

Executive Summary

Analysing the user personas gave an insight into the types of content that should be included in Bob and Robertas Healthy Ideas website but analysing competitive sites has given clearer idea of what content to include plus layout and design.

Sites compared	Overall Scores out of possible 180 points
My Dish	168
All Recipes	149
The Vegetarian Society	124
The Vegan Family	56

All Recipes is particularly impressive in the way that the content is searchable both locally within the site and with google searches. My Dish has a very strong community feel plus provides articles and useful information

The Vegetarian Society looks like a credible and reliable source but the volume of content is vast, too vast for 2 people to generate so my general recommendation is that the website to be a social networking site focusing on user generated content. The site will grow as members add content and become more useful to it's users.

Bob and Roberta are free to add content at any time but will not be pressured to provide it constantly.

Method

Criteria for Selecting the sites for comparison

Sites chosen for comparison were: -

The Vegetarian Society

The Vegan Family

My Dish

All Recipes

I chose two sites that offer information on the alternative lifestyle of vegetarianism and the more extreme Vegans

They are also good because they are in the same “business” to Bob and Roberta and rank highly in searches, plus have a high google page rank. I can assume then that they are successful at attracting visitors and this at least must be partly down to providing relevant, useful content.

My Dish and All Recipes provides functionality that’s centres around user-generated content.

Selection of comparative questions or heuristics

The IBM list of comparative questions seemed to provide the best fit to what I need to find out about these competing websites.

The Marketing Experiments website provides a list that is aimed at more e-commerce types of website although I have added some questions from there to my list along with some questions recommended by Nielsen and Stocks.

I also added some questions about the websites social community based on the information on social networks provided by Erin Malone (Boxes and Arrows).

I did this because I can see a possible solution for their website could be make it into a social network where members upload articles, share recipes and tell each other about how and where they buy their recipe ingredients.

The Questions

Asking the questions about these other websites has a context and that is what can we learn from the already successful websites. Finding out what do they do well and what do they do badly and capitalising on that.

I went through each question scoring out of five, five being excellent and 0 being non-existent.

I added notes where I thought it was relevant and useful for the production of Bob and Roberta’s website.

Findings

All Recipes (<http://allrecipes.co.uk/>)

The screenshot displays the All Recipes website interface. At the top, there is a search bar with the text 'Recipe search (or search by ingredients I have)' and a search button. Below the search bar, there are navigation links for 'Recipes', 'Chocolate', 'Photos', 'Cooks', 'Competitions', 'My stuff', and 'Submit a recipe'. The main content area is titled 'Chocolate + Healthy recipes (6)' and features a list of recipes with their respective ratings and descriptions. The left sidebar contains various filters such as 'Main ingredients', 'Recipe type', 'Total time', 'Cuisine', 'Occasions', 'Special diets', and 'Cook/prep method'. The right sidebar includes an advertisement for NHS, a 'History' section, and 'Seasonal favourites'. The bottom of the page shows a 'Top tags' section with various recipe categories.

Content/Functionality

Content

Recipes

Advertising

Functionality

Extensive Search

Submit a recipe

Join Membership

Tag cloud

Find local cooks (make friends)

Supporting Content

News

Help

Legal

Privacy

Site Map

Comment

All Recipes is simple concept of providing a place where anyone can view an extremely searchable catalogue of member-uploaded recipes.

The many different way a user can search for recipes, and modify their search as they go gives this site it's UVP.

All of the content is visible without needing a password plus it is text based meaning that All Recipes is optimised for search. That is for internal search within the site and for search engines. (Comment on SEO for content only)

The most commonly used parts of the site are above the fold

It's Help section was also extensive.

Weaknesses

It is not very personal and looks completely automated with little input from moderators. (I have seen inappropriate uploaded profile pictures).

The Tabbed navigation doesn't always show which page you're on.

My Dish (<http://www.mydish.co.uk/>)

The screenshot shows the MyDish.co.uk website homepage. At the top is a dark navigation bar with the MyDish logo and links for Home, Recipes, Biscuits, Community, Carol's Blog, Shop, and Add a recipe. Below this is a search bar with 'Find a Recipe' and a 'find' button, along with an 'advanced search' link and an 'add a recipe' button. A 'Shopping List' icon is also present. The main content area features a 'Welcome to MyDish' banner with a photo of Carol and text describing the site as a recipe sharing network. To the right of the banner are three icons: 'Store' (a jar), 'Share' (a cup), and 'Tell' (an open book), each with a brief description. Below the banner is a 'Join now' button. The main content area is divided into three columns. The left column is titled 'Spring is in the Air' and features three recipe cards: 'Roast Chicken with Lemon and Ginger' by Jacque, 'Mussels with Leeks, Cider & Cream' by Justy, and 'Mushroom and Leek Risotto' by Emilygal. The middle column is titled 'Newest' and 'Popular' and lists four recipes: 'Three Cup Chicken' by sony08, 'Jam Sponge' by Manxy, 'Easter Cherry Trifle' by Laila, and 'Easter Egg Starter' by Szilvia. The right column is titled 'Sign up for Weekly Recipe Ideas' and includes an email address input field and a 'Go' button. Below this is a 'BrandAlley.co.uk' logo and a 'Win a Le Creuset' banner with the 'Julie & Julia' logo.

Content/Functionality

Content

Recipes
Advertising
Shop
Blog/Articles

Functionality

Extensive Search
Submit a recipe
Join Membership
Find local cooks (make friends)
Find local group
Group and cook activity feeds (like twitter)
Forum

Supporting Content

Press articles
Privacy
Terms and Conditions
Sitemap
Resources (external links to useful sites)

Comment

My Dish received the highest score overall.

It provides a place for users to look up recipes that member users have uploaded but also provides articles, shop but it's UVP is that My Dish has a strong community feel and functionality. She also has the backing of Dragon's Den member Deborah Meadon that has raised the sites profile and commercial prospects.

It scores full marks for the criteria that Malone says are essential for social networks. Carol Savage, it's founder features prominently on the home page and she looks as though she has a genuine interest in the site and it's community. It has a very warm and friendly feel and it seems it's all about the sharing in a supportive atmosphere.

Weakness

No Help documentation. Nielsen says that even though it shouldn't be necessary if the site it built correctly it should still be provided.

Vegan family <http://www.veganfamily.co.uk>



Content/Functionality

Content

Recipes
Advertising
Shop
Articles

Functionality

Twitter feed
Guest book
Join mailing list

Supporting Content

External Links

Comment

I gave the Vegan Family the lowest overall score. This is a site that is for users to view the lifestyle and discoveries of one particular family in their life as Vegans. The Vegan Family looks home made and amateurish and possibly done by the owners on their kitchen table. They are promoting an alternative lifestyle that includes every aspect of their lives including home educating their children.

The site was made by real vegans who you can imagine being hippies with opened toed sandals.

It may be too much on the edge of society and will be dismissed by many and so is a lesson on how not to design your website if you want it to appeal to the mainstream.

That is though it's **strength**. It has an authentic feel. There are enough vegan people within the world to look past it design failures to appreciate it's content. It has a surprisingly high google page rank of 5/10 which would be the envy of MyDish at 4/10.

The lesson to take away here is in niche marketing. The Vegan Family website is not trying to appeal to the mainstream. People find it because it is specialised. It doesn't have to be well designed because people are so interested in it's content. (Sevilla).

Weakness

Poor Design, no member content, no help, not searchable, disorganised.

The Vegetarian Society <http://www.vegsoc.org>



'understanding and respect for
vegetarian lifestyles'

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Welcome to the Vegetarian Society

The Vegetarian Society of the United Kingdom is the oldest vegetarian organisation in the world. It is an educational charity promoting understanding and respect for vegetarian lifestyles.. [read more >](#)

Help and support for going vegetarian



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[National Vegetarian Week 2010](#) ➔

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for veggie customers



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The Vegetarian Society of the United Kingdom
Registered Office: Parkdale, Dunham Road, Altrincham, Cheshire, England WA14 4QG

Registered Charity no. 259358 Registered company no. 959115

Content/Functionality

Content (relevant to Bob and Roberta – site is too vast to list all the content)

About

News

Articles on education

Lifestyle

Events

Cooking school

Functionality

Extensive Search

Join Membership

Find local groups (make friends)

Supporting Content

Press articles

Privacy

Contact

Comment

This site's primary purpose is to provide information in all aspects of the Vegetarian lifestyle.

The society itself has taken responsibility for providing all information and content so that looks like it's designed to be used like a reference book to dip into when needed. There is no community of contributors and once you have the information you wanted there is no reason to hang around on the site although there is a real world connection with events and local groups.

It's charitable status and overall look and feel gives it an air of authority making the information provided credible.

Weakness

Other than having no help page, the most relevant weakness for Bob and Roberta is that they could not possibly provide the volume and variety of content that the Vegetarian Society provides.

No site map either.

Discussion & Recommendations

The analysis has provided insights as to what works and some of the mistakes that are made by the websites likely to be visited by Dale and Margo.

For each of the websites there is an essential “take away” or UVP.

1. All Recipes – Search
2. My Dish – Community
3. Vegetarian Society – Authority
4. Vegan Family – Niche

The Vegetarian Society provides all the information to do with the lifestyle but the volume of content is enormous and may well be far too much would be far too much for 2 people to generate therefore my recommendations is: -

Provide a **social community** website so that users can add their own content while building their up their own profiles.

Allow member users to rate **member added content**.

Make the member content **searchable** in the way that All Recipes has.

Allow the members ability to create **online profiles**.

Make it possible for members to message each other, set up **groups** and **meet up** providing an outside into the real world.

Have articles and contributions from **Bob and Roberta** in the form of a **blog** in the same way that Carol Savage does on My Dish.

What I didn't test for:-

A very detailed report could be provided for each of these.

- SEO
- Adherence to Standards and Accessibility

Appendix

Sources:

Books

Information Design Desk Reference (2002) Christine Sevilla

Sexy Web Design – (2009) Elliot Jay Stocks

On Social Media

Erin Malone - <http://www.boxesandarrows.com/view/5-steps-to-building>

Competitive Analysis Questions

IBM - <http://www.ibm.com/developerworks/webservices/library/us-analysis.html>

Brian Alt - <http://www.marketingexperiments.com/improving-website-conversion/online-competitive-analysis.html>

http://www.boxesandarrows.com/view/competitive_analysis_understanding_the_market_context

Raw Data

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