

Zero and counting

Written by Cheryl Pearson-McNeil
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Are you a Zero-TV household? No, I don't mean restricting the kids' TV viewing to the weekends or until after they've completed homework. I mean – do you watch TV the traditional way or on any of the growing techy options available to us? So many of us are watching video content on our phones, computers, or tablets, that Nielsen designates this group of consumers: Zero-TV Households. This consumer segment is so significant; it will soon be included in our measured samples.

For those of us who are hard-core holdouts or just plain tech-challenged, don't worry. Ninety-five percent of Americans still get entertainment and information the old-fashioned way – via traditional TV. In fact, according to Nielsen's latest Cross-Platform report, American TV viewing time was up in late 2012 over the same period the previous year, averaging more than 41 hours a week. That makes sense. There were a few notable, life-altering events towards the end of 2012 which kept our eyes on the continued coverage. Several states along the East Coast suffered the catastrophic Hurricane Sandy. The Newtown, Conn. tragedy touched all of our hearts, and the highly anticipated 2012 Presidential Election was also noteworthy. Since you and I have been together in this space for a while now, you know that the Black community tends to log more TV viewing hours a week than other demographic groups. The latest numbers show that African-Americans average 55 hours a week in front of the telly.

The new kids in town, the Zero-TV households, do own televisions – about 75% of those in this category have at least one in the house, but they prefer to watch, or consume content, on other

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devices. The data shows that 36% of viewers feel cost and 31% of viewers say a lack of interest are reasons for their preferred choice. Right now, about five percent or five million American households fall into this Zero-TV category. African-American consumers make up almost 10% of that number. Nielsen's latest African-American consumer report looks at our alternate traditional TV viewing numbers more closely. We enjoy our multiple-screen options. Thirty-one percent of us watch video online. I have to admit it took me a minute to get there, but I've learned to appreciate the charms (and convenience) of other screens. (I know, I know. In some instances, size *does* make a difference and only a nice, large, flat screen will do). And, these are our favorite video sites:

- YouTube (48%),
- Other (31%)
- Netflix (10%)
- Hulu (8%)
- VEVO (3%)
- Yahoo! (1%)

Our technological world is spinning so rapidly, and the way we respond as consumers is having such a tremendous impact. Another adjustment could ultimately be made in the way TV ratings are measured. As much as we love to watch TV, we also love to let our *fingers* do some of the talking, too. A new Nielsen/SocialGuide study shows that 32 million people in the U.S. tweeted about whatever they were watching in 2012.

You know what I'm talking about

. Some 68% of African-Americans own smartphones and we tweet on those phones 30% more than other groups. So, chances are, when you're nearly hyper-ventilating over the antics of your favorite Real Housewife or blown away by a performance on your favorite talent competition show or the score during some championship sporting event, you're talking about it with the rest of the world by tweeting. Fun, isn't it? The data confirms what most of us already know – as consumers, we are master multi-taskers. At least several times a month, 80% of U.S. tablet and smartphone owners use those fancy gadgets to visit a social network while watching TV.

Research shows that the decision-makers in the TV industry would be smart to take notice of the numbers attached to all that tweeting that's going on while live television is being watched, whether traditionally or through multi-screen viewing because tweeting affects the numbers. And, it's interesting how the Twitter numbers correlate with ratings depends on the age group. For younger people, 18-34, an eight and a half percent increase in Twitter activity equals a percent ratings point increase. But, it takes a 14% increase in Twitter volume to see an extra ratings boost of a percent among 35-49-year-olds. (I can't help but wonder where that leaves those of us who have outgrown that demo, but watch TV and tweet, too). Once again, our behavior, our choices as consumers have the power to influence industries. *What you watch and how you watch it, matters*

. So, choose wisely.

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