

iPad Anti-Frenzy Revised

Domenic Venuto, March 2010

***This article was originally published in Min Online, March 2010: <http://bit.ly/dsKORW>*

When I see long lines of people waiting outside Apple stores to purchase the iPad, then I will be convinced that it is going to save the publishing industry. Don't get me wrong—as an agency that creates experiences that in turn builds businesses, at Razorfish we are looking forward to rolling up our sleeves and unleashing our creativity with the new platform. We even have a few iPad projects for publishers in the pipeline. But consumer adoption and penetration is going to take some time before the iPad scales to a size that will be meaningful.

It was three years ago now when consumers were whipping themselves into a frenzy over the iPhone. Steve Jobs slid the sleek one-button phone out of his pocket in January 2007, and everyone had to wait impatiently for the device to go on sale a full six months later. I remember at the time that publishers' response to the phone was generally lukewarm. Even after the app store was opened, publishers still took time to create applications. They were apprehensive. It was a new, untested medium. The screen was small. The ad models were untried and Apple owned the consumer data. Put simply, in an industry of Photoshop perfection, everyone was afraid of releasing something that wouldn't be adopted. The fear of embarrassment, if something didn't stick, was too great.

Times have certainly changed. With the iPad device only days away from release, the publishers are the frenzied ones and the consumers are apparently lukewarm.

In the socializing around the American Society of Magazine Editors' awards ceremony last week there was a lot of talk about the iPad. No one was willing to spill the beans about what their brands had in development, but clearly many of them were excited. One publisher was practically dancing with glee, counting down the days until their iPad magazine goes "on sale." It was fun to see. This time around, instead of being nervous of failure, publishers are taking leadership positions. To wit, the Sports Illustrated tablet demo and Wired's demo were developed in partnership with Adobe.

I am excited to see what magazine and newspaper publishers have been working on. There is no doubt that we will see some beautiful experiences that take full advantage of the iPad's capabilities. I am also sure we will see some print brands simply translated into a digital magazine. Old habits die hard, and for some, the form factor of the iPad is too similar to a printed product to challenge the traditional convention from the start. Fingers crossed that there's more of the former than the latter.

With that said, no one thing, including the iPad, is going to save the publishing industry. As much as we want one easy solution, the reality is that it's going to be a long-tail process where great content can be accessed across multiple devices, in a variety of formats with different

business models. The iPad is simply one more channel in the mix. There's tons of opportunity, but the challenge is going to be supporting the growing number of devices—creating content once, and distributing it many times—while preserving the brand and experience of the original product. The further afield the content goes, the less control there is and the more humans are needed to ensure it gets to the destination as intended. That's a downstream problem we can save for another day.

Conclusion

I am optimistic that the iPad will teach us:

- How to extend brands beyond the boundaries of their current containers.
- How to value and price different pieces of content on different devices.
- How much consumers value functionality and convenience.
- What level of engagement consumers are willing to have with a brand.

I think it is also going to make us more comfortable about relinquishing the ownership and control of consumer data. Since Apple isn't likely to give that up anytime soon, this constraint may actually spur innovation. Without access to our usual bag of direct marketing tricks, we will be forced to create better forms of consumer engagement.

I am willing to change my mind and believe the iPad is the answer if I start seeing tents pitched outside the glass temples of Appledom a few days before it gets released on April 3...provided it's not an April Fools' joke.

About the Author



Domenic Venuto is Global Managing Director of Media Solutions at Publicis Groupe's (Euronext Paris: FR0000130577) VivaKi, a global digital knowledge and resource center.

About Razorfish™

Razorfish creates experiences that build businesses. As one of the largest interactive marketing and technology companies in the world, Razorfish helps its clients build better brands by delivering business results through customer experiences. Razorfish combines the best thought leadership of the consulting world with the leading capabilities of the marketing services industry to support our clients' business needs, such as launching new products, repositioning a brand or participating in the social world. With a demonstrated commitment to innovation, Razorfish continues to cultivate our expertise in Social Influence Marketing, emerging media, creative design, analytics, technology and user experience. Razorfish has offices in markets across the United States, and in Australia, Brazil, China, France, Germany, Japan, Spain and the United Kingdom. Clients include Carnival Cruise Lines, MillerCoors, Levi Strauss & Co., McDonald's

and Starwood Hotels. With sister agencies Starcom MediaVest, ZenithOptimedia, Denuo and Digitas, Razorfish is part of Publicis Groupe's (Euronext Paris: FR0000130577) VivaKi, a global digital knowledge and resource center. Visit www.razorfish.com for more information. Follow Razorfish on Twitter at @razorfish.

Razorfish

821 2nd Avenue, Suite 1800

Seattle, WA 98104

Phone: 206.816.8800

Fax: 206.816.8808