

DIARY STUDY EVALUATION: PROTESTIFY

www.weprotestify.com



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines a diary study usability test conducted on Protestify (weprotestify.com), a social action, data analysis platform that operates by twitter aggregation. Protestify seeks to bring users breaking news, specifically on larger social movement issues or topics, through citizen journalism or tweeting. At this time, Protestify is a new platform with various potentially great features and functions that faces the task of spreading its mission and acquiring long-term visitors and users.

To serve Protestify's needs as an up-and-coming social awareness interface, this report first introduces the diary study usability test methodology and then details the participant findings and evaluator recommendations. Specifically, this report focuses on the following five usability findings and their corresponding suggested solutions:

1. Inconsistency and poor visibility of the "Hashtag Search Bar;"
2. Lack of visible timestamps;
3. Vague curation process;
4. Unclear purpose of the homepage's "Trending graph;"
5. Poor visibility of the page arrows.

The findings and recommendations outlined by this study will increase the visibility and accessibility of Protestify's useful search and data representation functions. They will also stress the overall website's social mission and potential user opportunities, allowing website visitors to gain a clearer understanding of how their Protestify participation can impact awareness to particular social movements and news.

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INTRODUCTION

Protestify is an up-and-coming social action data analysis platform, operating through the power of citizen journalism. By harnessing the voice of the people via Twitter aggregation, Protestify seeks to bring users breaking news through the visceral medium of on-the-ground photography. As a new platform, the Protestify site faces the challenge of instilling awareness of its mission to novice users so that they may not only become long-term visitors but also become inspired to share their experiences with others and bring new users to the site.

Despite its wealth of information and resources, the Protestify site at times struggles to clearly illustrate its primary mission and its curation process. By conducting a diary study implementing user-based analysis, we identified and addressed minor interface flaws in form and function. Through the application of key recommendations garnered via the diary study, the Protestify site can ensure that novice users become advocates, building the site's credibility and strengthening the social conscious voice of the world.

METHODOLOGY

To test Protestify's usability in a timely, cost-efficient, and impartial manner, the diary study method was employed. J. Rieman, in his 1993 article "The Diary Study: A Workplace-oriented Research Tool to Guide Laboratory Efforts," claims that the diary study analyzes how users or participants learn through the functionality of a given interface during their daily tasks (p. 323). No formal training is involved, no researcher must be present, and the participant has the freedom to explore the specific interface at any point in the day. Bruun, Gull, Hofmeister, and Stage similarly point out in their 2009 article "Let Your Users Do the Testing: A Comparison of Three Remote Asynchronous Usability Testing Methods" that the diary study method involves participants auto-logging qualitative information without a formal content structure and within a loose timeframe (p. 1621-1623). Both of these expert articles stress the user independence in completing the diary study and how this independence produces noteworthy findings and usability suggestions.

For purposes of this particular diary study, three novice-user participants explored the Protestify interface at three different times over the course of two weeks. The participants first completed an initial demographic survey form, in which they answered basic closed and open-ended questions pertaining to related interface and social media use (see Appendix A for the Demographic Survey). They then recorded their findings and use results in a pre-configured form of both closed and open-ended questions pertaining to specific Protestify features and functions (see Appendix B for the Diary Study Form). Upon submission, these forms were directly sent to the diary study evaluators.

The evaluators then viewed the results in a table format, and summarized major areas of concern. To keep the participant suggestions at the forefront, responses pertaining to the potentially major usability concerns were consolidated into a separate table, organized by question and responses (see Appendix C for Summary of Relevant Diary Entry Results). From this table, the evaluators were able to analyze the usability

concerns, outline five primary participant findings, and suggest five recommendations or solutions, all of which is detailed in the following report.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After reviewing and analyzing the participant-submitted diary entries, we discovered that there are a few usability concerns related to the website’s design and mission. In particular, the diary entries highlighted the following potential website issues: the inconsistency and poor visibility of the hashtag search function; the lack of visible timestamps; the vague curation process; the unclear purpose of the homepage’s trending graph; and the poor visibility of the page arrows. In this section of the report those areas will be explored, providing both findings and recommendations that will be helpful in resolving these issues.

Finding 1: Visibility and Inconsistency of the “Hashtag Search Bar”

While analyzing the data, the usability evaluators recognized that some users were initially unable to locate the “Hashtag Search Bar”. The search bar creates a usability issue due to the fact that it is small in size and located on the upper right hand side of the page (see Figure 1A). The search bar is also subject to movement as the page size increases and decreases per screen size, potentially causing confusion to users who expect it to be located in one position and find it in another.

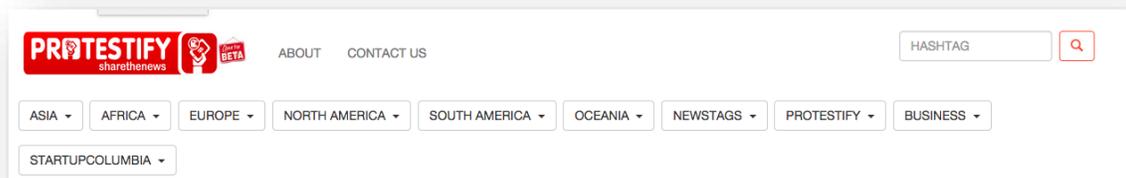


Figure 1A: The "Hashtag Search Bar" as seen from the homepage.

The usability evaluators also noted that when they clicked on a particular country or topic and arrived at the chosen page, the “Hashtag Search Bar” disappeared (see Figure 1B). The bar can only be accessed from the homepage, and this unfortunately requires users to take additional steps (by returning to the homepage) in order to search for other hashtags of interest.

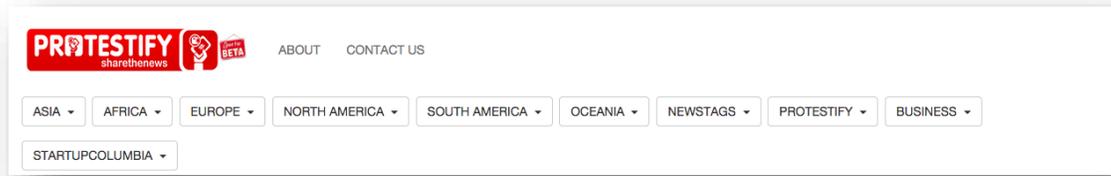


Figure 1B: Example of lack of accessibility to the “Hashtag Search Bar” from the “Italy” page.

Recommendation

The “Hashtag Search Bar” located at the top of the page is a good usability idea. However, it is recommended that this important feature be made even more visible. By moving the “Hashtag Search Bar” to the top and center of the page, the search bar will become more visible and accessible (see Figure 1C). This useful search function should also be anchored to this location and not be affected by changes in page dimensions.

To increase consistency and accessibility, the search bar should also be located on every page of the website, making it more convenient for users to search by hashtag on any page without completely returning to the homepage (see Figure 1C).

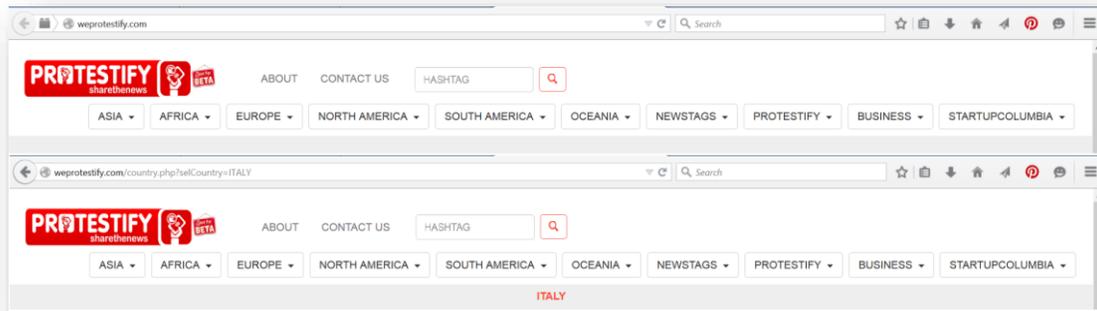


Figure 1C: Mockups of the “Hashtag Search Bar” as seen from the homepage and as seen from the “Italy” page.

Finding 2: Lack of Visible Timestamps

While reviewing the Protestify interface, the usability evaluators found that the tweets displayed on each page’s twitter feed are organized in a clean grid format but do not have timestamps (see Figure 2A). The evaluators indicated that users could potentially encounter difficulties in determining which tweets are live or current and which are not.

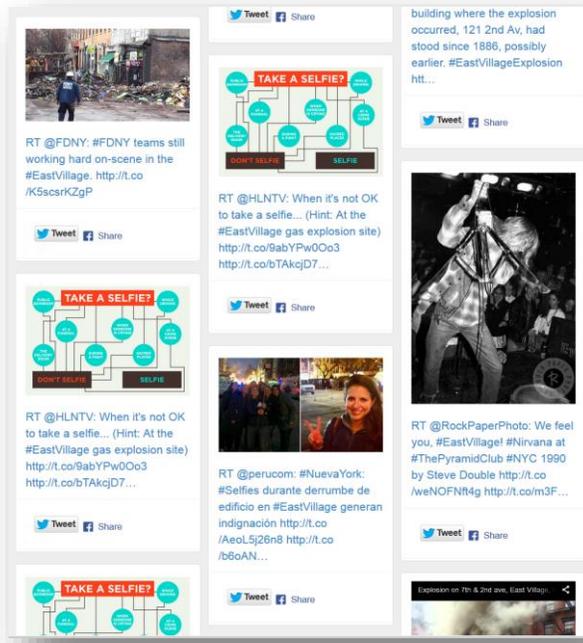


Figure 2A: The Protestify homepage's tweet feed, without visible timestamps.

Recommendation

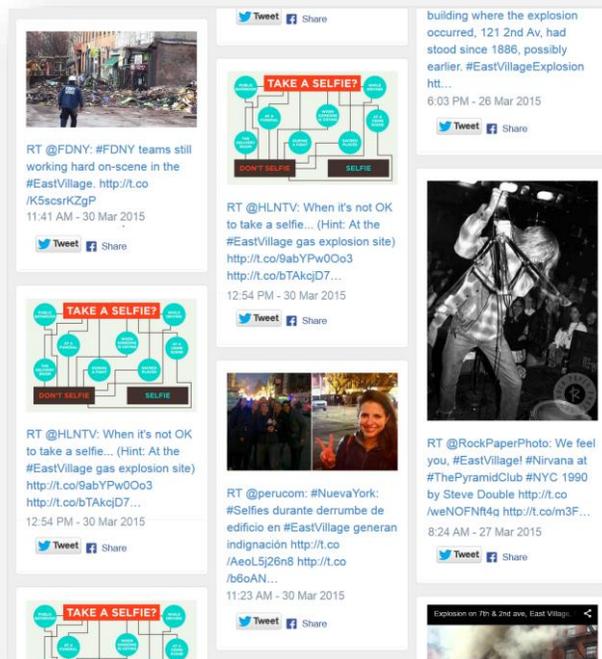


Figure 2B: Mockup of tweet feed with added timestamps.

To distinguish between recent and older tweets, timestamps should be present on each displayed tweet. This timestamp could easily be placed in the white tweet box, under the tweet's image and text (see Figure 2B).

Finding 3: Vague Curation Process

The Protestify website is, by its mission, a forum for socially conscious individuals and citizen journalists to share social movement news. However, the evaluators noticed a number of tweets not related to social movement issues and a large volume of repeated tweets (see Figure 3A). One evaluator did not even recognize the mission at all, as it is not visible from the homepage. Overall, the evaluators questioned the site's tweet curation process, and warned that the visible tweets not related to Protestify's mission might cause confusion for potential novice users interested in sharing social movement news.

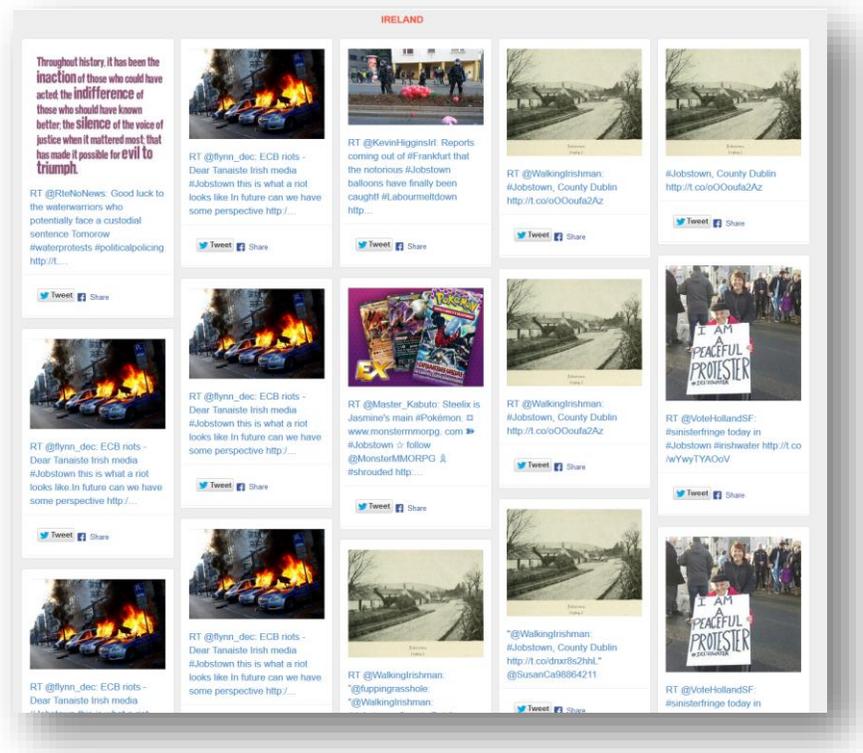


Figure 3A: View of the "Ireland" page, which includes several repeated tweets and tweets not related to social movements.

Recommendation

To clarify Protestify's mission and curation process, one or two sentences explaining the site's purpose should be located on the site's homepage. With this information up-front and easily visible from the first viewed page, users will have a clear understanding of the site's purpose and may be more willing to participate with Protestify.

If the site is to be utilized for posting content that is only related to social movement news, a filter capable of analyzing incoming tweet content should be installed. This filter could help eliminate tweets that do not carry content related to social movement news. The filter could also be used to prevent the display of repeated tweets (see Figure 3B).

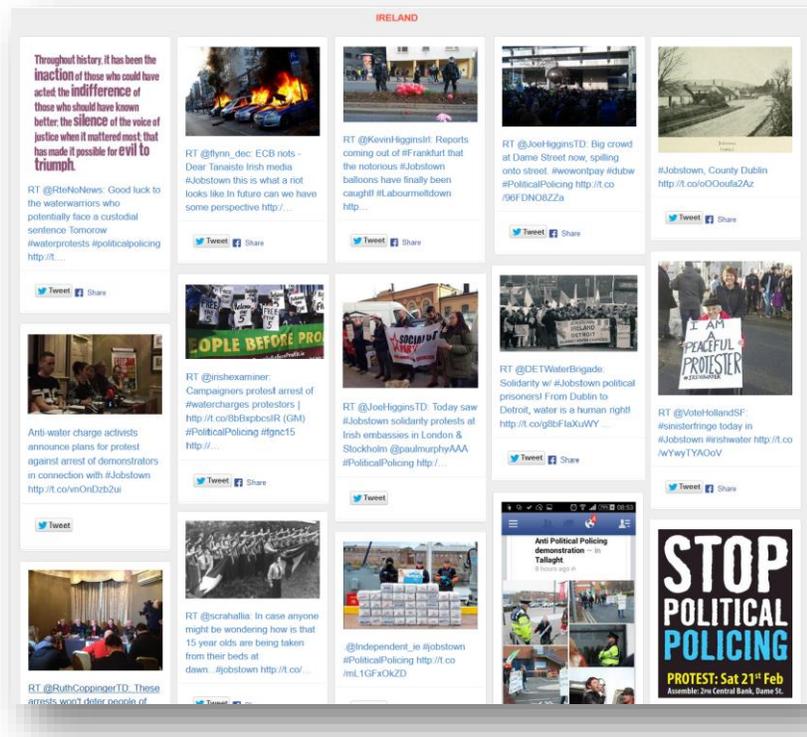


Figure 3B: Mockup of tweets that have been curated to avoid repetition and have been investigated to make sure they are relevant to the site’s mission.

Finding 4: The Unclear Purpose of the “Trending Graph”

The “Trending Graph,” located on Protestify’s homepage, displays current twitter and social movement trends. However, the usability evaluators found that when they initially arrived to the site, they were uncertain about the graph’s purpose. Although the graph is accessible at the top of the homepage, the graph axes are not labeled and the text above the graph does not identify its purpose as the “Trending Graph” (see Figure 4A). The evaluators also noted that the font of the text located above the graph is very small in size, which unfortunately adds to its visibility and clarity concerns.

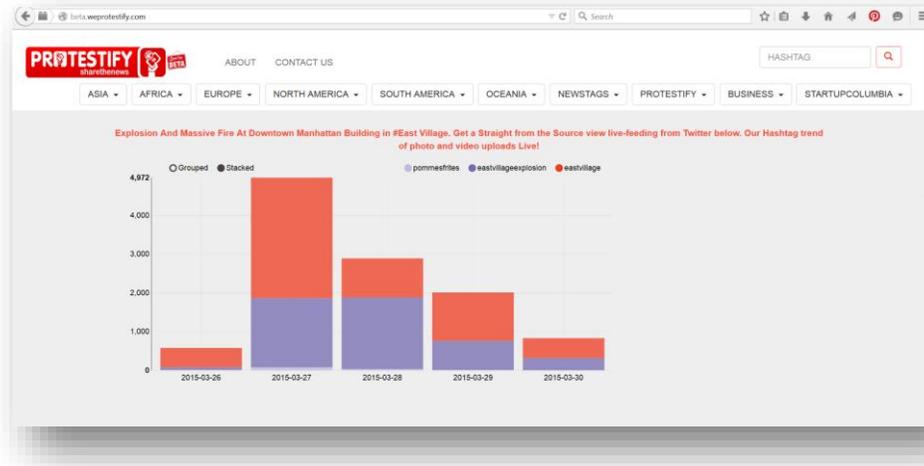


Figure 4A: Current view of the homepage’s “Trending Graph.”

Recommendation

To increase visibility and understanding, the “Trending Graph” should be increased in size and centered on the screen, and the text located above the graph should be larger. The graph should include a visualization tab with information on how to use it, and can even include a link to other visualizations, which are currently hidden in the site’s blog. Because the graph is interactive, functions should look more “clickable” so that users will better understand that they may filter what they wish to see or not see (see Figure 4B).



Figure 4B: Mockup of the “Trending Graph,” with increase in size, centered location, purpose clarification, and a link to more information visualizations. (The “About” blurb from Recommendation 3 is also visible in this mockup).

To emphasize the purpose and visibility of the graph, the long grid of tweets located under the graph can be turned into a “News Alert” link, which the user can click to

access the main tweet feed. The separation of the graph from tweet grid can increase the aesthetic appeal of the homepage as well as clear up any confusion as to how the graph may or may not relate to the following tweets.

By focusing on increasing the visibility and clarity of Protestify homepage’s “Trending Graph”- one aspect that is only found in one other, slightly hidden area of the site – it is easier to process and may be more fully appreciated by users.

Finding 5: Poor Visibility of the Page Arrows

While reviewing the website’s pages, the evaluators noticed browsing arrows located at the bottom of each page. It was discovered that on the homepage the left arrow did not work (only the right arrow). The evaluators also noted that the arrows were initially not visible due to the fact that they are very small in size, not labeled, and only accessible underneath the tweet grid (see Figure 5A).



Figure 5A: Arrows as viewed on the bottom of the homepage.

Recommendation

To create better arrow visibility, the size of the arrows on all pages should be increased. From the homepage, the left arrow should be removed (or faded) to signify the correct “right” browsing direction. To clarify the arrows’ purpose, the right arrow can include a label (underneath) for “Older Tweets.” For additional pages, both arrows should remain in red at the bottom of each page, and the left arrow could be labeled as “Most Current Tweets” or “More Current Tweets” (see Figure 5B).

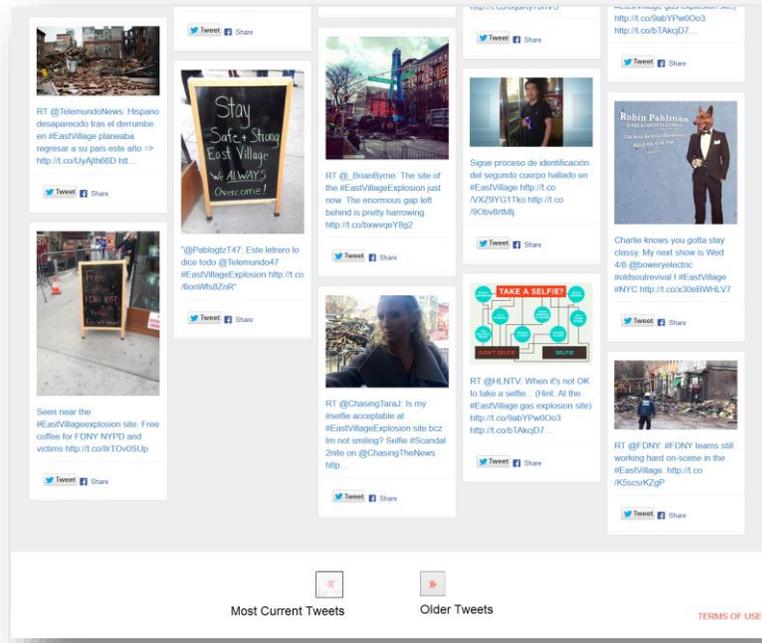


Figure 5B: Mockup of the homepage arrows with increase in size, labels, and faded left arrow.

CONCLUSION

The user analysis documented through a diary study of the Protestify site highlighted usability concerns of visibility, consistency, and clarity, specifically in relation to the “Hashtag Search Bar,” tweet timestamps, tweet curation, the “Trending Graph,” and the browse arrows. The three evaluators who participated in the diary study all echoed the issue of pinpointing the platform’s ultimate goal in tweet aggregation due to the site’s unfiltered nature. The expert analysis documented in this report determined that through the application of clear labeling and a strong statement of purpose, the Protestify platform would garner long-term engagement from its users. The data visualization that Protestify excels in suffered from simple issues of clarification on the home page. Minor but readily apparent issues in navigation were identified and appropriate adjustments provided. By implementing the actionable recommendations provided in this report, the Protestify site can clarify its purpose to the socially engaged and aware user and build a strong user base of advocates.

REFERENCES

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- Rieman, J. (1993). The diary study: A workplace-oriented research tool to guide laboratory efforts. In *Proceedings of the INTERACT '93 and CHI '93 Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '93)* (p. 321-326). New York, NY: ACM.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Demographic Survey

Protestify Demographic Survey

* Required

Name *

Age *

Gender *

Male

Female

Other:

Have you used Twitter before? *

Do you consider yourself socially conscious? *

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Extremely

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

Appendix B: Diary Study Form

Protestify Diary Study

Please fill out three times before 3/26/15. Thank you!

Daily Use

What device are you using to access the site?

- Mobile
- Tablet
- Laptop
- Desktop

Summarize your use today.

Did you look at a particular country? Why?

Did you look at a particular hashtag? Why?

Did you share anything you found today? How?

How would you summarize the purpose of this site?

What did you learn today?

Any other comments/suggestions?

How would you like to search for something on the site? Was there anything that you would like to do that you were not able to? Etc.

Submit

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

Appendix C: Summary of Relevant Diary Entry Results

| Questions | Responses |
|--|---|
| <p>Summarize your use today.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Tried to investigate Protestify's data viz services. Their main page title is data visualization but their tag line is share the news so I am unsure of what the main thrust of the site is” • “I decided to try the site on my iPhone. I noticed from the homepage that clicking the "hamburger" icon brought up a hashtag search box, which I hadn't seen on the desktop site” • “Looked at homepage, tried to understand the graph on the homepage (I didn't)” |
| <p>Did you look at a particular hashtag? Why?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “No. I did not see the hashtag search button until this question prompted me to go back and look for how to search for a particular hashtag” • “I did not look at a particular hashtag, since I didn't see any way to sort by that. Instead I browsed through three pages of tweets” |
| <p>How would you summarize the purpose of this site?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Aggregator of twitter content but most being pulled up seems less content heavy than hash tag heavy” • “The stated purpose of the site is to aggregate and share images from social media for journalists. I only know this because I read the 'About Us' page. If I just looked at the page content, I would see that this is aggregating social media posts on certain topics, but I would have no idea what was being aggregated or why” • “I am still unsure if they want to be sharing images or analyzing hashtags. If their goal is data viz why can't I click into the main chart on the homepage to see the images that are being graphed?” |
| <p>Any other comments/ suggestions?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Would have liked more detailed info on how tweets are pulled in” • “I would appreciate a better explanation of why content appears on the individual country pages.” • “I have no sense of current events, there are no timestamps on anything and the basic visualization on the homepage doesn't have labeled axis” • “It would be nice to sort and search by hashtag” • “The hashtag search bar is only |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <p>available from the homepage, if you click into a specific country or topic page it disappears and users cannot focus in on a specific hashtag for that country”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “...the service is useless for anything but the most current events. Any slightly outdated hashtag is quickly flooded with irrelevant content”• “I wanted to be able to search for a hashtag from the Germany page, but the search box that's on the homepage was not present on the individual country page” |
|--|---|