# What google and Microsoft know about multi-screen experience

Recently, checking google new tool databoard I found a google research about multi-screen experience, I few month before I was reading a similar whitepaper carried out by Microsoft. This aimed to write about common points and divergences between this both great and tremendously helpful research from these two major companies.

***How is media used in daily life**? which are the **common patterns**? What are the **motivations hidden behind every behaviour**? **how can engage** to our consumers **in this crossing-scenarios**?*


These are just some of the many question that are answered through these whitepapers. **Keep reading and find out what you should know about multi-screening**.

Although both papers are not so new -Google's research is from 2012 and Microsoft's from first quarter of this year- just in case you missed it -like I did!- here's my insights about this two whitepapers full of powerful insights about media consume these days around multi-screen behaviour. I must say Microsoft approach definitively is my favourite, you'll see why next.

First of all, when they talk about multi-screen experience, refer to the same: when consumers are using more than one screen at a time, either sequentially, simultaneously or separately.  This form of media consume, both agree, is increasingly becoming the default mode of content consuming and is deeply affecting the way users engage. That's why even you are and advertising trying to engage your customer or a company trying to deliver a  great user experience this insights are for you.

## 10 Major insights from both research:

1. Both agree simply the **media consume are radically changed**. Users are more in control of their content grasping. Consumers are using multi-screening in a way that can satisfy that control desire, either for amplify experiences, share, connect with others, do multitasking or simply get things done.
2. Both emphasize the **need to adapt to this new multi-screening scenario** in a way that we could engage our consumers catching up in the right moment and in the right way. User experience has toppled content's reign as king. Consumers now control their own flow of content.
3. **Consumer relate to each device in unique ways** so business should tailor the experience to each channel (consumers think and use differently about their devices). On TV? Tell emotional stories and build your brand. On the computer? Provide deeper information, facilitate analysis.

On Tablet?. Tell stories using visual, evocative tools, such as rich media and video. On the mobile phone? Make sure you're adding value, and not interrupting users.

4. Both found the **same modes of multi-screening**: **Sequentially**, when users moves from one device to another at different times to accomplish a task. **Simultaneously** when using more than one device at the same time. Microsoft describe a third mode named '**Separately**' when consumers are using more than one device at the same time (simultaneously), but for separated unrelated activities. Google treats these just as sub-modes of simultaneous depending if the activities are related or not: the 'Multi-tasking' for unrelated activity and the 'Complementary Usage' for related activity.
5. **Separately** (unrelated content) is the most common mode of multi-screening. Users think about as a 'multi-tasking' but research show is more about being distracted.
6. **Context and mind status determines the device we use** and the experience we seek. Are we at home? Are we seeking for social enjoyment, shopping or entertainment? Multi-screening behaviour differs strongly depending on the user intentions and dominant activity. In many cases (34%) users laziness make the closest device the king.
7. **TV**. Both agree **television is not longer the full-attention media it used to be**. Media consume is shifting from traditional evening prime-time turn a 'always-on' scenarios. **Beside this television is the major catalyst for search**.
8. **Computer**. Is more i**nformation based and productivity oriented** that the rest of devices. It is the most common starting point for more complex activities.
9. **Smartphone**. **Are the backbone of our daily media interactions**, the most common companion in all simultaneous multi-screening behaviour. It is the most 'personal' of all devices, maybe that's way users tend to be less open to advertising content on it.
10. **Tablet**. Is the device most **focused on entertainment** activities and content, and is primarily used at home. It is the 'discovery tool' with a immersive screen experience.

## What they have in common?

- Both are **oriented to advertising market**, trying to understand consumer behaviour, when use different devices as TV, Computer, tablet, phone, and in case of Microsoft also game-console and e-readers.

- Both studies use **similar methodology** based on quantitative and qualitative techniques: a combination of surveys, self-reported diaries and interviews.

- Both **talk about screens instead of devices**. This is certainly curious, the quick reason could be they are analysing devices for advertising marketing so see it majority as an 'advertising display' . Anyway I can think two other reasons, first one: users don't think/care about 'devices', users is focus in their goals, and all devices are just 'screens' for them. Second: because the continuous emergence of new devices, makes no sense to put the focus on technology but on the

use made of it.

- Both **identify the same basic modes of multi-screening** behaviour.

## And what are the main differences?

- **Market**: Google research is focus in USA market , meanwhile Microsoft approach 5 different markets: Australia, Brazil, Canada, UK and USA.
- **Sample**: Google sample is about 1611 participants, Microsoft sampled reaches the 3586 participants.
- **Scope**: Google focus in 4 main screens: smartphone, tablet, computer and Television, but Microsoft include also the gaming-console and the e-reader.
- **Takeaways insights**: both papers has plenty insights, but Microsoft specially leaves you with a bunch of strategy takeaways points.

Finally, as you will see later, **Microsoft's paper has a slightly different approach**, which I have found particularly interesting and actionable, it goes beyond behavioural trends and patterns and pursuit understand user motivations behind them, even so create an effective modelling around this motivations and intentions,  that they define as **'the paths to engagement'**:

- **Content Grazing**: that occurs when consumers use two or more screen simultaneously but for access unrelated content. (Google's Simultaneous multi-tasking).
- **Spider-Webbing:** where users consume related content on two or more devices at the same time (Google's simultaneous complementary usage).
- **Quantum:**  Consumers leap over time, space and screen to achieve a goal (Google's sequential usage).

Besides, cross this engagement-paths with the main screens (devices) so you could see the role each screens play depending on the pathway is running.