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## Streaming Through the Changing Landscape: Choosing Where to Place Your Message Today

By: John Houle

We've all seen how streaming video has changed the way we watch our favorite programming. Gone are the days of "Must See TV," appointment television and water cooler conversations about last night's episodes. We now watch what we want, when we want. We have choices and options, and with that comes better programming. The golden era of television is upon us, and the longstanding model of having to watch advertisements in order to enjoy the best stories continues as the standard bearer.

Now it's time to thoroughly examine the data to make informed decisions on where to place your message. So, let's look at the latest numbers.

<sup>1</sup> Premium OTT/CTV refers to advertising placed on internet-delivered video content accessed through internet-connected devices, particularly smart TVs and streaming devices. OTT (Over-The-Top) describes the delivery of content directly to viewers over the internet, bypassing traditional cable or satellite. CTV (Connected TV) specifies the device used for this content, such as a smart TV, Roku or a gaming console.

According to Nielsen, a record 47.3% of overall TV viewing time in July 2025 was spent streaming. YouTube was the number one platform, accounting for 13.4%. Netflix achieved a platform record of 8.8%, followed by Disney+ (4.7%), Prime Video (3.8%), Roku (2.8%), Paramount+ (1.9%) and Peacock (1.6%).

Cable finished with a 22.2% share of overall television viewing in July, while broadcast television held an 18.4% share, which included a 28% increase in news viewing with ABC News leading the way.

The local market is not far off from the national numbers. In the Providence market, premium Connected TV (Hulu, Paramount+, MAX, Peacock, Discovery+ and Disney+) accounted for roughly 14% of the total viewer landscape. This option has become a preferred choice for luxury brands and for reaching high-income subscribers.

When you add live streaming with Premium OTT/CTV<sup>1</sup>, this bundle (21.71%) surpasses cable TV (18.25%) and broadcast TV (17.89%) in R.I. When additional OTT options are in-

cluded, total streaming reaches over one-third of total local viewership.

As the landscape continues to evolve, YouTube TV has skyrocketed, establishing itself as the fourth largest pay-TV service behind Charter, Comcast and DIRECTV. With its live primetime, sports and news, YouTube TV is projected to become the largest pay-TV provider by 2026. However, the entry point is high for advertising and more geared towards national brands, but as this Google-backed platform continues to grow, it will become more available to local advertisers.

### Streaming: Target by Audience

Instead of using a broad-stroke approach, with streaming you can target by audience, interest and geographics down to zip code. With advanced targeting and cross-device retargeting, your desired audience is within reach with precision and impact.

And who has more information on our purchasing habits than Amazon? Its exclusive first-party data is available to reach high-intent audiences across Am-

Amazon Self Service TV Advertising and a broad network of trusted sites via Amazon Publisher Services and Publisher Direct. Your message can appear in premium content and engage customers wherever they are online using Amazon's audience insights. With Amazon Marketing Cloud Matchback, you can actually see how many of your leads or customers were exposed to an ad by providing lead or sales data captured during the campaign, allowing you to better measure impact and sales conversions.

This is what makes streaming so appealing to marketers, but how it's actually done is the critical question. The truth is that every keystroke and any word you say before Siri and Alexa is tracked. Your roaming history and past purchases are all collected to build a profile on you, with data then packaged and resold to advertisers.

The best targeting is through first-party data collection like Amazon. Vital data including names, email addresses and browsing or click history are retrieved at customer touchpoints. First-party data provides audience insights, improving retargeting strategies and is useful for identifying patterns and predicting future trends.

Proprietary first-party data is collected using pixels from local media outlets, websites and mobile apps across the country, as opposed to second-party data, which includes audience information from consumer-facing companies that has been collected from their own platforms regarding who is using their websites and apps. This differs from third-party data, which is collected by a data aggregating company using cookies placed on websites and apps. Examples of third-party data include both online and offline purchases, search histories, website and app interactions, survey responses, voter registrations, real estate information, user feedback, interviews and focus group responses.

Specialized third-party data combines demographics, consumer attitudes, product/brand usage and media exposure in a searchable database, drawing from an industry-standard national survey of hundreds of thousands of U.S. consumers.

While all this may seem intrusive, the data is used to gain audience insights, identify patterns and predict future trends. Many companies rely solely on third-party data. That's why proprietary first-party data is more important than

ever, as many devices and platforms are allowing for the rejection of third-party cookies, and users are increasingly concerned about data safety.

The positive side for marketers and brand builders is the ability to select the networks and websites best suited for campaigns. A layered strategy with a mix of broadcast, cable television and streaming is typically a winning formula but requires larger budgets in order to effectively implement a successful campaign. Broadcast television isn't going anywhere and still has the gravitas of the local news, live sports and primetime shows that people tune into by habit.

The inclusion of streaming enables us to deliver more targeted campaigns, and we can no longer fall back on John Wanamaker's famous lament, "Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted; the trouble is, I don't know which half." ■



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