reciprocal communication. It is the role of the user that indicates which dimension applies: Web surfers take the playfulness and choice role; task-oriented users take the connectedness role; and expressive users take the information collection and reciprocal communication roles.

In exploring household use of e-mail through a survey of 112 adults, Stafford, Kline, and Dimmick (1999) found that home e-mail was most closely tied to the need to gratify interpersonal relationships (keeping up with family and friends), personal gains (such as information gathering, learning, recreation, and information exchange with others), business

(corresponding with clients, etc.), and "gratification opportunities" such as ease of use, less-expensive communication, convenience, and quickness.

Ferguson and Perse (2000) adopted the U&G framework to explore the similarities between TV and the Internet, using a combination of survey and media-use diary, to see if Web surfing is a functional alternative to watching TV. What they found were gratifications from using the Web that mirrored those for watching TV: Entertainment, pass time, relaxation, social information, and information. They concluded that the Internet might offer some of the same gratifying functions as the television, particularly diversion. However, relaxation was not as strong an indicator of Internet use as is television. It is important to note that at the time of this study, watching network television content through the Internet was simply not an option.

Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) surveyed 279 university students about their motives for using of the Internet, and found five primary factors: Information seeking, intrapersonal utility, pass time, convenience, and entertainment.

Teo (2001) looked at demographic variables such as age, gender, and education, in conjunction with motivation variables such as perceived ease of use, perceived enjoyment, and perceived usefulness, and their associations with Internet usage, by analyzing 1,370 survey responses. Internet activities for this study included messaging, browsing, downloading, and online purchasing. Results found that males were more likely than females to download and purchase, younger people had a higher likelihood than older people to message and download, and education had little effect on messaging, downloading, and purchasing.

Audience characteristics (i.e., age, gender, economic status) are also heavy influencers of media usage. Age, specifically, is a determinant of new technology use. Younger people are

more inclined to adapt to new technologies because they already understand them, while older audience members are more uncomfortable with them (Kang, 2002).

Katz and Aspden (1997) analyzed a 1995 national random telephone survey dataset from 2,500 respondents on their motivations for and barriers to using the Internet. At the time only eight percent of respondents reported being Internet users, and socio-personal development was cited as the main gratification sought by its use. This includes such activities as communication with other people through, among other things, e-mail, obtaining information on special interests, and keeping up to date.

In investigating the under-researched link between U&G and using the Web for political information, and more specifically, how political attitudes and political self-efficacy predict Web motivations, Kaye and Johnson (2002) conducted an online Web survey designed to attract politically interested Web users around the 1996 U.S. presidential election. They found the following—guidance, information seeking/surveillance, entertainment, and social utility—as top motivations for getting political information from the Web.

A recurring theme in all this literature is that gratifications sought tend to follow the traditional, categorized, pre-determined list that is often cited through U&G literature. Much criticism of the theory is based on this. However, this list has become less absolute. For example, Eighmey and McCord (1998) conducted an exploratory study whereby participants browsed and evaluated well-known Web sites in 1995. While several factors commonly associated with U&G were cited (including entertainment value, personal relevance, and information involvement), two surfacing factors—personal involvement and continuing relationship—also appeared in the study. Personal involvement here is indicated by a level of personal feeling obtained through a Web site, while continuing relationship refers to a strong

potential to attract and hold an audience. Why these two seemingly obvious relationships with traditional media have been left out of past U&G research is a wonder. It reinforces criticism of the methods initially used to categorize gratifications into the theory, as mentioned earlier. At the same time, it shows how U&G has evolved into a potentially stronger way of looking more realistically at how individuals use media, beyond the earlier and more two-dimensional quantifiable classifications.

Summary of Motivations for Using the Internet

The Internet and World Wide Web are interactive media. They are not simply one medium, as are television, radio, and the newspaper. They combine different media into a single online platform and allow the user to actively choose and consume or engage in which one (or ones, if multi-tasking) suits them at each individual time. Because the Internet has so many different uses, it would seem improbable to pigeonhole motivations for using the Internet into a single classification in ways other singular media are. Still, as might be expected, many of the motivations for using the Internet do mirror those of other media.

As is found in many U&G studies related to TV watching, gratifications sought through using the Internet include diversion and entertainment. Further motivations include information related gratifications such as surveillance in learning (information seeking, for example, through Web surfing). Keeping up with family and friends (through e-mail and video and voice chat) and information exchange with others, both personal and business related, were also cited as motivations. Personal involvement (toward a particular Web site, for example) and continuing relationship, as cited by Eighmey and McCord (1998), are two motivations for using the Internet that did not seem to fit a previously-defined U&G categories.

Finally, three motivations—ease of use, quickness, and cheapness of use —are tied to Internet use, and can be linked back to nearly every aspect of its use, since many individuals today have become accustomed to having access to the Internet 24/7, whether it be in their homes, laptop bags, the library, or through smart phones and PDAs.

The Internet now provides a working alternative to the traditional television set for accessing network TV programming online. Exploring reasons why some people turn to the online format instead of the TV set requires looking at relevant motivations for using both mediums. At the intersection of TV and the Internet lies the need for diversion, whether it is to escape, be entertained, or simply to pass time. Both mediums are also used for surveillance, that is, to keep up with societal information and the news, for example. Where the two seem to differ are through levels and types of activity, and with the Internet, interactivity.

The "Active" Audience

Defining "active" in relation to media use when describing TV audiences is not as simple as comparing being physically active versus passive. Researchers under the structural approach view the audience as passive in their decision to watch (for example, Comstock, 1980; Webster, et al., 2006), with availability of content serving to define them (Cooper & Tang, 2009). Researchers with active-audience approaches see them as more active, in that they decide both to watch television and choose the content, even if the active decision lies more in the selection of content than the decision to actually watch it (Rubin, 1984). Rubin also suggests that "instrumental media use reflects more active patterns of using media content to select information from realistically perceived messages. Ritualized media use reflects less active patterns of using the media to fill time and relieve boredom" (p. 67).

The Internet, however, is a much more interactive resource, allowing users to engage in two way, synchronous and asynchronous communication with others, and with Web sites themselves. But interactivity through the Web might also be translated into watching TV, as the user is able to engage himself with the programming when he wants—on demand, with little effort, and with the power to change programs without missing any content. Regardless of the active versus passive argument, it is this bridge between the two media that calls for further exploration into why some people choose the Internet over the TV for watching content. That is, what are the gratifications sought, and is the Internet currently satisfying them?

Moving forward, I will look closer at these gratifications sought to see if they indeed can apply to streaming network TV content online, on demand, and for free.

Conclusion

The Internet and Web are an abundant resource of information and entertainment that seems to be able to gratify many individuals these days. Although the Internet may be similar to TV in some ways specifically related to viewing video content, as a whole it does not gratify the exact same needs that TV does (Kay & Johnson, 2002). For example, searching for product information, researching, and downloading software cannot functionally compete with the act of watching TV, as the interactive component of surfing the Web demands more attention and involvement (Ferguson & Perse, 2000).

Today, however, the Internet is much more of a TV than it was five years ago. TV network sites (for example, abc.com, nbc.com, cbs.com, and fox.com) and cable network sites (for example, cartoonnetwork.com, comedycentral.com, discovery.com, and tbs.com) now offer full episodes online of programs that have recently aired during their scheduled broadcast times—in some cases immediately after they have aired. These programs are offered on demand

and for free, either through their own Web sites or through third party sites such as Hulu or YouTube. A high-speed Internet connection and a computer screen are all that is required to watch, for example, last night's episode of Fox's *24* or Comedy Central's *The Daily Show*.

The objective here is to uncover motivations that drive individuals to stream TV shows in today's on-demand world. According to McLeod and Becker (1981), in summarizing the U&G perspective, "the (active) person follows his/her interests, choosing media content according to needs and synthesizes that content to satisfy those needs" (p. 69). Whether or not the Internet satisfies gratifications sought by those watching online in the same way TV does, the media landscape continues to change. Both consumers of TV content and the entertainment companies that produce the content are faced with new methods and choices of distribution and consumption. Research on this relatively new and fast-growing phenomenon of watching network TV content online and on demand is not yet abundant.

Next, we will look deeper into online television, from both the industry and end-user perspectives.

CHAPTER 2

TELEVISION, THE INTERNET, AND INTERACTIVITY

Chapter one mapped out the range of motives and gratifications individuals gain from using the Internet. In order to identify how the Internet can be used, this chapter will examine and map different classifications of interaction on the Web. I will start by reviewing literature on interactivity, identifying how scholars have conceptualized the construct. I will then move to the literature on the Internet as a complimentary platform to the TV, and then review how the Internet is used for streaming video content. In doing so, I will take a look at some of the different opportunities and options available for streaming premium video content online. Concluding this section I will apply the broader interactivity-related conceptual frameworks discussed earlier to the study of the interactivity of streaming video content through Web sites. This framework will allow me to identify the different ways in which people interact with video streaming, help map their experiences, and provide further insight to the relatively new phenomenon on viewing network television content online, on demand, and for free.

Interactivity on the Web

"Interactivity" and "interactive media" became significant buzzwords in the 1980s and early 1990s when researchers, politicians, and economists became fascinated with the euphoria surrounding multi-media (Quiring & Schweiger, 2008). Interactivity is originally rooted in sociology, as defined by the interactive relations between human beings (Blumer, 1986). While the term "interactivity" is often used in mass media research, particularly with the rise of Internet usage, a consensus of how it is accurately defined has not been reached (Kiousis, 2002). Still,

basic assumptions exist on interactivity in media. New media and communication technologies, specifically the Internet, are often associated with interactiveness. Steuer (1992) and King (1998) agree that interactivity involves the ability to control and alter, in real time, media content, something many forms of media, sans the Internet, do not allow for. Interactivity allows for receiver feedback through new technologies, but that does not necessarily explain how peoples' perceptions of an interactive medium predict levels of interactiveness (Kiousis, 2002).

Chan-Olmstead and Park (2000) included e-mails, chat rooms, polls and surveys, discussion forums, online feedback and news-tip forms (on newspaper Web sites), visitor registration mechanisms, online shopping, the ability to download files, customizable content (push technology), live camera views, video and audio streaming, search and help functions, and FAQ sections when categorizing interactive features of the Web. Greer and Mensing (2004) categorized interactive features into two modes—multimedia and interactivity. Here, multimedia refers to the aforementioned video and audio streaming but adds animation to the list, while interactivity refers to the already-mentioned e-mail, forums, letters to the editor, and customizable news.

While many scholars refer to similar interactive online features, the way they categorize and conceptualize them can be quite different. Deuze's (2003) interactive lens on online journalism organized it into four categories—moderated and unmoderated participatory communication, concentration on editorial content, and concentration on public connectivity. A year later, Paulussen (2004) identified three categories of interactivity on news Web sites: Choice complexity refers to ease of use, responsiveness to the user, facilitation of interpersonal communication, and immediacy of content; hypertextuality refers to the use of both internal and external hyperlinks on a Web site; and multimedia is the integration of music, video, audio,

pictures, and animation. Rosenberry's (2005) institutional approach to classifying interactive features looked at the following: Institutional authority behind citizen voices, such as blogs and polls; ways for citizens to interact on public issues, such as through forums, message boards, and community chats; ways for citizens to interact with public officials, such as through e-mails and chats; combining citizen and institutional stories; and surveillance of information through interactive methods, such as external links and interactive story telling. Chung (2008) isolated four discernable categories of interactivity on the Web: Human-to-medium interactivity, whereby citizens can contribute, or at least submit, letters and content to the media; medium-to-human interactivity such as personalized content, alerts, and e-mail updates; human-interactive features such as chat rooms and online forums; and medium-interactive functions such as audio and video content.

Interactivity: TV on the Internet

In recent years TV content has become complemented by online content and activities (for example, Ross, 2008). Being connected to the Internet turns TV watching into a shared event, providing tools of analysis that alter the watching experience, and allows viewers to become more invested in the creation of a show than ever before (Nussbaum, 2002). Indeed, many TV programs have embraced the Internet beyond simply promoting shows. Nowadays the Web can be used to further attract, engage, and keep TV audiences, through a variety of supplemental and interactive content. Understanding how complimentary these two platforms currently are and will be in the future can be an important step in redefining how society will continue to view and be engaged with TV content.

As recent as 1997, there was no support in the notion of the rapid decline of TV viewing as a result of the rising popularity of Internet usage. Instead, the growing interaction between the

two media was put forward (Coffey & Stipp, 1997). Pairing TV (and also motion picture) and Web content can be as simple as giving viewers access to online fan blogs and chat rooms. For example, the small budget film *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) had created an online fan following more than a year before it was released in theaters. But this relationship can go much deeper too. Henry Jenkins (2006) introduced the phrase "transmedia storytelling" as a way to explain how, in today's age of media convergence, multiple texts and platforms are integrated to "create a narrative so large that it cannot be contained within a single medium" (p. 95). He uses the film *The Matrix* (1999) as a prime example of transmedia storytelling, because it encompassed multiple media, of which the original film was served to stimulate interest. This included Web comics, video games, an anime series titled *The Animatrix* (2003), and the subsequent two film sequels, *The Matrix Reloaded* (2003) and *The Matrix Revolutions* (2003). It then turned it all into a massive, multi-player online video game. *The Matrix* creators, Andy and Lana Wachowski, would also appear in various online chat sessions to discuss their franchise.

This notion of storytelling across different media platforms, including the Internet, easily transcends into television, and allows viewers to interact with both the studios (through official sites) as well as with other viewers (through unofficial, user-generated sites). For example, Toton (2008) cites the re-envisioned *Battlestar Galactica* TV series, which debuted on the Sci-Fi (now SyFy) channel in 2003. A darker and much deeper narrative than the original 1978 TV series, the newer incarnation quickly spawned many online communities, which generated fresh content on a daily, if not hourly, basis. And, beyond these fan sites, such as bsg_femslash (http://community.livejournal.com/bsg_femslash) and galactica icons (http://community.livejournal.com/galactica_icons/), existed the program's viewers' own wiki communities, such as Battlestar Wiki (http://battlestarwiki.org), a user-generated collection and

catalogue of things such as characters, ships, and vocabulary, all related to the series. At the same time, through the show's official Web site, fans of *BSG* were able to watch webisodes—a series of short episodes available only online that would bridge the narrative gap between seasons. Online video blogs, hi-resolution photo galleries (of spaceships from the series, for example), computer icons, commentary podcasts, behind-the-scenes footage, and iPhone apps all allowed fans of the show to further connect with the franchise beyond the main televised episodes.

Is it this fandom that helps drives the success of TV programs and their Web sites? Many sites do allow for narrative recreation and fan interaction to take place by anyone with an Internet connection, at all levels of technical savviness and sophistication, and almost always under the watchful eye of program producers, who can more easily take the temperature of their audiences by monitoring their online activity. Booth (2009), expanding on Levy's (1997) argument of examining the naratological possibilities of online wikis, studied fan wikis of the popular TV shows *Lost* and *Heroes*. He conceptualized the interactivity present through this online format into what he calls "narractivitity," whereby fans express new conceptions of a story through interactive narratives by rewriting, revising, reorganizing, or retelling a show's story, all within this interactive online database.

Andrejevic (2008) studied online TV program fan sites, discovering how producers and writers were paying more attention to their online forums and the interactive communities that comprise them. This allows for instantaneous feedback and two sides of interactivity—the promise of shared control, and the ability to engage viewers in market research. A result is producers' "digital embracing" of fan culture in a more productive way, since the fruits of fans' labors can instantaneously be harnessed by them.

Costello and Moore (2007) investigated fans' uses of the Internet to keep up with their favorite TV programs and to interact with other fans. Here, online fans are described as a "unique subset of the television-viewing audience with access to the Internet and a motivation to seek out online resources related to the viewing of a favorite program (and) express their attachment to television narratives by creating or visiting Web sites associated with a program, and/or by interacting with other fans who share a common zest for the same TV series" (p. 4). Those who responded to the researchers' survey were found to be more sophisticated than the stereotypical "couch potato," with tastes in intellectually-stimulating programming, who used the Internet for active information seeking as an interpretive community in which they could transcend the assigned role of mere viewer.

Cesar, Bulterman, and Jansen (2009) took a more technical approach to interactivity by focusing on using secondary screens in a multi-user, multi-device environment. Their study involved using a separate computer screen simultaneously while watching TV, but in a way related to the content being watched, through a private social experience. The researchers organized the ways in which viewers interact with the TV into three classifications: Content control refers to the ability for the user to select content being watched using a secondary screen and a sharing interface, possibly with the intent to not bother other viewers in the same space who are watching the primary screen (TV); content authoring is the notion that the secondary screen user can manipulate content from their device, through annotation, fragmentation, or even enriching the existing material; and content sharing, or the act of sharing their enriched or manipulated content with others, through e-mail, blogs, or peer-to-peer platforms. Results of this study were that users most valued this secondary screen technology for previewing and viewing content, for accessing enriched information, and for sharing fragments of TV content with others.

It should be noted that this study was done in cooperation with European technology companies in an effort to "analyse the commercial prospects of a distributed home control paradigm from a non-technical perspective" (p. 140). These devices and platforms are currently not readily available to general publics.

Society turns to the TV and to the Internet for multitudes of reasons. Often the two media do not overlap with each other. More and more often, however, they do, whether it involves watching video content or becoming more involved through online interactions with other viewers and content producers. Where a major overlapping of the two is becoming more prevalent nowadays is with the ability to stream network TV broadcast and cable content, including clips and entire episodes—from primetime dramas, situation comedies, and reality shows, to daytime soap operas and the evening news, to last night's *Late Show with David Letterman*—online, on demand, and for free. This relatively new phenomenon has the potential to redefine the saying "I saw it on TV." Next I will look at opportunities, options, and availabilities of streaming video content online.

TV on the Internet

As recent as 2005, placing TV programs online had promotional value, but was still merely a complex experiment (Malone & Higgins, 2005). Today, the immediacy of the Internet has changed consumers' viewing patterns from appointment-based consumption to our newer "on-demand" lifestyle (Lapan, 2009).

According to a Nielsen report (3rd quarter, 2009), more than 138 million Americans watched video on the Internet each month during the third quarter of 2009, a 15 percent increase from the year prior. This is in comparison to 283.5 million who watched TV in their home, a .4 percent increase from the year prior. 15.7 million Americans used a third screen, the mobile

phone, each month during the same time period, a 53% increase from a year prior. A recent Leichtman Research Group report (Feb. 23, 2009) cited that 34% of adults who go online at home said that they watch some sort of video online at least weekly, including 11% who view daily. This compares to 31% a year prior, and 25% two years prior to the survey.

While these data clearly do not show any indication of the Internet overtaking the TV as the main medium for viewing network content anytime soon, the increase in viewership through the Internet and mobile devices is an indication that, according to Nielsen, "consumers are clearly adding video platforms to their weekly schedule, rather than replacing them" (p. 2).

According to a white paper published by the Convergence Culture Consortium at MIT (Seles, 2009), people watch TV content online for three primary reasons: To watch a show they missed during its original on-air broadcast; to watch something they have not yet seen on TV; and to watch a show again that they already saw on TV. One main difference between watching broadcast content on TV and online is the control over when and where content is viewed. TV content is scarcer, in that the broadcasters choose the time that a program will be carried by their network. It airs, can be viewed in real time, and then goes away. Of course, some programs will air multiple times during a brief time span—perhaps over one or several days, or over a month—but ultimately the viewer has little control over when he can view the program, and must tune in at exact times. An exception to this is time shift TV viewing, which has been an option for decades with the VCR, and more recently with the availability of digital video recorders such as TiVo. Time shifting allows viewers to choose from a virtually limitless, pre-recorded queue of selected programs, typically through a cable or satellite TV service. These devices have been and will continue to be the focus of many scholarly studies (for example, Krugman and Johnson, 1991; Du Plessis, 2009; Smith and Krugman, 2009). To be sure, DVRs do allow for interactivity

between user and content provider. Content that is pre-recorded is then later played back on-demand. However, the level of interactivity that is allowed for by online streaming platforms, as will be discussed later, brings online streaming interactivity to a higher level than the DVR generally allows for.

Viewing network programs over the Internet means that, as long as the content is made available online, the viewer can choose to watch when and where it is convenient for him. In a sense, viewing online is a less linear experience than viewing on TV—that is, content within a program can often be accessed immediately with the click of a mouse, making the experience freer from network control, allowing the flow of content to be controlled by the viewer (Seles, 2009).

So, which TV networks offer free, online, and on-demand streaming of full episodes? Put another way, how are networks regaining some of the "control" lost when online viewing is available? And, how much, and what, is made available? A simple answer would be that most networks do offer their shows for streaming, including the big four broadcast networks of ABC, CBS, Fox, and NBC. Many cable networks do as well, including the majority of the top 25 cable TV programming networks (SNL Kagan, 2009). Others carry episode clips or, in the cases of news and sports networks like CNN and ESPN, interviews that make up parts of full episodes offered only on TV. However, to maintain certain levels of control, each network does not offer all programming online.

While individual television networks continue to offer to stream full-length programming through their own individual Web sites, it is the Hulu platform, however, that has managed to partner together with multiple competing networks to offer their programs through one comprehensive site. Hulu.com launched in March 2008, and is currently jointly owned by News

Corp.'s 20th Century Fox, Disney's ABC, and General Electric's NBC Universal—three of the big four American television networks. CBS, the lone holdout, has shown no interest in becoming a partner with the rest (Jefferson, 2010).

Hulu.com is currently the second most popular source for online video—behind only YouTube—with 13.6 million unique viewers and 634.8 million total streams reported in December 2009 (Nielsen Internet). However, these numbers have been disputed as being grossly underestimated, with as many as 42 million viewers reported logging in and watching (Stelter, 2009). Digital research company comScore, Inc. (2010), in their recap of the 2009 digital year, reported that in December 2009, Hulu viewers watched more than 1 billion streams totaling 97 million hours of content. This is a 140 percent increase from one-year prior, with the average viewer watching more than two hours during the month. Regardless of which numbers are accurate, there is no dispute over the growth of Hulu into the number one online source for streaming network TV content. It currently has more than 220 content partners, including A&E, E: Entertainment Television, and PBS, in addition to NBC, Fox, and ABC.

While viewers may have the ability to control content they watch online, it is still contingent on the content first being made available to watch, and also the length of time after the initial TV broadcast that it will remain uploaded to the site. For example, episodes of Fox's *24* are posted for online streaming as early as the day following their initial broadcasts, allowing viewers to almost immediately watch online for the first time, or as on-demand repeat viewings. But the length of time that these shows are made available may vary. Often, only the most recent five episodes of a network program are offered.

Making many prime-time programs available online to view at one's leisure has also prompted some concern over how much is too much. For example, during the 2008 Summer

Olympics in Beijing, NBC offered 2,200 hours of live streaming of events. However, for the 2010 Winter games in Vancouver, NBC's decision to take a step back and offer only two events for online streaming—curling and hockey—is an acknowledgement that Internet viewing can indeed cannibalize TV viewing. And with NBC having predicted to lose a quarter-million dollars on the winter games, their decision to protect core television airing is a trend that continues to grow (Weprin, B&C).

Watching TV online can transcend traditional viewing habits of simply choosing a program and watching it. Synchronous, human-to-human communication is also an option in some instances. For example, CNN and Facebook, the social networking site, joined forces for the inaugural address by President Obama on January 20, 2009. They offered the ability to watch the ceremony live on CNN.com while simultaneously allowing viewers to update their Facebook statuses and see their friends' updates, all in real time. The final count at 3:30 p.m. was that CNN generated over 136 million page views, served more than 21.3 million live video streams, and at it's peak, was serving 1.3 million streams concurrently (Cashmore, 2009).

CBS.com introduced a feature allowing online viewers to interact with others while streaming a program. "Social TV" (http://www.cbs.com/social_tv/) permits the opportunity to for viewers to connect with others in real time to "watch and chat" in what the network describes as a "real-time viewing room." Of course, this feature, by its nature, does not allow viewers to start streaming a program at his leisure, since the interactive element requires all viewers to watch the same elements of the program at the exact same time in order to have relevant, real-time conversations.

Different networks offer variations of online streaming platforms for users to view content. However, while differences between them exist, there are more similar features that are

shared across these platforms. For example, Web sites offer the opportunity to expand content to full-screen views, maximizing computer screens' dimensions to obtain the largest picture possible for each user. The abilities to pause, review what has already been played, and go forward through the running time of programs is fairly consistent across platforms as well.

Some network sites offer different resolutions of some of their content. For example, CBS.com offers the choice of viewing certain programs in various streaming resolutions. Shows available on CBS.com, including "The Good Wife" and "NCIS Los Angeles," were offered in choices of "high quality" (480p), "high definition" (720p), and "full HD" (1080p). At the same time, ABC.com, while not offering the opportunity to choose a screen resolution for viewing their content, would automatically switch from standard definition to high definition, seemingly upon detecting that both the Internet connection and user's receiving device could support it. Further analysis of streaming platforms on network Web sites will be discussed in chapter four.

Watching a TV program on demand through the Internet is similar in some ways to watching the same program via the airwaves, cable, or satellite, in that the program itself generally contains the same content regardless of the platform it is viewed on. Still, many differences exist that differentiate the viewing experience. Internet access points are available in many places besides the home, making viewing possible anywhere one can plug in or grab a wireless Internet signal on their personal computer or laptop—including coffeehouses, libraries, college campuses, taverns, and airports. This portability—the mobile TV—coupled with free and on-demand access to many programs, has brought TV watching out of the home, a place it has been almost limited to since the first television set was brought into the living room. But beyond the convenience of watching, the Internet has enabled producers and fans alike to control how content is presented and viewed, sometimes mimicking the controls of a VCR or DVR, as

discussed earlier. Further, the Internet as a platform to supplement the TV-watching experience, whether to voice opinions, create or consume official or unofficial content, communicate with other fans or networks and producers, or engage in other forms of computer-mediated communication, means that TV shows are no longer simply streams of media that flow exclusively from networks to viewers. Rather, the viewer has, in a sense, been given the opportunity to take one step closer to producer. He cannot not only choose programming based on his immediate desires, but can manipulate both the time and place he watches and offer feedback—to fans and producers alike—all with the click of a mouse and a few keystrokes.

Next, ways in which individuals can interact with computers and each other related to watching TV content will be discussed.

Conceptual Framework for Interactive Classifications

Steuer (1992) and King (1998) agree that interactivity involves the ability to control and alter, in real time, media content, something many forms of media, sans the Internet, do not allow for. When looking to the Internet as source for streaming network TV content, several relevant views of the concept of interactivity can be applied. These involve both human-computer interaction and computer-mediated communication between viewers, streaming Web sites, and those who control the content (i.e., TV producers and networks). Next, these two facets of interactivity are reviewed and tied to the discussion on Internet and the TV.

User Control of Online Content

Traditional watching of TV programs, through a dedicated television set, is an appointment-based activity (Seles, 2009). Viewers tune in at pre-determined times, normally at the top or bottom of the hour, and then can watch until the program ends. Save for the VCR and DVR, as discussed earlier, the viewer has little if no control over his viewing experience, except

to change channels, adjust the volume, and switch the TV on or off. The content flows one way—from network to consumer—with no real means for the consumer to directly influence the experience. Streaming these same programs online adds a new dimension to the viewing process—user control through human computer interaction. This process can be compared to watching on a DVR, since that device *is* a computer. It has many of the same control features that streaming offers, but with overall less degrees of interactivity. Now, when programs are made available online, it is typically up to the viewer to engage in the viewing process when and where he wants, and with a variety of options previously not made available with the TV and DVR. Paulussen (2004) identifies choice complexity, which includes responsiveness to the user and immediacy of content, and hypertextuality, or the use of hyperlinks. Both of these elements of interactivity put control in the viewer's hands. Therefore, the Internet, and the immediacy it allows for, has changed consumers' possible viewing patterns from appointment-based to a way that can heed to our newer "on-demand" lifestyle (Lapan, 2009). Putting this control in consumers' hands is a far cry from the options once available to watch TV shows.

While online viewers do have more control than traditional TV viewers over the viewing experience, that control only goes as far as the content providers will allow access to. Whether a show is made available for streaming, or if it is, how long that show will be made available, is still ultimately up to the provider. Many shows are made available almost immediately after they air. Some may take up to several weeks before being posted. And still, others do not become available at all. This control by the content providers limits viewer control of the content, since there is nothing to control if it is not made available in the first place. And, if a program is made available online, a number of aspects of the viewing experience are still not in the hands of the

viewer, putting limits on the human computer interactivity element of streaming network TV programming.

In summary, the ability to choose when and where to stream are two major aspects of user control of online TV content. If the program is available online, then it is the viewer's choice to pick a time and location to watch, anywhere he can find a high-speed Internet connection to connect to his desktop or laptop computer.

Two-way Communication Among Consumers

Rosenberry (2005) includes "combining citizen and institutional stories" and "interactive storytelling" through, among other venues, third-party sites, when classifying interactive features on news Web sites. Chung (2008) refers to human-interactive features, such as chat rooms and online forums, when analyzing levels of interactivity. And Booth (2009) refers to "narractivity," or the ability of fans to express their opinions, interpretations, and retellings of stories to each other through unmoderated venues (i.e., without a program's permission)—typically unofficial TV show sites. The Internet allows for people of similar interests, from all corners of the country (and sometimes the world) to come together and confer knowledge about their favorite programs, either simultaneously while streaming content, or more likely, as a supplement to the viewing process. This practice brings the concept of Monday morning water-cooler talk to a hyper-real level, and brings about more engaging ways in which viewers and fans can choose to interact with each other about the programs they watch.

Viewers of the same TV programs have the ability to discuss those programs, exchange information about them, and even debate them—both synchronously and asynchronously. E-mails, online chats, and social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter allow for an array of choices for communicating with others about TV shows. Additionally, both official and

unofficial TV program fan sites, wikis, and forums all provide the platforms necessary to bridge fans of similar programs together, both with and without the program producers' consent. Through the Internet, fans can communicate with both their friends and strangers and discuss, cheer, or rant about their favorite programs.

Two-way Communication Between Consumer and Content Provider

Many media outlets provide opportunities for their consumers to communicate directly with them through their Web sites. This has been a focus of numerous studies, many of which were related to news media Web sites, and the ability to utilize e-mails, forums, letters to the editor, and message boards (for example: Greer and Mensing, 2004; Rosenberry, 2005). Andrejevic's (2008) study of TV program fan sites takes a slightly different approach, as it uncovered that show producers' frequent visits to these unofficial sites are a strategy called "digital embracing," as it allows for shared control through audience feedback, while engaging viewers in a sort of virtual market research labor. Of course, official TV shows Web sites also have their own fan feedback opportunities. Official chat rooms and fan forums are commonplace on many of these sites. Viewers can offer feedback to the producers and, since the very nature of market research is to gain insight and support decision-making through gathering and interpreting information about individuals (ICC/ESOMAR), there does exist a two-way communication between producer and viewer, albeit not synchronous.

Providing forums (literally and figuratively) for fans to communicate with program producers and networks makes available the opportunity for fan feedback in ways not possible before the Web. It allows for fans to become sounding boards, where they can potentially alter the path of a show's narrative, set design, or an actor's fate, much faster than could be achieved previously. Further, it provides TV producers with a less-intrusive way to monitor fans' feelings

about their favorite programs, giving fans a reason to contribute their opinions for reasons other than simply sounding off.

Conclusion

The Internet provides an outlet to watch video, online, on-demand, and for free, something that only recently has become a fast-growing phenomenon. TV networks give consumers the ability to take this non-traditional approach to watching, and statistics show that consumers in response take advantage of it—some more than others—with those numbers continuing to grow. A convenient and portable option for being entertained and informed, streaming TV shows online is a valuable option for those with on-demand lifestyles. But more than just being a different platform for viewers to choose, the Internet offers the ability to take the experience of TV watching to a higher level. Fans are no longer just viewers. They are offered more control over the viewing experience through a multitude of human-to-computer interaction options, while at the same time given the ability, through computer-mediated communication, to interact with other fans and content producers. How these relatively new options are currently embraced, as well as how new and emerging opportunities for expanding the overall TV watching experience will be welcomed, can help define the future of how and why individuals choose to consume the programs they do—and how those choices help satisfy gratifications sought through television.

CHAPTER 3

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Literature reveals an abundance of research connecting U&G to both watching TV and using the Internet, but typically as separate activities. What is missing, therefore, is how the U&G lens is applied to the specific activity of streaming TV programs. By studying how individuals become gratified through watching TV online, we can further understand how this relatively new option affects viewing habits, as the TV is no longer solely an instrument of the home, but a more mobile device that can be accessed wherever an Internet connection can be found. Therefore, what follows first is an overview of the particular gratifications sought from both the TV and Internet that will be applied to this study, as well as of the interactive features provided by the Internet as they pertain to streaming video content. A conceptualization of how these gratifications might be satisfied through watching online will be further analyzed, followed by the formation of research questions for this study.

Uses and Gratifications Related Concepts

While U&G literature has yielded many conceptual frameworks describing what gratifications individuals seek through the use of various media—from traditional to new—several key needs often appear when looking specifically at both the TV and the Internet separately. Those are surveillance, diversion, entertainment, and social utility.

Surveillance

Surveillance is an often-cited gratification sought by using the Web (for example, Blumler & McQuail, 1968; McLeod & Becker, 1974) and for watching TV (for example, Kaye

and Johnson, 2002; Rosenberry, 2005). Commonly related to news surveillance, both media are well suited to provide information necessary to keep up with the day's events, whether it comes from the evening network news or the many online news sources such as online newspapers and RSS newsfeeds. Today, the ability to interact with content through the Web, rather than being limited to the intake of information that is fed through a TV broadcast, allows the consumer to not only be able to view the same programming online that is offered through a TV set, but also easily search and maneuver through the countless hyperlinks connected to news stories—many of which are regularly updated as breaking news warrants. What is interesting is how surveillance might be redefined in the age of the Internet as a platform for watching TV. For example, viewing friends' and family's Facebook pages often allows individuals to keep up with their day-to-day (or sometimes minute-to-minute) activities. And, the ability to stream entire TV programs is often complimented by the availability to stream clips of programs—oftentimes highlights with runtimes of only a few minutes—that can afford one the ability to quickly catch up with what happened last night or last week on *Lost*, for example. We no longer have only the option of viewing an entire program, but can quickly catch up with a musical performance from *Saturday Night Live*, a funny excerpt from *Family Guy*, a quick recap of *Dancing with the Stars*, or the president's speech highlights which were shown during last night's *NBC Nightly News*. To be sure, the option to be more "in the know" about friends and family, entertainment, politics, and news is now as easy as a quick click of the mouse and a few minutes of time.

Diversion

Diversion, whether it be to escape or for emotional release (see McQuail et al., 1972; Rubin, 1985) is another often cited reason why individuals turn to the media—including both the TV and Internet—for gratification. In fact, Ferguson and Perse (2000) found that gratifications

of using the Web often mirrored those for watching TV, particularly diversion. While the study did not focus on streaming network TV programs, since that option was not available a decade ago, it did suggest that both mediums were somehow connected, and was a strong indicator that more research was necessary to understand the direction and potential that lay ahead for the Internet as a practical option to satisfy needs commonly associated with the TV.

Early examples of diversion through TV viewing include having the sound of other voices in the house, temporarily forgetting about worries, and having good gossip (McQuail et al., 1972, p. 448). Today, the Internet allows many the option of easy diversion from daily routine (despite the fact that for many the Internet is already *part* of that routine). Connected desktops, laptops, and smart phones allow individuals to surf the Web, chat with friends, blog, and watch video. These are now easy options for diversion—in our homes, at work, or virtually anywhere the Internet can be accessed.

Entertainment

It is plausible to suggest that everyone likes to be entertained at some point or another, and media provide countless sources for entertainment. Not surprisingly, the need for entertainment is commonly cited as a reason why media are used (for example, Rubin, 1985; Compesi, 1980; Abelman, 1987; Nabi et al., 2003). Both the TV and Internet are easy to single out as prime examples of "go to" media for entertainment, and with good reason. For entertainment today we have access to hundreds of TV network channels, covering many different varieties and genres. Further, the Internet provides a seemingly infinite number of additional options—from popular magazine sites and chat rooms to interactive online gaming and pornography—whereby accessing content can be as simple as a Google search. What seems even less astounding nowadays is the level to which these two media have converged to allow

for the online streaming of video content—from TV network and news broadcasts to user-generated and viral videos—creating a bountiful source for instant entertainment gratification. Further, with the on-demand accessibility to TV content online, computers are becoming more often one-stop shops for an abundance of entertainment options, wherever people decide to take them.

Social Utility

Social utility, or the using of TV as a mechanism to engage in social interactions with others, has been established as an often-experiential variable in much U&G research (see McQuail et al., 1972; Rubin, 1985; Compesi, 1980). How individuals can engage in these interactions has been augmented, as the Internet allows more options to connect with others than before it existed. Often in the past, socializing with others about last night's TV episodes was often relegated to next-day water cooler talk. The final episodes of *M*A*S*H* (1983) and *Cheers* (1993) were both highly-popular social events during, and hot topics of face-to-face conversation after their broadcast airings. Today, however, discussing an episode of *American Idol* or *Family Guy*, in addition to face-to-face interactions, can easily happen through computer-mediated communication. Individuals can text or chat in real time as events unfold during a telecast. Or, in some cases, viewers can chat synchronously with others who are streaming the same program at the exact same time, as is the case with CBS' "Social TV" watch-and-chat online platform, for example. Further, the virality of certain TV events, such as Janet Jackson's Super Bowl halftime wardrobe malfunction (2004) and Susan Boyle's powerful singing performance during *Britain's Got Talent* (2009), extends the mechanism for social utility. Boyle, for example, became an almost instant international star after the telecast, as her performance video became widely available over the Internet, and often searched for.

Literature has suggested many reasons why individuals choose certain media over others to gratify needs. The line between the television and the Internet at times becomes blurred as the two on occasion become more synonymous with each other. And, with the general ease of use, cheapness, and quickness of the Internet, the opportunity to access TV content from nearly anywhere for the purposes of surveillance, diversion, entertainment, and as a catalyst for social interaction, allows for a quicker, on-demand method of gratifying those needs.

Interactive Features Related Concepts

The Internet's relative ease of use, immediacy of content access, and general affordability nowadays have impacted the way many choose to watch video content, and more specifically TV network content. The availability of new and recently aired programs for free online streaming has not only taken the TV out of the living room and made it a mobile option, but has given the viewer a level of control over content that rarely existed prior, save for the DVR and VCR. TV news and entertainment programs are now on-demand options, allowing individuals to stay informed and be entertained when and where they choose. The converging of the TV and Internet means the computer screen is more than merely a different viewing platform. The interactive nature of the Internet has, in many instances, become a supplemental option to the experience, allowing viewers to not only control how content is viewed, but also interact with each other, TV networks, and content producers.

Human-Computer Interaction Control: On Demand and On Location

Because of its interactiveness, choosing which Web sites to visit and which to avoid is a basic function of the Internet. Still, control continues to transcend itself as technologies advance. Today we can control what we choose to buy, whom we communicate with, what news we consume, what music we listen to, and which TV programs we stream—all through the Internet.

Controlling the ability to stream a wide variety of video content on demand and for free, coupled with the portability and wireless connectivity that defines many computers today, separates streaming TV content on the Web from traditional viewing through a TV set. Viewers can now choose entire episodes or shortened clips of TV shows to watch on their laptops or desktops. They can also watch video clips from the evening news and other news organizations to stay informed. The offering of shortened clips from popular programs means that viewers and fans can quickly keep up or catch up with their favorite shows, and by proxy, be able to socialize with others about them. No matter what an individual watches online, the mouse clicks, a player launches, and the show begins—but that is by no means the limit of interactiveness and control made available between viewer and computer. The ability to pause, skip ahead, go back, and adjust the screen size are all elements of control afforded to the viewer when choosing the computer over a traditional TV set. This control over content—that is how, when, and where TV shows are accessed through the Internet—means that consumers are now capable of watching without the limits previously imposed on them through traditional viewing methods. And, while the availability of certain network shows offered online is limited, many more are made available, even if for only a specified amount of time, making the online choices at any given time abundant. Further, while the end result of watching a TV show online versus on a TV set can be the same—that is, the programmed content generally does not differ between platforms—it is the overall online experience that is uncharacteristic of traditional viewing. A higher level of control over content choice, time, and location distinctively separates these two options for watching TV.

Computer-Mediated Communication: TV and the Internet

Beyond the immediacy and control afforded to the viewer by streaming TV shows online versus appointment-watching on a TV set, the opportunities to communicate by means of the computer and Internet have added layers of interactivity to the viewing experience that today's TV sets generally still do not offer. No matter how one chooses to watch TV shows, the many computer-mediated communication choices, both with fellow viewers and fans as well as content producers and networks, have redefined how society can act or react to their favorite programs. Synchronous online TV show chat rooms and asynchronous fan forums both allow viewers to share thoughts and discuss their favorite programs with people across the street, across the country, and even around the world. This is a far cry from the water cooler conversations previously discussed. Official and unofficial TV program Web sites allow for narratives to be retold, reinterpreted, and sometimes rewritten, all under the potential watchful eye of the networks and producers, who can survey this online content for the purposes of research. No longer do they have to rely solely only on overnight ratings and focus groups to take their audiences' temperatures, and no longer do audiences have to wait until the next morning to applaud, rant, or discuss with others about last night's episode of *Breaking Bad*.

We live in a world where the Internet, more and more often, becomes whatever we want it to be. Virtually any media, from text to art to multimedia content, can be accessed at a moment's notice, wherever a computer can connect to the Web. This has redefined how individuals can watch TV programs, as the exact same content available at home, in the living room, on a TV set, is now often available on demand, online, and for free through the Internet. This relatively new phenomenon of watching network TV programs online, given the two-way

connectivity of the Internet and the numerous choices available for viewing, has the potential to gratify viewers' needs in ways that redefine how individuals use TV.

Revised Conceptual Framework and Research Questions

Individuals use communication technologies, including the TV and the Internet, to gratify certain needs, including surveillance, social utility, diversion, and the need to be entertained. Gratifying these needs would seemingly translate to network TV shows streamed online. Still, why people choose to go online to watch, versus the more traditional viewing method, raises questions that point to specific gratifications sought through the consumption of the two media platforms—platforms that more and more become blurred as the phrase "watching TV" does not always mean what it used to.

The table below illustrates how the Internet and the TV streaming options it allows for can potentially satisfy the needs for surveillance, diversion and entertainment, and social utility, on both the social and individual levels. Surveillance through human-computer interaction can be for social purposes as well as for the individual need to stay informed, depending on whether one wishes merely to keep up with current events or use that information to engage in social interaction with others. Diversion and entertainment through human-computer interaction can satisfy individual needs, such as temporarily escaping from the everyday by streaming TV shows. At the same time, however, the same individual need might also be satisfied through 2-way communication, such as communicating with others about the entertaining moment one streamed online. And, the need to be social with others might be satisfied through engaging in social interactions with others—either through a computer or face-to-face—after streaming programs. This option, not unlike the social need for surveillance, can be gratified through

streaming entire programs online. But, it might also be satisfied streaming shortened clips of TV shows, an option commonly offered by networks' sites.

Table 3.1 Individual and social needs, and how they might be gratified through both HCI and CMC interactive features.

Through / Gratifying	**Individual Control--HCI**	**2-way communication**
Social Needs	**Surveillance**: Keeping up with topics for purposes of social interaction (info+ent.).	**Social Utility**: Streaming programs as a mechanism for engaging in CMC and F2F social interaction.
Individual Needs	**Surveillance**: Keeping up with world around to stay informed (info+ent.). **Diversion & Entertainment**: For personal escape through watching content.	**Diversion & Entertainment**: For personal escape through watching→CMC with others.

Traditionally, the need for surveillance has been associated with one-way flow of information, whether it comes from the newspaper, radio, or television, for example. However, with the introduction of the Internet and the more recent opportunities it provides for streaming TV programs online, one can satisfy the need for surveillance not only via the traditional selection of mass media channels, but also through the interactions with one another and with media professionals about any salient issue. In the context of the U&G approach, I therefore ask

whether the types of features now available to users when watching TV via the Internet—one-to-many or two-way communication—are associated with need for surveillance. Watching the evening news and news magazine programs are two examples of programs that provide current events information. But the need for surveillance might also be gratified through watching entertainment programs online, either in full, or nowadays, by watching shortened clips of those programs, and then communicating with others about those programs as a way to keep up with them. These options allow viewers to keep up with a multitude of TV shows on their own schedule. Therefore, a two-part research questions is:

RQ #1a: "Is the need for news-related surveillance associated with the types of interactive streaming features used (HCI or CMC)?"

RQ #1b: "Is the need for entertainment-related surveillance associated with the types of interactive streaming features used (HCI or CMC)?"

Diversion from the everyday, whether for emotional release, escape, of simply to be entertained, can be gratified through watching TV. The immediacy of the Internet—through its mobility, quickness, ease of use, and general overall cheapness—means that more than ever society has the option to turn to TV programming on demand and without being confined to a dedicated space. Traditionally, when turning to the TV for diversion or entertainment, viewers engage in a one-way flow of content and consumption. However, with the Internet and the TV streaming and content-related options it allows for, when, where, and how one turns to TV programs for entertainment and diversion transcends this one-way flow to also allow for multi-directional communication options. A research question therefore is:

RQ #2: "Is the need for diversion and entertainment associated with the types of interactive streaming features used (HCI or CMC)?"

The opportunity for social utility, by watching TV programs as a mechanism to engage in social interactions with others, has the potential to be expanded by the inclusion of the Internet in not only the viewing process, but also the way in which individuals socialize and communicate about the content. Now, in addition to face-to-face communication, CMC through both official and unofficial program Web sites, as well as more popular methods such as online chatting and posting on Facebook, for example, allow individuals more options for sharing their experiences. How viewers engage with others through these various methods leads to the following research question:

RQ #3: "Is the need to interact with other people associated with the types of interactive streaming features used (HCI or CMC)?"

To further explore these questions, a closer look at the types of TV programming available online will be taken, as well as the interactive options available to viewers of online content. Online viewing habits will also be looked at through a survey instrument designed to uncover not only how often individuals are embracing the Internet for their network TV content, but also how they use the various online viewing platforms available to them. Methods and reasons for communicating with each other about their viewing experiences will also be explored.

CHAPTER 4

METHODS

In this chapter the research methods employed will be discussed. These methods are comprised of a one-week survey of streaming Web sites and a survey questionnaire for the main study. Independent and dependent variables for the study will be defined, including how they will be operationalized and measured through the survey instrument. This includes both questions asked and statements offered for evaluation. Finally, both the pre-test for the survey and the final survey will be discussed.

Survey of Streaming Web Sites

In order to create a survey, an analysis of the variety of interactive features employed by streaming Web sites was first conducted. This took place over the course of one week (May 10-16, 2010), and looked at the top-rated broadcast and cable television networks, as reported by The Nielsen Company (2010). The sites, then, included abc.com, cbs.com, fox.com, and nbc.com for broadcast networks, and tnt.tv, nick.com (Nickelodeon), usanetwork.com (USA), and home.disney.go.com/tv (Disney Channel) for cable networks. Additionally, hulu.com, which streams programming from multiple broadcast and cable networks, including ABC, NBC, Fox, and FX, was included. Hulu was added based on its popularity. It is the most-visited Web site for streaming network TV content in the U.S.

Surveying the sites, the following interactive features were identified: The ability to pause, skip ahead (fast forward) and go back (rewind); the ability to share content, either by posting TV clips or shows through social networking sights, sharing through e-mail, or by

embedding video on Web sites such as personal blogs ("embed" is an option separate from "posting"); the ability to choose between commercial options, that is, either the type of advertiser that will play, or the number and length(s) of commercials that will play; the option to view in hi-definition; and the abilities to leave feedback about a show, review a show (text), and rate a show (either "good" or "bad" or through assigning a number of stars, usually between one and five).

Overall, the most common interactive feature shared by each Web site was the option to pause, skip ahead, and go back. Not surprisingly, each Web site offered this group of features, one that would be expected when streaming video on demand.

Each site did offer the choice to share content, although not equally across all options: The option to post content was available across all sites, through Facebook, MySpace, and/or Twitter accounts. Usanetwork.com did offer the opportunity to post content to Facebook, but only after downloading an application to a user's Facebook account. Only hulu.com and nbc.com offered the "embed" option of posting video content to a non-specific third-party Web site or blog.

With the exception of usanetwork.com and abc.com, each site offered the option to share video content through e-mail.

At no time during the analysis was the option to choose a commercial break option before viewing a program available.

Hulu.com and cbs.com were the only sites that offered hi-definition viewing options.

With the exception of tnt.tv, which offered no option, each site did offer some sort of opportunity to leave feedback: Hulu.com, abc.com, cbs.com, and usanetwork.com each allowed for leaving feedback through discussion forums; only hulu.com and fox.com permitted users to

leave personal reviews of programs; and only hulu.com, nbc.com, fox.com, and home.disney.go.com/tv allowed users to rate a show (numerically, through assigning stars).

Variables for the Study

Demographics and Access

The survey includes questions designed to identify demographic variables. Also, a range of questions and statements designed specifically to identify subjects' habits of accessing both the Internet and the television, including streaming TV content online, were included. Here, the word "streaming" is defined as clicking a play button on a Web browser to instantly play video (stream), rather than downloading the video onto a computer hard drive prior to watching. Watching content on a television set refers to just that—television programs that are viewed in real time on a traditional TV set as they are broadcast from the broadcast or networks. Nowhere in the survey were the options of watching time-shifted or on-demand content, through a DVR, VCR, or cable or satellite TV box, mentioned. Further, the option of specifically streaming content illegally was not brought up.

Demographic variables are age, race, and gender. Those questions were included at the end of the survey.

Control variables

Access variables measured are as follows: The number of hours spent watching TV content; the number of hours spent using the Internet; the number of hours spent streaming TV content over the Internet; the screen sizes of both the computer and TV set subjects have access to regularly; the location where subjects mostly stream TV content; the genre's of TV shows subjects mostly stream; and the format mostly chosen when streaming—either entire episodes or shortened clips or highlights of entire episodes.

Dependent variables

DV#1: The perceived importance of human-computer interactive features: The following items were used to measure this variable: The abilities to pause, skip ahead, and go back, are evaluated by the statements "The ability to pause playback is important to me when streaming TV shows online," "The ability to skip ahead (go forward) is important to me when streaming TV shows online," and "The ability to go back (rewind) is important to me when streaming TV shows online"; the availability of shortened clips is evaluated by the statement "The availability to choose shortened clips/highlights of TV shows is important to me when I stream TV shows online"; and the overall "on demand" aspect of streaming is evaluated by the statement "The ability to watch/stream TV shows 'on demand' (I can start the show when I want to) is an important reason why I choose to stream TV shows online versus watching on a TV set." Each of these statements is measured on a 5-point Likert scale using the range "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." All these items are associated conceptually with HCI interactive features. A reliability test was at the .7 threshold. A factor analysis showed that one of the items—the availability of shortened clips—correlated low with the other items. In an attempt to increase reliability of this variable, I removed this item, resulting in the reliability increasing (Cronbach alpha=.78). Therefore, only the remaining four items were combined into the variable.

DV#2: The use of computer-mediated communication interactive features: The following items were used to measure this variable: The availability to communicate with others in relation to streaming is evaluated by the statements "I simultaneously communicate online with others while streaming TV shows online," "I visit online message boards that are directly related to TV shows that I watch (either official or unofficial message boards)," "I communicate

online with friends (online chat) about my favorite TV shows that I have watched," "I communicate online with other fans of TV shows I am a fan of, through TV show fan sites," "I contribute content, through posting messages or other information, to TV show fan Web sites of TV shows that I watch," "When streaming a TV show online, I leave feedback or comments about the show on the Web site when it lets me," "I share TV shows or clips of TV shows to social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, or Twitter," and "I will rate a TV show I have watched online if the Web site offers that feature." Each of these statements is measured on a 5-point Likert scale using the range "very rarely" to "very often," with a sixth option of "never." A reliability test which included all eight items was high (Cronbach alpha=.91), and therefore all items were combined into this single variable.

Independent variables

IV#1a is the need to stay informed on current news events, and was measured by these three statements: "I watch/stream entire TV news shows online to stay informed on current events," and "I watch/stream shortened clips of TV news shows online to stay informed on current events." These included a 5-point Likert scale with the range "very rarely" to "very often," and a sixth option "never." "Streaming TV news shows keeps me up to date with current news events more than watching on a TV set does" includes the range "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." A reliability test which included all three items was high (Cronbach alpha=.91), and therefore all items were combined into this single variable.

IV#1b is the need to keep up with TV shows, and was measured by these three statements: "I stream entire TV shows online so that I may keep up or catch up with shows I have missed when they originally aired on the TV," and "I stream shortened clips of TV shows online so that I may keep up with shows I have missed when they originally aired on the TV"

included the scale “very rarely” to “very often,” with the sixth option “never.” “Streaming TV shows online keeps me up to date with those shows more than watching them on a TV set does” included the scale “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” For these three items, a reliability test produced a low Cronbach alpha of .41, and therefore each item was tested separately.

IV#2 is the need for diversion and entertainment, and is operationalized as the following three items: Being bored is measured by the statement “I stream TV shows when I am bored,” and escape from the everyday is measured by the statement “I stream TV shows online as a way to temporarily escape from the everyday,” each using the 5-point Likert scale “very rarely” to “very often,” with a sixth option of “never.” The need to be entertained is measured by the statement “The ability to stream TV shows online is important to me because it allows me to be entertained when I want,” using the 5-point Likert scale “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” A reliability test which included all three items was acceptable (Cronbach alpha=.72), and therefore all items were combined into this single variable.

IV#3 is the need to interact with others about TV programming, and is operationalized in the following ways: Being social with others is measured by the statements “I find that streaming TV shows online makes me more social with others about current events and/or the latest TV shows, than watching on a TV set does,” “I find that watching/streaming shortened clips/highlights of TV shows online allows me to keep up with programs for the purposes of discussing them with my friends,” and “I find that streaming entire TV shows online allows me to keep up with programs for the purposes of discussing them with my friends, more than watching on a TV set does.” Each is measured on the 5-point Likert scale “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” A reliability test which included all three items was acceptable (Cronbach alpha=.73), and therefore all items were combined into this single variable.

Tools

Survey Pre-test

Prior to administering the survey, a pre-test was conducted in order to assess the instrument for ambiguities, confusing questions and statements, and errors. Thirteen undergraduate students at a major southeastern university each participated in one of three sessions. Each was offered extra credit in one of his or her classes for participating. Of the sample, six were male and seven were female. Ten were white, two were Asian, and one was black. The median age was 21.

The survey during pre-testing took approximately 12 minutes to complete on paper. Feedback concluded that the survey instrument was overall clear, with only two questions that were interpreted by several students as being difficult to interpret: The term "premium cable channels" was changed to include the examples "Showtime, HBO, etc," so as to make more clear the delineation between premium and non-premium channels; and a short sentence at the beginning of the survey was included to differentiate "streaming" content from "downloading" content to a computer.

Data Sources and Sampling

For the main survey a sample of undergraduate students in a large lecture class at the same university was selected to participate in an online survey. The total number of subjects who participated was 274 (n=274). For their participation, each student received extra credit in the class, with an option to write a short paper about their online viewing experiences if they did not wish to participate in the survey. This convenience sample included students between the ages of 18 and 27, with a median age of 20. Eleven respondents chose to not specify their age, only acknowledging that they were at least 18. Males comprised 38.6 percent of respondents,

and 61.4 percent were female. Twelve respondents chose to not specify their gender. All information that could link subjects to their answers, i.e. their names, was stripped from the data and forwarded to the instructor of the class for the sole purpose of verifying who participated in order to be awarded extra credit.

Survey Instrument

An online survey instrument was used to collect data. After a short in-person explanation of the study to the students during their class, all students were sent three e-mails—one initial e-mail and two follow-up reminders—each with a private link to the zoomerang.com survey instrument. Subjects were then able to verify that they were at least 18 years old before beginning the survey. The rest of the questions were multiple choice, utilizing a combination of picking the appropriate answer from choices available, choosing all that apply, and Likert scale answers, as previously indicated. After pre-testing, the final survey instrument contained a total of 68 items, including demographic-related questions. It is estimated that the final online instrument took approximately the same amount of time to complete—approximately 12 minutes—as the survey pre-test.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

Findings (N=274) show that on average, respondents watch 11.15 (S.D.=9.21) hours of television weekly, regardless of whether it is online or on a TV set. The mean number of weekly hours spent on the Internet is 20.52 (S.D.=14.11). The mean number of weekly hours spent streaming TV shows online is 3.45 (S.D.=4.73). Four percent of respondents indicated that they do not stream TV shows.

Eighty-one percent (n=222) stream mostly entire episodes of TV programs, 5.8 percent (n=16) mostly shortened clips or highlights of full episodes, and 10.9 percent (n=30) stream both full and shortened clips about the same. One percent (n=3) indicated either "none," or "live sports" when answering this question.

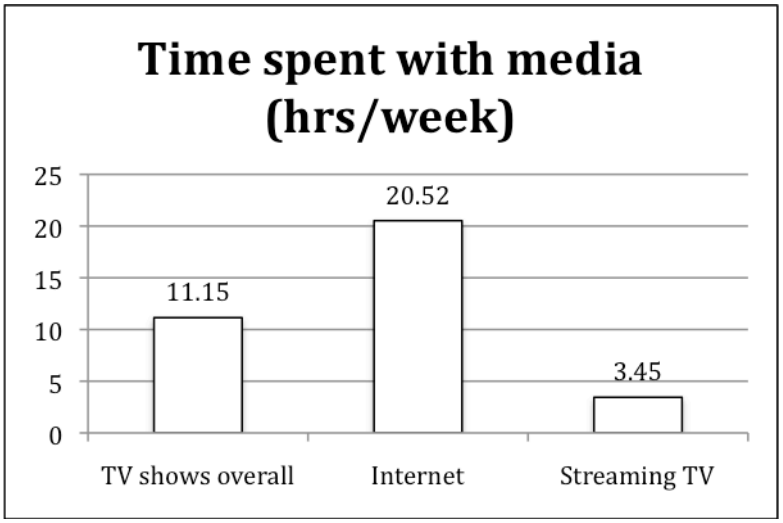

Figure 5.1 Time spent with media by media option, hrs/week.

Hulu.com is the most-often visited Web site for streaming TV shows (49.3 percent), followed by YouTube and abc.com (10.9 percent each), Netflix (4 percent), surfthechannel.com and cwtv.com (2.9 percent each), megavideo.com (1.8 percent), fox.com and nbc.com (1.5 percent each), and sidereel.com and tvshack.net (1.1 percent each). The following streaming Web sites were most-often visited by less than one percent each of respondents: Abcfamily.go.com, adultswim.com, bet.com, casttv.com, cbs.com, ch131.com, cnn.com, espn.com, espn.go.com/espn3, fancast.com, freeonlineepisodes.net, fxnetworks.com, justin.tv, ninjavideo.net, southparkstudios.com, tv.blinkx.com, tvduck.com, usanetwork.com, and watch-series.com.

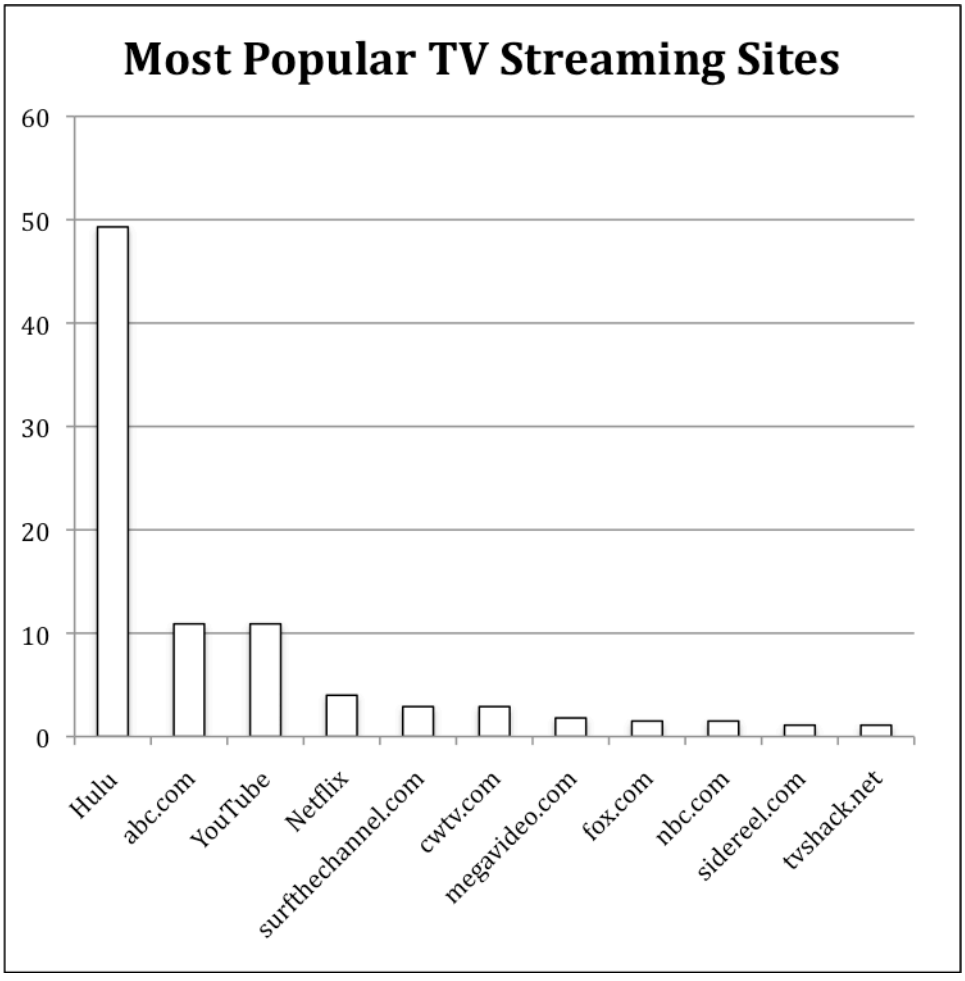

Figure 5.2 Most popular sites for streaming network TV shows by % of respondents.

For the HCI DV: Broken down, the individual HCI interactive feature considered most important in the decision to stream was the ability to watch "on demand" (M=4.33, SD=.86), followed by the ability to pause (M=4.27, SD=.88), the ability to rewind or go back (M=4.18, SD=.93), the ability to skip ahead (M=4.04, SD=1), and the ability to choose shortened clips of TV shows (M=2.76, SD=1.27), on a 5-point Likert scale of "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." I then combined these interactive streaming features into one overall value (M=4.2; SD=.72) for evaluation.

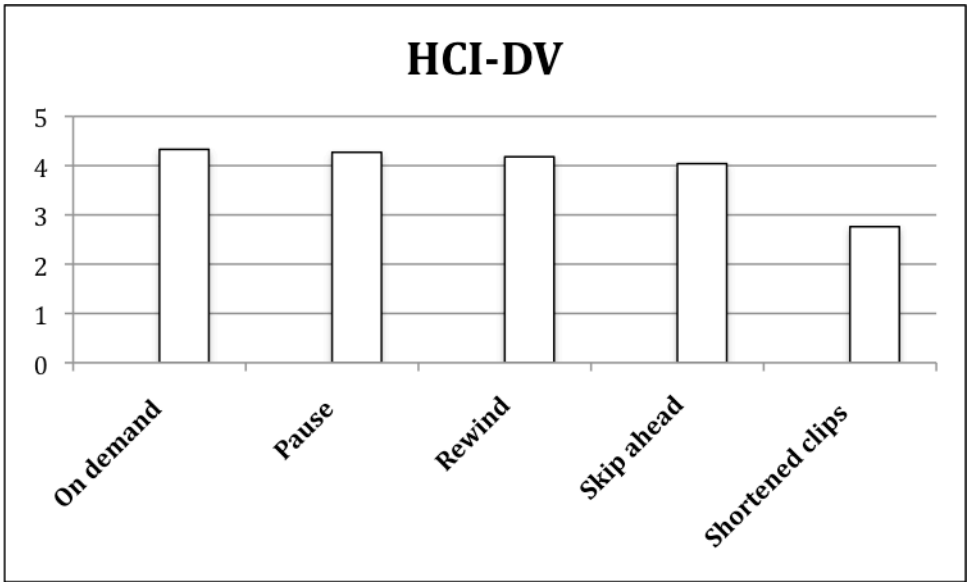

Figure 5.3 Importance (greatest to least) of HCI interactive features (DV) on a 5-point Likert scale.

For the CMC DV: Broken down, the individual CMC interactive feature considered most important in the decision to stream was simultaneously communicate online with others while streaming TV shows (M=2.78, SD=1.52), share shows or clips of shows to social networking sites such as Facebook or Myspace (M=2.6, SD=1.54), chat online with friends about favorite TV shows watched (M=2.47, SD=1.46), will rate a TV show watched online if the feature is offered (M=2.26, SD=1.4), visit online message boards related to TV shows that I watch

(M=2.04, SD=1.27), communicate online with other fans of TV shows through fan sites (M=1.83; SD=1.28), leave feedback or comments about a show on the streaming Web site (M=1.81, SD=2.72), and contribute content through posting messages or other information to TV show fan sites (M=1.77, SD=1.24). I then combined each of these eight statement responses explained in the methods section into one single cluster (M=2.2; SD=1.07). Responses were based on evaluation of individual use on a 6-point Likert scale of "never" to "very often."

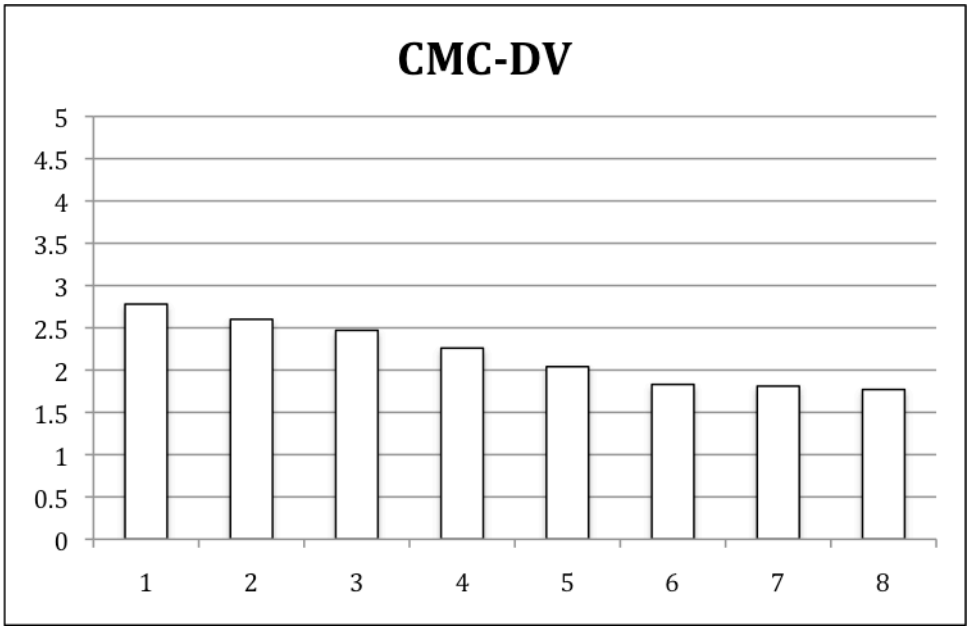

Figure 5.4 Importance (greatest to least) of CMC interactive features (DV) on a 6-point Likert scale: 1=stream while communicating online with others; 2=share clips on social networking sites; 3=chat online with others about TV shows; 4=rate a show; 5=visit online message boards; 6=communicate online through TV show fan sites; 7=leave feedback about a show on streaming sites; 8=contribute content to TV show fan sites.

The news surveillance-related IV results were as follows: Streaming shortened clips of TV news shows (M=3.03, SD=1.43) was more popular than streaming entire TV news shows (M=2.49, SD=1.36) for staying informed on current events, on a 6-point Likert scale of "never"

to “very often.” There was slight disagreement with the statement “Streaming TV shows online keeps me up to date with those shows more than watching them on a TV set does” (M=2.52, SD=1.07) on a 5-point Likert scale of “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Each of these three statement responses discussed in the methods section was combined into one overall value (M=2.67; SD=1.07) for evaluation.

The entertainment surveillance-related IV results were as follows: Streaming entire TV shows (M=4.81, SD=1.31) was more popular than streaming shortened clips of TV shows (M=2.81, SD=1.47) for keeping up with shows missed when they originally aired on TV, on a 6-point Likert scale of “never” to “very often.” There was no agreement or disagreement with the statement “Streaming TV shows online keeps me up to date with those shows more than watching them on a TV set does” (M=3.07, SD=1.16), on a 5-point Likert scale of “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Each of these three statement responses discussed in the methods section was combined into one overall value (M=3.57; SD=.88), for evaluation.

The diversion and entertainment-related IV results were as follows: Streaming TV shows when bored was more popular (M=4.20, SD=1.33) than streaming to temporarily escape from the everyday (M=3.44, SD=1.49), on a 6-point Likert scale of “never” to “very often.” There was fairly strong overall agreement (M=4.12, SD=.86) with the statement “The ability to stream TV shows online is important to me because it allows me to be entertained when I want (on my schedule),” on a 5-point Likert scale of “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Each of these three statement responses discussed in the methods section was combined into one overall value (M=3.92; SD=1.0), for evaluation.

The social utility-related IV results were as follows: There was slight disagreement with the statements “I find that streaming TV shows online makes me more social with others about

current events and/or the latest TV shows, than watching on a TV set does" (M=2.69, SD=1.07), and "I find that watching/streaming shortened clips/highlights of TV shows online allows me to keep up with programs for the purposes of discussing them with my friends" (M=2.66, SD=1.16), on a 5-point Likert scale of "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." There was neutrality with the statement "I find that streaming entire TV shows online allows me to keep up with programs for the purposes of discussing them with my friends, more than watching on a TV set does" (M=3.03, SD=1.16). Each of these three statement responses discussed in the methods section was combined into one overall value (M=2.79; SD=.92), for evaluation.

To evaluate the overall contribution of the IVs variance in the DVs, regression analyses were used, in which all DVs were included. Overall, the IVs measured in this study—the needs for surveillance, diversion and entertainment, and social utility—better predicted the CMC DV (Adjusted R^2=.273, p<.001) than they do the HCI DV (adjusted R-square=.161, p<.001).

Testing for the control variables of gender, weekly number of hours watching TV shows overall and online, and weekly number of hours spent on the Internet, showed that none affect the relationship between the IVs and DVs.

Regression Analyses

RQ1—Surveillance

RQ #1: Is the need for surveillance (both news-related and entertainment-related) associated with the type of interactive streaming features used (HCI or CMC)?

A regression analysis model was applied to examine the relationship between the surveillance-related IVs and the HCI DV. The entertainment-related surveillance items could not be combined into a single index, as discussed in the methods section, and therefore were included as individual independent variables in the model. The news-related surveillance items

showed high reliability, and therefore allowed the incorporation of a single combined news-related independent variable in the model. The model explained 8.9 percent (adjusted R^2; $p<.001$) of the variance of the HCI DV. The strongest predictor ($\beta=.312$; $p<.001$) was the importance of streaming entire episodes to keep up with shows previously missed on TV. It was the only significant one in this analysis

A regression analysis model was applied to examine the relationship between the same surveillance-related IVs and the CMC DV. The model explained 24.6 percent (adjusted R^2; $p<.001$) of the variance of the CMC DV. The strength of this relationship is most obvious when looking at the relationships between the CMC DV and the IVs streaming shortened clips of TV shows to keep up with them ($\beta=.293$; $p<.001$) and streaming news content online to stay up to date with current events ($\beta=.260$; $p<.001$). Streaming entire TV episodes to stay current showed a significant yet weaker and negative relationship ($\beta=-.133$; $p<.05$). Comparing streaming TV shows online versus watching on a TV, as a way to keep up with those shows, was not significant.

From these analyses, the CMC interactive features as a whole better explain how the need for surveillance might be gratified, in relation to streaming TV content online.

RQ2—Diversion & Entertainment

RQ #2: Is the need for diversion and entertainment associated with the types of interactive streaming features used (HCI or CMC)?

A regression analysis model was applied to examine the relationship between the diversion-and-entertainment-related IV and the HCI DV. The IV is defined as the combined IVs streaming to temporarily escape from the everyday, streaming when bored, and streaming to be entertained when one wants (on demand). The IV explained 13.5 percent (adjusted R^2; $p<.001$)

of the variance in the HCI DV. The direction was positive (β=.372). In other words, the more one wishes to be diverted or entertained, the more he will use human-computer interactive features related to streaming TV content.

Applying the regression analysis model to examine the relationship between the same IV and the CMC DV, the IVs explained only 1.7 percent (adjusted R^2; $p<.05$) of the variance of the CMC DV. The direction of this relationship was positive (β=.372).

RQ3—Social Utility

RQ #3: Is the need to interact with other people associated with the types of interactive streaming features used?

A regression analysis model was applied to examine the relationship between the social-related IVs and the HCI DV.

The IV was not associated (adjusted $R^2=.01$; $p=.056$) with the HCI DV. In other words, no relationship between the need to be social and the HCI DVs could be found.

However, a relationship was found when applying the regression analysis model to examine the relationship between the same IVs and the CMC DV (adjusted $R^2=.196$; $p<.001$). This relationship showed a very strong positive relationship (β=.446). In other words, the more one wishes to be social, the more he will use computer-mediated communication interactive features related to streaming TV content to achieve this.

Table 5.1 Summary of the three factorial ANOVA models.

	Interactive features DVs			
Independent Variables	Human-computer Interactive Dep. Var. Adj. R^2	β	Computer-mediated Comm. Dep. Var. Adj. R^2	β
Surveillance:	.089*	–	.246*	–
-entertainment: online v. TV	–	-.002	–	.075
-entertainment: full episodes	–	.312*	–	-.133****
-entertainment: short clips or highlights	–	-.025	–	.293*
-news (combined)	–	.116	–	.260*
Diversion & Entertainment:	.135*	.372	.017****	.142
Social Utility:	.01	.116	.196*	.446

**** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p \leq .001$, * $p < .001$

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

Katz et al. (1973) suggested that people bend the media to their needs more readily than the media overpower them. How certain needs are affected by technology that turns a computer into a TV is still a relatively new question. Related to streaming network TV content online, findings from this study are as follows: The need for surveillance of both news events and TV entertainment programming better predicted the use of CMC interactive features over HCI features, going against much of the previous traditional U&G literature on surveillance; not surprising is that social needs best predicted the use of CMC interactive features; and entertainment and diversion needs best predicted the use of HCI interactive features—also not surprising when considering that the process of streaming TV content does not require interactions with others, even though those opportunities exist. Here, human-computer interactive (HCI) features involve a user interacting specifically with features provided by a computer or Web site, and not with another person or persons. On the other hand, computer-mediated communication (CMC) features require using a computer to communicate with others. The applied theoretical framework, synthesized in part from previous U&G, Internet, and television literature, was designed to uncover in part what motivates individuals to engage in the relatively new phenomenon of streaming network TV content online, on demand, and for free.

Surveillance needs best predicted the use of CMC interactive features. The overall need for surveillance, which for this study is defined as keeping up with both current news events and TV shows, was best explained as being satisfied through the use of computer-mediated

communication interactive features that pertain to streaming TV content. Human-computer interactive features showed a considerably weaker relationship. On the surface this seems to contradict what previous literature has suggested regarding traditional media. For example, Blumler and McQuail (1968) and McLeod and Becker (1974) found TV to be a preferred source for political news surveillance. Later, Kaye and Johnson (2002) found surveillance to be a top motivation for getting political information from the Web. Of course, when turning to the literature on surveillance and U&G, it by and large refers to news and current events rather than entertainment shows. Still, one might easily expect that regardless of the type of content one is seeking (on TV or online alike), the very nature of "surveillance" is to survey, implying one-way communication from a source to the person seeking the information. In other words, through traditional mass media, surveillance could happen only via one-to-many technology.

This study, however, shows that through the Internet, TV watching for surveillance purposes is best associated with two-way interactive-related features. Why, then, would CMC interactive features show a stronger relationship overall in helping gratify surveillance needs? A closer look at the data suggests a plausible explanation. The CMC features that showed strong positive relationships were streaming shortened clips or highlights of TV shows to keep up with them followed by the news-related IV. Streaming full TV episodes to keep up with them actually showed a negative relationship, suggesting that streaming a full TV show online is an experience more similar to watching traditionally, that is, on a TV set. Regardless of the viewing platform, a full episode requires a longer commitment of time, whether it is a half hour (roughly 23 minutes streaming) or an hour-long (roughly 45 minutes streaming) program. Non-commercial content is generally the same either way, and the overall experience is still a one-way form of communication—from sender to receiver—with little or no feedback required

during the viewing. Contrary to this, streaming shortened clips requires much less of a time commitment. Typically only a few minutes is required to watch a sketch from *Saturday Night Live*, a recap of last night's episode of *Glee*, or an *NBC Nightly News* package on the progress of the BP Gulf oil spill. In today's "instant gratification" age of online connectivity, the ability to stream parts of TV shows is a quick fix for keeping up with the latest programs. Coupled with the numerous interactive multi-tasking options available on an Internet-connected laptop, streaming clips and highlights could easily be accomplished hand-in-hand with many CMC functions. Facebook chatting, Tweeting, and posting comments and clips during or directly after streaming them are all realistic scenarios. And to take it further, on the receiving end, one is more likely to stream a short clip then a much longer episode of a TV entertainment or news program when the stream appears in her Facebook news feed. This turns traditional surveillance-through-media methods around, as using one-way communication procedures to stay informed and up to date on events is no longer the only way to keep up through the media. Communicating with others online—pushing as well as surveying for information—expands the human-computer interactive surveillance experience.

An older and more traditional method of surveying information can further lend a perspective on these findings. Communication of a simpler kind—face-to-face interactions with one another—is as old as the human language. This synchronous, personal method of communications also transcends itself to telephone conversations, as they too are real-time occurrences. Baym, Zhang, and Lin (2004) found that while college students do embrace the Internet for social interaction, face-to-face communication remained the main source of interaction. Still, younger adults do like to communicate via the Internet and mobile phones because of the ability to better control their interactions than, say, through face-to-face or voice

call interactions (Madell & Muncer, 2007). The ability to choose to communicate synchronously or asynchronously is an option when e-mailing, Internet chatting, and SMS texting. This can have an impact on controlling a communicative event, something that is not afforded by real time conversations. In other words, Internet-enabled communication is not necessarily synchronous. Talking is. But regardless of which method one chooses—computer mediated or face-to-face (or voice-to-ear)—communicating to one another about the day's events or last night's TV programs is still a form of surveillance. It always has been. The Internet's existence only adds to the ways in which people can share stories, news, and gossip about their favorite TV shows or popular news stories. The water cooler has not gone away, but in many cases it has been replaced by newer technologies.

Entertainment and diversion needs best predicted the use of HCI interactive features. Literature shows that the need for diversion and entertainment has often been gratified through watching TV (McQuail et al., 1972; Rubin, 1985; Nabi et al., 2003), and more recently through the Internet (Ferguson & Perse, 2000; Papacharissi and Rubin, 2000). With its large number of options for diversion and entertainment, the Internet can nowadays satisfy just about anyone looking for an easy fix, through a multitude of multimedia platforms. Online newspapers, magazines, radio stations, and audio and video are just some of what can be found online. Telephone and video chats, file sharing, and chatting, for example, expand the online options to combine synchronous and asynchronous communication. These allow for computer-mediated communication opportunities that connect individuals in ways mostly impossible to the masses before the Internet. Further, although streaming video online is not a brand new phenomenon, the recent arrival of network TV shows available to stream on demand and for free is relatively new. Nearly every genre is now represented through a variety of official and unofficial Web

sites. It allows for anyone with a high-speed connection to watch his or her favorite shows on demand, as networks continue to post episodes shortly after they debut on TV.

It is not surprising, then, that from a streaming TV online perspective, the need for diversion and entertainment better predicted the use of human-computer than computer-mediated communication interactive features. One does not necessarily require interaction with others to fulfill this need online, particularly when streaming TV shows. In fact, many want to avoid it. The mere ability to start, stop, and go back and forth within a program's timeline are basic interactive features, but important ones as the survey data show. Without these, the on-demand aspect of streaming would simply not exist.

Social needs best predicted the use of CMC interactive features. While human-computer interactive features' uses showed strong relationships with the need for diversion and entertainment, this was not the case when looking at the need to be social. Social utility has often been cited through the literature as a need gratified through media in general (for example, McQuail et al., 1972) as well as through TV (for example, Rubin, 1985). Here, the social utility IV best predicted using computer-mediated communication interactive features related to online streaming. When one wishes to be entertained, interactive options with Internet content are plentiful. Still, one cannot be social "with" the Internet, just "on" the Internet. The suggestion here is that the relationship between the need to be social and the interactive features currently available that might help satisfy the need does exist as it pertains to streaming TV shows. In an online on-demand environment, where one can watch television and interact with one another through the Internet, the ability to connect with others through the same platform is a natural and convenient opportunity for being social. Online features that are provided to the viewer can supplement the viewing process, and even co-exist simultaneously with it. Of course, certain

features are less used than others—for example, contributing to TV show fan sites and message boards were less-popular CMC option. One explanation is that certain features discussed and measured, overall, appeal to a very small segment of the population that streams TV shows—the hardcore fan as opposed to the more casual viewer. The two most often-used features here were chatting while streaming and sharing clips on social networking sites such as Facebook. These make sense, given the overall popularity of Facebook and online chat platforms. Still, posting streams of TV show clips, or anything for that matter, on Facebook can be less interpreted as two way communication than, say, the asynchronous act of posting on fan sites or message boards, which serve the purpose of back and forth discussions, but were overall less appealing. Streaming and being social, therefore, both lend themselves to being interactive online, just in different ways, but ways that compliment each other to help satisfy the need to stay connected with both TV shows and each other.

What individuals do, or more specifically have the option to do, when they are streaming TV shows is different than when watching on today's TV set. The experience has the potential to be different, even if the desired effect is the same through either platform. Typically the TV show one watches online is the same as the show seen on a TV set. Rarely is the overall "content" different, with the exception of commercial length and its effect on the total-running time of the viewing. So, then, do people stream TV shows for different reasons than they watch them on a TV set? In a word, yes, if those reasons are directly related to the features—interactive or not—afforded by the Internet. For example, when one wants to watch two consecutive weekly episodes of a program currently offered for streaming on Hulu, and he doesn't have the luxury of a DVR, then the Internet offers an option not available elsewhere. Often, one can stream up to the latest five episodes—sometimes more, sometimes less—of a TV

show. Rather than watching and waiting from week to week through traditional broadcast channels, viewers can now experience a TV show online by streaming multiple episodes (sometimes entire seasons) back to back—or marathoning. However, if the reason for streaming is because a favorite TV show was missed during its original network broadcast, then the reason for streaming would be more along similar lines of watching on a TV.

A more important question, then, is not whether one streams for different reasons than he watches on a TV. Rather: "Is it a different viewing experience to be connected to the Internet?" So many people are connected in their daily lives by default: Today's computers actively seek out Internet connections where available; cell phones and smart phones stay connected simply by being switched on; Web sites such as Gmail.com and Facebook offer the automatic option to chat with friends; and many Web sites auto update in real time to keep streams of information current. All of these examples rely on connectivity and interactiveness—two options that are usually, by default, swithed on. Being connected is a gateway to online interactivity, and being interactive is an option that, more often than not, helps define how individuals communicate with each other today. Therefore, the online streaming experience, which by definition is both a connected and interactive one, is for some not the same as watching on a TV set. For all, however, streaming offers a different set of communicative options than does watching on a TV. How that experience plays out for each person who chooses to stream is based on individual uses, and can differ greatly between users. In other words, everyone is connected and interactive when streaming. Some, though, choose higher levels of interactiveness than others, both CMC and HCI.

Contributions and Practical Implications

Theoretical

The Internet's rising popularity as a functional tool for streaming TV content, while still in the early stages of acceptance, indicates that the way one can watch their favorite programs will continue to evolve to fit today's on demand and interactive lifestyles. While much research on U&G looks at TV—a traditional form of media, and the Internet—a still-new technology, the synthesis of the two into one phenomenon is still lacking in an abundance of research. This is understandable, as the option to stream network TV content online has been around for a considerably short time.

Since its introduction television has been considered a one-way form of communication—from sender (or network) to receiver—with little or no opportunities do directly communicate back or with others during the viewing experience. The Internet as a streaming platform is changing that. We have seen how this phenomenon opens up the ways in which people inform, become informed, be entertained, and use content as a catalyst for social interaction, through features that allow for interactivity with others and the content itself. Contributing to the literature on motivations for watching television and Internet use, this research offers a fresh perspective on surveillance that goes beyond turning to the media for news and current events, as is often cited. It suggests that individuals turn to the Internet and streaming Web sites in order to stay informed on popular TV shows—a form of surveillance that does not turn up in previous literature. Further, finding that certain surveillance needs better predicted two-way CMC features than they did HCI features not only goes against the classic literature on U&G and surveillance, but suggests that the Internet as a tool for both surveillance

and a social utility might draw more similarities to face-to-face interactions—in many instances replacing those personal interactions with computer-mediated texts.

TV Industry

To the producers of TV shows and the networks that distribute them, the streaming of their content on demand is still new, and its implications to their business models are not completely understood. Still, they stream, and viewers choose to watch through this method. This ability by the viewer, in a more connected environment than watching through a TV set currently allows for, opens up more channels of communication that allow for interactivity, multi-tasking, and instant gratification, as well as many more on-demand choices from which to choose. If the bottom-line to the TV network industry is to at least maintain market share, and in most cases to grow that share, then understanding *why* individuals choose to stream is tantamount to understanding *what* they are streaming. This affects more than just programming and advertising strategies. Becoming knowledgeable about the behaviors and activities of streaming viewers means going beyond the program and understanding if and how that content can be related to the interactive features the Internet allows for, or more precisely, how it can predict which features will be used. This can indeed affect not only programming decisions, but also how programs are marketed, distributed, and ultimately sold to advertisers—the bottom line.

Limitations of the Study

This study aimed to identify motivations for streaming TV network programs, both broadcast and cable, online. For the survey a convenience sample of undergraduate university students was used, limiting the responses to those with a median age of 20. How a more representative sample of the population would have affected the results remains to be seen. At the same time, a strong interest existed in the younger adult population pertaining to their streaming habits.

Nearly everyone in the sample does stream TV shows online, suggesting that this younger audience of consumers is more likely than previous generations to rely on the Internet for their TV fix.

This study also did not include the act of watching pre-recorded programming through DVRs or VCRs, which streaming on the Internet is likened to in a sense. The DVR employs important, interactive technology that can transform the way TV is viewed, making it a more proactive option than traditional viewing (Smith & Krugman, 2009). Perhaps the DVR is to older adults what the Internet is for younger viewers. And, while both time shifting and streaming options can be fairly easily compared to each other, one major difference exists: DVR is a paid service, while streaming network TV content is not. Many people do not subscribe to cable or satellite TV services, let alone own a TV. Instead, they choose to stream online. And, some even connect their computers to TV sets, allowing for a more traditional TV watching experience, but through interactive streaming.

Trying to isolate the myriad of interactive features available across popular streaming TV sites was difficult at best. Features are continually updated, added, and removed, sometimes from day to day. For example, abc.com would stream hi-definition video once a solid high-speed Internet connection was detected during playback. This feature was no longer being utilized during the content analysis of Web sites. Further, distribution practices of streaming TV shows continues to change. In June 2010, Hulu, the most-visited Web site for streaming network TV content, announced Hulu Plus, a subscription-based service that will allow much more access to programs, even allowing them to stream directly to Blu-ray players, video game consoles, and certain newly-designed TVs, all for ten dollars per month (Stelter, 2010). How this will affect streaming habits and further distribution models remains to be seen. Finally, another limitation

goes back to criticism of U&G as an empiricist approach to studying media use, with methods imposed upon subject rather than taken from them (Elliot, 1974). True, while early studies were descriptive in nature and relied much on audiences to try to fit their motives into pre-designated categories based on a pre-conceived model, many of the methodologies have been revised and updated. This includes more systematic and quantifiable ways of measuring audience responses, and increasing awareness by researchers that society's active use of media could be a factor in making effects more or less likely (Baran and Davis, 2006). The survey for this study did isolate key features that are currently employed across streaming Web sites and pre-tested them for relevance. By doing so, any ambiguity of how these variables were chosen was eliminated. Choosing often-cited gratifications sought for both the Internet and TV, although not replicated from previous studies, allowed for a reasonable and justifiable approach to attaching the U&G lens to streaming network TV shows online.

Directions for Future Research

Through the course of this study, changes in the industry as they relate to streaming network TV shows online continually changed, prompting even more questions and suggesting additional research. For example, while this study did compare streaming to watching on a TV set at times, the phenomenon of time shifting through DVRs and VCRs was not included. How these two options are and will be evaluated by individuals could be an important key to the future of the industry. Also, questions should be asked about the future of online streaming platforms, including Hulu, and how their new availabilities over more traditional devices such as TVs and Blu-ray players will affect, among others, the cable TV industry and its subscriber base. Further, the future of streaming programs through handheld devices such as smart phones and the new iPad remains to be seen.

The subject of the digital divide raises questions for further research as well. Individuals who cannot afford Internet service or computer devices have no or limited access to streaming programs online.

A major delineation between streaming and watching on a TV set is advertising. Approximately 25 percent of network TV shows is taken up with advertising when viewing a traditional TV broadcast. Streaming the same shows cuts the amount of commercial time considerably. While I briefly touched on it here, there is room for much more research on how individuals view advertising online.

Conclusion

When streaming network TV shows online, surveillance needs best predicted the use of computer-mediated communication interactive features, as did the need to be social. The need for entertainment and diversion best predicted the use of human-computer interactive features. This study looks through the lens of a popular yet often criticized approach to understanding people's reasons for choosing mass media—Uses and Gratifications. TV is one of the most popular forms of media, and the availability to now stream content online and on demand makes it even more accessible than ever. Regardless of how TV programming—or any media content for that matter—is accessed, it is done so to satisfy certain needs. The need for surveillance of current events and TV programs can be satisfied through streaming, but in ways that go against the grain of traditional surveillance methods. The connectedness that is part of many individuals everyday lives allows for the Internet to make information seeking and sharing a two-way communicative event, rather than a one-way, producer-to-consumer flow of information. This connectedness allows for near-constant interactivity—both with the computer and with each other—which acts as a tool that allows us to both share information and be social with others no

matter where they (or we) are. Adding to this is the online availability of short clips of TV shows and news events, which give individuals not only quick and instant access to keep up with the latest events, but act as a conduit to allow for easy sharing of this information with others, whether to help with surveillance, be more social, or both. This connectedness more often today remains switched on, giving every online experience—even TV watching—the potential to be a shared one, for reasons that help gratify both surveillance and social needs.

As a tool to be entertained and diverted, the Internet provides much of the same TV content accessible through traditional broadcast means. If the goal is to merely watch an entire program online, then it is plausible to reason that, in many cases, individuals stream TV content for many of the same reasons they watch it on a TV set. Whether these two experiences become even more similar to each other, as both television networks and the technologies that are used to distribute their programming further become integrated to bring this on-demand content to more traditional devices such as the TV set and DVD player, remains to be seen.

Where the TV and Internet intersect goes beyond merely the screen they both have in common. Today's TV screens can be used as computer screens, and vice versa. How this will change next year or within the next decade might indicate how the term "TV" is soon redefined. Until it is, individuals will continue to watch their programs on the platforms they choose, and call it by that platform. But, regardless of their choice, and the future of TV watching, one element of the convergence of television and the Internet is not going to change: TV is everywhere.

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