

Watch TV or use the Internet? Many do both at once: Nielsen

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LOS ANGELES (Reuters) - Nearly a third of all U.S. household Internet activity takes place while the user watches television, suggesting new and old media often share rather than compete for attention, the Nielsen Company said in a report on Friday.

In fact, the study found that heavy Internet users are among the most dedicated of TV viewers, spending more than 250 minutes a day in front of the tube, compared with the 220 minutes of television watched by people who never go online.

The findings would appear to be good news for broadcasters who worry the Internet is siphoning away viewers, and with them advertising dollars. It also helps explain the apparent paradox between rising TV viewership overall and the growing popularity of new media.

"TV usage is at an all-time high, and yet there's a lot more people using the Internet, and where does the time go, and part of the answer is that it's happening simultaneously," Nielsen spokesman Gary Holmes said.

The report, the first of its kind by Nielsen's media measuring service, was based on a sample of 3,000 people in more than 1,000 households during the month of May.

The study did not differentiate among the types of Internet use engaged in by TV viewers, though the most popular online activity typically consists of Web searches, e-mail and other forms of text communication, as well as shopping, Holmes said.

Internet use overall is growing by leaps and bounds, up 9 percent year-to-year in May, he said.

But average TV viewership still dwarfs online activity in the home - 127 hours vs. 26 hours per month among those who use the Internet, with video "streaming" on the Web accounting for just two hours and 19 minutes. As a group, teen girls are the most likely to engage in streaming,



CREDIT: Mark van Manen/Vancouver Sun
 Jack Chung of MatrixStream, headquartered in San Mateo, California, does all its development work in Vancouver on high definition Internet TV. You can attach a box to your TV set, and using the open Internet, download 1080p HD signals to your television with MX-1 Box to receive live High Definition signal.

82 percent.

While 31 percent of in-home online activity occurs at the same time the user is watching TV, the lion's share of all household TV viewership - almost 96 percent - takes place apart from the Internet, the Nielsen study found.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, a higher percentage of teenage TV viewing coincides with Internet use, 5.4 percent compared with 3.8 percent for the general population, Nielsen found.

Still to come is research that explores the correlation between TV and entertainment content on the Web, and the relationship between TV commercials and online advertising, Holmes said.

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