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CareerFoundry

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1.7 Competitive Analysis & UX Analysis

Competitor Profile: Surfline

Overview

Surfline is a company and website (<https://www.surfline.com/>) based in Huntington Beach, California, that specializes in surf forecasting and surf reports, live webcasting, photography, videography, as well as editorial coverage of the sport of surfing.

Key Objectives

Surfline's main goal and purpose is to make ocean enthusiasts' lives better. This includes surfers, offshore cruisers, fishermen and a myriad of other ocean-goers. In order to fulfill this mission, Surfline centers itself around five values which are to: "Bring Your Passion, Be Humble, Keep It Personal, Set Your Line, and Push Our Limits".



Overall Strategy

Surfline recognizes that their core competency as marine weather forecasting. They are always thinking of ways to innovate on that foundation and serve more ocean enthusiasts effectively. Their focus is to use their strengths in the marine weather space to serve and enhance the ocean-going experience of users worldwide, while protecting life and property. They also focus on making profit via advertisements on their app and having users pay for the Premium membership.

Market Advantage

In recent years Surfline has added two new products to their portfolio: FishTrack and Buoyweather. FishTrack helps fishermen find and catch more fish while Buoyweather provides mariners with accurate and accessible data, to safely enjoy the ocean. Additionally, the Surfline offers a website in addition to the app on smartphones, which gives the ability for surfers to record themselves if they have the Premium membership, and the ability to see live video of beach spots. Many other competitors do not have a separate product dedicated to fisherman, giving them a larger market to reach and expand with.

Marketing Profile: Surfline

Surfline shows up in the iOS app store as the second app suggestion to download for the search phrase 'Surf Weather App', and is rated as a 4.7 out of 5 with 5.7k ratings. However, doing a Google search with various wave and weather app phrases did not populate the Surfline very easily. They did appear on the 5th Google search page under the phrase "best wave weather apps". This shows their SEO could be improved.

The primary feature that sets them apart is that they are experts in marine weather forecasting. However, as mentioned above, they do not show up easily on the Internet when keywords related to that are searched.

As mentioned above, they earn revenue by posting advertisements on their platform, and via their Premium membership option. In order to grow, they will continue to think of innovative ways to forecast marine weather.

Overall, they seem to have an app and operating systems that is quite average, despite their strong mission to serve ocean enthusiasts. This is due to several things, including but not limited to cam issues, the constant influx of ads on their platform (despite if you pay or not for Premium), an interface that requires you to add to your favorite spots before being able to see any spots, and there not being a key to explain to new ocean enthusiasts on how to read the maps.

SWOT Profile: Surfline

Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean and easy to use app • Experts at marine weather forecasting • Has a website in addition to app that includes live web cams of beach spots • App/website include news articles relevant to ocean enthusiasts/surfers • Surfer can record video of themselves on water (if purchased premium) • Surfline, as a company, has two other new tools -Buoyweather & FishTrack that help tell how swells are impacting spots and where to find fish, respectively. • Over 200+ Web cams w/ up to 4k quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update the app to include helpful analyses for novice ocean enthusiasts, similar to the Surfline website (throw some 'newbie' viewers a bone) • Incorporate social media for surfers and other ocean enthusiasts to communicate • Obtain reliable and consistent hardware (cameras) • Ensure SEO is improved and enables search rankings to appear at top • Improve and expand list of beach spots
Weaknesses	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surfline does not have social media or a live feed where people can post what they see or are experiencing at a specific beach spot. • App does not include live web cams of beach spots (only website) • Cameras are not reliable every day and drop/cut out while viewing (even if users are paying for premium) • iPad view of the app has viewing issues in landscape view • The app is not easy to read at a glance when people are physically on the go 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faster, more accurate, and more reliable web cams exist • Some apps enable users to view spots easily without having to create a list first • Some apps provide a more useful and easier interface to use

UX Analysis: Surfline

Usability

Overall, the app was light and simple to use. However, there were moments of 1) awkward horizontal scrolling required at several points (see Figure 1 below), 2) It's not clear which beach spots are in what county which forces users to have to use a competitor app or do a Google search (i.e. Oceana county includes Silver Beach, but I was unaware of that so it made searching difficult searching - see Figure 2 below), 3) users still see ads even if they pay for Premium, 4) video cams crash periodically 5) and there is no differentiation in the picture bars shown on your favorite spots list (see image below) making it difficult to quickly skim and use on the go. Also, the value of the app is not as easily realized until you create an account or pay for premium. This is because many features are disabled until an account is created and the initial information shown is generic. However, once you create an account, you can see the value in keeping an easily accessible list of your favorite spots.

Two areas that could improve the usability are 1) being able to search by city (not just county), 2) including a map or visual of where the beaches are located within each county, 3) Updating parts of the UI to help improve the visual ease of the app (differentiate the picture bars). As mentioned above, while you can search for a specific county, there is no way to tell if you have selected the correct beach or location when you are searching within the county on the app. This forces users to have to do research on the internet and Google Maps to ensure they have the right location or spot.

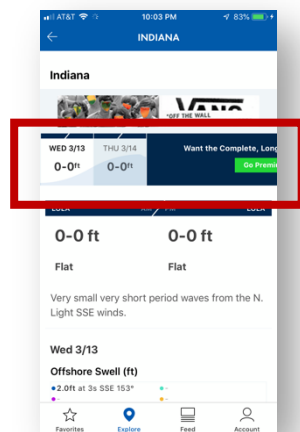


Figure 1

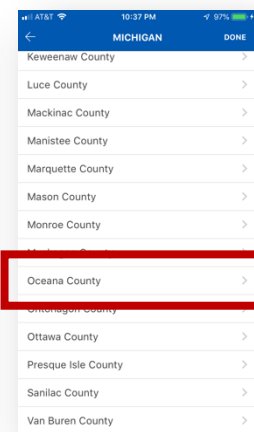


Figure 2

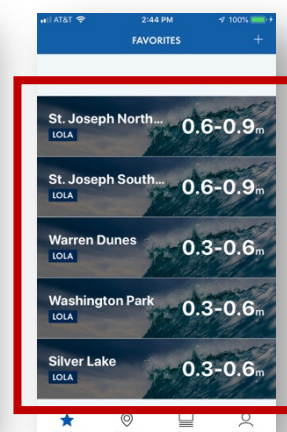


Figure 3

Layout

The layout of the app is pretty simple to quickly understand. When you first open the app, you are given the option to create an account, sign in, or continue without creating an account. There is a mini tab/navigation bar at the bottom of the screen that includes 4 labeled icons – Favorites, Explore, Feed, and Account. In the top right portion of the screen, there is a '+' sign for adding a location. You quickly discover that you are not able to add locations until you create an account or sign in. Once you do this, you can add your favorite or most important 'spots' or beaches of interest.

Navigation Structure

The navigation of the app feels clean, light, and simple. The tab bar at the bottom of the app is simple and only contains 4 options which helps keep the interface feeling simple and not overbearing. Also, the labels and icons are intuitive and help the user quickly navigate to where they may like to go to such as their account, a live video feed, their favorite spots, or exploring new spots.

Compatibility

A Surfline subscriber can check swell predictions from any device 'anywhere on the planet'. This includes desktops, iPads (and other tablets), iPhones, and Androids.

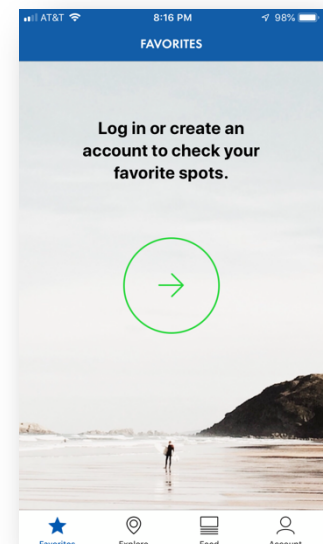
Differentiation

While the Surfline app is useful in enabling the user to create a list of their favorite spots, there are several areas of improvement that we could focus on for improving the experience of the app. Surfline provides information at a high-level, more for the experienced surfer or ocean enthusiast. This isn't helpful for those who are new to surfing or wanting to have a fun water experience in a new area. This will therefore be more of a focus on the new app. Several ways the app will be improved include:

- 1) Improving the search option by enabling users to search by city, as well as including a map of the location so users know they have the right 'spot'.
- 2) Creating map keys to ensure readers of all levels can read the data accurately.
- 3) Enable live web cams to be viewed from a smartphone, not just the desktop.
- 4) Eliminating all horizontal scrolling.

Calls to Action

When opening the app for the first time, there is a large call to action (bright green button) in the middle of the page encouraging the potential user to click. Once they click it, this takes them to a screen for creating an account or signing in. This was a simple but not intrusive method of encouraging the user to sign up, as it easily allowed them to select 'create later' if they decided against creating an account. Additionally, when you would try to change any metrics or add any 'favorite' locations, it would tell the user that they needed to create an account in order to do this. However, they could still search for spots and check them out, but for customizing the app to their own preferences, the user would need to create an account.



1.7 Competitive Analysis: Magicseaweed

Competitor Profile: Magicseaweed

Overview

Magicseaweed (MSW) - www.Magicseaweed.com - offers detailed long-range surf forecasts for waves, wind, and swell, including live wind and wave buoy readings, direct beach reports, hurricane tracks, photos, videos, weather station reports, and editorial content spots around the world. Additionally, it offers HD live video of the surf from a network of 'intelligent' surf cameras that track the tides and most popular banks.

Key Objectives

This app is for travelling pros, big wave aficionados, local heros or weekend warriors, and will help enthusiasts score 'more of the right waves across the globe'. MSW's goal is to provide enthusiasts with tools to become their own surf forecasting expert.

Overall Strategy

MSW is rated a 4.9 out of 5 with 2.35k ratings. They emphasize how they are utilized and trusted by contest directors such as: Rip Curl, Quiksilver, Billabong, O'Neill, Roxy, Swatch and more, for competitions. These competitions range from showcasing big wave events with long waiting periods, to hour-by-hour decisions for the ASP World Tour. Ultimately, MSW's data is used to plan for some of surfing's largest and most popular events.

With that being said, the exact same tools used to make the call for the world's top surfers, are available for free through the MSW app and website.

Market Advantage

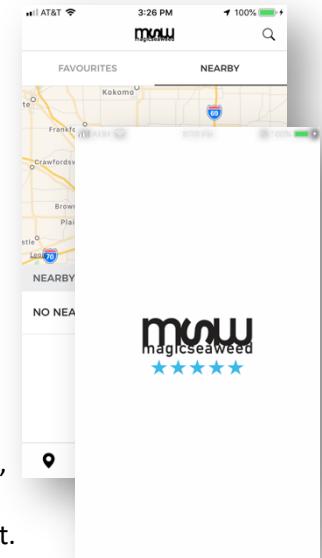
MSW has a market advantage of how many people they reach and that use the app. Every month, 1.5 million surfers all over the world check MSW before they hit the beach or their favorite spot.

Additionally, MSW includes a network of live human reporters that update in real time. The forecasts update four times a day, and due to a decade of tweaking and tuning, their data is known to be very timely and accurate.

As mentioned above, one of the main key advantages that MSW has against competitors is 'their in' with some of the largest surfing companies as well as surfing competitions and events. Because they have the strong relationships and trust from these key players, they can easily be seen as having a respected, trustworthy, accurate, and reliable product. This would of course continue attracting users and support them in maintaining their competitive advantage.

Marketing Profile: Magicseaweed

MSW is the oldest, most popular and detailed free long-range surf forecast on the web. MSW attracts 1.5 million users each month, and covers almost 3,000 beaches in 180 countries. MSW Offers accurate seven day forecasts for free compared to competitors, and includes more surf spots than competitors.



MSW makes its revenue through selling its upgraded version (Magicseaweed PRO), which users have to pay for, and by selling their data to some of the largest surfing competitions and events.

Additionally, MSW encourages customers to provide feedback on their experience with the MSW app and webpage, but having them contact MSW via email or the MSW Facebook page.

Lastly, doing a Google search with various wave and weather app phrases did not populate Magicseaweed easily. However, MSW did appear on the 1st Google search page as #6 under the phrase “best wave weather forecasting apps”. This shows their SEO is ok, but could be improved with other keywords.

SWOT Profile: Magicseaweed

Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large 1.5 million monthly user base • Does business with some of the largest surfing companies • Is sought after to provide data to some of the world’s largest surfing competitions and events • Has live human reporters that update in real time, enabling any problems to be fixed immediately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readability of app could be improved as font size is too small according to reviews • Due to some forecast inaccuracies, there is an opportunity to continually improve the forecasting of certain beach spots • Incorporate social media in the MSW app
Weaknesses	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website can be confusing for users to use • Users have recently noticed some options removed from the free version, and are feeling uncomfortable about paying for the upgraded version • Beach spots are still missing from list • There is a lack of camera variety for certain beaches, making it difficult to see different angles of the beach and forces users to use other competitors’ apps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competitors improving their listing and views of different beach spots • Expansion of cameras and views getting better (i.e. competitors having 4k resolution cameras)