

# Expanding Internet Usage and Changing Perceptions of Television among Japanese in Their Twenties

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The NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute's March 2007 Public Opinion Survey on Television in the Network Society (hereafter "Network Society Survey") reported younger generations to be progressively more active than older ones in accessing or sharing information through the Internet.<sup>1</sup> This finding, which is supported by other studies as well, has prompted the suggestion that increased Internet use will lead young people to stop watching television. To examine this assertion, the present study focuses on the television-viewing behavior and attitudes toward television of young people in their 20s, basing its analysis primarily on data from the Network Society Survey.<sup>2</sup> First, drawing on several institute surveys, let us look at how this segment of the population uses the media in general, including television.

## MEDIA USE

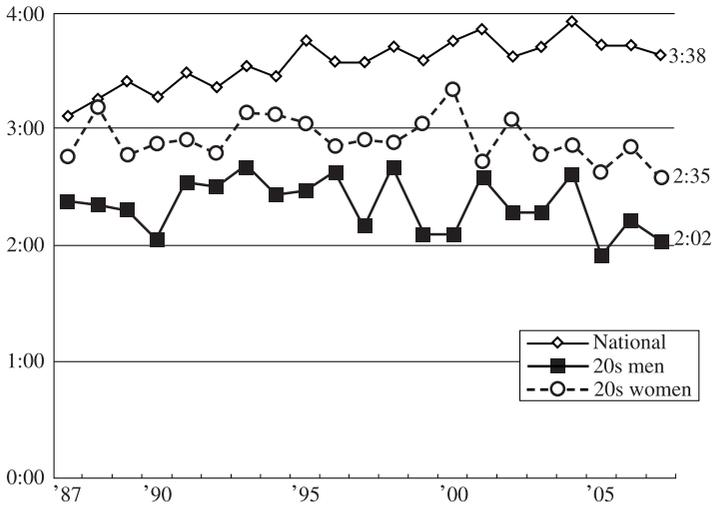
Statistics on television viewing time are provided by the institute's twice-annual National Individual Audience Rating Survey. As of June 2007, daily viewing time (averaged over the days of the week) by Japanese in their 20s was 2 hours 2 minutes for men and 2 hours 35 minutes for women. Although these figures are considerably lower than the national average (for age 7 and older) of 3 hours 38 minutes, such a difference does not deviate from prevailing trends in which television viewing increases with age.

Analysis of data for the group likewise reveals no marked changes in the intervening two decades since 1987. Viewing times for men and women in

<sup>1</sup> Aramaki Hiroshi, Hirata Akihiro, and Ishibashi Ari, "Hitobito no johokan to media e no hyoka: Nettowaaku shakai no naka no terebi ni kansuru yoron chosa kara" [People's Views on Information and Assessment of the Media: From the Public Opinion Survey on Television in the Network Society], *Hoso kenkyu to chosa* 57 (August 2007), pp. 14–33.

<sup>2</sup> The survey took place from March 3 to 11 (Sat.–Sun.), 2007, among 3,600 Japanese citizens (12 respondents x 300 survey points) aged 16 and older from all parts of Japan who were selected by stratified two-stage random sampling. Through the placement (self-administered) method, the survey yielded 2,572 valid responses (valid response rate, 71.4%).

**Figure 1. Television Viewing Time (from the National Individual Audience Rating Survey)**



their 20s have remained at around 2 hours 30 minutes and 3 hours, respectively, with some fluctuation over the years but no observable trend either toward increase or decrease (Figure 1). Nor has there been a change in the tendency for women to watch television somewhat longer than men. It may be said, however, that recent levels have been low since peaking in 1998 for men and in 2000 for women.

### Frequent Use of Music Media and the Internet

Figure 2 shows average weekday participation rates (the percentage of persons who engaged in a given activity for more than 15 minutes on a single day) for major mass media by age group as obtained by the 2005 NHK National Time Use Survey.<sup>3</sup> Of subjects in their 20s, 83 percent viewed television for more than 15 minutes on a single day—a considerable number, but nevertheless slightly lower than the national average of 90 percent. Participation rates for radio and newspapers were likewise lower among this group compared with the overall population, as were rates for the mass media on the whole.

At the same time, use of “magazines, comic books, and books” and “videos” among the group was roughly equal to the national average, while

<sup>3</sup> See Yoshida Rie and Nakano Sachiko, “Changes and Trends in Media Use: From the Results of the 2005 Japanese Time Use Survey,” *NHK Broadcasting Studies* 5 (2007), pp. 117–42.

**Figure 2. Participation Rates for Mass Media and the Internet (weekday average by age group, from the NHK National Time Use Survey)**

	National	10s	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s	70 and older
Mass media	95	94	<b>89</b>	91	95	97	98	98
Television	90	88	<b>83</b>	85	89	92	95	96
Radio	15	5	<b>9</b>	10	14	19	24	19
Newspapers	44	7	<b>18</b>	29	45	58	68	61
Magazines, comic books, and books	18	32	<b>20</b>	19	18	16	15	14
CDs, MDs, and tapes	9	24	<b>19</b>	9	9	6	5	3
Videos	8	10	<b>9</b>	11	10	7	5	5
Free-time Internet use	13	18	<b>21</b>	17	14	9	10	7

for “CDs, MDs, and tapes,” it was higher. Outside these mass media, members also exhibited a higher-than-average participation rate of 21 percent for free-time Internet use. To summarize, whereas mass-media consumption by Japanese in their 20s is generally on the low side, utilization of publications (magazines, comic books, and books), videos, music media (CDs, MDs, and tapes), and the Internet among this age bracket is relatively frequent.

### More Experience Using Social Networking Services

As observed above, one of the marked features of media use by younger Japanese is frequency of Internet use. According to the Network Society Survey, 88 percent (versus 60 percent nationally) of those in their 20s—in short, the vast majority—are Internet users in some form (i.e., accessing websites and/or email via computer or mobile phone). Some of these users in their 20s access the Internet only by mobile phone rather than computer, but they are in the minority (11 percent for men and 21 percent for women). Those in their 20s who use only email without looking at websites is also low (4 percent for both men and women).

Internet users in their 20s, moreover, include a relatively large proportion (20 percent, as opposed to 6 percent nationally) with experience participating in social networking services (SNS) such as Mixi. Members of this age group frequently appear to draw on the Internet for purposes of communication, as also evidenced by the proportion with experience in creating their own websites or blogs—16 percent, second only to the 36 percent for ages 16–19 (and higher than the national average of 7 percent). The 2006 Time Use Survey in the IT Age likewise concluded that those in their 20s and younger make up the

bulk of users of blogs, SNS, online games and fiction, and other recent forms of communication and entertainment.<sup>4</sup> Such online interaction is spreading as a source of entertainment and diversion to other age brackets as well.<sup>5</sup>

## MANNER OF VIEWING AND ATTITUDES TOWARD TV

Television viewing time by Japanese in their 20s has changed little over the years. What, then, of their manner of viewing?

### Increase in Self-selected Viewing

Of the relevant questions in the NHK Japanese and Television Survey,<sup>6</sup> conducted every five years since 1985, subjects in their 20s in 1985 versus in 2005 differed in answers to two: whether they generally (1) watched television at specific times and (2) selected the programs that they watched. The number who said they watched television at specific times decreased from 77 percent in 1985 to 65 percent in 2005, and decreased for both men and women. As to whether subjects selected the programs they watched, “yes” responses rose from 67 to 79 percent in the two decades; by gender, the percentage for men showed little change, while that for women sharply increased. Overall, the ways that those in their 20s watch television have changed considerably for viewing regularity and selectivity, particularly in the case of women.

In terms of lifestyle, between 1985 and 2005 marriage rates among Japanese in their 20s fell from 27 to 23 percent for men and from 54 to 28 percent for women. Employment rates also fell from 80 to 69 percent for men while rising from 52 to 70 percent for women. These and other differences in generational attributes and media environment (e.g., number of television sets) over two decades may be factors in the abovementioned shifts in data on viewing behavior.

<sup>4</sup> Watanabe Yoko, “Netto riyo no yoso o kaeru mobairu kiki: IT jidai no seikatsu jikan / futai iko chosa kara” [Mobile Devices Transforming Internet Usage: From the 2006 Time Use Survey in the IT Age and a Supplementary Survey of Use Habits], *Hoso kenkyu to chosa* 57 (June 2007), pp. 12–20.

<sup>5</sup> Watanabe Seiji and Yonekura Ritsu, “The Spread of Multimedia and Changes in Information Behavior: From the Research Project ‘People and Media Usage in Japan,’ ” *NHK Broadcasting Studies* 5 (2007), pp. 100–16.

<sup>6</sup> See Shiraishi Nobuko, Hara Miwako, and Terui Daisuke, “Nihonjin to terebi 2005: Terebi shicho no genzai” [The Japanese and Television 2005: The Present State of TV Viewing], *Hoso kenkyu to chosa* 55 (August 2005), pp. 2–35.

**Figure 3. Feelings about Television (multiple answers)**

	(%)	
	20s (N = 281)	National (N = 2,572)
Watching television naturally informs me about a variety of topics	47	63
I find my mind and heart swayed by what I see on television	28	26
Television coverage leaves me unsatisfied and wanting to know more	23	20
I feel uncomfortable unless I have the television on	22	15
Simply having the television on gives the household a sense of togetherness	13	14
Television makes me feel connected to the outside world	12	19
Television allows me to feel personally involved with what is on screen	10	9
Television allows me to feel close to the performers on variety shows	5	4
Television acts as a mouthpiece for my feelings	3	4
Television lets me know how my ideas measure up to those of the rest of society	3	6

<, > indicate a statistically significant difference ( $p < .05$ )

### **Fifty Percent Agree Television “Naturally Informs”**

Figure 3 shows responses to a multiple-answer question in the Network Society Survey on attitudes toward television. The highest percentage of subjects in their 20s, like those overall, agreed that television “naturally informs” them about a variety of topics. The results, at 47 percent, fell below the national average, however. Responses saying that television made one feel “connected to the outside world” were likewise fewer among the group (12 percent) compared with the entire survey sample. Perhaps for those in their 20s, the multiplicity of available sources of information other than television, for example other media or acquaintances, dilutes their sense of television as a prime provider of information or contact with society.

At the same time, the proportion of those who claimed that they felt “uncomfortable” unless they had the television on was actually higher among

**Figure 4. Evaluations of Media (most useful/suitable medium by function; single answer)**

20s

	Radio	TV (terrestrial)	TV (broadcasting satellite)
Learning about events and trends	1	51	0
Keeping up with topics of conversation	1	48	0
Gaining knowledge even about fields outside one's interests	4	33	1
Finding information related to one's hobbies	0	5	0
Finding information necessary to work or daily life	1	12	0
Finding tips and insider information	1	8	0
Learning details about news interested in	0	25	1
Confirming one's ideas do not diverge from those of others	0	6	0
Seeking casual entertainment	3	47	1
Being moved	1	45	1
Passing the time	1	36	0
Forgetting loneliness	1	31	0
Sharing the same feelings and ideas with others	1	44	1
Expressing one's feelings or thoughts	1	2	0
Presenting views or original work	0	4	0
Obtaining reliable information	1	18	1

 = highest number of responses

 = second highest number of responses

									National*		
									(%)		
TV (cable/communications satellite)	Newspapers	Magazines	Books	Internet (excepting email)	Email	Conversation with others	Can't choose	No answer	TV (terrestrial)	Newspapers	Internet (excepting email)
1	14	1	0	18	0	3	2	8	46	24	8
1	2	4	0	11	2	18	5	8	42	10	5
2	11	3	2	25	0	5	5	10	31	16	13
1	2	23	9	43	0	4	3	10	8	7	25
1	4	7	7	47	0	12	3	7	14	14	24
1	5	6	3	51	0	8	6	9	13	10	26
0	15	1	2	43	0	3	4	6	26	28	21
0	2	1	3	11	3	55	13	6	8	8	8
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2	1	5	4	15	3	9	2	9	47	3	7
3	0	1	26	1	0	6	7	10	44	2	1
3	0	11	7	21	5	3	3	11	39	3	9
1	0	4	3	8	8	25	13	8	32	1	3
1	4	1	3	7	1	14	15	9	37	7	3
0	1	0	1	6	13	62	7	9	4	2	3
0	3	2	3	16	4	31	29	9	4	6	8
1	25	2	8	17	0	11	9	9	21	30	9

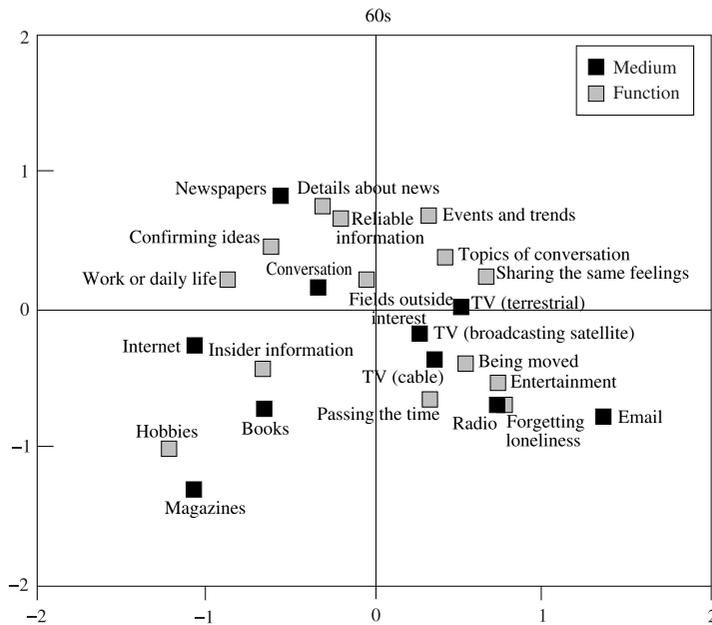
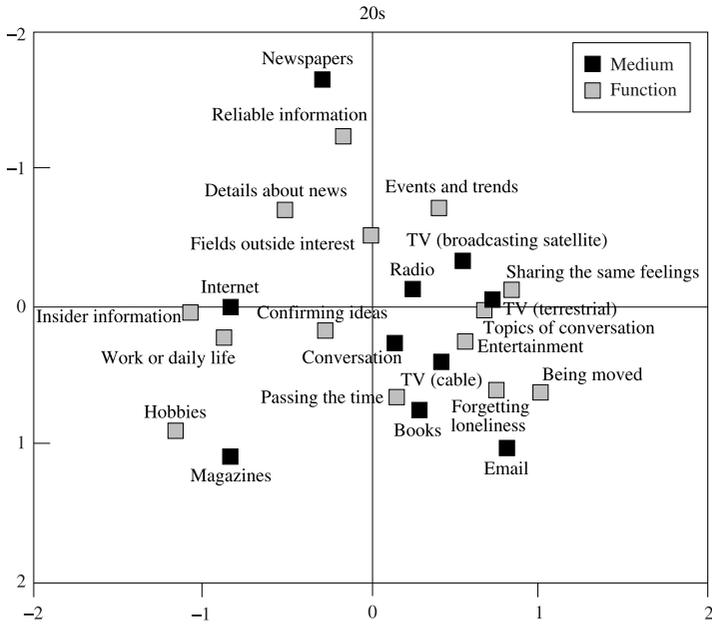
Note:

Above double lines: most useful medium

Below double lines: most suitable medium

\*National results provided for TV (terrestrial), newspapers, and Internet only.

Figure 5. Degrees of Closeness among Functions and Media



subjects in their 20s (22 percent) than the overall population, suggesting that, on the level of awareness, television is a deeply ingrained part of the lives of this generation.

## EVALUATIONS OF MEDIA BY FUNCTION

This section will look at how Japanese in their 20s evaluate television, as compared with other media, in terms of its usefulness in their everyday lives. Figure 4 presents the results of the question in the Network Society Survey in which subjects were asked to choose from 10 media, including conversation with others, the medium that they deemed most useful or suitable for each of 16 prelisted purposes.<sup>7</sup>

### High Evaluation of the Internet

The highest percentage of respondents in their 20s selected television (terrestrial) for items having to do with more passive forms of information acquisition, such as “learning about events and trends” and “keeping up with topics of conversation,” or with entertainment and recreation, such as “seeking casual entertainment” and “being moved.” The Internet, meanwhile, was deemed useful by the most people in the group for “finding information related to one’s hobbies,” “learning details about news one is interested in,” and otherwise actively searching for information. Newspapers ranked highest for reliability of information.

While the above results were largely similar to the national average, subjects in their 20s tended to choose the Internet more frequently and, in some cases, exhibited a different order of responses from the population at large. The first-place results differed for one item, “learning details about news one is interested in”; whereas subjects overall chose newspapers, television, and the Internet, in that order, those in their 20s most often cited the Internet, followed by television and then newspapers. The Internet also ranked second among the group for “learning about events and trends” and “gaining knowledge even about fields outside one’s interests,” surpassing newspapers, second in the national average. Moreover, in terms of “obtaining reliable information,” the Internet, third among those in their 20s, was nevertheless judged nearly as suitable as television. Thus for many items related to information, members of the group favor the Internet over newspapers.

<sup>7</sup> More precisely, subjects were asked to indicate media that they regarded useful or suitable for each item (multiple answers possible) and then to select from these the best one (single answer). To more clearly illustrate the differences between media, the present analysis considers only the single-answer responses.

Also notable among the findings was that the second highest number of responses seeking for “casual entertainment” and “passing the time” was given to the radio and magazines, respectively, by subjects overall but to the Internet by those in their 20s. Although outstripped percentage-wise by television in both cases, the high figures for the Internet clearly show its importance among Japanese in their 20s as a source of not only information but also entertainment.

### **No Marked Difference in Evaluations of TV**

A closer look at results for television (terrestrial), meanwhile, reveals that those in their 20s do not necessarily poorly evaluate this medium. Although evaluations by the group often leaned more toward the Internet and less toward newspapers compared with the national average, as far as television was concerned they were much the same.

Evaluations of television by subjects in their 20s were lower than the national average for two items, “finding information related to one’s hobbies” and “finding tips and insider information.” As regards these and other items related to information retrieval, the group was particularly likely to respond in favor of the Internet.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, evaluations of television were higher among the group than the national average for the two items of “keeping up with topics of conversation” and “sharing the same feelings and ideas with others.” Thus members of this generation appear to value television for its characteristics as a mass medium that enables viewers to share information and attain a sense of togetherness.

### **Internet Plays Clear Roles**

The data for the 20s age group was next subjected to correspondence analysis in order to obtain a visual representation of the degrees of closeness among functions and media (Figure 5). For purposes of comparison, the same analysis was performed for subjects in their 60s ( $N = 410$ ), an age group with a low proportion (32 percent) of Internet users.

The two functions of “expressing one’s feelings or thoughts” and “presenting views or original work,” both of which have to do with transmitting information, were excluded from the analysis, bringing the total number of items to 14. The “can’t choose” and “no answer” categories were also excluded.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Of the 10 possible media options, conversation with others was presented only as a supplementary category. The graph for the 20s age group is reversed to the bottom to permit better comparison with the one for those in their 60s.

The resulting graph for subjects in their 20s indicates that television (terrestrial) and the radio are clustered relatively close to each other, while newspapers, the Internet, and magazines all lie apart. Newspapers exhibit a strong correspondence to “obtaining reliable information,” the Internet to “finding information necessary to work or daily life” and “finding tips and insider information,” and magazines to “finding information related to one’s hobbies” (note, however, that close correspondence does not necessarily imply that the medium was most often chosen for that function).

The graph for the 60s age group, by contrast, plots the Internet close to books and magazines and somewhat far from “finding information necessary to work or daily life” and “finding tips and insider information.” Overall, it may be said that while both groups are largely similar, for example in terms of their positioning of broadcast media, subjects in their 20s assign definite roles to the Internet, whereas those in their 60s not only fail to cite the Internet as often in their responses but seem as yet more diffuse about the purposes to which they put it.

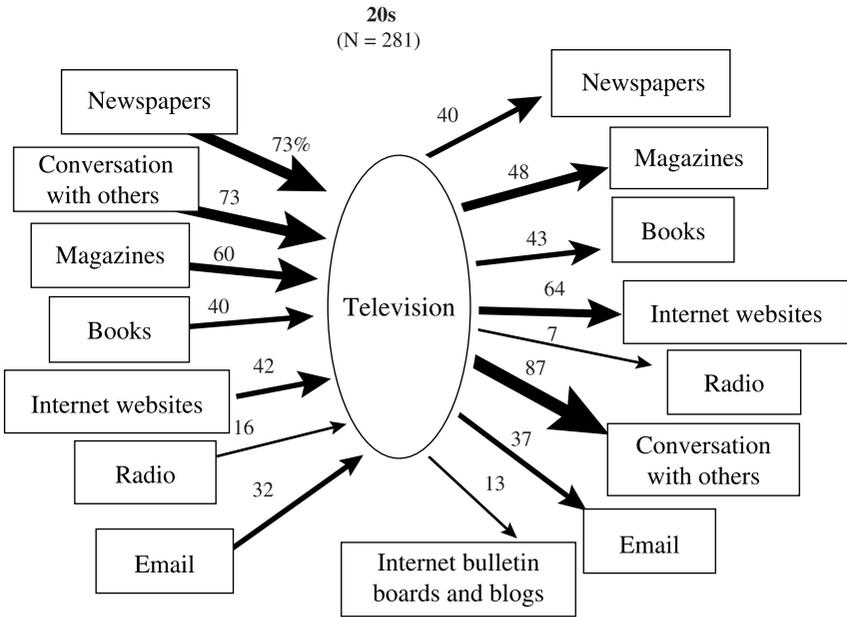
### LINKED ACTIVITIES CENTERING ON TELEVISION

As discussed above, Japanese in their 20s make use of a relatively wide variety of media, each for different purposes. This, however, does not mean that each medium is used separately. Responses to the Network Society Survey’s questions on television-connected activities show that many different media come into play both in prompting people to watch television and in providing channels for them to find out more or tell others about what they saw on television.

#### **Using the Internet to Pursue Topics Seen on Television**

Figure 6 summarizes relevant survey findings for subjects in the 20s and 60s age groups. In the first of this set of questions, subjects were asked whether they ever watched television as a result of learning about programs and performers through the media listed to the left side of each diagram. Affirmative responses for newspapers came in an overwhelming first among subjects in their 60s (88 percent), followed by conversation with others at 54 percent; the Internet and email each accounted for less than 10 percent for this age bracket. Subjects in their 20s likewise most often cited newspapers and conversation with others, at 73 percent each, but the drop in results between these and other media was much less pronounced than in the case of people in their 60s, with Internet websites and email proving a fairly significant impetus for watching television programs as well.

**Figure 6. Activities Linked to Television**

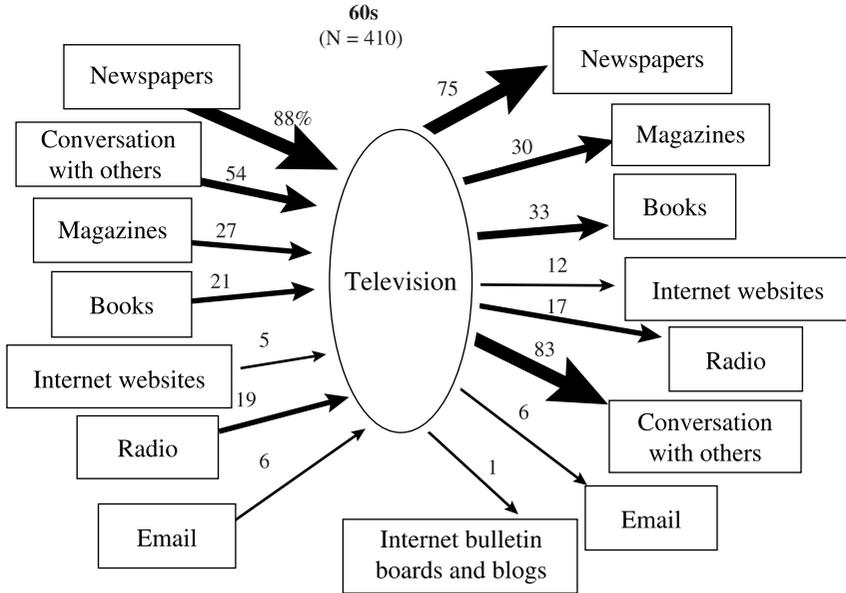


As to the question of what subjects did to find out more about things seen on television, for those in their 60s, again, reading newspapers ranked first (75 percent; see top five boxes on the right sides of both diagrams). Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of those in their 20s, meanwhile, replied that they went to Internet websites for further information. Referring to magazines, books, and newspapers also topped 40 percent among this group.

Finally queried as to what they did to relay to others things they saw on television or thought after watching television, the great majority of subjects both in their 60s and 20s answered that they talked to people (bottom right three boxes of both diagrams). Very few in their 60s cited writing their comments in email or on Internet bulletin boards and blogs, indicating that discussion of television by older people is largely confined to face-to-face communication. By contrast, email was cited by 37 percent and Internet bulletin boards and blogs by 13 percent of subjects in their 20s.

**Evaluations of Television: Changes in the Making?**

Thus Japanese in their 60s largely rely on newspapers and conversation with others to receive and exchange information concerning television, whereas



those in their 20s employ a wider variety of media, including, to a not insignificant extent, email and blogs. Although the above set of questions focuses only on connections between media as centered on television, they provide one picture of how, in actual practice, users combine different media according to purpose to carry out a larger sequence of activities.

This, conversely, points to the possibility that such linked activities may decrease with the spread of options, for example video downloading or online games, that involve only the Internet. Use of the Internet for casual entertainment or for passing the time, although as yet not prevalent within the overall population, seems to be gaining a foothold among Japanese in their 20s. Once these functions of the Internet grow more widespread, they may have a significant impact on the amount of time that people spend watching television as well as on their evaluations of its role.

*(Translated by Imoto Chikako)*