



A D i n g e s t

Product Overview



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Adverts and advertising

The role of advertising in our society is more important than it has ever been. The last decade has seen an explosion of creative advertising content, fuelled by the advances in design, production and publishing tools, being delivered to an increasingly demanding public. Companies wishing to publicize their products want to surprise their customers and sell their products in a bigger, better, flashier way; and advertising and media planning agencies, in turn, receive enormous pressure to have fresh, quality creative work delivered to target audiences with the maximum impact.

Of course, there is more to advertising than the campaign itself. As advertising budgets become progressively more important for the marketing departments of thousands and thousands of companies, there is a logical concern to maximize and account for every single cent spent in an advertising campaign. For example, it is estimated that as many as 7% of all press advertisements do not appear as booked¹, so monitoring and confirming the occurrence of advertisements in the printed media is today an important part of any campaign. Advertising Expenditure (ADEX) companies specialize in providing the crucial information needed to do so, as well as monitoring advertising investments.

¹ ISBA Member Guidance Note, April 2002. www.isba.org.uk.

ADEX Monitoring

ADEX monitoring requires the thorough examination of selected media to obtain accurate information on the appearance of adverts. The data obtained is useful for advertisers and advertising and media agencies when checking whether adverts have appeared as booked. ADEX data is also of interest to competing companies, as it makes it possible to calculate advertising budgets and their impact, and to the Medias themselves, so they know their and their competitors' advertising saturation.

For printed material, data collection is usually done manually. A team of controllers scans magazines and the daily press page by page, searching for adverts, and collecting quantitative and qualitative information on each of them (such as support, page number, format, and whether the advert is in color or in black and white). Quantitative advert data is registered using pre-defined text descriptors, and qualitative information tends to be standardized. The resulting information is validated by a senior controller, who makes sure that all adverts are categorized correctly and that there are no advert duplications or omissions.

Quality ADEX data is not easy to obtain. It must be complete, reliable and immediate, and manual processes usually present several drawbacks. For example, a long training period is necessary for operators to reach a good level of performance. Controllers also need to keep a lot of information in mind about every advert (such as name of advertiser, trademark, model and so on), as the assistance they receive from current text-based systems and data entry interfaces is generally not enough.

Manual annotation is also prone to human errors. Controllers working under pressure can easily make mistakes and their work can contain duplicates, inexactitudes and in some cases serious categorization problems. The concentration trend in publishing, which accounts for the proliferation of regional versions of a same newspaper, can also confuse things further and give more opportunities for data collection mistakes. That is why the figure of the senior controller is so important, as he or she checks that all insertions are correct and that any new adverts in the database are accurately categorized. It is also easy to see that this necessary step multiplies the time and resources dedicated to quantitative ADEX data collection.

The analysis, evaluation and control of advertising require “just-in-time” delivery of information, because ADEX data has a short lifespan and needs to be constantly updated. Advertisers and agencies not only need it to validate every advert appearance, but also to know their competitors’ moves and campaigns. The generalization of the Internet is making it increasingly common for clients to request real-time ADEX information to be available online, which requires faster, more reliable data extraction systems.

Finally, fierce competition among advertisers and agencies is resulting in demands to complement quantitative information with qualitative data. That is, for a given advert, customers not only want to know where it has appeared and how many times, but also how it looks and the context it appears on. Because of this, it is becoming common for ADEX companies to carry out the scanning of adverts in parallel to traditional manual annotation, effectively multiplying the amount of work that needs to be done in order to provide this information.

The solution to current and future ADEX monitoring needs is ADigest, an advanced system that uses advanced image matching and processing technology to streamline and simplify the collection of ADEX data. Its innovative acquisition, annotation and validation tools provide highly accurate data in less time, as well as the possibility of simultaneously collecting quantitative and qualitative information. In other words, ADigest re-invents the data collection process so that ADEX companies can offer more and better services to their clients.

The ADingest Process

ADingest uses sophisticated image processing techniques to extract accurate quantitative and qualitative ADEX data from a wide range of publication formats. ADingest allows the control of advertising versions and increases the reliability of annotations by making them more objective thanks to the graphic interface of the system. ADingest automatically detects one-page adverts, as well as the format and type of advert, and calculates the area occupied by each advert insertion.

The ADingest process to control advertising activity by brand/model has the following structure:

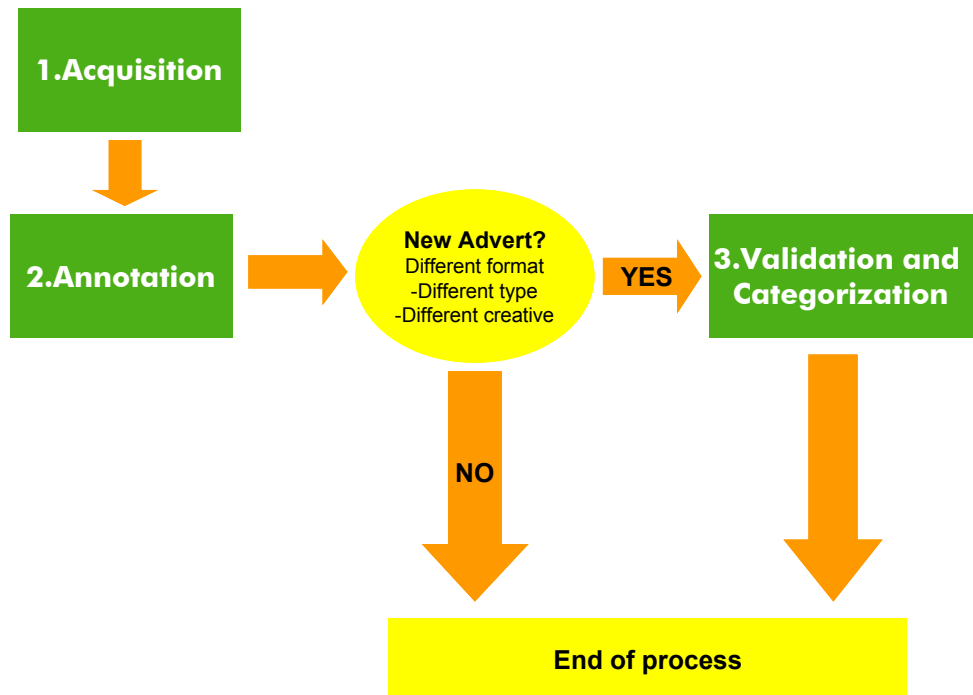


Fig. 1 The ADingest proces

1. Acquisition

The ADingest process begins with the digitization of the issue that has to be analyzed. The digitization can be carried out with a TWAIN-compatible color scanner big enough to cover the format dimensions, or with ADingest's exclusive digitization table, especially designed to work with

newspapers and magazines, and that has proved to increase productivity especially when dealing with large supports (such as newspapers). The digitization table captures the images of the pages in a faster and more efficient way than with a desktop scanner. The digitization table also allows the acquisition of images showing unconventional advertising.

The controller digitizes the pages that will be annotated and inserts them into the system with the assistance of the acquisition application. The acquisition application obtains a digital copy of the issue and automatically provides its support and page number, effectively acting as the entry point to the system. It is the only application in the system that deals with the physical copy of publications; further work is carried out using the digital version only.

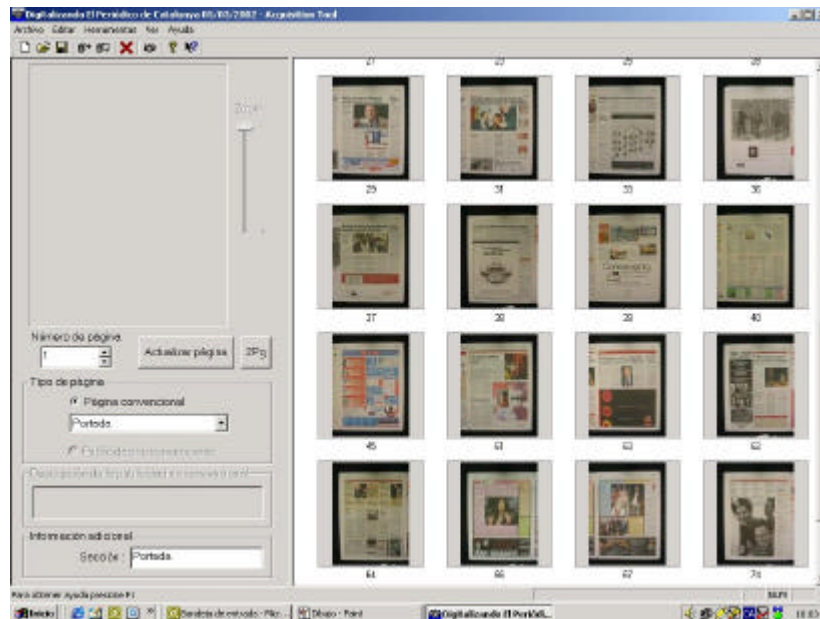


Fig. 2 The Acquisition Main Screen

2. Annotation

After the desired pages have been digitized, the annotation process begins. For every digitized page, the annotation software automatically identifies the areas that are most likely to be advertisements, and marks them. The user only needs to confirm this pre-selection by double clicking the selected areas it with the mouse or with the help of the keyboard.

The annotation application enables the user to register new adverts and to enter quantitative and qualitative data on insertions of already existing ones. This information is completely customizable and adaptable to the needs of the client. The annotation application makes it faster and easier to annotate adverts, because the user can work without knowing the validation code for each advert.

The user does not have to “remember” similar adverts that may have appeared, either, as the application will automatically suggest them using content-based image retrieval technology. This guarantees the reliability of collected data on advert insertions, and eliminates the need to have it checked by a more senior controller. Only data on new adverts needs to proceed to the validation and categorization step of the process.

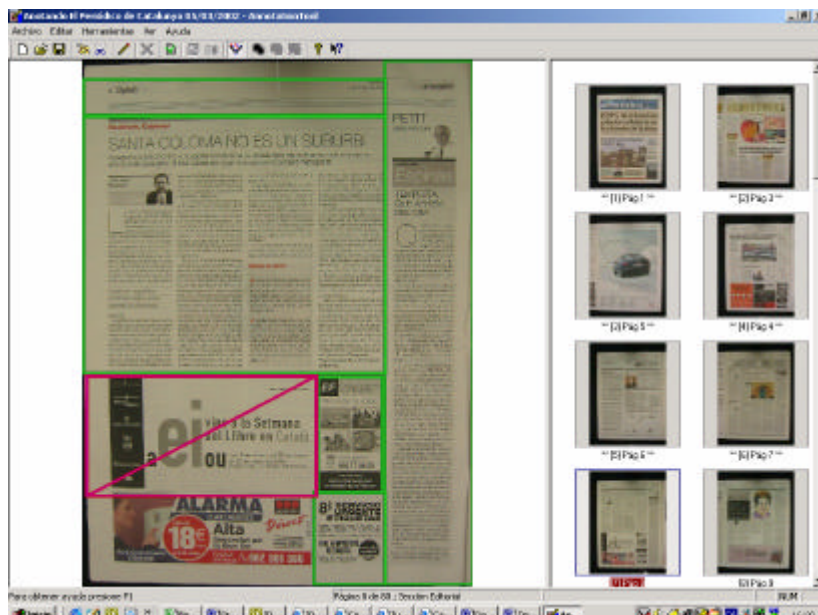


Fig. 3 The Annotation Main Screen

3. Validation and categorization

The validation process, designed to be carried out by a senior controller, effectively acts as a quality control check, making sure that new adverts registered in the annotation process are not duplicates, and that the data they contain is valid. The ADingest validation process, which only needs to be carried out for new adverts, also ensures that the categorization into sector, category and product is exact and as objective as possible.

To check if an advert is already registered in the database, the user can simultaneously search it by text and by graphic content. Textual searches will return those adverts in the database with names similar to the one being annotated. Content-based searches, on the other hand, will return the adverts most similar to the advert being annotated. In either case, search results can be filtered so that only adverts with certain characteristics are returned.

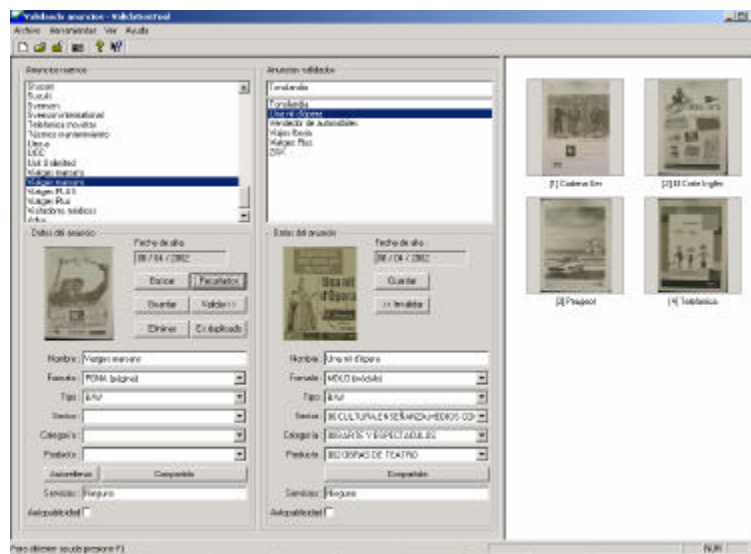


Fig. 4 The Validation and Categorization Main Screen

Benefits

With a simple 3-step process, ADingest delivers higher quality ADEX data in less time and with fewer resources. Some of the other benefits offered by ADingest are the following:

- All newspapers and magazines can be controlled, regardless of format, thanks to the digitization table.
- Both quantitative and qualitative ADEX data can be collected in just one go.
- Textual and graphical information on adverts is accessible across the whole monitoring process.
- Additional information about adverts, such as their area, position and format, can be gathered with no extra work.
- Version control and recognition is greatly improved, resulting into highly reliable data.
- Advert context can be viewed, as all page images are retrievable as desired.
- The manipulation of physical issues is kept to a minimum, and is only required in the acquisition process.
- Training times are greatly shortened because of user support and intuitive, user-friendly interfaces.
- It is a highly customizable application, much more flexible than conventional processing.
- The system improves speed, quality and efficiency.

To know more about the ADingest process and the advantages it offers for the collection of quantitative and qualitative ADEX data, please contact Visual Century at sales@visualcentury.com or visit www.visualcentury.com.

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