

The concept of ‘second screen’ as a way to enhance the TV user experience

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Keywords: Second screen, TV, Mobile devices

1 Context

Taking advantage of a natural behavior of their audience, which increasingly makes use of mobile devices in parallel to the viewing experience, TV stations begin to invest in tools and solutions that enable the expansion of this relationship between TVs and mobile devices. Thus, what is sought is to extend this transmedia experience by joining the “main” programming consumption (on TV) and the interactive features that exist in tools created for mobile devices, integrated at the level of TV content, which is also known as *second screen*.

In the past two decades, much has been discussed about the impacts that the consolidation of the Internet would represent to the mass media. Initially, there was a claim that the popularity of the Internet would lead to a drop in TV audience or even to the demise of TV and other mass media. In the book *Old Media, New Media*, Dizard (2000) shows a decrease in TV audience in the U.S. in the mid 90’s, during the boom of the Internet, which supports this falling expectation.

According to Lévy (2007), the impacts caused by possibilities brought by the Internet on mass TV experience are inevitable and, within this context, at first the TV model tends to result in two main possible outcomes:

- 1) The TV product will become just an input tool to cyberspace and an access to products and services;
- 2) New ways of distribution and interaction devices between the consumer and the product will eventually lead to the generation of new languages, products and services on cybernetic TV.

In fact, what is observed is that the Internet represents not just a danger to the audience of large media corporations, but to the prevailing media model itself, which has aimed to meet the masses until then.

However, another look at the issue shows that the media model afforded by the Internet would not necessarily result in the end of the mass media models established so far. After the decrease period, TV audiences have stabilized, and there is evidence that users are unifying both experiences in order to add the best features each one has to offer. The popularization of mobile devices has speeded up this natural tendency among users, and in many cases the mobile device is used for consumption of information which complements the content provided by TVs, a phenomenon that has been called *second screen*.

This paper is meant to discuss the use of mobile devices as a second screen TV experience from the Design perspective. From theoretical and practical points of view, it presents the relationship between Internet and TV, evaluating aspects that favor the establishment of this transmedia consumption experience. Throughout the study, the challenge of finding ways that provide such an experience – whose purpose is to make both markets even more valuable, using the whole range of platforms, services, applications and offerings – is addressed.

In order to complement the research, some of the tools for *second screen* are presented. By observing these solutions, this work shows their main functionalities and features that attempt to exploit the mobile devices potential in addition to the TV experience, as well as the relationship and consequent interaction between TV broadcasters and their audience.

2 Method

Firstly, a theoretical investigation of subjects related to the popularization of the Internet as well as the use of mobile devices, particularly in the *second screen* field was required, presenting concepts and justifying the relevance of the topic and the reasons for the consolidation of this kind of transmedia experience. In this context, it was necessary to collect and analyze statistical data that shows this consolidation of *second screen* experience.

In addition to the theoretical and conceptual approach to the subject, an investigation was made over major existing applications created specifically to be used as a second screen at the time of its conduction. From empirical observations made by the authors, impressions collected from specialized critics, and research on magazines and websites focused on this subject, it was possible to identify some relevant applications, of which *Zeebox* and *NextGuide* were chosen.

The presentation of the tools indicated as case studies not only aims to give support to this research but also to materialize the subject. The idea is to make it more

comprehensible, establishing a good understanding of the challenges, problems, solutions and trends that shape the current scenario. For this purpose, the authors used their practical and theoretical knowledge as information architects and User Experience experts to deconstruct these applications, identifying their functionalities and exposing certain features and functional rules, as well as some distinctive interface, interaction, and user experience aspects.

It is worth mentioning that such a selection and its subsequent analysis have qualitative and observational features. They do not take into account the penetration of these tools among their potential audience and even the satisfaction level of their current users.

3 Results

Working as an electronic program guide, *Zeebox* is not only a great directory of channels and programs. The application focuses on giving a social connotation to the TV viewing experience, making it more interesting and enjoyable. From its integration with *Twitter* and *Facebook*, and its own technological resources, *Zeebox* shows what the user and their friends are consuming in the present moment.

NextGuide, on the other hand, has a powerful content offering system, from text to video, due to its integration with services like *iTunes*, *Amazon*, *Hulu* and *Netflix*. Among its features, the highlights are the ability for the user to be notified whenever the desired program is on air, and the option to watch fresh movie trailers and classic movies. The inclusion of clips and movie previews provided by *Hulu*, for example, indicates the application's intention to go beyond the user experience as a second screen, playing an important role in the discovery of new movies and programs rather than just an environment to support the TV.

Thus, in objective terms, it can be said that while *Zeebox*'s mission is to offer a user experience in line with what is consumed on TV, *NextGuide* is not limited to what goes on TV as an attempt to be relevant enough, so it can be used without the support of the first screen.

It is important to notice, however, that both applications have undergone constant improvements in their algorithms and interfaces to provide an immersive and enriching experience for the user. In both cases, it is clear how important content offering is. They are concerned about programs and advertisements that fit the user consumption profile, being implicit that failure of this task will result in their own ruin.

4 Conclusions

Still in its primary stage, this new form of interactivity with the TV, which is featured by the use of a mobile device as a new dimension of this environment, offers a completely new paradigm regarding the measurement of the audience engagement. It is unclear however how to do it, or how to offer exactly what users expect. From that transmedia consumption, users can check-in at their her favorite program, see which friends are also watching it, discuss a TV series with strangers, find more information about an advertisement or an item used by a film character, all these actions while watching TV in real time. But what is the next step for this experience? Would it be possible to imagine a moment of complete reversal, where the experience on the second screen is consolidated to the point of interfering in what happens in the first, or even to the point in which the second screen starts to be treated as the first screen so the TV becomes the device that provides additional content?

The case studies shown on this paper demonstrate that TV stations are truly seeing a huge growth potential in the *second screen* market. New applications solutions arise every moment in a market that is growing by leaps and bounds and reaches more and more users. However, solutions are still in an early state with many references to the traditional language utilized in conventional user experience on the Web. Thus, within a project capable of providing experiences tailored for the context of *second screen*, there are many possibilities yet to be explored.

Based on the above analysis, it is not possible to conclude whether the solutions analyzed are actually able to set standards to be followed, as well as able to attend to what viewers expect and perceive as improvement in their consumer experience regarding content offered by TV stations. At this stage one could say that the existing solutions intended to use mobile devices as a second screen for this TV experience represent an early attempt for experimenting with the potentials at hand, in order to find in the future a model capable of transforming and consolidating the way interaction and engagement happen through the use of these devices.

Therefore, it is necessary to follow up this issue over the coming years so it will be possible to evaluate it more accurately and then find conclusive results.

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6 Notes

Were considered for this study the information available through the following links:

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<<http://digitalvideospace.blogspot.com.br/2012/12/10-predictions-for-second-screen.html>>

<<http://www.engadget.com/2012/09/27/zeebox-second-screen-app-comcast-hbo/>>

<<http://www.fastcocreate.com/1679561/the-race-for-the-second-screen-5-apps-that-are-shaping-social-tv>>

<<http://www.fastcompany.com/3001615/why-hbo-nbc-and-comcast-are-betting-startup-power-their-second-screens>>

<<http://mashable.com/2012/02/02/hbo-miso-game-of-thrones/>>

<<http://www.nytimes.com/video/2013/01/07/business/100000001990834/the-impact-of-second-screen-tv-viewing.html>>

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