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CrossMates, a new digital format that allows consumers to communicate with their favourite TV show heroes

At egta's recent Digital Next meeting, Applicaster showed a new, innovative concept called CrossMates, which allows consumers to connect directly with the heroes of TV shows themselves.

The concept

As consumers increasingly move away from a passive, lean-back experience when watching TV shows and become more involved, either through apps or social media, broadcasters are looking for new ways to keep consumer engagement high. CrossMates is a digital format that allows broadcasters to cater to these increasingly sophisticated TV consumers by **offering viewers direct and personal communication with their favourite TV hero via a mobile device**. It not only allows consumers to become closer to their preferred shows, it also opens up new possibilities in terms of sponsorship and advertising, offering new revenue sources for broadcasters and their sales houses.

applicaster

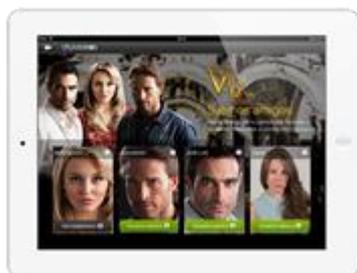
 Watch the video

How does it work?

Through a broadcaster's dedicated TV app, **each viewer selects a character from the show to connect and socialise with**. In line with the plot, **viewers receive communications from these characters straight to their mobile devices**. These personalised messages can either be texts, photos, voicemails and even videos that provide new information and gossip, not only during the show but also when off the air, thereby creating pre- and post-airtime hype around the show.

The hype is also heightened by the fact that the viewer can only follow one character, so each receives different parts of the story and are therefore pushed to share the information with colleagues, family and friends in order to get the full picture.

In addition to the messages received from characters, viewers also receive commercial offers as well as personal messages from the characters. Shows can **integrate sponsored products** into the conversation with viewers and send coupon codes. An example of this is the partnership between Univision (the leading media company serving Hispanic America) and Toyota during the telenovela *Lo Que La Vida Me Robo*.



The response

The solution has already been deployed by international commercial broadcasters in the US, LATAM and Europe, including Univision and Televisa, with additional projects in advanced stages. The success of the service has been measured by usage metrics, app downloads and social metrics. However, due to customer confidentiality, online subscriber numbers cannot be shared. That said, one of Applicaster's customers confirmed that their TV programme has gained **8 times more followers on Twitter, 5 times more followers on Facebook, and that the TV app was downloaded over 1 million times in less than 3 months**.

Why does it matter to egta members?

In the new technological environment, consumers have become multi-screeners, and broadcasters must cater to this new feature. The viewer is no longer passive but rather an active participant who is engaged with the content, not only at show time but also potentially throughout the entire week.

When it comes to multiscreening, one of broadcaster's priorities is to remain in control of the experience and resulting revenue stream. The CrossMates platform, by keeping viewers' attention focused on what it is happening on the main screen, does not jeopardise first screen advertising revenues but instead magnifies it.

By adding social, interactive and commercial layers to the TV experience, whether scripted shows or reality TV, CrossMates brings audiences, broadcasters, and brands closer together.



What they said

We asked Applicaster and Univision Communications for their comments on this initiative:



"Broadcasters continuously seek new ways to cater to the growing sophisticated video consumers and second screen audience. However, this should not come at the expense of main screen advertising revenues, but rather magnify it; adding social, interactive, and commercial layers to the TV experience creates a new synergy broadcasters want to leverage."

— Jonathan Laor, CEO, Applicaster



"These added features are the result of our understanding that viewers today want deeper engagement with favorite stars and programs, whether on linear TV or our digital properties. These features reflect our commitment to offer compelling and unique experiences for our audiences that bring them closer to our talent, content and marketing partners."

— Kevin Conroy, president, Digital and Enterprise Development, Univision Communications, Inc.



Background information

Please click on the links below to access the relevant documents:

» **Applicaster website** (please click here)

» **Presentation by Applicaster** from DigitalNext (for egta members only - you need to be logged in to access the file) (please click here)