

Younger Audiences Adopting 'Lean in' Interactive TV Features that Blend Entertainment, Social Media, and Commerce

Nearly half (48%) of TV viewers regularly engage with social media during or after a show. Younger audiences over-index on social engagement with TV content.

IRVING, TX, UNITED STATES, September 2, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ --

Attracting audiences to live content beyond sports is a challenge in today's media ecosystem. A recent Horowitz study suggests that, especially for younger audiences, interactivity may be key to driving them to live TV and delivering higher levels of advertising engagement.



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Adriana Waterston

Already, nearly half (48%) of TV viewers regularly engage with social media during or after a show, according to Horowitz's latest annual report, [State of Media, Entertainment and Tech: Viewing Behaviors 2025](#). Younger audiences over-index on social engagement with TV content: 55% of viewers ages 18-34 and 53% of 35-49 year-olds report using social media in connection with TV content, compared to 39% of viewers ages 50 and older. And importantly, a growing audience of consumers are actively engaging with content in real time. For example, over a third (36%) of viewers share live reactions such as

emojis and comments while watching a show or event on a platform. In addition, nearly 3 in 10 viewers report hosting or joining virtual meetups or watch parties using services like Hulu Watch Party. These online gatherings appeal especially to younger viewers, with slightly over 4 in 10 of those ages 18-34 engaging with content in real time, compared to one-third of 35-49 year-olds and just over 1 in 10 viewers ages 50+.

In this new ecosystem, consumers are increasingly open to the merging of TV and commerce that eschews the traditional shopper journey and drives the viewer directly to conversion. About

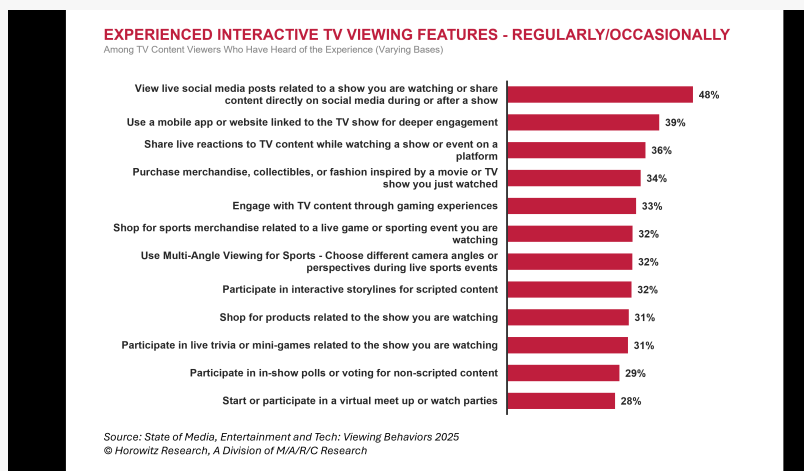
a third (34%) of viewers have purchased merchandise, collectibles, or fashion inspired by a movie or TV show, and almost a third (31%) of viewers report shopping for products related to the show they're watching by using QR codes or shopping links shared during the show. Younger viewers are especially engaged, with 45% of 18-34 year-olds shopping for items related to the show they are watching, more so than older viewers (35% of viewers ages 35-49 and 19% of those ages 50+). Nearly a third of TV viewers have also purchased sports merchandise during a live game or sporting event they are watching on TV.

"For today's younger viewers who are inherently multiplatform, enjoy participating in trends, are used to immediate gratification, and expect to have a two-way dialogue with brands, interactive ways to engage, share, and even shop while watching is not just an acceptable way to advertise, it is an expected and welcome aspect of engagement with TV content," notes Adriana Waterston, Executive Vice President and Insights & Strategy Lead for Horowitz Research, a division of M/A/R/C Research. "Brands should be working with content providers to explore innovative ways to make brand engagement and v-commerce an inherent part of the audience's viewing experience to make themselves stand out for Gen Z and other young consumer segments."

The State of Media, Entertainment & Tech: Viewing Behaviors 2025 study explores viewing behaviors in the complex media landscape. We examine share of viewing per platform, the devices they're watching on, the kind of content they're consuming, and which services they feel do the best job at delivering the content they seek. The survey was conducted in March 2025 among 2,000 consumers 18+ who are decision makers about subscription services in their home. Data have been weighted to ensure results are representative of the overall U.S. population. The report is available in total market, FOCUS Latinx, FOCUS Black, and FOCUS Asian editions.



Interactive TV features are blending entertainment, social media, and commerce



Interactive TV Features Among TV Viewers

CONTACT

For more information about the State of Media, Entertainment & Tech: Viewing Behaviors 2025 report, visit: <https://www.horowitzresearch.com/syndicated-research/state-of-media-viewing/>. To purchase the report, schedule an interview with an analyst, or to request specific data, please contact Adriana Waterston: adrianaw@horowitzresearch.com.

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