




Nina (36)

13 followers | 23 posts | 6 following

 Joined January 2018

Blog Comments Replies Rewards ▾

Wallet Settings

My blog



 **ninaja** (36) in assignments • 1 hour ago

Occupy Social Media: Steemit

Nina Janies

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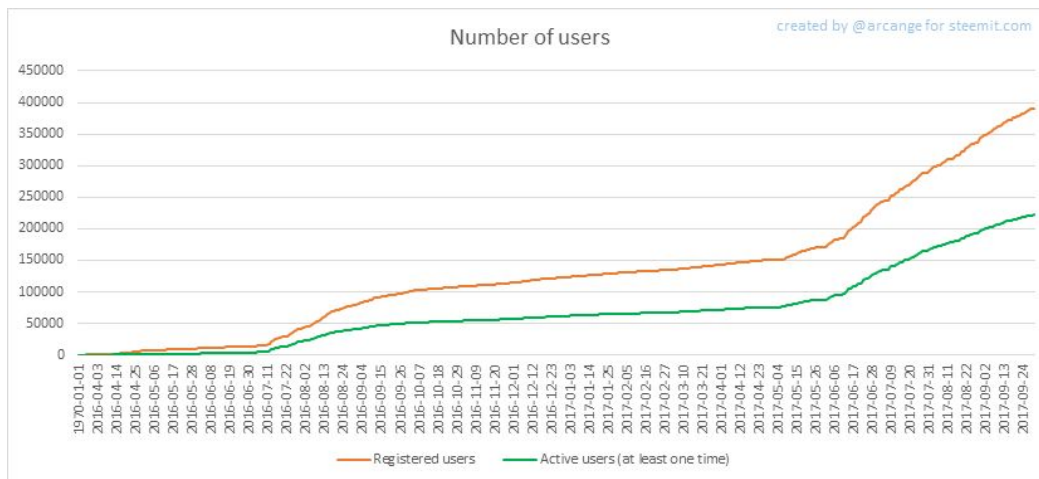
Erin Krupka

April 4th, 2018

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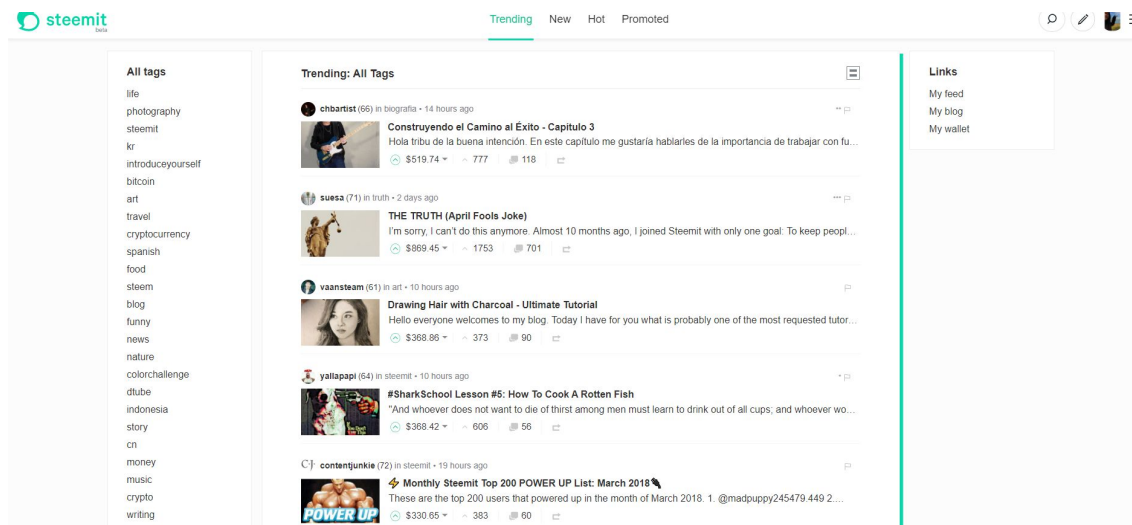
What is Steemit?

Steemit, like many other social media platforms, is a beta site where users can post articles, blog posts, videos, and photos. But there's a twist. For every like, comment, or interaction a user gets, based on an algorithm and the prestige of the user, they can receive online currency, or in Steemit's terminology, "Steem." This new approach to social media uses a lot of the same components as other social media or blog websites, like the ability to "like" and share posts, but unlike those sites, a portion of the money generated each week is put into a rewards pool to give back to the users who posted. All of these transactions are done through the cryptocurrency, Steem, made by the site that can be translated into rewards within the site, or be turned into currencies like Bitcoin that can be exchanged for real money.



Steemit's number of users since their creation as reported by one of the founders (A., 2017).

Launched in March, 2016 by Ned Scott, Steemit has been fairly successful with over 900,000 accounts created as of April 1st, 2018 (Database, n.d.). The original concept, according to Steemit's official Frequently Asked Questions page, was to create a "redefined social media [that has] a living, breathing, and growing social economy - a community where users are rewarded for sharing their voice" (Steemit, n.d.).



Front page of Steemit, the trending feed.

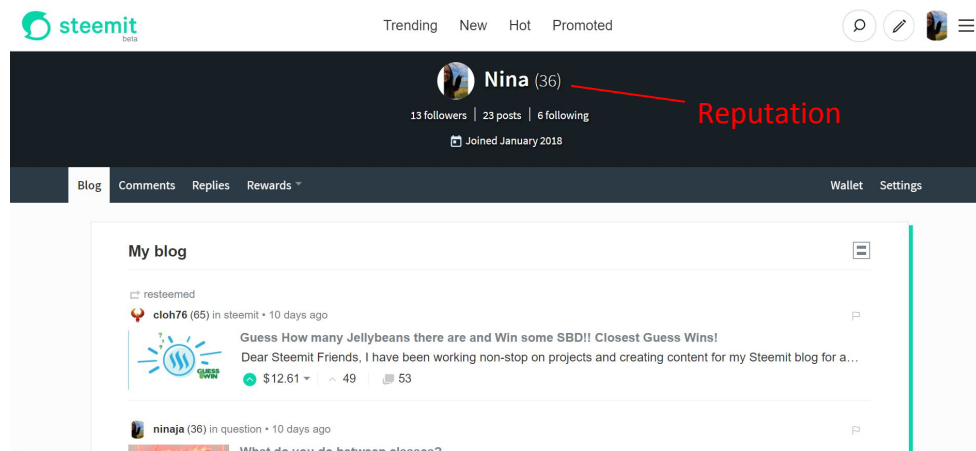
Image courtesy of steemit.com

This promise of users being “rewarded for sharing their voice” is tempting to many users and is most likely the main reason for the boom of the site with the interest in cryptocurrencies becoming a hot topic in recent years. Much like others users who were enticed with this promise, I was enticed to see how this would affect what people posted and whether or not the motivation of money would get occasional creators, like me, to post more.

↑ \$0.03 ↓ 11 17

 **ninaja** (36) in description • 1 hour ago

Key Features and Vocabulary



Steemit’s platform uses many of the same terms that other social media sites uses like “upvote,” “comment,” and “followers.” The platform also uses a very recognizable layout with the profile page, feed page, and trending/hot page being separated from each other. The main difference between Steemit and other social media sites is the cryptocurrency component, which is where the knowledge of Steemit vocabulary is vital to understand different parts of the site. Some of the essential features to know are:

Rewards - consists of curation and author rewards and is also a public tab. Curation awards show weekly earnings of STEEM POWER and weekly reward history based on the posts created by the user. Author rewards also show weekly earnings, but on comments and replies.

Reputation - based on the amount of votes a user has received, this determines whether the content the user has posted is high quality or not and can increase or decrease the visibility of the content the user posts.

Wallet - contains all of the user’s data on the amount of STEEM, STEEM POWER, and SBD a user has. This tab is also public.

Promoted - promoted posts are content that have been paid for by the user, using STEEM POWER, to be pushed to the front for a better chance of being seen by other users. This is different from the hot and trending tabs in that this content is not filtered for its content, but is completely based on how much the user paid for it to be seen.

STEEM vs STEEM POWER vs SBD - STEEM, and its abbreviation for trading sites, SBD, is the actual cryptocurrency that Steemit runs off of. This can be exchanged on trading websites for other cryptocurrencies, like BitCoin, or for paper money. STEEM POWER contributes to a user’s reputation. It controls how much their comments and upvotes on posts are worth and makes them a more valuable user.

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First Impressions

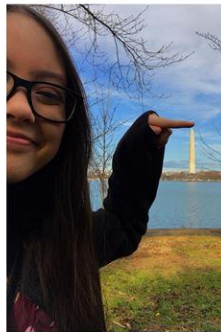
When I first started to read about Steemit, I thought it was the best deal ever: I could be rewarded for something as easy as making a social media post! But just like this seems too good to be true, it is. When I wrote my proposal I was very ambitious. While I was not an avid social media poster at the time, I thought that the motivation of money would get me to post more.

Introduce Yourself: Hi Steemit! My name is Nina :)



ninja (36) in introduceyourself • 2 months ago

Hi everybody!



My name is Nina and this is my very first post on Steemit. I am a student at the University of Michigan and am studying Computer Science. I am super interested in all types of tech and social media. I am particularly interested in software and app/web development. My passion is to help

My first post on Steemit, a classic “Introduce Yourself” post.

The first week, I planned to make an introduction post where I would introduce myself to the site. I was able to do this, but it took me about two hours to create a quality, thought out post. Despite being a high quality post of original content, I only made \$0.05 on the post. I did, however, get positive comments on my post and was excited that users on the site seemed generally interested in me.



joeyarnoldvn (53) • 2 months ago

Nina, I'm Oatmeal Joey, and I love your photos and I love Disney and Japan and I do web design. I'm from Oregon.



\$0.00

1 vote

Reply



ninja (36) • 2 months ago

Hey Joey! Thanks for reading!



\$0.00

Reply

Most of the comments I received were like the ones above, actually inquiring about stuff I had written. This was pretty exciting because it gave me the impression that the people on this site were genuinely interested in developing an interactive community. I also had the impression that a beta site like Steemit, where users have to apply to become a user, would encourage people who were actually interested in the concept of the site and promoting it would be the primary users. That because people would need to put effort into joining the site, users who wanted to exploit the site would be weeded out. As I began to interact with the site more, however, **it became apparent that a social media site, whose entire concept revolves around money, was bound to attract users who were looking to make quick cash, and was not a model that could survive as a result.**



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The Barriers to a Beta Social Media Site

There were two main components that contributed to the slow death of my account: design failures and user behavior. Design failures, however, was the first barrier I was faced with. As mentioned, my first post took me almost two hours to curate. The main cause for this was the text editor that Steemit provides.

This is a post

This is text
<h1> This is a header </h1>
<h2> This is another kind of header </h2>
This text is italic
This text is bold

Insert images by dragging & dropping, pasting from the clipboard, or by selecting them.

Tag (up to 5 tags), the first tag is your main category.

Post

Clear

Rewards: Default (50% / 50%)
Upvote post

Preview

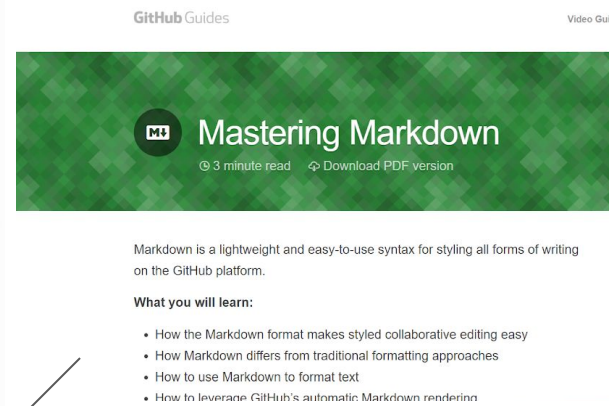
This is text

This is a header

This is another kind of header

This text is italic
This text is bold

Markdown Styling Guide



This is the GitHub page this link leads to. Image courtesy of github.com.

The Steemit text editor with some of the HTML tags users can use, if they know them.

While aesthetically pleasing, with its minimalist and completely customizable approach, this text editor was incredibly hard to use for someone without knowledge of HTML markup tags. Steemit attempts to resolve this issue by providing a third party link to a “Markdown Style Guide.” This link leads to a GitHub page with vocabulary meant for someone with basic programming knowledge, which the average user cannot be expected to have. This particular guide is very GitHub specific and references how these tags can be used in the README files that most repositories on the site have. The style guide never references Steemit or how any of its instructions can be specifically applied to the site.

Steemit, in this case, fails to consider many of the components of interaction design. In chapter 1 of *Interaction Design* by Helen Sharp, Jenny Preece, and Yvonne Rogers, it is stressed that, when designing a product, it is important to ask “who is going to be using [the product], how, and where?” (Preece, 2004). Steemit clearly did not think through each of these questions if their goal was to make the platform usable by a diverse group of users.

Steemit’s text editor also fails several of the usability goals listed in *Interaction Design*. While the text editor is “effective to use” because it can be very powerful with all of the editing options available, it is not “efficient to use,” “easy to learn,” or “easy to remember how to use” (Preece, 2004). Remembering HTML tags and learning how to properly use them is a skill that is typically taught through formal courses and is not something the average user should be expected to be able to do. The use of an HTML reliant text editor prevents users that are not as technology savvy from creating visually appealing and organized posts, leading these users to be frustrated with how hard can be to post.

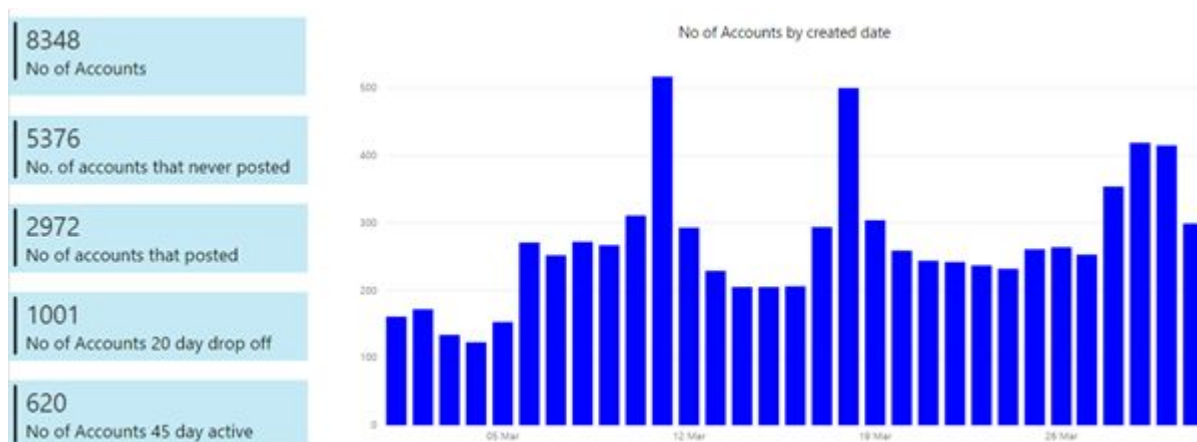
What you type	What it looks like
<p>The image name, the word thumb then the caption :</p> <pre>[[File:wiki.png thumb Wikipedia logo]]</pre>	<p>The image name, the word thumb then the caption :</p> 

Part of Wikipedia's extensive markup style guide.

Image courtesy of [wikipedia.org](https://www.wikipedia.org)

This frustration associated with websites that require users to create content is not uncommon. Benjamin R. Cowan and Mervyn A. Jack in "Exploring the wiki user experience: The effects of training spaces on novice user usability and anxiety towards wiki editing" discovered a similar problem with the Wiki text editor. Wiki, like Steemit, allows for user curation using a text editor that relies on a markup language like HTML. Cowan and Jack found that the "usability and ease of use are seen as significant barriers to contribution in wikis and a potential reason for lack of editing" (Cowan, 2011). If the first interaction a user has with a website's text editor is frustrating, it is unlikely that the user will be encouraged to try again, especially if the action is for something voluntary, like posting on a social media site. Cowan and Jack elaborate further on this sequence of events of a user's experience and explain how this unsatisfactory practice can lead "to the creation of a 'digital ghost town'" (Cowan, 2011).

Steemit is not an exception to this phenomenon. Using data from steemwhales.com, a site that tracks and collects data on Steemit, one user was able to create a diagram displaying the user retention rate in the month of March. This diagram, pictured below, shows that 64% of the accounts created in March never posted to the site (G, P., 2018). While some theories suggested that users may have not stayed on the site because they were not making as much money as they thought they should be making, the amount of users that never even post is notable and could be linked to the barriers Steemit presents to its users in creating their first post.



Personally, this style of text editor was not that difficult for me to use, but I have also had experience in running a professional website that utilized HTML tags. The text editor, however, did make it harder for me to make a quality post in a short amount of time, and thus, contributed to a lesser amount of posts over the seven weeks of occupying the social media than I had expected to be able to make. And when it came down to it, the amount of money I was making was not worth the time and effort it took to post.

Brawls and Bad Behavior

The other main component that resulted in the death of my account was the user behavior on Steemit. To begin, unspoken rules on the site made it hard to post regularly. Despite being a social media site where users were free to post whatever they wanted, unoriginal content was almost taboo, and this was enforced in several ways. Much like the dot in Larry Lessig's *How to Regulate Code* was regulated, the user on Steemit was regulated by two of the four categories: law and norms (Lessig, 2010). Norms were the main regulator on Steemit. If a user posted content that was not their own and did not explicitly cite who the content was coming from, commenters would be quick to point it out, much like the comment below on a video that another user reposted without giving credit.



leoplav (63) • 8 months ago

P [-]

Please credit the original content creator @sethlinson.

<https://steemit.com/steemit/@sethlinson/announcing-steemit-explained-a-new-animated-series>

Otherwise you might be flagged.

⬆️ \$0.00

1 vote

Reply

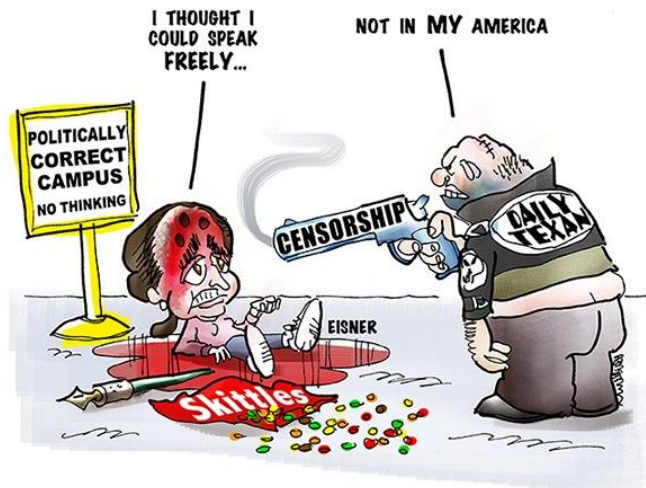
This sort of comment pressures the user to credit the original content creator, or else they could be flagged and other users may be incentivized to not upvote this user's post because they now know it is not their content. Citing sources is very important on Steemit because money is involved. Users would get mad if a trending post was unoriginal content because it was not fair to them that another user was able to make money by not posting original content when they are working hard on their original content. While I did not have any incidents with other users during my time on the site, I realized how dangerous this could be, which is where another regulator on the site came in: flagging. As hard as it was already to make money, if another user on the site wanted to purposefully prevent another user from making money, all they had to do was flag them. When a user flags someone, the following message pops up:

Flagging a post can remove rewards and make this material less visible. Some common reasons to flag

- Disagreement on rewards
- Fraud or Plagiarism
- Hate Speech or Internet Trolling
- Intentional miss-categorized content or Spam

Flag

Steemit's policy for flagged posts is that they would be reviewed by a moderator, but for the time being, that user's post would be less visible and would prevent them from making as much money as they could have, even if the post was original and completely valid content. So essentially, if two users got in a fight, they could hurt each other's income through flagging. And because Steemit is still a beta social media site, they failed to really do anything about this. They have listed in their FAQ that situations like this could happen, but the only sort of regulation they have is to recommend that users post original content and that blocking or muting users is an option. What Steemit fails to realize in this case, however, is that regulating behavior is a key to building a successful online community (Kraut, 2016). This lack of regulation put a damper on the community aspect of Steemit for me because it became so transparent that many people were just in it for the money, and would do whatever it took to get their fair share.



A comic from Medium writer Bashar Zaiter from his article on how social media undermines free speech (Zaiter, 2017).

But in Steemit's defense, regulating social media is a huge challenge. Even an organization as big as the United Nations was not able to figure out a way to do it that everyone agreed upon. In her journal titled, "Impossible to Regulate: Social Media, Terrorists, and the Role for the U.N.," Paulina Wu describes how the U.N. failed to impose regulations on terrorists use of social media. One of the biggest challenges was freedom of speech. She writes that "screening and removal of offensive social media raises complicated issues over what should and should not be censored" (Wu, 2015). If Steemit were to impose regulations on what could and could not be censored, many users may disagree on the rules, and when money becomes a part of the situation, lawsuits could ensue if a user thinks they were wrongfully censored, making the issue even more complicated. But nevertheless, as long as users could be harshly regulated in a system that revolves around money, someone is bound to get upset, and this could do major damage to Steemit's reputation.

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Reflection

When I first went into Steemit, I had the goal of making \$100 over the span of seven weeks. After my first post, however, I realized that this goal was unrealistic. The poor design of the text editor, with its challenging to learn HTML markup language, partnered with the strict regulations put into the site by my fellow users, created a barrier to entry that most users would not take the time to overcome. The promise of money was alluring, but ultimately, the time and the effort that would need to be put into the site to make a decent sum outweighed the rewards.

Steemit's concept of a site made to reward its creators is one of an utopian internet, but not one of reality. Its initial success came from its promise and made its users excited, especially with the topic of cryptocurrency becoming hot in the past few years. But its failure to reward its users with more than a few cents for a post, with only the top 1% of the site actually making a decent sum of cash, Steemit's future is bleak. It is human nature to want to make a lot of money in a short amount of time, but Steemit's model does not work like that, and as more users realize this, their numbers will start to dwindle, just as their retention rate of users already has. Steemit, while good in concept and possibly a concept that could be built upon better, will not survive among the social media giants of today. Maybe in the future, with a business model that does not rely on the rollercoaster market of cryptocurrency and has a simpler user interface, another model like Steemit could thrive and create a more utopian internet. But for now, Steemit's model will die out like the MySpace's of the world.

As for my account, its death has almost arrived. The amount of money was not a great enough incentive with everything that is vying for my attention as a college student. Once in awhile I might look back to see if the people I followed are making money, but I don't think I will ever post again. Even the money I earned, less than a dollar, is not worth the time and effort it would take to turn into real cash. The only thing I, and other Steemians, can really hope for, if we really want to get our money's worth out of Steemit, is that STEEM explodes like Bitcoin. But in the meantime, I am going to stick to Facebook and Instagram.

Goodbye



ninja (36) in goodbye • 12 seconds ago

Goodbye, Steemit.

goodbye

PROMOTE

🕒 12 seconds ago by **ninja (36)** ⬆️ \$0.00 ⬇️ 1 vote ⬇️

Reply Edit 🗨️ 0 👁️ 1    

⬆️ \$0.03 ⬇️ 11 🗨️ 17

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