



# Motivations for the complementary use of text-based media during linear TV viewing: An exploratory study



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## ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of complementary use of text-based media, such as social media or instant messaging (IM), during linear TV viewing has been growing. This represents a new pattern of TV consumption, and is worth studying from a business as well as an academic perspective. In this paper, we present our findings from an exploratory study of 66 users who were interviewed to determine their motivations for the complementary use of text-based media during linear TV viewing. Five major use motivations were identified: communication about the impressions of a broadcast; information sharing and seeking; feelings of coviewing; curiosity about others' opinions; and program recommendations. We classified use motivations according to program genre, and also conducted a comparative analysis on how use motivations differ when using KakaoTalk (a form of instant messaging) and Facebook. Our work clarifies the use motivations of text-based media during TV consumption, which has not been addressed in previous studies, and provides insights into implementing text-based media that is complementary to linear TV viewing. Most interviewees in this study, however, were KakaoTalk users; future studies should explore users of more diverse types of text-based media.

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## 1. Introduction

Numerous studies have demonstrated that television viewing is moving from a communal to an individual experience. TV-viewing behavior has evolved with the increase in TV penetration, the introduction of new media, and technological advances (Klym & Montpetit, 2008; Nathan, Harrison, & Yarosh, 2008). In the past, family-based viewing was general; however, individual viewing has expanded with the increase in TV penetration and the emergence of personal media forms capable of broadcasting television (Harboe, 2009; Spigel, 1992).

And nowadays virtual group viewing is increasing; this can be seen from the increase in use of text-based media, such as social media and instant messaging (IM), during linear TV viewing (Boyd & Ellison, 2008; Harboe, 2009). Here, "linear TV" refers to a television service where the viewer watches a scheduled TV program at the particular time it is offered, on the particular channel on which it is presented. Video on Demand (VoD) or download-type viewing, where the viewer can select a program and view it at his/her leisure, is not included in our definition of linear TV. Currently, a large number of linear TV viewers share their viewing experiences over

text-based media, exchanging feelings or opinions about the program with other viewers who are not in the same physical space.

The current complementary usage of text-based media during linear TV viewing is reflected in statistical data. A report from Ericsson ConsumerLab (2012), which investigated TV viewing habits in the US, the UK, Germany, Spain, Sweden, China, and Taiwan, showed that 62% of TV viewers in these countries used social media such as Facebook or Twitter while watching TV, and that over 45% chatted on MSN, Skype, or Facebook while watching TV. In addition, these figures were estimated to have increased compared to the previous year. Particularly, 40% of viewers who reported using social media during television viewing communicated via the social media about the TV program they were watching.

However, one could argue that the complementary use of text-based media during television viewing is not a new phenomenon, as it was also possible with personal computers and mobile devices even before the emergence of smartphones or tablet computers. However, it was not until the smartphone era – particularly when mobile IM and social media began to be used in earnest on smartphones – that technology started to allow some 'really cool synchronized experiences' among TV viewers (Warren, 2013). Therefore, the instantaneous sharing of TV viewing experiences among viewers through the complementary use of distinct forms of media can be viewed as a new aspect of TV consumption.

This new viewing behavior is stirring much interest in the business world, because it can potentially improve audience ratings, as

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well as provide diverse data on viewing behavior. Further, this TV consumption behavior is different from existing types, and has therefore received academic attention. However, existing studies have been conducted mainly at the level of industry reports, using the terms 'second screen' or 'social TV' to describe this new TV consumption phenomenon (e.g., [Ericsson Consumer Lab, 2012](#); [Socialtv-lab.org, 2012](#)); few systematic academic studies of this phenomenon have been performed. The spread of this new complementary consumption behavior throughout the world makes it important to understand why viewers engage in such multiple media consumption behavior.

Our purpose in this study was to qualitatively analyze motivations for the complementary use of text-based media during linear TV viewing. The reason for performing such a qualitative analysis is that the motivations for using text-based media during TV viewing may differ from those identified in previous studies, because complementary use of these forms of media is a new practice. Most research on motivations for using media conducted thus far has targeted a single form of media, such as TV or the Internet. In this study, however, we look into motivations for the complementary use of different forms of media; there are very few studies of this kind. Our study findings widen our understanding of TV consumption behavior by clarifying the motivations behind the complementary use of text-based media during linear TV viewing. Furthermore, our results can be used to develop new related theories and contribute to the academic knowledge in the area of communication with respect to motivations for the use of media. In addition, this study has significance in that it clarifies the aforementioned use motivations and provides relevant information for broadcasters and social TV application developers regarding how to exploit these use motivations.

## 2. Conceptual background and research questions

### 2.1. Complementary use of linear TV and text-based media

The most typical forms of text-based media used during linear TV viewing are social media and IM. While watching TV, instant messaging and social networking are significantly prevalent among 16–34 year olds in the U.K. ([OFCOM, 2013](#)). TV viewers share their viewing experiences in real-time through computer-mediated communication, which creates a pseudo-communal viewing experience ([Wohn & Na, 2011](#)).

Common social media services include Facebook and Twitter. Facebook allows exchange of more in-depth messages than Twitter and favors the formation of close connections. Facebook communications contain more content than Twitter communications, and Facebook guarantees 'the continuity of the story' by containing all existing posts on the profile or page screen. It has a relatively intimate network configuration compared to Twitter because it allows establishment of relationships by mutual consent. Automatic notification of updated posts contributes to continued mutual communication.

Twitter is a service that enables its users to send and read text-based messages of up to 140 characters. It has the characteristics of rapid real-time speed and a very wide reach. Particularly, the RT function of Twitter – re-posting of someone else's tweet by a user to his/her followers – enables exposure of a message to numerous people with a single click. This RT function thus has a crucial role in enhancing spread speed and expanding reach. Relationships on Twitter do not require another's permission to follow, which enables its users to form a global network, including people with no personal off-line exchanges. Twitter messages, however, suffer from fragmentariness and high volatility.

IM is a means of exchanging and sharing thoughts and information among people within a human network. There are several forms of IM services, such as WhatsApp ([global level](#)), WeChat (China), LINE (Japan), and KakaoTalk (South Korea). In previous research, IM was studied as a communication channel that allows users to maintain social relationships by carrying out actual social interactions over devices (e.g., [Bardi & Brady, 2010](#); [Birnholtz, 2010](#); [Quan-Haase, 2008](#); [Ramirez & Broneck, 2009](#); [Valkenburg & Peter, 2009](#)). This was based on the function of providing real-time conversation with acquaintances or close friends.

In addition, social TV applications also enable viewers to share viewing experiences with other viewers while watching TV. Such social TV applications provide a variety of functions, such as check-in, real-time chat, commenting, review, quizzes, and other functions. In the US, GetGlue, IntoNOW, and Miso are representative of this type of application, and in South Korea, some social TV applications have been released, but their penetration rates are low.

As discussed above, there are a variety of text-based media that can be used complementarily while watching TV. However, what types are chiefly used among all forms of text-based media vary depending on the country. According to [Ericsson ConsumerLab \(2012\)](#), which surveyed major countries such as the US and the UK, major countries showed higher usage rates of social media such as Twitter or Facebook than IM with a chatting function. In Japan, the most frequently used text-based medium was social media (Twitter 54.7%, Facebook 16.7%, and LINE 9.0%) ([Socialtv-lab.org, 2012](#)).

In contrast, according to the [Korea Communications Agency \(2013\)](#), KakaoTalk is one of the most widely used mobile messengers during linear TV viewing in Korea (KakaoTalk 66.5%, Facebook 15.5%, Twitter 10.0%, and blogs 5.5%). KakaoTalk is a free messenger application with free text and free call features. With KakaoTalk, users can share diverse content and information from photos, videos, voice messages, and URL links to contact information. Both one-on-one and group chats are available through KakaoTalk, and there are no limits to the number of friends who can join in a group chat.

The penetration rate of smartphones in South Korea is estimated to be 73% ([Google, 2013](#)), and 9.5 out of 10 Android-powered device users use 'KakaoTalk' ([The Korea Economic Daily, 2013](#)). The number of both domestic and overseas subscribers to KakaoTalk amounted to 100 million as of July of 2013, and KakaoTalk has established itself as a free IM application for most smartphone users in South Korea.

According to Onavo market intelligence data ([Onavo Insights, 2012](#)), South Korea, together with Spain and the Netherlands, belongs to the group of countries with very high IM usage rates among major countries. The high IM usage rate in South Korea is attributable to good infrastructure (high broadband and smartphone penetration rates), free offers, and the higher competitiveness of IM than other communication tools resulting from the richer functionality provided, such as group chatting and a better overall user experience (UX).

The above-mentioned data and previous research findings suggest that IM is the application most likely to be used during television viewing in South Korea. It is not known, however, which device viewers primarily use to watch TV and which device they use concurrently to communicate via text-based media. Therefore, the questions 'which screen do you use to watch TV?' and 'which type of text-based media do you use through which type of second screen?' are interesting research questions. As such, RQ1 is as follows:

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