Google News Initiative

e-Agency 産経デジタル

Partnership

The Japanese newspaper industry is facing a decline in readership due to digitization, an aging print readership, the rise of emerging media, and global economic changes. Print newspaper sales in Japan witnessed a more than 20-percent decline between 2008 and 2018, indicating that digital transformation is crucial for the continued survival of newspapers. (Source: Nihon Shinbun Kyokai.)

Sankei Digital Inc. has been using Google's ad monetization products since 2004. They currently use both Google Ad Manager 360 and Google Analytics 360 to maximize ad revenue.

Overview

Sankei Digital provides an array of digital services for Sankei Shimbun Co., Ltd., including an online newspaper. It was founded in 2005 and headquartered in Tokyo, Japan. Sankei Shimbun is one of Japan's five national newspapers.

Sankei Digital has built a stable ad revenue business, and recently started to turn their focus toward paid content. They wanted to increase their number of paid subscribers without decreasing their ad revenues, but they struggled to achieve this goal.

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Sankei Digital enabled data-driven decision making to assess website engagement, user consumption, and pave the path to subscriptions

Google, in cooperation with e-Agency, a Google Analytics 360 authorized reseller, worked with Sankei Digital to match audience segments to different revenue streams such as ads and paid content. This enabled them to adopt a set of strategies to engage with different audiences.

The Project

Google News Initiative, in cooperation with e-Agency, a Google Analytics 360 authorized reseller, worked with Sankei Digital to match audience segments to different revenue streams such as ads and paid content. This enabled them to adopt a set of strategies to engage with different audiences. This collaboration resulted in two key outcomes:

1. **Dashboard-based data visualization**
    Google and e-Agency built a dashboard to help Sankei Digital analyze their performance for subscriptions, ad revenue, and user engagement. It was built by using the data framework from the News Consumer Insights tool, and helped inform their decision making on the optimal balance between subscriptions and ad revenue.

The top of this page shows the statistics of subscribers and non-subscribers. In the chart on the bottom of the page, they can learn about page views, impressions, and conversion by genre. They can understand the kind of articles which generate ad revenue. *Source: Website performance dashboard on data studio*

2. **Improved UI (user interface) through A/B testing**
   Sankei Digital ran 10 A/B tests with Google Optimize with the goal of improving their UI. Google Optimize helped Sankei Digital see the benefit of data-driven decision making, and the company implemented changes that increased the volume of paid subscribers.

> " Before the project, we struggled with a slowdown in subscriber growth. We couldn't identify what the biggest bottleneck was—whether it was the articles themselves, the headlines, or simply that readers couldn't find and access the articles in the first place. We didn't know how to address the challenge, so it was hard to make progress and move forward. "
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> **HIROSHI MIYAMOTO, GENERAL MANAGER,**
> **BUSINESS MANAGEMENT DIVISION, SANKEI DIGITAL INC.**

The Results

1. **Dashboard-based data visualization**
   Sankei Digital's dashboard helped them make the most of data already available in NCI and delve deeper into business-critical metrics such as number of paid subscribers, new subscribers, ad revenue by article type, and conversions by article.

2. **Improved UI through A/B testing**
   The A/B tests revealed that simple UI changes could drive higher conversion rates and better engagement. For example, Sankei Digital added a button for their subscription page at the top of the paid content page. The result? The conversion rate of paid users on the new UI was 150-percent higher for web users and 176-percent higher for smartphone users, as compared to the original UI.

   Building a dashboard helps different departments of a publisher, such as the management team, editorial team, and advertisement, to discuss and develop strategies together.

SANKEI DIGITAL REPORTED A NUMBER OF IMPROVEMENTS	
150% Increase conversion rate of paid users for web	**176%** Increase conversion rate of paid smartphone users

> " It was a huge bonus to learn how to leverage the tools that allowed us to easily test and analyze data. Going forward, I would like to implement similar measures to increase our subscriber numbers. "
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