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INTEGRATE MULTIMEDIA, MAKE FINGERS HAPPY: JOURNALISTIC STORYTELLING ON TABLETS

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1   Introduction

Many professionals throughout the media industry think or would like to think that tablet devices are the greatest invention after Johannes Gutenberg invented a new, effective printing method. His invention about 670 years ago is credited with starting a revolution in the printing of books and newspapers for mass media.

Tablet devices are seen as the new salvation for newspapers that are hit hard by cuts in revenues. The newspaper industry is going through a big digital revolution and a device like the tablet is seen as a way to regain the money that is lost with the traditional printed papers and which is hard to recover via the Internet. The industry missed its opportunity to make money in the beginning of the digital revolution by offering everything for free. Now there are hopes that readers could be charged for consuming media content on tablets, because the content can easily be put behind a pay wall and the payment transaction is made really simple.

But can tablets act as a salvation to the newspaper industry? According to analysts, e-reading devices like Kindles have succeeded very well in the public market, because they are excellent devices for reading books. Are tablets good for consuming journalistic content?

It has been claimed that at the moment newspapers are shovelling the print or online content straight to the tablet applications. In the second chapter I will have a look at some of the examples in newspaper industry to see if that is true.

Then I broaden my perspective into other kinds of journalistic content. I want to answer questions such as what is required from a journalistic application in order to attract users? What are the best examples of storytelling? How about the design and layout? Based on my examination of dozens of applications, literary review and interviews with graphic designers, new media specialists and scholars specializing in new media, there seems to be some relatively basic and common characteristics that work well on tablet-specific storytelling, so I will present those.

Because the traditional newspaper industry doesn't seem to be developing storytelling on tablets quite as fast as maybe they should in order to give the reader the best possible experience on this device, I will have a look at magazines and broadcast companies as other examples. Are they doing that any better? What about longer digital stories like features? There is also a whole new journalistic format, which is popular on tablets, namely long-form journalism. Have the small new media companies invented a compelling way to tell stories on tablets? The comparative analysis looks at five different kinds of applications: Newspaper, magazine, long-form journalism, feature and broadcast applications in relation to the characteristics presented.

In my final chapter I will look briefly at the future: Where is the storytelling on tablets heading? Are there other genres outside journalism that can do compelling and natural-feeling stories on tablets? For example games form the top of the charts when measured by popularity. Could the news industry use the experience that the game industry has got in developing applications to tablets?

It seems to be the case that newspaper publishers are going to need another few years to find the best way for digital storytelling on tablets. I will search for future predictions of where newspapers should be heading in creating compelling and natural-feeling stories for tablets.

All research is done with an iPad 4 –tablet. Thus the findings only apply to this device.

2 Background

2.1 Tablets are replicas of online or print

According to my literary review, interviews with digital storytelling specialists and going through dozens of tablet applications I have reached the conclusion that there is very little tablet-specific storytelling in newspapers. Furthermore, the tablet applications of traditional newspapers are typically replicas of print and online newspapers. Applications can – at their simplest - be merely PDF versions of that day's paper uploaded the night before or taking the same content from the Web site and placing it on the tablet's smaller touch screen.

Even the most advanced publishers haven't been very innovative with their daily tablet versions. Content-wise the newspapers are typically like their print versions with some added multimedia content, such as videos and picture galleries, that are commonly used in online publications already. Tablet versions also replicate print papers in their layout. American Journalism Review's new-media columnist Barb Palser[1] compared tablet versions of newspapers to their print versions and concluded that stories are in hierarchical order and the look is stylish but not revolutionary.

To give a general picture of where the traditional newspaper industry is at the moment in digital storytelling for the tablets, I will briefly present three applications and how they differ from their print and Internet counterparts. They serve as representatives of the time, about three years after the first tablet devices came to the market. I have chosen the British daily newspaper the *Guardian*, the American newspaper *New York Times* and the American *The Daily* (closed down in December, 2012). I am not claiming that these newspapers are objectively measured the best in the world. However, among media specialists they are considered to be among the best applications at the moment.

So far *The Daily* is the only newspaper application that has been published for tablets alone, so it doesn't have a Web or print counterpart. It was published for less than two years, so I will give some preliminary analysis of why it didn't survive longer and whether the reason had anything to do with its storytelling. I will add my own observations to those given by digital storytelling specialists.

2.1.1 The Guardian

The *Guardian* is considered to be one of the most advanced newspapers in the world with its inventions for the tablet. The layout and its user-friendly interface have received credit from many media specialists.

However, if we look at the content and the structure of an article, the tablet version doesn't differ from the print version. The news stories' text and photos are copied from the print version and the stories' layout is similar in both. Some digital elements have been added from the Internet. These are videos, photos, photo slideshows and links to web stories (with more information and background to the stories).

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[1] B. Palser, "The Ins and Outs of iPad Apps", American Journalism Review, 2011

With its design the tablet version imitates both the print and Internet version in its colour and typography. Compared to the Internet, the cover is simpler and easier to browse; firstly, because there is not as much content on the cover and secondly, because the tablet version doesn't have advertisements. The cover of the tablet version is reminiscent of a "chocolate box ". The boxes are links to the main story or a section in the newspaper. In the web format there is a ready-opened "chocolate box" with no cover. And the chocolates are in no specific order. In the tablet application the news are ordered according to their importance similarly to the print version.

Figure 1.   The cover and a story in the Guardian's tablet version, 24.1.2013

Figure 2. **The cover of the print version and the Internet version of the Guardian, 24.1.2013**

2.1.2 The New York Times

The New York Times' newspaper application stays close to its print counterpart in content. From the Internet version it has brought videos and photo slideshows. The cover page has small introductory texts of the news, so from its layout, the application reminds one more of the Internet version.
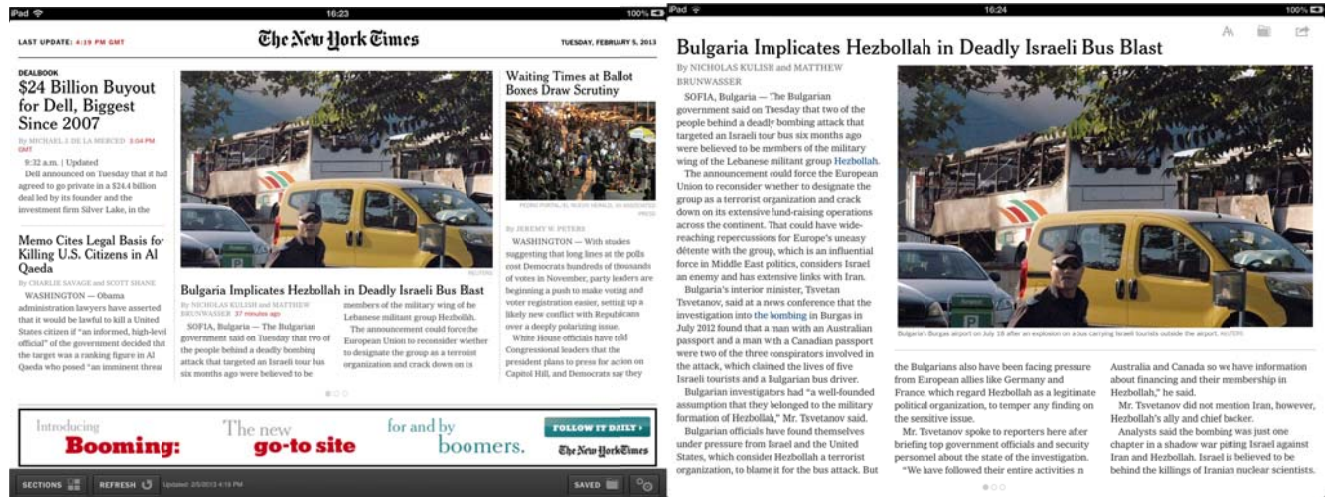
Figure 3. **The cover and a story of the New York Times' tablet version, 5.2.2013**

Figure 4. The print cover (11.3.2013) and the Internet front page of the New York Times (5.2.2013).

More than the everyday newspaper of the *New York Times*, the specialists that I have interviewed praise the special digital content that has been developed for the newspaper's Internet and tablet platforms. Special content includes feature stories like Snow Fall that have been done by a special team outside the everyday news production. "The rest of the mind set behind the website and tablet versions is old-fashioned", says graphic designer Spiros Polikandritotis[2]. Snow Fall will be analysed later in chapter four.

2.1.3 The Daily

There has been one tablet-only daily newspaper in the market, and it was *The Daily*. News Corporation's application has been credited for exploiting technical possibilities on a tablet a little more than traditional newspapers in general do. For example, its cover pages would be digitally retouched (fig. 5). It had a lot of photos, which were embedded in the text (fig. 5). It also had videos and other multimedia – and even interactive elements, such as quizzes and games regularly. In the quizzes, for example, the reader had to

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[2] Personal interview with S. Polikandriotis in February, 2013

combine the right photos with the right persons by dragging photos with their finger (fig. 6). Or the reader could reveal an answer to a question by scrubbing the picture on the screen with their fingers. Movie, music and theatre reviews always had trailers or samples to watch and listen to.
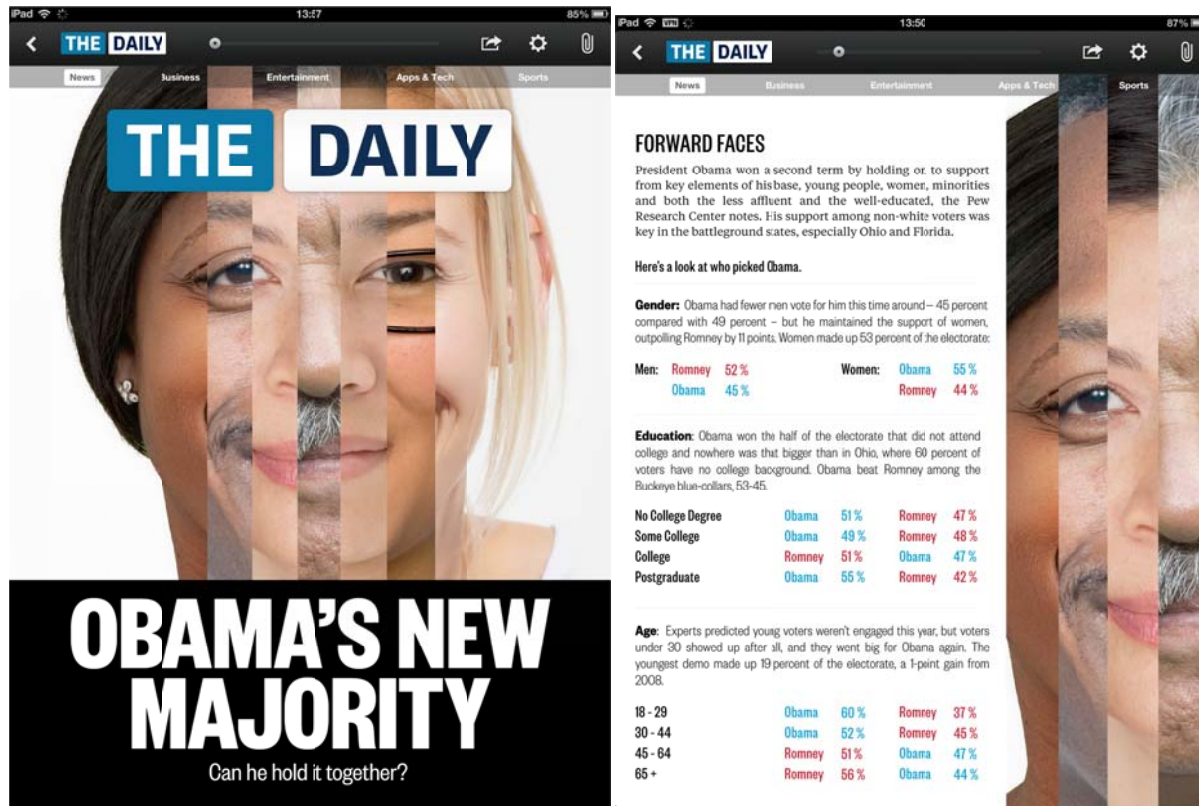
Figure 5. **The cover and a story of The Daily's tablet application, 8.11.2013**
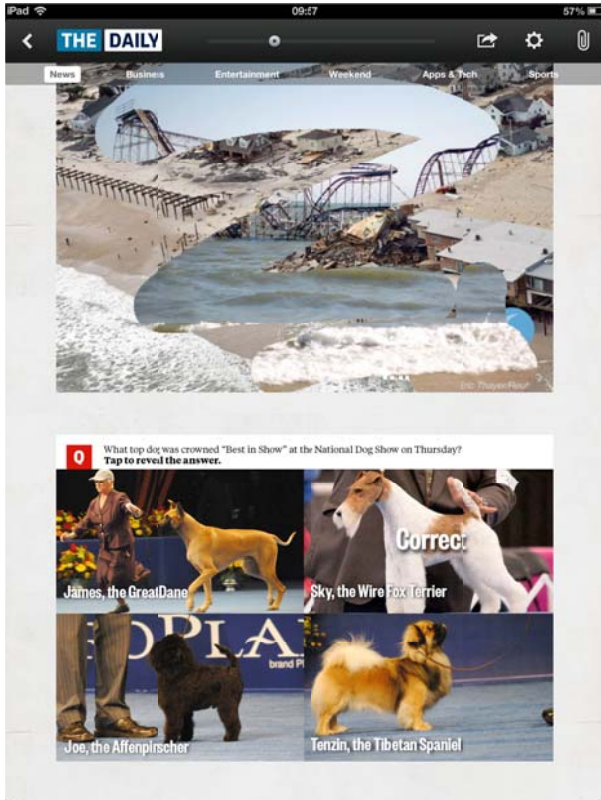
Figure 6.   **Quizzes in The Daily's tablet application, 25.11.2012**

Although a lot of media specialists give credit to Rupert Murdoch's trial, a lot of them seem to claim that in the end, it was nothing more than another printed version of a newspaper. For example, Pedro Monteiro[3], graphic designer and consultant working with apps, tablets and digital content, thinks that *The Daily* tried to do digital storytelling but most of it was by the end paper-based storytelling, using maybe some video (which is TV-based storytelling and thus not digital in itself).

2.1.3.1   *Murdoch gave up on The Daily*

The Daily was an application that had a lot of money and effort behind it (according to different sources it had around a hundred employees and had spent 30 million dollars just in the launch of the paper). From different sources it was said to have attracted 250,000 monthly readers and 100,000 paid subscribers, but it was shut down before it reached its second birthday. News Corporation's chairman and CEO Rupert Murdoch said in a statement[4]: "we could not find a large enough audience quickly enough to convince us the business model was sustainable in the long-term".

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[3] Personal interview with Pedro Monteiro in February, 2013

[4] "News Corporation Announces Details Regarding Proposed Separation of Businesses", News Corporation's Press Release

The closure was diagnosed widely in public. Many said that *The Daily's* death signalled that tablets in general are much less powerful and revolutionary than many had hoped. Far from offering richer content than can be found in the web, they actually fall into unexpected traps.

The content of the app was also criticized. Cultural news editor for the *Daily Beast* Michael Moynihan[5] wrote "*The Daily* charted a centrist course with an often libertarian editorial line as well as an array for liberal voices. But as the paper failed to substantially grow its subscriber base, News Corp tacked towards a real-red-state-feeling", explaining that "coming down from the editors (was a demand) for more red meat."

A lot of people fault the pay wall, complaining that you can't create demand for a new Internet brand that you've hidden behind a pay wall. On readwrite.com John Paul Titlow[6] cites former contributor to *The Daily* Trevor Butterworth whose Facebook commentary said: The iPad-only focus is part of what drove *The Daily* into an early grave: You can't create an entirely new brand and take it behind a pay wall after 4 weeks, while limiting its footprint on the Internet and then expect people to buy it. The content itself was just not good enough to attract paying subscribers.

Some suggested that it was the phone hacking scandal that strongly affected the closure. Murdoch's News Corporation was ensnared in the embarrassing and costly phone-hacking scandal in spring 2012.

The Daily had an interesting position in experimenting as a first newspaper ever how a tablet newspaper could be made profitable without having to think about other platforms, their other needs and the cost of publishing paper products. It would have been interesting for the rest of the industry to see what kind of innovations they could have come up with.

I believe media critic Jack Shafer's[7] point that *The Daily* didn't fail – rather, Rupert gave up. Shafer quotes director Joshua Benton from Nieman Journalism Lab who thought "*The Daily's* glass was actually half-full, having 100,000 paying subscribers in such a caged and constrained offering". Shafer thought himself that for an innovative man like Murdoch it is quite normal to lose 100 million dollars on a new project.

2.2 Tablets are a lean-back device

The preliminary research on tablet usage suggests that tablets are used mostly in the evening hours as a "lean-back device". According to Pew's survey[8], news junkies who own tablets use them before going to work, but not as much as after work. In the morning tablets are used for a quick news glance and in the evening for more relaxed activities, like reading longer articles and watching videos.

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[5] M. Moynihan, "Why Did The Daily Die? The View From Inside the Collapse", Daily Beast, 2012

[6] J P Titlow, "The Daily Drops Dead: What Murdoch's Failure Means For iPad Publishing", readwrite, 2012

[7] J. Shafer, "The Daily didn't fail – Rupert gave up", Reuters, 2012

[8] A. Mitchell, T. Rosenstiel, L. Houston Santhanam, and L. Christian "The explosion in mobile audiences and a close look at what it means for the news", Journalism.org, 2012

The difference between a tablet, web and print is not the way you use it with your hands but the situation where you are using it, thinks Chiqui Esteban[9], Visual Journalist at the *Boston Globe*. A person is usually relaxed and playing with the tablet and spending more time with a single article because they don't have all the distractions.

Research shows that the tablet is emerging as an important device for news consumers. According to the Reuters Institute's Digital News Report 2012[10], 58% of tablet users in the UK use the device to access news every week. The report also shows that users are more likely to pay for news content and over 40% say they find the experience better than a PC. In the UK, some newspaper brands with paid apps do significantly better on a tablet than on the open Internet – in terms of overall market share.

Other research shows - quite surprisingly – that some users tend to want to use the devices in a way that is familiar to them from the web or print. Thus in the early stage of designing for the new device, there is a risk in asking people about their preferences, Monteiro[11] thinks. Users generally won't be able to even imagine what they could have. So if publishers listen to the users too much, it might slow down innovation.

The Poynter Institute's eye track research**[12]** reveals that tablet readers spend an overall average of a minute and a half on the first story they select to read. Of the people who did not finish reading a story, they read for an average of 78.3 seconds before leaving the story entirely. Regina McCombs[13], a faculty member of the Poynter Institute, says that we need to be thinking about how to engage people to keep them reading beyond that time. McCombs[14] thinks it is crucial to think about time spent with a story, not only the length of a story. For example instead of creating a story that is compelling enough to keep them past the point the reader leaves the story, the reader could be offered something else they can go to or read.

Professionals argue that offering the PDF of a print paper on the tablet will be enough for some of the older generations of newspaper readers. However, it is widely agreed that the format won't be interesting enough for those who are already really familiar with blogs, social media and interactive Internet games[15]. And as editorial assistant of American Journalism Review Caitlin Johnston[16] points out: Newspaper readers and their Web site visitors get one year older every year, and legacy outlets are failing to bring in new ones.

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[9] Personal interview with C. Esteban in February, 2013

[10] N. Newman (ed.), "Digital News Report 2012", Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford, 2013

[11] Personal interview with P. Monteiro in February, 2013

[12] S. Dickenson Quinn, "New Poynter Eyetrack research reveals how people read news on tablets", Poynter.org, 2012

[13] Personal interview with R. McCombs in April 2013

[14] Personal interview with R. McCombs in April 2013

[15] To give one example: A. Heinonen, "Tablettijournalismia tutkimassa", Lukulaitejournalismi – nyt - tutkimushankkeen loppuraportti, University of Tampere, 2012

[16] C. Johnston, "Second Chance", American Journalism Review, 2012

If tablets are going to be one of the platforms that more and more people like to consume their news on, then publishers are in a hurry to find out how to produce compelling content in this form. Every platform should have their special characteristics, because they are used differently and in various occasions and have different technical functions. There will still be a need to produce content that can be glanced quickly "on the go" and also for content that the reader can spend hours with.

3   Key characteristics in storytelling on tablets

There are only a few academic studies about tablet storytelling itself, so I have gone through website articles and blogs written about the topic by specialists in the field. I also interviewed specialists. Then I examined dozens of tablet applications that were mentioned (in studies, articles, blogs and interviews) as representatives of good storytelling.

According to my survey, there seems to be certain characteristics that are typical of good tablet storytelling. I am going to present some of the key characteristics that apply to all kinds of journalistic content on tablets. These characteristics define design, layout, storytelling and usability. They can be thought of as a principal guideline to any kind of journalistic content, no matter how often the stories are published or how long they are, whether they are news content or feature content etc.

3.1   Simple interface

This is inarguably one of the most important characteristics. It seems that the clutter and cacophony that has overtaken many Web sites should be absent in tablet apps. Jussi Ahlroth[17] says the user shouldn't be given too many options to choose from at any given location. The more minimalistic the interface is, the more people are actually going to explore the content, says lecturer Jeremy Rue[18] from the UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism. So it is wise to avoid offering an overload of impulses at the same time.

3.2   Clear interface

Options for the user must be clearly visible. The user needs to know what effect clicking an active point will have. The reader should be left with as few mysteries as possible. One of the most frustrating things using tablets is when you don't find the kind of response to your touch as you intuitively thought you would get. For example flipping the pages can sometimes require a perfect rectilinear swipe from the user, which can become very annoying. Polikandriotis[19] says that the active points for touching need to be big enough, and there has to be a common logic how to use your fingers.

Barb Palser[20] thinks that section-level navigation needs to be clearly visible on every page, so that if a user is viewing a story in one section, he or she can easily jump to another section. It is also really important to let the reader know what part of the application he/she is in. The user needs to have a holistic outlook of the whole application. That can be done in various ways. Typically this seems to be done by offering the reader a small, scrollable ribbon (see figure 7) at the bottom of the page. The reader shouldn't get lost in an application and the reader should always have a sense of orientation like with a print product and should be able to move around without flipping through every page.

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[17] J. Ahlroth, "The Nine Commandments for Newspapers on Tablet Devices", Reuters Institute Fellowship Paper, University of Oxford, 2011

[18] Personal interview with J. Rue in March, 2013

[19] Personal interview with S. Polikandriotis in February, 2013

[20] B. Palser, "The Ins and Outs of iPad Apps", American Journalism Review, 2011

Figure 7. **The navigation ribbon of the Helsingin Sanomat tablet application, 7.5.2013.**

Applications shouldn't require complex how-to pages or tutorials, says Craig Mod, an independent writer, designer and publisher[21]. "You shouldn't have to hire a famous actor to show readers how to use the app with his nose". Much as with a printed magazine or book, the interaction should be intuitive, effortless, and grounding. The user should never feel lost, he says. By limiting the amount of articles and removing pagination, many of the routes leading to complex navigation are also removed, he adds. Some of the publications have tutorials that are several pages long. I think one page should be sufficient, or otherwise the reader will skip the whole manual.

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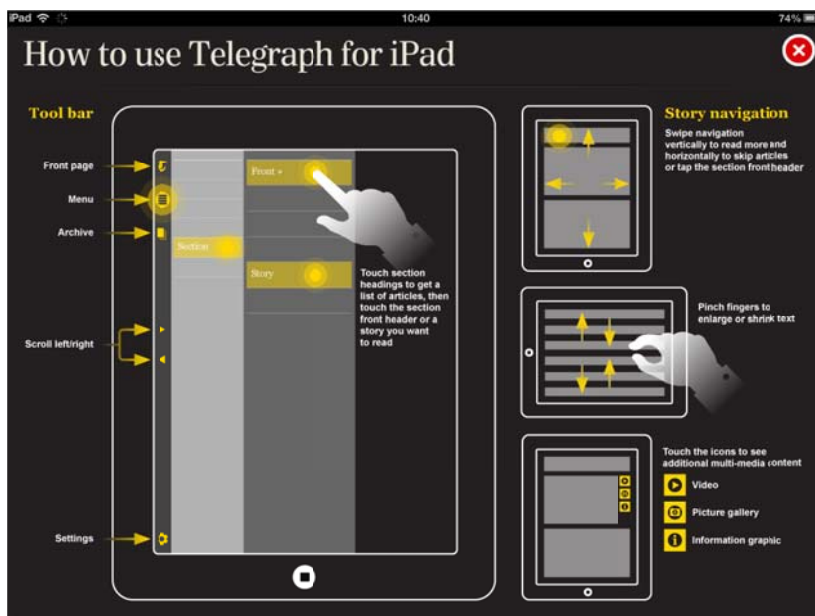
[21] C. Mod, "Subcompact Publishing – Simple tools and systems for publishing", @craigmod, 2012

Figure 8.   **How-to tutorial of The Telegraph's tablet application.**

3.3   Good design aesthetic

Good design aesthetic triggers an emotional response that can help a story. Rue[22] believes that if your design is poor it will actually detract from the story. Thus the chosen designer needs to be really good, not just somebody with basic skills. Design can sometimes mean merely thinking about the perfect typography.

3.4   Use of layers

I agree with Johnston[23] when she argues: with tablets one of the main strengths is their experimental nature, which enables both the deep exploiting of content and a layered structure even inside a single article. What this means to me is that with the tablet you don't want to show all of the content at once. In certain cases the more detailed information can be put available "behind the surface" (see figure 9). Thus the layout and aesthetics can be simple without compromising the depth and details of the story. This idea works well with graphics, for instance. If you have a graphic, which has a lot of information, you can divide it into several sub-levels. The user can decide how deep he/she wants to proceed. The biggest mistake is to cram the whole presentation onto one screen.
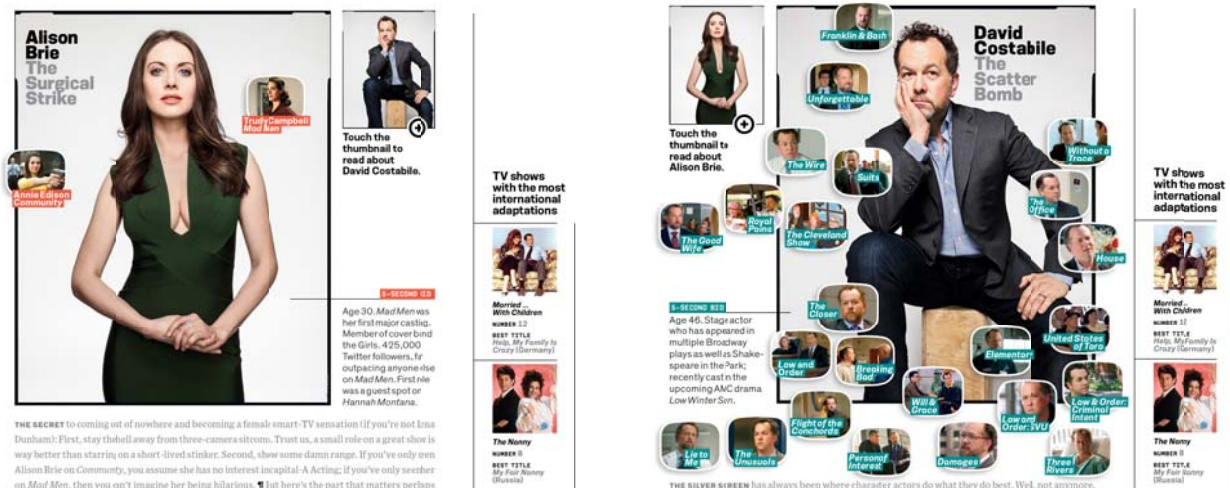
Figure 9.   **The graphic opens up in an extra layer in Wired magazine, April 2013 issue.**

3.5   Making fingers happy

The touch element is probably the most unique characteristic that distinguishes tablets from online and print. Touch screen phones have the same element, but with the bigger screen size tablet storytelling can rely much more on the touch element. Mario Garcia[24] says that the finger "needs to be made happy". The finger is both unforgiving and impatient: It wants to touch the screen and immediately get results. If the finger is going to be

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[22] Personal interview with J. Rue in March 2013

[23] C. Johnston, "Second Chance", American Journalism Review, 2012

[24] M. García,"Design Lab: Storytelling in the Age of the Tablet", North Light Books, 2012

fully engaged, it must reveal the surprising "pop-up" moments, when the tablet becomes playful and the story more engaging, he thinks. I agree with Garcia[25] as well as the Financial Times Online Managing Director Rob Grimshaw[26] who says that people actually learn about the world through touching it and seeing what happens. "It's why little kids poke and nudge so much. They want to see how things react. It's the same with a tablet." I also think Regina McCombs**[27]** is correct by saying that touching needs to be planned so that it is not just being equivalent to clicking with a mouse on a screen.

3.6   Using multimedia - wisely

It is widely agreed that apps crave for multimedia elements, such as photos, audio, videos, graphics. However, multimedia shouldn't be used without value to the story. Polikandriotis[28] warns of using digital elements just to show off, because after two or three times the reader gets bored of seeing same kind of elements. Showing off was a common mistake, especially in the first phase of digital storytelling, he says.

Research also shows that there is a heavy consumption of videos on tablets. Regina McCombs[29] thinks that the fact that you can move around with the device increases the consumption of videos. I assume this means it is easier to finish watching a video when you are not hooked to cables, which you can be with a laptop. Videos are also suitable for the lean-back nature of tablet usage. The big problem with videos has been that a lot of video players don't work on all platforms.

There are certain guidelines how to get the message across by using the right multimedia elements (text, video, pictures, sound etc.) in digital storytelling. For example Mindy McAdams[30], a journalism educator and web developer and Mark Gould[31], a web designer, videographer, photographer and writer have summarized these principles well in their articles. They are presenting concrete examples of multimedia elements that serve certain storytelling purposes. I won't go into these techniques in this research, but this is an area that needs further research.

3.7   Integrating multimedia

If multimedia is used, the elements belong more naturally to the story, if they are integrated. This means that if you have a text-based story, the multimedia elements should be embedded in the text where they have the natural connection to the story, not for example thrown at the end of the article. In Barb Palser's[32] opinion, embedding makes it possible for users to access that content inline or full screen without leaving the story. It is

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[25] M. García,"Design Lab: Storytelling in the Age of the Tablet", North Light Books, 2012

[26] C. Johnston, "Second Chance", American Journalism Review, 2012 April/May

[27] Personal interview R. McCombs in April, 2013

[28] Personal interview with S. Polikandriotis in February, 2013

[29] Personal interview with R. McCombs in April, 2013

[30] M. McAdams, "Cheat sheet for multimedia story decisions", own web pages, 2008

[31] M. Gould, "Multimedia decisions: Choosing the right medium for your message", Mark Gould Media, 2010

[32] B. Palser, "The Ins and Outs of iPad Apps", American Journalism Review, 2011

vital in a journalistic story with a beginning, middle and an end, that your audience interacts with the whole story, says Monteiro[33]. He thinks that hiding information that is crucial to the plot can be dangerous.

This means that you have to make the user conscious about which elements belong to the core story and make the readers interact with them. Otherwise you can only have multimedia elements that add value or dimension to the story but aren't essential for the reader to experience.
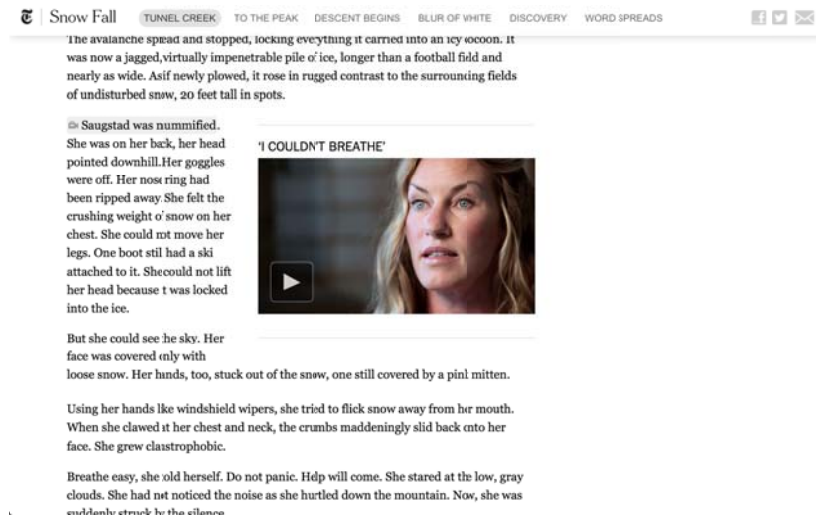
Figure 10.   In the New York Times' feature story Snow Fall the video is integrated into text.

3.8   Feel of cognitive container

There are opposite positions on whether an application should be a 'cognitive container' or should the reader be able to go in and out of a publication. I tend to agree with digital literacy researcher Monica Bulger's[34] thought that it is important to maintain the same kind of feeling of a container than there is with printed newspapers as opposed to the distracting linked nature of the Internet. There should be minimal distraction when indulging in an app-based story. Others think it is destructive business-wise to put everything behind a closed application, which can't even be entered for free.

3.9   Other characteristics

In addition to characteristics mentioned above there are obviously a whole lot of other characteristics that apply to storytelling on tablets. I will leave them out of the comparative analysis (in the following chapter), but I will briefly introduce them here.

Avoiding redundancies is a characteristic that was mentioned in the interviews. That means that the same information shouldn't be told twice without a specific purpose, for example first in text and then in video.

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[33] Personal interview with P. Monteiro in February, 2013

[34] in J. Ahlroth, "The Nine Commandments for Newspapers on Tablet Devices", Reuters Institute Fellowship Paper, University of Oxford, 2011

Polikandriotis[35] thinks this a big problem in digital storytelling and "you see it a lot". Publishers are throwing in multimedia just because they can. They wouldn't do it on print. However in some cases it might serve a purpose to provide options, like McCombs[36] suggests. For example, offering a text-based story as an audio clip on a tablet makes it possible to listen to the story while the user's hands are busy steering a wheel of a car, for instance.

The tablet is also good for displaying personalized information like news near you and facts that directly affect your life. For the reader to feel that the stories are current and immediate, you will have to show it. Using timestamps of the publishing time is one way. It's a given that app content should be as current as Web content, says Palser[37]. Outdated information is a non-starter.

Sometimes the user wants to read the whole publication or a certain article later, even in an offline mode, in an airplane, for instance. For that kind of a use an archive of a week's paper editions and a possibility to save articles for later reading, are recommended.[38]

I agree with Palser[39] who thinks that on tablets there seems to be a natural need to be able to view pictures in a full window, so one should consider where the reader wants to zoom into details of text, photos and graphics. Often it might actually even best serve the purpose to have pictures fill the whole screen and insert the text on top of it (like in the example of the *Guardian's* Firestorm presented in chapter 5).

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[35] Personal interview in February, 2013

[36] Personal interview in April, 2013

[37] B. Palser, "The Ins and Outs of iPad Apps", American Journalism Review, 2011

[38] B. Palser, "The Ins and Outs of iPad Apps", American Journalism Review, 2011

[39] B. Palser, "The Ins and Outs of iPad Apps", American Journalism Review, 2011

4 How characteristics apply: Comparative analysis

In this chapter I will study how the characteristics presented in the previous chapter apply to different journalistic apps. Because it seems that daily newspapers have not reached the full potential of tablet-specific and natural-feeling way to tell their news on tablet applications, I also surveyed other journalist applications to see if they have invented a more original way to tell stories on tablets. I looked at magazines, long-form journalism pieces, features and broadcaster apps. I found that there are interesting experiments outside the traditional newspaper industry.

It seems that some of the most interesting applications need a lot of time and money to be developed. It is no surprise that a lot of the best examples are from big media companies in the United States. However, also small start-ups have been innovative and have been able to produce interesting experiments.

I will take one example of a newspaper app and compare it with a magazine app, a long-form journalism app, a feature app and a broadcaster app. Examples were mentioned by interviewees when I asked them to list best practices in journalist storytelling on tablets at the moment. I am not arguing these are, however, objectively measuring the best examples in the world, but they should at least represent their own genres of journalism quite well.

To get an idea of how they compare to each other I will rate the applications on these characteristics in a chart following the analysis. I am using rating from one to five, five being the best score. The scoring is, of course, relative to the examples presented and illustrates the digital storytelling phase we are in right now. The rating is based on my own assessment, but is backed up with a text analysis.

4.1 Newspaper app

As a newspaper application I chose the *Guardian* (11.4.2013 issue analysed), which was often stated in my source material as the best example of newspapers. (The newspaper was introduced in more depth previously in my paper in 2.1.1). Scott Trust Limited owns the *Guardian*.

The app has a moderately clear interface. Personally I think it could be simpler without links to other stories on the side column.

The app has got excellent design aesthetic. The use of colours and font, for example, is very enjoyable to the eye.

The *Guardian* has a nice way of using layers so that on the cover and the front pages of each section there are only thumbnails (box-shaped) to tap the story open. The thumbnail only shows the title and in most of the news a picture. However, there are no other layers used. Even photos can't typically be opened in a larger window.

Most of the time fingers get along with this app. Nevertheless the app does not offer any special treats. The elegant use of thumbnails provides a nice and an easy navigation experience, but the thumbnails don't visually respond to touch, for example by animation or changing colour.

The use of multimedia elements doesn't really differ from the traditional newspaper web format. Pictures and videos are used for a reason, not lavishly. There is zero to one picture in a story. Videos seem to be a rarity.

The multimedia elements aren't integrated into the story. The links to the webpages bring valuable background information to the news, but clearly interrupt the coherent reading experience. Side stories to the main story should be linked to the main story page.

The daily slideshow in the "In Pictures" section doesn't follow the idea of embedding multimedia. It feels like striking photos that were left over from the edition are thrown into it, "because they exist". Within the slideshow the captions usually repeat the same content than is seen in the photos.

If you don't use links to the website, the app somehow manages to maintain a feeling of a cognitive container.

4.2   Magazine app
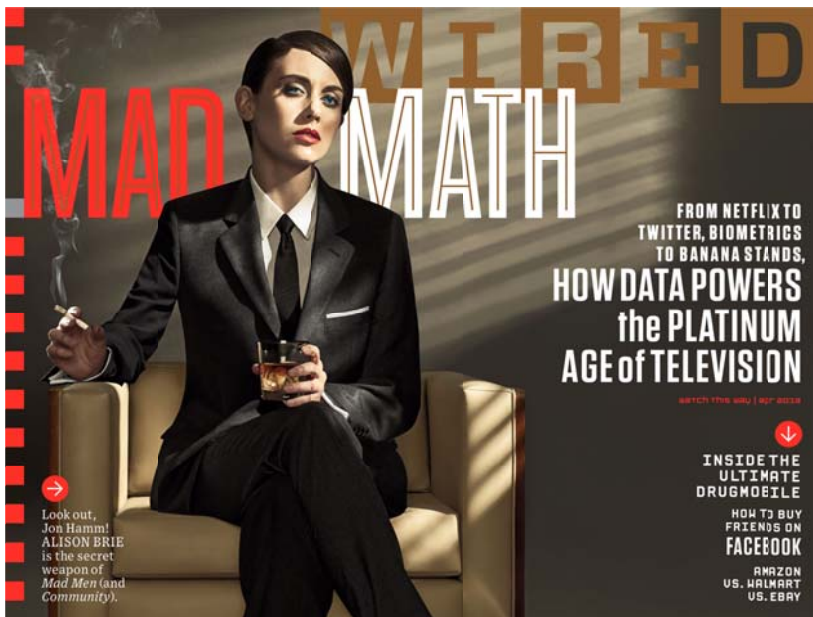
Figure 11.   **The cover of Wired, April 2013 issue.**

As a magazine app I chose *Wired* (April 2013 issue), which is a monthly magazine reporting on developing technology. Owned by Condé Nast, it is headquartered in the US.

It was challenging to choose one example of magazine apps, because so many interesting examples were recommended to me, such as *National Geographic, The Economist, Iconist, GQ, House Edition 29*, just to name a few. I chose *Wired*, because it received most attention in my interviews and literary review.

The design of the app triggers a positive response. It reminds me of an elegant and luxurious traditional magazine. To me the ads are distracting, because you can't instinctively distinguish them from the journalistic content.

There is a lot of multimedia used, which makes the magazine-reading experience very engaging. There are photos, videos, sound, and graphics (some of the graphics are interactive). Usually multimedia elements add to the story or even form the core of the storytelling, but sometimes they seem a bit far-fetched. After reading a few issues the user might get tired of the abundance of bells and whistles, that don't necessarily add meaning or depth to the stories. Like Craig Mod claims: In product design, the simplest thought exercise is to make additions. It's the easiest way to make an Old Thing feel like a New Thing[40].

The multimedia elements are usually smoothly attached to the story, but for example not all pictures and videos are integrated to the text.

The navigation preview is excellent. It is easy to navigate with its help and know your location inside the magazine. However, the app is not that simple to use and there is a multiple page tutorial.

There is a neat way of using layers. For example the graphics make use of layout (see figures 9 and 12), so that the pages don't get too cramped when only some particles are shown at a time. In both examples extra information can be found on an underlying layer (page). They can be opened and closed by tapping the screen.

There are a lot of touch elements, which make the app very engaging. Most of the time the active points are big enough. However the active points are not distinguished and do not visually respond to the touch. The use of the active points is not consistent, which might even be done on purpose to keep up the excitement. For non-frequent readers that might, on the other hand, be frustrating. If you can tap and swipe in some articles and get a reward, why not in all?

Especially in some of the longest articles the structure is carefully planned to present all necessary information without the necessity of external links, and thus creates a feeling of a cognitive container.

Infographic by CARL DETORRES

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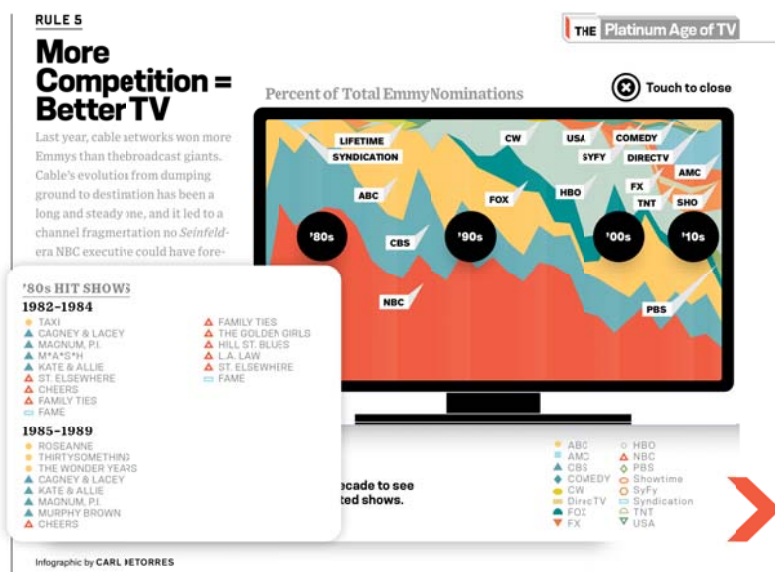
[40] C. Mod, "Simple tools and systems for digital publishing", Subcompact Publishing, 2012

Figure 12.   **Graphics are layered and embedded to the text in Wired, April 2013 issue.**

4.3   Long-form journalism app

Figure 13.   **The cover page of The Atavist's story The Last Clinic.**

With long-form journalism I am referring to new media businesses developing digital stories that are typically published on digital platforms only. There has been a boom in long-form journalism during the past few years. Adam Westbrooke[41], a digital producer and publisher himself thinks that the boom in long form journalism products might be connected to the fact that longer stories are more comfortable to read from a tablet than a computer. However, long-form journalism applications are usually designed so that they can be read on any digital device.

Long-form journalism typically means having a long-form text content at their core and then possibly some multimedia elements. Platforms that collect together such works have also been launched alongside. According to Alissa Quart[42], editor-at-large for The *Atavist*, there are a number of genres, which suit the long-form publishing very well: memoirs, historical books and crime stories, because they have a lot of archival images, artefacts or legal documents.

Atavist was mentioned most frequently as the best representative among long-form journalism applications. It is an American media and software company, which offers bestselling non-fiction stories that are longer than typical magazine articles but shorter than books trying to reach readers across mobile devices and the Web.

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[41] Personal interview with A. Westbrooke in January, 2013

[42] in R. McAthy, "How long-form journalism is getting a new lease of life in the digital world", Journalism.co.uk, 2012

The story analysed in my paper is called The Last Clinic, which was published on *Atavist* in January 2013. It consists of a 50-minute video, a four-page text, two full-size graphics and 13 full-size photos. They all tell a story of an abortion clinic in Mississippi and its patients, staff and religious people who oppose to the abortions.

The video, pictures and text succeed in complementing one another. The user can approach the content either by watching the video, the photos or reading the text. However, there is actually no need to both read and watch in order to understand the content, because they are separate pieces.

The video, graphics and pictures are not integrated into the text, but in this case it clearly hasn't even been the aim.

The interface is clear and simple and the design is nice. The photos and graphics could have been embedded into the story to make them feel more part of it. Also the navigation preview should show the type of element, i.e. is it a photo, video or text.

However, the finger doesn't get any treats. Symbols and navigational elements don't show when they react to your command. Instead the program merely executes the function.

There is a reason why long-form journalism is called as it is. There is a strong feeling of a cognitive container, which comes quite naturally because everything essential to the topic should be packed within the app.

4.4   Feature app

Figure 14.   In the cover page of Snow Fall there is a video without sound.

I chose Snow Fall: The Avalanche at Tunnel Creek, which is a special feature story, longer than the stories in the newspaper, published in the *New York Times* apart from everyday news work. This compelling story about an avalanche has got a lot of positive attention after it was published at the end of 2012.

Because it took over half a year and sixteen people to finish it, it has received criticism for not being a fair example for news publications that can't use as much time and money. In addition it is not a tablet-specific

application, and according to Jeremy Rue[43], it was actually first designed for the Internet. Nevertheless, it works as well on the tablet (via Internet) and many think that it could lead way to others in digital storytelling in general.

I have to admit this feature story could as well be called a long-form journalism piece, because it is longer than typical magazine articles but shorter than a book. However in my research I wanted to treat it as a separate example, because it is not created by a small new media business, like a lot of long-form journalism pieces seem to be and because it is a stand-alone piece. A similar kind of a feature piece is for example France24's Rape in Congo, which is a separate tablet application. It is also seen as a good example of tablet storytelling. Both of them have elements from long-form journalism – and documentaries. Actually web documentary is a genre from which print and broadcast journalism could learn a lot from, as well. I could have added documentaries in the analysis, but thought they are too different from the other examples to be compared with one another.

The interface of Snow Fall is clear and simple. However it is quite clearly designed for the web use, because there is no horizontal dimension in navigation and the page scrolling down takes forever. The design aesthetic is simple and flat. There are black letters on a white (snowy?) background. In my opinion though, the story is so engaging that while I was reading it, I didn't pay much attention to design.

Snow Fall integrates multimedia elements (photos, animated images, slideshows, sound, videos, video animations, and motion graphics) into the text (see figure 15). Every multimedia element falls in exactly where it belongs.

Multimedia elements rather add to the story than are compulsory in order to understand the text itself. There is a justification for them. The elements bring the characters and places that are already introduced in the text into life. They also connect the reader better with the story. I couldn't stop reading the story before the end.

The use of silent video animations is exceptionally clever, like Rue[44] says. Showing the place of the story (a breezy and snowy slope of a mountain, for example) in a silent video animation is much more effective than showing it in a photo or video with a sound. In Rue's opinion in Snow Fall, the opening animated images of each section set the mood in a similar fashion to background music setting the mood of a movie. A special treat is the interactive graphic showing the progress of the skiers in the slope at the same speed the reader scrolls down the page. It is no wonder the story by John Branch recently won a Pulitzer Prize in feature writing, and as noted by the Pulitzer website it was "a project enhanced by its deft integration of multimedia elements."[45]

The reader can lean back and enjoy the story without having to stress about the structure and being afraid of missing some important elements. In a similar manner to long-form journalism this kind of feature or reportage apps by definition form a cognitive container.

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[43] Personal interview with J. Rue in March, 2013

[44] J. Rue, "The 'Snow Fall' effect and dissecting the multimedia longform narrative", Rue's blog, 2013

[45] J. Rue, "The 'Snow Fall' effect and dissecting the multimedia longform narrative", Rue's blog, 2013

Because the story was not designed for tablets, the finger is merely used like a mouse on the computer. The function symbols are too small and for example the full screen symbol is not one of the conventionally used ones. The slideshows, graphics and videos can be opened in a larger window, but pictures can't and they are surprisingly small. In my opinion this is a big mistake. Why not make the pictures reach the whole screen size and the text run through the pictures?

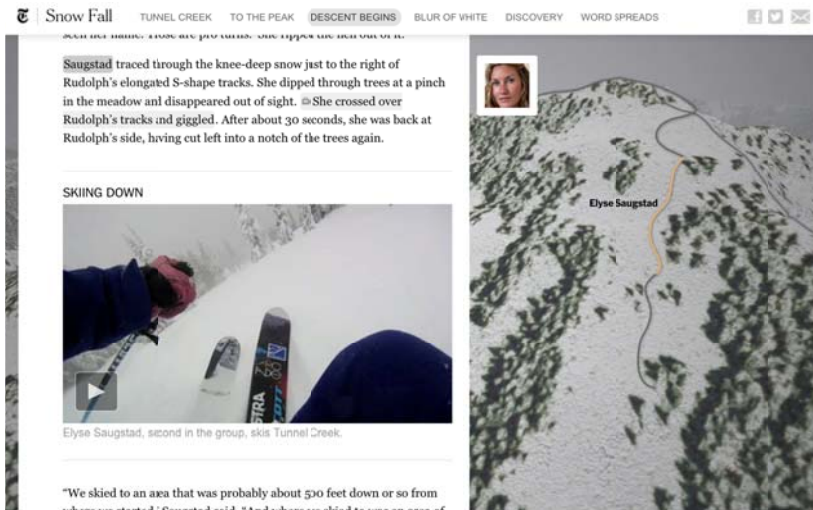**Figure 15.**   **The graphic in Snow Fall shows the progress of the skiers simultaneously with the text.**
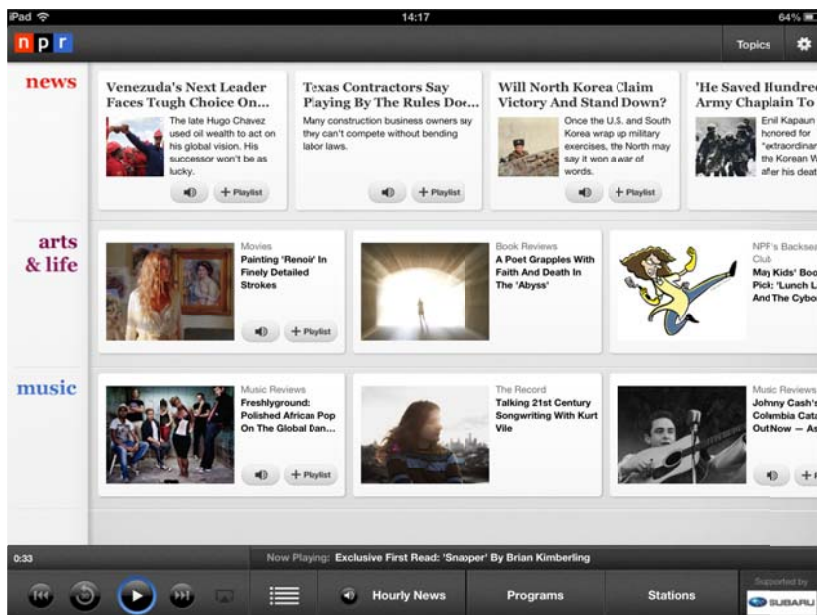
4.5   Broadcast app

Figure 16.   **The home page of NPR's tablet app has thumbnails to stories**

NPR is a privately and publicly funded non-profit membership media organization that serves as a national syndicator to a network of 900 public radio stations in the United States.

It has been said that broadcast companies have been more experimental with their tablet apps than the newspapers, because they haven't had the historical baggage of a print paper structure. That seems to be true. For example NPR has laid its articles and radio programs into small boxes where you can see a photo, the title and some a short introduction. They are under sub topics and are easy to scroll horizontally. Zooming into photos also works intuitively. Compared to the web site the tablet version is simplified. Nevertheless, the interface is quite hard to learn.

The app (analysed on 11.4.2013) uses layers in multiple ways. For example an opened radio program continues to be played even when you enter a different page. The player and the title of the program are shown on the bottom bar. While reading an article, the user is exposed to a concealable ribbon showing other articles of the same section.

Photos are used to illustrate the articles in a way typical to traditional newspapers. They are not integrated into the text. The core products of the app, namely radio programs, are widely on offer. In addition audio clips from the shows have been used in news stories. Exceptionally wide use of audio increases the multimedia value.

The touching points are mainly easy to use, but at times the function buttons feel like they are planned for a mouse of a computer rather than for fingers. For example the cross button for making an exit is too small. This seems weird, because the vast majority of NPR's navigation elements in the app are planned for a tablet.

There is not a notable feeling of a cognitive container, although the articles themselves do not offer options to escape from the app. Background information is often supplied in the form of audio clips. I assume that broadcasting apps don't even aim at the feeling of a cognitive container. One reason could be that they get content from various programs that might work quite independently. Especially in NPR's case, this is very true.

4.6   Summary

Table 1.   **Comparison of the different journalistic applications**

	Simple	Clear	Aesthetic	Layered	Touch	Wise multimedia	Integrating multim.	Cognitive container	SUM
Wired	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	5	**35**
Snowfall	5	4	2	4	1	5	5	5	**31**
Atavist	5	4	5	1	2	3	1	5	**26**
Guardian	3	3	5	2	3	3	2	2	**23**
NPR	2	2	2	4	3	3	2	2	**20**
SUM of characteristics	**19**	**17**	**19**	**16**	**13**	**18**	**14**	**19**	

Realization of characteristics (5=Excellent, 4=Very Good, 3=Good, 2=Fair 1=Poor)

These are not absolute ratings but relative to each other. So the scores only apply to this comparative analysis. With all points counted together, the magazine app *Wired* received the highest scores of all applications. It received at least four points in every category. The feature app Snow Fall scored well in multimedia usage, simplicity, clarity, use of layers and having a sense of a cognitive container, but was not considered good in aesthetics and in use of touch. It might be that it didn't score as well as *Wired*, because it was not designed specifically for tablets.

The long-form journalism app *Atavist* is simple and clear, has a definite feeling of a cognitive container and is excellently designed, but didn't use multimedia elements as skilfully as all others.

The newspaper app the *Guardian*, which is considered one of the best examples of newspaper apps in the world, scored excellent in design aesthetics but in all other aspects was either good or fair. *Wired* outdid it in all but simplicity. No wonder that some newspapers at the moment want to adapt a magazine-like design to their tablet applications.

The broadcast app NPR uses layers quite effectively but it didn't succeed in other aspects.

First of all, this comparative analysis reveals that different journalistic apps have different strengths. They are all used for different reasons and in different circumstances, so users have different expectations of them. Expectations towards storytelling and design in daily products, for example, might not be as big as they are towards a weekly or a monthly magazine. Thus in a way it is unfair to assess them against each other. In addition it might be that with different examples we would see another kind of a result. Obviously, the storytelling on tablets doesn't have to be identical but still some of the key characteristics should apply to all of them.

The analysis also shows that there aren't applications that would be perfect on all levels. I came to the same conclusion with my interviews and literary review. The media companies are waiting for this "one project" that will show way to everybody else. At the moment there is a big focus on Snow Fall. It has gained an incredible amount of attention as what some call the future of journalism. Jill Abramson, Executive Editor of the *New York Times* thinks Snow Fall represents the future of digital storytelling[46]. She also adds that the project has had such a strong effect in the *New York Times'* newsroom that "Snow Fall" has become a verb.

Personally, I thought that Snow Fall is the most appealing piece of the five examples described. Even though it didn't succeed in all areas, the storytelling works as a whole. That obviously suggests that not all characteristics have to be fulfilled to tell a story well. And I must admit that telling a news story and a feature story differ in many ways, not least on how much time can be spent producing one story. However, I think that the listed characteristics are so fundamental that they should be fulfilled. What now is called an experiment can be everyday reality when the industry learns how to add certain storytelling procedures into their publications effectively and get the software to support their work.

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[46] J. Señor, Interview of the Executive Editor of the New York Times Jill Abramson at the World Conference of The International News Media Association (INMA), 29.4.2013

A few months after Snow Fall's publication, Cody Brown, co-founder of an interactive web design tool Scroll Kit, claimed he had recreated the Snow Fall piece using Scroll Kit to show that you didn't need an army of developers or designers to create the same type of interactive storytelling[47]. He proved his point on a video where he finishes his recreation in less than an hour. This example suggests that the tools to build compelling narratives that take advantage of the combination of text, and video, and images, might actually already exist today. Media companies just aren't necessarily the first ones to employ them.

If we compare the characteristics used in the analysis in relation to each other, it seems that within the examples good aesthetic design, the feel of a cognitive container and simplicity were most often achieved. Use of touch got the weakest points. However with this comparative analysis it is impossible to make further conclusions, because the characteristics are not comparable.

All of the examples in the analysis work without extraordinary problems, but they could all be much more enjoyable for the reader. Acknowledging deficiencies is the first step and that's why this kind of analysis of storytelling techniques will hopefully be valuable for the industry. The comparative analysis offers concrete examples of technical or design deficiencies that would be comparatively easy to fix and offer the tablet user a more enjoyable experience. The content is, undoubtedly, very important in journalism, but sometimes it feels like the quality of content is still the only thing at least newspapers take seriously. They ought to think about storytelling methods more extensively.

Personally I would start with the five characteristics that are the easiest to carry out, because they don't require every day adjustments from the staff. These are simplicity, clarity, good design, feel of cognitive container and use of touch. These characteristics usually refer to the whole application. On the other hand the three other characteristics (wise use of multimedia, integration of multimedia and use of layers) are harder to carry out, because they need to be altered within every separate story or article (if there are multiple stories or articles in the application).

One might argue that there is no need to create "diverse structures" for headline news, for instance, because readers just want to browse through them quickly. However, I am claiming that applying the eight characteristics doesn't necessarily mean you have to create a complex piece like the Snow Fall or *Wired*. For example a daily newspaper doesn't need to use as many photos or graphics in a story as there are in these longer pieces, but applying the eight characteristics can even make the application easier to browse through quickly. Using layers, for example, could mean showing the headlines of the story first in a simple way and the whole story could be embedded and include more depth and detail, multimedia and more layers.

At the moment newspaper tablet applications are not even typically up-to-date, because they are uploaded only once or twice a day. Thus if the reader wants an up-to-date view of the current news, the reader will have to go to the online version anyway.

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[47] R. Lawler, "Snow Fail: The New York Times and its misunderstanding of copyright", TechCrunch, 2013

5   A glimpse at the future of tablet storytelling

Given the cases reviewed one could conclude that in the future multimedia content will be used more and will be more properly integrated into the story. Several other stories have been produced in reaction to the success of the *New York Times'* Snow Fall project. They all follow Snow Fall's lead in many ways.

One of them is the *Guardian Australia's* Firestorm (see figure 17). It is a digital story of a destructive bushfire in Tasmania with audio, videos, pictures and graphics. It was published on 23.5.2013. It is beautifully designed, multimedia is integrated in the story and it is simple and clear. The graphics reveal more information as you scroll down the text. (Like the Snow Fall this story is read via the web browser, there is not a specific tablet app for it.)

It is like a developed version of Snow Fall. The design aesthetics are better in my opinion, images are bigger and videos, audio and graphics appear automatically in full screen. It is also more of a treat to your fingers than the Snow Fall. This, I believe is a model that will be copied in other newspapers, as well.

Figure 17.   **The Guardian Australia's multimedia project.**

Based on my review it seems that tablets as a platform will lead news organizations to develop their content so that it more often "shows, not just tells" the story or fact. Interactive games, graphics and videos etc. will be able to create that feeling. It might also be psychologically and economically wise as there is alluring entertainment content competing with the tablet user's time. In the future apps there will also be a feeling that the reader is taken by hand and lead through the article, unlike in the Internet where you can easily get lost in the labyrinth of content.

When one looks at all the evidence, it becomes obvious that the feeling of a cognitive container (clear beginning and an end) will be the predominant way to tell stories on a tablet rather than having ins and outs from the publication, like on the Internet. Readers will expect that they have a control of the content and in the end of a newspaper application, for example, feel they "know it all".

Based on the evidence it seems to be beyond dispute that there is a need to forget what we know about making magazines, newspapers or videos. "If you taught a ten-year-old HTML and let him make a magazine, what would they make it look like? Because they have no idea what it should look like, I think they would make something simpler than we are trying to make", digital producer and publisher Adam Westbrooke[48] says.

The interviews also revealed that there seems to be an evident need to re-invent videos for tablets (and other digital platforms). Videos are being watched a lot on digital devices, and especially live videos are popular on tablets. However, they are made too heavy. "Why are we still making videos that look like TV?" Westbrook[49] asks. We use videos in the digital platforms that are good enough to be broadcast on the evening TV news. Videos should instead be more social, interactive and light in weight to fit the web-native space. Regina McCombs[50] thinks that in the beginning of the video boom newspapers really underestimated how hard it is to make them.

Based on my review it seems that at the moment good journalistic digital storytelling examples work almost similarly well on the web or mobile phones as on tablets. Actually it can already be seen, that some of the good practices, layout innovations, design solutions and storytelling models that have proved to be successful on tablets are being transferred to the web. Some might argue that it is better to develop tablet, mobile and web storytelling side by side and not have dramatic difference between them. Actually this would be a scenario that newspapers are probably secretly hoping for, because then they wouldn't have to create different storytelling methods for different platforms.

When one looks at all the evidence, it becomes obvious that over time there will be content that is designed purely for tablets. Content will be designed taking into account tablets' best technical qualities, best ways to tell a story, best ways to design content and situations they are being used in. I am most certain that the use of touch will play a key role in the future. I also believe a new media specialist Alex Nieminen[51] is right when he says that tablets' technical qualities will be used more in the future. By technical qualities he means for example the camera, map, GPS, acceleration sensor, temperature sensor and a QR-code reader. Even though mobile phones will have the same qualities, the bigger screen size will play a significant role in usability.

Documentary films are likely to inspire tablet storytelling, because designing a tablet application is reminiscent of creating a documentary film. A media consultant and designer Mario R. García[52] says he usually draws a storyboard, much like film directors do for scenes. "I think like a documentary filmmaker when I plan an app." In his opinion multi-genre presentation requires a plan, and the creation of a storyboard helps with the logistics of such a plan. Although it is not purely designed for tablets, Welcome to Pine Point[53] (see figure 18) is an interesting example of multimedia narration that could be adopted by the newspaper industry as well. It is an

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[48] Personal interview with A. Westbrooke in January, 2013

[49] Personal interview with A. Westbrooke in January, 2013

[50] Personal interview with R. McCombs in April, 2013

[51] Personal interview with A. Nieminen in January, 2013

[52] M. García,"Design Lab: Storytelling in the Age of the Tablet", North Light Books, 2012

[53] P. Shoebridge and M. Simons, "Welcome to Pine Point", The Goggles, National Film Board of Canada, 2011

interactive web documentary project using video, pictures, text, sound clips, narration, animations, graphics and music. The website explores the memories of residents from the former mining community of Pine Point, Northwest Territories, as well as how we remember the past.

Figure 18. **Welcome to Pine Point is a web-documentary.**

Games might have a big influence on storytelling in the future. I was only able to carry out a superficial review on the subject in this research. Therefore it is hard to say, what will be their exact impact. However, newspapers and magazines are already using newsgames, which combine the narrative of news and computer games. "Newsgames are good for explaining complex structures, that would be very hard to construct with text, says Bobby Schweizer,[54] who has written a book Newsgames: Journalism at Play. In the first newsgame in history, Kabul Kaboom from 2001 the player tries to catch hamburgers thrown from airplanes and simultaneously try to avoid the American bombs.[55] With a game the player can experience how contradictory the situation in Afghanistan is. Chiqui Esteban[56] says that the newspaper he works for, *the Boston Globe*, is using the game structure more and more in graphics. "We have noticed that everybody is trying to display complex issues with games, because it gives the user an experience and it is easier to understand things playing a game."

Media organizations are trying to learn storytelling methods in tablet journalism from each other and from individual designers, artists and developers. According to Rue,[57] *the New York Times*, for example, almost always goes outside the journalism field to explore what innovative ideas are being developed in the digital world. For example the idea for Snow Fall's realization had been copied from a developer's wedding site that he had done for his wife, Rue tells.

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[54] J. Vehkoo, "Pelaa uutinen!", Journalisti, 13/2012

[55] J. Vehkoo, "Pelaa uutinen!", Journalisti, 13/2012

[56] Personal interview with C. Esteban in February, 2013

[57] Personal interview with J. Rue in March, 2013

It appears that individuals or small companies will be more agile than big ones and might be able to outdo the big legacy media companies in storytelling. If audiences become more scattered in the future, like some[58] predict, small publishers might not need to reach for big audiences like the traditional media have needed in order to survive economically. Small digital-only publishers won't have to invest in printing and they might have a small loyal audience that is willing to pay for the content. The dependency on advertising might even diminish.

My interviewees emphasized that the industry needs a couple of years to see where it is going with tablet storytelling. Nieminen[59] thinks it might take a long time to find a unique way to tell stories on tablets and in the end there necessarily won't even be an utterly unique way of use.[60] He also says that this experimental period can end up in a disaster. Only one thing is sure: the media industry needs to be creative.

It is most likely that the key characteristics that I was referring to in previous chapters are going to change as the use of the platform develops. What feels like a natural way of storytelling now, will feel less natural or even clumsy in the future, when design, layout and storytelling skills develop.

Media companies will have to figure out more precisely what users want to do with their tablets and develop something to fulfil their needs. I think McCombs[61] is right by saying that at the moment publishers are usually thinking too much about their products as how they can get through what they produce. It should be the other way around. But publishers, I understand, are afraid of making that step. They fear putting too much effort on digital platforms instead of print, because print is still the platform where most of the revenues are coming from. They are in other words afraid to shift their focus before they get proof of revenues from the digital platforms. According to data gathered in the US by McKinsey and Company, 35 per cent of news consumption remains in newspapers and magazines, 16 per cent in radio and other audio, and 41 per cent television. Smart phones and tablets each account for 2 per cent of time spent and desktop/laptop 4 per cent.[62]

My review suggests that pressure from manufacturers, software developers and social networks is going to force newspapers to develop their content into a more tablet-specific style. But it might be that only some part of the content will be "tabletized", not all. But it is most certain that apps in a few years' time won't look like the ones I presented in this paper. It is an inexorable conclusion that apps will feel more natural, more intuitive, better designed, simpler and easier to use – without compromising the story. Moreover better design, storytelling and layout solutions will make the stories more powerful.

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[58] For example digital producer and publisher Adam Westbrooke predicted this in a personal interview in January, 2013

[59] Personal interview with A. Nieminen in January, 2013

[60] Personal interview with S. Polikandriotis in February, 2013

[61] Personal interview with R. McCombs in April, 2013

[62] R. Edmonds, "New research finds 92 percent of time spent on news consumption is still on legacy platforms", *Poynter*, 2013.

6 Conclusion

In my research I found that newspapers are still in the early days of developing tablet-specific storytelling. They hardly seem able to fully exploit the possibilities and nature of the tablet. Daily versions of newspapers are generally shovelling the print or online content straight into the tablet applications, without re-purposing for the new platform. Content-wise newspapers are usually like their print versions with some added multimedia content typical to online like videos and picture galleries. They also remind me of print papers in their layout and design. My research suggests, however, that there is a need to re-purpose for the new device, as the old newspaper format doesn't work well on the touch screen and digital environment and as the format won't be interesting enough for the younger generations.

Some seem to have developed their storytelling on tablets quicker than newspapers. To get the whole picture of journalistic storytelling, I examined dozens of magazines, long-form journalism stories, broadcast applications and newspapers. According to the examination, literary review and interviews I figured out that there are key characteristics that define good storytelling on tablets: simple and clear interface, good design aesthetic, use of layers, making fingers happy, using multimedia wisely, integrating multimedia and feel of cognitive container.

I wanted to see how these characteristics apply to all of these journalistic applications. I chose five journalistic representatives: a newspaper (the *Guardian*), a magazine (*Wired*), a feature story (the *New York Times'* Snow Fall), a broadcaster (NPR) and a long-form journalism story (*Atavist*).

The comparative analysis revealed that *Wired* was the most tablet-specific example in terms of these characteristics, Snow Fall was the second best, *Atavist* was third, the *Guardian* fourth and NPR fifth. The newspaper app the *Guardian*, which is considered one of the best examples within newspaper apps in the world at the moment, scored excellent in design aesthetics but in all other aspects was either good or fair. *Wired* beat it in all but simplicity. It is not surprising that some newspapers think they should copy a magazine-like look.

The analysis proved that none of the applications is perfect based on all characteristics. This to me was a surprising finding, because these characteristics are quite elementary. My study offers concrete examples of technical, storytelling or design deficiencies that would be comparatively easy to fix in order to offer the tablet user a more enjoyable and intriguing experience. It is understandable that newspapers might be reluctant to develop their applications, as developing is costly and time consuming. Newspapers that are already in difficulties economically aren't tempted to put a lot of effort into new platforms. Nevertheless luring younger generations with appealing apps into the traditional newspaper world could also ease economical troubles.

Acknowledging deficiencies is the first step and that's why this kind of analysis of storytelling techniques will hopefully be valuable for the industry. Personally I would start with the five characteristics that are easiest to carry out, because they don't require every day adjustments from the staff. These are simplicity, clarity, good design, feel of cognitive container and use of touch. These characteristics usually refer to the whole application. On the other hand the three other characteristics (wise use of multimedia, integration of multimedia and use of layers) are harder to carry out, because they need to be altered within every separate story or article (if there are multiple stories or articles in the application).

Every publisher is waiting for this "one project" that will show way to everybody else. The *New York Times'* Snow Fall has gained an incredible amount of attention as what some call the future of journalism. It is a harmonious piece of work where all multimedia elements fall in exactly their right places (well integrated into the story), the story is well written and the app is simple and clear to use. For example Jill Abramson, Executive Editor of the *New York Times* thinks Snow Fall represents the future of digital storytelling. She says this Pulitzer Prize winner has had such a strong effect in the *New York Times'* newsroom that "Snow Fall" has become a verb used in turning a traditional story into an appealing digital and interactive reporting piece.

We can already see that there are new stories produced in reaction to the success of Snow Fall. They all follow Snow Fall's lead in the way they use and integrate multimedia. *Guardian Australia's* Firestorm, for example is like a developed version of Snow Fall. To me the design aesthetics is better than in Snow Fall, images are bigger and videos, audio and graphics appear automatically in full screen. It is also more of a treat to your fingers than the Snow Fall. However, like Snow Fall, Firestorm again is not developed for tablets only.

I think that tablets are already good for consuming journalistic content, but publishers need to keep on developing the storytelling so that the applications don't start to look clumsy and old compared to other content that is more popularly used on the tablets, namely games, books and other kind of entertainment. I would like to emphasize that not every journalistic application needs to look and feel like Snow Fall or *Wired,* but publishers should think of applying the eight characteristics into their works - even if they are producing short headline news that the reader wants to browse through quickly.

Personally, during the research process I have been converted from a print reader to a tablet reader. I have never been an early adopter of new technical appliances, so before starting the research I used to order my newspapers in print, but now there is no going back. While using other core apps like email, web browser and social media applications frequently on the tablet, there seems to be no sense in having a separate print newspaper next to my digital screen.

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8 Appendix

Interviews:

Chiqui Esteban, visual journalist at the *Boston Globe*

Regina McCombs, a faculty member of the Poynter Institute

Pedro Monteiro, graphic designer and consultant

Alex Nieminen, new media specialist

Spiros Polikandriotis, graphic designer and consultant

Jeremy Rue, lecturer from the UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism

Juan Señor, partner at Innovation Media Consulting (and also supervisor for the research)

Adam Westbrooke, digital producer and publisher