



The Next Big Thing: Linear TV?

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(gigaom.com) -- Still think DVRs killed linear TV consumption? Well, think again. Recent numbers from the U.K. show that traditional TV consumption is actually more popular than ever. British viewers watched 28 hours and 15 minutes of linear television per week in 2010, according to the country's Broadcasters' Audience Research Board. That's two hours and four minutes per week more than in 2009.

In other words: Brits just added another 18 minutes of TV viewing to their day last year, and they're now watching a total of four hours and two minutes of linear TV per day. That's not only a lot of TV; it's more TV than the Research Board ever measured before.

Why do people stick to the broadcasters' schedule, you might ask? The U.K.'s Media Week blog, which first reported the Research Board numbers earlier this year, points to one likely culprit: Twitter. Media Week author Arif Durrani writes:

"Turns out those younger audiences, which [were] moving away from television since the arrival of mass Internet access 10 years ago, are actually quite adept at multi-tasking. Behind the near 20m headline figure who watched last year's X Factor final on ITV lurks a social media success story. More than a quarter (26%) of all viewers used Twitter or Facebook to interact with the show, according to new research from Brand Driver."

We've been writing about Twitter's ability to function as a global water cooler around TV shows and live events for a while now, and it only makes sense that this phenomenon is now influencing ratings outside the U.S. as well.

But there's another factor at play here that shouldn't be underestimated, and that's the BBC's iPlayer and its ability to keep people connected to a show even if they happen to miss an episode. The Beeb once again reported record usage for the iPlayer in 2010, clocking up more than 900,000 requests for single episodes of hit shows like *The Apprentice*. However, most of these requests were coming from PCs; connected devices simply don't matter yet, at least not in the U.K..

This suggests people catch up on shows via their PCs, then turn to their TVs to watch the next episode of a show in real time. Of course, this behavior could shift once Internet-connected TVs and other devices become more commonplace, but even then, Twitter might save the day. You simply don't want to show up late to the water cooler.