

How the Internet Has Changed the Way We Waste Time

For every great tool the internet has given us like live video streaming services, the internet has also given us wonderful distractions like live panda webcams. Before we decry them, these distractions also show us how far we've come and how much we have stayed the same.

To see how much the internet has changed life as we know it you have to look at the simple things. Sure, we have stuff like [live video streaming services](#), and you can listen to radio live from just about anywhere in the world, but that stuff is the stuff you tend to think about everyday. Instead, just take a look at all the stupid little distractions that live streaming video has given us in the last decade. You can check out just about anything online. As we speak I am watching a live webcam of a baby panda from the San Diego Zoo. Cute? Yes. Unnecessary? Absolutely. But if there is anything that is indicative of the "age of the internet", this is it. You now have literally millions of ways of waste your time, and you can access them anytime you want. And frankly, there is nothing wrong with this.

Don't get me wrong, distraction did not just begin with the internet. Let me tell you a little story I heard when I was on a family vacation back in the late 90's. On a cruise to Alaska we had an excursion day in Juneau. During our excursion we hired a cab to take us around and see the sights. During one of our stops our cabbie told us a story about how the local cable supplier had an open channel which they decided to fill with a live camera of a fish tank while they tried to negotiate a real network to fill that slot. About six months later they finally filled the channel with a real entertainment network, hence taking the fish tank off the air. To the cable suppliers surprise they were bombarded with calls and letters from locals demanding that they bring the fish tank back. Apparently they became so attached to the fish tank that they watched the channel religiously.

To me, stories like this prove that there is always a market for these live animal webcams online. Webcams showing everything from pandas to buildings to trees to, yes, even fish tanks gets thousands of viewers daily. Do they make money? Who knows, but they show where technology has taken us. But this is just the way it goes with technology: each medium starts out as a way to get information out and then as it advances in comes other sources and, eventually, distractions. When television was created it was three channels. Now, there are 500-1000 channels and no lack of "distractions" on the airwaves. Heck, even the news channels are "entertainment" based.

This is what happened with the internet. Once people got use to webcams and e-mail, then came web based entertainment and around the clock web coverage. Where will the internet in the future? Who knows, but I know that I'll be there watching it.

About the Author

Author Kimberly Green teaches her children about animals using the [live video streaming services](#) provided by the local game preserve.

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