

New digital suite provides interactive content

Using Adobe's new Digital Publishing Suite, graphic designers will now be able to add an interactive element to digital content for use on tablet devices such as the iPad, [Blackberry Playbook](#) and Samsung Galaxy Tab. This offers a new communications medium to South African advertisers and publishers.

Traditionally the consumer's experience of an advertisement would be a static image with a tag line, but digital publishing provides an opportunity to "draw the user into a product" by bringing the ad or publication to life, allowing him to navigate through the content and choose his own experience, says Eva Csernyanszky, a director of Friends of Design (FoD), currently the only design school that provides training in the new technology in South Africa.

She explains that there are various ways in which to create "an immersive experience" for consumers and stimulate their senses. One is by integrating a game into an advertisement. In a car ad, for example, the consumer might touch the screen to start navigating the vehicle through a maze or driving it through a dangerous situation. Another way might be to 'immerse' him into the car via a 3D image of the interior, where he can click buttons on a virtual dashboard to turn on the radio, or open a window and hear birdsong or leaves rustling on trees.

Sometimes the interactive experience can be as simple as touching the screen to hear a sound or start a video playing - for example, to show the making of the ad - or it might be as complex as enabling the consumer to rotate a product on screen to see it from all angles. The latter would involve building a model of larger products, such as cars, during the ad production process, she says.

Other tools include having expandable areas of text to enable users to read more about the characteristics or benefits of products, or adding hyperlinks so that they can access more information from a company website simply by touching the screen. Ads may also be designed in such a way that users can view a different graphic when they orientate the tablet screen from horizontal to vertical.

South Africa ready to follow international trends

Many well-known brands, including Mercedes Benz, EMI Music and Red Bull are already actively using digital publishing as an advertising and marketing method overseas, she adds.

"Publishing companies, too, are at the forefront of the new technology. [Richard Branson's](#) 'Project' magazine, for example, is available only on the iPad, offering an exclusivity that many consumers can't resist."

Interactivity offers an experience that makes the user feel more connected to a brand, which in turn creates a loyalty and message involvement that is difficult to forget. "Studies carried out at the University of Connecticut in Stamford, US, have shown that those who engage with a brand in this way have a heightened awareness of that brand afterwards."

Using interactive content also has great value in that it allows publishers and advertisers to track how many users have engaged with a particular ad in a digital publication and how long they have spent reading it. "Being able to derive statistics from the technology, using Adobe tools, to track and quantify the impact of an ad will enable advertisers to make their future messages more effective."

Break clutter in eco-friendly manner

She adds that interactive ads also offer an advertiser the chance to break through "the clutter" of advertising that today's consumers are bombarded with, and even keep readers coming back for a fun experience. "However, not every ad should have all the bells and whistles: the designer should be the curator of the content and choose selected advertisements or

articles that retain the design fidelity of the print publication."

From a publishing perspective, digital publications have the advantage of being more eco-friendly and less costly to produce as they do not use water, ink and paper. "There is also a timeliness about them: publishers can get breaking news out faster or update an existing article online, then instantly advise consumers who have downloaded the original that the piece has been updated. Another factor that will appeal to consumers is that digital magazines remain accessible: users can easily go into a publication's archives and purchase a back copy published a year ago."

Digital publications are likely to appeal to younger, techno-savvy consumers who are willing to buy and learn new technologies to access information, she says. "What this means is that, as creatives, designers have got to adapt, and FoD is facilitating their migration from print to tablet."

Retraining traditional print designers

She believes that traditionally-trained print designers, especially those who have been in the industry for 10 or 15 years and who were reluctant to go the web route because of the coding aspects, technological standards and restrictions, will find the leap to digital publishing quite easy, as the tablet is a simple device and the Adobe tools automate the process. "The new technology will offer these designers and their clients another tool."

Keeping local creatives up to speed with international technology and training is what drives FoD as an organisation, says Csernyanszky, who was actively involved in testing and presenting the beta versions of the Adobe digital publishing suite. She has already run a training programme on the new technology for *Tell* magazine in Nigeria, and will soon return to Lagos to hold a master class for those she has trained.

FoD will launch a five-week evening training course at its Cape Town premises on 4 July 2011, offering comprehensive digital publishing training for designers, using Adobe InDesign and the Adobe Digital Publishing Suite. "This has been met with enthusiasm by the industry: we already have an entire advertising agency booked on the course."

Csernyanszky, who worked with *Design Times* magazine to create a sample digital edition that was shown at this year's [Design Indaba](#), says those on the course will be the pioneers of the industry in South Africa.

"On the course we will outline what publishing is about, where it is going, and look at the technologies, giving our students a product matrix of all the available tablets and mobile devices. We will provide a thorough introduction to the Adobe Digital Publishing Suite and best practice guidelines insofar as they have been thrashed out till now.

"They will then go straight into producing static layouts in InDesign, and learn to add interactive content. They may work on test pages for their own clients as live projects in class, if they choose. Their work will be published online to the school's mobile device, where they can see their ads in action. It's a quick learning curve in an exciting new medium, and I believe digital publishing will hold huge appeal for creative professionals."

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