

# Internet Users and Television: Findings and Hypotheses on Viewing Behavior

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Use of the Internet has been growing for some time, but once the broadband infrastructure is in place, we can expect a marked increase in both volume and diversity of use. How will these developments affect the role of television and popular viewing patterns? To answer that question, we have to formulate hypotheses based on actual, current examples of the place of television in the lives of people who regularly use the Internet at home and projections of how those patterns of TV viewing are going to change. For that purpose, we recruited a number of Internet users meeting certain criteria for focus group interviews and conducted a detailed study in March 2002 of how they used the Internet, the relationship between the Internet and television, and other topics.

The study's main findings established that a large number of people watch television and use the Internet simultaneously, and that users have a well-developed understanding of the characteristics of both media and tend to use them selectively. The study also confirmed that some people find an entertainment function in the Internet and use it for enjoyment. The discussion below relates the findings of our study in some detail as a basis to propose a number of hypotheses concerning future patterns of television viewing and the relationship between television and the Internet. In conclusion, we suggest several issues that merit further study.

## OUTLINE OF STUDY

The central aim of this study was to probe the relationship between Internet use and television viewing. We established certain criteria for recruiting regular Internet users who also habitually watch a certain amount of television.

- We targeted people in their 20s and 30s who tended to be heavy Internet users and had characteristics that we thought would help us predict changes in viewing patterns.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Media in Daily Life survey conducted in March 2001 by the NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute. In this survey, 3,600 individuals aged 16 and over throughout Japan were

- Other criteria included Internet access through a personal computer, at least one year's experience using the Internet, and regular Internet use for two hours or more per week, either at work or at home. We limited participants to those who went online for tasks in addition to e-mail, assuming that users who did nothing with the Internet except e-mail would have little to offer in comparing their Internet use to television viewing behavior.
- Excluding people who watched very little television, we recruited only individuals who watched TV for two hours or more every week.

We recruited two types of Internet users according to access mode: one consisted of normal users (8 groups) and the other of heavy users with broadband access (4 groups). The normal users were dial-up users and always-on users, whereas all the heavy users were always-on users. The study was conducted among a total of 83 people.<sup>2</sup>

### Major Goals of Study

- To determine in what environment, when, and for what purposes the Internet is used.
- To establish what activities Internet use replaces.
- To discover which media and what activities have been superseded by Internet use.
- To understand how television viewing behavior and the place of TV in daily life have changed.

## HOW THE INTERNET IS USED

In figure 1, considering the results of interviews with survey respondents, Internet usage is divided into seven categories; the right-hand column shows

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selected in a stratified two-stage random sampling process. The number of valid responses received was 2,818 (78.3 percent). Internet usage from home PCs was 21 percent overall, 40 percent among men and 41 percent among women in their 20s, and 39 percent among men and 33 percent among women in their 30s.

<sup>2</sup> Each group consisted of 7 people, and there were 12 groups, so there should have been a total of 84 persons, but one person was absent on the day of the interviews. The composition of the 12 groups was as follows:

#### *Normal users*

Men: students (1 group); working, aged 25-39 (2 groups)

Women: students (1 group); working, aged 25-39 (2 groups); housewives, aged 25-39 (2 groups)

#### *Broadband users using the Internet 10 or more hours a week*

Men: working, 20s (1 group); 30s (1 group)

Women: working, aged 25-39 (1 group); housewives, aged 25-39 (1 group)

the number of people with previous experience in each category.

Since all the study participants used the Internet for purposes beyond simply sending or receiving e-mail, they all operated through some kind of search engine to access websites. Many read online magazines, and quite a few engaged in activities with a high degree of involvement, like online shopping or contributing to bulletin boards.

We divided Internet usage into three stages: (1) reading/receiving information, (2) some kind of interchange/asking or answering questions, and (3) creating information. Ten participants were in the first stage, 63 in the second stage, and 10 in the third stage.

Insofar as this study excluded anyone who used the Internet simply to send or receive e-mail, the number of people who had not gone beyond the first stage was comparatively small. If we surveyed all Internet users, however, we would probably find most people only in the first stage.<sup>3</sup>

Users who had progressed to the second stage were quite numerous. These people were shopping online and participating in auctions or question-and-answer sessions about topics of interest to them. But only 10 out of the 83 were in the third stage, which required having created a website. Although it is relatively easy for users to move to the second stage and start participating online in venues focused on matters they are interested in, not that many progress to the third stage when they actually create information.

**Figure 1. Use of the Internet (multiple responses)**

	(N = 83)
1) Receiving	
Sending/receiving e-mail	82
Visiting websites	83
Reading online magazines	59
2) Participating	
Online shopping, taking part in auctions	53
Posting on bulletin boards, participating in chat rooms	63
Playing games	38
3) Creating	
Creating/maintaining a website	10

<sup>3</sup> According to the Media in Daily Life survey, 24 percent of home Internet use consisted of "reserving/ordering from a website," 8 percent of respondents had "bought or sold items at online auctions," and 15 percent "communicated by e-mail with individuals they had met online."

### **Interaction via the Internet**

In its function as a communication tool, most participants had used the Internet to send or receive e-mail. Many people "lurked" in chat rooms or watched bulletin boards, reading but not participating. And individuals who said they participated in chat rooms or posted on bulletin boards often did so on websites created by groups or circles of which they themselves were members.

*I belong to a tennis club and the club has a website. I don't post anything but the bulletin board is used to exchange information, so I read it.* (Housewife, 29)

*I once posted a message on the bulletin board of a parents' magazine website, asking to be friends with women in my neighborhood. I exchange e-mail with women I met that way.* (Housewife, 27)

As these comments demonstrate, users sometimes search the Internet for people with similar interests or in similar situations and exchange information with them. But only a small number of study participants had developed friendships with people they had met this way.

We developed the following hypotheses concerning Internet use, based on study findings:

H1: Internet use can be divided into three stages, according to degree of involvement, starting with "reading/receiving," moving on to "participating" and finally to "creating original information." Many novice users have already gone on to the second stage, but progressing to the third stage is more difficult.

H2: Online communication also moves in three stages, from "interacting with acquaintances" to "interacting with others who have similar interests or something in common," and finally to "establishing new friendships over the Internet." Again, however, in our study the proportion of users moving on to the third stage was quite low.

### **WHAT HAS THE INTERNET REPLACED?**

It is often thought to be axiomatic that established media go into decline when new media appear. Has this been the case with the Internet?

#### **Internet versus Established Media**

The questions in this study were not limited to media-related activities: respondents were asked, "What did you do previously with the time that you now spend on the Internet?" and "What other activities do you have less time for, now that you use the Internet?" Frequent answers were watching televi-

sion, reading magazines, talking on the telephone, going to a bookstore or library, sleeping, chatting with family, playing video games, writing letters, or going out. Women often said they used to talk more on the telephone or write letters, while many men mentioned playing video games and sleeping.

The survey showed that the Internet has had certain effects on the way users view other media. These are summarized below.

**Magazines and books:** *I used to go to bookstores a lot and spend time looking for books, but nowadays I check the Internet first to see what's available before I go and buy anything.* (Working female, 25)

*I haven't been buying that many magazines lately, because I can get information from the Internet.* (Working female, 33)

As far as collected information about topics of interest is concerned, the Internet is similar to magazines. The Internet has the added advantage of being able to offer multiple levels of information—ranging from weblogs and the websites of particular stores or enterprises to related newspaper articles and official government commentary, for example—any time the user wants to see it, and many information sources can be accessed free of charge. In this respect, respondents seemed to feel less dependent on magazines. One interesting finding was that few think that “my attitude toward reading books (as opposed to magazines) has changed.” Respondents apparently did not view the Internet as a replacement for reading per se.

**Telephone:** *I can send e-mail any time, without worrying about whether it's a convenient time for the other person. And you can give detailed instructions more clearly when you write them. Because I use e-mail, I don't talk on the phone for hours any more. E-mail feels much more comfortable.* (Working female, 35)

Many respondents were of the opinion that e-mail is “convenient” or “care-free.” They noted that e-mail allows the sender to get in touch with others without having to worry whether they're busy doing something else. When you can use e-mail, you never have the problem of waiting and then forgetting to relate something important. E-mail also serves as a record. Some people also viewed the Internet as a means of communication beyond its e-mail function, insofar as it allows users to view or participate in chat rooms and post messages on bulletin boards.

**Newspapers:** *Searching on the Internet turns up one thing after another. I use it to get added information besides what I get from the newspaper.* (Working female, 33)

Some participants believed that the Internet was more convenient than

newspapers because information was accessible quickly, they could compare information from many sources, and they could delve more deeply into subjects they wanted to know more about.

**Television:** *“Now that I’m watching TV less, I’m not so aware of it anymore, but having no television at all would be a problem.”* (Working male, 32)  
*I don’t find television any less worthwhile since I started using the Internet. The Internet fleshes out the information I obtain from TV.* (Housewife, 36)

These comments reflect a complex change in attitudes toward television that will be discussed in the next section.

### **“Something Extra” with the Internet**

Although the emergence of the Internet has had an impact on established media, many respondents felt that “the Internet is completely different from established media. I think of those media the same as I did before.”

*There’s no [mass communication] medium I no longer need, just because I now have Internet access.”* (Housewife, 34)

*The Internet came on the scene as something different. It gives you that “extra something.”* (Working female, 35)

These people had high Internet literacy and were skilled at using the convenient aspects of each type of medium selectively.

## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TELEVISION AND THE INTERNET

When study participants were asked whether their television viewing habits had changed because of Internet use, their answers revealed three broad patterns: (a) amount of time spent watching TV has decreased; (b) no change in amount of time watching TV; (c) the television is on for the same length of time, but user is viewing with less concentration.

Public opinion survey findings indicate that about 20 percent of respondents say they watch less television as a result of using the Internet. About 80 percent report no change in viewing habits.<sup>4</sup>

Responding to the detailed investigation of our study, many people who said they were watching less TV indicated that the main reason was, “I don’t have time anymore just to while away hours watching television.” (Working male, 36). Seventy percent of those interviewed this time said they were spending just as much time watching TV as before or were watching but paying less attention. Many of them made comments like, “TV and the Internet

<sup>4</sup> The Media in Daily Life survey.

are completely different, so I'm not spending less time watching TV;" "I always watched television while doing something else anyhow, so I'm still watching the same number of hours;" or "I used to watch television because I didn't have anything else to do, but now I watch while I'm surfing the Net," which means watching TV and using the Internet simultaneously.

### *Watching TV while surfing the Net*

About half the study participants (42 out of 83) said they watched TV while surfing the Net. It has always been possible to watch television while doing some other activity like housework or chatting. Surfing the Net is just one more activity that has been added to the list.

*Maybe now I just listen to the TV. I listen and shift my gaze between the TV and the computer monitor.* (Working female, 39, broadband/lengthy user [hereafter referred to as "BB"])

*In a certain sense, TV has become like radio.* (Male university student, 23)

These people were dividing their attention between television and the Internet, and when the topic on TV was not of interest to them or they felt bored, they concentrated on the Internet and shifted back to the television if their ears perked up at interesting-sounding words. Their behavior appeared to be changing: if their attention was drawn by what was on TV they watched that, and if the Internet was more interesting they focused on that instead.

Other comments were equally illuminating, such as the observation by several people that the presence of television in their lives has begun to shrink. *TV has started to pale a bit. TV is a one-way medium—the Internet is more interesting because it's interactive. Television is starting to be like background music. It used to be more absorbing before.* (Working male, 28)

*I sometimes feel that television is less important as a source of information now that there's the Internet.* (Working male, 39)

These remarks indicate that the Internet, which allows users to obtain the information they want any time, is gaining in importance. But even so, the majority of respondents said they did not go so far as to turn the TV off.

In terms of time of day, many people said they logged on to the Internet around 10 or 11 p.m., the same time slot as one of the day's peak TV viewing periods.

### *Why double screen use?*

Degree of simultaneous use of television and the Internet was similar among participants regardless of whether they had always-on broadband access or not. But some of those who had always-on service said that they went onto the Net and turned the TV on at the same time, when they got up in the morning

or when they got home, because they paid a flat rate for access regardless of how long they remained online.

*I get home at around 10 p.m. and I turn on both the TV and the PC right away. I leave them on all the time even while I'm eating and changing.* (Working male, 25, BB)

The medium of television allows viewers to do something else at the same time. The Internet, however, unlike reading a magazine or washing dishes, demands some degree of concentration and active involvement. This poses the question of why people go to such lengths to watch TV and surf the Net simultaneously.

*Television is sometimes enjoyable because you can talk about things you've seen with others, whereas only PC enthusiasts like talking about the Internet (computers).* (Working male, 36, BB)

*I enjoy television because of the sounds. It's also comforting just to have it on. To me, it's like the air I breathe—it's always around.* (Housewife, 27)

In many cases, people said they were loathe to turn the television off because "I want to learn what's going on in the world from TV," "I want to get something from it to share with others," "It feels lonely when it's too quiet," or "I want to relax with my family when they're sitting around watching TV."

We worked out a number of hypotheses concerning simultaneous television watching and Internet use.

H3: The number of people simultaneously watching TV and using the Internet will continue to grow.

H4: When television and the Internet are in use simultaneously, often no one will be actively watching television, but in most cases no one will actually turn the TV off.

H5: As a result of simultaneous television viewing and Internet use, people will be less conscious of the presence of television in their lives than they were before they began using the Internet.

### **TV versus Internet: Competition for Content**

While some people reported that they were concentrating less when watching television after starting to use the Internet, others said that when they watched television now they were more actively involved. This indicates a shift from television viewing "for no particular reason" or "to kill time" to making a conscious decision to watch or being more selective about programs watched.

Such comments led us to ask which programs participants have stopped watching and which, conversely, they now watch with greater attention.



### ***Program genres no longer watched***

*The Internet is full of gossip about show business people so there's no need to remain glued to the TV watching the "wide shows" [general interest shows covering personalities and a broad variety of other current topics] any longer. (Housewife, 36, BB)*

*I often used to watch those two-hour long suspense dramas before, for no particular reason, but now that I've started surfing the Net I turn the TV off. (Housewife, 33)*

Many housewives mentioned that the so-called wide shows were one program genre they were watching less now that they were busy with the Internet. They said they had stopped watching the TV wide shows for entertainment news because they could get the same thing in detail on the Internet and could focus on finding just what they wanted to know about, whenever they wanted to do so. Many people also commented that they were watching fewer (or with less concentration) "programs that I end up watching even though I don't particularly want to see them." Specific genres they said they were watching less frequently included variety and quiz shows, and drama reruns.

Several other people who characterized themselves as fans of late-night television said they were no longer watching TV in that time slot because they found the information available on the Internet more exciting and interesting than late-night shows.

### ***TV program websites and program viewing***

When asked which TV station and program websites they sought out, many participants mentioned websites of dramas, cooking shows, programs offering useful information for daily living, and program listings or descriptions.<sup>5</sup> Generally they accessed websites when they had missed a program or wanted supplementary information after viewing.

In the case of useful-hints-for-living programs, however, participants did not use the Internet merely to supplement or flesh out the information that had been aired. In the words of two participants:

*I like "Hakkutsu! Aru-arui daijiten" [Encyclopedia of Plentiful Discoveries] but it's on the web too, and so I'm more inclined to find it on the Internet rather than spend an hour watching the show. (Working female, 33, BB)*

*The "Ito-ke no shokutaku" [The Ito Family Dinner Table, Useful Tips for*

<sup>5</sup> Findings from the Media in Daily Life survey indicated that the websites most frequently accessed from home were on "daily living, hobbies, practical hints" (41 percent), "travel, sightseeing, traffic information" (37 percent), "information on music, films, concerts and events" (27 percent), and "television program information" (10 percent). (Based on all respondents)

*Daily Life*] website has previously aired programs, as well as information that wasn't presented on TV. (Housewife, 35, BB).

In other words, quite a few people don't watch these programs for entertainment; instead, they often access the programs' websites because they only want to learn the information that was presented. The same goes for cooking programs; some people said they rarely watched the shows themselves but often accessed the programs' websites to get recipe information. This kind of time-saving behavior was common among working women, clear proof that the Internet was a good fit with the rushed pace of their lives.

As for the relationship between programs and their websites, in most cases people watched the programs first, or knew about the programs and then accessed the relevant websites. Cases where participants had watched a program after learning about it on the Internet were few. Examples of comments by those who did included, "I read a description of the program in the online magazine sent by the television station and it sounded interesting so I watched the program," and "I had avoided watching a particular program because I didn't like some of the actors, but when I read the plot outline on the website I started watching the program." Overall, a relatively large number of women said they visited television station or program websites, whereas comparatively few men did.

### ***Programs actively watched***

*Where dramas are concerned, I watch only the dramas I like, and when those dramas are going on, I don't pay much attention to the computer.* (Housewife, 36, BB)

*Television is best for documentaries. I spend less time watching now, but television is better for something to stir the emotions.* (Working female, 27, BB)

Few people mentioned that they were spending less time watching TV dramas, news, or documentaries as a result of using the Internet. Given their greater range of choice in daily activities, Internet users tended to be more discriminating in deciding what television programs they wanted to watch. Many said that they enjoyed being able to watch stirring dramas or inspiring documentaries on television.

*Television is good because I can have vicarious experiences when I watch dramas, and it's nice when our whole family is together watching variety shows.* (Housewife, 33)

These and numerous other comments indicated that participants expected television programs to provide vicarious experiences, moving moments, laughs, a change of pace, a human touch, and well-crafted contents. But some people had a slightly different attitude where news was concerned.

### *Sources of news*

Overall, men and women alike said that their main news sources were television and newspapers. Their overall opinion was that rather than replacing those media, the Internet was an additional news source. However, the same number of men named the Internet as their first news source as named television and newspapers. (figure 2)

Concerning selective usage of television and the Internet, some people said, "I find out about general news and what's going on in the world from television and then follow up in more detail about things that interest me on the Internet," or "I get national news and major stories from television, and I use the Internet to look up minor local news or follow-ups to past news stories."

Answering questions about television's unique role, participants felt that "hearing the information makes it easy to understand," and that "specialized information is accompanied by commentary that makes it much clearer, or it piques your interest in areas you had no interest in at first."

But quite a few people reported that they had begun seeing the news differently after starting to use the Internet. Mainly men said that they learned to compare media information that they found on the Internet, commenting, "I began comparing the news on each television station."

*Once I started using the Internet, I got into the habit of looking at each newspaper's website and I realized that they communicated news differently and with differing nuances.* (Working male, 28, BB).

It seems safe to say that the Internet is contributing to the development of media literacy.

Commenting on Internet-based methods of obtaining news, some people said that "it's convenient because if there's a certain news topic I want to look up, I can get to it immediately," and that "the Net is best for keeping up with fast-changing situations." A few said that "ever since I started reading the news over the Internet at the office I don't watch television news any more at home."

**Figure 2. Role of Television and Internet News**

Television	Internet
What's happening in the world	Topics user is interested in, as a database
National, major news stories	Local news, minor news stories
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Informs on topics unfamiliar to viewers	Media organizations can be compared
Commentary that makes the news understandable	Provides up-to-the-minute news

Several people also described how reading news over the Internet gave them a way to keep in better touch with the news or boosted their interest in current events. In general, those who read news over the Internet took full advantage of the different characteristics of television and Internet news. Even if they did not go often to the Internet for news, they thought of it as a news database that was always accessible if they wanted to learn more, and that assurance gave them peace of mind.

### *Interest in video on the Net*

Participants were also asked about Internet video transmissions. Various surveys reveal that the number of people receiving video transmissions is not that large,<sup>6</sup> but most of the people interviewed in this study had some prior experience.<sup>7</sup>

First, participants were asked whether they would be interested in viewing somewhat lengthy videos, dramas, or concerts, for example, via the Internet, at transmission speeds currently available to them and with existing picture quality and screen size.<sup>8</sup> The majority indicated that they might watch if a particular video were available only on the Internet, but that they would not take the trouble of watching something lengthy online that could be seen on television.

Items that they said would be worthwhile transmitting over the Internet included new song releases, information on foreign music artists, live concerts, and other music-related video presentations not often shown on television. Where dramas were concerned, the consensus was that the Internet is not the best venue, for the following reasons.

*I once watched a Japanese film about two hours long (on the Internet). The Internet is all right to watch something for a short period of time, but my experience convinced me that viewing for a long period really requires a large screen especially for that purpose. (Housewife, 37, BB)*

On current three-minute serial dramas:

*Three minutes feels long, when it requires sitting still in front of the PC. (Housewife, 28, BB)*

<sup>6</sup> According to a survey by the InfoCom Research Inc., 23 percent of Internet home users watch streaming video.

<sup>7</sup> Distribution of streaming video over the Internet comes in several forms, ranging from very short promotional videos for films or music to what is referred to as Internet broadcasting such as dramas, talk shows, and live concerts carried over broadband.

<sup>8</sup> In a focus group interview study, if participants were asked about the future with the condition "suppose that . . .," their comments would be neither credible nor reliable, so questions containing phrases like "if picture quality were better . . ." or "if transmission speed were faster . . ." were avoided.

These and other comments revealed participants' dissatisfaction with picture quality, screen size, and visibility limited to one person.

Responding to a question about viewing presentations for a fee, a large number of people said that they would watch if it were free, and some said they would be willing to pay if it could not be seen elsewhere.

As a 23-year old male student said, "With the TV it's easy to change channels and switch the set on and off with the remote, but it's not that simple to change channels when you're online." In other words, television is easy to use and can be watched by the whole family. Many can also share information via television. As far as moving pictures are concerned, therefore, television is much preferable to the Internet.

The following points summarize our hypotheses concerning the competitive and complementary relationship between the content of television and Internet offerings, and how news is obtained.

#### Content: Competitive or Complementary

H6: Where content is concerned, users will use the Internet mainly for its complementary function, but for some purposes and in some areas, the Internet may replace television.

H7: Internet users want better-quality programs to be shown on television.

#### Obtaining News

H8: Users obtain general news and major news items from television and newspapers. The Internet will be increasingly used as a news database.

H9: People in the habit of obtaining news online will continue to get news from other sources as well and generally obtain a large amount of information.

H10: Once they are in regular touch with the news online, users develop a stronger interest in news in general.

H11: People in the habit of obtaining news from the Internet, compared to those who are not, show stronger media literacy in comparing the news reporting of multiple broadcasters/publishers/journalists.

#### **Television versus the Internet: Comparison**

The next step was to determine how Internet users feel about television and the Internet as media.

#### *Images*

When asked, "What does the Internet mean to you?", numerous participants characterized it as "a dictionary" or "a tool." They said, "It's fun to hunt for information on something I want to know more about," or "I enjoy the feeling

of accomplishment when I've found what I'm looking for," which showed that they thought of the Internet as a tool they could actively use to pursue their interests.

In answer to the question, "What does television mean to you?," many participants described it in terms of enjoyment, as something they were not especially conscious of and took for granted ("a piece of furniture," "a necessity," or "just like the air I breathe") or on a deeper level as more than a tool, but part of their daily lives (something that "adds rhythm to daily routines" or "serves as a social lubricant"). Some people had less positive images of television compared to the Internet, calling it "something to kill time with" or "something that's just 'there'."

One female Internet user commented that "the Internet is my boyfriend, while television is my family." While users were not especially conscious of television in everyday life, they apparently believed it is indispensable.

### *Enjoyment*

Many people thus had the impression that television is for enjoyment and the Internet for information, but the interviews revealed that to some people, going online was enjoyable in itself and that it constituted entertainment. When participants were asked to compare television and the Internet from the standpoint of enjoyment, their opinions were split three ways, as follows:

Television is more enjoyable; I don't use the Internet for amusement.

Each is enjoyable in its own way.

The Internet is more fun than television.

Of the 76 people who were asked this question, 34 (16 men, 18 women) felt that "television is more enjoyable"; 28 (9 men, 19 women) believed that "each is enjoyable in its own way"; and 14 (10 men, 4 women) thought "the Internet is more fun." Even among Internet users, the most popular choice was that television is more enjoyable, but quite a few also felt that each is enjoyable in its own way. Those who said that the Internet is more fun are still in the minority, but this group included nearly one-third of the men in the study.

When modes of connection were factored in, 6 out of every 10 participants with a dial-up connection felt that television was more enjoyable, and only a handful thought that the Internet was more fun. But among those with an always-on connection, the largest number believed that each medium was enjoyable in its own way, but television ranked second; compared to those with a dial-up connection, more always-on users gave the Internet first place for enjoyment. Additionally, more people with higher-involvement Internet usage tended to feel that the Internet was more enjoyable.

### *As a diversion*

Focusing on one current characteristic of television viewing, namely, watching TV as a way of passing time pleasantly even though there is no program they especially want to see, the authors called this *jikan kaitekika shicho*, "viewing as a diversion."<sup>9</sup> Such an inclination is believed to lead to long hours of TV viewing and an increase in the number of variety shows, but the responses of some Internet users in this study indicated that the Internet is beginning to play the role of diversion device. For example, 54 out of our 83 respondents said that they sometimes went online with no particular purpose.<sup>10</sup> This proportion was even larger (30 out of 41) among those with an always-on connection. As always-on connections become more commonplace and more people begin to leave the Internet on just like they do the television, the Internet too will become part of the background of everyday life and television may lose its preeminent position as the medium of choice for killing time or for easy amusement.

### *Positive aspects*

Participants' statements concerning the positive and negative aspects of television and the Internet are shown below.

#### Positive aspects of television 1: information content

*I watch television because I feel that I should; if I don't, I won't be able to keep up with the news.* (Working man, 33, BB)

*Television seems to involve viewers, even if we aren't that interested in what's being shown, and it helps broaden our interests.* (Working woman, 30, BB)

In summary, the positive aspects of television as far as information content is concerned are as follows.

- Gives a broad, general overview.
- Helps viewers learn more about things they should know, even if they are not interested in them; broadens their interests.
- Helps reveal what other people are currently interested in.
- Provides common topics of conversation; allows people to share information.
- Has visuals; can be watched on a large screen; good picture quality.

<sup>9</sup> Tomomune Yumiko and Hara Yumiko, "Television as a Diversion Device," *NHK Broadcasting Studies*, No. 1 (NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute, 2002).

<sup>10</sup> According to the Media in Daily Life survey, 49 percent of people using the Internet at home said they had begun using the Internet as a way of killing time.

### Positive aspects of television 2: low involvement

*TV is good because you can watch it while you're lying around. As an entertainment medium it's really easy.* (Male university student, 23)

*As long as it's turned on, television keeps coming at you even if you're not thinking about anything. You can just watch it vacantly when you're tired or don't want to think. Television keeps you company too.* (Housewife, 36, BB)

Participants' comments on the low degree of involvement required by television were as follows:

- It's easy to watch while lying around; relaxing to watch.
- You can watch together with the family, or while chatting.
- It entertains and doesn't require you to do anything (all you have to do is watch).
- You don't have to read words on the screen. All you have to do is listen.

### Positive aspects of television 3: emotions, impressions

*With television, you can get "inside" the picture. You can experience things vicariously, as if you were at a movie. Or if you're watching a concert you can feel drawn in.* (Working man, 37, BB)

*With television, you can watch documentaries that move you to tears, or you can be energized by listening to music.* (Working woman, 27, BB)

The positive aspects of television concerning emotions and impressions were as follows:

- It allows you to identify with it, feel emotion, laugh, cry.
- It offers you vicarious experience, the chance to be drawn in.
- You can feel it as a presence; it feels as though someone is there.
- Having the television on keeps you from feeling lonely; you can enjoy talk or conversation.

### Positive aspects of the Internet

*I'm happy to have it, and it's necessary, too. Society nowadays takes the Internet for granted, so we probably can't live without it.* (Female university student, 22)

*There are more things I want to learn more about now, compared to before I began to use the Internet. The amount of information available has also increased.* (Working woman, 35)

*Arcane, unusual things that we couldn't find out about before can be researched now, thanks to the Internet.* (Working woman, 26)

Using the Internet has stimulated users' thirst for knowledge, and they now



seem to take it for granted that they can immediately look up whatever they want to know about. In that sense, the answers of many respondents indicated that the Internet has become an indispensable part of their lives.

### *Negative aspects*

Internet users were dissatisfied with the following aspects of television:

*No matter what channel you choose, all the variety programs seem to be made the same way.* (Male university student, 23)

*Television is an amusement but it's passive. It feels as though you're being shown something on a predetermined theme. Television doesn't respond to my own immediate interests.* (Housewife, 27)

*I dislike having to wait for a television program to start. The Internet, on the other hand, is always ready, so you can use it whenever you want.* (Working man, 33, BB)

They were dissatisfied with television mainly for the following reasons:

- I can't find as many interesting programs now.
- Not all the programming is something I want to watch.
- Programs I like aren't on when I want to watch; I can't get the information I want quickly.

The main negative aspects of the Internet singled out by participants were that "it's not as 'easy' as television" and "the risk of personal information getting out, and illegal acts."

*The Internet is something you have to do yourself and I really concentrate hard when I'm using it. It's interesting, but it's exhausting. It's not relaxing for me.* (Working woman, 35)

*With the Internet, I'm always worried about viruses or getting into a bad site that I might get charged a lot of money for. It makes me tense because I have to stay alert, which is different from how I feel when I watch television.* (Housewife, 30)

### **Summary of Internet Users' Attitudes**

This study revealed that Internet users tend to have a good grasp of the characteristics of television and of the Internet. They can use both effectively and they use each medium selectively. We may summarize their attitudes toward television and the Internet as follows.

- They view television as a public medium and the Internet as a personal tool, and collect information from each accordingly.
- They have both positive and negative feelings regarding the passive nature

of TV viewing. On the plus side, they find television “easy” and requiring only a low degree of involvement, but at the same time they are dissatisfied that television cannot respond to their personal desires.

- Experienced Internet users derive pleasure from being able to make their own choices and obtaining information without having to wait. Television irritates them because they cannot choose or are forced to wait.
- On the other hand, participants see television as a medium that can be shared, is relaxing, and that stimulates conversation or is moving, since it places viewers in the scene and allows them to feel emotion. They believe that this is the essence of television and continue to have strong expectations from it in this respect.

However, some people described somewhat unusual expectations. One man who said he was tired of the Internet and had resumed watching television commented,

*I watch TV, but I like the specialized channels. Those channels are more interesting than the Internet, although the Internet is more interesting than regular television.* (Working man, 28, BB)

Another individual commented,

*I can record TV programs and watch them on my PC now, so I'm paying more attention when I watch television.* (Housewife, 35, BB)

These statements indicated that participants had developed a new sense of what they wanted from television; mainly, they had strong expectations regarding wider viewing choices from among a greater number of specialized channels, which are made possible by the larger number of channels available, as well as regarding television's storage function.

Our hypotheses concerning the positioning of television and the Internet are as follows:

#### The Internet as a diversion device

H12: Users feel that using the Internet is enjoyable and they use it even when they have no specific purpose in mind.

H13: The higher the degree of involvement with the Internet and the more it is used as a communication tool, the greater the number of people who find enjoyment in going online.

H14: That the user feels that the Internet is enjoyable has something to do with his or her thirst for information and active approach.

#### Expectations from and potential for television

H15: Even Internet users continue to lean more heavily toward television as a medium for learning ordinary information and keeping up with what is going on in the world.

- H16: Even Internet users continue to have stronger expectations from television as a medium that allows sharing information and that stimulates emotion.
- H17: Many people use the two media selectively, taking advantage of their respective features, but television continues to be the superior medium for entertainment, both in participants' minds and deeds.
- H18: Selective usage will continue, the Internet for personal use and television for viewing together with family members or others.

#### Competition in terms of time use

- H19: Whether the two media complement or compete with each other needs to be examined separately in terms of content and of time use.
- H20: Where time use is concerned, the two media are in competition with each other, and the competition will intensify as the always-on connection mode spreads.
- H21: Simultaneous use of the two media will further increase with the development of the always-on connection mode. People will use the Internet more and watch television less for the purpose of killing time.

### DIGITAL DIVIDE AND FUTURE ISSUES

The preceding section summarized our hypotheses concerning different aspects of Internet usage and television viewing behavior. These hypotheses are mainly concerned with changes in patterns of television viewing by Internet users, and they are predicated on certain assumptions about the extent to which Internet use will grow and what changes, if any, will occur in the amount of information available to Internet users and non-users and their behavior relating to the two media.

#### **“Digital Divide”**

There is concern today about the growing information gap, the so-called digital divide. Although this study investigated only Internet users' perspectives, the following hypotheses are worth considering:

- H22: Internet users and non-users can be characterized according to their degree of involvement with information. Polarization will occur as users collect information more actively and non-users are content to accept information passively.
- H23: Attitudes toward use of time and leisure time, too, will differ depending on Internet usage tendencies; the more time-economical they are, the more individuals will actively collect information on the Internet.
- H24: Where television viewing is concerned, Internet users will be more selective and opt for specialized channels, whereas non-users will be more pas-

sive and watch general programming. Television viewing as a diversion will decline among Internet users.

The authors would like to substantiate these hypotheses with quantitative testing. Further, the hypotheses themselves will need to be modified on an ongoing basis, given the continuing rapid changes in today's telecommunications environment and the circumstances affecting sources of content for television, and other media.

### **Issues Requiring Further Study**

Although this study alone did not allow us to formulate certain hypotheses, we believe the points below should be studied in more depth.

- What hypotheses, in addition to those mentioned above, can be made concerning the variables in dividing Internet users and non-users according to degree of Internet usage.
- How need for services similar to television, such as motion picture delivery, and attitudes toward cost will change with changes in the factors affecting mode of connection and type of content.
- Since simultaneous and complementary use of the Internet and television are likely to differ depending on the type of information involved, this issue should be investigated more thoroughly. How this usage affects television content and programming should also be probed.

How widely will Internet usage spread, and how deeply will it become embedded in people's lives? These issues will undoubtedly have a strong impact on future television viewing.

### **Further Reference**

Kamimura Shuichi and Ida Mieko, "Will the Internet Take the Place of Television?," *NHK Broadcasting Studies*, No. 1, pp. 51-108.

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