

COLUMNS

Updating the relationship between viewers, brands and broadcasters

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By [Justin Beere](#)

You are probably too young to remember thishell, I am too young to remember thisbut in the beginning, television was free.

Broadcasters paid for the content and distribution, advertisers paid for ads and airtime, and viewers got to watch TV for free in exchange for ingesting hundreds or even thousands of TV commercials every year.

That was the deal for a long time until the cable companies came along and free TV was promptly dropped out of a 34th floor window in midtown Manhattan.

New game in town

Viewers now pay for access to an avalanche of ad-supported channels, with the option to pay even more for premium, ad-free channels such as HBO and Showtime.

When you think about it, the mobile gaming space is organized in the same way.

Broadcasters a.k.a. app makers pay to create and serve content, advertisers pay for ad placement, and viewers a.k.a. users agree to endure those ad placements in exchange for free games.

Ads got you down? Simply shell out a few dollars for the premium versions of these games and indulge ad-free.

This model exists for Internet TV outlets such as Hulu, just as it does for Internet music outlets including Pandora and Spotify.

As long as I have been alive, this has been the relationship between viewers, brands and broadcasters.

Now, second-screen applications are renovating this relationship in both mobile and TV at the same time.

Screen time

As someone who has recently moved from the land of broadcast advertising to the tech scene, I can confirm what you already know: brands are spending less money on TV ads and more on digital.

The beauty of digital ads on the second screen is that they allow brands to simultaneously have a mobile presence, while extending their TV presence throughout the length of the program, instead of just the commercial breaks.

As [social media and marketing expert Brian Solis recently wrote](#), "By making products or brands part of the story, advertisers have new opportunities for contextualized storytelling across multiple platforms and the ability to host new interactions, build communities or drive desired outcomes."

Second-screen apps based on live events is exactly the kind of televised story that consumers want to watch over

and over again, preferably in real time.

Played out in these stories are dozens of unique moments that brands can target in order to engage viewers in a way that is fun, natural, inexpensive and highly-converted.

Imagine Sports Authority engaging with users the moment after a home run is hit, or Domino's associating its brand with every turnover in a football game.

Brands forge new relationships with viewers based on unscripted moments. Broadcasters drive viewership, enhance content and add value for their brand clients. The best part? Viewers win, too.

Second-screen apps, especially games, can change the viewer's relationship with broadcasters, brands and even mobile apps themselves for the better.

These apps offer new, more engaging ways for brand integration.

Instead of serving banner ads, brands can sponsor or offer rewards to users. What is the consumer going to like more looking at a banner ad or receiving a gift card from the brand?

For brands, when they offer users discounts or credit, they acquire new customers for well below their average acquisition cost.

Everybody wins with this model.

Scoring points

Second-screen apps drive revenue by weaving brands into the fabric of their game, where they engage with consumers in a novel, economical way.

Users a.k.a. viewers get a premium, ad-free mobile gaming experience for zero dollars even better, they get rewarded for it by their favorite brands.

Of course, these rewards on the second screen can coincide directly with the content being watched on the first screen, creating a more dynamic, engaging and relevant experience for TV viewers.

Chia Chen, senior vice president and mobile practice lead at interactive marketing agency Digitas, summarized this concept excellently in a recent [Mobile Commerce Daily](#) column: "Incorporate a process that targets the moments in consumers' lives where the brand could have impact, and create experiences that deliver value for the users and brand in those moments."

When you think about it, this concept has actually been successful in other facets of advertising for nearly three decades.

Jack in the Box rewards Los Angeles Lakers fans at the Staples Center with tacos whenever the Lakers score 100 points and hold opponents under 100 in the same game.

Fans chant, "We want tacos!" whenever that moment is within reach. It is so popular that the NBA 2K video game series now includes it in its games.

This is what second screen apps can do except they can do it with any game, any team, any athlete, any moment for any conceivable metric.

Second-screen games can simultaneously increase utility and positivity in the relationship between viewers, brands and broadcasters in the mobile and TV spaces. Maybe we can even invite the cable companies.

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