Confessions of A 'Guilty' Couch Potato
Understanding and Using Context to Optimize Binge-watching Behavior

Illustrations by: Mariëlle Weijzig
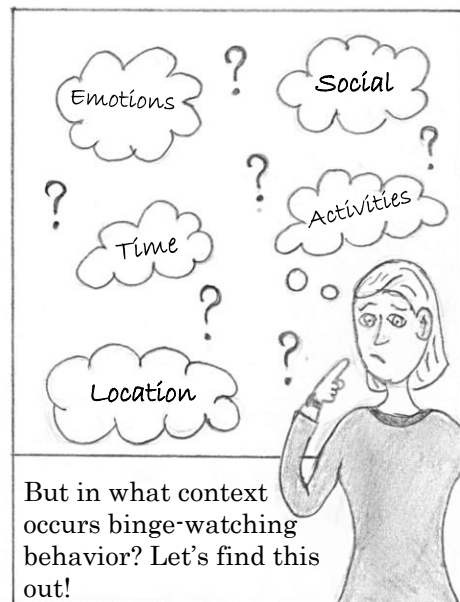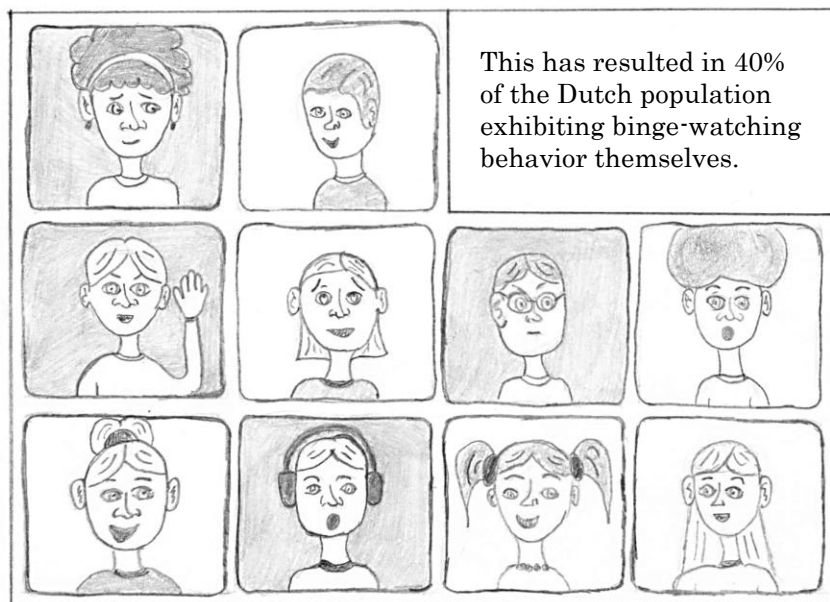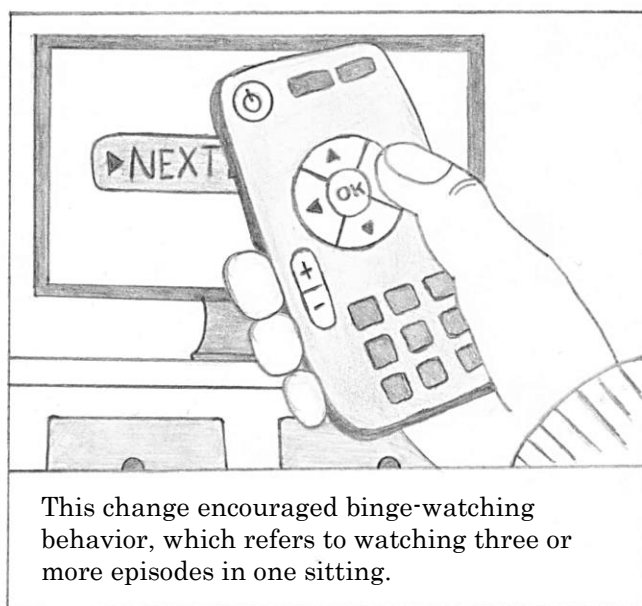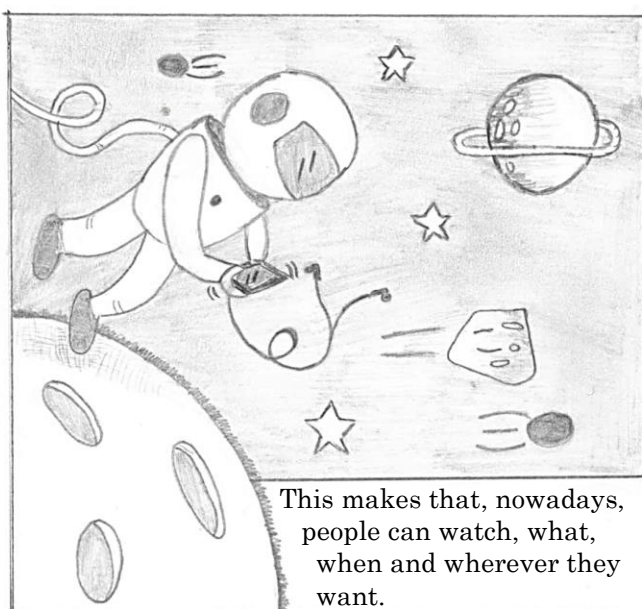Original paper written by: D. de Feijter, V.J. Khan and M. van Gisbergen

By introducing new technologies, many different ways of television viewing arose.

This makes that, nowadays, people can watch, what, when and wherever they want.

This change encouraged binge-watching behavior, which refers to watching three or more episodes in one sitting.

This has resulted in 40% of the Dutch population exhibiting binge-watching behavior themselves.

But in what context occurs binge-watching behavior? Let's find this out!
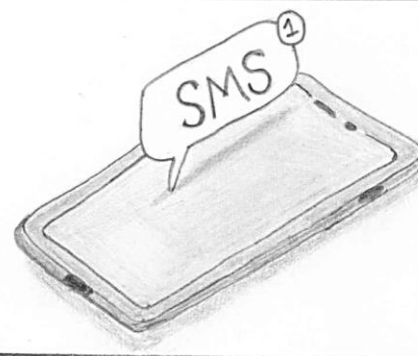
To get insight in what context binge-watching occurs, 32 participants were recruited to participate in a survey each time they finished a viewing session.
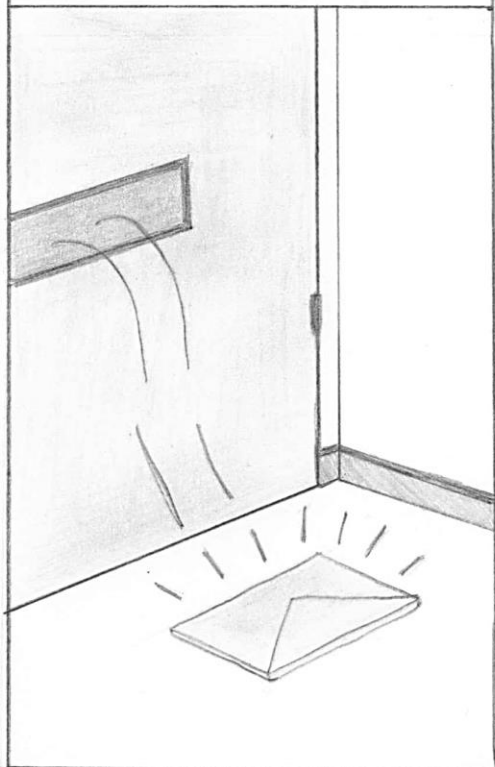

They participated for ten days: eight working days and a weekend.

Each day participants received an SMS reminder to fill in the survey.
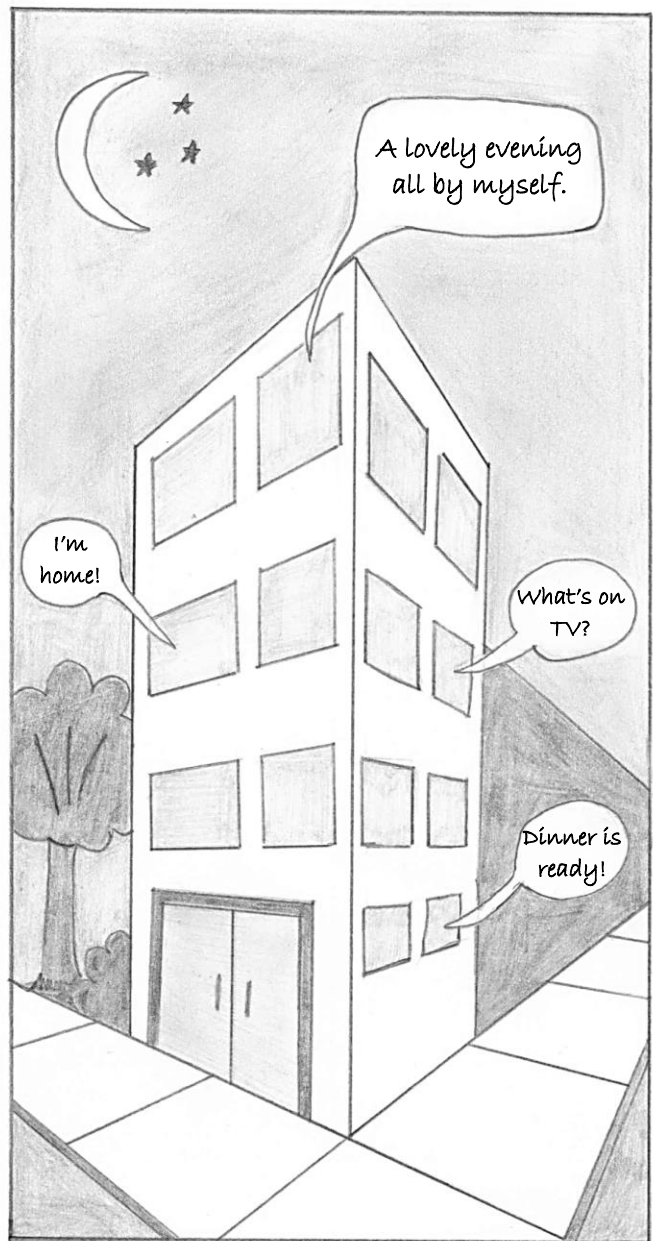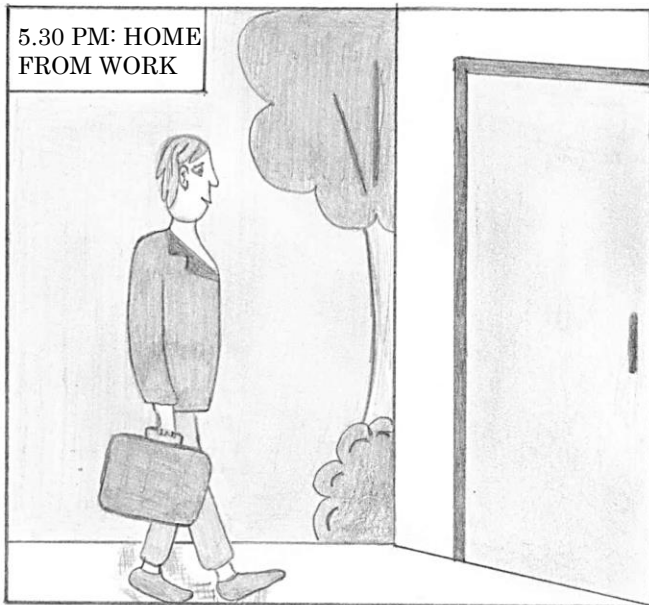

After those ten days, five participants were invited to do an interview and explain their answers.

That would be great!
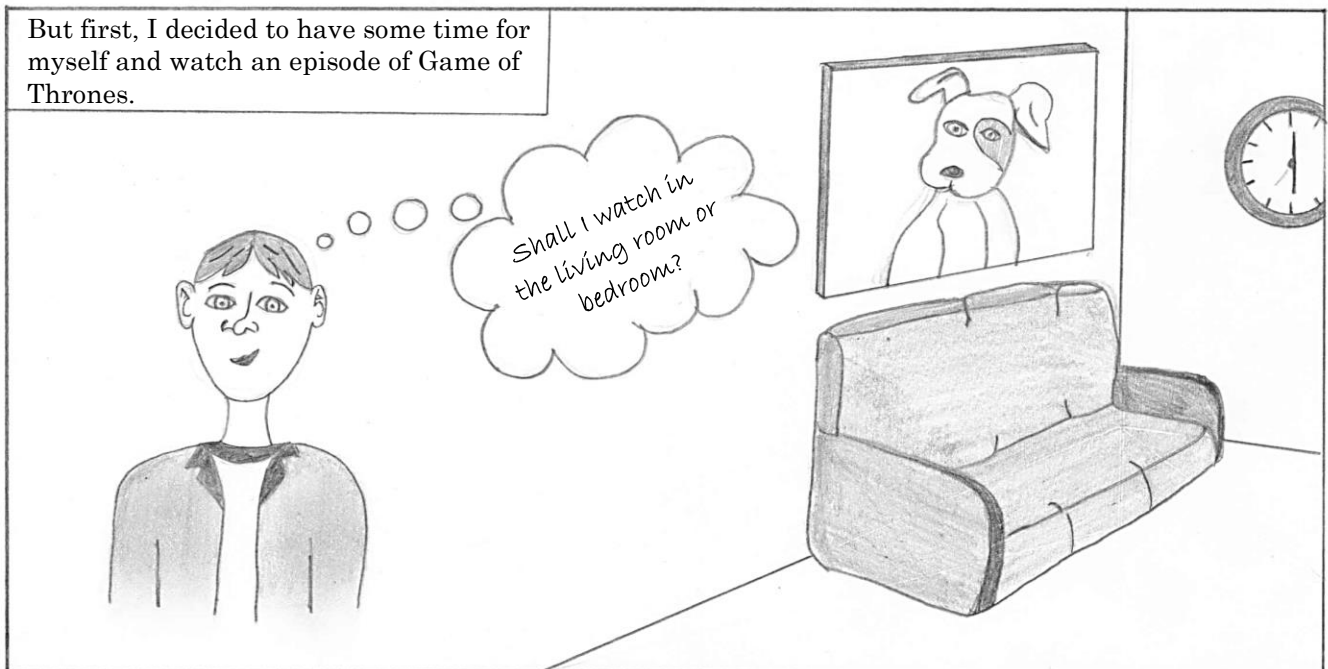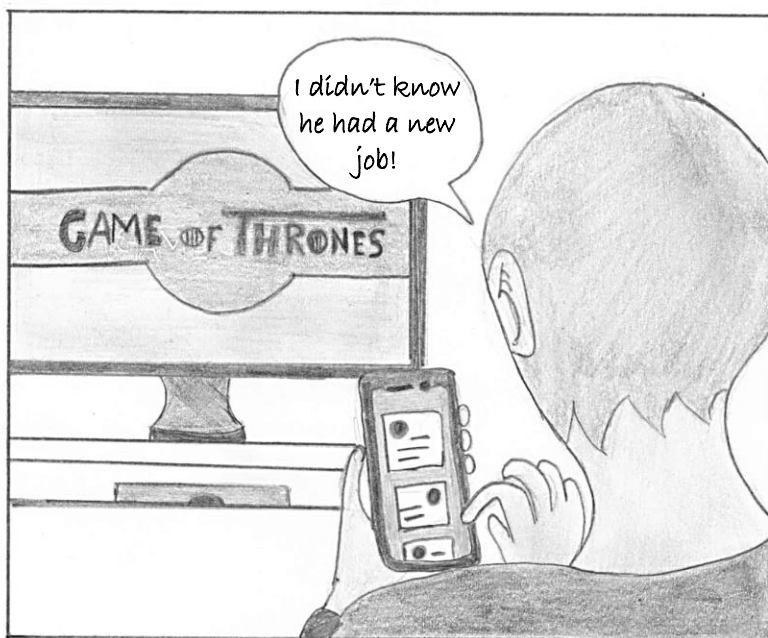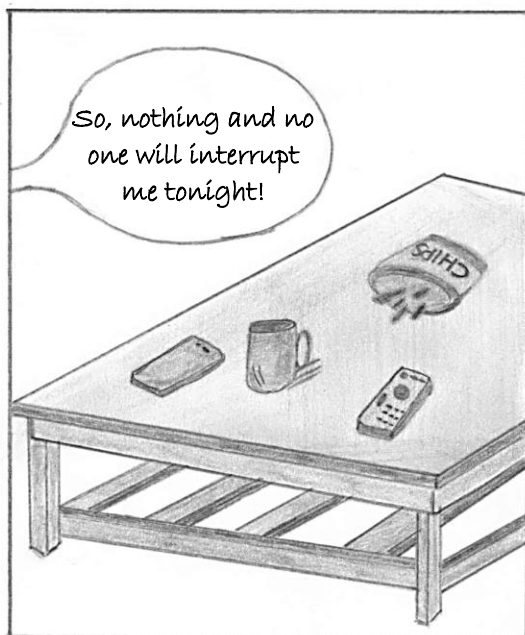
I'll tell you how it was for me.

During the interview, participants were confronted with their survey responses regarding their experience, viewing behavior, content, activities, self-regulation and awareness of their behavior.

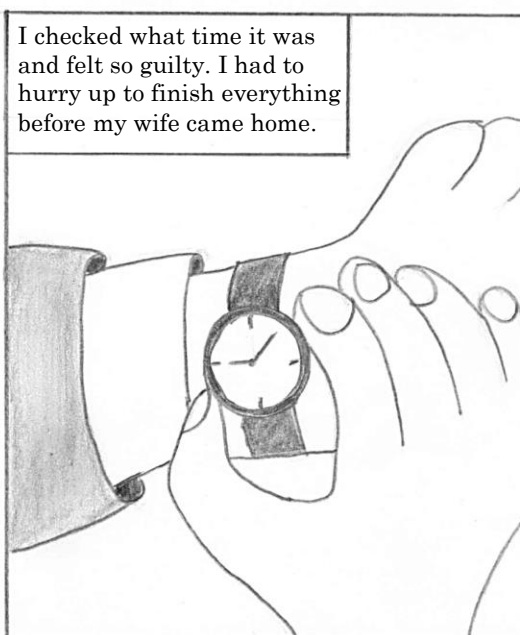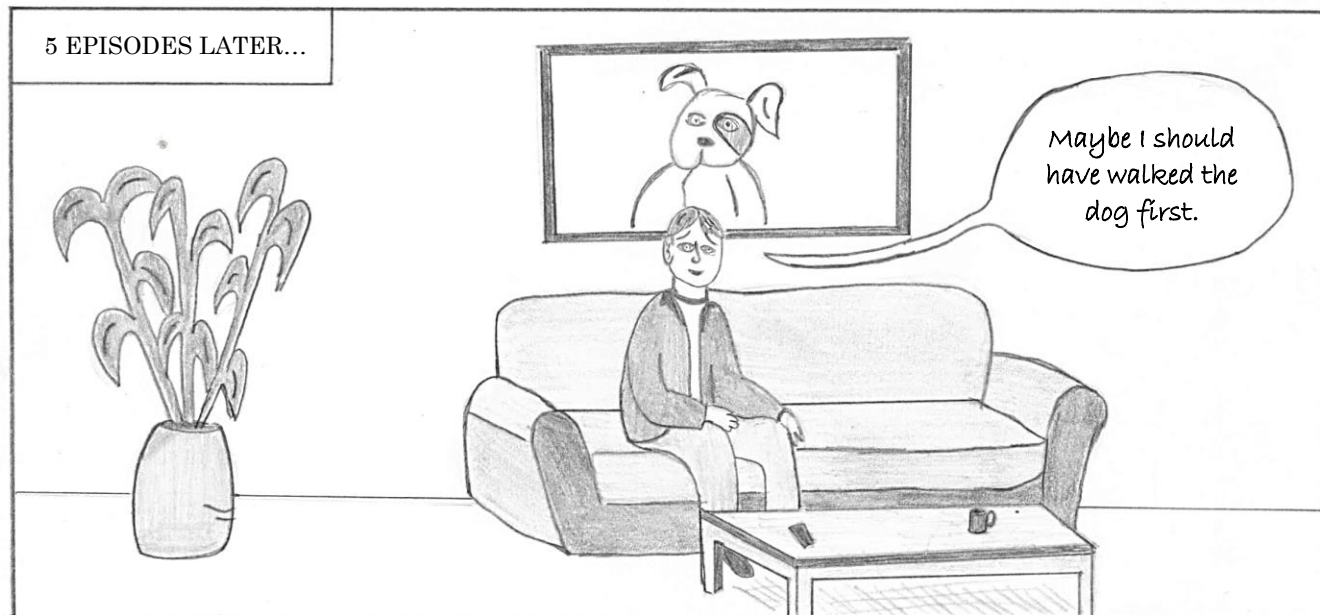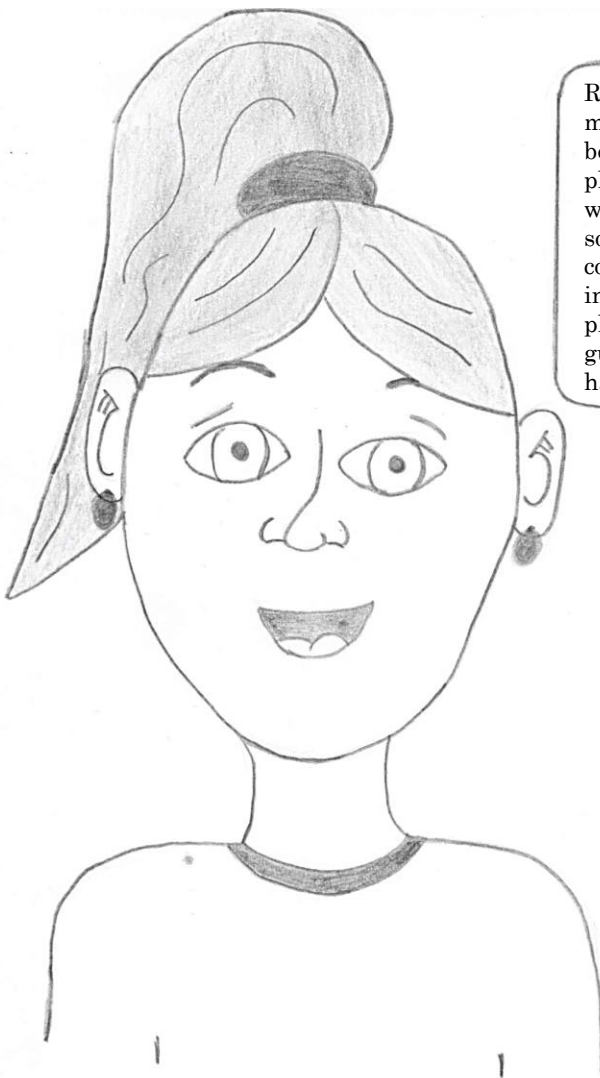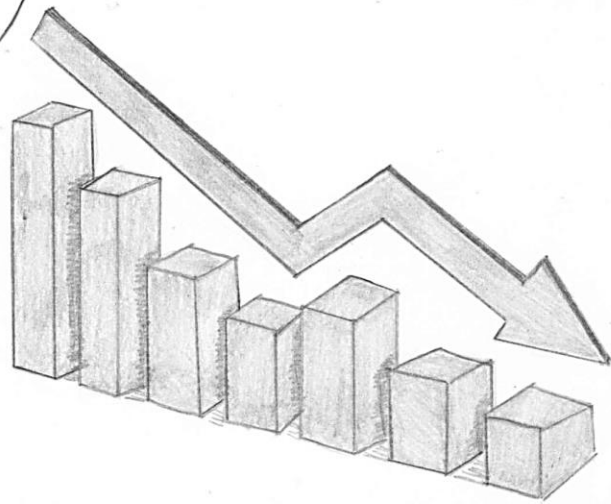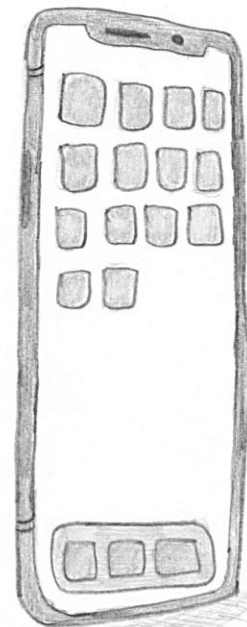Results showed that people prefer to binge-watch in the evening the most and on weekdays. They do this at home, in the living room or bedroom. Besides that, when they start binge-watching, they do not plan how many episodes they are going to watch. While binge-watching, 11% of the participants prefer to do nothing, but doing some passive activities as checking social media or eating seem common. After five or more episodes, people start getting engaged in other activities. In 58% of the binge-watching sessions, other planned activities were postponed. After binge-watching, most feel guilty about postponing the activities. Finally, binge-watching happens in solitary context.

To optimize binge-watching behavior, feelings as guilt must be reduced.

An idea to optimize binge-watching behavior is signalizing the viewer when the optimal viewing time has been reached.

Since most people watch at home, creating an app for all viewing devices at home could be the most effective solution to monitor viewing behavior, provide feedback and enhance the overall viewing experience.