

All the News That Fits on Tablets

An Analysis of News Consumption and Best Practices

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Abstract

In light of the biggest media revolution since the debut of radio and television, this paper seeks to analyze whether newspapers and magazines are effectively using iPads and other tablets to serve readers and remain competitive. This will include examining whether news organizations are making the most of the technology, explaining the production and financial challenges, determining best practices, looking at the future and assessing what attracts and keeps readers.

Keywords: iPad, tablet, newspapers, magazines, app, application, digital, mobile

Introduction

Print isn't dead; it's digital. Just look at the growing number of readers who are tapping, swiping, pinching and zooming content on tablets. Many still read traditional newspapers and magazines. However, some are strictly digital and have abandoned paper altogether. Publishers predict that a larger segment of their audiences will fall in this latter category as technological, economic and societal forces continue to transform media consumption habits and business models.

"Our traditional business has been disrupted," said M. Scott Havens, president of *The Atlantic*. "We're no longer a magazine; we're a platform."¹

Like Havens, many media executives no longer call their newspapers and magazines, newspapers and magazines. They are more likely to use words like platform, brand, product and content. These words are also moving over to the editorial side, where many editors and staff writers had traditionally shunned them. Instead of saying readers, Alfred Edmond Jr., senior vice president and multimedia editor-at-large at *Black Enterprise* magazine, now says audience.²

In light of the biggest media revolution since the debut of radio and television, this paper seeks to analyze whether newspapers and magazines are effectively using tablets to serve readers and remain competitive. This will include examining whether news organizations are making the most of the technology, explaining the production and financial challenges, determining best practices, looking at the future and assessing what attracts and keeps readers.

One challenge of this revolution is that people have more power and choices as

legacy media transitions from its traditional one-way conversation to a two-way conversation increasingly led by consumers. “We take control as the media enters our lives,” explained Henry Jenkins, a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and author of *Convergence Culture*.³

This means that media organizations must be more nimble and creative. Magazines have been forced to adapt their leisurely production cycle of turning around an issue in three months or more into a 24/7 schedule that integrates print and digital platforms. For example, the bombing at the Boston Marathon in April 2013 became a breaking news story for *Runner’s World magazine*, which also added “multimedia enhancements and bonus content not available elsewhere” to the iPad version of a special issue on the marathon in July.⁴ To deal with the accelerated news cycle, *The Atlantic* and *Esquire* came up with an interim plan. In addition to their monthly tablet applications (apps), they introduced weekly tablet editions in mid-2013 to respond faster to the news of the day by bridging the longer lead time of their magazines and the immediacy of their websites.

“We’re tasked with innovating at a much more rapid pace than in the past,” Havens said of *The Atlantic*. “We’re continually thinking about adding new skill sets, new products and new organizational structures.”⁵

Background on Tablet Ownership

While tablets have been around for two decades, they did not take off until the introduction of the iPad in April 2010.⁶ In May 2010, 3% of Americans owned a tablet, rising to 4% four months later in September, according to “Generations and Their Gadgets,” a 2011 report by the Pew Internet & American Life Project.⁷ Apple sold 15

million iPads during the first year.⁸ Since then, Apple's market share of tablet sales has dropped from 81% in 2011 to 52% in 2012 with the introduction of various Android devices—some smaller and cheaper than the iPad, prompting Apple to follow suit with its iPad Mini.⁹ Androids made up 61% of tablets shipped globally in the third quarter of 2012, compared to less than 1% for the same period in 2010. Apple is still a dominant player but less so, with sales dropping from 17 million iPads in its June quarter for 2012 to 14.6 million for the same period in 2013.¹⁰ Now that consumers no longer have to pay \$500 or more for a tablet, more of them are trying tablets with pricetags below \$200 in some cases.

The result is that a third of all Americans now own tablets, according to Pew's "State of the News Media 2013."¹¹ In another Pew report, "Future of Mobile News," nearly 60% of respondents said their tablets led them to consume more news.¹²

"Tablets are going to be an important part of our future; there's no doubt about that," said Arnie Robbins, executive director of the American Society of News Editors and former editor of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*.¹³

Newspaper and magazine executives went even further in the "2012 Digital Publishing Survey: How Media Companies Are Innovating and Investing in Cross-Platform Opportunities" by the Alliance for Audited Media (AAM), formerly the Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC). In the survey, 63% of respondents agreed that "tablets are the most important digital channel for their publication's future."¹⁴

On a typical day, Pew reported, 92% of Americans obtained news from multiple platforms and only 7% used one platform. Readers using the tablet alone spent 51 minutes

obtaining news on a typical weekday. Multi-platform readers said they spent 51 minutes obtaining news on their smartphones, 56 minutes with print, 71 minutes on tablets and 76 minutes on laptop or desktop computers.¹⁵ In the Reynolds Journalism Institute's Media Consumption Survey, 60% of respondents who used large tablets preferred them to printed newspapers and many respondents used tablets in a similar manner as the evening newspaper.¹⁶

To cater to the latter audience, many newspapers have essentially resurrected evening editions for a new digital era. This comes years after bloody battles killed off afternoon dailies and transformed their cities into one-newspaper towns on a.m. cycles. It's certainly a different 24/7 day.

The good news for many publications is that they might finally be able to reap some degree of success from pay walls. The Pew study on the "Future of Mobile News" indicates that tablet adoption could expand revenue streams for news organizations; a third of tablet users purchased digital subscriptions after acquiring their devices.¹⁷

Literature Review and Theoretical Frameworks

Scholarly research on tablets as news devices is limited, because of the tiny window and rapid change within those three years since the introduction of Apple's iPad in mid-2010. In the Winter 2013 issue of the *Newspaper Research Journal*, the article "Few Students Willing to Pay for Tablet News Content" focuses on the pros and cons of monetizing information previously available for free. This is a key challenge for companies experimenting with various revenue models to ensure their survival.

Another group of researchers noted that media organizations “should focus on understanding how to create experiences across multiple platforms,” including tablets, in “Focusing on the Reader: Engagement Trumps Satisfaction.” Engagement, a buzzword that has grown in importance with near life-or-death implications, “represents the cumulative experience of the readers across the entire range of ways that content affects their lives.” To drive home their point, the researchers pointed out that newspapers alone have lost “\$1.6 billion in annual reporting and editing capacity since 2000, or roughly 30%.”¹⁸

Given such losses, any hesitancy on the part of newspapers to innovate would be understandable, said Wilson Lowrey in “Journalism Innovation and the Ecology of News Production: Institutional Tendencies” in the Winter 2012-13 issue of *Journalism & Communication Monographs*. Disruptive innovation in particular — similar to what companies are experiencing with tablets — can create an environment of uncertainty, stretch limited resources, thrust companies out of established roles into uncharted territory and cause them to lose traditional customers.¹⁹

In terms of theoretical frameworks, the usability research of noted expert Jakob Nielsen, Ph.D., examined specific attributes of the iPad during its first two years of existence. Nielsen and fellow researcher Raluca Badiu studied features of pilot iPad apps and then how these features were modified, partly by observing users in focus groups.²⁰

The diffusion of innovations theory is also relevant to tablet readership. In his book of the same name, Everett M. Rogers said, “Diffusion is the process in which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system.” Rogers defined innovation “as an idea, practice or object that is perceived as new

by an individual or other unit of adoption.” The diffusion of an innovation in a system tends to be part of a technology cluster and is interdependent upon other advances, he added.²¹ As such, the tablet could be seen as part of a technology cluster with the Internet, mobile devices such as smartphones and, as part of this study, their primary multimedia platforms: newspapers and magazines. In these clusters, some media executives differentiate the smartphone with its small screen as an innovation for more immediate news consumption. While tablets serve a similar function, they are also ideal for more leisurely news consumption. Rogers also pointed out that:

Getting a new idea adopted, even when it has many advantages, is difficult.

Many innovations require a lengthy period of many years from the time when they become available to the time when they are widely adopted.

Therefore, a common problem for many individuals and organizations is how to speed up the rate of diffusion of an innovation.²²

Similarly, the uses and gratification theory of radio researcher Hadley Cantril, associate director of the Office of Radio Research at Princeton University in the early forties,²³ is ideal in helping to understand what attracts and keeps tablet readers, and how they use tablets of various types and sizes. “Uses and gratifications is an approach to investigate what draws audiences to the kind of media and content that satisfy their social and psychological needs,” Joseph Jai-sung Yoo explained, citing Cantril in his research on mobile technology and the digital divide.²⁴ In “Uses and Gratifications Theory in the 21st Century,” Thomas E. Ruggiero also noted the transformative nature of the Internet in leading to “profound changes in media users’ personal and social habits and roles.”²⁵

Indeed, “profound” is how many media industry leaders have described the adoption of tablets for reading newspapers and magazines in the three years since the debut of the iPad in April 2010.

Methodology

This study incorporated uses and gratifications, diffusion of innovations and Nielsen’s usability research as theoretical frameworks to address the following research questions:

RQ1: What attracts and keeps tablet readers?

RQ2: How are newspapers and magazines using tablets to serve their audiences and maximize competitiveness?

The research included quantitative measures from an original Tablet Readership Survey and existing industry surveys of media companies and tablet users. Qualitative analysis incorporated interviews with industry leaders and descriptive analysis to explore interactivity, best practices, whether news organizations are making the most of the technology along with the production and financial challenges.

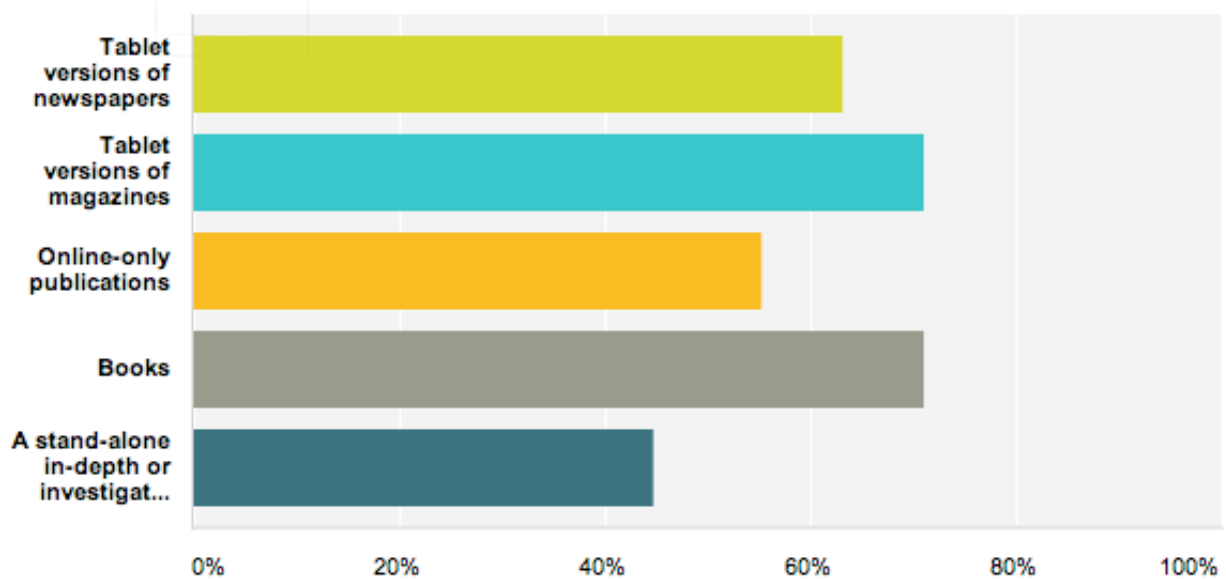
The Tablet Readership Survey was developed based on Nielsen’s usability research. It used a Likert scale with additional questions to drill deeper on what currently appeals to readers in terms of content and interactivity. It focused solely on tablet users and only those who use the device to read newspaper and magazine content. It was distributed via social media and email. The data cited in this paper from the ongoing user survey are preliminary, based on results from 50 respondents during June and July 2013. Because of

its limitations, there is ample room for additional research in the future. (See Appendix for a sample of the tablet readership survey.)

In terms of media companies, data is derived from leading industry studies that were comprehensive and perfectly suited for the needs of this paper. They included “The State of the Media 2013” and “Tablet Ownership 2013,” both by the Pew Research Center, and the “2012 Digital Publishing Survey: How Media Companies Are Innovating and Investing in Cross-Platform Opportunities” by the Alliance for Audited Media (AAM), formerly the Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC).²⁶

Findings

RQ1: What attracts and keeps tablet readers?

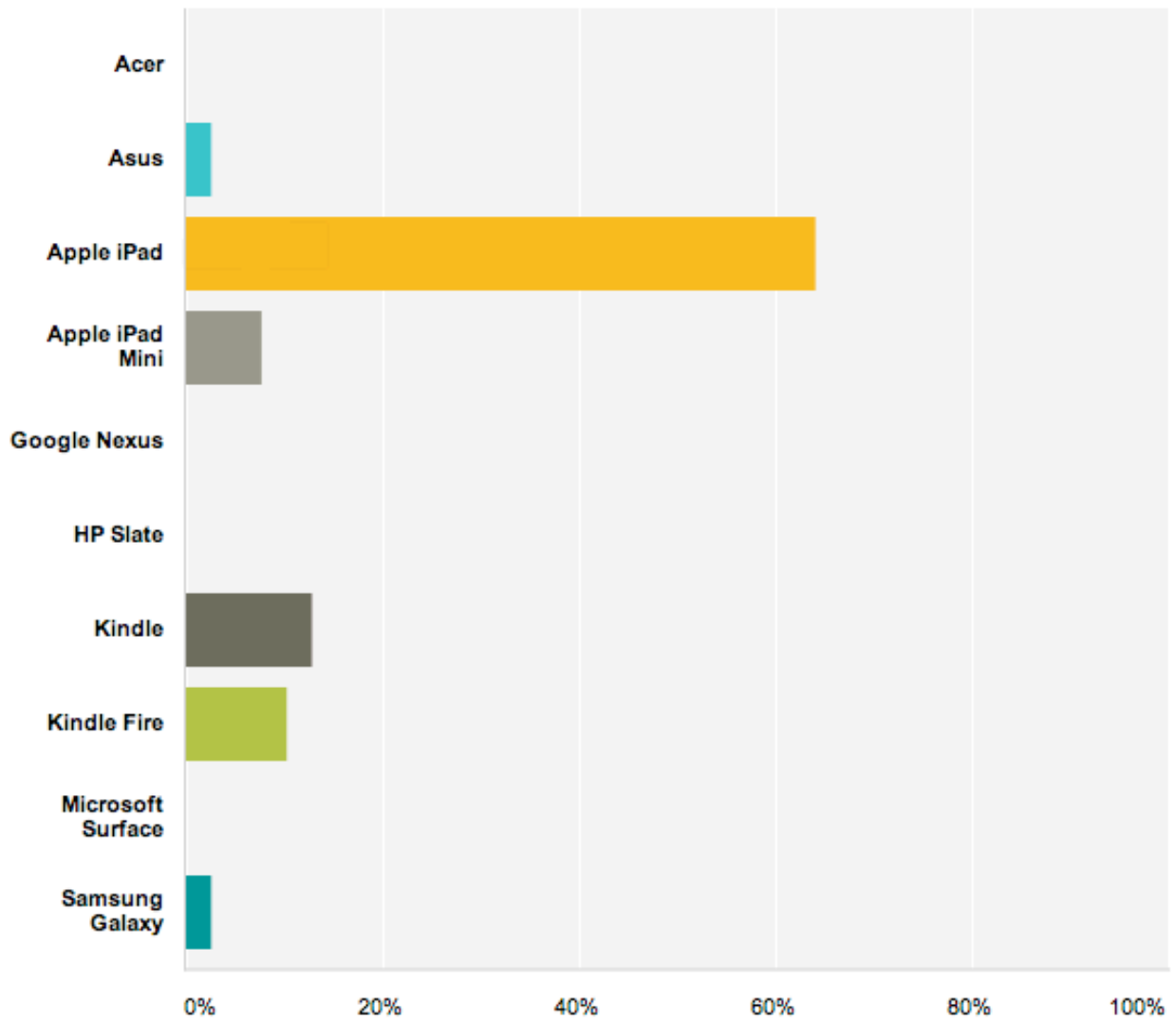


Type of Content; Type of Tablet

Respondents read slightly more books (76.5%) than magazines (73.5%) or newspapers (62%) on tablets. They were able to choose more than one category. About

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44% said they read stand-alone, in-depth or investigative articles. Some respondents also commented that they used tablets to access email, schedules, curated content, Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest and YouTube video. Two-thirds used an Apple iPad or iPad Mini with 26% using Kindles.



Frequency

Thirty-three percent read newspapers and magazines on tablets very or extremely often. Less frequent readers limited tablet use to travel.

Ease of Use

About 43% said the tablet versions of their newspapers were very or extremely user-friendly; 54% shared this view for magazines.

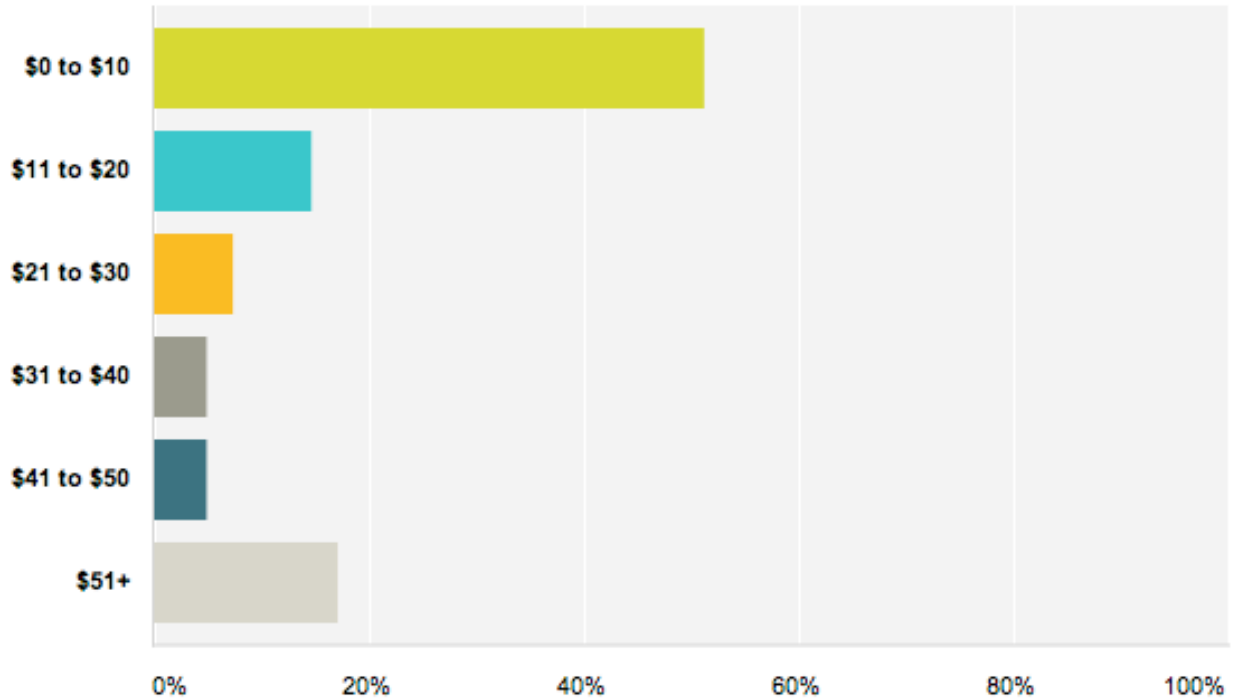
Appealing Features

On a scale of one (“not at all appealing”) to five (“extremely appealing”), respondents rated the following features as the highest:

Viewing and manipulating a page horizontally and vertical	4.11
Navigation button to go immediately to the table of contents	4.11
Page viewer to scroll through the issue	4.09
Being able to click on a magazine cover line to go to the article	4.08
Bonus content	4.03
Data visualization/informational graphics, maps, diagrams, etc.	4.03
Having the same content in the print version	3.97
Interactive table of contents	3.97
Videos	3.95
Audio	3.81
Ability to share content through social media	3.81
In-depth and/or investigative articles to read at your leisure	3.78
Slide shows	3.78

Features that ranked the lowest, as slightly to moderately appealing, included animated or cascading headlines/type (2.57) and tap-to-buy links for products and services (2.78).

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Spending on Tablet Apps and Subscriptions

Slightly more than half of respondents spent \$10 or less annually to read newspapers and magazines on tablets, with 19% spending \$51 or more each year and 16% spending \$11 to \$20. Checking all that applied, here's the percentage of respondents who said, "I'm willing to pay":

One fee to have access to a publication on all platforms — print, phones, tablets, laptop/desktop (80%)

Separately for a subscription of several months or a year (43%)

Per tablet issue (17%)

Separately for engaging narrative journalism that I can read at my leisure (17%)

Separately for an investigative special report (14.3%)

Separately for specialized, exclusive content, such as sports, fashion or a guide (8.6%)

Suggested Improvements From Respondents

- *Faster download; eliminate bugs; provide ways to get back issues for longer periods (i.e. past 3-6 months for papers and 2 years for magazines).*
- *Brief innovative content.*
- *Easily save or share pages and quotes.*
- *Make moving between pages a more user-friendly process. Some are not very intuitive, and you have to figure out what to do.*
- *Make them free.*
- *Include all content from the print version instead of a curated version.*
- *Larger pix with in-depth cutlines; more compelling heds and sub-heds. More narrative writing.*
- *I would like to be able to copy and paste things from the publication or to click on a word and be able to look it up in the dictionary.*
- *I like e-editions that replicate the newspaper, i.e. Daily Press and Virginian-Pilot examples in my community.*
- *By consistently evolving their platforms via innovative measures.*
- *I miss the actual newspaper layout. Seeing what's the lead on a page, big photos, etc. if there was some way to recreate that.*
- *More interactive video features.*
- *Print! Print! Print!*
- *Make it easier to search for info.*
- *I have honestly unsubscribed to magazines on my tablet because they were not user friendly. ... They try to incorporate scrolling features that just don't work well. All a reader really needs is to be able to turn the page, zoom in and be able to see a text only view.*
- *Offer more audio and video features and ways to communicate about topics raised in articles/features.*

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- *More interactive and aesthetically pleasing. Think outside of the norm when creating the user experience.*
- *Font sizes and interactivity — I want to be able to click on links and videos*
- *Magazines on tablets have too many ads that crowd the screen. Newspapers tend to squeeze more content into a smaller space.*
- *Make more them interactive.*
- *Make it more like the print product.*
- *Magazines need a search function, more distinctive and readable fonts and also organize their guides more like a home page than a table of contents page.*
- *Have pages more closely resemble actual newspapers.*
- *Organized, alphabetized sections; more keywords to click on and ease of back tracking. If several articles are initiated on the same page, have a radio button to click to the next page after the last word.*
- *List of experts and resources, if applicable.*

Demographics

Gender

Female	82.35%
Male	17.65%

Education

Bachelor's degree	52.94%
Graduate degree	41.18%

Annual Household Income

\$30,000 to \$49,999	14.71%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	11.76%

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\$75,000 to \$99,999	32.35%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	17.65%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	2.94%
\$200,000 or higher	2.94%

Age

18 to 24 years old	2.94%
25 to 34 years old	14.71%
35 to 44 years old	11.76%
45 to 54 years old	26.47%
55 to 64 years old	8.82%
65 +	5.88%

RQ2: How are newspapers and magazines using tablets to serve their audiences and maximize competitiveness?

The Audience

Although circulation for newspapers and magazines has been dropping, media experts say the decline doesn't mean that people aren't reading. "The audience model isn't really broken," said Robbins of ASNE. "There's a lot more choices so it's a lot more fragmented." At ASNE's convention in June 2013, Tom Rosenstiel, executive director of the American Press Institute, reinforced the staying power of reading. "Audiences are consuming more news, not less," Rosenstiel said. "The numbers are much more powerful among people who use mobile technology."²⁷

In a joint study by the Pew Research Center and the Economist Group, 31% of tablet readers said that they spent more time with news since obtaining their devices. Another 43% cited growth in the volume of news consumed.²⁸

Mobile devices are also helping to bring down the age of readers, Rosenstiel said, citing Scarborough Research that indicates 59% of people 18 to 24 years old read newspapers each week in print or digitally. The average age of mobile-only readers is 33 years old while the median age of print newspaper readers is 54.²⁹

Tablets users are also helping to expand newspaper audiences in other ways. First of all, roughly half are not reading news printed on paper, according to “Digital: By the Numbers” in Pew’s 2013 State of the News Media report. In addition to serendipitous discovery in digital spaces such as the iTunes Store or Apple Newstand, many readers are attracted to tablet content through social media or publication websites. This could especially be a plus for local newspapers that serve a geographically specific audience, giving them a taste of the reach that larger newspapers have long enjoyed, such as the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times* and *Wall Street Journal*. Some local papers attract readers far beyond their backyards from a mean distance ranging from 65 to 423 miles, Hsiang Iris Chyi wrote in the *Newspaper Research Journal*.³⁰ Even without altering content geographically, these newspapers stand to benefit from outsiders willing to pay for content on tablets.

As smaller newspapers expanded to the Internet, they were in the position of placing local content on a global medium. Generally, local papers have had little incentive to reach out to non-local readers with 90% of their ads coming from local

companies, Chyi said.³¹ However, he added, "A re-evaluation of the value of these online readers is essential."³²

Jim Brady, editor-in-chief of Digital First Media, which operates the Journal Register Company and MediaNews Group, says that the industry can't afford to overlook the audience. "Since the rise of mobile, we have 24/7 access to every one of our consumers; that's a pretty huge win for us," Brady acknowledged. "If we can't figure out what to do with that, then shame on us."³³

Content, Design and Production: The Challenge of Multiple Platforms and Products

"Tablets have forced publishers to think beyond the illusion of the 'infinite web hole' or even the constraints of traditional two to three-column grids for conveying news and information," said Ju-Don Marshall Roberts, a digital media strategist who was formerly managing editor of WashingtonPost.com; general manager and senior vice president for Everyday Health; and executive editor and senior vice president at News Corporation overseeing Beliefnet.com.

"Tablets, at best, support very immersive, interactive experiences," Roberts said. "The explosion of apps that exploit the flexibility of tablets have raised the bar for publishers as well. I believe magazine publishers have done the best job of taking advantage of this. Smart magazine publishers are creating immersive experiences around their stories that allow for seamless multimedia presentations."³⁴

Tablets are especially appealing for magazines like *Sports Illustrated* where fans can hear the roar of the crowd and see the action on the field or court simply by clicking on an article. In a video about SI's app, the narrator, then-editor Terry McDonnell pointed

out that readers could rearrange the lineup to their liking, share it with friends or play a game while watching it on TV. “If you like the SI swimsuit issue, ask yourself, what if it came to life?” he suggested.³⁵ Magazines such as *Wired*, *Marie Claire* and *Martha Stewart’s Living* continue to be pioneers in the “whiz-bang” appeal of tablets by offering elements that maximize tapping, zooming, pinching and swiping motions. They take advantage of the crisp, high resolution on tablets with 360-degree images, stop-action photography, embedded video, animation, slide shows, and data visualization of statistics and complex processes.

For example, in the April 2013 issue of *Wired*, its tech-savvy readers can tap an actor’s name for more details in an informational graphic as part of the article “TV’s Power Has Shifted.” Featuring the type of usability that Jakob Nielsen espouses, *Wired* includes explicit directions — “Touch, then pinch and zoom to explore” — next to a navigational button in an article titled “The Future of Spring Cleaning.” *Wired* started working on its inaugural iPad edition long before the device made its 2010 debut. The app sold 105,000 copies, which exceeded newsstand sales and later leveled off to about 37% of monthly newsstand sales.³⁶

Among newspapers, the *New York Times* stands out with many experts citing the Pulitzer Prize-winning story “Snow Fall: The Avalanche at Tunnel Creek” for its interactivity and creativity. The package included a mini documentary, videos of survivors, audio, photos, interactive maps and a simulation of the avalanche. However, this interactivity wasn’t limited to tablets. The *Times* offered readers the same “Snow Fall” experience across platforms. While the *Times* wants to take advantage of the tablet’s

attributes, it doesn't give readers bells and whistles for the sake of using bells and whistles, said Kamal Grey, mobile product manager at the *New York Times*. "At the end of the day, they're coming to us for news, and we want to display the news in the best possible way," Grey said.³⁷

The *Boston Globe* has offered readers interactive features and historical highlights pegged to Red Sox participation in the All-Star Game, said Bennie DiNardo, deputy managing editor for multimedia, who is responsible for digital strategy and editorial operations of the free Boston.com and BostonGlobe.com, which has 40,000 subscribers who pay for multiplatform access.³⁸ The *San Jose Mercury News* released an end-of-life app called "The Cost of Dying." The *Washington Post* produced an array of political apps. The *Denver Post* created apps for sports, snow reports, daily deals and "10 Things to Do in Colorado." And several Digital First Media papers collaborated on an app for the 150th anniversary of the Gettysburg Address. In the AAM survey, 31% of newspaper and magazine executives said they offered single-topic apps; 21% offered "unique content unrelated to print edition."³⁹

With their smaller screens, smartphones are handy for quick hits: sport scores, stock prices, breaking news alerts, said Steve Buttry, digital transformation editor for Digital First Media. The larger screens of tablets make them more conducive to leisurely reading, whether relaxing at home or traveling. "A lot of newspapers have an iPad edition that's like the evening newspaper," Buttry said. "They've got fresh news geared for that audience." This includes the *Boston Globe* and the *San Jose Mercury News*.

Newspapers and magazines also hope to increase their release of customized apps

and other in-depth projects for tablets. “We know that people read books on tablets all the times,” Buttry said. “I think it’s going to help long-form journalism eventually.”⁴⁰ As part of its relaunch, the *New Republic* made it possible for readers to start an in-depth article on a tablet and return to it on another mobile device or computer.⁴¹

Fully 78% of tablet news users read in-depth articles at least sometimes on their device. Moreover, most of those consumers, 61%, said they read two to three articles in a sitting, while 17% read four or more. A vast majority, 72%, said they often read in-depth articles they did not set out to read, or what is known in the media as serendipity.

All of this is a departure from previous assumptions about “the search-driven, quick-hit readership of the desktop era of digital news,” according to the 2013 State of the News Media.

Types of Tablets and Formats

A major challenge for publications is tailoring content for each particular platform — print, website, smartphones and tablets — to develop a cross-media publishing strategy.⁴²

This is a must, along with designing for the specific platform to improve the user experience, Jakob Nielsen advises in his usability research.⁴³ Brady embraces the challenge. “Now we just can’t talk about mobile as one thing. Now mobile is a tablet. Mobile is an iPhone. Mobile is Google Glass,” the wearable computer.

Variation also exists within a particular platform. Different companies have different strategies to address this issue on tablets. The *Boston Globe* uses HTML5 to created browser-based responsive design that adapts to the device. Meanwhile, the *New*

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York Times has developed a range of native apps, defined by AAM as “downloadable programs built for specific operating systems.”⁴⁴

On average, companies are building three apps for each device (i.e., iPad, Kindle, Nook). Mirroring responses from the “Tablet Readership Survey” and other research, the AAM study found newspapers and magazines have developed the following:

87% iPad apps

85% iPhone apps

75% Android apps

67% Kindle apps (nearly tripled from 24% in 2011)

57% Nook apps (a four-fold increase up 14% in 2011)⁴⁵

“The proliferation of device types has pushed many publishers toward responsive design as a way to avoid constantly redeveloping for new platforms or devices,” Roberts said. With responsive design, publishers don’t have to share app profits with third parties or worry as much about slow downloads. “Our experience is consistent across all devices,” DiNardo said of the *Boston Globe*.

The *New York Times* has experimented with HTML5, which comes with lower investments of time and resources, but more sacrifices in terms of presentation and functionality, Grey said. “We believe that building the native experience is probably the best way to go.” Perhaps more so than other media companies, the *New York Times* has invested resources to blanket the digital world to “deliver a best-in-class experience” whether it’s having a presence on Flipboard, which aggregates content from social media and websites in a magazine-like format, or Windows 8, which has a hybrid interface for

both mobile devices and computers, where users can experience the look and feel of tablets. “We want to be where our users are,” Grey said.

Cost of Innovation

Little training was available when the iPad made its debut, so companies had to learn quickly and invest deeply in staffing, technology, design, editing, multimedia, deadline changes and other production expenses. “What’s hard for editors is that as revenues have gotten smaller, they’re all struggling with resources,” Robbins said. “You don’t do more with less; you do less with less. You have to figure out your priorities.”

“If you’re the editor, your head is exploding — what to put online, what to put on smartphones, what to put on tablets,” he said. “It makes it way more complex.”

Buttry said, “You need some tablet designers who understand the tools and the size of the screen and responsive design and those sort of things.”

“The question is, ‘What’s the right mix, and how much is it worth to produce and still have the advertisers compensate you for it?’” Edmond said of bells and whistles.

“Number one, the readers aren’t asking for it. And two, advertisers aren’t paying for it. If the advertising isn’t going to pay for it, you’re just throwing money away. And three, audit rules keep changing.” While many magazines launched their iPad issues with basic PDFs, some of those that dove deeper have pulled back on the bells and whistles of 2010 and 2011 since AAM restricts how far replica editions on tablets can stray from the printed version to include them in the circulation rate base. With the growing popularity of video, Edmond said, one plus for *Black Enterprise* is the ability to reduce costs by using outtakes from its television program on the tablet or consolidating production costs by shooting for

both at the same time.

Americans are watching more online video than ever, and video advertising has exploded in response. It increased 47%, to \$2.9 billion, in 2012, by far the highest growth rate of all digital ad segments. Video ads bring in higher rates than banner ads, providing news organizations the opportunity to charge more for the content on their sites.⁴⁶

The Bottom Line

In the AAM study, roughly half of publishers said that mobile accounted for 9% of circulation and advertising revenue. About 48% of newspaper respondents had a pay wall, restricting access to web or other digital content. This includes all-access subscriptions to content on tablets and other platforms with or without print; metered pay walls offering a certain number of stories, or premium content. Only 22% of magazines had pay walls, but more of them charged for their apps either separately or as part of a bundled subscription.⁴⁷

“Our digital subscription business has been a boon for us,” Grey said, adding that the *New York Times* has more than 650,000 digital subscribers. Given the nay-sayers before the paper erected its pay wall, the results are promising. Robbins and others say that companies should have charged for digital content years ago. Today, readers are more willing to pay, especially on tablets. However, “there’s still a lot of our readership that said they would never pay for content,” DiNardo said, hence the free Boston.com and paid BostonGlobe.com with access to other digital products.

“Tablets have also created an opportunity for publishers to rethink the ad

experience,” Roberts said. “Many publishers opt for multimedia ad experiences that are in your face and then resolve elegantly.”

Digital ads are the fastest-growing advertising segment, accounting for 23% overall or \$37.3 billion in 2012. Within this segment, video ads dominate, increasing 47%, to \$2.9 billion.⁴⁸ “So what does making money mean?” Buttry asks. “Does that mean we’re returning to the 30% profit margins of a decade ago? No, nobody’s doing that. We’re experimenting and finding out the right way to do business.” So far, the revenue lags behind “print dollars,” bringing instead “digital dimes” and “mobile pennies.”⁴⁹

“People aren’t buying ink on paper,” Edmond cautioned. “People aren’t buying tablets. What we’re ultimately delivering is measurable audience, and I emphasize *measurable*. The people who can deliver measurable audience engagement are the people who are going to be paid and stay in business.”

Conclusion

While the appeal of tablets could change over time, publications cannot afford to ignore these and other mobile devices. So far, newspapers and magazines have largely embraced tablets with many looking for new and novel ways to serve their audiences, which will help them maximize competitiveness.

“The iPad continued to push publishers to create content with the medium in mind,” Roberts said in assessing what the industry has learned since its debut. “Instead of shoveling every piece of content they had onto the platform, publishers became very savvy about the UX (user experience) opportunity provided by the iPad and to make

judgments about what worked best on the platform and what didn't. You saw the emergence of platform-specific experiences, such as Flipboard, that showed the power of drawing in audiences through a clutter-free, easy-to-navigate environment."

"Smartphone and tablet owners are your friends," Rosenstiel told publishers and top editors at the ASNE conference. "Right now the future is mobile. It will be your primary digital platform in three to five years." Rosenstiel also alluded to the foot-dragging of many companies to anticipate or respond adequately to the dot.com boom of yesteryear by innovating for a new millennium. "Do not wait for the revenue to emerge before you move to mobile," Rosenstiel warned. "It is your second chance. It is the opportunity to move and react in ways that the news industry didn't in the first decade."

Here are other best practices and opportunities for future growth:

Innovate quickly and change. The research and development cycle is shorter and faster. Companies can't stand on the sidelines while other work out the bugs. They must have a faster, nimbler mindset and be more open to taking risks. They must think: "Build it, and they will come," adapting a line from the movie *Field of Dreams* and passages from the *Bible*. But if they don't come, build something else. Similarly, media experts recommend creating products now to build the brand and market share; explore where the revenue will come from later. "People have to try things," Robbins said. "They have to experiment, and they have to quickly pull back if something isn't working."

Roberts noted that "early adoption allows for learning and iteration, and allows those publishers to capture the crowd most likely to influence the behavior of other readers/users."

“Change is always challenging, but change is also exciting,” Grey said. “It’s really an exciting time at the *Times*; I wouldn’t want to be anywhere else. And we haven’t even scratched the surface for where we can go.”

Create more videos for readers to generate buzz and ad revenue. Video was once dismissed as something primarily for the young. “People watch a lot of videos,” Buttry said. “News organizations should take video content seriously.”

“Good can be newsy. It can be funny. It can tear your heartstrings. The videos that people share on social media are the ones that do the best.”

Consider a la carte offerings. “We’re exploring those types of possibilities,” DiNardo said. The *Boston Globe* could allow readers to pay for only sports content or arts or the Ideas section, for example. Another expert mentioned an app on garage sales as an example. “We’re certainly considering ways to display long forms, similar to the *New York Times*’ ‘Snow Fall,’” DiNardo added.

Embrace the new normal, and revamp definitions of failure. “The changes are coming faster and faster,” Edmond said. “And each change begets more change.” Instead of being captains of industry who maintain the status quo, be “new wave surfers” unafraid of risk. “They see it as exciting opportunities to be chased,” Edmond explained in his description of forward-thinking leaders.

“What worked in 2010 wasn’t working in 2011 and 2012,” Edmond said. “Everything’s going to be different again. And the reality is, if it isn’t, we’ll either be dead or irrelevant, and I think irrelevancy is almost worse.”

Develop better ways of generating revenue on tablets — more than subscriptions

and less intrusive than advertising. “I don’t know if this will be a straight path to success, but we’ll get there,” Buttry said. “I think that the tablet and the phone will be the primary mobile devices for the foreseeable future. We have to figure out how to do journalism and how to do business on those platforms effectively.”

Create content to tap into the second-screen phenomenon. Many people watch television while using mobile devices such as tablets. Notable examples include the 2012 presidential election, singer Whitney Houston’s funeral and sporting events. These are opportunities for publications to create content on tablets to engage their multitasking readers.⁵⁰

Increase social media for referral traffic. About 39% of tablet users said they “sometimes” or “regularly” obtained news through social media, and a large number of tablet readers started out on the web, not print.⁵¹

As Edmond sums it up, “Nobody knows all the answers, but we’re learning all the questions.”

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Appendix

Tablet Readership

Exit this survey

1. What do you read on tablets? Please check all that apply.

- Tablet versions of newspapers
- Tablet versions of magazines
- Online-only publications
- Books
- A stand-alone in-depth or investigative article

Other (please specify)

2. What type of tablet do you primarily use?

- Acer
- Asus
- Apple iPad
- Apple iPad Mini
- Google Nexus
- HP Slate
- Kindle
- Kindle Fire
- Microsoft Surface
- Samsung Galaxy

Other (please specify)

3. How often do you read newspapers and/or magazines on tablets?

- Extremely often
- Very often
- Moderately often
- Slightly often
- Not at all often

Other (please specify)

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