

Nation Media Group revamps site

Nation Media Group, reportedly East Africa's largest media house, has revamped the Daily Nation website. The revamped site was launched to bloggers at an event on Wednesday, 14 August 2013, in Nairobi.



Nation Media Group
Media of Africa for Africa

Joe Odindo, group editorial director at the Nation Media Group says the revamp of East Africa's largest digital site is aimed at making the group a "digital first media house".

Changes to be made

At the top of the list of changes to be made is a new design and layout which features three home pages. The first homepage is the traditional website homepage, which features headlines first, with various sections placed after the headlines. The arrangement and rank of stories on this homepage will be chosen by the editors.

The second homepage sees the print publication being digitised, with content arranged as it appears in the print publication, starting from the first page of the paper to the last.

The third homepage heavily relies on images, with the layout featuring images, rather than headlines. The layout can be compared to Pinterest. The stories are expected to be ranked according to interaction from readers, with stories seeing the most interest ranked higher up on the page.

The menu has also been rearranged, with menu titles dropping down to reveal sub-categories and with the sub-categories showing a glimpse of top items in each category on mouse over.

Easy navigation

Churchill Otieno, Nation Media Group's managing editor of digital, says the changes are aimed at making it easier for readers to find content, and are as a result of feedback which indicated it was hard to find stories in the previous design. Churchill also says the changes also see the publication having a "broader take on content", with a focus on specifics such as life.

The revamped site will have new sections, including "specials" which will have in depth coverage on topics of interest through long reads, videos and infographics.

Other sections include a health section and profiles.

Dot 9, a daily blog section will feature nine bloggers who will cover topics such as IT with John Walubeng, finance with Bankelele, modern life with Abigail Arunga and satire with Kwamchetsi Makokha among others.

Nation has also departed from pagination of content, a move previously deployed to increase page views,

which are an important metric in online advertising, and will instead have all content load on a single page. Churchill says the move, which will take a hit on page views, has been taken to improve usability.

Technical changes

Technical changes include the use of a responsive design, which sees the site loading to fit any device, down to a tablet size. Mobile devices will have their own specific mobile site. Lazy loading has been implemented such that content loads in phases, which will be helpful for slow internet connections. Lazy loading will also load content without the need for the user to refresh pages.

Nation first launched a website in 1997, then named NationAudio. The website was updated once a day and was targeted at the diaspora. The website was then revamped in 2002 and also took the NationMedia name and started seeing several updates a day. A third revamp was done in 2008.

Going digital

Nation Media Group CEO, Linus Gitahi, says that the group is looking to be the first thing Kenyans do in the morning, "even before brushing." The next phase, he says, is for everyone at NMG to go digital. "We realised digital is too important to be left to the digital department alone, the digital department will be a facilitator for everyone(at NMG) to go digital," says Gitahi.

Gitahi also confidently expressed that the paper would not be facing the challenges currently being faced by Western publications, which have seen revenue and readers plummet in the advent of the Internet. "We don't talk that language in Nation, that is why we invested in digital," he said. The CEO also took the opportunity to hit out at the Standard Media Group, Nation's biggest competitor, saying "We don't want to compete with the guy down the road, we want to be the best in the world," referring to the website revamp.

In terms of revenue, Agastee Khante, general manager of Nation Digital, said that advertisers will have a choice of five digital platforms that includes social media and video. Additionally, Nation said that digital advertising will now be in the form of sponsorships, where one advertiser will sponsor categories such as "News" or "Counties" over a period of time. This he says will result in a "much better experience, less number of adverts and a consistent brand pushing a specific message."

Gitahi also said that Nation, for now was focused on building an audience, and would therefore not have paywalls any time soon. Over time, the firm is looking at diversifying revenue through properties such as Nation Soko and the Nation Hela Card. The new website includes functionality for readers to send money from