

The Future of Digital Magazine Publishing

Dora SANTOS SILVA^{a,1}

^a*Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas da Universidade Nova de Lisboa*

Abstract. The publishing industry went through more structural changes in the past ten years than in the whole second half of XX century. In magazine publishing in particular, since the emergence of the first sites to complement the print edition in the 1990s to the release of iPad in 2010, these media have enjoyed numerous opportunities provided by new technologies, which, in turn, demanded the reinvention of editorial and business models. This article seeks to bring together some of the opportunities that digital magazines should embrace (or try) to be sustainable in the future and get the readers' attention and loyalty.

Keywords. Digital journalism, digital magazine publishing, magazine journalism, business models, digital magazine publishing software.

Introduction

Digital magazines are increasingly capturing the attention of the media industry due to their ability to attract readers through interactive content, without involving high costs in production and distribution as traditional magazines. In 2007, MediaIDEAS (Renard, 2007: 2) had already suggested that in 2022 digital magazines would represent 30% of the magazine market and in 2032 75% of all periodicals market.

The Magazine Handbook 2010/2011, an annual report of The Association of Media Magazine about trends of publishing, concluded last year that consumption is growing, being surpassed only by the use of the Internet, 50% of subscribers renew their magazine subscription, including digital, 61% of new subscribers choose only the digital version and 60% of U.S. consumers have great intentions to buy a tablet to read periodicals in the next three years.

According to the same media institution, but regarding its latest Magazine Media Factbook (2011/2012), the next numbers seem promising (2012: 14): 58% of digital magazine readers read their edition the day they get it; 51% of consumers between 18-34 are reading magazines electronically; 41% of those who have downloaded apps have paid for magazine content and 91% of e-reader owners are magazine readers.

Almost every print magazine has an online presence, but the number of digital-only magazines is also increasing. However, the fact that a print magazine has an online presence doesn't mean that its "online version" is a digital "magazine". Be aware of this is crucial for the study of this media.

¹ Corresponding author: Dora Santos Silva, Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas da Universidade Nova de Lisboa; E-mail: dora.santos@netcabo.pt

1. What is a digital magazine?

Due to the economic importance of digital magazines, the Audit Bureau of Circulations integrated the definition of this medium in its latest report (March 2011): a digital magazine involves the distribution of a magazine content by electronic means; it may be a replica (of the printable version) or a non-replica.

However, this definition is far from being updated. A digital magazine should not be, in fact, a replica of the print magazine in PDF, as was common practice in recent years. It should, rather, be a magazine that is, in essence, interactive and created from scratch to a digital platform (Internet, mobile phones, private networks, iPad, or other devices).

As the print magazine, a digital magazine is distinguished by six key features: it has a beginning, middle and end; it is edited and curated (has an editorial alignment, is divided into sections previously established); it has an aesthetic treatment much more appealing than a newspaper; it's date-stamped (it has series of issues published in a specific date, usually weekly, monthly or quarterly); its contents are permanent, suffering only minimal corrections; it is periodic (created to have subsequent issues).

Following this, we can conclude that many publishers use the expression "digital magazine" wrongly, just to characterize a site or the online presence of a print magazine, even if they don't have a beginning, a middle or an end or periodic issues.

Josh Gordon goes further and speaks of interactive digital magazines (2011: 9) to rule out the simple PDF replicas. He lists three characteristics that distinguish them:

- a) interactive digital magazines are designed to compete for the attention of online readers, not print readers, so pages are formatted to be viewed on a computer screen with larger type, contain "digital extras", such as flash animation, embedded video, etc.;
- b) interactive digital magazines are designed for easy interaction between readers and the magazine. For example, readers can share their thoughts, comments, complete a survey, click to play content in the form of digital extras or click to download additional content, register for membership, share the magazine on social media, etc.;
- c) interactive digital magazines contain ads that readers can interact with.

Thus, from the five most common types of digital magazines, we focus on the first three regarding this article:

- digital magazines that are not based in the printed version;
- digital-only magazines;
- iPad, Android or iPhone apps of magazine editions;
- PDF replicas of print editions;
- applications for Kindle or Sony eReader.

2. A bit of history

Tony Quinn (2011), editor of Magforum, says that 1982 was the year in which magazines - Acorn User was the pioneer - started to use electronic tools, including e-mail and online alerts. In that same year, Redwood, a publishing company in UK,

threw away the typewriters and introduced the Econet system based on technology from Acorn.

Regarding digital technologies for composition and manipulation of images, the 1980s were also gold: Apple Macintosh (1984), Postscript from Adobe Systems (1984), Apple Laser Writer Printer (1985), Aldus Pagemaker (1985), Adobe Illustrator (1987), Quark Xpress (1987), Adobe Photoshop (1989) are just a few examples.

In 1992, Adobe's PDF technology was launched; in 1994, the Daily Telegraph defined itself as the first newspaper on the Web; in 1995, a company called IPC launched Unzip, the first interactive magazine on CD-ROM; thereafter, most of the magazines began to develop their sites and media companies to analyze the flow of online content.

In the early years of the XXI century, media started to distribute digital facsimiles of original print versions in PDF format. In 2006, magazines began to distribute downloadable content for mobile and distributed via YouTube. In 2007, the first exclusively digital magazines, based on page flip technology (such as MonkeyMag or JellyFish) were launched. Since 2008, digital magazines started to be distributed in virtual shops – Zinio is the largest one at the moment. The market for software magazine publishing also expanded, from the free ones (such as Issuu or Yudu) to the premium companies with customized softwares, such as Z-Mags, Page-Flip, Texterity or NxtBook.

The emergence of mobile devices, in particular the iPad, announced in January 2010 and in stores on 3rd April, has brought more hope for this industry and increased digital magazines potentials and opportunities. It was one of the most eagerly anticipated product arrivals. Although it was not the first tablet personal computer to have appeared on the market or the first electronic reading device, its success derives from the fact that it combines the functionality of the personal computer, the intuitive interface that consumers had become familiar with from other Apple products such as the iPhone, and the talent of Apple to mobilize both the world's media and its own user base to publicize its new products (Flew, 2010: 2). In contrast to e-readers, iPad has a large colour screen of almost ten inches, readers can check e-mail, listen to the radio, watch a film, track calories, see the headlines, etc. On the same year, Google launched a mobile operating system called Android, and it is available in some tablets and smartphones.

The first magazines to have an iPad edition were Time (launched on 12th April 2010) and Wired (18th June 2010). Between April 2010 and April 2011, the number of magazine iPad editions grew from 36 to 485, being the most extensions of print editions with interactive contents and other digital extras. The New Yorker was the first magazine to use in-app subscription. In Portugal, magazines "Visão" and "Caras" were the first ones with an iPad edition (in December, 2010).

In magazines, unlike newspapers, the aesthetic treatment requires more attention - the magazines are loved and saved because they can be enjoyed, played, and "felt". Thus, the experience of reading magazines on an iPad or on the Web cannot escape what differentiates them: the beauty and aesthetic pleasure of consumption. Usability and aesthetics must therefore go hand together.

Just as digital magazines for Web environment, also the presence of a magazine on the iPad requires "rethinking participation and experience of the reader, the workflow and the creative process of the editorial and design teams (Kawohl, 2011: 3). The interfaces have to be prepared to be touched and consider the "fat finger" in the size of links and buttons.

The report on the usability of websites and tablets by Jakob Nielsen (Nielsen, 2011) points out however several problems with the interfaces for the iPad editions of digital magazines, including:

- a) the areas "touchable" are very small in many applications without few interval separating them;
- b) there is a high rate of accidental activations due to unintended touches;
- c) low rate of discovery, because the active areas do not appear "touchable";
- d) readers do not like to write on the iPad, avoiding registration processes.

The same report indicates the main trend of magazines on the iPad care to increase the immersive experience of the reader, through a more intuitive navigation, greater use of hyperlinks and widgets, visible existence table of contents and a button to return.

3. A brief overview of potentials and opportunities

In this age, when digital and creativity can be combined in the most appealing ways, digital magazines have many opportunities to make a difference both in editorial and business models. We use a simple methodology, looking to some magazines and see how they use these potentials. In the next chapter, we look at three specific digital magazines.

3.1. Digital magazines can attract readers attention through creative ways of storytelling, besides the numerous possibilities of interaction

Today, digital journalists can choose the most appropriate tools to tell their story, not having to stick to the text, image or a certain number of characters. The experience of reading can be enriched in a number of ways and page flip technology simulates even the traditional act of passing through pages. Currently, any digital magazine, even the less interactive, gives the reader the chance to click on links that refer to sites mentioned in the text or in commercials, go directly to one of the pages through the index, send an e-mail automatically to any address mentioned in the magazine or simply "zoom".

Options for magazine or interest groups subscriptions, augmented reality, digital games, special apps, social media, online shopping, contributions to the magazine's content or special access to some information organized in layers are some of the possibilities that digital magazines (and also their advertisers) can explore to enhance interactivity with the reader.

3.2. Digital magazines have a tremendous broadcasting potential

Unlike a print magazine, whose geographical expansion depends on the physical distribution, a digital magazine can potentially achieve anyone with Internet access. Moreover, the very "discovery" of a digital magazine is facilitated by search engines, directories and social media. Subscribers can access their first issue digitally within minutes of subscribing, rather than waiting weeks for a hard copy to arrive. If the publisher offers digital sampling, readers can have free access to a portion to determine whether or not they want to subscribe.

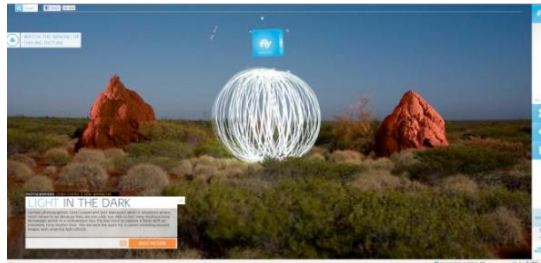


Figure 1. iFly Magazine (www.iflymagazine.com), KLM magazine, won the award for best digital magazine in "Travel" category in the Digital Magazine Awards 2010. The publication uses flash technology to represent the editorial concept: an image which occupies the entire screen and small boxes with text. In this screen in particular, readers can click in "Next Picture" to scroll through different images and access a making-off video (in the upper left). On top center, an animation gives readers the chance to subscribe for iFly free. In the top menu, it is possible to share the magazine on Facebook and in the right side menu readers can change the page, access the table of contents and also change the language and country of origin.



Figure 2. All articles in digital in Zoo Zoom Magazine (www.zoozoom.com) can be shared through more than 30 social media with a simple click on top right menu.

3.3. Digital magazines can be read and stored anywhere

From an iPad, a laptop or a mobile phone, readers can have access to every digital magazine they want, without problems of space or weight. On the other hand, international subscribers can receive magazines quickly and cost-effectively.

3.4. Readers can search digital editions like in websites

Access to back issues is also much easier. Readers can search current issues and archives, as well as saving information directly on the computer or send articles to friends, for example.

3.5. Digital magazines give readers the change to look, try and buy

Especially in fashion, travel or gadget magazines, the digital era gives the possibility to see objects at 360 degrees, zoom them, “try” them (see figure 3) and buy them in a matter of seconds through a security transaction.



Figure 3. In this page of Viv Magazine (www.vivmag.com), readers can try different shoes and pants through the mannequin. By clicking on the image, they access to detailed information about the item, such as price and composition, and can buy it online.

3.6. Digital magazines can more easily be driven to market niches

Due to lower production costs, publishers can create niche magazines that attract readers and advertisers that are appealing to very specific.

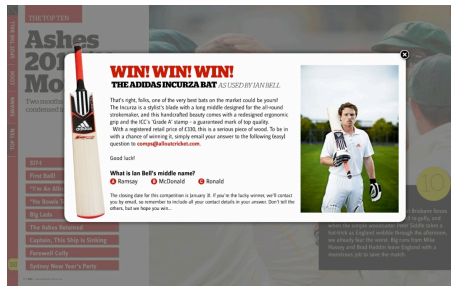


Figure 4. All Out Cricket Magazine <http://www.alloutcricket.co.uk/> was created for cricket fans. On this particular page, reader interacts with the menu to access their content. Clicking on the first, an automatically pop up arises with an invitation to participate in a promotion.

3.7. Digital magazines can explore new potentially successful business models

The electronic edition of a magazine can be rather cheaper than the print one, because it saves on costs related to printing and distribution, representing these sometimes almost 50% of total costs. Besides this, publishers can create niche magazines that attract specific readers and new advertisers, offering them also new ways to advertise. Sure the risks are obvious, but even if advertisers represent only a tiny percentage of revenues, publishers can explore many new business models, diversifying its revenue, as premium content, e-shops, special services, crowd funding, e-books or special editions, and so on... Opportunities are just outside the door.

4. Three digital magazine profiles – FlypMedia, Magnética Magazine and The New Yorker

4.1. FlypMedia (www.flypmedia.com) – “Read. See. Listen. Interact.”

Flyp was for a period of time the metaphor for the future of journalism, and even if it was canceled in 2009 due to lack of funds (its largest investor, Alfonso Romo, eventually withdrew sponsorship) it remains one of the best examples of what a digital magazine can be. Founded in 2007 by Jim Gaines, a former editor of “Time”, “People” and “Life”, presented itself as a "dynamic magazine, online and multimedia, which combines text, video, audio, animation and interactivity into a new form of storytelling". Its signature was precisely "More than a Magazine." The 35 editions, devoted to central issues of Americans, like politics, health and education, are still online.

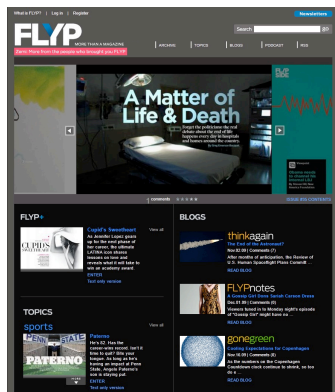


Figure 5. Flyp Magazine is available in the upper area of the site, which has, in addition to several highlights of the latest issue, highlights of blogs. In the top menu, you can access the archive of issues, do a search by topic, listen to podcasts and subscribe to feeds.

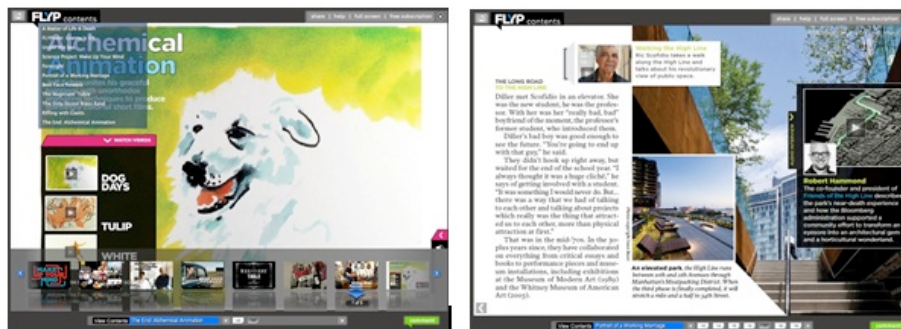


Figure 6. The publishing platform uses flash technology. Through the interface, it is possible, from the top menu, to access the contents of the magazine, share them, consult the "Help", view the magazine in full screen and even subscribe for this free publication. In the bottom menu, there is the option to show pages on carousel and a button to view and / or enter comments. Flyp Magazine is adapted to a computer screen, so you can read the contents without making "zoom". In the main text, the page gives the reader the option to access more information and digital extras.

4.2. Magnética Magazine (www.magneticamagazine.com) – “An online magazine produced on a global scale”

Magnetic Magazine was the first Portuguese magazine exclusively digital. Launched in December 2008 by the publisher Edit. Set Go, it is published monthly and it is devoted to dissemination of “ideas, concepts and magnetizing projects”.



Figure 7. The magazine uses flash technology and is in the upper area of the site. Under the current edition, you can access content updated daily. Compared to FlypMedia the use of digital tools is significantly lower. The font and layout were designed from scratch to the screen of a computer, but the degree of interactivity is minimal, giving only the possibility to access directly the mentioned sites, see one or two videos per issue on average and go through some animations. There is, however, a consistent strategy of interaction with readers: the opportunity to edit a page, promoting an illustration gallery online, boosting the Facebook page and quizzes online are some examples.

4.3. The New Yorker – iPad edition

The New Yorker was the first to use the in-app subscription system. This means that it is not necessary to go to the Apple store to buy its editions. Being an extension of the existing print magazine, the iPad edition this does not present a satisfactory degree of interactivity, using only links and some extra photos, in general. In addition, navigation through the pages themselves is not very intuitive, because the reader has to drag down the screen to read more, but the presence of content at the bottom is not always identified.

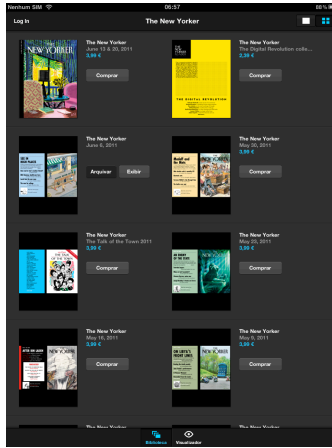


Figure 8. The New Yorker in-app subscription system.

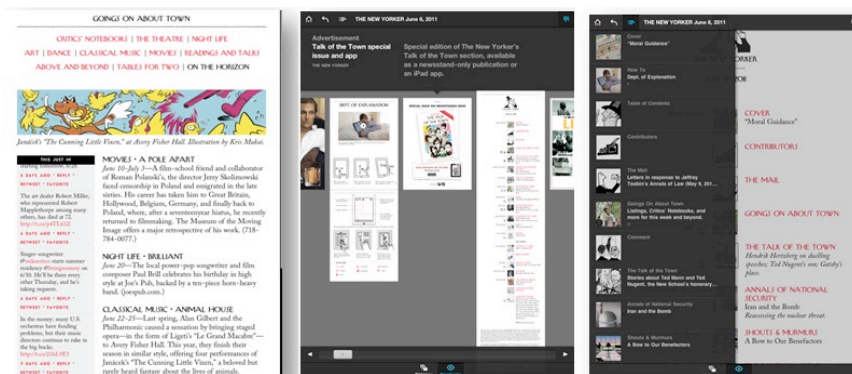


Figure 9. The New Yorker interface is very simple: at the top, you can access the index, returning to the starting point and view all pages. At the bottom there is a scroll that tells the reader what extent is reading (though not actually fully complies with this role).

5. A brief conclusion

The digital environment is rich in opportunities for digital magazines. However, if on the one hand, we are witnessing a growing number of these applications and a hopeful enthusiasm surrounding the presence on the iPad, the truth is that, on the other hand, the publishing industry has yet to develop a viable business model to sustain the costs of a digital magazine. The result is, of course, the poor exploitation of digital tools and the excessive use of replicas of printed versions of journals. Nevertheless, it is possible to conclude that these new formats of magazines have real advantages over traditional. Readers are just beginning to realize that. And their expectations are growing.

References

- [1] MPA – The Association of Magazine Media, 2011/2012 Magazine Media Factbook, MPA, New York, 2012.
- [2] The Association of Magazine Media, *The Magazine Handbook 2010/2011*, AMM, New York, 2011.
- [3] Flew, T., *What will the iPad deliver for newspapers?*, 2010, retrieved 20th December 2011, from <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/38699/2/38699.pdf>
- [4] Gaumont, Adam, SEO for magazines: optimizing content for Digital Publication, British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, 2007, retrieved 2nd January 2012, from <http://ir.lib.sfu.ca/bitstream/1892/11368/1/ETD4845.pdf>
- [5] González, Juan et al., Las revistas electrónicas: características, fuentes de información y médios de acceso, *Anales de Documentación*, 6 (2003), 155-186, retrieved 2nd January 2012, from <http://revistas.um.es/analesdoc/article/view/1971>
- [6] Gordon, Josh, The case for advertising in interactive digital magazines, 2011, retrieved 12nd January 2012, from <http://www.nxtbookmedia.com>
- [7] Grueskin, Bill et al, The story so far: what we know about the business of digital journalism, New York, Columbia Journalism School, 2011, retrieved 4th January 2012, from http://www.cjr.org/the_business_of_digital_journalism
- [8] Hanley, Aarna, Magazines on or off line? *3PM Journal of Digital Research & Publishing* (2010), 2-11, retrieved 6th January 2012, from www.artichokewebdesign.com/ARIN6912/3PMjournal_2010s2.pdf
- [9] Hilderman, Kristen, Life after print: revising the digital editorial strategy in magazine publishing, British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, 2011, retrieved 17th October 2011, from <https://theses.lib.sfu.ca/thesis/etd6732>
- [10] Honeywill, Paul et al., *Digital Magazine Design with Case-Studies*, Bristol, Intellect Books, 2002.
- [11] Jue, Kaitlin, Major Trends in Digital Magazines, California, California Polytechnic State University, 2009, retrieved 19th October 2011, from <http://digitalcommons.calpoly.edu/grcsp/2>
- [12] Natansohn, Graciela et al, Revistas online: do papel às telinhas, *Revista Lumina vol. 4, n.º 1* (2010), retrieved 27th October 2011, from www.ppgcomufff.bem-vindo.net/lumina
- [13] Natansohn, Graciela, O jornalismo de revista no cenário da mobilidade, *Revista Prisma n.º 12* (2010), retrieved 27th October 2011, from <http://portal.doc.ua.pt/journals/index.php/prismacom/article/view/758>
- [14] Navasky, Victor; Lerner, Evan, Magazines and their Websites, Columbia, Columbia Journalism Review, 2010.
- [15] Nielsen, Jakob; Budiu, Raluca, Usability of iPad Apps and Websites, Freemont, Nielsen Norman Group, 2011.
- [16] Quinn, Tony, Digital magazines: history and development from teletext to iPad, 2011, retrieved 7th December 2011, from www.magforum.com/digital_history.htm
- [17] Renard, David, The definition of a print and digital magazine, 2007, retrieved 7th December 2011, from <http://www.mediaideas.net>
- [18] Ryberg, Teresa, The Future of the Digital Magazine, 2010, retrieved 7th December 2011, from http://www.nada.kth.se/utbildning/grukth/exjobb/rapportlistor/2010/rapporter10/ryberg_teresa_10140.pdf
- [19] Señor, Juan; Wilpers, John, Innovations in Magazines 2010 World Report, 2010, retrieved 7th December 2011, from www.innovation-mediaconsulting.com/FIPP-2010
- [20] Silber, Tony, What is a magazine, retrieved 7th December 2011, from <http://www.foliomag.com/2009/what-magazine>