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How Viewing Live TV Will Change By the Year 2035

Everyday millions of Americans sit down to spend their evenings receiving relevant news and popular culture through a rectangular screen and associated technology that was predicted to fail at its genesis. Yet for nearly 90 years, the television has delivered information in a format quicker and easier to understand for aural and visual learners than the written word, revolutionizing and expediting the availability of information.

When, in 1928, the first live TV broadcast was executed by General Electric, its audience was small, consisting only of those who were able to construct their own television sets from a kit, which were over $1000 (when adjusted to current inflation) and boasted just a 3-inch screen. The hallmark of these early sets was the Nipkow disk, a circular device with holes spiraling toward its center. It created images through its ability to distinguish light and dark areas of a projected picture (Wild). Reviews of this broadcast by viewers described clear audio (likely due to the much earlier development of the radio component) but poor video quality, catching just "glimpses of faces" (Wild).

This electro-mechanical model was replaced in 1935 by cathode ray tube televisions, which were all-electric, the mode through which the 1936 Berlin Olympics were broadcasted (Wild). During WWII, development of television and receivers was delayed, but still yielded iconic small screens set in large wooden cabinetry that constituted the television set during the 1930's and early 40's (Timeline of Television History).

Post-WWII, television sets were made more compact, and screens became slightly larger (Timeline of Television History). CBS created the first all-electric color broadcast in the 1940's, which made its debut June 25, 1951. Following on its trails were CBS-developed color television sets, and converters to modernize black-and-white sets, sometimes homemade instead of purchased (Early Color Television). Analog televisions remained a staple of the American household until the turn of the century approached.

In June 2009, the Digital Television Transition, mandated by Congress, made digital television the viewing standard. From 1996 until this date, broadcasts continued in both digital and analog formats to accommodate both revolutionary and popular receivers. The new digital format provided for increased clarity in audio and video, and is the standard by which many televisions operate today.

But what is the fate of television transmission and viewing? Already, transmission has transcended the traditional television screen to include mobile media players like smartphones and laptops, especially with the advent of Netflix. According to its site, it has "over 69 million members in over 60 countries enjoying more than 100 million hours of TV shows and movies per day" (Netflix). Furthermore, the online broadcasting platform is home to, among many other collections of videos, Ted Talks, a popular series of informative discussions and speeches delivered by influential figures. Neither of these avenues provide live broadcast; however, this is where possibilities lie for the future of television within the coming two decades.

With the creation of Facebook, social networking, and smartphone apps, societal priorities have shifted towards the real-time interaction between individuals from the comfort of one's home via an online connection, sometimes from great distances. What can this mean for educational enrichment like Ted Talks? The future of television is interpersonal interaction in real-time—the viewer will directly engage with the live media from their electronic device, either by voice or by written word. He or she will be able to ask questions, express opinions, and feel as if they are part of a live audience by their near-immersion in the event. A viewer will submit an audio or text file to a "dropbox" online, screening software will sort irrelevant submissions, and they will appear for the selection of the speaker, who will engage in conversation with the viewers. This technology would not be limited to educational media, however—imagine, for a moment, how this could revolutionize presidential campaigns, which would capture the accurate concerns of the American people to make for an informed election; or in a live comedy show, during which comedians and the public can initiate impromptu collaboration to make for rousing entertainment. The live television of 2035 will foster cohesion, participation, and belonging within channels or genres, creating communities founded on common interest similar to the rising popularity and capabilities of social media.

Sources:

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