

Mobile sites as a part of the digital model of modern daily newspapers

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Abstract

Changes in the sphere of conventional printed publications have been acquiring global dimensions. Is there any future for the printed newspapers? Problems of the daily newspapers transition from paper to digital bearers are discussed in the present paper. A model of the future digital newspaper is presented here. The mobile sites of Bulgarian newspapers and magazines are viewed in the paper. The advantages of the mobile platforms through smart phone access are presented here. The sites have been viewed in the aspect of the necessity of "New digital model of the modern newspaper." An analysis of their utility in the point of view of readers and news publishers has been made.

Keywords: Digital model, mobile sites, news, newspapers, magazines

1 Introduction

Smart mobile phones are multifunctional devices. Their sales in recent years have surpassed personal computers in sales. [1]. Many people use their phones in their free time – for quick access to news and news sites. The advantages and disadvantages of the mobile sites compared to desktop at access by mobile phones are presented in the paper.

Predictions for the death of the printed media have appeared since the origin and rise of radio. Later at the emergence of the new exciting media – the television, almost all analyzers were convinced that it would bring the end of newspapers. As it is well known all these predictions have failed to come true – just the opposite – radio and television are not competitors fighting for influence any more but they are becoming partners for development.

The emergence and quick development of Internet have become medium for the appearance of new electronic media. They present news quicker than paper newspapers. This has become the reason for publishers and editors to ask questions about the future of newspapers and to make pessimistic prognosis. Is there any future for newspapers?

2 The necessity of a Mobile platform

For the convenience of the owners of mobile devices some news media offer possibility for quick access to a lighter content of their site through a smart phone. With such an access the users are automatically redirected to the mobile platform of the corresponding media and in this way they get quickness of loading and save traffic data.

3 Advantages of the mobile versions of sites at smart phone access

The content is as close to the user as possible. Speed of loading and work in the site. Friendly interface in compliance with the small size of the smart phone. Easier navigation in the site, reading and sharing information. All

menus and panels for navigation are in compliance with sensor navigation and the small area of the screen. Full compatibility with all mobile operation systems [2] and browsers for them. Lack of Flash elements in the mobile platform [3]. The use of Flash elements (SWF - Shockwave Flash or Small Web File) in internet pages enriches its content and presentation but makes difficult the access to them especially through portable devices. Another basic disadvantage of SWF-files is that they require very quick internet connection and generate huge traffic. At the same time they take a lot of resources and weight down maximally the processor which leads to high energy consumption and so to quick exhaustion of the batteries of the mobile devices [3]. Not all modern mobile operation systems support functionally Flash elements in their browsers [2].

4 Digital model of modern daily newspaper

The author of the present research has more than 15 years experience in printed news media. There is a practical experience gathered for their creation, expansion and development, and observation of their crises, problems and successes. In our opinion internet is not a thread but a new transition medium for the printed news media. Their future is clear – in order to survive they have to benefit from all digital forms which have been offered by the new technologies. Let us not stop only to the availability of electronic site [4]. It is only one form of existence in the digital era. The others are:

1. Availability of a mobile version of the site for quick access through smart phone and tablet;
2. A mobile application working under the three most widespread operation systems for smart phones and tablets - Android, iOS, Windows phone;
3. Concluded agreements with providers of electronic books and distribution of the newspaper as an electronic interactive document in all readers of electronic books and sites for distribution of electronic sites;

4. Strong presence in social networks and looking for feedback with readers through them and if possible the online users to be able also to be its numerous reporters.

5. Availability of digital archive with a new structure and possibility for searching. In order the site of the media to be successful, in our opinion, it needs deeper and fuller temporary archive in which the technologies for semantic web at supporting digital archive to be applied.

A common web based platform is in the basis of this new digital model. It contains two bases of data – one information reference and an advertising one containing all advertisements of the daily newspaper. The new digital transformations of the news media (desktop site, mobile site, mobile application for smart phones and tablets, and digital format for electronic books) get information from the main web based platform (Figure 1).

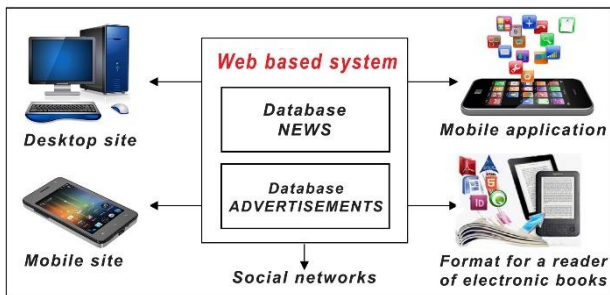


FIGURE 1 New digital model of a web based platform

Here is the model of the newspaper of the future presented by Ivan Mihalev: “The business model of the quality newspaper in the epoch of internet practically combines three different business models corresponding to the different platforms for content distribution – paper newspaper, online issue and a mobile version. They function united by a common denominator – the brand of the media. It is a guarantee for the quality of the content and it is the grounds of the confidence in information which the audience has. Common multimedia editorial offices which are usually in a common integrated newsroom are responsible for the production and distribution of content. The correct positioning of the messages which is a function of the good communication between the structure departments, preliminary coordination between the editors of the corresponding platforms as well as the constant engagement of the journalist teams is of great importance.”

To this opinion we can also add the role of the electronic readers and tablets and the prognosis for them on economicarticles.eu: “They open a new business niche for the newspapers. iPad, Kindle, Sony, Toshiba and many others are already producing good platforms and alternatives of the paper newspapers. One of the advertisement accents of Kindle is namely you to be able to read the morning newspaper on it and if you open the site of iPad, you can see first the issue of The New York Times. The competition between the devices themselves is very strong and the prices are constantly falling down. In a year or two it will be one of the main ways of reading newspapers in our country and the one who starts preparing now will win.” [5].

The necessity of this channel for transferring of information is shown in the report of Aleksei Pustovalov “Printed issues or web? Leading USA magazines in the struggle for popularity“ [6].

The advantages of the electronic bearer according to Ivan Bunkov, publisher of “New life” and the chairman of Bulgarian association of regional media are:

- actuality and possibility for actualization of information each minute;
- 24-hour access to the issue;
- accessibility from each point connected to the world web on the planet;
- volume – it is difficult for the reader to keep and to have access to 10-old archive of the printed issue but they can easily get access to each article in the electronic archive;
- quick search and finding of information;
- possibility to illustrate events by rich picture materials, sound and even video – thus the reader gets comprehensive and pictorial information for the events“.

5 Mobile and desktop version of sites of Bulgarian printed media

In the present research we will discuss the sites of leading national and regional newspapers and magazines.

5.1 THE “TRUD” NEWSPAPER

The newspaper has a full desktop site. The navigation in it is convenient and intuitive. A quick access is secured to materials of a certain sphere by departments and falling menus. The author articles are clearly distinguished from the advertising and reference information. There is a browser available. The registered readers can comment the articles on the site. You can access that by your social webs profile.

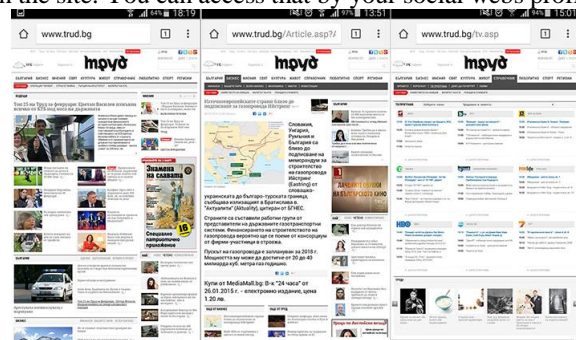


FIGURE 2 Potentials of the desktop version of the “Trud” newspaper

At accessing the site through a smart phone the mobile version is not always loaded. At the end of the page there is a reference to after turning up the whole information. Difficulties are mainly created by falling menus under the head of the media. On fig 2 the opening page (left), view of open news and access to information are presented (Figure 2).

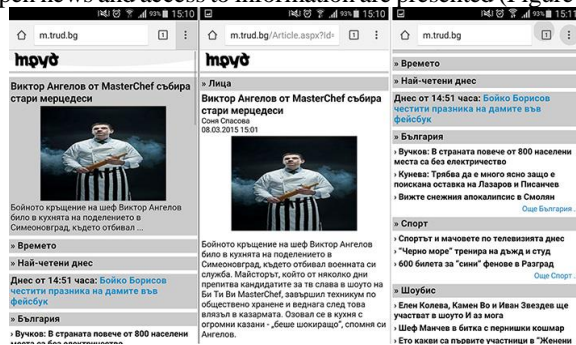


FIGURE 3 Mobile version of the “Trud” newspaper

The mobile site loads with a picture the leading news and in the form of a list the features and the news of them. (Figure 3). The quick loading with information and convenient navigation by touching are the advantages of the site. The disadvantages are: lack of searching machine and connection with the social media. The second makes the access to the sections with the comments impossible – reading of existing and adding new. Lack of access to multimedia content – picture gallery and video information. There is only one picture to a given news and often it is not resized correctly and is loaded disproportionately.

Because of all these disadvantages we could not define the interface as “user friendly” according to modern graphic standards.

The opening page of the site (left), a view of open news and an access to other news and sections are presented on Figure 3.

5.2 THE “CAPITAL” NEWSPAPER

The weekly newspaper “Capital” offers a modern desktop site with a lot of possibilities. It is the only one of all the media reviewed to offer possibilities for reading in the version of an electronic book. This is the most convenient format for the owners of Kindle and the other eBook devices and tablets. The access to this format is paid (Figure 4).

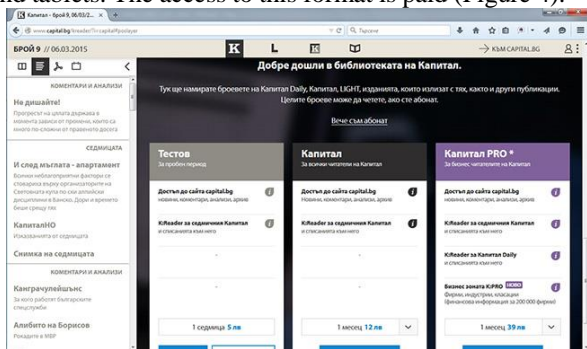


FIGURE 4 Paid section of “Capital”

The navigation by desktop browser is convenient and pleasant. At accessing through smartphone the mobile version is loaded as there is a reference available in to the full version of the site. (Figure 5).

In the mobile version of “Capital” all the opportunities of the desktop one are available. Quick and convenient access to features and news references is offered. Each piece of news is presented by a picture. There is a connection with the social webs. All the comments are accessible and one can add new ones a social web profile. Everything is easy only by one touch.

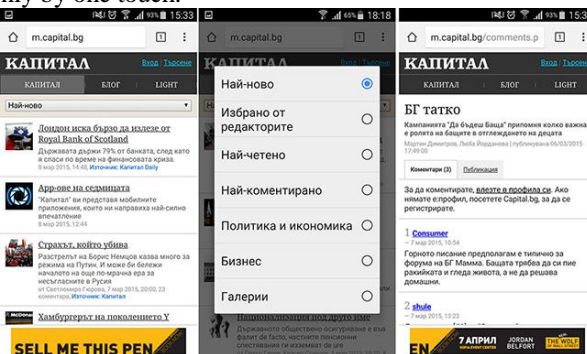


FIGURE 5 A mobile version of “Capital” newspaper

On the opening page a link to Blog of the newspaper is put and also to “Capital LIGHT” application.

On Figure 5 the first page (left) is presented, the convenient menu for choosing a feature and the comments after the article.

Definitely the mobile site of “Capital” is functional and can be used as a pattern in developing the news site.

5.3 THE “HICOMM” MAGAZINE

Accessing it through a desktop browser the site of the magazine is overloaded (Figure 6). The advertisement elements “eat” the news content. The involuntary activation of an advertisement banner is the desired effect at the designing of the site.



FIGURE 6 “the captured” by advertisements page of HiComm”

At loading from a smart phone it is automatically directed to the mobile version of the site. It is light and quick. The navigation is convenient and intuitive. There is access available to social webs and writing of comments.

On the first page there are references to the most important sections of the site: “News”, “Test”, “HiEnd”, “Accents”, “Analysis”. A search margin is at the right upper corner next to the logo. Own searching browser is used.

Each piece of news is depicted by a picture. When there are more pictures there is a link added to them in the “Gallery” section. The pictures are looked through easily and conveniently in it.

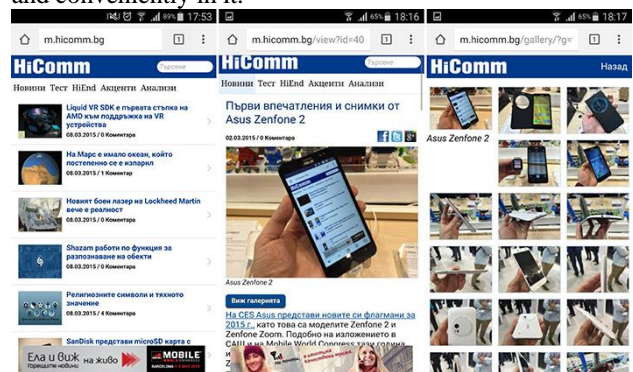


FIGURE 7 A mobile version of “HiComm” magazine

As a whole the mobile version of the “HiComm” magazine is well designed and realized in an exceptional “user friendly” style.

On Figure 7 the opening screen is presented (left) loaded news and an open gallery to the news.

5.4 “CHERNOMORSKI FAR”

The present research would be complete if we do not include the regional media in it. We will discuss the exclusively ambition joint project of two Burgas newspapers with a common publisher. Since 2014 the daily “Chernomorski far” and the weekly “Factor” have a common site. The name - “Information Agency “Far” shows that it is a new separate electronic project. Each hour news are published with the ambition the site to become the information agency of the region. Is this the future of the newspapers?



FIGURE 8 the first page of “Chernomorski Far”

At the first loading through a desktop browser the page of “Chernomorski far” seems overloaded by advertisement. While scrolling it becomes evident that the banners are crowded only at the upper part of the site. The news materials are divided in theme features and are clearly distinguished from the advertisements. The navigation in the site is convenient and logical. There is also own searching device.

Each piece of news from the site can be shared in the social webs. Registration or profile is not required in order to write comments. In this case the comments are limited to 600 symbols.

Accessing through a smart phone the browser automatically directs to the mobile version of the site. The same has a user friendly interface and convenient navigation. The opportunities of the desktop version are present in the mobile one too. There is an easy access to the categories in the site and to the searching device on the title page. Users can read and add comments.

Each visitor can regulate the size of the letters in the main text of the news. Each piece of news is accompanied by a picture. We could not find news with more than one picture.

The site offers reference information and the weather

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forecast is being updated in real time.

Though the mobile site is convenient enough there is a link in it to the full desktop version.

The opening page of the site (left) is presented on Figure 9, the list with categories and news and open to be read news are also presented.

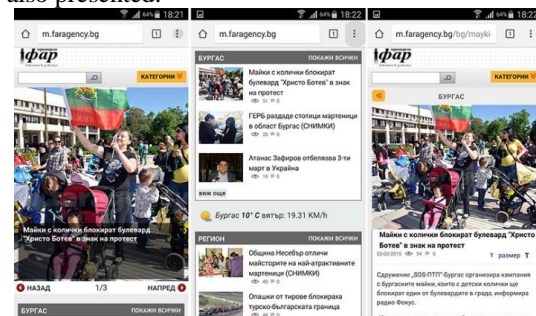


FIGURE 9 “Mobile version of “Chernomorski far”


6 Conclusions

We have to conclude that in XXI century newspapers have to be transferred to new modern digital bearers of information. A new digital model of the newspaper in the epoch of internet in which the website of the media is only one of the forms of the newspaper of the future has been presented in the paper. The others are the mobile version of the site, the application for smart phones, and strong presence in the social network, a version of the issue formatted for electronic books. Though the mobile devices are being equipped with more and more powerful processors and their browsers are becoming more and more compatible with the desktop systems we consider the necessity of mobile versions of on-line issues of the newspapers of Bulgaria. A lighter version which is in compliance with the size of the smart phone offers an easy and convenient interface. Traffic and time for loading and reading the news are saved. The entire customer experience is much better at access to the site through the mobile platform than through the desktop version.

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