

Mondstuk van die Suid-Afrikaanse aartappelbedryf • Mouthpiece of the South African potato industry

CHIPS

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**BASELINE AND MARKET
DYNAMICS FOR THE
COMING SEASON**

Growing tomorrow's
producers, today

**OOS-VRYSTAATSE
DROËLANDKULTIVARPROEF
OP WARDEN 2019/2020**

Importation of French
fries takes a nosedive

Waarde van navorsing
oor blaarsiektebeheer

A close-up photograph of several light-colored wooden blocks. Two blocks in the foreground are clearly visible, one with the letter 'U' and another with the letter 'X' carved into them. The background is filled with more similar blocks, some slightly out of focus.

Why digital user experience (UX) matters

By Immaculate Zinde and Phindiwe Nkosi

Potatoes South Africa's newly revamped consumer website boasts enhanced search engine optimisation (SEO) features, adopted new technologies, realigned to current branding guidelines, fresh-off-the-stove recipes, and slants towards improved user experiences.

Statistics and user feedback do not lie. "A single bad experience on a website makes users 88% less likely to visit the website again," according to *Intechnic.com*. The site further reports that 79% of people who don't like what they find on a particular domain, will abandon it and search for another site. These are just some of the stats that re-emphasise the urgent need to prioritise user experience (UX) on the Potato Nation (www.potatonation.co.za) consumer website.

Despite statistics indicating that recipes showcasing the taste, versatility and convenience of potatoes are a great way to captivate end consumers, consumers still tend to fall through the cracks. At the pulse of UX is the need to adapt domains to the end users, their experiences, perceptions of utility, ease of use

and efficiency. It was with this in mind that the marketing division of Potatoes South Africa (PSA) went on a mission to deconstruct the existing consumer website, so as to rigorously investigate it from an end-user perspective.

Enhanced user friendliness

The marketing division dissected web statistics to see which pages site users most visited. Potato recipes were among the biggest drawcards of the consumer website. However, to tackle the concerning bounce rate, which is a reflection of visitors not lingering long on the website, more needed to be put in place. In as much as the content is imperative, one could also not overlook design-related aspects.

This is even more so when one considers that UX design and development statistics indicate that 94% of the factors that affect a user's first impression of your website, are design related. First impressions matter, and frustrated users can be downright unforgiving.

Unlike the former site, the revamped site has advanced search features making it easier for users to search for recipes from any website

section. For ease of reference, users can search by ingredients, keywords, categories and more. There is also the option to tick off recipes they have read or used, print various sections of the recipes, comment on each recipe, browse through selected recipe galleries, and even watch embedded video recipes without leaving the website. Furthermore, multiple sections were rearranged according to their popularity for ease of access.

Adopting new technologies

The newly revamped consumer website was rebuilt to WordPress, a free and open-source content management system written in PHP and paired with a MySQL or MariaDB database. The marketing division has built superior content over the last 14 years, which stands to benefit and strengthen its efforts of imparting accurate, well researched and updated information with current and potential product consumers.

Some of the weaknesses of the old site that were identified upon closer scrutiny by the marketing team on the old consumer site included, but were not limited to,

misaligned brand identity, broken links, redundant information as well as utilisation of space.

The revamped website is responsive with enhanced navigation, including restructured menu tabs and drop-down menu icons. Redundant information was deleted, several content pieces were rewritten, bugs were removed, and broken links were fixed.

With the launch of the improved site in 2021, the marketing division envisages an improvement in site traffic, especially relating to the bounce rate which represents the percentage of visitors on the website who navigate away from the site after viewing only one page. It is also hoped that the improvements will increase the amount of time users spend on the site perusing the wealth of content that the division has invested in over the years.

New digital touchpoints

In moving with the times, the marketing team has found it fitting to add a monthly newsletter to the website. It will be adjusted and emailed to newsletter subscribers. For ease of subscription, a new pop-up feature was added to the revamped website. This newsletter gives the division an added platform to inform, educate and inspire consumers.

To obtain the buy-in of consumers, a competition was put in place for users to submit proposed names for the newsletter on social media and, in so doing, boost both social media engagement, website traffic and the new e-newsletter.




The newly revamped website is designed to meet user-experience expectations and contains lip-smacking recipes as well as a regular newsletter to which users can subscribe.

Rather than throwing out the baby with the bathwater, so to speak, the revamp was about improving what works, and sharpening the pencil to stay abreast of local and international benchmarks. SEO does matter in this digital environment. To this end, Yoast SEO, and the popular SEO plug-in for WordPress – globally downloaded more than 200 million times – was installed and configured, along with other ongoing SEO strategies to help improve the site’s Google rankings, among other things. It is worth noting that this is not an overnight transformation, but rest assured that the wheels of change are in motion.

Improved spaces

Re-using and strengthening our current image and recipe database was key. Establishing expertise by having a registered dietician update nutritional properties of

potatoes – also comparing it to other starches ‘to make potatoes shine’ – was part of the scope of work undertaken. Repurposing and repackaging existing resources were also part of the scope of the project.

Statistics suggest that 91% of non-complainers leave, and 13% of them tell 15 more people about their bad experience. This project went out of its way to also consider the voiceless non-complainers who contributed to the bounce rate. Current and future users were incorporated to craft a portal that speaks to them and addresses their needs, lest we found ourselves in the conundrum of speaking to ourselves about ourselves. 

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