Change News Reading Habit
in the Information Age
and Digital Mobile Devices

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Abstract. The news broadcasts are looking for their media formats as well as
users are choosing their news consumption preferences. Will be these companies
that produce and transmit news know who are these new users? Where the touch
points are and what kind of users are they interacting with? The purpose of this
paper is to present a study applied with users who consume print and online
newspaper and an analysis of two respectable newspapers: The New York
Times (USA daily news) and Estado de São Paulo (Brazilian daily news). The
questionnaire applied with users pointed behaviors and expectations about
current news consumption and the analysis of four smartphone apps evaluated
how these two newspapers are presenting its contents, and if these presentations
are in accordance with some data found in this study.

Keywords: Digital information · Mobile devices · Apps · News

1 Introduction

Apparently, traditional newspapers have been suffering to adapt its entire structure to
this actual news consumption habits. Habits that come from the ease to purchase
mobile devices and the wide access to wireless internet connection anytime and any-
where. And with the several channels available for this service, from traditional press
that still retains their printed versions, to the social networks. The age of digital
information and mobile devices, provides, thus, several news users' profile that con-
sume in locations, platforms and various media. "It's not the first time that journalism
faces the evolution of the media in order to adapt. Throughout its history, the jour-
nalism presented different ways: from press to cinema, from radio to television, and
with the advent of internet, the modality of digital journalism" [1]. But, despite all these
changes, there has never been a phase that impact so negatively in the structure of the
century-old hegemony of the press companies as the current phase. Beyond all chal-
lenges mentioned above, there is also a change in the newspaper's relationship with its
reader. "The meeting of the digital ecosystem and the media ecosystem isn't unique to
mobile, but it should be noted that it is who allowed an unprecedented link between
device, consumption and identity of users" [2].

With the widespread use of mobile devices, the newspapers were driven to develop specific applications. "Think for a moment how difficult it is to build a meaningful experience for others. It is necessary first to understand your audience; what are their needs, abilities, interests, and expectations; and how to reach them" [3].

In order to attract and retain these 'mobile' readers, the press had to spread in various social networks, where there is a direct relation to news consumption among mobile device relationship and social network because "most of the social networks" traffic comes from smartphones. That's why our [the New York Times] competitors say the key to winning mobile is to win on social [4]. Quote corroborated by a study conducted in 2013 [5], which states that 64 % of American adults use Facebook and almost half of these public (30 %) consume news from this social network.

From the point of view of human computer interaction it's necessary to consider the macro and micro views of the system. The macro is the interconnection of systems, meaning, to recognize a structural unit that pervades the various mobile platforms and social networks that are strengthened every day in the news acquisition. The micro considers the individual aspects of each device taking advantage of its full potential to provide an interface and appropriate information architecture.

2   Problem

Much of what it's been seen in journalistic products texts and links are almost identical on the web and in app. "The transposition of content does not seem to take into account satisfactorily technological capabilities provided by the device characteristics and in this case it seems no difference on news of the structure when taken into account the digital media" [5].

The current scenario constitutes, thus, different profiles of users who consume news in different times, locations, platforms and media. It's perceived that many press companies create products and launch them on the market to see how users respond, on trial-and-error. At the other end, users get lost with so many variables and try to find themselves in the midst of so much information. So, for a successful project, designers should map and understand both the company's culture and the costumers' culture in order to fit the two poles, as shown in the Fig. 1.

Fig. 1. Design for a bi-cultural fit [6].

3   Methodology

Based on the analysis of some findings of a behavioral report [7] developed in a study for graduate discipline, this paper analyses two traditional newspapers in order to view some proposed solutions for digital platforms. Due to the credibility, tradition and innovation in its apps, the two selected newspapers were The New York Times (American daily news) and Estado de São Paulo (Brazilian daily news, known as Estadão). Four free apps of these newspapers (two for each) developed for iOS platform were analyzed in the iPhone device.

This report analysis brings up findings encountered in a research report develop with 95 users of printed and digital newspaper regarding habits consumption, connection with the world, usability and preferences and reliability.

4   Results

4.1   Study Report

The study investigated why there are still readers of print newspapers even with new possibilities and easy access to digital news, considering the transition moment of the newspaper industry. A questionnaire was used in order to map the behaviors of consumers regarding printed and online newspaper. The questionnaire was applied through personal contact and via internet. Data were analyzed with statistical methods, from the standpoint of the following perspectives: habit of consumption, connection with the world, usability and preferences and reliability.

Conclusions were formulated from the analysis based on these four perspectives. From this study, it can be seen that new technologies and greater internet access promoted a change in the habit of news consumers. It's noticed that the print newspaper users are more connected to entertainment and habitual behavior than to keep updated and informed.

In addition, the research detected an increase use of digital newspapers over the printed version in just a few future years. Since younger audience is more familiar with the handling of mobile devices while the older audience is transiting between the two media - print and digital.

Since the consume of digital newspapers is greater nowadays and with the aim to reach younger audience, traditional newspapers have to adapt their platforms to attend these new tendency. Below, the paper presents data of the behavioral report and analyses if the two newspapers are following the expectations.

4.2   Newspapers Analysis

Bet On Frequent News Update. The report research pointed a most of readers in the habit of newspapers users, where say it is important to be constantly updated with the day's top stories from different sources, as shown in Figs. 2 and 3.
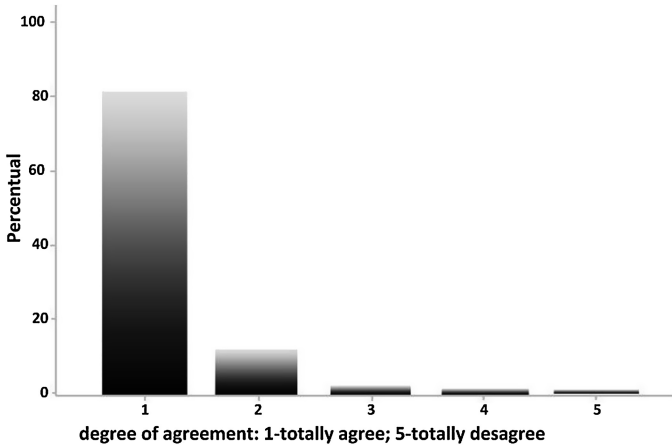
Fig. 2. Question on the chart: "I think important to be constantly updated with top stories of the day".
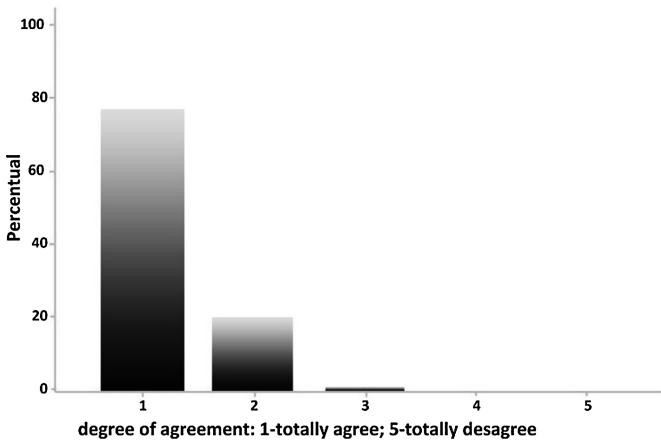
Fig. 3. Question on the chart: "I think it is important to have access to different opinions when reading news".

Both New York Times as Estado de São Paulo (Estadão) presented smartphone's solutions for frequently update the news. The first one quoted launched the NYT Now app, while the second bet on a radio version.

The NYT Now app presents easy accessible menu with three icons: news (presenting current news), picks (with the editors' picks from around the web today), and the favorites (news chosen by users).

With this type of configuration, the NYT Now app offers its users two of the demands indicated in the report. Updated news and news from other sources, as shown in Fig. 4.

Fig. 4. Menu from NYT Now app

At the end of each news post, the user knows how many hours ago the news are available in the app, with the possibility of sharing it through with the social networks and marking it favorites, as shown in Fig. 5.

Fig. 5. NYT Now app

News appear in blocks with the leading of the main news of the day (photo + text) and if user wants, by clicking on the block, he has the ability to read the whole news. It is perceived a clear consistency in the ordination of news. There is also concern with the user in show when ends the latest news and begin the oldest news, with a friendly message according to the Figure below (Fig. 6).

Fig. 6. Message at the end of the most current news

The app from the newspaper Estado de São Paulo (Estadão) also has this ability to update its users through the radio, with the possibility of inserting audio, (something absent from the New York Times app). However, this is a clear example of non-use of device resources, which only has the function equal to the radio. When compared to a similar app, the CBN (Brazilian radio that plays news), with origins from a radio station, as opposed to a printed newspaper, it is observed a clear difference of use of the device features (Fig. 7).

Fig. 7. At left the home page and the only one from Estadão app and at right the podcast page from CBN app.

In the CBN app, (which includes live radio option), the menu also allows the visualization of the latest podcasts, with the possibility of downloading it to listen later. In addition, the user can also select the columnists of their interests to listen. In both options there is a possibility of sharing with social networks.

4.3   General News

In apps that have the role to encompass all news, and bring updates, it is perceived in the tray menu various topics of subjects. Although the New York Times allows customization of topics, which is the limit for topics and for news? One should really offer everything to the user? According to Morville [8], words helps users to find what they need and understand what they find. That´s why the first step in taxonomy construction is defining its purpose. Arrange for users is very difficult and the categories are the root of this work, but it can't be built before realizing their connectivity with the system as a whole (Figs. 8, 9).
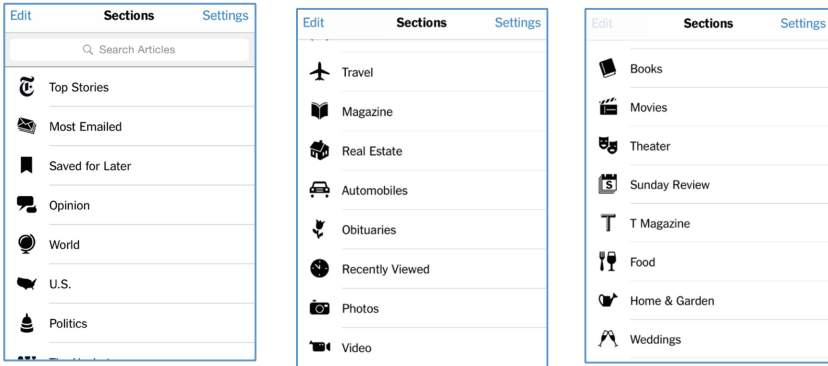

Fig. 8. Topics from Estadão tray menu app

Fig. 9. Topics from New York Times list menu app

Who are the users of these apps? For the NYT, the icon clearly refers to the printed newspaper, which probably approach users that used to or still read printed newspaper. However, the public over 50 years believed to be easier to find news on the printed newspaper than the digital media (Figs. 10, 11).
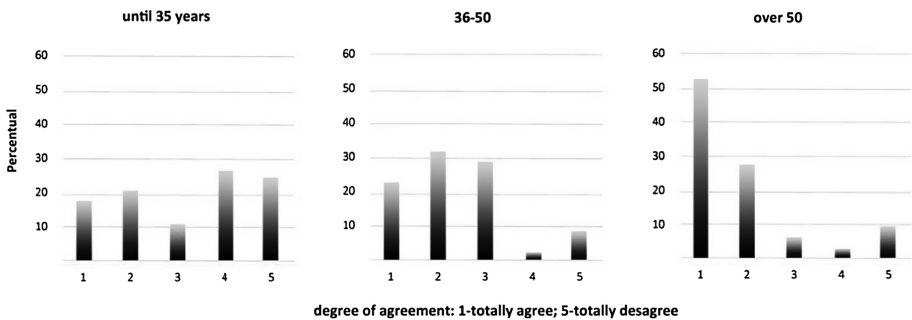

Fig. 10. Thumb from NYT app

Fig. 11. Question on the chart "I think it's easier to find news on print newspaper to find news on digital one."

5 Conclusion

It is clear that there is an attempt by newspapers to adapt to its users' the new way of reading. In this article, the side view was the study of newspaper apps on smartphone, but it is known that there is a huge range of offers in other devices, besides the inevitable range of social media. It can be seen an attempt by newspapers in being connected in most of these devices and social media in order to broaden this range of users. Some demands are being known, as the demand of users to keep up constantly in different news sources. But it is notable that in the attempt to offer the widest possible range of information to the user, the older public still not users of digital media and find it easier to search for information on the print media.

Thus, there is still much to know from user behavior with regard to the consumption of news and companies that produce or broadcast news are still testing formulas to offer their services. I believe that the most coherent way in this time of uncertainty is design to fit a bi-culture, meaning, to know the culture of the company and to know new habits and behaviors of users of digital news.

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