

TV Guide? What's that?

As a media educator, I ask my students to think about how the media affect their lives. Today we are constantly inundated by media content, and those students have known no other way of life. Hundreds of TV channels have always come into their homes on a wire.

Before we consider how media shape our language, our dress or self-image, we can look at something as simple as how the media have changed the way we physically arrange our households, for example.

A century ago American homes had a living room or parlor that was organized to facilitate conversation. By the 1950s that room had been rearranged to make the television set the focal point – all seating faced the TV.

Likewise, we can look at how the media have changed our daily schedules. I clearly recall how my grandmother scheduled everything around “her story.” Still today I hear people saying that they must be home by 8 o'clock on Wednesday to see “Idol.”

But media consumption patterns are drastically changing, representing possibly one of the most significant changes in media since the advent of television. Ever since the first television stations went on the air in the 1940s, the schedule was set by the broadcasters.

“On demand media” puts the choices of when and where to use media into the hands of the consumer. Using an Internet-based streaming media provider, I can watch my favorite movie or TV episode at any time and at just about any place I choose.

Media researchers are trying to understand how these changes are affecting our daily lives and our culture. And advertisers are trying desperately to figure out how to assure their messages are still seen.

One observation I have made regarding my students' media consumption is a growing “impatience.” I am not implying any cause-and-effect connection between the introduction of on demand media and a behavioral change. But I am suggesting that the young people that I see in college classes don't watch TV the way I do.

And now some research appears to support this anecdotal evidence. Young people want their content in small bites, and they want it now.

A recent study of 18-24 year olds, conducted by research company *Synovate*¹, suggests that 65% of young people watch TV and film content ONLINE every week. Almost 15% of those young people report they have abandoned live TV altogether. Imagine! No TV!

¹ <http://advertising.microsoft.com/wwdocs/user/en-us/researchlibrary/researchreport/Young-Adults-Revealed.pdf>

The same study shows that young people are “clip watchers.” 73% of the respondents watched video clips online monthly, most of them either comedy or music, and most of them shared among online friends.

I suspect that by the time my four-year-old granddaughter is in college, the idea of racing back home by 8:00 to watch “Gone with the Wind” will be so foreign to her that she will roll her eyes and laugh, as she has already begun to do to me. Instead, she will download her favorite scene to her wireless device, add a video message, and send it to her friends. “What did my grandma see in this guy?”