

Credibility Brief: NewsTrust

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Overview

NewsTrust [1] is a non-profit online news aggregation service that is similar in many ways to Google News and Yahoo! News. NewsTrust aggregates news stories from newspapers, wire feeds, weblogs and other online sources, and attempts to present the best of these stories to its users. NewsTrust's specific focus is on providing its users with credible and high quality news stories through story ratings provided by users and by panels of verified experts.

NewsTrust was founded in 2005 by Fabrice Florin, a digital media specialist who previously produced online content for Apple, Macromedia, and other major sites. NewsTrust's board of advisors includes representatives from the Harvard Law School, the University of Massachusetts, Stanford, Public Radio International, Google News, and MoveOn.org. Although NewsTrust plans to operate as a non-profit organization, its business model is still under development.

The NewsTrust system is still being developed, and has not been officially launched to the public. An initial pilot version of the system is available [2]. NewsTrust is currently planning to launch their site in 2006.

Competition

In many ways, NewsTrust is similar to other user-driven news sites, such as Digg [3], NewsCloud [4], and Newsvine [5]. On these sites, users vote for their favorite stories, and the most popular stories appear on the front page. Newsvine is perhaps most similar to NewsTrust, allowing users to add new stories, discuss stories, and vote for the most important stories.

NewsTrust differentiates itself from these other sites primarily through its focus on providing credible and unbiased news. While Newsvine and other sites generally allow users only to vote "thumbs up" or "thumbs down" on a given story, NewsTrust provides raters with a multidimensional scale for rating the credibility of news stories. NewsTrust also provides a system for measuring the quality of users' ratings. Users who contribute more frequently to the site and users who have established professional credentials will have a greater influence over a story's rating. Finally, NewsTrust will provide additional credibility ratings for publications and journalists, rather than focusing strictly on individual stories.

NewsTrust also has some features in common with Google News [6]. Google News uses a fully automated system to determine the quality of publications and individual stories, and places higher quality results at the top of its listings. The ranking algorithm used by Google News is proprietary and confidential [7], although Google appears to be using an information quality algorithm called TrustRank in some of their products [8]. TrustRank is an algorithm developed at Stanford that uses a small set of reliable "hub" sites to determine the quality of other Web sites [9].

Rate this Story

Problems Found With Diebold Voting Machines in Ohio - [Full story](#)

Read the story on the right (click [Full story](#) if you don't see it). For rating tips, click on any question title, or check our [FAQ](#).

Overall Rating: * Is this good journalism? 1 2 3 4 5 n/a (required) <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> (?) (1 = very bad >> 5 = very good journalism)	Trust: Do you trust this news source? 1 2 3 4 5 n/a <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> (?) (1 = not at all >> 5 = very much)
Information: Is this story informative? 1 2 3 4 5 n/a <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> (?) (1 = not at all >> 5 = very informative)	Fairness: Is this story fair? 1 2 3 4 5 n/a <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> (?) (1 = not fair at all >> 5 = very fair)
Sources: Is it well sourced? 1 2 3 4 5 n/a <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> (?) (1 = not well at all >> 5 = very well sourced)	Context: Does it show the "big picture"? 1 2 3 4 5 n/a <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> (?) (1 = not well at all >> 5 = very well)

Comment: Write about the journalistic quality of this story. (max. 250 words)

The NewsTrust rating interface.

Research

Although the NewsTrust service has not yet been released to the public, members of the NewsTrust advisory board have been involved in research and community efforts related to credibility and online journalism. As part of the development of the NewsTrust system, NewsTrust implemented a research study with Michigan State University that examined how users rate the quality of news stories [10]. The results of this study were used to design the story-rating interface in NewsTrust. The NewsTrust board of advisors contains faculty from several major universities, including Harvard, Stanford, and the University of Massachusetts. NewsTrust advisory board members have also participated in recent conferences about online journalism, including the 2006 Media Giraffe Summit at the University of Massachusetts [11].

Impact

Given that NewsTrust has yet to launch their site, it is difficult to gauge the impact of this project. NewsTrust has created some buzz among bloggers [12, 13, 14], but has yet to make its mark in mainstream news outlets. A search for "NewsTrust" on Google News currently retrieves zero results.

The NewsTrust system itself is very similar to Newsvine, Digg and other online news sites that feature user ratings. NewsTrust's contributions to the field include an emphasis on information credibility and an elaborate editorial system designed to provide users with high quality news stories. It remains to be seen whether users will appreciate a site that focuses primarily on information quality and credibility, and whether NewsTrust will be able to compete with existing competitor sites.

If successful, NewsTrust may increase consumer demand for web sites that provide verified, credible information. A successful launch would indicate that Internet users place value on high quality news information, and that they are interested in using services that promote information credibility and quality.

References

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