30th July 2014

Introduction

Nu.nl¹ is a Dutch news site, and has a section, Nujij, that allows users to share existing web content on the platform for other users to read. Nujij is a group-based aggregation platform that allows users to share content including news articles, citizen journalistic reports, and blog posts (OECD, 2007).

The factors behind user's motivation to share content on Nujij include enhancing social capital, self-expression, and self-actualization (Shao, 2008). It is used as a channel for users to share and re-broadcast news that they feel are important or relevant for the rest of the community.

Content Analysis

From the root website, Nu.nl, users can navigate to Nujij by clicking the tab on the top navigation bar. In the Nujij section, users can browse through user-generated posts, and sort the posts by different time frames, categories provided, or by specific keywords. Users can also share the content with their own friends on Facebook and Twitter with the buttons available in the posts, although this is not available on the Nujij homepage.



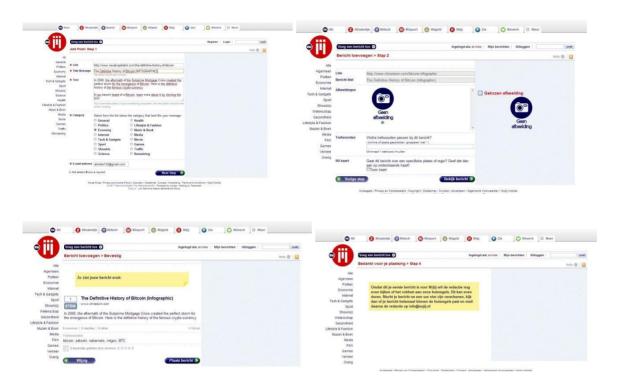
Users can create new content by clicking the "Voeg een bericht toe" button at the top of the page. This is done by filling up a short form, including the link of the article to be shared, as well as a title and a short description. The whole process includes 4 steps, including 2 steps to add the post, 1 step for verification of the post details, and 1 last step for confirmation. As a result of the rather lengthy process, many users may be discouraged to complete the entire form. This can be investigated by analysing the bounce rate of users on the relevant pages, to analyse the percentage of users who do not complete the form and seek to reduce this value. In addition, even upon completing all the steps, posts are not immediately publically available as they are still subject to approval by a Nu.nl staff.

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¹ http://www.nu.nl/

30th July 2014

Nujij also has a friends section, which allows users to add and maintain a list of friends from the "Mijn vrienden" section. This is an internal community, and users can only search for and add other users by their Nujij profiles. This section does not have Facebook or Twitter integration.



Recommendations

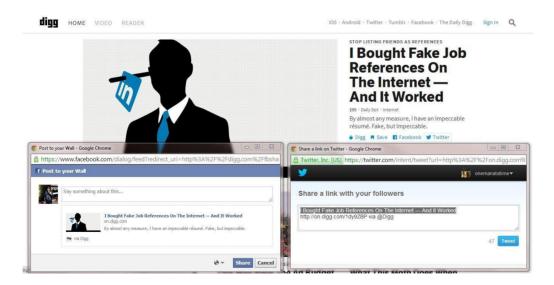
Lerman and Galstyan (2008) used Digg as a case study and pointed out that structural properties of a website can have a significant impact on various dynamical processes on networks. Therefore, it is important that the structure of the website makes it easy for users to create and share content, as well as to introduce uninformed existing users to the Nujij section. To make it easier to create content, I recommend reducing the number of steps required to two, or even one step. The easier it is for users, the more likely they are the complete the post. In addition, I also recommend removing any restriction on the content creation process, in terms of requiring manual verification by a Nu.nl staff, to further simplify the process. Although this will bring about potential issues of spam and irrelevant content, the problem can be managed by introducing a captcha to prevent bots from adding content, and also be regulated by the users themselves who collectively decide the popularity of the content and are allowed to down-vote or report a post.

Moreover, another issue could be that users do not know about the Nujij section, which can be attributed to the need for a better website infrastructure or the need for better marketing. The structure of the website should also contribute to increasing traffic to the Nujij section, informing both existing and new consumers about the existence of the UGC platform, which will in turn increase

30th July 2014

the number of content creators. This can be done by placing a more prominent link from the Nu.nl homepage that leads to the Nujij section, such as a promotional banner, to increase click-through-rate to Nujij. Nu.nl should also inform existing users of the Nujij platform by sending them an email newsletter or reaching out via Facebook and Twitter, to convey the benefits and value propositions of using the platform, and encourage users to add new content.

Lastly, it is also vital for Nu.nl to improve its social networking connectivity, in order to promote more sharing of content on social networks, as well as to reach out to more consumers through the powerful medium of electronic word of mouth. This is also supported by Lerman and Galstyan (2008) who showed that social networks play a significant role in promoting stories, and discussed the importance of well-connected clusters of nodes in enhancing information propagation online (Lerman & Galstyan, 2008). For the "Mijn vrienden" section, Nu.nl should integrate Facebook and Twitter integration, to allow users to find and invite friends from these social networks, and allow Nu.nl to make better friend and content recommendations to users. For content sharing, Nujij uses the 'recommend' API for Facebook, and a 'retweet' API for twitter, for users to share content on their social networks. However, the use of these API do not allow for user interaction or customization of the posts. I will recommend using a different Facebook and Twitter sharing API, to allow users to customize their message, such as the one used on Digg, as can be seen below. Although these last recommendations are not directly related to encouraging users to add content, they help to improve the social infrastructure of the Nujij, which in turn helps develop the community and indirectly increases motivation for users to create content.



30th July 2014

Works Cited

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