

Pinterest

Launch: 2009

~250 million users per month

2,700 employees

HQ: San Francisco, CA (+16 other locations)

Revenue: \$1.5b overall

Price: Free for all users

Twitter Followers: 2.4m

Use:

Pinterest is primarily for organizing and sharing content on the internet by saving and storing content from a main image. The user may save an item from the internet, upload an image from a device, save an image from their homepage or through searching within Pinterest, commenting on someone's post and organizing posts on "boards" that the user names. The standard is that all pins and boards are public, but you can opt to have a private board (though there is a limit to how many private boards you may have). Users may follow other users or boards and can chat with people. You can also externally share something through Whatsapp, Facebook, Twitter and (FB) Messenger.

Strength:

Pinterest came to the market with a new concept and it has quickly and rapidly expanded. Even users without a Pinterest account has heard of the site and terms like "pinning" have become widely known. Pinterest solved a problem that no one had done a good job at before: it gave users one place not only to organize and store content, but to be inspired and have a community through follows and shares. Pinterest is also available as a website and an app, so it's easy to access your profile on multiple devices.

Weakness:

With regards to the purpose of our article/text based app, Pinterest is lacking. Because Pinterest is image based, it can be tricky to save an article at all. Some may have a main image, but often times, only an ad image or something unrelated to the article will generate. Additionally, articles won't be recalled by their image, so it doesn't prove to be an effective way to find and store that type of content.

Opportunity:

Pinterest has an opportunity to capture the audience that they are currently missing. By providing a more effective way for people to store links and upload documents and articles and other text-centric items, Pinterest could gather a new crowd. There is also an opportunity to close the network if desired. Pinterest defaults to sharing everything publicly. For certain individuals or organizations, it would be preferred to have the app default to private folders and saved content, with the option to share wider.

Threat:

Pinterest does not have a lot of true threats at the moment, other than people turning away from social platforms, if that should happen. Pinterest has always had a very clean design and simple content and they do it well. That being said, with the opportunity illustrating a potential desire for more privacy and text-based content, we are hoping that our app could be a threat by having the ability to store text and images together.

Reviews:

Pinterest has positive reviews on Google Play (4.6 from 5m reviews) and the App Store (4.8 from 2.4m reviews). In general, people speak highly of the visual-centric organization using boards where you can see a preview of some of the saved content from the user's home page. Though Pinterest has introduced new features: private boards, sub-boards, collaborative boards, etc, there are users who have become frustrated with updated and ads that are new.

Takeaway:

Pinterest is a very strong company that is ever-growing. If we want to break into a market, we will want to differentiate our app enough to reach an audience that Pinterest is missing. I believe the best approach is to focus on articles and document saving and storing, which is an area in which Pinterest does not currently excel.

Pocket

Launch: 2007

~30 million regular users

48 employees

HQ: San Francisco, CA

Revenue: \$14.5m overall

Price: Free basic version; \$4.99/mo or \$49.99/yr for Premium users

Twitter Followers: 155k

Use:

Pocket is used to keep any content from a website to read later. This includes saving information from Twitter or other social media platforms. Users can save an image, video or article to their profile and can also upload content as well. Everything you save is archived so the user is also able to access the content offline. You are able to organize content in lists and edit the title. Tags are also able to be added to each item to find it better later on. There is also a variety of ways to stumble upon new content in their tabs at the top of the app/site. Users are also able to send or share content both within or outside of the platform, though currently you are only able to share an item and not a list. Users are also able to save just highlighted sections of passages and articles if preferred.

Strength:

Pocket is very versatile and compatible with a variety of devices and other apps. It may be integrated within messaging apps (such as iMessage and Slack) and can be used through an extension on a browser or simply through the app or site itself. This allows a wider pool of users to be able to access and easily use Pocket and helps with sharing and attracting friends of users. Another strength is the capability to have your articles read to you. Pocket is linked with Alexa so that she may read your saved items as well as other narrating services.

Weakness:

One weakness as mentioned above, is the lack of ability to share an entire list. This is something that our client mentioned in the project brief, so something that we will be focusing on. Another weakness is that not all users utilize the tagging ability, so finding old articles that were saved longer ago can be tricky. This app was designed to save articles and passages for users to read them later, but it seems as though it may not be solving that issue. Users might be too bogged down with new content to actually go back and utilized their saved items.

Threat:

Pocket is often compared to Instapaper as far as competition is concerned, so there is a threat there. Additionally, a threat could be that Pocket is not free and even has a more expensive, premium version. An app that has similar or more capabilities at a better price-point could prove to be a big threat.

Opportunity:

The UX of the app and site can definitely be upgraded. Users have complained about sifting through long lists of saved items and not having a nice home page that easily demonstrates what content exists. Additionally, Android users are asking for a widget so that they can easily access and use Pocket from their main screens. Also, adding a feature to add/upload a URL to save has been an expressed wish.

Reviews:

A lot of the negative feedback stems from the highlighting feature. Apparently many users' highlights are not actually saved or stored, so it has become more of an annoyance than helpful. Though overall, Pocket has very high reviews in both the Google Play (4.5 stars from 259k users) and Apple App store (4.8 stars from 9.9k users). Users have also complained that after a recent update, the listening function has become less responsive and isn't as reliable to track your location within an article, when switching devices.

Takeaway:

It was nice to look at an app that focuses on text-content, which is the direction I want to go in. I feel as though Pocket can make users feel overloaded with content, diminishing the purpose of assisting people and organizing what they need. At the end of the day, users are having too much trouble finding saved items and the sharing capability needs to be more clear and for both a single item as well as a list. Finding a way to offer a free service with only an option for a

monthly payment plan is also a goal of mine. But it is very helpful to see what users are valuing: highlighting content and being able to both read and listen to items.

Instapaper

Launch: 2008

~100m monthly users

Employees unknown

HQ: New York, NY

Revenue: \$10m/yr

Price: \$2.99/mo or \$29.99/yr

Twitter followers: 51.7k

Use:

Allows users to save articles and web pages as plain text files that can be accessed on or offline. Folders are used to organize content and there is an included search feature as well (for an extra cost). Dictionary and Wikipedia lookups are integrated, so you can get more out of what you read and the text is customizable with regards to size font and color. The main purpose is to store these articles and read them later on another device. Up to 500 articles are available to have on each device, with the website storage being unlimited.

Strength:

Instapaper is able to efficiently execute its goal and allows users to access their saved content on iOS, Android and the Kindle, in addition to a web browser. What it does, it does well and saving files as simpler text files can remove the distraction of ads and other non-related content from the page. The highlighting option seems to be executed well and offers a convenient way to find a portion of a text. In addition to this, Instapaper also has a note function. For students and researchers, these abilities would be extremely useful.

Weakness:

As mentioned, the saved items are organized in various folders and only one item is able to be moved within a folder at a time. Additionally, Instapaper does not handle images and video as well as other competitors, Pocket being one of them. The text to speech function is read in a very robotic voice, which users don't find natural sounding and as such, less enjoyable. It also seems that they are working out their business model, so things that used to be free are now in-app purchases.

Opportunity:

Finding a balance between the main things a user wants/needs and making enough revenue seems to be a very important thing that Instapaper needs to reevaluate. Something like the highlighting feature may be what is drawing users to the app, so allowing them to have it for free

can be a big selling point. Additionally, allowing that capability to drag and drop more items into a folder at a time and have easier capabilities of reorganizing.

Threat:

Competition will remain a threat for Instapaper, especially as I noticed through this competitive analysis, that former competing brands no longer exist. This is a very unique idea and while it is important and great that Instapaper is doing a great job for reader-focused users, branching out and allowing more functionality could be key to maintaining its place in the market.

Reviews:

Instapaper has 4.1 stars from nearly 8k users on Google Play and 4.2 stars from 490 rating on the App Store. This is lower than the other apps, with also less users. In general, reviewers have complained about bugs during updates and the annoyance of having features costing money today when they did not in the past. Overall, people do seem to be pleased with the app and mentioned its ease of use.

Takeaway:

I do believe in a less-is-more mentality, but it seems as though people do want more functionality and capabilities than what Instapaper is currently offering. Having the ability to access content offline should be surveyed and researched more to see if this is the same direction I would like to go in. Users do seem very happy about how clean the articles look after being saved by Instapaper.

Overall Takeaway:

Drawing in users using a subscription plan seems to be tricky for both Instapaper and Pocket. If there is a way to offer a similar service for free as Pinterest does, it would attract more people off the bat. Additionally, the UI and UX for Pocket and Instapaper are very similar to one another. It would be good to mimic more of a pinterest-vibe but in a text-heavy world. In the survey, I would like to have a better sense of what type of content people would ideally be using my app for and if they would want this to be accessible offline as well. That being said, when asking people if they want something, they will likely always say yes, so I'll need to word it carefully. I also would like to find out how to best arrange items so that users find them easily and can organize them best.