TV HEARS THE CALL OF SMART SPEAKERS

USERS WILL LOVE FAMILIAR TV VOICES

Just-released data from Edison Research shows one-in-six Americans (16%) now has a smart speaker, more than twice as many as a year ago. The jump, according to Edison, came in part because 7% of those it surveyed received one between Black Friday and the end of December. “Voice-activated speakers are perhaps the most dynamic sector not only in the audio space but in consumer electronics in general,” Edison SVP Tom Webster says. The research, done in conjunction with NPR, also found 30% of smart speaker owners said the devices are cutting into the time they spend with TV.

“These smart speakers are absolutely here to stay and they’re going to become an integral part of people’s lives,” Whiz Technologies CEO Nuikhil Modi says. “Now the question is how TV stations can leverage that.” His San Jose-based company is currently working with about 20 television stations that are on the cutting edge of giving TV’s news and sales departments a place in the smart speaker. “If you look at the role of the TV station and what people gravitate toward, one thing is network TV shows,” Modi says. “But independent of that it’s local news and weather—you have people who trust and bond (with) the weather personality of a particular TV station.” That’s where the opportunity comes in.

Whiz has created a “skill”—what apps are called on smart speakers—which allows a TV station to produce on-demand weather forecasts and local newscasts using its own meteorologists and anchor teams. “Having it in the generic Alexa voice is nice; it’s like the first step, but if you want to make it really valuable you have it in the anchor’s voice,” Modi says.

It’s also where the local sales opportunity comes in. Like a live read ad on a radio traffic report, the anchors can mention the weather report is sponsored by TYLENOL Cold & Flu for example. “From an advertiser point of view it’s cool because while it’s a small population today that’s going to use it, say 100,000 viewers in a medium size DMA, those people are a little cutting edge and more technically savvy,” Modi says. “It’s a good sales opportunity for the reps to go out to the more adventurous client.” Clients will need to be willing to overlook the fact there aren’t any metrics at this point, in part because Amazon won’t disclose how much Alexa owner use the device.

The national ad market is leading the way as Amazon has reportedly approached big consumer packaged goods companies such as Procter & Gamble and Clorox about placing audio ads on Alexa. CNBC reported last month those ads could be tied to securing preferred product placement on Amazon’s e-commerce platform as it looks to boost its advertising revenue. (Continued on page three)
CABLENET CHATTER

Pickler & Ben has picked up a greenlight from The E.W. Scripps Company for a second season. The Nashville-based daytime talk show is hosted by country music star Kellie Pickler and Emmy Award-winning television personality Ben Aaron. The show is recorded with a live studio audience and the hosts are joined by top celebrities, tastemakers and experts on everything from entertaining and home design to cooking and DIY. Pickler & Ben airs on CMT cable network and is in broadcast syndication in several markets.…… Investigation Discovery has announced two new specials and the development of a new series at the Television Critics Association winter tour. On February 14th, the network will air He Lied About Everything, the astonishing true tale of a love affair between award-winning investigative news producer Benita Alexander, and the brilliant, world-renowned surgeon Paolo Macchiariini. The two-part special airs on Investigation Discovery on Wednesday, February 14th at 8 PM (ET). The first installment of a three-part documentary series exploring cases of violence driven by prejudice entitled Love & Hate Crime will air on Sunday, February 25th at 8 PM (ET). It will highlight the 2017 case of the first person to be sentenced on federal hate crime charges for killing a transgender person. Investigation Discovery also announced the development of a new six-part series called The Unsolved. It follows former Rhode Island Police Sergeant Derrick Levasseur and Forensic Psychologist Kris Mohandie as they answer the pleas of desperate families to investigate murder cases that have exhausted all possible leads and have officially gone cold. The Unsolved will premiere on the network in April…….Syfy has given a greenlight to The Outpost, an original fantasy series for its international networks. The series will star Jessica Green (Ash vs. Evil Dead), as Talon, the lone survivor of a race called the Blackbloods. She’ll be joined by Jake Stormoen (Mythica), Andrew Howards (Hatfields and McCoys) Anand Desai-Barochia (Lake Mead), Robyn Malcolm (Top of the Lake) and Kristian Nairn (Game of Thrones) in the cast…….The Jim JEFFERIES Show has been renewed by Comedy Central for a twenty-six-episode second season. The network also announced it has ordered a new Sirius XM morning show with Nikki Glaser. You Up with Nikki Glaser will be Comedy Central’s first ever daily morning show. It will air on Sirius XM’s Comedy Central Radio channel starting next month…… Hallmark Movies & Mysteries has designated August at Garage Sale Mystery Month as the network brings back its successful Garage Sales Mystery franchise with a limited series of four all-new original movies. The series stars Lori Loughlin, Sarah Strange, Steve Bagic, and Kevin O’Grady. The movies ranked No. 1 in primetime every Sunday in August of 2017 making it the most-watched month for the network outside of November and December’s holiday programming…….Fox News has announced a seven-part documentary series called Scandalous that will spotlight the events that led to former president Bill Clinton’s impeachment in 1998. The series begins on Sunday, January 21st at 8 PM (ET).