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## 'The Voice' was a Ratings and Social-TV Triumph but 'X Factor' Isn't? Guess Again Their Ratings Are Actually Roughly Comparable, and Bluefin Labs Picks Simon Cowell's Show as the Social-Media Champ

*Published: October 07, 2011*



Fox

The 'X Factor' judges during a 'bootcamp' episode

NBC's "The Voice" was a surprise hit in the spring -- and thanks to its highly integrated use of Twitter (tweets from judges frequently appeared on screen and backstage correspondent Alison Haislip sort of served as an on-camera Twitter jockey), it was widely considered a "social TV" triumph. Whereas Simon Cowell's "The X Factor" on Fox this fall is a ratings disappointment and people just aren't talking about it that much... right?

Guess again.

The truth is, "The X Factor" ratings have been solid if not spectacular -- and actually are not that far off from the numbers "The Voice" was doing in the spring: in the range of 12 million viewers per episode. The problem, of course, is that Cowell set up ridiculously high expectations for his show -- which he now realizes. "I'm not going to lie," [he told the AP this week](#). "I wanted 20 million when we launched, but now I'm kind of back in the real world and I'm seeing this grow naturally. I'm as happy as I've ever been."

The good news for "The X Factor" is that viewers who are watching the show remained hooked -- the show is holding on to its audience -- and they're incredibly engaged with

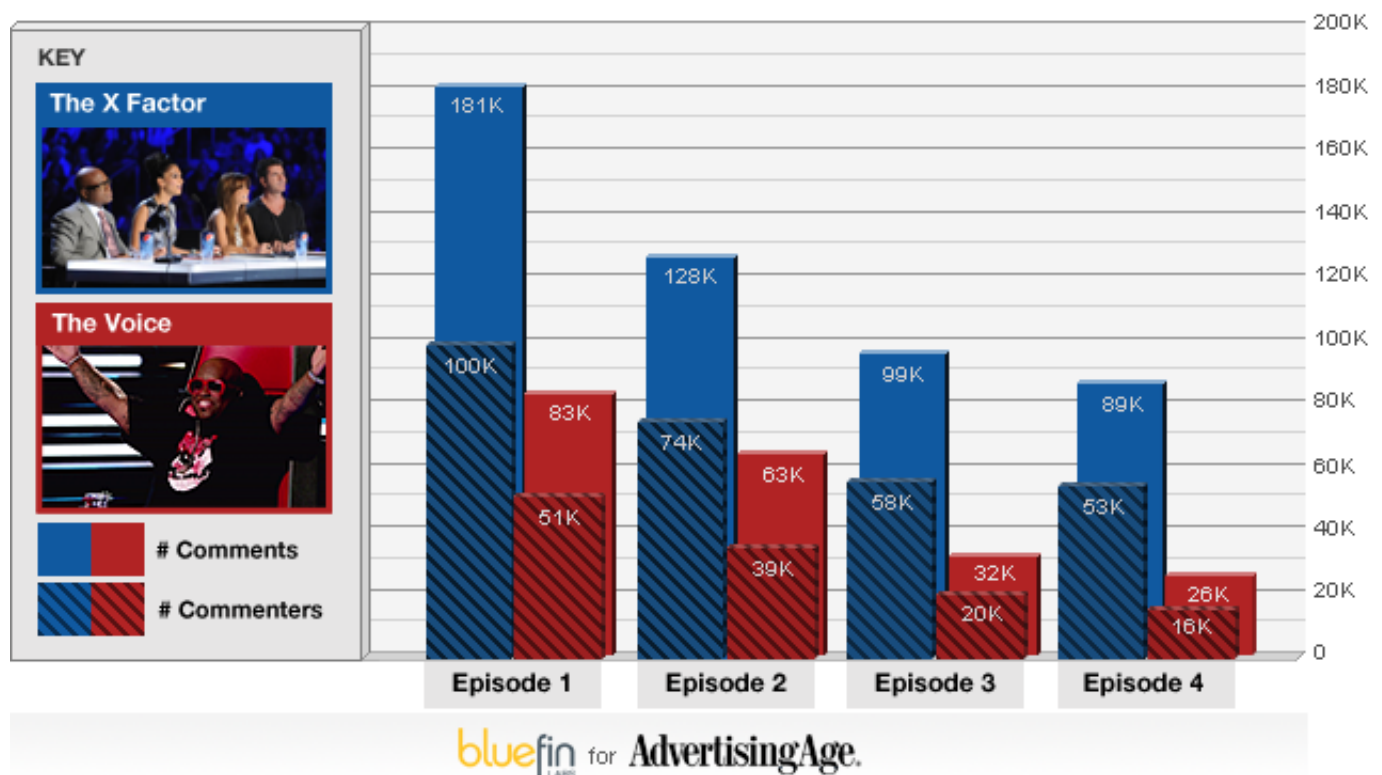
it. Given that a huge part of "The Voice" story was its level of social engagement, we decided to compare its social-TV profile to that of "The X Factor." And so we asked the team at Ad Age's editorial partner [Bluefin Labs](#), a Cambridge-Mass.-based social-media analysis company that specializes in television, to dive deep into its comprehensive database of social-media response for both shows. The topline results are shown in the chart below. Some context:

The chart shows the number of social-media comments as well as the number of unique social-media commenters for the first four episodes of "The X Factor" and "The Voice." The number of comments and commenters refer specifically to the episode airing; other social-media comments were filtered out. Comments pertaining to "The Voice" judge Blake Shelton's concert tour or album, for example, were not included in this analysis.

For the record, the first episode of "The Voice" aired on April 26, while the first episode of "The X Factor" aired on September 21. That's worth noting because social-TV keeps growing and growing -- more and more people are using social media to comment about the TV they're watching -- which gives "The X Factor" an edge because it's airing half a year further into the social-TV age than "The Voice" did. That said, Bluefin's analysis shows that "The X Factor" is far and away the social-TV champ in a matchup against "The Voice."

Interestingly, "American Idol" has been one of the top terms used in social-media comments about "The X Factor" -- people are making inevitable comparisons between Simon Cowell's old show and his new show. But comparisons between "The X Factor" and "The Voice" are relatively scarce. Given that both shows have formats that have judges competing against each other as they work with groups of contestants, there was a lot of speculation that "The Voice" would be seen as having preempted "The X Factor." But as far as social commenters on "The X Factor" are concerned, "The Voice" is a distant memory -- if that.

"Even the sponsors have been getting a lot of mentions in the social-media comments about 'The X Factor,'" Bluefin's Tom Thai tells me. "I was surprised to see so many positive comments about the Pepsi sponsorship, actually. Typically, when we look at this type of data for in-show sponsorships, the audience's social-media comments tend to be pretty negative, so Pepsi is an outlier in a positive sense." What seems to have won the audience over is the [terrific nostalgic Pepsi spot](#) -- showing snippets of past Pepsi commercials -- that debuted in the first episode. (Sample tweet: "That Pepsi commercial with Michael Jackson, Britney Spears, & Kanye West was awesome #xfactor.") Also helping: the fact that there's sort of an underdog factor to Pepsi being the sponsor of a show that's been compared to Coke-sponsored "American Idol" (sample tweet: "Kinda diggin X Factor. Love the Idol touches like Pepsi and Chevy and Thin Randy").



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