

Five Future Trends in the Marketing of Television

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A surefire way to grab attention and attract clicks right now has been to write headlines and soundbites about the demise of television as we know it. Apple CEO Tim Cook [stated](#) that "the future of TV is apps." Netflix chairman and CEO Reed Hastings confidently [predicted](#) that cable networks will die for good and all TV will be on the Internet.

Dissenters from that narrative are led by essayist and journalist Michael Wolff. Far from being trampled by digital challengers, TV has become one of the fastest-growing business sectors, where consumers and advertisers are prepared to pay for "the influential, the prestigious, the culturally significant, a business and medium of value, need, originality, and exclusivity," writes Wolff in his book "[Television is the New Television](#)."

As co-author Charlie Mawer and I discuss in our book "[The TV Brand Builders: How to win audiences and influence viewers](#)," marketing has played a big part in creating this value.

So, what do the next few years hold for the people at the sharp end of television marketing, people responsible for the brand strategies, design, promotion, and advertising of TV brands and the new disruptive online entertainment services? What are the key future trends?

Our book research included interviews with 50 of the world's best practitioners from some of the major players, such as HBO, Fox, BBC, CANAL+, Vice Media, and Hulu.

We identified five of most important themes.

1. Producer brands will assert themselves

In an increasingly global entertainment industry, there's a danger that the people who make the bold decisions to commission new shows end up with no credit (or at best confusion) in the eyes of TV viewers. For example, is "Peaky Blinders" an award-winning original drama from the respected UK broadcaster, the BBC, or a "Netflix Original" (as it was promoted in the US)?

To counter that, originators will need to maintain their brand association with the content they commission. For example, when Sky launched a new channel, Sky Atlantic, it was [positioned](#) to the UK audience as "the home of HBO." That's the power of a strong producer brand.

2. The importance of TV master brands will grow

Broadcasters are going to find it more difficult to maintain portfolios of many different individual sub-brands. FX in the US and Channel 4 in the UK are examples of networks that have channels and services targeted at different audiences under the banner of an overarching proposition. For FX, it is "fearless" and for Channel 4, it's "born risky." In both cases, the propositions are intended to work across the whole brand portfolio.

Now, saying your master brand is "fearless" or "born risky" means that you have to prove it by taking risks with your marketing. Channel 4, in particular, has proved that in recent years with its brand communications. For example, one of its most recent campaigns assembled samples of some of its most controversial and challenging programming as [evidence](#) that Channel 4 is "True Colour TV."

3. On-demand brands will develop their personalities

The growth of online streaming is changing the TV landscape and the new on-demand brands are exploring new creative territory. In the early years, most on-demand services have all looked and felt like generic aggregators, but Netflix and Hulu are good examples of brands that work hard to differentiate themselves.

A couple of years ago, Netflix launched a campaign based on the line "Watch Responsibly." Then, last year, Netflix took this a step further and encouraged viewers to "[Binge Responsibly](#)." If you watched more than two episodes back to back, stars from some of Netflix's leading shows, like Michael Kelly from "House of Cards," appeared, encouraging people to go outside, take a break, or eat. That was really smart thinking from Netflix. It demonstrated that it understands the role Netflix has come to play in popular culture.

We talked to the marketers at rival on-demand service Hulu, and it also recognized that success in this market isn't just about winning the arms race to the best library of content. Hulu recently [launched](#) a campaign with the line "Come TV With Us" to show that Hulu loves TV as much as its subscribers do.

Faced with new competition like this, broadcasters with on-demand services need to be thinking about developing brand personalities that work consistently across all platforms and all devices.

4. Personalization will transform the relationship between a TV brand and its audience

TV service providers also are applying the increasingly rich amount of data they are collecting to deliver content recommendations their consumers will value.

A total of 50% of consumers are unable to find anything to watch on their linear TV service at least once a day, and one in four TV/video consumers are open to providing personal data to get more accurate recommendations, according to [according to](#) Ericsson's ConsumerLab.

Personal data in this context means online and in-service behavioral tracking, actively providing

data and volunteering information when opting in to the service. We believe the brands and service providers that will achieve the most success in this area will be those that establish a genuine two-way dialog based on mutual value and respect.

5. We'll still call it TV

The final point is drawn from a recent conference panel session called "Why Do We Still Call It Television?" Illustrious future media gurus from Swisscom TV, Sky Italy, and Telefónica debated the near-term impact of such things as content in the cloud, predictive search, content discovery, and user experience but concluded that "TV" is still how we'll describe video content across multiple formats, platforms, and devices. That brings us back to Michael Wolff's book and his assertion that TV remains "a business and medium of value."

TV marketers will continue to play a big role in creating that value by bringing big audiences to hit shows and building distinctive and powerful TV brands.

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