

# Social Media Kweens: *Broad City* and Social Media as Content in a Multiplatform Flow Model

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Time-shifting practices have come to increasingly disrupt the industrial logics of flow that have historically defined the legacy television industries in our current moment with the growth of streaming-video-on-demand services, digital video recording and piracy. One way the legacy TV industries have responded to the disruption of digital distribution is connected viewing initiatives, by which I mean the strategic use of social media by television producers to encourage audience engagement with secondary devices while watching a TV show in order to motivate viewers to watch television during the initial on-air broadcast. As social media production takes a more central role within the television industries I will argue that its recuperation of televisual flow makes it a significant part of a television program's content. Using *Broad City* and its official social media production as an example, we must redefine what we consider to be the central text or content of a television show and amend this to include social media content. *Broad City* has accounts on most social media networking sites, however, I want to focus on the use of Twitter to live tweet episodes as they air live on Comedy Central. follows a live tweeting trend within the television industry wherein showrunners, stars and program specific social media accounts promote and engage in hosting live Twitter conversations during a television program's original linear broadcast. Central, between 10 – 10:30 at night, the Twitter account will have between 25 – 30 or more tweets. These tweets work to draw viewers' attention to the episode and promote secondary device use during broadcast by revealing information about moments on the show as they, for instance, the name of a musician as a song plays, or the name of an actor guest starring as they appear, as well as responses and questions about something that just happened, often including prepped GIFs with material from the night's episode.

In many ways, we can look at *Broad City's* social media content as an example of how the television industry considers it to be an extension of programming content. This is evident in the way that *Broad City's* producers have placed hashtags in the bottom left corner of the screen during linear broadcasts on Comedy Central encourage audience members to go onto their social media accounts and engage with *Broad City* as it airs. In this sense, the show's social media content is intended to be experienced as a part of viewing *Broad City* episodes and its social media content functions as an extension of the program material. This is a function reflected by Comedy Central and Viacom's movement towards using "big data" to calculate program ratings by scraping social media platforms for mentions of *Broad City* and quantifying social media data and the meta data that accompanies users social media profiles as a commodity

audience that can be sold to advertisers as evidence of an engaged and loyal viewership. Thus, this case demonstrates how social media participation is being redefined as television viewership within the TV industry, and this redefines the social media content that viewers connect with on social networks as television content within the new digital environment that is reshaping how programming is designed, produced and funded.

Therefore, I see *Broad City's* social media content functioning as multiplatform flow, and doing the work to recuperate contemporary disruptions of the traditional understandings of flow and the way it encourages viewers to continue to watch programming and the advertisements that accompany them. The fact that Twitter and other social media companies are rolling out products for advertising clients that syncs up advertisements during broadcasts with social media advertisements in audience feeds reaffirms that, while multiplatform flow is not the defining characteristic of television in our current post-network and fragmented digital era, it is a significant one that demonstrates how historical practices shape how contemporary technologies are deployed in the television industries.