



Digital Magazines A Qualitative Exploration

CASE STUDY

July-August, 2011

Background & Objectives

Following on baseline research conducted on digital magazines on the iPad in 2010, Condé Nast embarked on new round of research to further explore the user experience.

- ❖ The scope of this year's study expanded to include additional titles and probed users' experience reading magazines across platforms and devices.
- ❖ The primary objectives were to:
 - Explore perceptions of current app offerings
 - Understand the user experience
 - Compare rich digital platforms against PDF, web, and Kindle/Nook offerings
 - Explore brand engagement
- ❖ The qualitative research was used to guide subsequent quantitative research to:
 - Point up the key areas to probe
 - To optimize wording and framing of questions in surveys

Methodology

Prior to this study there was no existing methodology for exploring content accessed on tablets. **SayWhat** developed the following method:

- ❖ We conducted Individual Interviews (IDI's) to explore the user experience at the individual magazine level and;
- ❖ Focus Groups to explore the gestalt of the user experience across platforms
- ❖ The sample was split across three segments defined as:
 1. **Market Prospects**
 - Newsstand buyers of client's print publications
 - Print Subscribers of client's publications
 - Single issue purchaser of client's mag apps
 2. **App Only Subscribers** → subscribed to client title via online app but have no print subscription
 3. **Dual Subscribers** → used print subscription to client title to obtain app subscription

Key Findings

- ❖ Increased use of tablets outside the home but there is room for improvement in discovery of digital magazines.
- ❖ Interactive elements inspire interest and enjoyment, but they often go unnoticed.
- ❖ Many view interactivity in digital magazines as the nexus of present and future: “the future is now.”
- ❖ Digital magazines are having an impact on readers’ affinity to “their” magazine brands. Brand loyalists report a deepening relationship with the magazine brand as a result.

Tablet Usage & Discovery of Digital Magazines

- ❖ Users are carrying their tablets outside the home more than they were a year ago. And they have expanded their app collections to include more productivity tools which allow them to substitute the iPad for netbooks and laptops much of the time.
- ❖ They mostly spend time playing games, watching video and TV entertainment, social networking, consuming news, stoking hobbies, shopping, paying bills and reading.
- ❖ Digital magazines appear to play an increasing role in tablet usage among those with digital magazine experience. And market prospects indicated digital magazines exceeded their expectations after exposure during the interviews.
- ❖ There appears to be room to improve discovery of digital magazine issues, especially among market prospects.
 - Unless they specifically seek out magazine titles, they report little awareness of places where they can browse for magazines virtually.

The Challenge of Interactivity

- ❖ Some interactive elements in digital magazines went unnoticed.
 - Reasons for lack of recognition included:
 - Preoccupation with magazine content
 - Not expecting interactivity
 - Subtlety of cues to interactive features
- ❖ After exposure to interactive elements, interest was generally very high if the content with which they were associated was also of interest.
- ❖ Paradoxically, many indicated they preferred magazines with interactivity over flat versions, and that they value interactive elements—but that flat PDF versions of print magazines are also a perfectly acceptable alternative.
 - The “novelty factor” among consumers may play a role in obscuring the differences in levels of interactivity across platforms at this stage in the development of the digital magazine market.

The Future Is Now

- ❖ The value of interactive elements seems to increase with the reader's level of interest and engagement with the content.
 - In a few instances the interactive element seemed to entice interest in content that would otherwise be browsed over. But most of the time it appeared to be the other way around: interest in content motivated exploration of interactive elements.
- ❖ Some respondents value the interactive elements as “extras” but not essentials.
- ❖ Many view interactivity in digital magazines as the nexus of present and future: “the future is now.”
 - They expect interactivity to become the norm in the near future.
 - They believe that soon these elements won't be “extras” but standard features of all digital magazines.

Evolving Relationships with Magazine Brands

- ❖ Digital magazines are having an impact on readers' affinity to "their" magazine brands.
 - Many reported increased consumption of content in digital issues because they are more engaged and are spending more time with each issue.
 - Many reported their connection to the magazine brand had strengthened as a result of experiencing digital versions because they felt closer to the voice of the editor, and they felt more in control of their experience.
 - It had the effect of making some feel like they were customizing their experience of the magazine.
 - Several reported the iPad has sparked a discovery and rediscovery of magazines.
- ❖ Brand loyalists described having a deeper experience of the magazine in its digital format, which, in turn, is increasing their attachment to the magazine brand.



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