

# NBCU Project 2: Transforming News

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## **TO TEAM MEMBERS OF PROJECT 2:**

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Thank you for taking the time to read through the following news run. The challenge we face is to determine how we can transform and expand NBC's news coverage across a wide spectrum of media channels, while simultaneously creating an attractive investment for advertisers.

The following news articles highlight recent news related to the changing face of broadcast news.

Selected highlights from the article:

- The FCC's mandate to switch from analog to digital broadcasting on February 17, 2009 provides cable and satellite companies with the possibility of increased subscribership. It also offers a challenge to local affiliate stations to offer an array of options for video consumption across multiple platforms.
- ABC Evening News has experimented with different story formats on the web to attract new audiences to their content. Much of the content is less formal than their traditional Evening News TV broadcast and provides the opportunity for consumers to interact and comment.
- CNN has launched a new completely user-generated news site called iReport.com. The user-generated format raises questions of journalistic integrity, what the definition of "news" is, and how to attract advertisers to the site without alienating users.
- CBS.com and NCAA.com will show all of the March Madness 2008 games uninterrupted on March Madness on Demand online. CBSSports.com has also partnered with Facebook to design a promotional bracket contest. The contest will have live links to game coverage.
- According to eMarketer, "More than 80 million American Internet users have watched a television show online, representing 43% of the total online population."
- The media is increasingly glomming onto the idea of branding content to attract niche audiences and retain them more effectively.
- According to a recent Pew Research survey, older generations (over 50) still predominantly prefer getting news from TV and newspapers. Contrastingly, younger generations (18-29 population) prefer consuming news online.

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*News Run Prepared by Chris Genteel, MBA Class of 2008 &  
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## **2/17/08, Winners, Losers in Digital TV Transition**

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK (AP) -- TV's big switch from analog to digital broadcasts will be complete in just one year, on Feb. 17, 2009, and many consumers are puzzling over how the shift will affect them: Do they need a new converter box, a new TV, a better antenna?

But it's pretty clear which business interests stand to gain.

Cable and satellite TV companies could see a wave of new subscribers as people with older TVs pass on hooking up converter boxes to older televisions or buying new sets. Local stations are already using some of the extra capacity digital broadcasting frees up by launching auxiliary TV channels with weather and traffic reports, and they're looking for ways to bring programming to portable devices.

The Federal Communications Commission began the switch many years ago to free up a large chunk of U.S. airwaves, which the government is in the process of auctioning off, a process that will net billions of dollars for public coffers. Making all UHF broadcast spectrum above channel 52 available will allow for powerful new wireless services, and possibly for a new network for public safety officials to use during disasters.

Most U.S. TV stations already broadcast digital signals as well as analog. What's happening a year from Sunday is they'll switch off the analog signals. No one with cable or satellite service will be affected, nor will anyone who gets stations over the air with a newer TV with a digital tuner.

Those who will be affected are the 13 million or so households that get TV broadcasts exclusively over the air and have a TV more than a few years old -- or even a newer TV that's relatively small. Also affected are TVs not connected to cable, even if a home has cable.

A Nielsen Co. study released Friday found that 16.8 percent of all U.S. households have at least one analog television set that would not work following the switch. And Hispanics are nearly twice as likely as whites to be without TV reception.

Affected households can get a digital converter box, buy a new television or sign up for cable or satellite service or one of the newer cable-like services being offered by phone companies.

A government program said Friday that it will begin sending out coupons Tuesday worth \$40 each to any U.S. household that requests them to subsidize buying a box. Each household is entitled to two coupons for the boxes, which are just coming into stores now, start at \$40 or \$50, making this option easy and practically free. The government says it has funds for 33 million coupons. To get one, go to <http://www.dtv2009.gov>. or call 1-888-DTV-2009 (1-888-388-2009).888-DTV-2009 (1-888-388-2009).

All TVs being made and shipped as of March 1 are required to have digital tuners, which are sometimes called ATSC tuners, after the technical standard used to make them (the analog standard was known as NTSC). Retailers can still sell analog-only TVs from existing inventory as long as they are clearly labeled as such.

If your current TV has the initials "DTV" appear somewhere on its front, or its screen is rectangular, you're probably OK. If you still have the owner's manual, check there whether the tuner is digital.

The new signal could mean the picture on some televisions will improve, but it doesn't guarantee high-definition visuals. That depends on whether a particular TV is set up to receive high-definition programming and whether a program is broadcast that way.

The switch could give an economic boost to retailers and manufacturers, who would benefit from selling the boxes and new TVs. And cable providers could get a boost over the next year or two from consumers who sign up for new service rather than deal with the other options.

According to a report Sanford C. Bernstein & Co. released Friday, an estimated 1.4 million households will likely switch to pay TV service as a result of the digital TV transition -- enough to significantly lift the growth rates for the cable industry in 2009, compared to recent years.

Chris Murray, senior counsel for Consumers Union, says his organization is watching that pay TV operators don't take advantage of confusion over the digital transition to push people into buying cable to view digital TV broadcasts. It isn't necessary.

So far he hasn't seen any abusive behavior, but he said: "We want the folks in the marketplace to know that we're watching."

Brian Dietz, a spokesman for the National Cable & Telecommunications Association, a cable TV industry group, notes that cable's educational ads about the transition don't say consumers have to switch to cable.

For retailers, Bernstein analysts say the economic boost is likely to be incremental. The market for the converter boxes is likely to be about \$1.4 billion, and for new TVs about \$1.7 billion, for a total of \$3.1 billion -- still a relatively tiny part of the \$150 billion U.S. consumer electronics market.

The cost to broadcasters of new digital equipment is relatively small. Tim Thorsteinson, president of the broadcast division of Harris Corp., a major manufacturer of broadcasting equipment, says it costs about \$500,000 to upgrade a typical TV station.

The transition comes at a tough point for local TV stations, however, because they are seeing live viewership erode amid a proliferation of ways to watch video -- over the Internet, on iPods and DVDs.

Mark Aitken, director of advanced technology at Sinclair Broadcast Group Inc., a major broadcaster based near Baltimore, says digital technology gives TV owners several important ways to hold onto viewers, mainly high-definition broadcasts, which can be a lot more pleasant to watch than YouTube videos.

Aitken calls using HDTV broadcasts the "low-hanging fruit" for TV stations to take advantage of. He points to another big possibility: sending live TV broadcasts to portable devices like cell phones. Adapting the handsets would be simple technically; the far bigger issue is getting broadcasters, programmers, mobile device makers to agree on a standard.

Just next week, a preliminary field trial for three competing technologies for portable TV viewing is getting under way in San Francisco, Aitken said. The industry could have a candidate for a new mobile TV standard in place by the third or fourth quarter of this year.

## **1/24/08, The Unavoidable Update**

By ROY FURCHGOTT

The New York Times

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WHILE people like to complain that there is nothing to watch on television, about 21 million American households may find that literally true in February 2009. On the 17th of that month, most TV stations will quit broadcasting analog TV signals over the air, and older sets will go blank.

But remarkably, half of the country does not realize a changeover is coming, according to a survey by the Cable and Telecommunications Association for Marketing.

And despite advertising that proposes cable TV as the remedy for a dark screen, cable viewers with older sets -- 40 million of them, according to the Federal Communications Commission -- will be given a reprieve but not immunity. Three years after the over-the-air change, cable customers with analog sets could see the same blank screen. (By that time, most analog sets would be ancient.) The picture isn't entirely bleak for old sets. There are simple steps consumers with old TVs can take to ensure that "American Idol" is still on their screen next February.

But consumers ready to make the transition may have a hard time learning how to prepare. After seeing ads about the conversion on television, Dale Hazelton, a former creative director at a direct response marketing firm living in New Hampton, N. Y., decided he wanted to keep watching free over-the-air TV. So he replaced his 20-year-old analog TV with a digital L.C.D. screen and bought a rooftop antenna that could receive over-the-air digital signals, all for about \$700.

Mr. Hazelton's antenna pulls in more than twice as many New York metro area stations as he used to get, all of them with a digital picture and 5.1 surround sound. The picture quality? "It's unbelievable," he said.

He had to do his research online, because he found a lot of misinformation in stores. "I went into RadioShack to get the UHF antenna and they said, 'If you buy this, you know it won't work next year.' The guy had no clue. He said, 'When TV goes digital, you have to have cable.' I told them, 'You really need to learn about the stuff you're selling.' "

A RadioShack spokesman, Charles Hodges, said the salesman may have been a new hire who had not received the training on digital TV that is required for all employees.

Drawing the public's attention to the changeover has not been easy. Although government agencies, cable providers and broadcasters have promised to contribute what they say is \$900 million worth of educational advertising, many people stop listening when they hear "DTV." They think it is a sales pitch for premium cable service or for high-definition TV, said a Best Buy spokesman, Brian Lucas. "I think it's the kind of thing that it takes four or five times before people understand it applies to them," he said.

To receive digital signals, a TV must have a digital tuner. Digital tuners were first required in some TVs beginning in 1998, but they weren't required in all TVs until last year. Still, sets with analog-only receivers can still be found in stores.

The first step is figuring out whether your TV has a digital receiver. If you bought your TV before 1998, it is almost certainly not digital. For any TV after that, check the manual under specifications for the tuner. If it says "ATSC," it is digital. If it says "NTSC," it is analog. Some TVs have both.

If you don't have a manual, sometimes "ATSC" or "NTSC" is marked on the back of the TV. Or if your TV has a setup mode that automatically seeks channels, switch it on and see if it asks "analog or digital." If it does, your TV is digital.

If yours is one of the 21 million American households that the Government Accountability Office says has an analog TV, you are not forced to replace it. You could buy a converter box. The government, underwriting the cost of a converter box to let analog TVs play digital broadcasts, is giving out 33.5 million \$40 coupons that would reduce the price of eligible converter boxes, expected to cost \$50 to \$70 after the discount. (Sorry, there are no coupons for TVs.)

The perseverant consumer can download a coupon application at [www.dtv2009.gov](http://www.dtv2009.gov) or call 888-388-2009. The hearing impaired can call 877-530-2634 for English or 866-495-1161 for Spanish. The applications may also be found in some stores and public libraries.

In focus groups, over-the-air TV viewers showed an inclination to wait until the last minute to buy converter boxes, said Todd Sedmak, a spokesman for the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, which is running the coupon program. "This older gent stuck in my mind," Mr. Sedmak said, because he was going to wait until next year. "He said: 'Feb. 16, I am going down to Wally World, I am buying a new TV and a new converter box.' " The converter would allow him to keep using the old TV.

But that gentleman risks a blank box on the 18th, unless he wants to pay full price for the converter. Coupons are limited in number, and they are first-come, first-served, up to two per household.

Also of note to procrastinators: once issued, the coupons expire in 90 days.

The converter boxes are just beginning to show up in stores, although they are still hard to find. The government says they should be available in about 15,000 outlets nationwide, and it has set up a Web site, [www.dtv2009.gov/VendorSearch.aspx](http://www.dtv2009.gov/VendorSearch.aspx), to list those stores. But this week it was unable to find one within 50 miles of San Francisco or Manhattan. What about those 40 million cable TV viewers who have older analog sets? The cable companies have agreed to continue to broadcast the programs required by law in both analog and digital until 2012. The F.C.C. will reassess the agreement in 2011. It can drop the requirement at that time, keep the 2012 deadline or extend it.

There is no consensus on how the industry will handle the changeover, said Brian Dietz, spokesman for the National Cable and Telecommunications Association. People with analog sets will need a new set-top cable box. The question will be whether cable companies give them out, sell them, rent them to users or tell customers to go to a store and find their own. "It's up to the individual carriers," Mr. Dietz said.

Some cable companies are already making the leap to all digital, like Bend Broadband in Bend, Ore. It has committed itself to supply all qualifying customers with a converter, free through 2008. "With the digital conversion we will do, everyone will have a set-top box," said Amy Tykeson, the chief executive of Bend Broadband. The change will free bandwidth for other services, like high-definition channels, phone and faster Internet, she said.

Verizon Fios, a fiber optic service offering pay TV, phone and high-speed Internet, stopped providing analog signals to new customers this month. For existing analog customers, that signal will be phased out. Customers can still use analog TVs with a converter box. Verizon may supply qualifying customers with one free converter and additional converters for \$3.99 a month, although Sharon Cohen-Hagar, a Verizon spokeswoman, said terms of the offer were still being worked out.

Satellite service subscribers fare a bit better. Their systems are already all digital but work with analog TVs. "Our customers made the digital transition 13 years ago," said Robert Mercer, director of public relations for DirecTV. "They are all set."

## **10/12/07, ABC Reshapes the Evening News for the Web**

By BRIAN STELTER  
The New York Times  
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Huddled with a producer in an editing suite on a recent Friday afternoon, the ABC News correspondent Bill Blakemore enthusiastically helped put the finishing touches on a video account of his recent trip to Greenland to see the effects of global warming.

The segment did not look like a normal network news report: It showed Mr. Blakemore riding a sled across Greenland's ice sheet and casually addressing the camera while wearing a black North Face parka and sunglasses.

But Mr. Blakemore's video diary, the first of three documenting his trip, was not being produced for "World News With Charles Gibson" -- rather, it was aimed at the network's afternoon Webcast, which is simply called "World News."

Executives at the broadcast networks know they have opportunities online that they do not have on television -- namely, to take chances by testing new forms of news delivery and new types of storytelling. They are also mindful that making their content relevant online is a good way to attract the younger audiences who are less likely to tune in to the evening news on television.

But ABC is the only major broadcast network that is using the staff of its evening newscast to produce a separate and distinct daily program for a Web audience. The 15-minute Webcast often features Mr. Gibson in the anchor chair, but the similarities end there: the segments can run long, and they purposely look raw and personal, as if they were made for MTV rather than ABC.

Over the course of 20 months, the Webcast has evolved from a basic distillation of the day's news into an original program that incorporates video blogs, first-person essays and interviews. It covers many of the same stories as its television sibling, but often in a different way: in one example, the day after President Bush announced gradual troop cuts in Iraq, Mr. Gibson was shown debriefing the network's chief White House correspondent, Martha Raddatz, in the Webcast for a full 3 minutes and 20 seconds -- an eternity on a half-hour television newscast.

ABC News's main network competitors, CBS and NBC, are for the moment mainly using the Web to repackage their regular nightly news shows. "CBS Evening News With Katie Couric" is streamed live on CBSNews.com at 6:30p.m. NBC takes a different approach, posting the full half-hour "NBC Nightly News With Brian Williams" each night after 10 p.m. rather than live.

But the ABC Webcast is an entirely different animal, sometimes resembling a younger, more technologically advanced version of the traditional 6:30 p.m. report. It is intended in part for people who view Web pages on iPods and cellphones, and ABC executives say they are deliberately aiming to please the 25- to 54-year-olds whom every news organization covets.

Every night there is a good dose of technology and pop culture coverage. For instance, Google puts out a daily list of what it calls "rising searches" -- search terms that are suddenly more popular among Web users. And ABC producers select three to mention on the Webcast, usually in a one-minute segment.

So far ABC has been more focused on editorial experimentation than on garnering advertising dollars. The "World News" Webcast does not have any commercial interruptions, though AT&T and Pfizer have run advertisements just before the podcast version starts.

"It's a real open playing field online," said Brad Adgate, senior vice president for research at the ad-buying agency Horizon Media. ABC's Webcast, he said, has the competitive advantage of its brand name, but it is also "competing with newspapers, radio and Web-based organizations" for ad dollars.

And while "World News" reaches a tiny fraction of the broadcast audience -- 4.5 million views and downloads a month, most of which come in the form of podcasts downloaded automatically by iTunes users -- the network regards it as a first step toward a future that looks increasingly digital and multimedia.

"We knew that we had to, and wanted to, occupy some space online," said Jon Banner, the executive producer of both the broadcast and the Webcast.

The Web product was introduced in January 2006, back when Bob Woodruff and Elizabeth Vargas first became co-anchors of "World News Tonight." After Mr. Woodruff was seriously injured in Iraq, Mr. Gibson was introduced as the anchor, and ABC's attempts to tinker with the "World News" brand were largely discarded -- except for the Webcast.

Unlike the broadcast, the afternoon edition of "World News" can be relatively lenient with time, said Jason Samuels, who, as senior producer on charge of digital content, oversees the Web presence of both the broadcast and the Webcast. "I don't have to count the seconds," he said. "I just try to put in a good show that's around 15 minutes."

Mr. Samuels started overseeing the Webcast in April and said he has tried to push correspondents and producers to escape the package formula that dominates television news. "Do one long stand-up, do much longer sound bites, play an interview," he said, summing up his advice to the staff. "Produce a story in any way you think is engaging -- there are no rules."

Mr. Gibson, who is the oldest of the three network anchors, is the host of the Web newscast two or three days a week, and other hosts fill in when he is on assignment. He calls the Webcast his "toe in the water" in the digital media space.



"What I'm hoping is that the digital end of ABC News will begin to produce enough revenue to devolve to the benefit of 'World News,'" he said.

For now, all the networks say their online news programming is at a nascent stage. NBC said elements of "Nightly News" are streamed on MSNBC.com 10 million times each month. CBS, whose "Evening News" is mired in third place in the broadcast ratings race, would not release traffic figures.

Meanwhile, correspondents like Mr. Blakemore say they appreciate the Web because it presents another outlet for their work. Dan Harris, the anchor of "World News Sunday" who regularly substitutes for Mr. Gibson, said the Webcast was his favorite show to anchor.

"I feel less pressure to wear a tie, sit up straight, and make sure everything I say is perfectly enunciated," Mr. Harris said. "I have an opportunity to be much closer to who I actually am, instead of the TV version of myself."

## **2/11/08, CNN Launches iReport.com**

By MIKE SHIELDS  
Mediaweek.com  
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Since CNN embraced the citizen journalist movement back in August 2006 with the launch of its iReport initiative, the news organization has received nearly 100,000 news-related photos and videos from viewers, including nearly 10,000 this past January alone. Yet less than 10 percent of those submissions have appeared on CNN.com or the cable channel.

That's all about to change. Time Warner's CNN this week will enter YouTube territory with the launch of iReport.com, a new Web site built entirely on user-produced news. And unlike CNN's own properties—where only iReport submissions that have been handpicked by editors and checked for accuracy ever make it online or on air—the new site will be wide open, allowing users to post whatever content they choose, CNN said.

The new site looks and feels much like YouTube and other video-centric destinations. Wannabe Anderson Coopers can upload videos, photos and audio files through an easy-to-use interface. Visitors to the site can search for specific clips or sift through various news categories, such as politics or weather. Users also can rate and share clips, and even embed them on personal Web sites.

CNN executives acknowledge that iReport.com's openness is something of a departure for a news organization that prides itself on accuracy and editorial judgment. But iReports have become increasingly popular, and in many cases have even proved beneficial in the reporting of breaking news. Some of the most compelling footage from last April's shootings on the Virginia Tech campus came from the 420 user-gen video clips CNN received, while last year's California wildfires yielded more than 11,000 submissions.

So, a user-gen site is the logical next step, said Jim Walton, president of CNN Worldwide. "It starts with the audience," he said. "Audiences are more and more comfortable participating in news. It's a natural extension for us."

Walton acknowledged that he and others at the news net don't quite know how iReport will evolve once users warm up to the site. But CNN officials are banking on the Web's community aspects to boost the venture, as well as to determine which content belongs and which doesn't.

"The community will decide what the news is," said Susan Grant, executive vp of CNN News Services. "We are not going to discourage or encourage anything—iReport will be completely unvetted." (CNN will, however, monitor the site for objectionable content.)

Grant explained that iReport content will be clearly labeled as not necessarily reflecting the editorial views of CNN. "We'll be telling people in lots of different ways that it's a post-moderated site," she said.

To encourage participation, the network has begun reaching out to frequent iReport contributors such as Rick Ebrecht, a Savannah, Ga., resident whose clips of violent storms and a recent Space Shuttle launch ran on CNN.

Regulars like Ebrecht—who estimates that he's submitted seven or eight photos to CNN, with roughly five or six making the cut—will be able use iReport.com to establish profiles and possibly develop a following among other users. "It's great that people can submit whatever they want," he said. "It engages them."

Still, Ebrecht wondered about the site's lack of policing. "The first thing that came to mind is ethics and credibility," he said. "People have to not take things at face value. People [on the site] will have to keep an eye on each other."

Advertisers, too, are likely to keep a close eye the site, although Grant downplayed the importance of monetizing the site at the outset. "We're going to start very, very small," she said.

Initially, that means just a single display ad on the site's home page, and no pre-roll video ads.

"I don't know if we're ever going to have them," she added.

That's likely to change if media buyers have their way, said Craig Woerz, managing partner at Media Storm. Woerz had not yet seen iReport.com but liked the idea of tapping into user-gen news so long as controls were in place.

"We love it," he said. "That's exactly the kind of things our advertisers are looking for. What we like about citizen journalism is that it's emotional and real."

Woerz applauded CNN's willingness to experiment. "They have to [try things like this]," he said. "Ratings are challenged right now. News organizations can't count on elections every day or a bridge collapsing. They need to keep innovating."

Grant agreed. "We like being first," she said. "This is an opportunity to create a relationship with a global audience."

## 2/10/08, CBSSports.com Changes March Madness Game Plan: All Games Through Final Four, No Blackouts; Facebook

By STACI D. KRAMER

Paidcontent.org

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In a switch from its previous policy, CBS Sports.com and NCAA.com will show all 63 of the NCAA Division I Men's Basketball Championship games from the March 20th kickoff through the Final Four on its ad-supported March Madness On Demand -- no blackouts. (That doesn't include the play-in game.)

Until now, the network has protected its affiliates by maintaining roughly the same blackout rules online as it has on air and in its DirectTV out-of-market package, essentially keeping the "local" games TV only. It also has stopped coverage after the first 56 games. Both decisions were meant to protect the TV franchise.



The changes show some growth in the thinking of CBS Sports, the NCAA and the affiliates, aided by the success of previous years and some proof that most people who have a choice between watching March Madness on TV versus a computer will pick the former. (Then there are those of us who use a combination to watch multiple games at once.)

Jason Kint, SVP and GM of CBSSports.com told me: "It's an across-the-board decision by all the partners that this is additive—not cannibalistic." Kint said affiliates were part of the discussions. "I think they appreciate that the main consumers watching MMOD are doing it at work." MMOD 2007 streamed 2,598,889 total hours live to 1,381,875 total unique users; for perspective, 132.7 million viewers tuned in at some point for the televised 2007 tournament.

Upgrade—but no HD: As for the actual experience, Kint says it should be better than last year. The revamped media player (pictured above) is wider (16:9 aspect ratio with 640 X 360 pixels) but still no high definition: "If you had to judge where our focus is right now, it's on broader distribution. That's priority over getting a small group of users HD quality." The scale has been increased "dramatically" and the technology for the waiting room has been upgraded. As has been the case since MMOD switched from subscription to free in 2006, pre-registered VIPs will have preference for wait times; unregistered users go in a general admission queue.

Advertising: The presenting sponsors are Coca-Cola, Pontiac and AT&T. All three are advertising on the broadcast side but the online sponsorships are standalone. Some ads will be the same as those on TV; some are online only. When I asked about providing some local avails, Kint said the technology exists but there's so much interest from national advertisers, that it hasn't been an issue. He declined to say whether there is revenue sharing with the affiliates.

Facebook: Last year's nifty YouTube deal—an official NCAA channel with highlights and more—was hampered by the inability to embed videos, keeping it from ever becoming truly viral. No word yet on whether that will change this year but Kint, who arrived after MMOD 2007, acknowledged the issue: "We're doing this stuff, like everyone else, as rapidly as we can." In fitting with the CBS Interactive emphasis on audience, Kint says "pieces of content from March

Madness” will be distributed “as widely as we can. ... We understand and everything we’re trying to do with the company is embrace disaggregation ... We get that, we’re pushing as hard as we can across all fronts. At the same time, we have to manage our partnerships.”

But a new deal with Facebook for the official bracket game (\$10,000 prize) is the cornerstone of this year’s social media effort: “We want to have the largest bracket game on the web.” (No details about the finances of this deal, either.) Last year, without an official deal, Facebook’s various bracket games drew more than 2.6 million users. This official version will be integrated with content, including links to live games. What does CBSSports.com hope to get from Facebook? Kint: “Incremental audience and exposure, especially to users who and breath in Facebook all day.” It also will be available via CBS Sports Mobile.

## **2/7/2008, Online TV a Hit With Viewers**

Report by eMarketer.com  
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Forget about prime time, Americans are watching their favorite TV shows online when and how they want, according to the "Digital Life America" survey of 1,150 Americans ages 12+ conducted by Solutions Research Group.

More than 80 million American Internet users have watched a television show online, representing 43% of the total online population. This is a sharp increase from just one year ago, when only 25% were watching online.

In addition, 20% of Internet users polled are watching shows online on a weekly basis. Time shifting strongly correlated with age. Overall, 25% of respondents had time-shifted a prime time show using either a DVR, broadband, mobile or some other device. Among 18-to-34-year-olds, that percentage rose to 34%.

As these trends continue and more content becomes available online, television scheduling may be a thing of the past.

## 3/17/2007, Brand Aid

By WILLIAM POWERS

National Journal

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**E**veryone is getting into branding! According to “The State of the News Media 2007,” this year’s installment of the massive report by the Project for Excellence in Journalism,

the media have a new strategy to stay solvent. Faced with declining audience numbers and ad revenues, they are chopping up the mass market into smaller niches and creating brands for each taste.

“Increasingly, outlets are looking for ‘brand’ or ‘franchise’ areas of coverage to build audience around,” the report says.

Niche branding is not a new idea. Other industries were onto this long ago. This is why the supermarket doesn’t stock just one kind of breakfast cereal. Whether you’re a Cap’n Crunch person or an Organic Frosted Bite-Size Mini-Wheats person, there’s a brand for you.

The media were decades late in catching on, but now they’re branding with a vengeance. Media brands are refreshingly different from other types of brands. Unlike, say, dental floss, where the mind-boggling choices range from “mint satin” to “clean-burst cinnamon,” media brands have easy-to-understand names, such as “Anderson Cooper” and “Keith Olbermann.” And rather than appeal to the taste buds, these brands are engineered to please the *opinion buds* of specific kinds of people.

**For instance,** do you ever find yourself lying awake at night thinking obsessively about the phrase “border-security crisis”? Then CNN has a brand for you! It’s called “Lou Dobbs,” and it’s a wonderfully consistent product—night after night, always the same. With a great brand, you know exactly what you’re getting, no surprises.

In spotting this trend, the authoritative PEJ report is clearly onto something. Lately, every week seems to bring the launch of some new media brand. *Time* magazine has just unveiled a whole new look, which *The New York Times* this week described as “a cleaner, simpler design, heavy on labels at the top of each page and the names of its columnists in World War II-size type—the better to brand with.”

Other than its own venerable, red-bordered brand, what brands is *Time* brandishing? I see they are shipping “Walter Isaacson,” “Michael Kinsley,” “Bill Kristol,” and “Niall Ferguson.” Now, these brands are all very familiar, which can be an asset or a liability depending on how the market responds to another rollout of such classic models. “Niall Ferguson,” in particular, may be running up against “brand fatigue,” which

By William Powers

is what happens when a brand is so ubiquitous that consumers start thinking of it as a burden or an affliction.

Brand confusion is another danger. This occurs when a well-established brand tries to fundamentally change its identity. Remember when Coke created New Coke and threw the whole planet into turmoil and chaos? That can happen to any brand, if the brand managers are not very careful.

**The latest poster child** for brand confusion is Katie Couric. What a wonderful brand Katie used to be, as beguiling as the mermaid of the Starbucks logo—but instead of a fishtail, two lovely legs. The legs were integral to the brand, and so was the smile, the laugh, the hair, the way she bonded with the simple folk who gather each morning on

Rockefeller Plaza to pay homage to their favorite morning-show brand. In the land of the brand called Katie, every day was a lark.

Then CBS purchased the brand and gave it a makeover. The rebranding of Katie Couric was all wrong from the start. You don’t take a fun, popular brand and make it all serious and sedate. Katie is a Mini Cooper, not a Lexus. This is Branding 101.

Now CBS has brought in veteran producer Rick Kaplan, winner of countless Emmy awards, to revive Katie’s brand. If he can’t do it, nobody can. It’s not too late, either. According to a

survey conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, the most admired journalist in America is—Katie Couric, followed by Bill O’Reilly and Charlie Gibson.

How, you may ask, can the most admired journalist be losing in the ratings? Easy: When people hear “Katie Couric” they think of the old brand—good. When they tune in the show, they see the new one—bad. Live by the brand, die by the brand. ■

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# 1/28/2008, Why the Internet is not today's CNN

By SCOTT BRADNER

Network World

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## Why the Internet is not today's CNN



**NET INSIDER**  
Scott Bradner

**T**ed Turner founded the Cable News Network in 1980. It took a few years, but CNN became a major source of news for most of the United States. According to the latest Pew Research survey, 38% of the U.S. public turns to

CNN and its cable competitors for news about the current presidential campaign. That is essentially the same percent as turn to their local TV news, somewhat ahead of the percent that get their news from the nightly network news or from newspapers, and about 30% more than those who admit to getting campaign news from the Internet.

The Internet is growing in importance (up from 9% in 2000 to 24% a month ago), but is still not a dominant player. However, it still may be a dominant effecter.

The Pew survey makes for interesting reading, and contains lots of charts detailing its findings. Perhaps the most telling is the one showing the generational divide over news sources. The relative importance of the Internet and local news shows as information sources is almost reversed when you compare the over-50 population (50% local news and 15% Internet) with the 18-to-29 population

(25% local news and 42% Internet).

A lot of news is only "covered," if that is the right concept, by Internet-based blogs. For example, effectively no major print or TV news show is reporting in any detail on the vote recount going on in New Hampshire while there are a number of blogs publishing the up-to-the-minute results. But this example illustrates a basic bias and competence problem with Internet news that is likely much worse than that with most major news organizations or newspapers.

Allegations of bias are leveled against CNN and its major competitors all the time, and, from what I've seen, for quite good reasons. But the worst of these allegations are milk toast when compared with the vitriol and

speculation in some blogs. The New Hampshire reports in the blogs are, at best, varying in their degree of believability. Too many border on supermarket tabloid quality.

At least most viewers of network news or talk shows or readers of newspapers have enough of a history with particular hosts or news editors to correct for their often obvious biases. That is not as easy to do with some blogs that appear to be well written but for which there is no way to know the background, biases or basic competence of the writer.

If the trend shown in the Pew report continues (for example, more than doubling the percent of people getting political news from the Internet in the last four years) we will soon have a generation of potential voters that get their news from an environment where no one can tell that you are a rabid dog when you write about a candidate as long as you use proper diction. That does not make me feel better about the future.

Disclaimer: I expect some folk at Harvard worried about the impact of anonymous pamphleteering during the Revolutionary War; maybe the above is more of the same. In any case, the above is mine, not Harvard's, expression of worry.

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