KATZ TELEVISION GROUP

CONTENT MATTERS
IDEAS IMPACTING THE CONTENT COMMUNITY

5 INSIGHTS TO KNOW

1. Despite the common belief: It would appear that sports aren't 'DVR-Proof'

Recent survey indicates that 84.3% of pay TV subscribers use DVRs to record games for various reasons ranging from the inability to watch the contest live, to the ability to skip commercials.

2. Older Viewers and Conservatives Are Watching Less NFL, Survey Finds

Morning Consult survey also cites election coverage and over-saturation of primetime games. A survey of 2,088 people finds evidence for this season's sagging National Football League TV ratings.

3. ABC Wants to Focus More of Its Programming on the Working Class in the Age of Trump

Donald Trump may or may not make America great again, but his unexpected election triumph is already causing at least one American TV network to question its programming philosophy.

4. #SocialTrends2017: What to Expect in this Year

Some marketers will look to monetize live streaming video, while others will face some hurdles with influencer marketing. Social media is a major player in the most important conversations including topics such as attribution, live streaming, digital video advertising and messaging.

5. CNN Taps YouTube Influencer to Reach Millennials

In a move to reach younger, mobile-oriented viewers, CNN acquired mobile video app Beme, one of the most widely-followed videomakers on YouTube.

The vast majority of pay TV subscribers with DVRs – about 84.3% -- use them to record sports, a clear indication that live sports are not "DVR-proof," a new survey from Thuuz Sports found. MULTICHANNEL NEWS reported this finding, which has been summarized and excerpted. The survey of more than 1,000 pay TV subscribers who are also sports fans conducted in partnership with Ring Digital, also found that 84% of those sports DVR users do so several times a month.

As for the reasons, the survey indicated that 75% said they use the DVR as a backup when they can't watch the game live. Another 58% told researchers that they use it as a backup when they might miss the start of a contest. And yet, another 58% like to skip ads. This survey was meant to explore new programming opportunities and it was the latter use-case that Thuuz believes opens the door to a premium-ad-free highlights product.

Thuuz, of course, is enthused about these findings because they fit well with a product set that uses metadata and algorithms to keep viewers apprised of live games, ranking them based on their excitement level. In mid-2015, the company began to talk up a new app called Thuuz Highlights that adds more personalization to the mix by enabling fans to build highlight reels based on games recorded on a set-top DVR, in a pay TV provider's VOD library, or stored in the cloud for streaming.

Thuuz's announced partners include Fox Sports, NBC Sports, Charter Communications, Dish Network, Liberty Global, TiVo and ThinkAnalytics, among others. Of that group, Comcast has testing a DVR In-Game Highlights feature that lets viewers jump to big plays in recorded football and soccer matches. Comcast did not use the Thuuz technology for their test.

"Thuuz is all about enhancing fan experiences for games and highlights through metadata indicating the best moment to tune-in, which can also be extended to automatically assemble personalized playlists for each subscriber," Warren Packard, CEO of Thuuz Sports, said in a statement. "These survey results strengthen our commitment to personalized, real-time sports video highlights as a growth strategy for TV operators, sports networks, leagues, and teams."

"Sports are best viewed live, but this survey highlights the fact that most fans with DVRs regularly use them to customize their sports viewing in a near-live fashion, added Brian Ring, principal of Ring Digital. "Indeed, our dataset provides strong evidence that a multi-billion-dollar opportunity exists for TV providers and sports networks to super-serve this user behavior, creating a better TV bundle."

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Even though this survey was not aimed at over-the-air broadcast sporting events, it does provide some insight on sports viewer behavior. Since it was believed that sports were indeed the last bastion of live viewing, it should be concerning that nearly 85% of those viewing sports on subscription cable services were recording the games. It is not a stretch to believe that broadcast homes with DVR capability are doing the same.

Explanations for this season's sagging National Football League TV ratings have ranged from competition with election coverage to an overload of primetime games to impatience with commercials according to this item summarized and excerpted from the WALL STREET JOURNAL. It also shows declines in viewership among older viewers and those with conservative political views.

Interest in the election certainly played a part in keeping viewers away from the games. The survey, done in November, found that 16% of respondents were somewhat or much less likely to have watched football because of election coverage including debates. As for political leanings, conservatives are watching less football this season compared to last season versus other political groups. Some 28% of conservatives said they were watching some or much less NFL, versus 20% for moderates and 16% for liberals. The survey did not explore why older and conservative viewers might be losing more interest than other groups this season and whether protests by players during the playing of the national anthem are a factor.

Older viewers cited political coverage less frequently than their younger counterparts as playing a part in their decision to not watch football. One caveat to the analysis: people in specific age groups or with particular political views represent a subset of the overall survey group, and therefore the data on them is produced from smaller sample sizes. NFL ratings have been soft this season for its three primetime franchises on Sunday, Monday and especially Thursday. Thursday Night Football is clearly a challenge for the NFL. Forty-one percent of people polled said they never watch Thursday night games, only 22 percent of people said they watch on a weeknight if their favorite team is playing.

Much of the blame has been put on election and post-election coverage that has filled the airwaves this fall. Fewer commercials and shorter broadcasts could boost viewership, the survey said. Of those surveyed, 43% said they would be much more or somewhat more likely to watch games if there were fewer commercials. To be sure, the amount of commercials in NFL games is pretty much the same as last year when ratings were higher.

The Super Bowl is still ahead, a plurality of respondents (39 percent) said which teams end up playing will affect their decision to watch. Seventeen percent said the commercials would get their viewership, a few points more than the 13 percent who said it was the halftime show that would get them to tune in. The league and its advertisers might do well to root for the Dallas Cowboys, then. The team is crushing opponents and ratings this season, and according to UPI, played in four of the five most-watched games in the 2016-17 season.

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The NFL has indicated that it remains committed to Thursday football in response to ongoing speculation that the league will scrap the franchise or scale back the number of games on that night. But it is true, that with all of these concerns, the NFL will have to make some changes even in a non-election year.

Donald Trump may or may not make America great again, but his unexpected election triumph is already causing at least one American TV network to question its programming philosophy. This item is summarized and excerpted from NEW YORK MAGAZINE and C21.

Channing Dungey, the recently installed president of ABC Entertainment, told the Content London media summit that Trump's election — powered in part by a surge in support among white rural and blue-collar voters — has prompted Alphabet execs to wonder whether the network's slate of flashy, upscale hour-long series (think How to Get Away With Murder or Designated Survivor) adequately reflects all parts of America. "With our dramas, we have a lot of shows that feature very well-to-do, well-educated people, who are driving very nice cars and living in extremely nice places," Dungey told the conference, according to a report from TV industry trade C21. "There is definitely still room for that, and we absolutely want to continue to tell those stories because wish-fulfillment is a critical part of what we do as entertainers. But in recent history we haven't paid enough attention to some of the true realities of what life is like for everyday Americans in our dramas."

Dungey's self-critique is notable since ABC has been miles ahead of its broadcast rivals in terms of racial and cultural diversity.

Led by powerhouse producer Shonda Rhimes, the network's hour-long series regularly feature significant numbers of non-white leading and supporting actors and don't shy away from tackling hot-button social issues. But while those attributes were seen as positives during the Obama era, Trump's ascendancy threatens to shift the tone of the culture. To be sure, Dungey said nothing to indicate ABC plans an extreme makeover of its lineup. Instead, per C21, she pointed to the network's comedy lineup, saying ABC's half-hours do a better job offering a "balance" between financially comfortable characters (Modern Family, Black-ish) and more economically anxious folks (The Middle, Speechless). Dungey also pointed to the upcoming LGBT-themed miniseries When We Rise as an example of storytelling that is "more important to share than ever" after the results of November 8.

To really evaluate the role that mass media played in Trump's victory, it's important to look beyond cable news and late-night comedy sketches. On broadcast TV alone, tens of millions of Americans watched competing visions of American society in their living rooms, daily. Still, for anyone wondering whether Trump's election might have an impact on the pop culture, Dungey's comments indicate it already is.

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Viewers are presented with images and ideas that could either confirm or counter their political philosophies—that look toward a brighter future or fondly evoke the good old days. For the most part, these networks and their series' producers rose to the occasion in improving their representation of women, people of color, and other underrepresented groups. At the same time, it seems that ABC is looking to find balance in this new age of Trump.

eMarketer predicts what will happen in this fast-changing space in 2017, according to a new eMarketer report, "US Social Trends for 2017: eMarketer's Predictions for Attribution, Live Streaming, Messaging, Influencer Marketing and More" which is summarized and excerpted from the eMarketer website.

Marketers that want to know what offline actions their online advertising caused should look seriously at the tools being developed by Facebook and Google. The two digital powerhouses are among the most strongly positioned players. This area will certainly be a big focus for social media advertising in 2017. Google and Facebook already offer location-based digital ads with offline objectives. And advertisers are ready for it; 78% of US marketers surveyed by the Mobile Marketing Association said they have already increased location-based mobile ad spending based on the availability of foot traffic data.

After Facebook sharply reduced the reach of marketers' nonpaid posts a few years ago, many businesses flocked first to Instagram and then Snapchat to build their fan bases. But these options are diminishing in 2017, as Instagram reduces the visibility of organic brand posts in feeds. And there are signs that Snapchat will make its own moves on this front. Instagram signaled its intentions when it rolled out an updated algorithm. Instead of showing posts in reverse chronological order, the feed is now ranked based on what Instagram thinks users would most like to see and engage with. That means that a brand post that used to show up in an Instagram user's feed at the time the marketer published now may appear higher up, further down, or not at all.

Another trend will be monetizing live streaming video. The major social and digital video platforms as well as TV networks and publishers will all stake their claim, leaving marketers with a dizzying array of options to consider. Esports platforms like Twitch have already proven that live streamed video game competitions have huge audience and revenue potential. eMarketer expects TV networks to get more involved as well, moving beyond their current experiments with the social platforms. Meanwhile influential marketing, which has been heating up over the years, is expected to face some big challenges next year. First, marketers will likely be faced with increased enforcement of FTC regulations covering sponsored content in social media. Many marketers do not label their influencer-led posts as sponsored, or do so inconsistently.

Social properties will insert themselves in the process. This could come by reducing the organic visibility of the marketing messages influencers post, or by requiring brands to buy ads to promote their influencer marketing arrangements. A more benign scenario may be that the social platforms acquire or invest in influencer-marketing companies, something Twitter did when it bought Niche.

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eMarketer predicts social properties will insert themselves more forcefully into the cozy relationship between marketers and influencers. As broadcasters, we need to be aware of these fast moving developments at least have "a toe in the water" in this emarketing space, especially the use of influencers.

Young viewers are drawn to internet and mobile for news according to this item summarized and excerpted from the eMarketer site regarding the acquisition of the Beme video app. The deal adds a highly popular social video personality to the CNN roster, it also signals an effort to find ways to communicate with a generation that is far more likely to consume news via digital, and in particular via mobile devices.

A Pew Research survey earlier this year found that millennials were roughly twice as likely to "often get news" from the internet as from TV. Fully half of those 18-29 cited the internet (including social media) as compared to 27% from TV. Among older generations, those 50 and above, the skew was even more pronounced—but in the opposite direction, with the vast majority tapping TV over the internet. Not only are younger users more likely to turn to the internet for news, they are more likely to consume it via mobile devices. comScore Media Metrix data from May shows a sharp bias for mobile among younger users, with nearly three-quarters of their time spent consuming news/information on mobile devices rather than desktops.

CNN plans to shut down Beme. Its 11-person team will develop a new stand-alone media brand, which it plans to launch by summer of 2017. Beme has been compared to Snapchat, but the emphasis is not on selfies. Rather, the idea is for users to capture the world around them in brief video snippets. Neistat gives CNN a digital video personality with a significant track record in influencer marketing. His YouTube channel has nearly 6 million subscribers, primarily made up of young viewers, and includes a mix of original and sponsored content.

"Research shows that young people are heavily influenced by celebrities and digital influencers," said Debbie Williamson, principal analyst at eMarketer. "CNN's acquisition of Beme could help it bring in new content that could attract a younger audience. In addition, influencer marketing is extremely popular among advertisers. Influencers can create content that is fresh and original, introduce brands to their followers and help companies to do marketing that comes across as more authentic and genuine than a paid advertisement would."

An April 2016 survey from TapInfluence, an influencer marketing automation platform, and Altimeter Group, a technology research company, asked influencers what their audience loves about their work, and ultimately, what keeps them engaged. More than seven in 10 US influencers said authenticity was key. They keep their followers engaged by simply being themselves — by being honest, funny, open and willing to call it like they see it.

CONTENT IN CONTEXT

YouTube stars and influencers in general—are not new. But in recent years they've gained popularity among marketers, in part because they are seen as authentic and honest, and partly because they allow advertisers to get around consumer ad avoidance. As broadcasters, we need to closely observe this trend, while making use of our on-air talent in those same roles as local market influencers.