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ESSENCE Magazine



CONTENT STRATEGY & PROFILE PROPOSAL

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Figure 1.

ESSENCE.COM

Our Purpose.

Our original [Essence](#) started as a print magazine in 1970 for black women. Fast forward to now, our interactors are still mainly women of color, but also include men of color who are interested in the accomplishments, and lifestyles of black people around the globe. We make our content accessible to our targeted audience through our print magazine, on the web, and our social media platforms.

Our Interactors:

- ✓ Between 15 – 80 years old
- ✓ Predominantly black women
- ✓ Educated from sixth grade and beyond, and can understand complex issues.
- ✓ Are from urban, suburban, or rural locations
- ✓ Have access to the internet, and devices that can connect to it
- ✓ Know about the culture of black people and have some knowledge of their achievements in the Arts, Education, Entertainment, fashion, and other Professional Careers
- ✓ Have a favorable attitude towards learning more about black culture and personal achievements



Figure 2.

Frequency of Publication.

Brian Carroll asks in *Writing & Editing for Digital Media* (2017), “How often do you anticipate interactions with your audience?... The frequency will determine how often your content should be updated.” (p. 154).

We publish fresh, and up-to the minute news content daily since our website and social media accounts, namely Facebook and Instagram, get five to ten thousand hits per day. We keep up with trending topics as they develop

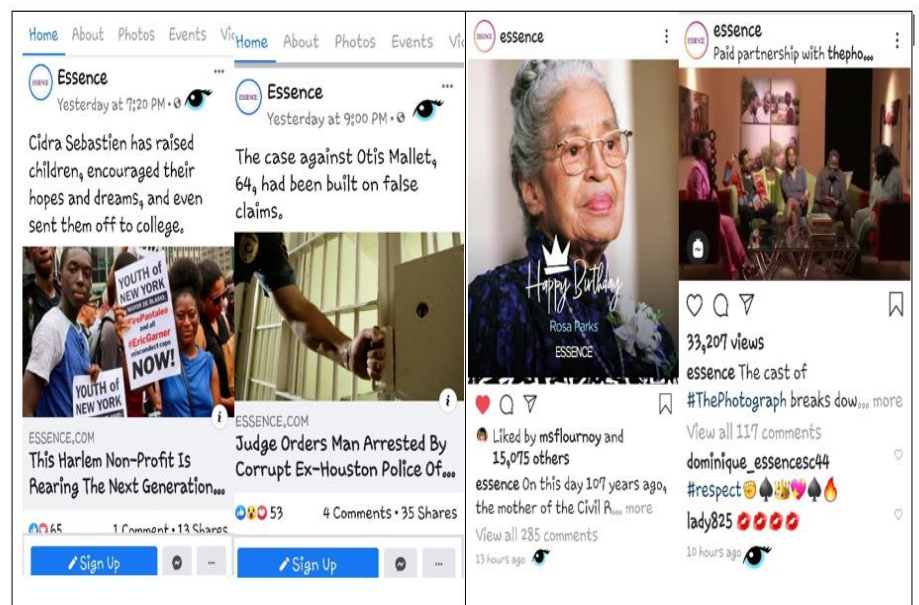


Figure 3: Images taken from our Facebook and Instagram accounts. Note: the eye symbol indicating time of publication.

since we know our readers will come to us as a source for accurate, credible news content. News from trending topics may be published hourly as we keep up with the news as they progress.

Content Fitness IQs – Did we pass?

Intrinsic

We try to ensure that all content that is delivered to our audience meets their needs. We take pride in putting out publications that have been checked for accuracy and facts. Our audience view us as a trusted source, and we strive to maintain that reputation.

Rating: **Excellent** 😊



Figure 4.

Contextual

Our articles are written to keep up with trending topics as they occur. A recent example of this was when we released an announcement the moment we learned of the tragic deaths of Kobe Bryant and his daughter Gianna on January 26, 2020. That news shocked the entire world. We took to our website and social media platforms, and featured articles that honored Kobe and his daughter. We kept our audience informed as information became available from the investigation into the crash. However, the number of articles surrounding trending topics will decline as time goes on. This can leave our audience feeling lost in transition, or may translate to, “on to the next”.

Rating: **Good** 😊

Representational

We do keep an archive of articles that no longer meet the requirements for daily information. In order to access them, our interactors will have to use the search feature on our site. The trouble with this is that the interactor may not remember the name of the article, and may use the genre that he/she thinks the article will fall in. There is no guarantee that the article will be found. This can frustrate our interactors. Older published articles can be of important value to our readers, therefore we must consider placing a tab on our site for archived articles, that can be easily accessed by date, genre, title, or tags.

Rating: **Poor** 😞

“we must consider placing a tab on our site for archived articles, that can be easily accessed by date, genre, title, or tags.”

Accessibility

We want to ensure that our readers, regardless of location, have full access to our content. There is no barrier to entry as in, “members only” can access our content, or follow us on social media platforms. The padlock icon in the browser when visiting our ecommerce page, indicates that it is secure and adheres to [PCI \(Payment Card Industry\)](#) compliance.

Rating: **Excellent** 😊

Overall Rating: Good.

Information Challenges

(Carroll 2017) mentions that “Researchers Kuan-Tsae Huang, Yang W. Lee, and Richard Y. Wang found that when people visit a website, they base their judgements of the quality of information more on how well that information matches what they are seeking...” (p. 152). This reiterates what we mentioned earlier when we discussed the need for an easily accessible archival system. Our readers may come to our site to access an article that was previously published. They will be challenged to locate it quickly, since there is no system for quick retrieval. Our competitor [Vogue has an archive of articles and magazine publications dating back to 1892.](#)



Figure 5: Landing page of Vogue's Archives. Publications date back to 1892.

Social Media Presence.

We are present on the following social media platforms

- ✓ Instagram
- ✓ Twitter
- ✓ Facebook
- ✓ Pinterest
- ✓ YouTube
- ✓ RSS feed for our podcasts

Currently our strongest platforms are Instagram and Facebook because we can engage our audience by responding in real time to the questions they ask, and the comments they make when we stream live content from workshops and events. Viewers enjoy the instantaneous feedback and responses and the acknowledgement of their presence, when we respond mentioning their user handles.

Our Competitors – How We Match Up.

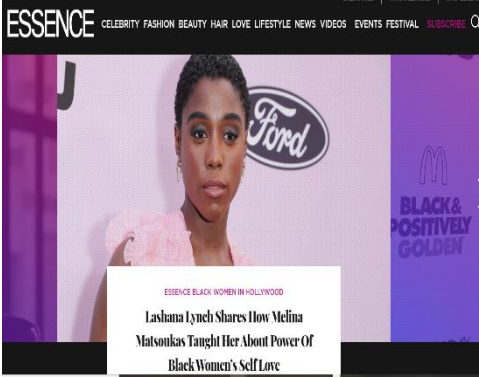

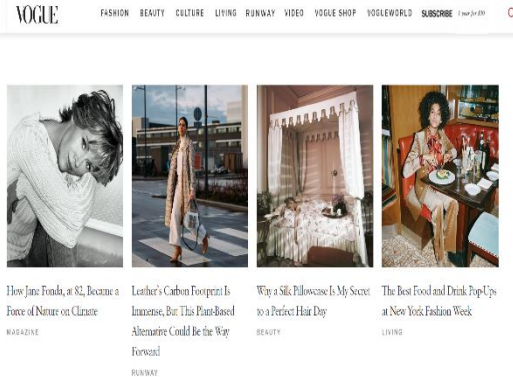
| <div>    </div> | | | |
|--|---------|-------|---------------|
| Publication | Essence | Vogue | Caribbean 360 |
| Print Version | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Social Media Presence | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Free Newsletter subscription | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Mobile App | | ✓ | |
| Country-Specific Magazine | | ✓ | |
| Multiple Languages | | ✓ | |
| Sophisticated Design | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Empowering and Inspirational Articles | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Accurate news content | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Website blog | ✓ | ✓ | |
| High definition visuals and multi-media | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Interactive design | ✓ | ✓ | |

Table 1: How our attributes match up to those of our competitors.

Content Strategy Proposal.

Let's Revise:

Our Website Navigation

1. (Carroll, 2017) said “Navigation is not just a feature of a website; it is the website” (p. 116). Using this idea, on the landing page, the interactor may not be aware of how to read the featured story. There is a title that suggests an article is to follow. The natural thought of the interactor would be to scroll down to see more. In fact, doing this will show the reader more information, but not about that article. We discovered that the title or image needs to be clicked on to open the article. This element should be modified for better user experience. The interactor must be able to access information without having to guess.

2. Featured articles when opened, do not have a navigational area which takes the reader to next article, or to return to the featured articles bar. The interactor must either use the back button on the browser or click on the site's brand title “Essence”. It took us a few minutes to discover how to retreat from the article. An interactor would most likely leave the page if he/she cannot figure out quickly how to navigate out of it.

Suggested Modifications

1. On the title bar located on the feature article, an interactive, down-pointing arrowhead should be placed at the top right corner of the text box. It should be clearly visible to the reader, and indicate interaction by clicking it to expand the article to read more.

2. Another suggestion would be to use ellipses and the words “read more” that contain a link that will open the article, or a text box that opens the article when clicked on. For example:

... read more

... read more

3. Interactive words “*Back*” and “*Forward*” placed strategically within the article, will signal to the reader how he/she can move forward, or go back.

Digital Content Accessibility

“User experience (UX) focuses on having a deep understanding of users, what they need, what they value, their abilities, and their limitations.”

According to Usability.gov (2020), “User experience (UX) focuses on having a deep understanding of users, what they need, what they value, their abilities, and their limitations. It also considers the business goals and objectives of the group managing the project. UX best practices promote improving the quality of the user’s interaction with and perceptions of your product and any related services.” This reiterates the need for improving the way that our interactors access our content. We know who our target audience is, and what they come to us for. We are therefore expected to cater to these needs to maintain our place as a trusted source. This brings around the point previously made about the need for an upgrade to our current archival system. Our interactors must face no challenges trying to locate previously published articles, no matter how old these articles may be.

Our Online Presence – Increasing Readership

Our competitor Vogue has country-specific magazines and apps like Vogue Italia, Vogue Paris which are printed in Italian and French respectively, and Vogue India. Currently, Essence only has an app for the annual Essence Festival. We should consider publishing our content in multiple languages, to help our readership increase. Our analytics show that our target market extends to countries in Africa and the Caribbean, that are French and Spanish speaking.

Conclusion

Even though we passed our content fitness tests with high IQs for intrinsic, contextual, and accessible output, our representational IQ was poor because of our lack of readily accessible archived articles, which can be of important value to our readers. We provide inspirational pieces and interactive audio for our podcasts, and our impact on our audience on social media is powerful. There is still a need for inclusivity for our non-English speaking audience. This is one way to increase our readership and encourage more traffic to our platforms.

References

Carroll, B. (2017). *Writing & editing for digital media 3rd edition*. New York, NY. Routledge

Figure 1. Cumberbatch, M-T. (2020, Feb 3). *Subscribe to Essence*. [Digital image]. Retrieved from <https://www.essence.com/>

Figure 2. *Target market*. [Digital image]. Retrieved from Creative Commons – Microsoft Word

Figure 3. Cumberbatch, M-T. (2020, Feb 4). *Social media collage*. [Digital image]. Retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/> and <https://facebook.com/>

Figure 4. Cumberbatch, M-T. (2020, Feb 5). *Let's talk fitness*. [Digital image]. Retrieved from Creative Commons – Microsoft Word

Figure 5. Cumberbatch, M-T. (2020, Feb 6). *Vogue's archive*. [Digital image]. Retrieved from <https://www.vogue.com/>

Usability.gov (2020, Feb 6). *What and why of usability*. Retrieved from <https://www.usability.gov/what-and-why/user-experience.html>

Addendum

Statement of Purpose.

Our original [Essence](#) started as a print magazine in 1970 for black women. Fast forward to now, our interactors are still mainly women of color, but also include men of color who are interested in the accomplishments, and lifestyles of black people around the globe. We make our content accessible to our targeted audience through our print magazine, on the web, and our social media platforms.

Interactor Analysis.

1. **AGE:** The intended interactors are those who are 15 -80 years old.
2. **GENDER:** The target audience is of all genders, but predominantly women.
3. **EDUCATION:** Interactors should have at least a sixth-grade education, but they should also be able to understand complex concepts to understand some of the content.
4. **CONTEXT:** The audience should have access to the internet and a device that can connect to it. The website also supports a print version so audiences who are not able to access the digital content, may do so by purchasing the printed version. For interactors who are accessing the digital content, there is no restriction on area, but for print, the audience will have to purchase the magazines where they are sold or purchase a subscription which can be delivered to their homes monthly.
5. **CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE:** The target audience is mainly in the United States, Canada, The Caribbean, and Africa as it focuses on the heritage and culture of black people. However, it reaches audiences in other countries not listed here where black people live.
6. **SOCIO-ECONOMIC:** The intended interactors are those who can afford internet access or be able to purchase the print magazine.
7. **EXPERTISE:** It is assumed that the audience is versed about many of the topics covered in this magazine which makes the information come under scrutiny for facts, culture-specifics, and relatable content.
8. **ATTITUDES:** It can be assumed that the target audience has a favorable attitude towards the topics presented and discussed by Essence.

Trusted Writer Review.

Expertise: Software Engineer

Email: joshdeveloper90@gmail.com

Date: February 9, 2020

Questions I asked:

What did you think of the layout of article?

Is the writing concise?

Do you think that the suggestions in this proposal will be heeded?

Are there any suggestions that you would make to improve this presentation?

Reflection.

I asked Josh to look at my work again, from an executive point of view. He said that the writing was concise, the images were easy on the eyes, informative and added great value to the document. He found two grammatical errors. I changed those; I was missing two commas. He said that from an executive point of view, the recommendations would in fact be taken into consideration, since the points were well emphasized.

I think I may be an intuitive writer and give too much information. Sometimes more than what is required. I think that I do this because I want to remove all possibility of ambiguity. Since my last assignment, I have been practicing writing more concisely without losing the concept. Sometimes it is difficult to understand the instructions for the assignment, and as a visual learner the student examples really help me. I noticed that now when I visit websites, I am looking at them through an editor's lens.