



VAB's TV IN THE TIME OF COVID-19 EVALUATES RECENT SURGES IN VIEWERSHIP

New Bulletin Equips Marketers with Data, Insights and Actionable Takeaways to Navigate our "New Normal"

*NEW YORK – April 6, 2020 – [VAB's](#) newest report, **TV Viewing in the Time of COVID-19**, deciphers current television viewership trends and offers guidance for marketers currently reevaluating their media plans.*

*With people confined to their homes and seeking both a constant source of news and a welcome distraction, VAB's latest analysis, **TV Viewing in the Time of COVID-19** quantifies the affect this "new normal" has had on TV – how many people are watching, what are they watching, when are they watching it, and how much engagement do they show via interaction on social media. Furthermore, as marketers struggle with "what's next?" given the new normal, it provides actionable takeaways for their strategy.*

"While COVID-19 is a horrible reason for our population to stay at home, we've seen scores of marketers rightly rush to connect emotionally with 'here to help' messaging, to the scale-atop-of-scale surge of 24/7 viewership, to all forms of premium multiscreen TV content," said Sean Cunningham, president and CEO, VAB. "These marketers see both a mass of information-hungry viewers, as well as the spikes in viewing for comfort-of-favorites distraction. TV and TV-Social is where the populations are all converging in March and April."

The New Normal for Messaging

Consumers are reacting to authentic, purpose-driven campaigns that address today's issues with real solutions (contactless drivers / pick-up windows, car relief payment programs, etc.). These campaigns build long-term brand health by focusing on a relevant, emotionally compelling message and yet also have a clear call-to-action resulting in practical results. Fifty six percent of consumers are 'pleased to hear brands taking action like making donations of goods and services' and 43% say they want messages that are 'reassuring from the brands I know and trust.' (slide 9)

The New Normal of Scale

Overall U.S. television viewership is rising regardless of age and daypart, with the peak potentially still to come. After entering the first full week of state mandated stay-at-home orders, all age groups had significant, double-digit increases in TV usage. This provides an environment for marketers to test campaigns and learn among new audiences, especially teens and young adults. Time spent watching TV is up +17% for P2+, +39%

for kids 2-11 and +46% for teens 12-17, respectively (slide 20). This overturns conventional wisdom about youth and teen viewing, indicating that absent the routine of attending school and activities, they turn to television for entertainment. Similarly, 18-34-year-olds collectively spent 83 million more hours watching television during the first week of lockdown compared to the last week in February (slide 21).

The New Normal of Daypart Strategy

VAB's analysis found *increased viewership across all dayparts and all demographics*. "This finding underscores the point that marketers should not deem any daypart 'off-limits,'" said Danielle DeLauro, executive vice president, VAB. "With every daypart showing increases, now more than ever marketers should be targeting by audience, not daypart. The audience for daytime TV has particularly changed dramatically, now filled with school age kids and younger, working adults".

Teens and adults 18-34 are now spending +175% and +45% more time, respectively, watching daytime television, M-F 9a-4p (slide 32). Late night and overnight are prime opportunities for advertisers as key buying groups are staying up later. Teens 12-17 and adults 18-34 are spending 22% and 12% more time watching late night programming, respectively.

The New Normal of Programming Selection

Despite the absence of live sports programming and production stoppages, other programming is filling the void as evidenced by increased viewership across all dayparts and demographics. Marketers should feel confident that there is relevant, engaging programming offered and consumed throughout the entire day.

Reflecting the desire to keep informed during this pandemic, ad-supported TV news has experienced significant growth in viewership. Weekly time spent watching news programming increased +81% for adults 18-34, +66% for adults 35-49 and +43% for adults 50-64 (slide 35).

At the same time, viewers are flocking to programming that will entertain them and provide a brief escape. Weekly time spent watching ad-supported movies and films increased +61% for teens 12-17 and +32% for adults 18-34 (slide 37).

Other genres seeing double-digit viewership growth include instructional and advice programming, as well as kids programming, where time spent watching is up +25% for kids 2-11 and +48% for teens 12-17 (slide 39).

As families are home and watching together across generations, it follows that programming choices would reflect that.

The New Normal of Second-Screen Engagement

Under normal circumstances, people are highly engaged with their favorite TV programming and enjoy the communal aspect of the viewing experience (slide 43). In today's current stay-at-home environment, contact with friends and family is being maintained on social media platforms, including many conversing about their favorite premium video programs. This presents options for marketers to consider how TV and social strategies complement each other to maximize the brand's voice in the conversation.

From March 15 to March 25, VAB conducted a custom Twitter analysis and found premium video content accounted for two-thirds (66%) of the top 10 Twitter trending topics at night, with ad-supported TV accounting for over half of all topics (slide 46.)

During the eleven days, 33 TV entertainment shows trended in the top 10 on Twitter accounting for more than 60% of total ad-supported TV topics. The programming that got viewers talking spanned content types - entertainment (62%), news (25%), and sports (13%).

About VAB

VAB is an insights-driven organization that inspires marketers to reimagine their media strategies resulting in smarter, more educated decisions. VAB develops unique market insights and answers questions from a marketer's perspective, tackling the toughest issues with fresh thinking and supporting data.

Note: Access to VAB's sizeable Insights library is complimentary to members of the press by creating an account [here](#).

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