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FAST – towards a new form of content distribution

Abstract

The streaming industry is coming full circle. Compared to its early days focused primarily on access to content via subscription, ad-supported and scheduled content is now becoming more common. This is related to phenomena that are becoming more and more noticeable on the media market: the so-called subscription fatigue, as well as the so-called the great unsubscribe, as well as cord-cutting, which is causing many streaming service providers to see their subscriber numbers decline. Streaming audiences have turned to looking for alternative programming options, such as FAST (free-ad supported-streaming TV). The development of this sector does not currently revolutionize the streaming market, but it creates, on the one hand, new opportunities for content distribution and responds to audience expectations, and on the other hand, it creates additional opportunities for content monetisation. The purpose of this article is to illustrate a new trend in the way both content is distributed and created in the streaming services space. For the purposes of this analysis, it was hypothesized that in the streaming industry, ad-supported services and scheduled live programming are gaining in popularity and constitute a significant alternative to existing business models. Therefore, the article is a review and is based on the analysis of available reports, practical studies, as well as expert statements. Moreover, the author's intention is to indicate the directions and areas of changes that will become part of the Polish media landscape in the near future.

Keywords: FAST – *free-ad supported-streaming TV*, content distribution, programming, content

Introduction

In their reflections on the communication processes taking place since the second half of the twentieth century, researchers point out that they have accelerated considerably, and the reason for this is attributed to the development of new media communication channels. Authors such as Harold Innis and Marshall McLuhan have drawn attention to the role of technology as a factor influencing these changes¹. While McLuhan expressed the view that technology leads to inevitable transformations in the way of thinking, the structure of society and the cultural forms created within it – which

¹ T. Sasińska-Klas, *Mediatization a medialisatioon of the public sphere*, *Zeszyty Prasoznawcze*, vol. 57, no. 2 (218), p. 163.

is considered a manifestation of technological determinism² – Derrick de Kerckhove shifted considerations in this regard to the media and Internet³. The assumption, rooted in this strand, that technological developments lead to changes in the way media organisations operate and are structured is not without influence on the content they produce⁴. This article aims to illustrate a new trend in the way both distribution and content creation are taking place in the space of streaming services. It is further hypothesised that in the streaming industry, ad-supported services and scheduled live programmes are gaining popularity and represent a significant alternative to existing business models. Given that the phenomenon under analysis is a novelty on the global television market, the considerations are based on an analysis of available reports, practical studies and expert statements. The article is therefore a review, and the author's intention is to indicate the directions and areas of change, which in the nearest future will become a part of the Polish media landscape.

The use of on-demand streaming services was intended to provide media users with an interesting and tailored alternative to so-called traditional television⁵. A free, linear product supported by advertising was diametrically opposed to the prevailing belief that the future would be about on-demand and ad-free content. As a result of the widespread trend away from programmed content, there was a rapid growth of streaming platforms, each of which offered a myriad of content from which the viewer could choose the programmes of interest, access to which was conditional on having a subscription. Not insignificant for the development of this sector of the media market was the period of the Covid-19 pandemic, during which the lack of a significant alternative for leisure activities resulted in a significant increase in the number of subscribers. Having access to multiple streaming services quite quickly began to present users with various challenges. Firstly, having multiple subscriptions became a significant expense for households, especially in times of inflation. Secondly, it became apparent that in the case of on-demand streaming services, discovering the content on offer was a problem. This is because finding the right content for the user becomes – in the case of access to multiple subscriptions – overwhelming and requires a significant amount of time and the ability to navigate through various content recommendation systems. As a result, the streaming industry has started to face a kind of trend reversal. This has resulted in an increasingly perceptible phenomenon: so-called *subscription fatigue*⁶,

² M. McLuhan, *Understanding media. Prolongations of man*, WNT Publishing House, Warsaw 2004.

³ M. Wiczorek-Tomaszewska, *Toronto schools past and present. A study in media history*, pp. 6–7, <https://ktime.up.krakow.pl/ref2010/wiczorek.pdf> [accessed 19.11.2023].

⁴ Cf. W. Świerczyńska-Głownia, *Programming activities of public television. Key determinants of programming and distribution of the offer*, Jagiellonian University Publishing House, Kraków 2017.

⁵ Traditional television- offering a scheduled programme offer, allowing the viewer to passively consume content.

⁶ *subscription fatigue* – feeling overwhelmed by the amount of content available; the more choice we have, the harder it is to find something we want to watch.

as well as *the great unsubscribe* and *unsubscribe-cutting*⁷, which has resulted in many streaming service providers experiencing a decline in subscribers⁸. Furthermore, in an era of rising costs and overwhelming options, users are increasingly turning to free alternatives to expensive subscription services. They are looking for a convenient experience, an easier, more passive way to access content, without the stress caused by an overabundance of choices. In addition, and this should be emphasised in the streaming market, there is growing pressure to develop *single IP (individual prefeed) channels*⁹. This is due to the fact that viewers want increasingly tailored content and are not willing to spend time searching for it. So while so-called traditional TV and then streaming offerings offered a culinary channel of a – let’s call it – universal nature, a *single IP channel* can be dedicated to a specific chef or a specific diet. In this case, these channels may form a variant offering of a single genre¹⁰.

In summary – the cost of multi-subscriptions, the fatigue associated with switching between services to view content and the difficulty of managing services and choices, and the personalisation of expectations have caused streaming customers to turn to the search for alternative programming options¹¹. As a result of the above-mentioned factors, free, personalised and easily accessible content (which does not force decisions other than channel choice), is experiencing a kind of renaissance, which is reflected in the development of Free Advertising Television Services (FAST), which is, to say the least, the delivery of the right content at the right time, through the right channel and to the right consumer. FAST overtly attempts to solve the paradox of choice, which is that there is so much content available that viewers struggle to find something to watch.

What is FAST?

FAST (*free-ad supported-streaming TV*) – in its simplest terms means free streaming TV with advertising. It is an over-the-top (OTT¹²) content delivery model that is com-

⁷ *cord-cutting* – a pattern of viewer behaviour involving the abandonment of subscription to multichannel television services available on cable or satellite, as well as the abandonment of pay-TV channels or the reduction in the number of hours of watching subscription television in favour of content available online. A. Diallo (16 October 2013), Ready To Cut The Cable TV Cord? Here’s How To Do It, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/amadouidiallo/2013/10/16/how-to-cut-the-cord-cable-tv/?sh=6dd59f1323ac> [accessed: 02.10.2023].

⁸ *Free Ad-Supported TV (FAST) Is the Future, and the Future Is Now* (August 15, 2022), <https://target-video.com/free-ad-supported-tv/> [accessed 11.10.2023].

⁹ *single IP channels* – channels containing only episodes of a single programme or series.

¹⁰ A.Fry,(2022), *FAST times in streaming*, Digital TV Europe, pp 12–17, <https://www.digitaltveurope.com/files/2022/09/DTVE-September-2022-lr.pdf> [accessed 10.10.2023].

¹¹ *The Rise of FAST Channels and the Challenges That Come with It, (April 2023)*, Whip Media Intelligence & Insights Series, https://whipmedia.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/The-Rise-of-Fast-Channels_2023.pdf [accessed 07.10.2023].

¹² OTT: *Over The Top* – making video content, in streaming or video-on-demand (VOD) format, available to the viewer, mostly using the Internet. Users do not have to pay a cable

pletely free to viewers and generates revenue by displaying video advertising. Content is delivered as a linear, scheduled programme, rather than on-demand, with ads shown before, during or after the videos. In this way, FAST is much more similar to so-called traditional TV than other OTT streaming services¹³. It is therefore, in a sense, the best combination of so-called traditional TV and the Internet, and therefore: free access to content, no choice required, a *laid-back experience* and support on proven advertising technologies based on user-oriented data¹⁴.

When discussing FAST, it is important – for the sake of argument – to make a distinction between the FAST service and the FAST channel. The FAST service is an OTT video service or platform available online. This service is delivered over the Internet and offers a collection of – user-programmed – linear video channels. These services typically also include an on-demand component with *Advertising Video On Demand (AVOD)*. FAST platforms run as an application or are tightly integrated into the software of the device in question¹⁵. The channels offered there, however, are user-selected rather than algorithm-driven. In many respects, these channels tap into consumer preferences for passive viewing and offer an alternative to on-demand content and services¹⁶. What distinguishes FAST channels from traditional ad-funded linear channels is primarily the way they are distributed via digital networks, which are fully addressable and suitable for targeted advertising¹⁷.

¹⁸ The FAST channel, on the other hand, is a programmed, linear video channel with scheduled advertising breaks inserted in the traditional – familiar from linear

or satellite operator, but instead use VOD (short for Video On Demand), SVOD (Subscription Video On Demand), a VOD service where you pay a subscription fee in exchange for access to all the content), TVOD (Transactional Video On Demand), AVOD (Advertising-based Video On Demand) and other forms of streaming channels. Popular OTT services include, for example, Netflix, Hulu, Disney+, Crave or Amazon Prime and, in the Polish market, Player. *What is OTT and CTV advertising? Why do brands invest the lion's share of marketing budgets in it?* (28.01.2022), <https://trafficwatchdog.pl/pl/articles/93/czym-jest-reklama-ott-i-ctv-dlaczego-marki-inwestuja-w-nia-lwia-czesc-budzetow-marketingowych> [accessed 09.10.2023].

¹³ *Free Ad-Supported TV (FAST) Is the Future, and the Future Is Now* (August 15, 2022), <https://target-video.com/free-ad-supported-tv/> [accessed 11.10.2023].

¹⁴ A. Fry,(2022), *FAST times in streaming*, Digital TV Europe, pp 12–17, <https://www.digital-tv-europe.com/files/2022/09/DTVE-September-2022-lr.pdf> [accessed 10.10.2023].

¹⁵ *A new service has been launched that gives you access to almost 200 TV channels completely free of charge! How to watch?* (2023) <https://hdtvpolska.com/telewizja-kanaly-za-darmodarmowe-gdzie-ogladac-odbierac-online-na-telewizorze-google-tv-channels-polska-w-polsce/> [accessed: 10.10.2023].

¹⁶ *Understanding FAST*, Blue Ant Media, https://blueantmedia.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/OE_BlueAntMedia_eBook_V3.pdf [accessed 11.10.2023].

¹⁷ *The FAST Channels & Services Convenience Package provides a bundling of FAST-related content across the Omdia Media & Entertainment portfolio*, <https://omdia.tech.informa.com/-/media/tech/omdia/brochures/fast-channels-n-services-convenience-package/fast-channels—services-convenience-package-brochure-> accessed 14.10.2023]

¹⁸ It is also important to be specific here by pointing out that the term ‘Fast channels’ includes a whole range of programmes. These are, first and foremost, *single IP channels*, which focus on, for example, a single series. Another group is *O&O channels*, which belong to and are programmed by FAST platforms. Another type of programme is *Pop-up channels*, which are

television – form, delivered over the Internet through the FAST service¹⁹. As practice indicates, while the owner of the FAST service may own the channels delivered, the owner of the FAST channel will not necessarily own the services through which it is delivered. In doing so, it should be emphasised that it is the owner of the Fast channel who has control over the placement of advertisements, the choice of content offered and the programming of the content. Depending on the transmission agreement with the FAST service, FAST channel owners may also have control over the sale of some of the advertising inventory²⁰.

The phenomenon of FAST

To answer the question of what the FAST phenomenon is all about, one can – in simple terms – point out that it is the *Tik-Tok of television*: a convenient experience for the viewer, who can choose from free, often short and personalised content²¹. This is because FAST channels offer viewers a more linear, passive experience that in some ways resembles the experience of watching so-called traditional television. Viewers can simply turn on a channel that has been specifically designed with consumers' interests and personal tastes in mind without having to make choices. In addition, users do not need to subscribe or even log in to the FAST programme aggregation platform to watch FAST programmes. All he or she has to do is switch on the internet-connected device and select – as in standard TV – from the programme grid (EPG) the programme of interest. The only “cost” for the user is that he/she will watch dynamically inserted individually tailored commercials²². Viewers have thus gained access to content in a simpler and more direct way²³. However, in order to make it possible to find content of interest to the viewer, FAST channels must be clearly positioned and have

programmed in connection with specific events, such as holidays or sporting events. *Curated channels*, on the other hand, are channels that offer selected and appropriately programmed (scheduled) content. Another group is made up of *Niche channels* aimed at audiences with insufficient reach for universal content.

¹⁹ *Understanding FAST*, Blue Ant Media, https://blueantmedia.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/OE_BlueAntMedia_eBook_V3.pdf [accessed 11.10.2023].

²⁰ *Understanding FAST*, Blue Ant Media, https://blueantmedia.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/OE_BlueAntMedia_eBook_V3.pdf [accessed 11.10.2023].

²¹ Statement: **Srinivasan KA** co-founder of **Amagi**, a technology company improving FAST channel establishment at **MIPCOM 2022**, <https://screenlovers.pl/%EF%BB%BFstreamowana-przyszlosc-tv-o-fenomenie-fast-prosto-z-mipcom/> [accessed 14.10.2023]

²² *The FAST Channels & Services Convenience Package provides a bundling of FAST-related content across the Omdia Media & Entertainment portfolio*, <https://omdia.tech.informa.com/-/media/tech/omdia/brochures/fast-channels-n-services-convenience-package/fast-channels—services-convenience-package-brochure-1.pdf?rev=83184f2eb39c465f861954d00080d00c&hash=87242C4D5A31E725A37270866DF89190> [accessed 14.10.2023].

²³ S. KA, (April 29, 2022), *What Is Subscription Fatigue & What Does It Mean for the Future of Streaming?* <https://www.spiceworks.com/marketing/programmatic-advertising/guest-article/what-is-subscription-fatigue-what-does-it-mean-for-the-future-of-streaming/> [accessed 07.10.2023].

clear branding. The channel name must therefore emphasise a particular genre, format, content, niche or brand. This is the source of the success of *single IP channels*: viewers immediately recognise them and know what to expect²⁴. This philosophy of constructing FAST channels – in addition to making their content easily identifiable – gives them the ability to build their own audience and expand their reach quickly.

FAST economics

While the economics of FAST channels do not currently provide a model that would make the investment profitable (in the sense of self-financing), there is no doubt that these channels are becoming a complement to existing business models. FAST channels are seen by content owners as a strategic initiative, parallel to the programme licensing business, and allowing access to valuable audience data. Indeed, there is no doubt that, from an economic point of view, these channels represent an opportunity for content owners to generate additional revenue based on their resources. Content providers are taking advantage of this new form of distribution, seeing it as an opportunity to make money by giving new life to their niche content²⁵. This is because the development of FAST and AVOD has increased the value of older content that has already gone through two or more distribution cycles and was therefore originally already broadcast elsewhere (usually on so-called traditional TV). It should be mentioned at this point that originally, FAST channels broadcast compilations of so-called *shorts* (forms characteristic of, for example, a YouTube channel). In the next stage, live news from ABC or NBC entered FAST, followed by longer content such as TV series or films. In the last – observed today – fourth stage, the first *FAST-originals*²⁶, i.e. the channels' own productions²⁷, are available. Nevertheless, the programming philosophy of the FAST channels is still – for the most part – based on so-called library content, i.e. content such as reruns or older productions. To some extent, this programming philosophy is due to the content owners' desire to minimise the possible risks associated with the market failure of the FAST concept, as well as to the shape of FAST content contracts, which are mainly based on revenue sharing. As a result, content owners do not want to take the financial risks associated with offering high-value content. In addition, it is not insignificant that 'repeat' programmes are characterised by low cost intensity, e.g. in terms of licensing costs.

In attempting to characterise the business models used by media institutions in the FAST ecosystem, it is important to make the point that the financial capacity

²⁴ *Understanding FAST*, Blue Ant Media, https://blueantmedia.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/OE_BlueAntMedia_eBook_V3.pdf [accessed 11.10.2023].

²⁵ A.Fry,(2022), *FAST times in streaming*, Digital TV Europe, pp 12–17, <https://www.digital-tveurope.com/files/2022/09/DTVE-September-2022-lr.pdf> [accessed 10.10.2023].

²⁶ An example of this is Amazon's Freevee, which promoted its original series at Cannes.

²⁷ Statement: Collin Petrie-Norris, CEO of Xumo, acquired in 2020 by Comcast (owner of e.g. NBC or Peacock) at MIPCOM 2022, <https://screenlovers.pl/%EF%BB%BFstreamowana-przyszlosc-tv-o-fenomenie-fast-prosto-z-mipcom/> [accessed 14.10.2023].

of individual companies is a crucial determinant in this case. Indeed, the largest content owners have the potential to create – or acquire – their own FAST platforms and services. An example of this is Paramount (then still Viacom²⁸), which acquired Pluto TV²⁹, while many broadcasters in the US as well as in the UK have added FAST channels to their main direct-to-consumer video platforms. This option gives content owners full control over content distribution and monetisation, but requires significant investment. In addition, if a broadcaster wants to offer more than just FAST channels under its own brand, this involves entering into agreements with other channel owners and negotiating advertising revenue shares (advertising inventory) with CTV platform operators³⁰. The second business model option used in the FAST ecosystem is based on content owners being able to programme their own FAST channels and license them to FAST service providers. This solution is less capital-intensive than creating a standalone application, but still gives content owners the ability to retain control over the content and advertising shown on their channels. However, this solution is fraught with the need for a contracting strategy with FAST services³¹. FAST channels currently work with platforms on the basis of several basic models – *revenue share* – the channel provides the content and the platform sells advertising around it and gives back a contractually agreed percentage of the profit; *inventory share* – the channel itself sells advertising in an agreed percentage of advertising time³² and *flat fee*. In a revenue-sharing model, the platform owner is responsible for selling advertising inventory and agrees to pay a share to the channel provider. This is usually a 60/40 split in favour of the channel provider, although 55/45 or 50/50 splits are becoming more common. Resource sharing is the dominant model in the US market. This is where the channel owner allocates part of the advertising space for sale. In both the advertising resource model and the revenue share model, part of the advertising revenue will go to the technology partner. In the flat fee model, the channel or content owner agrees to make its content available to the platform in exchange for a fixed annual fee³³.

²⁸ In 1993 Viacom acquired Paramount Picture and in 2022 Viacom CBS changed its name to Paramount. <https://www.paramount.com/about> [accessed 11.10.2023].

²⁹ Pluto TV – a free ad-supported streaming television (FAST) service available in North and South America and Europe, currently owned and operated by the Paramount Streaming division of Paramount Global. T. Spangler, *ViacomCBS Streaming Shake-Up: Pluto TV's Tom Ryan to Head New Global Division, Marc DeBevoise Steps Down*, <https://variety.com/2020/digital/news/viacombcs-streaming-tom-ryan-marc-debevoise-1234810594/> [accessed 07.10.2023].

³⁰ CTV – hybrid television based on the concept that a device capable of streaming video content is connected to (or embedded in) the TV. Different types of CTV devices include Xbox, PlayStation, Roku, Amazon Fire TV or Apple TV. <https://www.oracle.com/pl/cx/advertising/measurement/ctv-vs-ott/> [accessed 11.10.2023].

³¹ *Understanding FAST*, Blue Ant Media, https://blueantmedia.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/OE_BlueAntMedia_eBook_V3.pdf [accessed 11.10.2023].

³² J.Nowakowska, (2022), Fast and furious: on the streamed future of television straight from mipcom, <https://screenlovers.pl/%EF%BB%BFstreamowana-przyszlosc-tv-o-fenomenie-fast-prosto-z-mipcom/> [accessed 14.10.2023].

³³ *Understanding FAST*, Blue Ant Media, https://blueantmedia.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/OE_BlueAntMedia_eBook_V3.pdf [accessed 11.10.2023].

With this in mind, it should be noted that – regardless of the business model adopted – in the FAST environment, the content provided generates revenue primarily through advertising, which is offered using DAI (*Dynamic Ad Insertion*) technology. DAI technology is based on the fact that on each device – as well as application or website – connected to the Internet, it is possible to display a different, dedicated advertising message. This is because the essence of DAI technology is to combine video content and advertising messages into a single stream. Once the content has been converted to digital – regardless of its original format – DAI can include customised, targeted video advertising tailored to individual viewers in the stream. As a result, it becomes possible to target individual adverts for linear broadcasts, as well as content available on demand^{34,35}. The use of the DAI model in the FAST environment has significantly influenced the interest in this form of content distribution both among content creators and advertisers. For content owners, it represents an opportunity to monetise content through ad-only streaming models, for advertisers it represents an opportunity to implement targeted advertising campaigns based on consumer data and viewing preferences³⁶, allowing them to offer personalised ad content that may be more engaging – or less irritating – to watch³⁷. Furthermore, given that FAST channels are based on the habits and viewing habits of viewers from so-called traditional television, it is pointed out that they are typically watched on Internet-enabled TV sets. They therefore become attractive to those advertisers who want their message to be displayed on devices accessible to all members of the household (*living-room experience*)³⁸. In summary, it can be pointed out that high brand safety³⁹, family viewing, well-targeted geographic and demographic advertising combined with the typical linear viewing of traditional TV make FAST the ideal environment for brands⁴⁰.

³⁴ DAI technology – dynamic ad profiling on TVP <https://www.tvp.pl/centrum-informacji/informacje-dla-mediow/komunikaty-centrum-informacji/technologie-dai-dynamicznego-profilowania-reklam-w-tvp/44733321> [accessed 14.10.2023].

³⁵ <https://support.google.com/admanager/answer/6147120?hl=pl> [accessed 11.10.2023].

³⁶ A.Fry,(2022), *FAST times in streaming*, Digital TV Europe, pp 12–17, <https://www.digitaltveurope.com/files/2022/09/DTVE-September-2022-lr.pdf> [accessed 10.10.2023].

³⁷ S. KA, (April 29, 2022), *What Is Subscription Fatigue & What Does It Mean for the Future of Streaming?* <https://www.spiceworks.com/marketing/programmatic-advertising/guest-article/what-is-subscription-fatigue-what-does-it-mean-for-the-future-of-streaming/> [accessed 07.10.2023].

³⁸ A.Fry,(2022), *FAST times in streaming*, Digital TV Europe, pp 12–17, <https://www.digitaltveurope.com/files/2022/09/DTVE-September-2022-lr.pdf> [accessed 10.10.2023].

³⁹ *Brand Safety* – a set of actions and tools used by those responsible for the implementation of the advertising process in order to create an environment that does not adversely affect the perception of a brand, service or product. These are all actions that do not expose the brand to reputational, legal or property damage and that guarantee an appropriate context for the display of the advertisement.

⁴⁰ Statement: Srinivasan KA co-founder of Amagi, a technology company improving FAST channel establishment at MIPCOM 2022, <https://screenlovers.pl/%EF%BB%BFstreamowana-przyszlosc-tv-o-fenomenie-fast-prosto-z-mipcom/> [accessed 14.10.2023]

It should also be mentioned that the non-intrusiveness of FAST channels in relation to existing content distribution platforms, the possibility of personalising the offer, as well as the typically TV-like ‘living-room experience’ and the much greater data richness for the advertising client mean that the possibility to target advertising budgets to the FAST environment is gaining in popularity⁴¹. Although building an advertising offer in this model is not easy, the projections for the FAST market seem to confirm the potential of this solution. Indeed, it should be noted that FAST channels have existed in some shape or form for at least five years, but have recently become a significant source of revenue-generating opportunities. Globally, FAST channel revenues have grown almost 20-fold between 2019 and 2022, and are forecast to triple by 2027 to reach over \$12 billion. While the FAST channel market is currently growing overwhelmingly in the US (the FAST channel market there is projected to exceed \$10 billion in revenue by 2027), FAST channels are also successfully entering other markets. As forecasts indicate, some of the largest FAST markets (outside the US) will be English-speaking countries, namely: UK, Canada and Australia. By 2027, the UK FAST market will be worth more than \$500 million. Meanwhile, the Canadian and Australian FAST market will be worth more than \$300m in the same year. These three markets, led by the UK and each characterised by a significant excess of US content, will account for more than half of FAST’s non-US revenues by 2027. It should also be noted that FAST’s market is not just about English-speaking countries and offerings. Europe is projected to be the second largest regional market after North America by value, with FAST revenues in Europe expected to exceed \$1 billion by 2027⁴².

The potential of the FAST environment is not only evident in the forecasts for growth in the value of this market. Also noteworthy is the involvement of media companies in this sector. Examples of this include leading television companies such as Comcast (Xumo), Paramount (Pluto) and Fox (Tubi), which are actively involved in the FAST environment as platform operators⁴³. This trend has not gone unnoticed in Hollywood either, and as a result, established media companies such as Amazon, which owns IMDb TV, and Tubi, which was acquired by Fox, have turned to the new sector. These entities have undoubtedly recognised the potential of being able to reach audiences with tailored and thematic niche content⁴⁴. Also worth highlighting is the presence of news channels in FAST. In May 2023, CNN launched CNN Fast. The channel offers short videos (three to six minutes) presenting international news content of major events from

⁴¹ J.Nowakowska, (2022), Fast and furious: on the streamed future of television straight from mipcom, <https://screenlovers.pl/%EF%BB%BFstreamowana-przyszlosc-tv-o-fenomenie-fast-prosto-z-mipcom/> [accessed 14.10.2023].

⁴² *Understanding FAST*, Blue Ant Media, https://blueantmedia.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/OE_BlueAntMedia_eBook_V3.pdf [accessed 11.10.2023].

⁴³ A.Fry,(2022), *FAST times in streaming*, Digital TV Europe, pp 12–17, <https://www.digital-tveurope.com/files/2022/09/DTVE-September-2022-lr.pdf> [accessed 10.10.2023].

⁴⁴ *The Rise of FAST Channels And the Challenges That Come With It*, (April 2023), Whip Media Intelligence & Insights Series, https://whipmedia.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/The-Rise-of-Fast-Channels_2023.pdf [accessed 07.10.2023].

business, entertainment, sports and the environment. In addition to the United States and Canada, the CNN Fast channel is also available in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. The channel was created for young viewers who prefer short content⁴⁵. In addition, the FAST environment seems to be an excellent opportunity for the expansion of entities operating in the social media space that have already built a strong, loyal audience. A good example of this is the culinary brand Chefclub, which has 100 million followers on social media and 2.5 billion impressions per month worldwide. Chefclub currently has a FAST channel on the Pluto Tv platform and is available in France, the US, Latin America, Spain and the UK. The service is also made available through Samsung TV Plus⁴⁶.

In summary, it should be emphasised that the FAST environment has become an attractive space for almost all types of content owners. These are, firstly: *linear channels* – linear channels that – through FAST – increase their distribution reach (the main example here are the already mentioned news channels), as well as extend their brand and reach a growing number of so-called *cord-cutting* audiences. Secondly: *social video* – in this group are the owners of video content offered in the social media space, who re-shape their short content offerings and catalogues and then re-market them in the FAST space. This group also includes print media publishers, such as Conde Nast, who use the FAST service to create video versions of their articles. Third: the *distributors programme* – distributors and content owners who, based on in-house resources (content libraries), create FAST channels focused on niche genres or are based on the concept of *single IP channels*. Fourthly are: *CE manufactures* – manufacturers of equipment for the reception of video content, in particular TV sets. An example of this is Samsung, which equips its equipment with FAST channels and sells advertising. The last group is made up of players who see the FAST environment as an additional source of revenue, such as AVOD operators or pay-TV operators who want to use FAST to stem the flow of subscribers to competing applications and services⁴⁷.

Summary

It can therefore be pointed out that the streaming industry has come full circle. Compared to its subscription-focused beginnings, ad-supported services and scheduled live programmes are now becoming more commonplace and represent a significant alternative to legacy business models. Much of the phenomenon of FAST lies in the fact

⁴⁵ CNN Fast channel launched. Aims to win young viewers over to TV (25.05.2023), <https://www.press.pl/tresc/76704,ruszyl-cnn-fast---ma-przekonac-do-telewizji-mlodych-widzow> [accessed 09.10.2023].

⁴⁶ A.Fry,(2022), *FAST times in streaming*, Digital TV Europe, pp 12–17, <https://www.digitalteveurope.com/files/2022/09/DTVE-September-2022-lr.pdf> [accessed 10.10.2023].

⁴⁷ <https://omdia.tech.informa.com/-/media/tech/omdia/brochures/fast-channels-n-services-convenience-package/fast-channels---services-convenience-package-brochure-1.pdf?rev=83184f2eb39c465f861954d00080d00c&hash=87242C4D5A31E725A37270866DF89190>

that it leverages a familiar user experience, and the statement that ‘the more things change, the more they stay the same’ takes on particular meaning in this case. So while ad-supported content drove the golden age of television, today – tired of the long and engaging choice of content to watch – streaming viewers are once again looking for ad-free programmes⁴⁸. It is also not insignificant that quite often FAST offers programmes extracted from traditional TV programmes⁴⁹. The development of FAST is therefore an indicator of changes in viewer requirements. Regardless of whether traditional broadcasters already see its full potential, viewers will be looking for personalised channels with content that meets their needs. Broadcasters must therefore adapt to these changes and embrace FAST as a promising form of content delivery⁵⁰. There are undoubtedly quite a few challenges ahead for the new streaming market segment. One example of this is the lack of an industry measurement and market research provider to offer consistent results on the effectiveness and reach of FAST channels. The lack of such data significantly affects programming decision-making, financial reporting or revenue recognition or distribution⁵¹. These are certainly issues that need to be addressed. However, regardless of the observations made above, there is no doubt that the development of FAST – free-to-air TV services with adverts – is becoming a growing new trend in content offering. It should be mentioned at this point that FAST is currently not changing the fundamental structure of the TV market. *Premium* content – especially high-end original productions and sports – will continue to be the backbone of the main free-to-air TV channels, as well as subscription services⁵². However, there is no doubt that FAST channels will, increasingly, provide additional revenue streams for large media companies by complementing and augmenting linear distribution, as well as providing an alternative to niche channels. Given the dynamic development of the FAST channels – which are beginning to create a competitive market – it must also be assumed that in the near future, the content offered there will increasingly take the form of original productions, created with and for this distribution platform. And this will open up space for the crystallisation of a significant new sector in the media market.

⁴⁸ *The Rise of FAST Channels And the Challenges That Come With It*, (April 2023), Whip Media Intelligence & Insights Series, https://whipmedia.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/The-Rise-of-Fast-Channels_2023.pdf [accessed 07.10.2023].

⁴⁹ *Return of linear TV: The advent of FAST* (August 2023), <https://www.nielsen.com/pl/insights/2023/linear-tvs-comeback-the-arrival-of-fast/> [accessed 14.10.2023].

⁵⁰ *Free Ad-Supported TV (FAST) Is the Future, and the Future Is Now* (August 15, 2022), <https://target-video.com/free-ad-supported-tv/> [accessed 11.10.2023].

⁵¹ *The Rise of FAST Channels And the Challenges That Come With It*, (April 2023), Whip Media Intelligence & Insights Series, https://whipmedia.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/The-Rise-of-Fast-Channels_2023.pdf [accessed 07.10.2023].

⁵² *Understanding FAST*, Blue Ant Media, https://blueantmedia.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/OE_BlueAntMedia_eBook_V3.pdf [accessed 11.10.2023].

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