Chapter 4

Screens: television's dispersed 'broadcast'

P. David Marshall

This chapter focuses on the television-like industries and viewing practices that have emerged on other screens. Through a discussion of the internet and mobile media, it explores the developing relationships between the existing television industry, the constellation of new media industries that have integrated video, and the new audiences generated by these technologies and practices.

Television and the internet: the emergence of networked video culture

The generational shift: trawling for content

The internet is now used by millions of people for viewing televisual-like content, and a key driver of its take-up is the part played by a new generation of users. Young (relatively affluent) consumers in many countries are now more likely to have a wired or wireless computer than a television – often because it intersects with their education or work needs. Far more individualized than the traditional mode of television consumption, the computer screen for this 'audience' replaces the television screen and it has enabled them to search for content in an internet-delivered format. What is also interesting about this generation of users is their intersection with the flows of television. Although their viewing practices are not connected to the television networks directly, nonetheless their choice of what to watch is driven by their relationship to the content produced by major television production houses and networks. The success of download social networking sites that use BitTorrent, with its peer-to-peer structure of parsing up content among its users and contributors and its reassembling of that content, is very much attached to particular North American and European-produced television series (see Pouwelse et al. 2005). Thus, within minutes of their broadcast, many popular television programmes are available for download through these networks of distribution, creating a secondary audience.

The distinctive quality of this secondary audience is the level of commitment of its members, which has driven them to download and watch

programmes in a more user- and time-intensive way. Their fan-ish behaviour is further augmented by their use of the internet for further exchange of information, news and gossip about individual series via other social networks, blogs and in some cases wiki sites. Perhaps an effect of this intense relationship to content that leads to these internet-based viewing practices is the development of more elaborate programme narratives, aimed at attracting those fans who luxuriate in the labyrinthine plots. Programmes such as *Lost*, *Doctor Who*, *Heroes*, *24* and *Prison Break* have attracted this kind of core, 'cult' audience. Jenkins (2006) recognizes the force of this phenomenon by identifying the change in the narrative structure of some American television series as 'trans-media storytelling' (2006: 95–7). The production of the narrative migrates from the actual television programme into other media forms such as websites or games – each providing greater narrative depth. *Lost* has a number of websites generated by the producers themselves to further embellish the story and to intersect with the fan 'chatter' that fills the many other cavities of the internet.

However, BitTorrent television culture describes only one node of intersection between television and internet users. It is very difficult to identify how large or prevalent such practices are, because they skirt close to challenging the intellectual property rights that television networks and production companies work very hard to protect. Easier to identify is the way television has appeared in a transformed format on more prominent websites, where it is watched and used in very different modes. Television news, for instance, is reconstituted for its delivery by the internet, where it does not resemble the structure of a newscast. Instead, stories are organized by textual and still image cues to help users make decisions about which story to watch. A menu of possible video feeds is available at any one time, in conjunction with a transforming web page of pictures, headlines, texts and blogs. The differences between news sites run by the television networks such as Fox News, MSNBC or CNN and those run by newspaper sites or newsradio sites have become progressively unclear. Content deals are shared across these various online news forms; videos generated from traditional television news constitute the core content of a newspaper site such as *The Australian*, much as an aggregator site such as Google News. Augmenting these are further video productions by in-house reporters posted in blog format. The *New York Times* has regular video feeds from its key national and international reporters; they don't necessarily match the quality of television production, but they at least rival the information content that is produced by television. In such cases, video online collapses the distinction between video produced by television and video produced from some other source.

This Balkanization of television content is further accentuated on the most successful video sources on the internet. Nielsen, along with other surveying companies such as ComScore, has now compiled survey information around online video in different parts of the world (see Nielsen Media Research 2008c; ComScore 2008b). For instance, in March 2008 in the United

Kingdom, ComScore calibrated that 48 per cent of online
seen through Google and its YouTube subsidiary. The nearest riv
Tube was the BBC, with 1.2 per cent. A total of 27 million people
United Kingdom actually viewed an online video in the month and the tota
number of videos viewed was 3.5 billion (ComScore 2008b). Similar totals are evident in the United States, where 34.8 per cent of video content was viewed through YouTube in May 2008, with the closest rival, on 6.4 per cent, being Fox Interactive. Some 142 million internet users in the United States viewed an average of 85 videos each, with more than 4.2 billion videos viewed in the month. Similar statistics have been generated from other national markets, and what they identify generally is a different relationship to video content from anything that television has produced in the past. The average length of viewing for online video is three minutes, which indicates a different viewing strategy from that implied by the organization of television schedules into 30-minute and 60-minute shows.

For much of the world, YouTube dominates both the supply of video content online and the prevailing patterns of its distribution. Television content is being 'unbundled' as it is being reconfigured for other screens (Dawson 2007: 139–42). The idea of the television 'segment' Ellis once employed to describe the organization of television has now taken on even greater significance on the internet (Ellis, from Dawson 2007: 232). Fans use YouTube to divide up and distribute less-than-10-minutes segments (the mandated length for the site) of their favourite programmes. Television networks, for their part, routinely strive to have their content taken down. At the same time, television networks themselves have entered into content deals with YouTube to put what they would classify as promotional content for their key properties on the site. Surrounding these industry efforts to deal with the breakdown in their control of content are the users themselves, posting millions of videos – some entirely new, self-produced content, others homages to existing produced content, and still others mash-ups of network-produced content reorganized for their own and other fans' pleasures.

There is a further complicating layer in the movement of online video that differentiates it from the traditional economic models of production and distribution of television. YouTube is a social networking site that encourages the sharing of content among its users. Other social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, Orkut and Friendster actively support putting video content from YouTube into the profile spaces of individual users so that the location of a video and its final 'screening' are thus recontextualized into an interpersonal exchange.

There have been several responses from the major television industry players to this changed production and distribution environment. First, as indicated above, the industry has developed alliances with sites such as YouTube where exclusive content deals are struck in exchange for controlling the piracy of television content. Second, the television production industry has moved

much more readily than film into a music distribution model for its programsme. Thus, through iTunes one can pay for the downloading of particular television episodes. Third, and possibly most costly, the network websites have become more elaborate places for the distribution of programmes than in the past. Increasingly, television websites are now designed for 'catch-up' television, where past episodes and/or compilation summary videos of past episodes can be streamed from the site. Catch-up television has become standard for major American networks, and uses what is called pre-roll advertising to pay for its delivery. Some public broadcasters, such as the Australian ABC and the BBC, have made their respective online services sites for the thousands of hours of past programme content, an amount that dwarfs the content that major networks have made available. In all cases, whether commercial or public, broadcasters have worked to make their own sites the portals for their own content through a partial embrace of the internet cacophony via multiple add-on videos to productions and extended capacities for viewers/users to write in or video in their own comments.

ITV and IPTV: the overlaying of screens and the TV putsch

In contrast to the chaotic structure of online video and its often-interpersonal re-mediation by users, there are other developments that overlay television onto the internet. It is difficult to essentialize the pleasures of television as they have developed over the last 60 years, but one of its foundational elements was that it was programmed for you. You could reject the programme and change channels or switch the machine off, but fundamentally television employed what could be described as a paternalistic form of delivery. In industrial metaphors, television's content was pushed at the viewer, and the viewer accepted the pleasures of the flow (and the flow of segments). This pleasure could be summarized in the phrase 'watching television', as opposed to watching a particular programme. Television viewing was and is a state of mind – whether one surfed channels with the remote control, or allowed the programmers of a particular channel to construct formations of pleasure, promotion and information for an entire evening.

The limitations of this model are among the reasons for moving television onto the internet through internet protocol television (IPTV) and internet television (ITV). These platforms of delivery have had minor success in most parts of the world, but identify some potential for how other screens could effectively be recolonized by television. IPTV is television delivered through telephone services such as DSL; it is sometimes described as telco television. At least in North America, its emergence coincided with cable companies offering broadband and phone services; telecommunications companies such as AT&T and Verizon, which dominated landline phones, crossed over and began offering similarly bundled television, broadband and telephone services. The actual look of American IPTV resembles cable television, as it is a direct

service to the subscriber. Much like current digital cable services, IPTV also offers many interactive features and guides for more agile use of the streamed channels. In other parts of the world, such as Australia, IPTV is used to identify viewing television via the computer but, similar to the American system, it sets up a direct intranet structure that is walled off from the rest of the internet for its delivery to the household.

The take-up of IPTV internationally is determined by a number of factors:

- the speed and reach of broadband and the associated quality of the cable to any endpoint;
- the standardization of technologies of delivery;
- forms, agreements and standards of both regulating content and determining how the content is redelivered and packaged;
- the extent to which there has been a movement of advertising revenue away from traditional media and into internet forms; and
- the record of existing television services operating successfully on their own terms.

The play of these factors varies from country to country. IPTV was developed after the introduction of digital television and digital video recorders, and contemporaneously with add-on technologies such as replay television and TiVo. Often the interactive, on-demand and time-shifting capabilities of these new traditionally delivered television services nullify consumer interest in watching IPTV. Nonetheless, IPTV is expanding and represents a challenge to cable-delivered television in some markets. According to 2008 statistics, IPTV has 15.5 million subscribers worldwide; the greatest presence is in Europe, where there are 8.4 million subscribers (Guevarra and Lee 2008). Other research indicates that there are 900,000 IPTV subscribers in Asia and 1.9 million in North America (*Electronic News Weekly* 2008).

In contrast to IPTV, internet television, or ITV, refers to the packaging of television or video content for direct and open delivery through the public internet. Whereas IPTV can guarantee the quality of its signal and image because it controls the delivery, ITV's quality is dependent on wider internet traffic. Like BitTorrent, ITV can use peer-to peer structures to deliver diverse television/video content. The open-source Miro TV is one of these examples. Similar to YouTube, it allows users to generate channels alongside more commercial or professional channel providers. Unlike YouTube, Miro is a software viewing and retrieval program that can be downloaded onto your personal computer and thereby provides a distinct viewing structure and frame. The format of Miro TV leads the user to structure their video environment as they would for RSS feeds – highly personalized and delivered directly to a desktop environment. The users subscribe to 'channels' and Miro arranges the new content on those channels for potential download through a series of thumbnail images and short title/texts. Joost, similar to Miro TV

except that it carries advertising and has a paid subscription model, offers 480 channels and boasts that it has over 28,000 programmes available.

There are two key differences between services such as Joost or Miro and IPTV. First, live content or feeds are just not part of these services as they are with either IPTV or traditional television services; Joost and Miro TV provide a collected and regularly updated archive of available video content. Second, ITV is closely integrated into Web 2.0's emphasis on social networking. Miro and Joost structure their sites to allow for the sharing of material, the collaborative building of channels or personal content, and the general expansion of video from a medium of exhibition, as it was with traditional television, into what I would call an intermediary form of interpersonal communication.

As noted above, the changes in the movement of television onto the internet are occurring at different rates internationally. Nonetheless, some patterns are emerging. South Korea, for instance – the site of the most active online game and social network culture – is migrating to internet video much more rapidly than other parts of the world, perhaps precisely because of its previous embrace of online life and its almost universal access to broadband infrastructure. Australia, on the other hand, is moving slowly into these areas and has a clear urban and regional divide in the take-up of these more video-oriented features of the internet. These differences point to infrastructural variations as well as cost differences. A further significant difference is emerging along language lines. As Mark McLelland's (2008) work has demonstrated, there are geo-linguistic variations in the use and organization of the internet: Asia is leading in the adoption of technology and providing distinctive paths of use that differentiate its activities from those of North America (2008: 611–14). There is not the space here to detail these, but it can be said that a shared language, perhaps more than a shared national identity, is leading to the development of a number of distinctive internet video cultures.

It is important to note the ongoing tension among three competing and overlapping imperatives that are shaping online video. First, there is the continuing emergence of the democratization of the moving image among users, where video, because of its accessibility and deployability, becomes a more everyday and mundane form of communication. Second, the television industry, in its re-mediated form on the internet, is working vigorously to hierarchize the value of images and thereby protect its market through earmarking premium video content that it alone can provide. And third, the new online industries – the Googles, Facebooks and YouTubes of the internet – that have been instrumental in making video just another component of social networking are working just as vigorously to find new ways of generating income. The older economic models, where video as a form of exhibition was used to produce audiences that were sold to advertisers, are now vying with new economic models where video is used to produce communication exchanges that generate richer information about audiences for more targeted and perhaps more valued types of advertising.

Television, DVD and mobile media

In contrast to the uncertain economies of internet television, there has been an accepted and comforting development of DVD production and distribution. Television series' DVDs now are a major element in the video sales and rental market, with worldwide sales by 2005 of 2.6 billion, or 10 per cent of the overall industry (Idato 2005). Due to the capacity to compress episodes into the DVD format, entire annual dramatic series such as *24* or *Sex and the City* can be collected in boxed sets and sold to avid fans and new viewers alike. The pleasures of viewing television series on DVDs have had a subtle but important impact on the migration of television to other screens, as well as breaking the relationship that television programme-viewing had to interspersed advertising.

After the first generation of home DVD players, subsequent production moved to making the player portable. And in the last five years, DVD players have become a regular accessory, with smaller screens embedded in the backseats of SUVs and vans to entertain children. Also, for several years, portable DVD players with attached screens (modelled in the style of slightly larger portable game systems such as Nintendo DS and Sony PSPs) have become a popular North American commuter device for screening television and films. In a similar vein, airlines began providing personal screens for their passengers from the last years of the twentieth century. Most recently, another migratory television practice has emerged: satellite television for cars and airplanes. Modelled on the North American satellite radio systems, these television services are designed for video delivery. Much like ITV, satellite-delivered mobile television is reconstructing content in ways that resemble the models emerging with other mobile media platforms.

Portable DVD players represent a very modest transformation of television that has permitted the traditional television companies to maintain their relative pre-eminence. In contrast, television's move to mobile media forms such as iPods, mobile phones and, to a lesser extent, portable game players articulates a much more concerted effort at building alliances outside the traditional industry. The business structure of mobile video demands that television content providers connect to a software and a technology that can present the video image on a much smaller screen, and to mobile telecommunications companies that can provide the service to their customers. Predating this business alliance is the building of the infrastructure through which large numbers of consumers have access to the latest generation of mobile phones – generally known as third-generation (3G) phones – in order to make any service viable.

The success of this constellation of deals has varied markedly around the world. There are certain markets, such as South Korea, where mobile video is at least as commonplace as internet video, and used in a manner that resembles the mobile satellite television discussed above. The Korean model is broadcast

from terrestrial and satellite sources direct to the wireless phone, and thus matches previous television delivery structures. The system called DMB (which has also been adopted in Japan) depends on elaborate government-supported infrastructure and purchase of the phone that can take the signal. In 2007, South Korea had a mobile television audience of 6.3 million (*Economist* 2007), with another 1.2 million watching in-car satellite. The distinctiveness of the Korean approach is that there is no delay in the delivery of programmes: they are simultaneously delivered to satellite, terrestrial and broadcast receivers.

From 2005, Apple has been developing an iPod that can download videos. Since that time, and progressively in other national and international markets, Apple has worked vigorously on developing content deals with television production companies so that programmes would be available to customers through iTunes. The model of content delivery resembles the successful music download model. As Apple has rolled out the production of iPhones, the move to video delivery on demand has matched its development by certain new industry players. In Europe, the standard developed for mobile video is called DVB-H, and it has had some success in Finland (through Nokia) and in Italy. In the United States, a different technology, called MediaFLO, has been developed. Prior to MediaFLO, and continuing to operate in the United States, is a system called MobiTV that is delivered individually to each mobile phone; this system works well so long as the number of users in a given area does not become overwhelming. There is no question that MobiTV has expanded in the United States. Operating since 2003 with the mobile phone provider Sprint, MobiTV has 4 million subscribers, and it has also established content delivery deals with some of the key networks in the United States, such as Disney, ESPN and NBC, for certain kinds of programmes (Whitney 2008b). MediaFLO is linked with the mobile service provider Verizon, and has similarly expanded its broadcast style service (*Economist* 2007). The IDC research firm projects that, with the shift to video-ready phones, mobile video will expand to up to 10 million subscribers in the United States by 2010 (*Economist* 2007).

Occurring simultaneously with the expansion of mobile providers is content development that recognizes the smaller screen of mobile phones. The most notorious content developed specifically for mobiles was a series connected to *24*, entitled *24: Conspiracy*. The mobile series was a companion to the television series, but independently produced. It attempted to shoot with a greater number of close-ups and simpler *mise-en-scène* to make sense for the smaller screen of mobile media; however, as Dawson reports, these aesthetics and its separation from the main series actually made *Conspiracy* only a very limited success (Dawson 2007). Other examples of original television content have been advanced, but these developments are still dwarfed by the interpersonal and amateur use of image, sound and video that mobile phone users utilize for simple communication and exchange.

Conclusion

James Bennett has correctly identified that television is already digitalized. As a technology, as an industry and in terms of user practices, television is a digital media form that needs to be studied and taught as such (Bennett 2008). This chapter has identified that there has been a proliferation in the sites and locations of television. Television content has been transposed into the structures and desires of the socially networked world of the internet, as well as reconfigured spatially and temporally so that it fits into the intermittent flows of mobile media use. The 2008 Beijing Olympics is a useful demonstration of how television as a cultural industry now treads a multi-platform line between traditional coverage and alignments with the new screens of digital media.

First, the Olympics is a classic televisual event, as Rothenbuhler (1989) has analysed. It underscores the centrality of television to the understanding of the nation and of what is international. Due to its power in expressing the central ideals and myths of a culture, as well as its capacity to capture large audiences, the Olympics is enormously valuable to major national networks. The Beijing Olympics, through the IOC licensing of television rights, was very similar to past games: national broadcasters paid millions for exclusivity in each of their markets – the American NBC network paid US$3.5 billion (Hoffman 2008). On closer inspection, though, one can see all the new dimensions of how the Olympics was to be delivered to its audience. A total of 2,200 hours of Olympics coverage was allocated to NBC-Online as traditional television tried to control its distribution through blanket multi-platform exhibition. Similar tactics were used by other national broadcasters, such as the Canadian CBC, using online services to multiply the number of events available to viewers. Side-deals with specific phone companies became part of the new exclusivity as it became clear that some sort of information about the Olympics could and would be imparted through mobile media. Indeed, the Olympics was a promotional vehicle for the value of mobile video and television for some companies – in essence, a potential tipping-point to attract users to a new service. In Australia, Telstra Mobile, through a massive rotation of television commercials, promoted its new video-capable mobile phone service where individual events could be streamed live to one's handset for as little as $3 a day. The actual image was heavily branded with the logo of the national network to maintain the exclusive IOC relationship. In the United States, NBC had arrangements with MediaFLO for two channels of Olympics coverage. Similar mobile arrangements were made in other parts of the world, where mobile coverage was twinned with the official broadcast partner in an acknowledgement that mobile video users would be attracted to streaming the short videos that might relate to a particular race or competition – in other words, mobile video allowed the user to unbundle the programming content of traditional television.

The Olympic frenzy of the new television industry, both in terms of its traditional broadcast form and in its different screens' incarnations,

demonstrates how an industry is working through a transformed moving-image ecology and economy. Older models of advertising support remain valuable and profitable in their accepted simplicity around audience engagement, and thus broadcast television continues to exercise a weakened but nonetheless forceful pre-eminence. Online cultures have challenged this pre-eminence by flattening the idea of video and its exhibition, where video becomes much more a technology of communication for users rather than predominantly a system of heightened and expensive mediating productions that work to represent national cultures. Emerging delivery systems have their modalities – personal computers translate the televisual experience into individualized and database retrieval experiences and aesthetics, while mobile media not only individualize the experience but also transform the aesthetics of the moving image into smaller screens and different relationships to space and time. Ultimately, the dispersed screens of television are producing an industry and an audience that are forming different alliances as the meaning of television in contemporary culture oscillates between a technology that represents a mythic concept of a culture and a technology that is a further extension of the emerging new, interpersonalized networks of cultural activity that are now both the ground-zero and the default starting point of digital media.