

Newsvine.com: Read, write and influence the news

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a study performed to an online community supported by newsvine. It was analyzed the users behavior and motivations to keep using the site. Results suggest that users combine their passion about writing and the possibility of earning money through ad revenue on their personal newsvine page.

Keywords

Idea, Motivation, Newsvine, social news, content control



IDEA AND MOTIVATION

Referred in the 50 Best Websites of 2007, category News & Information selected by TIME.com who picks the best examples of what's new and exciting about the web right now, by Maryanne Murray Buechner.

Agreeing with TIME article, the basic idea behind Newsvine.com is see what everybody is talking about right now, and add our contribution. It mixes elements of social news like Digg, customization like Netvibes and user-generated news like NowPublic. The most prominently placed articles are the ones voted most important by users. According to TIME we can plant our own "seeds" on the vine, i.e. links to stories from elsewhere on the Web, along with our comments, to start a discussion. We can also change the page layout by adding RSS feeds and moving the boxes around. Most articles come from familiar sources (Associated Press, The New York Times, BBC, MSNBC) but Newsvine also invites members to write their own columns and create their own Newsvine groups to discuss areas of common interest.

How Newsvine is different from the major news site?

Newsvine is a giant collection of news from all over the world, contributed and controlled entirely by Newsvine users like yourself. Whether it comes from the Associated Press, The New York Times, or the BBC, you'll see it here. Newsvine employs no editors because you decide what appears here. When you read a story you like, leave a

comment on it or click the "vote" button above the headline and your input is automatically calculated into the story's popularity score. What you see on the Newsvine front page every day is a direct reflection of the community's actions on the site.

NEWSVINE ID

Newsvine is a commercial site, with optional user registration.

Is available in English language since his launch in March 1 of 2006.

Alexa traffic rank for newsvine.com based on the past 3 months pageviews is #2232.

The actual owner is MSNBC.com.

History

Seattle-based Newsvine, Inc. was founded in the spring of 2005 by Mike Davidson, Calvin Tang, Lance Anderson and Mark Budos. Josh Yockey joined the company shortly after it opened its offices, with Tom Laramee and Tyler Adams being hired later. The development team consists of several veterans from the Walt Disney Internet Group and ESPN.

Alexa Rank

Newsvine is ranked #2,232 in the world according to the three-month Alexa traffic rankings. Alexa estimate that 50% of visitors to this site come from the US, where it is ranked #1,278, it is also popular in Ethiopia, where it is ranked #84. This site is based in the US. Relative to the overall population of internet users, Newsvine's users are disproportionately Caucasian, and they are disproportionately moderately educated, childless women over the age of 35 who have incomes over \$30,000. The site is in the "Participatory" category of sites.

Alexa review newsvine.com as a place to read, write, and influence the news.

Site Demographic

Based on internet averages, newsvine.com is visited more frequently by users who are in the age range 55-64 and received some college education.

Seeding

Newsvine allows users to "seed," or post links for others to view. Seeds usually contain a short description or direct

quotation from the linked article. With the "Newsvine Button," users can select "Seed Newsvine" from their bookmarks and a seeding dialog will appear. Seeds allow for all of the same options as articles except the ability to insert photographs and/or polls.

Articles

One of the most defining features of Newsvine is the ability for users to write their own articles. Commonly known as citizen journalism, this allows users to express their opinions for public discussion or even report in a journalistic manner. The most popular articles for top tags appear in the "Featured Writers" section, where article writers can receive extra publicity.

While writing articles, users can upload their own photographs or choose from a list of Flickr photos registered under a Creative Commons license for addition to the post. Captions can be written to clarify the meaning of the photograph.

Voting

Another common feature among social bookmarking websites is the ability to vote for content. Users who enjoy reading an article/seed or agree with its content are encouraged to vote for the content. Articles and seeds with the most votes appear in the "Top Wire," "Top Seeds," or "Top of the Vine" sections of the site.

Newsvine also allows for users to vote for comments that they enjoyed reading. When a comment receives at least five votes, a green star is placed in the upper right-hand corner, signifying that many users enjoyed or agreed with the comment. Clicking the star will lead viewers to the next highly rated comment.

Negative votes are also registered, and a comment that receives too many negative votes will often be collapsed, so that it can only be viewed by deliberately opening it. This limits discussion under that comment, since new comments under it will not be seen automatically.

Commenting

The ability to comment on seeds and articles allows for extra discussions regarding the content. While debates are welcome, useless, insulting, and self-promoting comments are not. If a comment receives enough reports, that comment will be collapsed and its contents can only be shown by choosing to expand it. The Newsvine comment system also allows for semi-threaded comments, easing the confusion of comment direction. Users can edit but not delete their own comments, writers are allowed to delete comments on their own content. Unregistered users are also allowed to have their say, but comments by unregistered users are not made public until that user creates a registered account.

User Columns

Newsvine user columns give users the ability to manage and share their articles, seeds, friends, recommendations, and other statistical information. Every user has one, and each is given their own subdomain to access it (<yourDomain>.newsvine.com). User columns are

customizable: aspects of the layouts can be moved or hidden, a user photo and biography can be added, a header (such as a welcome message) can be added, friends can be invited to Newsvine or added to the user's friends list, recommendations (such as favorite books, bands, blogs, etc.) can be shown, and comments and feedback from other users can be managed. Also, through user columns, members have the ability to add others to their watchlist and friend list or to send another a chat invitation.

Earnings

Newsvine tells users that they will receive 90% of revenue from advertisements on their personal Newsvine pages. These earnings are "based on traffic to your articles and seeds," but it is unclear exactly how Newsvine calculate earnings. The remaining 10% go to whoever referred the user to Newsvine, or for site maintenance if there was no referrer. Newsvine does not publish the amount of revenue that has gone to users.

Watchlist

If a user finds a writer or tag that he/she enjoys to read content from, it can be added to the Watchlist. Watchlists are lists of members and tags that a user can compile to easily find interesting news. Items on a user's watchlist appear on the left column and, if there is content that the user has not read by a watchlisted author or tag, a number will appear next to the item name signifying how many articles or seeds have not been read.

Conversation Tracker

Much like the Watchlist, the Conversation Tracker allows users to track other members. However, the Conversation Tracker is a notifier of new comments. There are three sections to the Conversation Tracker: new comments from a user's Newsvine column, new comments from articles that a user has commented on, and new comments from an article a user's friend has commented on. If a user has added members to the friend list that share a common interest in content, the Conversation Tracker can act as a list of recommended articles.

Friends List

The Friends List gives users the ability to meet new people and find others with common interests, but there are no requirements in doing so. Creating a populated friends list gives users the ability to find interesting new articles through the Conversation Tracker. Once a user adds a friend to the list, the added friend receives a notification and is given the ability to accept or decline the offer.

Vineacity

Vineacity is a measure of six elements that contribute to a Newsvine user's overall rating as a positive influence to the Newsvine community. Earned as 'branches' on a Newsvine logo icon displayed next to the user's name, the six areas of excellence include:

- Courtesy - earned when a user's positive feedback outweighs any abuse reports they may have received.

- Longevity - earned when the users has been active for at least two months after registering.
- Fruitfulness - earned when the user has submitted a substantial amount of content or comments that have received votes.
- Connectedness - earned when the user appears on a substantial number of watchlists and/or friendlists.
- Random Act of Vineness - earned for an exceptional moment of greatness on Newsvine.
- Lifetime achievement - earned when a user has received a combined number of votes on all articles, links and comments around Newsvine.

METHOD

The research methods were focused on experiment the Users of the community exploring the features established to evaluate is work, the quality control actions by others users and motivations to keep using the site as registered user, the goal is obtain a qualitative measure. It will be used a combination of interviews and observations to random leaderboard users to understand their behavior. With this method is expected to find the motivations of newsvine users community.

It will be tested the interest on reporting when members use inaccurate information, duplicate story, advertise and miscategorized/off-topic article. It will be interesting to measure how a user that is recurrently a target of reports on these issues and do nothing to correct it, what are the consequences.

RESULTS

The observations and interviews performed allowed to understand that exist a mix of registered users, one type that contributes more creating new articles or seeding news from other sites, and a second type that contributes more leaving comments in articles. The results show that majority newsvine leaderboard users write about Politics.

The report button is mainly used to report spammers, if the articles have inaccurate information or other non-spam related information users uses the public discussion space to post.

The main reason why contributors keep using newsvine is due to the ad revenue with observation revealing that users have clearly more seeds pointing to articles that they have read in another place on the web.

When a user creates an account and writes an article or seeds a link, Newsvine places an ad on that user's content. Results reveal several users using a seeded link to a personal blog or site with ads that generate revenue when someone visits. It does violate the user agreement in that the users are linking back to their own content outside of Newsvine and that the content falls under advertising, a reportable infraction. In fact results show users very happy with this system of writing some useful information and generate profit, however other users is very angry, they

claim to use the system according to policy rules and have seen their account suspended.

This was experienced when observation analysis were performed with the behavior of the reporting system. with one account was written a few articles with appropriate information and comments to others articles, acting as normal user. With another account was used to report about the first, using the report button to report about advertise and inaccurate information. In the next day without any notice the account of the affected user has been suspended.

CONCLUSIONS

Newsvine staff mostly works to keep the platform working and left the quality of contents to be controlled by members, Newsvine offers different resources to its members to get involved and because who writes needs exposure, be a member of this community is a legitimate way to gain more visibility and also earn money with ad revenue on their personal newsvine page. This earnings are based on traffic to articles and seeds and 10% percent go to whoever referred the user to Newsvine, because of this exists a relevant part of articles in service of spammers. While there are many spammers abusing Newsvine, there's also an active group members, newsvine anti-spam that any user could join, using their personal newsvine page specifically for the clipping of articles/seeds found on Newsvine that are spam, advertising, self-seeding, SEO link-farming, for ease of reporting to staff and tracking.

Due active community actions to control the quality of contents this not always works as expected, the report feature allows to someone malicious to report as many times you want on users articles and because of that the user account is automatically disabled without further notice, this causes a backlash from the affected user that does not know why it was removed. An e-mail notice to the affected user would be recommended, before disable his account.

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