

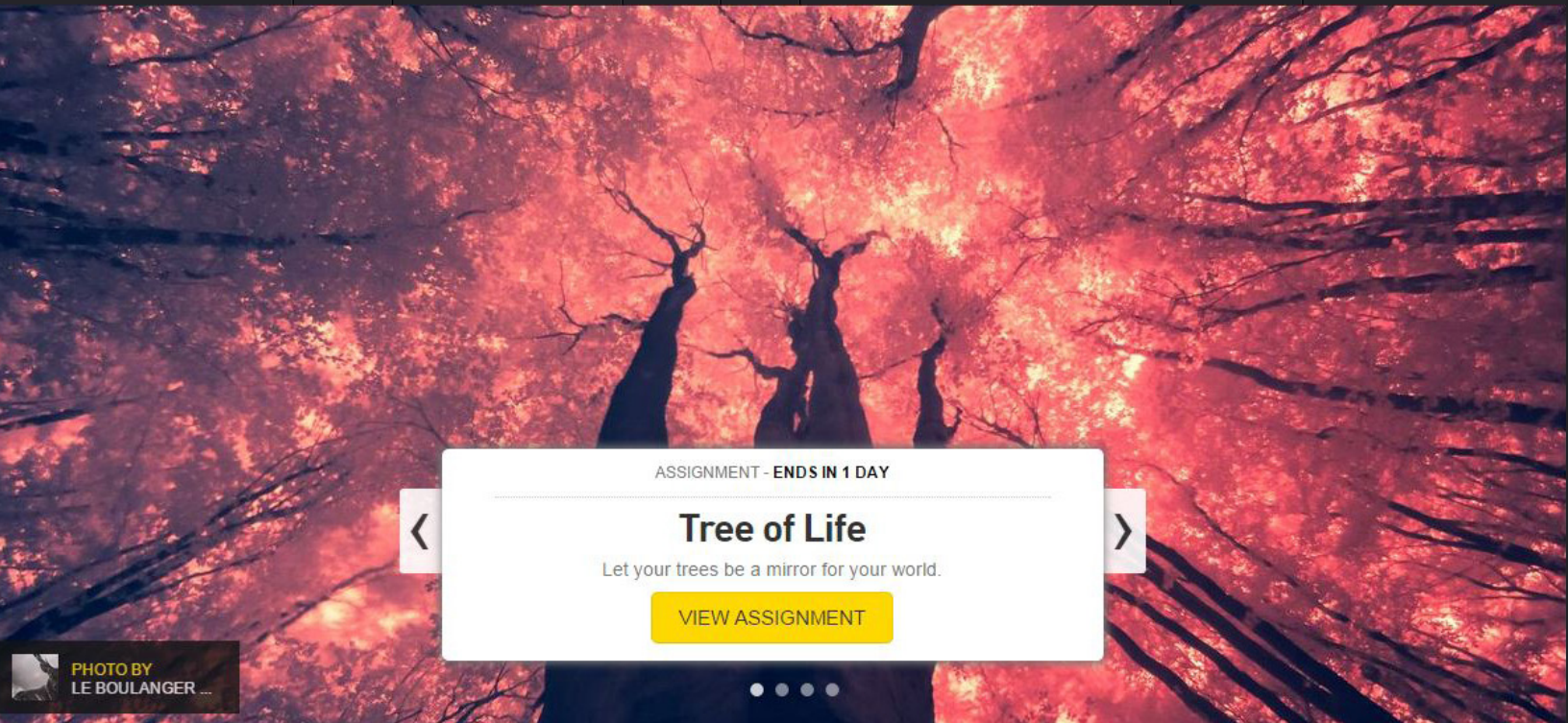


The National Geographic Society, is one of the largest nonprofits started in the United States. Known for its different scientific content, such as its magazine and television channel, the institution has further expanded its reach globally, with its content translated into several different languages.¹ Its website, filled with similar works published daily, houses its online community, allowing

1. <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/about/>

people interested in their work to share their thoughts through a site wide commenting feature. While National Geographic's online community, especially its Your Shot sub-community, has a significant population, its audience is sometimes larger on its other social media channels. The Your Shot sub community is National Geographic's most successful and lively sub community, owing its success to the architecture of

"assignment" participation option, rapid feedback system, and reputation of the Society itself. The other tools for engagement on the site do not have the same popularity due to the lack of visibility and the underdevelopment of this form of communication. Based on the audience on its other social media channels, the site has a lot of potential to engage more users.



ASSIGNMENT - ENDS IN 1 DAY

Tree of Life

Let your trees be a mirror for your world.

VIEW ASSIGNMENT

PHOTO BY
LE BOULANGER ...

Welcome to the Your Shot Community

547,854 Members

195 Countries

4,362,726 Photos

Your Shot

Created in 2012, the Your Shot community creates a space for amateur photographers to gain exposure from the respected site.¹ They have expectations about submitting personal and authentic photographs. This is accomplished through their strict copyright codes. This policy allows users who submit content to keep the copyright to their own work.²

1. https://www.facebook.com/NatGeoYourShot/info?tab=page_info

2. <http://help.nationalgeographic.com/customer-portal/articles/1081018-when-i-submit-a-photo-to-your-shot-do-i-retain-the-copyright-to-the-photograph>

Although the site recognizes the work of amateurs, many users are still commended for their skill and ability to take these photographs. This community is different from the general commenting area which users may also participate in. Due to the high quality content submitted by the users, the design has a beautiful aesthetic, complemented well with the overall design and colors selected by the site architects. The minimalist design affords the viewers to focus on the photography itself. Keeping it clutter free also helps users navigate the site with more ease, but

sometimes prevents the community from being very visible.

The work done because of this online community is the produce of creative cultural work. It represents a way users in online communities are involved in collective learning.³ This aspect of the site represents a successful, sustaining space.

3. Rheingold, Weeks *Net Smart*, p. 117

Population

The site itself is quite popular, boasting “26 million global unique visitors a month.”¹ It also has a large membership outside of its own site, with over 34.5 million Facebook fans, 8.5 million Twitter

followers, and 14.4 million Instagram followers. Based on the content shared on these platforms, this producer is known for its pictures and articles in particular. Its Facebook acts much like BuzzFeed articles, with its catchy titles and images well suited for a

Newsfeed appearance. The conversations on the other sites are actually much livelier than on the site itself, except for its Your Shot community. This provides an insight showing that there is a community actually interested in their content and a potential area of growth.

Another interesting aspect of the site is how it supports its offline community. The institution has its own museum and hosts a variety of events, on only at its center in DC but many across the United States. It also hosts some events in other countries. It also supports of their offline community with resources such as exhibitions, maps, and staff members.¹

1. <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/mediakit/>
2. <http://events.nationalgeographic.com/locations/>

- 28.26 MILLION Unique Visitors (Global)
- 14.92 MILLION Unique Visitors (U.S.)
- 13.34 MILLION Unique Visitors (International)
- 121.8+ MILLION Page Views
- 7.7 MILLION Video Views
- 34.5+ MILLION Facebook Fans
- 8.5+ MILLION Twitter Followers
- 3.7+ MILLION YouTube Subscribers
- 1.3+ BILLION YouTube Video Views
- 14.4+ MILLION Instagram Followers

Social Media, March 2015; Google Analytics, January 2015

The site has done extensive work to improve its presence on other social media sites, with its numbers in the millions on many of their platforms.

Joining the National Geographic Society membership is costly in terms of time because this aspect of the site is very hidden. While the Sign In or Join button is clearly labeled on the top banner, the site does very little to prompt users to engage with the community. Once a user has created a site, they are prompted to a Membership Benefits page, outlining the perks of joining the community. Only two of these options are actually

about engaging with other users.¹ The others involve discounts and exclusive content for its members. These extrinsic motivations may be helpful in recruitment, but do not guide new users to spaces they can actually find community.

New users are also prompted go through a tour to help navigate the site after creating an account. They are shown different methods of participation and expectations that the site has about communication and interaction with other members. This socialization of new members helps to keep them from getting

1. members.nationalgeographic.com/settings/

lost on the site and maintain current community standards of engagement. Below is an image from the welcome tour, displaying all the methods of interaction. A positive additional feature of this tour is that all users have access to it, even after they have been initiated. This access to behavioral norms and practices helps keep all users aware and informed.

Sharing, Favorites, and Feedback

See a great shot? Share it. Make it a favorite. Leave feedback for the photographer and start a conversation. Our staff is active on the website, so look out for their reviews, updates, and tips, too.





- Benefits
- Account
- Profile
- Interests
- Notifications


Settings: Benefits


As a member of the National Geographic Society, you have access to exclusive experiences, content, and discounts.


Your member benefits include:


**Photo Community**
Be published and get feedback from experts in our photo community.


**Comments**
Share your ideas on the latest news.


**Inside Nat Geo**
The email newsletter just for members. See the latest here.


**Special Issue**
Available for a limited time: The Civil War.


**Discount**
10% off at the Nat Geo Store online.


**Discount**
15% off Nat Geo framed photos with code NGMEMBER15.


**Discount**
Get a special Nat Geo rate from GEICO. (Limited time offer. U.S. only).


**Discount**
Save on participating Nat Geo Live! events at select locations.

**Video**
See the archive of Nat Geo Live! talks.

**Upgrade**
Get access to the magazine, digital editions, archives and more.

**Manage**
Already upgraded? Manage your account here.

**Archive**
For subscribing members only: 126 years of the magazine.

**Digital Editions**
For subscribing members only: magazine for iPad, iPhone, Kindle Fire and Android.

User Extrinsic Benefits

The site also offers different packaging for their resources. Members of the site are encouraged to upgrade their experience by purchasing a magazine subscription

as well as access to other archives. Participation options do not differ with price even though certain content is locked until a user signs in with a particular service provider. They leave commenting areas open to all users, even if they are using the freemium package. This could be due to the lack of participants already in these areas of the site. The image above illustrates how the site promotes their store

and paid content to new users. This is the first screen showed after a new user joins as a member. By explicitly definitely the benefits, the site reassures the user that they have made a beneficial decision. It also helps guide them through the site, prompting them in areas they may interact or purchase other items.



Juan Osorio

New York City, New York, United States
Member since 2009



ACTIVITY

ABOUT

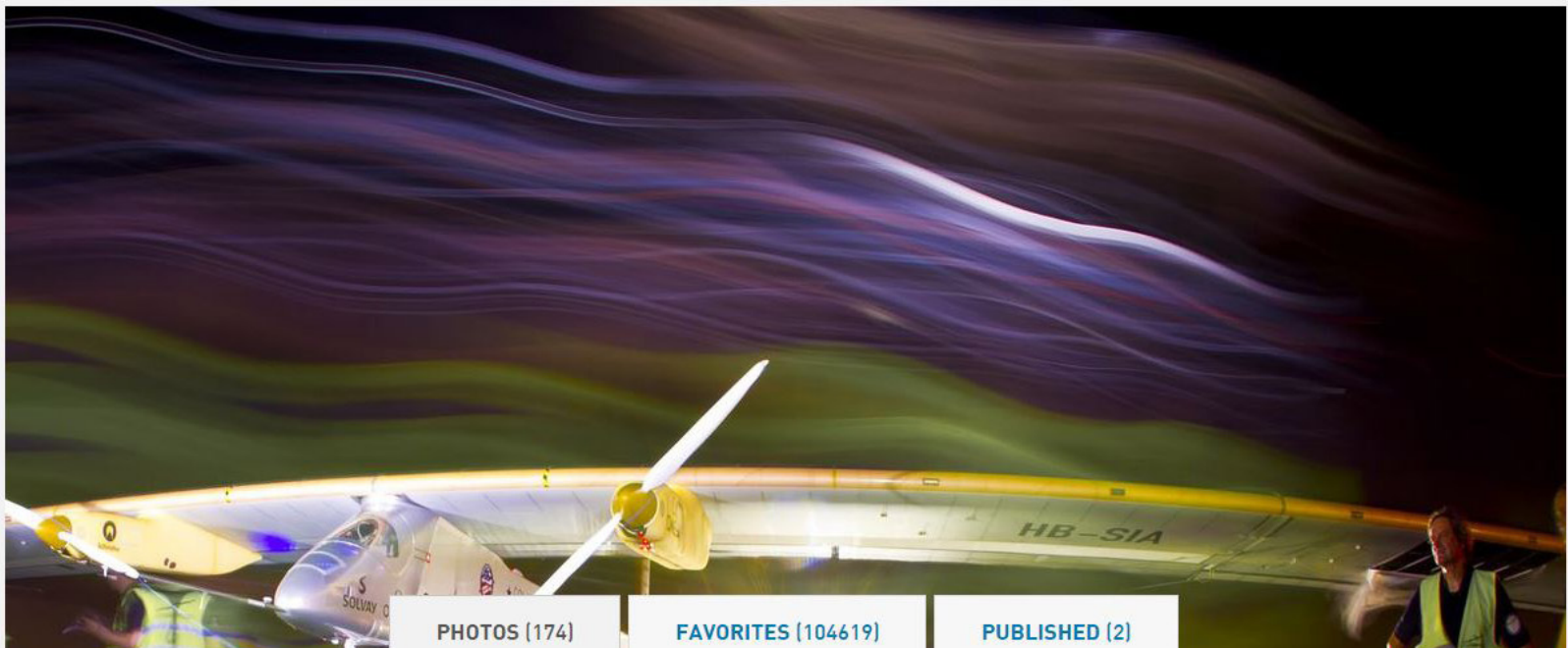


Juan Osorio

New York City, New York, United States
Member since 2009



About Juan Osorio
[Main Profile](#)



PHOTOS (174)

FAVORITES (104619)

PUBLISHED (2)

User Profiles

Once a user makes an account, there are two profiles created on their behalf, one general and one Your Shot profile. The Your Shot profile highlights showcases pictures that the user took and favored from the different exhibitions. The third tab exhibits pictures that were published on the site, recognized for its strong caliber. The main profile highlights the different articles the users liked and an About section about the user. Often times, this information is private and very little information is shared with other users browsing profiles. Users do not need two profiles on the site since they do not serve two unique purposes. These two profiles should be

consolidated because there is not a strong need to have two separate profile. The profiles do not share much about the users in general. Pseudonyms are rarely used, with most people deciding to use first and last names on the site. Public information about the users is the year when they became a member as well as a highlighted area of their city. This can be adjusted, allowing the level of obscurity the user wish to employ. The images on the left show the two profiles. The two displays show similar features. The top profile, the main

one, shares less information and contributions than the bottom. The Your shot profile helps the user build their credibility on the site because it highlights their contributions that have been published and recognized by National Geographic photographers and editors. It also helps exhibit all the work submitted by the photographer. Each image in their collection as an associated favorite count and comment count. These numbers also build status on the site because it shows how these pictures are well received and appreciated by other users.

Users do not need two profiles on the site since they do not serve two unique purposes

Community

The Your Shot community has over 500 thousand members.¹ It is quite diverse, with its population coming from almost 200 different countries. The community has shared over 4 million photos since its inception. There are many ways users are able to connect with one another. The most prominent is the comments section under many articles but especially in the Your Shot community. The commenting feature is supported under publications of top photos of assignments as well as under user submitted shots. Users are also able to favorite each others' comments as well as photos. The main conversation on the site happens in the comments section, where users are able to respond back and forth. Overall, the comments on the site are very civil and positive. The Your Shot community

1. <http://yourshot.nationalgeographic.com/people/>

in particular focuses on positive affirmation for the user driven content. When there are differing opinions, most comments use respectful language.²

Users are able to filter through content in three ways; Newest, Oldest, and Top Comments. The top comments are judged off of the number of likes it was given. For more popular topics, these options are not sufficient enough to allow users to filter through hundreds of responses efficiently. One interesting aspect of the community, is the counter for lurkers on a particular conversation. The site shows the number of people who are "listening" to a comments section. These numbers reach the hundred, especially for new content, but show a clear divide between the number of participants and the number of lurking members. It is a clear example of the power law rule for

2. yourshot.nationalgeographic.com/profile/5027/

participation.

Another way users are able to connect with the pictures is the feature which allows them to vote on "What makes this photo great?" The categories composition, lighting, creativity, and story allow the community to make collective decisions.

This site does not have a private messaging feature, which resulted in users publicly sharing their contact information in the comments.³ This can be extremely useful for users who are looking for more private mentorship and advice not pertaining to a particular topic of photo. Along with a following or friends feature, this will help support more one-on-one relationships on the site and encourage more participation amongst users.

3. <http://yourshot.nationalgeographic.com/photos/5845627/>

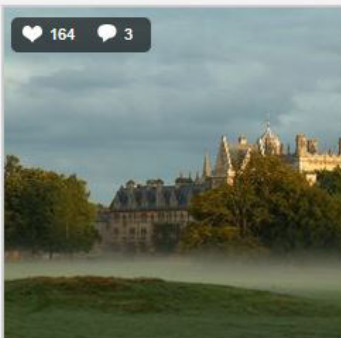
ALL SUBMISSIONS (19016)

EDITOR'S UPDATES (3)

DISCUSSION (471)

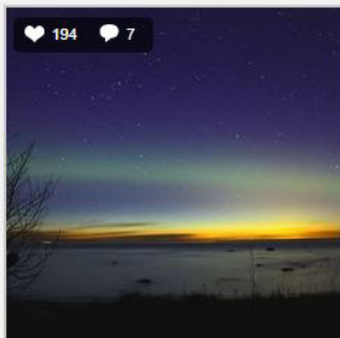
SORT BY: MOST RECENT | MOST DISCUSSED | TRENDING | EDITORS' FAVORITES

 VIEW SLIDESHOW



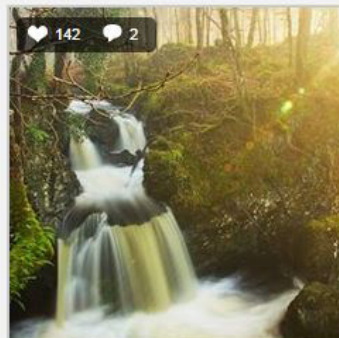
James Bennett 19 Jan

Christ Church Meadows at dawn
#firstlight



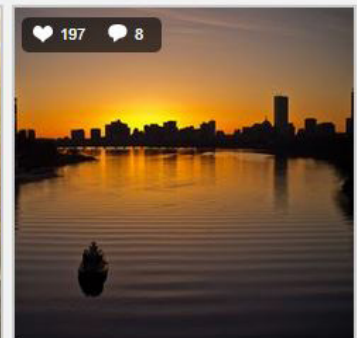
Kristoffer Vaikla 7 Aug 13

Northern lights and shooting star
#auroraborealis #night
#northernlights #sky #cosmos



Tom F. 19 Jan

Ancient Awakening
#woodland #ancient #sunrise
#golden #scotland #waterfall #oak



Bimal Nepal 19 Jan

Sunrise at Boston Skyline
#firstlight



Leonardo V.

Mar 2, 2015

"The maximum is when you look at a photo and immediately recognizes the style, find out who made the picture before looking at the credits..." - Araquém Alcântara

7 Like Reply



Veronika K Ko

Mar 2, 2015

@Leonardo V. Exactly!Tnx for sharing,my friend!Regards,V

4 Like Reply



Ivan Lesica

Mar 3, 2015

@Veronika K Ko @Leonardo V. Well, Veronika , that means that you have reached the maximum because most of the time I can recognize your style (creative and perfectly composed) without looking at the photographer...

6 Like Reply



Veronika K Ko

Mar 3, 2015

@Ivan Lesica @Veronika K Ko @Leonardo V. Wow,really?!You recognize my style immediately?! I am honored and thrilled to read it! THANK YOU,Ivan! I am happy that somebody can recognize my style,my pictures,without reading the name of photographer..yet!But I can say the same for your work,Ivan,I am "returning" you the compliment!:)

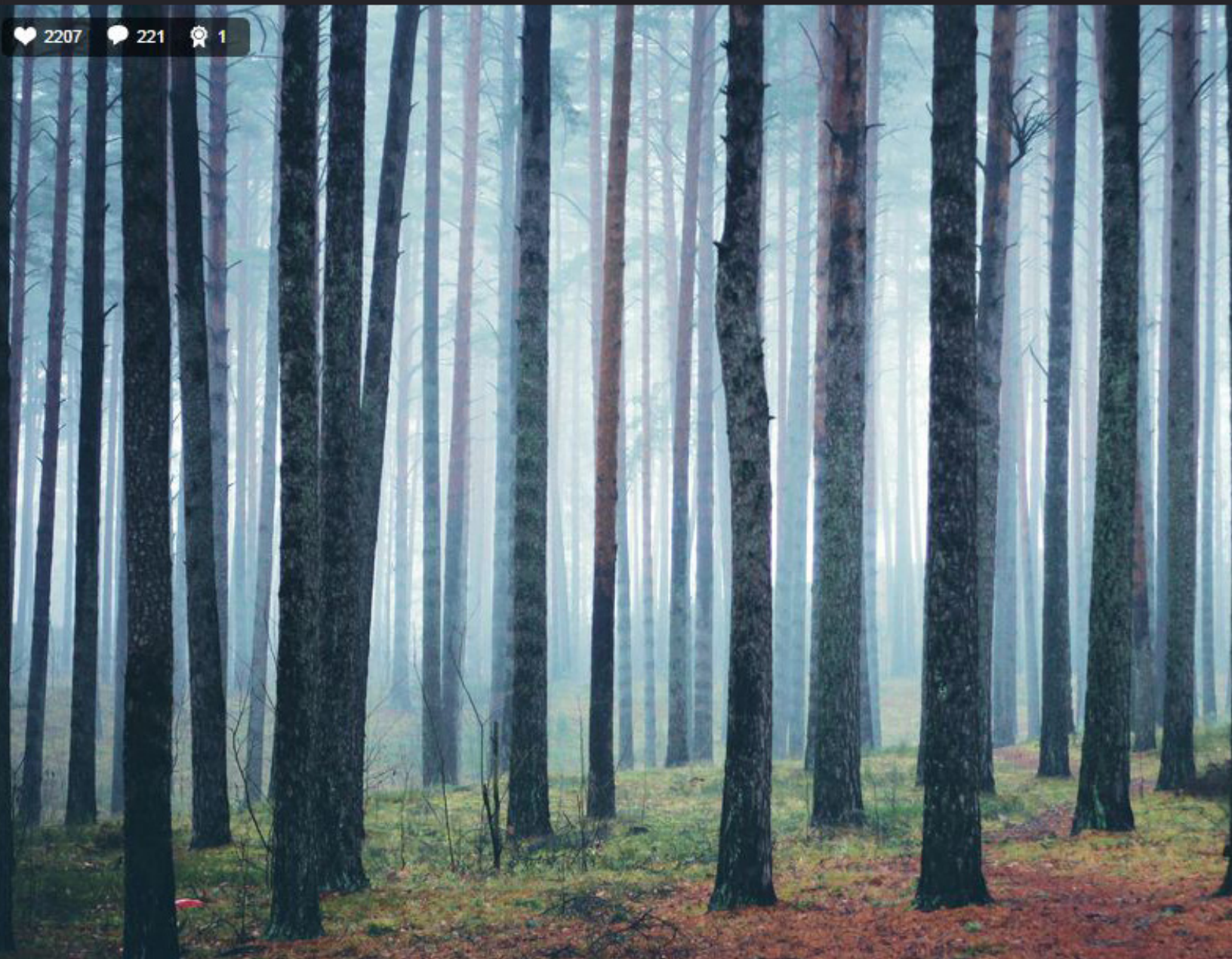
7 Like Reply

The Your Shot community in particular focuses on positive affirmation for the user driven content.

Editor's Note

These woods are both inviting and slightly off-putting. The bareness of the trunks and the eerie fog add to the overall dream-like quality of this forest. The scene pulls the viewer in and dares them to step inside.

Monica C. Corcoran
Director, Your Shot



♥ 2207 💬 221 🏆 1

Assignments & Stories



Everyone's welcome to contribute their best shot to open assignments



Community members and National Geographic discuss the submissions



National Geographic assembles the top photos from an assignment into a story

Feedback

One of the most unique and positive aspects of this online community is how experts interact with the amateur photography community. Although this site does not necessarily follow a reader to leader framework, since leadership positions are not open to members, there are still stark differences between lurking members and those submitting content.¹ The recognition from

1. Preece & Schniederman, *Transactions on Human Computer Interaction*, p. 16

an authoritative figure on the site and their regular participation helps maintain the quality of the content and legitimizes the work of amateur photographers.² This can be very appealing to some users who are looking for ways to improve their craft and engage in conversation of composition and other quality assessors of photography. It also serves users who are interested in status building, especially since they get more recognition if their work is highlighted

2. Cialdini, *The Psychology of Persuasion*

on this site.³ Rapid feedback is one of the most important retention features of an online community.⁴ Many members are supported through the commenting section of the Your Shot pictures. The liking feature allows users to provide feedback as well as the "What makes this photo great?" voting system.⁵

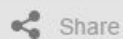
3. Velasquez, *Latent Users in an Online User-Generated Content Community*, p. 13

4. Kraut & Resnick *Buidling Successful Online Communities* p. 40

5. <http://yourshot.nationalgeographic.com/photos/5781631/>

ASSIGNMENT ?

First Light



This assignment ran from Dec 15 to Jan 19, 2015.

Set your alarm. Sleep can wait.

Challenge yourself and awaken just before sunrise. Grab a cup of coffee, and find a window facing east. Leave your camera in the bag. Watch the sun rise and begin its soft kiss on your world. At first, the light is barely noticeable, and as it brightens shadows begin to give shape to the landscape until it blinds you like a spotlight. First light—its beauty is fleeting, and that's what makes it so special. Welcome to your new assignment.

Curated by:



Kurt Mutchler
Senior Photo
Editor, National
Geographic
Magazine

ASSIGNMENT STATUS



Open



Closed

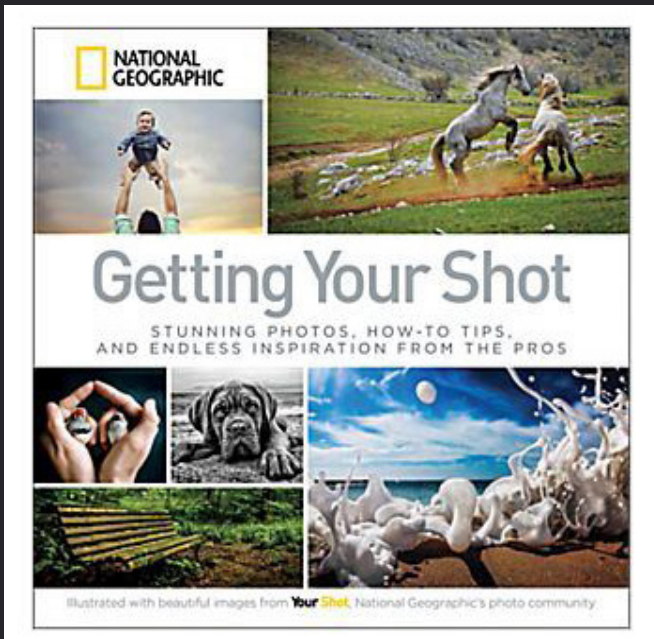


Published

Published Jan 26, 2015.

Thank you for your contributions!

This assignment will focus on the quality of natural light—its character



As a form of feedback, the site offers push notifications for users who choose to receive them. This is a beneficial design element because it keeps users updated and

between users.

National Geographic, after creating an account, will also send

1. Kraut & Resnick *Building Successful Online Communities* p. 235

involved with the site.¹ This can be applied to responses to a user's comment or comments on a submission they make. Users may also receive notifications for likes on their comments and images. This attention grabbing technique also encourages more back and forth

information through a push method in the form of an email. This also keeps the users updated on curated updated content on the site. By keeping users informed and aware, it helps build a stronger connection to others in the community.

National Geographic is very open with its support of its online community. It has recently published a book containing the works of many users. In the book, there are suggestions from National Geographic photographers, who really appreciated the work that was shared by the users.

This feedback system is an important part of the success of this online community.

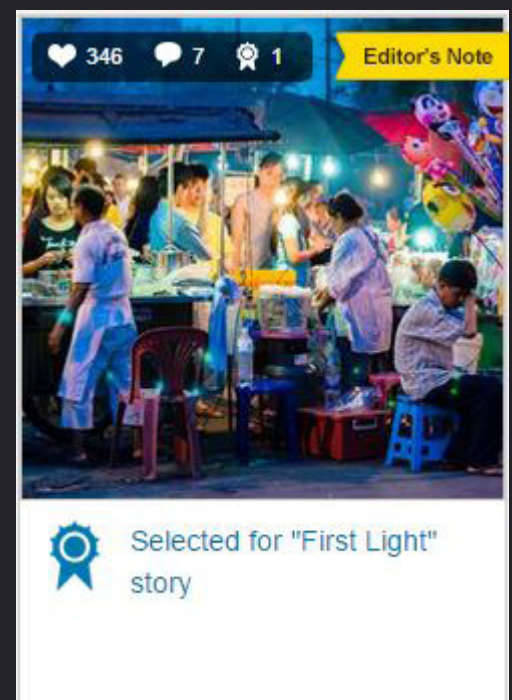
Gamification

To encourage participation, the site utilizes many game like elements to encourage user participation. These can be seen through the assignments, motivating many users to submit high quality work in order to be recognized on the site. Badges are also displayed on Your Shot profiles for the works that have been published in various articles. These motivators, in addition to feedback from authority, help user retention by providing a reason to return to the site. The motivation to view results is very compelling, which is especially prevalent in the comments

section. Many users, after viewing the results, choose to congratulate and respond to the winning pieces.

The implementation of this program has resulted in thousands of submissions and encouraged the cross fertilization of different photography specialties. It has brought people together from all around the world. The community has also pushed photographers to be more creative, making the space more successful overall.¹

1. Howard, *Design to Thrive*, p. 32



Recommendations

Although National Geographic's website has a lot of content it covers, the community they boast is hardly visible on its banner. The implementation of a more visible label and navigation link might promote the community for the better. This is especially important for new user retention.

Another way to promote interaction on the site would be through highlighting and curating con-

tent which is "most discussed". A system of bringing forth more controversial content or engaging work would spark more conversation between the different users. These many of these interactions are already hosted on Facebook. The site needs to offer more affordances in its architecture of the discussion area.

Another feature that will help support the existing community would be a feature to follow

favorite photographers and National Geographic staff. Although users are able to favorite content currently, they are unable to keep track of other users' works in its entirety. This will also be important in establishing longer lasting relationships. Ellison and Boyd argue that viewing connections is important, especially articulating connections.¹

1. *Sociality Through Social Networks* p. 158

Although National Geographic's website covers a lot of content, the community it boasts is hardly visible on its banner

Mobile Growth

The National Geographic Society does not have any support for its online community on a mobile device. Although the institution does have several applications in many languages, this content focuses more on its magazine and allowing users to read content off a desktop. Since most mobile devices support cameras, creating an

app for the Your Shot community is a potential area of growth. If the moderators and curators of the site were concerned about quality control of the photographs, a mobile friendly section or assignment can be created to support this type of interaction. By implementing a feature to support the community through mobile, it will also lower the costs of searching for the community through the browser.

Another area of growth especially

on its existing mobile applications is to create areas to interact for other users internationally. Currently, the Your Shot community is entirely in English. Users, however, come from many non-English speaking countries. Though the institution does have translations for a lot of its work in mobile applications, it has not added this multilingual feature to its community. This will also bring in new users and make the community more accessible.

Conclusion

Overall, this community has a sizeable population and interaction from its participants. The assignment feature of the community is what makes it unique and successful by relying on techniques of rapid feedback, call to action, as well as the reputation from the site itself which users seek to utilize. These features make the community successful and should be managed in a similar fashion in the future.

Though the site does get a lot of attention outside of the site's community, it can do much more to showcase the space it provides for interaction. More sharing of user submitted content and showcasing it on other platforms can

produce more interaction.

The community still lacks features to interact with other users privately. All conversations are happening on a public platform. While this can be beneficial for some users who are interested in the conversation, it results in many users sharing personal contact information with the entire community.

The gamified elements of the site has also encouraged the submissions of high quality content, which is well curated by paid staff members. This attention and monitoring of the site helps maintain its positive and encouraging ambiance, allowing all users to feel welcomed and supported in the space. This type of community is especially important for

users who are still exploring their photography skills. Getting positive and constructive feedback, on this site in particular, shows to be productive.

Your Shot is an excellent online community for photographers of all skills and backgrounds. Not only does it help promote many of its talented members, it also supports lurkers and non-participating members by making all of its user submitted content. It is an excellent addition to National Geographic's services but has room to grow.

created by: Meera Desai
SI 429

Images: www.nationalgeographic.com