



Teenagers Turn Off TV in Favour of Facebook

Tech-savvy teenagers now list using social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter as their number one pastime, overtaking watching television, according to a new report.

Gone are the days when your hormone-charged teenager is a permanent fixture on your sofa, hogging the remote control and abandoning homework in favour of late-night mindless TV. The behaviour of the teenager has evolved. Tech-savvy teens are now more likely to be glued to their smart phone or hijacking the family tablet.

Sixty-five per cent of the 16–24-year-olds, who were polled for the survey, listed talking to their friends via Facebook and Twitter as their top leisure activity. A third of the group spend more than three hours networking online at a time. Should we be worried about this? TV companies certainly are.

TV companies are aware of this growing trend and are working on a number of strategies to try and engage younger people in television programmes whilst staying online. The Million Pound Drop is one such example. In the prime Friday evening slot, the programme's makers are desperate to attract younger viewers and they are channelling teenagers' love of social media to do so. For instance, the successful online game version of The Million Pound Drop has generated 11 million plays since launching in 2010 and has successfully engaged those viewers surfing the web instead of watching TV. People are encouraged to play along online while viewing the programme.

This changing social trend is also reflected in the younger teenage demographic. A report by OFCOM has revealed that 12–15-year-olds on average spend 17 hours a week on the internet, matching TV viewing for the first time, and that potentially well over a third of 3–4-year-olds use the internet for TV and games. Indeed more than 40% of 5–15-year-olds who have Internet access have a social networking profile, rising to 80% among 12–15-year-olds. Is this where the problem lies? Are our teenagers abandoning traditional TV watching to chat to strangers?

The average 12–15-year-old has never met one in four of their "friends" on social networks websites such as Facebook, according to new research, and that is an average of 72 strangers per child. Almost 80% of parents claim that they have rules about their children's Internet usage, although less than half have parental controls installed on their home computers.