

Media as a flat circle: Predictions for the next frontier of TV

By Ami Murphy Iannone - 27 March 2017 16:55pm



Vlogger Casey Neistat recently sold his app Beme to CNN

Traditional media has taken a beating in the past few years.

In my house, there is no "TV" in the old sense of the word and anecdotally that's the case for most of my peers. We've got streaming services for sure, but I never "channel-surf" and I rarely watch ads unless they're forced upon me.

Data seems to support my experience, with [Oscar viewership rates at a nine-year low](#) and [another report](#) showing an overall TV viewership decline of more than 10%.

More and more people are watching traditional television programming on live streaming devices, subscription services, and are finding new ways of opting out of ads. So the question is: what does the next frontier of traditional ad media look like?

We've got a few early hints.

It's Collaborative

Around my office, we've been talking about what we call the "[Vlogxit](#)" phenomenon: daily vloggers ditching their social pulpits to move on to different endeavors. The most notable example is Casey Neistat's departure from daily vlogging and the acquisition of his app Beme by CNN. This guy went from daily skateboarding-around-town videos, to being slung around by a [Samsung sponsored drone](#), and now he's making a multi-million dollar exit to join one of the oldest-of-school media giants.

But think about how big the gap still is between the 24-hour cable news cycle and the complete democratization of information that the internet and social media provides. It's a jump. Good thing Casey likes to jump.

The most recent example of traditional media swinging over the digital divide to pluck a content creator off the internet: the announcement of Snapchat star [Shaun McBride's \(@shonduras\)](#) deal with Viacom. This is a much less permanent and less clean-cut deal than Neistat. Shaun will keep his social media practice in tact--in fact, he'll be leveraging his channels as additional outlets for the content he produces with Viacom. He'll be a "[social correspondent](#)." And he's leaving himself open for future opportunities because the deal only lasts one year.

It appears that the days of TV execs dictating what does and does not get airtime will be fading away. And they're finally ready to ask the public what we want to see. But the big question here, and really the gamble that these creators are taking is: will the audience follow?

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We predict that the audience will follow, as long as you make it easier.

It's Better Integrated

You can't take daily YouTube watchers and ask them to start tuning into CNN at 8:00 PM on a TV in order to see the guy they love. And you certainly can't take the fans of a Snapchat star and ask them to only watch him on 35-minute shows with several two-minute ad breaks.

Media companies are starting to get that.

Just as Shonduras will be creating content to be distributed through his existing channels, big media is trying to bring the social channels into their fold. YouTube's recently announced deal with Comcast is a good example of this.

Comcast is making YouTube available like any other TV channel through its X1 pay-TV service: **"The new partnership means YouTube's clips and streams will be available and searchable on Comcast X1 like a regular channel or show."** This follows last year's decision by Comcast to include Netflix on the same service.

But, forget your TV vs. your phone. This new media is heading into turf that we haven't even started using as a general public yet. The Shonduras deal outlines VR and augmented reality as part of the content-programming channels he'll be helping to pioneer. The big boys are tired of playing catch up; they're trying to get ahead again.

You can't get ahead if people aren't willing to follow you. That requires trust.

It Hinges on Trust

In one interview, Neistat points out that his audience doesn't really watch CNN, and here's why: **"There is a tremendous distrust between the audience that watches my content online and the information that is put out by traditional media."**

Just like any other brand, traditional media companies that are rapidly losing ground are trying to borrow on the hard-earned **audience trust that these influencers have developed over time.** They're looking for a rawness and authenticity that the normal highly-produced TV format and its expertly-coiffed stars simply cannot deliver with any believability.

Here's the kicker: **this ain't new.**

This is exactly what our grandparents wanted. When there was **hard, horrible news to share with the American public**, Cronkite was the guy for the job. He was so implicitly trusted in every American household. But he was also the only voice. Now there are thousands of options and no way of knowing who is bankrolling, influencing or suggestively editing the content to best suit their agendas.

The old model is one-way: we look at the TV and the TV talks to us. We're starting to see the whole axis of media shift. Social media was the start of us leveling out the field, participating in dialogues around the things that were served up to us. This next evolution levels it even further. In a way, we're electing our content creators by voting for them through subscribing and engaging. Media companies are taking note. We predict that you'll see many more media mergers between independent content creators. What those mergers will look like is hard to imagine right now.

The lines between TV/social media/internet/channel will keep bleeding and blurring--to the point that those terms might lose their significance and differentiation from one another. Once VR and augmented reality come into play, all bets are off. I'm not sure I can even fully picture it, but for **True Detective fans, this phrase keeps swirling around in my brain: "Media is a flat circle."** When we're all everywhere at once, platform won't really matter. Seamlessness will be of paramount importance; real life doesn't have ad breaks or unconvincing product plugs. All that will matter then, and all that has ever mattered, is trust.

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