

Video's evolution: Linear decline makes way for livestreaming

Article

Video's near-future trends are taking shape—as [digital pay TV](#) loses its momentum, [livestreaming](#) ecommerce is gaining traction.

"We're already starting to see the ramifications of the slowdown for digital pay TV and the fact that it is not going to probably end up being a replacement for TV," our analyst Ethan Cramer-Flood said on [a recent episode](#) of "Behind the Numbers." He sees the slipping digital

pay TV numbers adding to the overall decline of [linear TV](#). "My prediction is that within five years, linear TV is basically going to be a niche medium."

Here's how our analysts see the changing landscape of video and the medium's role in the future of [ecommerce](#).

Tuning out digital pay TV

In 2020, linear TV accounted for 72.2% of the total time US viewers spent watching video on TV screens, according to our forecast.

- In 2024, linear TV only made up only 56.5%.
- Meanwhile, digital pay TV services like [YouTube TV](#) and Hulu + Live TV will reach 14.1% of the population this year, but see only 5.5% growth, per our October 2024 forecast.

"The digital pay TV phenomenon that was explosively successful for a few years there is starting to peter out. It's really expensive," said Cramer-Flood. "People aren't gravitating towards it as fast as would be necessary to rescue the traditional linear TV industry. And as of 2025, we have now fully and completely reached the point where the majority of America does not have pay TV."

As streaming services fill the TV-watching gap, they're also getting more expensive.

- Streaming video subscriptions rose 12.6% in 2024, while the consumer price index only rose 3.6%, according to an EMARKETER analysis.

"[Consumers are] going to be the ones suffering the most," our analyst Oscar Orozco said in the episode. "There's just less options."

Turning on shopping streams

Consumers' video-watching habits are moving away from more traditional forms of TV. Meanwhile, shopping via livestream is on the rise.

- 49.0 million US consumers will make at least one purchase during a livestreaming session this year, a growth of almost 20% (19.3%), per our October 2024 forecast.

"Tell me the last buying or ecommerce behavior activity that has not only seen this growth that we've been seeing [in livestream shopping] the last few years, but that will continue on

into the future," Orozco said. "I think a lot of this is not just the [Gen Zers](#), but we're starting to think a little bit more about [Gen Alpha](#) as well."

Digital livestreaming has become a massive part of Chinese media usage, as 59.0% of China's population will watch livestreams at least once a month this year, per our October 2024 forecast.

"in China, [livestreaming ecommerce has] succeeded tremendously because they made it entertaining," said Cramer-Flood. "People will sit there and they will watch a commercial for hours."

Listen to the [full episode here](#).

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