Chapter 7

Returning to the TV Screen: The Potential of Content Unification in iTV

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ABSTRACT

Given the continuous transformation of the video consumption across multiple devices, this chapter has the main goal of characterizing the viewer behaviors at home, including the motivations for specific interactive television (iTV) features. An online survey was conducted with the aim of clarifying if the consumption patterns at home are contributing to the demand for unification services that combine videos from internet sources with TV content. The results highlight some insights regarding the preferred devices depending on age and the content source, as well as limitations and valued features to be considered in the development of future unification and personalization services. The results from this study are useful, not only to understand the dynamics of audiovisual consumption regarding the “future of television,” but can also be applied to foster product-oriented projects based on the synergies between behavioral factors, technological innovations, and industry trends regarding audiences’ needs and UX.

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Returning to the TV Screen

INTRODUCTION

Currently, the world is facing deep changes in audiovisual consumption habits that also have impact on the understanding of the role of TV, as a medium that nowadays is no longer confined to live broadcasting. Sustained by Streaming and Video-on-Demand (VoD) services, people are changing the way they watch audiovisual content, by migrating from the traditional approach of watching linear TV to non-linear TV and sources streamed over the internet, known as Over the Top (OTT) content (Abreu, Nogueira, Becker, & Cardoso, 2017). Simultaneously, the establishment of the new “Anywhere and Anytime” culture, mostly provided by constant advances on mobile devices, ensures ubiquitous access to Internet video, leading frequently to a transmutation of the primary screens (Vanattenhoven & Geerts, 2015a, 2015b). Pay-TV operators are, thus, working hard to make online video content available on their platforms. As they try to cope with the emergence of the cord cutters, they are committed to grant access to different mobile and web apps. Furthermore, personalized content can be provided by predicting which is the most appropriate content for each consumer, according to their viewing habits and reliable algorithms.

Pay-TV operators are also making the traditional line-up of TV content more flexible, offering services such as “catch-up TV” and “time-shift” in more engaging systems, supported by current User Interface (UI) paradigms (Abreu et al., 2017). In overall, Portugal is playing an important role regarding the offer of TV services by these operators, and is one of the most prominent countries in Europe where Pay-TV operators provide nonlinear alternative services (catch-up TV) to the linear-TV content offer (Abreu et al., 2017). The Pay-TV penetration in Portugal reached 89% of the households in 2017 and is expected to grow slowly but steadily to 94% by 2021, with Internet Protocol Television (IPTV) services having a prominent role since 2013 (Patel, 2017). Consumer demands and users’ preferences for VoD content are heavily influencing how Pay-TV operators provide content beyond traditional linear TV. In the third trimester of 2017, about 5.5% of individuals aged 10 or over had access to subscribed to streaming services, such as Netflix, Fox Play, NPlay or Amazon Prime Video (ANACOM, 2017; Patel, 2017). Pay-TV Portuguese high competitive market is currently being occupied by operators, such as Altice and NOS, which offer many HD channels and OTT mobile services (e.g., MEO Go, NOS TV).

This backdrop leads to new unification approaches that aim to offer video from different sources (OTT and TV) at the same level, on unique and simple UI, while maintaining the user within the operators’ TV ecosystem (Almeida, Abreu, Silva, Guedes, et al., 2018; Almeida, Abreu, Silva, Varsori, et al., 2018). This unifying opportunity is especially significant at home, where the big TV screen is still the preferred device for watching TV but isn’t the favorite device for watching internet content by the youngest generations (Ericsson, 2017), which are becoming more
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