Chapter 6
Perception of Journalistic Content Printed on Paper and on an iPad Case Study: La Voz de Galicia

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ABSTRACT

The introduction of digital tablets and the reduction in their price has meant that the newspaper publishing market has had to adapt itself to a new medium with a heretofore unseen different concept of design and use that is a hybrid between print content and a Web page.

The aim of this comparative study is to investigate the reading experience of users in two different media: the print version of a newspaper and a rich PDF version of that newspaper distributed on the iPad. The study aims to contribute to the developing digital news industry with relevant findings regarding the features of current news applications. The study focuses on La Voz de Galicia, a regional daily newspaper with a circulation of more than one hundred thousand copies per day.

In this study, we draw conclusions regarding the level of interactivity and multimedia content that the sample group demands from newspaper-related tablet applications, the difference in perception of the journalistic content based on whether the medium is paper or the iPad and the intent to purchase the product. This information is particularly relevant given that it has been obtained from future adults who within a few years will be in a context in which the trend in paid journalistic consumption will decrease while the penetration of tablets in the market will increase.

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this comparative study is to investigate the reading experience of user in two different media: The print version of a newspaper and a rich PDF version of that newspaper distributed on the iPad. Specifically, its goal is to determine whether the perception of credibility, depth, value of the focus and the interest attributed by the users to the journalistic content varies depending on the medium. It also seeks to identify how the reader uses the new potential of the digital medium: photo gallery, videos and updates to the application itself on the one hand, and videos, photos and galleries integrated into the PDF pages on the other. Lastly, this research is aimed at analysing the usability of the actual application being studied.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Literature Review

There is limited scientific literature focusing on the iPad or press read on tablets mainly because academia tends to operate at a much slower pace than industry. There have been publications on this new mobile device since its appearance in 2010, but for the most part these have focused on its performance, usability, and – especially lately – there were reports on its user profile and its commercial dissemination, but these didn’t necessarily focus on the study on journalistic contents, although this has occasionally taken into account. These contributions come from consultancy firms (Accenture, 2011; Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2011), trade associations (AIMIC, 2011; Ametic, 2011) or research centres (Pew Center, 2012; Knight Digital Media, 2012; the International Center for Journalists and the Nieman Lab of Harvard University, 2012).

Within the academic world, several theses (Cobos, 2011; Benckert van de Boel, 2011; Cunha, 2011; Haeger, 2011) have been published that more specifically address different aspects of the press on the iPad, although many of them are geared more towards magazines than general newspapers. Papers have also been presented at conferences such as those held by ECREA, the International Symposium on Online Journalism in Austin (Texas) or the Digital Journalism conference held in Huesca (Spain). Nevertheless, the only books published to date (September 2012) on newspapers on the iPad have been Dalle Gazette all'iPad by Elena Valentini (2012) – containing a valuable theoretical basis – and Mario García’s The iPad Design Lab (2012). Through an analysis of the Italian newspapers and of interviews with journalists and experts in the field, the Italian researcher outlines the directions to be followed by the dailies on the iPad. For his part, based on his own experience as a designer, Cuba’s Mario García (2012) details his idea of what the design of newspapers for tablets should be like so that their full potential can be realised. The other books on periodicals published on the iPad are not focused on general newspapers, but are instead more orientated towards magazines (Kawohl, 2011). The possibilities these new devices offer for journalism were also highlighted in the papers by Edo (2011), and Cabrera González and Bernal Trevino (2011).

In Portugal, the work of LabCom at the University of Beira Interior, as well as the work of the members of the Centro de Estudos das Tecnologias e Ciências da Comunicação (CETAC) at the University of Porto and the research carried out by Dora Santos Silva Lisbon on journals and magazines all deserve mentioning. Despite these contributions, to date there is a limited scientific literature on what general newspaper apps for the iPad should be like based on taking the user...