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How the iPad will change the world

OK, perhaps I exaggerated just a bit in today's headline.

The iPad won't change life as we know it, but it undoubtedly will revolutionize the way that we interact with various news and social media. Undoubtedly, we will look back on 2010 as the year the iPad changed the way we obtain and consume information.

How will the iPad affect our day-to-day lives? It's difficult to say, but I'm certain that it will.

As book, magazine and newspaper publishers and third-party developers get their hands on it — and begin releasing applications made specifically for it — the tide will begin to turn. It will become clear that the iPad, and other touch screen tablets released in its wake, will become the center of our households.

The iPad will be the heart of every home — the digital media consumption hub that connects us to the information highway. The iPad will be the interface of choice for Web browsing and media consumption. Soon, it will be quite common to read books, magazines and newspapers via the iPad interface.

The iPad will be the device users turn to for Web browsing and music and video streaming. In the very near future, recorded television shows and movies will be viewed regularly via live streaming from the Internet, either on the iPad screen itself or by using the iPad as the conduit, with the images appearing on a larger television screen. Although it already is possible to stream content via a computer to a television, it isn't commonplace. The iPad will be the device that makes it so.

My assertion that the device will usher in a new age of online content consumption is not unique. Many others are suggested it as well: Luke Hayman, for one, at www.Pentagram.com predicts the iPad will change the direction of journalism.

“What will they be willing to read on their iPad? I predict the return of long-form journalism. At the same time, visual storytelling will take deeper, richer forms. Information design will be more important than ever. Something like New York's Approval Matrix that

we designed back in 2005 with Adam Moss is popular in print but will really come to life in this format. Some people might subscribe to it all by itself.”

In short, the iPad is the next stage of online content consumption.

That being said, there are a lot of things the iPad won't do.

It won't be a portable work station. Laptops will continue to serve that function far better than the iPad. The iPad will suffice for composing e-mails and short documents but, for most businesses, laptops and desktop computers will remain the interface of choice.

Likewise, the iPad will not replace the iPhone. Smart phones will continue to function as miniature connectors to the information super highway. Their smaller size and GPS functionality make smart phones ideal for certain tasks that the larger, less portable iPad will not be able to duplicate. Applications that rely on geo-location for their functionality — such as the Zillow real estate app or the restaurant location and ratings app Yelp — still will be

ideal for use on phones for people on the move. Smart phones will not be supplanted by the iPad, but instead supplemented by it.

The iPad will not fill an already existing niche — it will create a new one. It will be ever-present in our homes, during daily commutes and on airplanes. The iPad will be prevalent where people tend to read books or magazines, but will be far less visible at locations where people mostly work or socialize. It will be our conduit for media consumption and our interface of choice.

The iPad is a game changer of epic proportions — of that I am sure. One year from now, we'll look back on its release and wonder how we functioned without it.

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