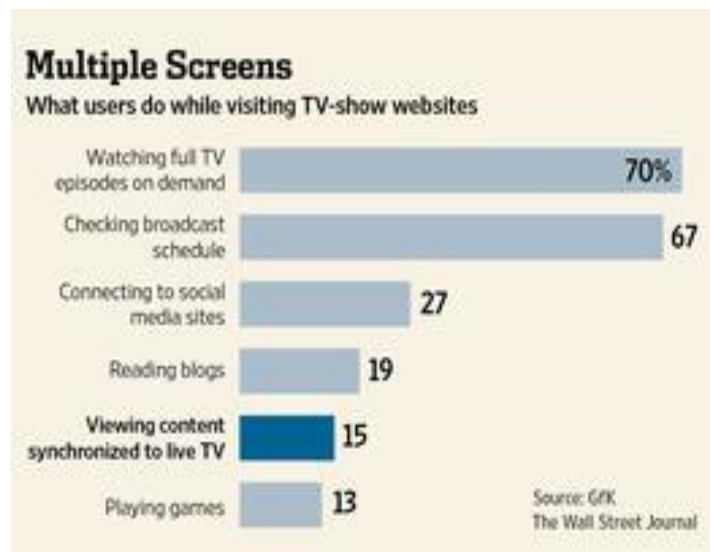# TV Networks Play to 'Second Screen'

By Amol Sharma
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Last weekend, members of the cast and crew of AMC Network's crime drama "The Killing" were on location in Vancouver, British Columbia, shooting material for Sunday's season premiere. What they produced won't be shown on television, though. It is meant for smartphones, tablets and laptops.

The video vignettes are for an online application AMC channel is launching this weekend to promote "The Killing," one of a number of increasingly ambitious such efforts being produced by TV networks. Designed to be watched on mobile devices and computers, the services show videos, photos, games, trivia and other content when the affiliated TV show is on the air.

TV networks are trying to take advantage of viewers who are increasingly multitasking as they watch shows. More than 40% of Americans have smartphones or tablets in their hands each day as they watch TV, according to Nielsen.

Multiple Screens
What users do while visiting TV-show websites

Watching full TV episodes on demand	70%
Checking broadcast schedule	67
Connecting to social media sites	27
Reading blogs	19
Viewing content synchronized to live TV	15
Playing games	13

Source: GfK
The Wall Street Journal

By offering so-called second-screen content synchronized with the broadcast, the networks hope they can persuade viewers to watch programming live, instead of on a digital video recorder several days after their initial broadcasts are recorded. When viewers watch on DVRs, they often skip over ads. In addition, networks want to attract more digital-ad dollars.

In the case of "The Killing," which starts its third season this weekend, the video shot last weekend is intended to give digital viewers background on a new character, a runaway teen named Bullet, and insight into the world of young homeless kids. It will be portrayed as footage from Bullet's smartphone.

"You're picking up a flavor of these street kids' life," said Mac McKean, senior vice president of digital media for AMC. The idea isn't to add any new plot elements. "There's only one story—we are complementing it," he said. The video, one of nine the channel produced for this season, is part of a content stream that will pop up periodically on digital viewers' screens during the telecast.

AMC also offers second-screen content for two of its other original shows, "Breaking Bad" and "The Walking Dead."

The channel isn't alone. Comcast Corp's USA Network offers synchronized digital content for all of its original shows—available via the Web and apps—and production is getting more intricate. The second-screen content for "Graceland," a series launching next week that revolves around law-enforcement agents sharing a house, includes a virtual rendering of the house that users can interact with. Doors unlock as the show progresses, revealing information about characters.

Viacom's MTV used its second-screen app to introduce viewers to new characters on "Teen Wolf," showing short interviews with actors during telecasts. Sports-TV networks are jumping in, too: Viewers watching NFL Network's coverage of the National Football League draft last month could use a mobile app to see a range of content during the telecast, including video interviews with players selected in the first round and analysis from experts. "They were producing it just like a television show, except that it was only going to smartphones and tablets," said Manish Jha, general manager of mobile at the NFL.

The audience for such services is still small. Just 15% of people who use TV networks' websites or apps watch digital content synchronized to live TV, translating into just 3% of the overall TV audience aged 13 to 54, according to market-research firm GfK. Users more commonly watch on-demand video clips and look up schedule information. "The networks really have to do a better job of educating users on when and how to use it," said David Tice, senior vice president of media and entertainment for GfK.

One risk is that by providing so much content on tablets and smartphones, viewers can get distracted from the show or, even worse, the ads. AMC's Mr. McKean says the video vignettes for "The Killing" will be shown during down time like commercials or credits, and users will have to choose to play them. AMC says the videos are short and that overall the synchronized content keeps viewers from changing channels during the commercial breaks.

News Corp's Fox says its approach differs depending on the genre. For comedies like "The Mindy Project," it serves up more frequent second-screen content—like video clips of funny moments—than for action-packed dramas like "Bones," where producers don't want viewers to miss any key developments.

"We're very careful about how we program it," said David Wertheimer, president of digital at Fox Broadcasting. "During the broadcast we want to add value to your experience, not detract."

AMC's Mr. McKean said the network worked closely with writers and producers of "The Killing" to find opportunities in the script for second-screen material. In addition to the video vignette, other digital content that will be made available during the premiere includes a coroner's report for the murder victim, a crime-scene photo that only gets briefly displayed on TV and a middle-school report card for Bullet.

Mr. McKean said the number of second-screen users for AMC's other shows has been into the six figures per episode and more than one million over the course of a season.

"It's a new medium," he said. "We want to see strong growth."