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ECT 455 E-Commerce Web Site Engineering
Deliverable B: Web Analysis

M Live – http://www.mlive.com

OVERVIEW
Introduction – E-commerce Category
M Live is a Michigan based website that aims to please anyone interested in Michigan sports. This website targets high school teams, college teams and professional teams of almost every sport offered in Michigan. This website is hard to classify under one e-commerce category. In one sense, it falls under B2C (Business-to-Consumer). This would be because M Live offers paid subscriptions to their website for a variety of services. However, in another sense, it could be classified as a B2B (Business-to-Business). This would be because the majority of their income is based on other businesses paying for advertising reality.

Value Proposition
M Live does a couple things very well to stand out from the competition. However, I feel the most important factor is that they don't shy away from staying true to their goals, which is serving the people of Michigan. This is evident when I visited the website for the first time in a few months. It is defaulted to show Michigan's weather, when the next game is for the Detroit Tigers, and when the next game is for the Detroit Red Wings. These are important because people know they can visit M Live and easily locate scores, schedules, and leading stories from their favorite teams in Michigan.

Revenue Model

This site really offers a lot of space for advertisers. Obviously, it isn't free to run these ads on M Lives' website, so I would say Internet Advertising is how they make the majority of their money. I think they are really targeting a wide population with their website, and with the advertisements they run. As far as identifying customers, I would say they are really targeting the male, middle class population in the age range of 16 and up.

As you can see in the above screenshot, the website is targeting a variety of age ranges, but mainly sticking to the male population. The "High School Basketball Bulletin" ad and the "Universal Technical Institute" ad are really targeting male high school students or their parents. It is evident who they plan to use their website and who they advertise too.

Other Channels
This website operates almost seamlessly with the majority of newspapers in bigger cities of Michigan. Newspapers such as Detroit Free Press, Jackson Citizen Patriot and the Kalamazoo Gazette, among others, all publish M Lives stories. All of these websites also advertise on M Lives' website so the online presence, combined with the printed presence really serves their customers well. It never hurts to offer your customers more than one channel to get the information they are seeking.

Mobile Presence
M Lives' website is mobile friendly. When visiting the website from a mobile device, it defaults to really basic HTML/CSS. It turns into a text based website, and is really only good for scores and quick information.
However, they currently have an iPhone App that is offered for free inside the App Store. This is the better choice when it comes to the iPhone because it offers a cleaner interace and is more user friendly.

Presence
M Live has a much more local presence than a global one. I understand, people outside of Michigan with interest might visit the website to read some stories or check some scores. However, they would definitely be in the minority. The website is used to really target and serve the people of Michigan.

INTENDED CUSTOMERS

Customers

In a broad sense, the intended customers for M Live would be any person with an interest in Michigan sports. However, the site targets males in Michigan from the ages of 16 and up. They offer information on the high schools, colleges, and professional teams inside Michigan.

Experience

I would say the website can offer both a utilitarian and hedonic experience for a visitor. It would more of a utilitarian experience if the person came to the site just to see if the Detroit Lions won their game. They would check the score of the game and leave the website. However, it would be more of a hedonic experience if a person was bored and came to the site for entertainment. Maybe, they roamed around until they found a story about the University of Michigan that sparked interest, read the story and then left the website. The fact that they visited the website for entertainment rather than to complete a task would make it more of a hedonic experience than utilitarian one.

Types of customers

I'm not sure this site truly has a 'customer', such as a website like BestBuy.com. But, this site should really appeal to any type of visitor. A visitor to M Live can get all the information they need with out signing up or creating a username. However, if a person wishes to have the website more personalized, they can signup through the website and set all the preferences they wish.

Usability

M Live really does a good job with the usability of their website. They really follow online standards and give visitors the kind of site they would expect to find. M Live did a good job of arranging their content and setting up their navigation like most other online news publications. So navigating through the website and finding what you are looking for is almost effortless because people are not foreign to this type of layout. This is an example of when it is best to follow the norm of other sites rather that getting creative.
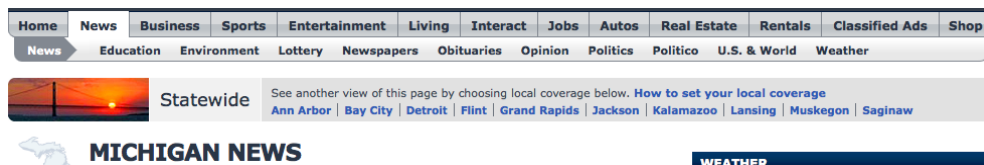
Attract

This is almost one of those sites that doesn't necessarily need to market and advertise all that much. The interest in these Michigan sports teams is going to be there regardless. M Live needs to be more concerned with providing people with the information they are looking for in the best manner they know how. However, the website does advertise and attract customers by posting stories in a variety of newspapers and they also purchase ad space on some newspapers to get their website out there. That is about all the advertising they do.

Interact

This website really interacts with it's visitors. This would definitely be considered a web 2.0 website. First of all, they allow users to login and set preferences so they can get the information they are looking for even faster. However, they also offer blogs and forums for a variety of sports. This allows visitors to not only communicate with M Live, but it also allows them to communicate with each other. The personalization this site offers is just another thing that really helps it stand out from its' competition.

Act

M Live doesn't sell products like an e-commerce website, they sell advertisement space. To do this a user would simply follow the advertisement link and click "Request Our Rate Card." Then the user is prompted to fill out a form, and M Live responds with rates of how much it would cost to advertise with them. It's pretty straight forward, and that's how they make the majority of their money.

React

I would say this is the first negative thing I have encountered at M Live. When scanning through the website, I could not find any thing that said customer service. Then when I simply searched "Customer Service", it showed me different jobs. Then I decided to navigate to the contact page and I finally found some customer service support. However, the support is kind of limited. It is a text heavy page and doesn't seem to be that useful. No phone number is immediately available and if a user has problems logging in, the website sends them to another text heavy "Troubleshooting" page. This site might benefit from providing users with a phone number or some kind of immediate online chat support. Another thing M Live doesn't do that may be beneficial, would be to offer some multi-language support.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

M Lives' biggest strength is that it offers a variety of services found in one place. Users can blog about things from high school soccer to professional football. There aren't many sites out there that offer that kind of variety.

Weaknesses

Weaknesses of the site would be the way they do customer support, along with the fact that they don't offer multi-language capabilities. Both of these would be beneficial in the future.

Opportunities

They make most of their money from allowing companies to advertise on their website. So their biggest opportunity to make more money would be to attract more companies. One way this could be accomplished would be by trying to reach a wider audience.

Threats

ESPN.com could potentially be a threat in the future. They have been launching different sites that focus on local teams (ESPN Boston). In the future they could branch out and

have an ESPN Detroit which would then encapsulate all of the Michigan college and professional sports teams. From there, they may choose to add on high school sports, which would then really put M Live to the test.

Conceptual Development

Features
I really like how M Live sticks with Michigan. If we want to have a successful website based in Chicago, then we have to be loyal to our Chicago teams and not stray to far. As far as content layout and navigation is concerned, I think it's important to follow the standards already set on the web. We never want people to have problems finding what they are looking for.

Improvements
I would concentrate on improving and doing two things better than M Live. One, ensure users that customer service is always available and easy to contact. Two, allow multi-language support. This is especially important in Chicago. There are people from all over the world in Chicago and English isn't their first language. So allowing them to see content in the language they are most comfortable with could be the deciding factor in whether or not they visit our website.