Clickable and swipe-able: the future of magazines

The magazine industry is facing a unique crossroads with the development of tablet technologies like the iPad. The Internet and its unlimited flow of information means that the articles people read in magazines are now in abundance online. If the Internet can do what a magazine does, and better, what is the point of a magazine? `

In 2009, Editor in Chief of Wired Magazine UK, David Rowan quoted William Gibson by saying "the future is already here, it's just not evenly distributed yet". On 3 February, 2011, hosted by the LSE Media Group, David Rowan spoke about the future of Wired UK, especially it's clickable and swipeable future. POLIS intern Aivory Gaw reports.

Magazines still have the ability to do things that the Internet cannot do well. This includes long-form story telling, excellent visual photography and design, visually tell a story, and most importantly it can act as a curator. People in modern society are busy. They do not have time to sift through all the information online. Magazines filter the content and present the most relevant and most interesting and present it using quality and refinement.

UK Wired Editor David Rowan spoke about the changing web habits. Social networks encourage online engagement but spark privacy issues, iPhone and iPad games like Angry Birds and Cut the Rope tap into a different aspect of human psychology and the traditional advertising model is now obsolete with the digital space. The emergence of tablet technologies will mean that soon this technology will be evenly distributed as its use continues to evolve.

The Meaning For Mags

What does this mean for magazines? How do you make a curator into an app? You evolve and tell stories in new ways. By integrating rich media, with social sharing and real time feedback you create a new form of browsing magazines. Imagine reading an article about a movie review, then clicking on a photo to watch the trailer. At the end of the trailer, you have the ability to browse movie times in your local area, purchase tickets, and see who has purchased what, all without disrupting the background of the magazine.

Personally, I'm sold. Browsing through magazines on my Ipad really changes the interaction I have with it. The ability to watch videos straight from the cover page, the browse the material in a traditional flip-by-flip manner or to click straight from the contents, and the linking ability it has to videos, photo galleries, and online information is simply just the beginning. Rowan mentioned other technologies like GE's heart scanner with touchable animations that could be the next frontier.

Real-time Feedback

The economic model of these apps means that advertisers get a full response rate with in app purchases and application interaction. The real-time feedback is also very appealing as users can directly say what they like and don't like. The focus reverts back to the user's experience and what we have now is only just the beginning.

At the end of the event, I spoke to Rowan and he asked me a question: "When was the last time you paid for news?" I don't. "What was the last thing you paid for digitally?" I said games. "Why?" Games have figured out a way to capture my attention and lure me into making upgrades without disrupting gameplay. This is exactly what magazines are trying to capitalize on. Exploring digital magazines, (yes I bought Wired's magazine on my iPad), shows me that quality content is something that people will pay for. The richness of the medium and the user interaction is something people will pay for. The economic model and real-time feedback is something advertisers

will pay for. The question is now, what does this mean for the future of traditional media? Are magazines all eventually going to be clickable and swipeable?

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