

Key Issues in the Arts and Entertainment Industry

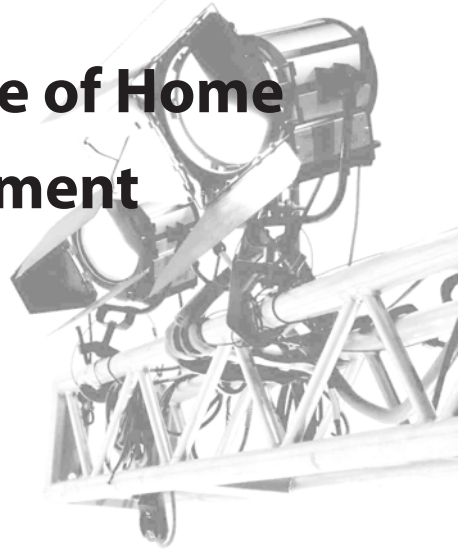
Edited by Ben Walmsley

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The Future of Home Entertainment



James Roberts

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to explore the current scope and character of home entertainment in its many electronic forms (including television, video games and music) focusing particularly on the changing nature of consumer interaction with it. Through an examination of the various forces that have driven its development, the chapter will look at the more significant aspects of its evolution in the decade since 2000 and make some informed judgements about how it might develop in the next.

The term 'home entertainment' has covered a vast range of activities during its long history. The first well-documented evidence of people spending significant time and resources on entertaining themselves at home emerge from Sumerian, Roman and Greek texts. As Juvenal notes, it seemed that all Romans were interested in was 'bread and circuses', and from a relatively early time, wealthier ones saw the opportunity to have both at home, hosting their own dinner parties and banquets. Along with dinner could be music, singing, and dancing by professionals. Such group activities might also be accompanied by more solitary pursuits such as reading, and individuals making their own entertainment through playing musical instruments or reciting poetry.

Even from these earliest times, we see evidence of the impact of three fundamental drivers on the amount and types of home entertainment prevalent in a society. Broadly these can be categorised as follows:

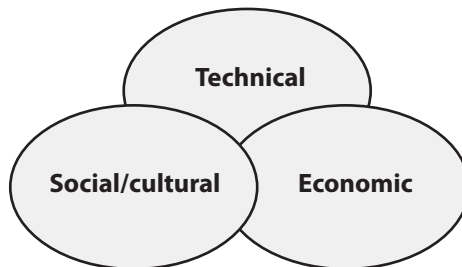
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- ◆ **Social/cultural:** the availability of free time; prevailing views of the social importance of home entertainment and cultural views on what that entertainment might constitute; views of appropriate behaviour and how entertainment is used in a social context.
- ◆ **Economic:** the availability of disposable income, the emergence of providers of home entertainment content or equipment and the business models to support their activities; the emergence of appropriate methods to distribute and consume entertainment.
- ◆ **Technical:** the range of products and services enabled by the existing technological infrastructure.

Each of these forces will interact with the others, hence social and cultural issues interact with economic ones around issues such as censorship, copyright control and the protection of perceived cultural integrity within a country through devices like quotas.

Throughout the history of home entertainment these forces have been at work to create the context for the growth and emergence of dominant forms of home entertainment. Figure 8.1 indicates the confluence of events and developments that led to the emergence of printing as a major manufacturing activity in the 1600s, and the subsequent development of reading as a major form of entertainment in the home.

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- Developments in press design
 - Developments in typesetting, e.g. movable type printing
 - Mechanisation of paper making (water-powered paper mills)
 - Developments in oil based inks



- Rapid economic and social-cultural development in late medieval Europe
- Rise in adult literacy (particularly in the middle classes) throughout Europe
- Increasing disposable income and time among middle classes
- Declining costs for book production
- Huge increase in numbers of print houses during the 1600s
- Ability of authors to produce many copies of their books as source of income
- Launch of early newspapers (e.g. *Relation*) as well as books in codex form
- Launch of early copyright laws

Figure 8.1: Early enablers of the growth of reading as a form of home entertainment

Chapter extract

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