

ppi 201502ZU4645

Publicación científica en formato digital

ISSN-Versión Impresa 0798-1406 / ISSN-Versión on line 2542-3185

Depósito legal pp 197402ZU34



CUESTIONES POLÍTICAS

Instituto de Estudios Políticos y Derecho Público "Dr. Humberto J. La Roche"
de la Facultad de Ciencias Jurídicas y Políticas de la Universidad del Zulia
Maracaibo, Venezuela



Vol.40

Nº 75

2022

Disadvantages of news aggregators in capitalist countries: overview and critique

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46398/cuestpol.4075.45>

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Abstract

The objectives of the article were to analyze the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the most popular science news aggregators in capitalist countries, created as a communication tool between scientists and journalists. For the recent research the methods of analysis were used, especially SWOT analysis and synthesis method. 10 main criteria of science news aggregators were observed and highlighted by analyzing recent science news aggregators from all over the world such as: EurekaAlert, PhysOrg, ScienceDaily, Science Seeker and Open Science. As a result, the study looked at the dual issue of funding, where government funding of aggregators allows authorities to control the process of publishing information while support is stable. At the same time, crowdfunding funds or platforms allow an aggregator to exist without political bias, but without strong confidence in its future existence. The results obtained allow us to conclude that, the points considered in the relationship between capitalism and aggregators are of great importance to create a high-quality scientific news aggregator at national and international level.

Keywords: news aggregators; capitalist countries; SWOT analysis; communication technologies; information policy.

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Desventajas de los agregadores de noticias en los países capitalistas: panorama general y crítica

Resumen

Los objetivos del artículo fueron analizar las fortalezas, debilidades, oportunidades y amenazas de los agregadores de noticias científicas más populares en los países capitalistas, creados como herramienta de comunicación entre científicos y periodistas. Para la reciente investigación se utilizaron los métodos de análisis, especialmente el análisis FODA y el método de síntesis. Se observaron y destacaron 10 criterios principales de los agregadores de noticias científicas mediante el análisis de agregadores de noticias científicas recientes de todo el mundo como: EurekaAlert, PhysOrg, ScienceDaily, Science Seeker y Open Science. Como resultado, el estudio se fijó en la doble cuestión de la financiación, cuando la financiación gubernamental de los agregadores permite a las autoridades controlar el proceso de publicación de la información mientras el apoyo es estable. Al mismo tiempo, los fondos o plataformas de *crowdfunding* permiten a un agregador existir sin sesgo político, pero sin una fuerte confianza en su existencia futura. Los resultados obtenidos permiten concluir que, los puntos considerados en la relación capitalismo y agregadores son de gran importancia para crear un agregador de noticias científicas de alta calidad a nivel nacional e internacional.

Palabras clave: agregadores de noticias; países capitalistas; análisis FODA; tecnologías de comunicación; política informativa.

Introduction

The web-site aggregator of scientific news is an opportunity of fast access of users to the generalized, systematized and complex information to news of national and world achievements of scientific community.

Due to the absence of one main tool of Ukrainian science news channel, it exists an immediate need to create and promote information channels for Ukrainian citizens. According to an internal memorandum from the Stanford Research Institute and Edward Freeman in the 1980s, stakeholders are: “Groups without whose support the organization would cease to exist” (Freeman, 1983: 06). Given that science in Ukraine is largely funded by the state, taxpayers are its main stakeholders. It follows that every Ukrainian citizen is a stakeholder in the creation of a scientific product, reporting on the use of taxpayers’ budget funds, as well as the promotion of scientific products.

Information awareness is the achievement of awareness, which is based primarily on informing employees through simple forms of information transfer within organizations (Sedej, 2015). If a country is a political form of organization that has all the necessary criteria: association of people, division of responsibilities, organizational structure, rules, steering group, borders, organizational form and mission (Monastyrsky, 2019), we can perceive the state as an organizational structure or company, as well as to apply certain standard mechanisms inherent in business organizations.

According to the report for 2021 of the world organization We are Social and Hootsuite (Hootsuite Inc., 2021), of the total world population of 7.83 billion people, 5.2 billion people, which means 66.6% of the world's population use mobile phones, and 4.66 billion people are Internet users. These companies are aimed at ensuring communication between client companies and their target groups through the use of social networks, as well as other means of social communication on the Internet. In addition, the data show that the number of global Internet users increased by 7.3% in 2020, which shows a fairly rapid growth of human network improvements.



Figure No. 01. Percentage of Internet and mobile users in the world. Source: Datareportal (2021).

Given the above processes, we can conclude that the use of Internet technologies and social networks is a convenient and relevant tool that has a tendency to expand the target audience. Business corporations are already active users of the network in order to raise public awareness or

target groups. Thus, the constant growth of the use of the Internet has many positive consequences for the educational and scientific community, but at the same time, it complicates the process of analyzing the importance of information (McCrickard, 1999).

Namely, the task of the aggregator platform is to become the main channel of communication with the public, which will inspire confidence in the latter. The issue of misinformation is being actively studied after the Covid-19 pandemic (Trishchuk *et al.*, 2020) and the beginning of the war in Ukraine (Tylchyk, 2022), so the popular media call for constant checking of sources of information and look for the original source with its further analysis. It follows that the resource with scientific news should primarily be based on research conducted by scientists and their scientific publications as factors of truthfulness and verifiability of data.

The **objective** of a recent study is to highlight main criteria of science news aggregator through the analysis of recent worldwide science news aggregators.

Methods which were used include general method of analysis and synthesis, descriptive method, forecasting methods to create SWOT-analysis and method of generating creative ideas.

1. Results and Discussion: Analysis of competitors and determination of the uniqueness of the platform-aggregator of scientific news

Analyzing the main competitors of sites aggregators of scientific news, which publish press releases to promote science, we have:

1. The most global American news aggregator network EurekaAlert from the American Association for the Advancement of Science, which is also the publisher of the journal Science and has the largest community of science promoters in the world. In order to understand the effectiveness of the resource, it is necessary to conduct one of the most popular (Hill and Westbrook, 1997) methods of analysis of strengths and weaknesses, prospects and risks, called SWOT-analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats). We will conduct a SWOT-analysis of this resource:



SWOT Analysis



Figure 2. SWOT analysis of EurekaAlert news aggregator! Source: Own elaboration.

EurekaAlert! is the most important player among the aggregators of scientific news. In addition, they are published in a variety of languages and have the support of America’s leading scientific institutions. In the analyzed media there are rather insignificant risks, which are expressed only in political involvement. The above criterion can be both an advantage and a disadvantage. With EurekaAlert, journalists from around the world receive press releases and translate into their own countries. In addition, each journalist confirms his identity by registering with corporate mail, which prevents the undesirable spread of embargoes on news that have a specific time of publication of the news in any media.

2. PhysOrg is the second, but no less popular resource for aggregating scientific news, which has a rather primitive design, but the team of publishers, editors and the depth of diversity of specialties make it the most popular among the public on social networks in terms of subscribers.

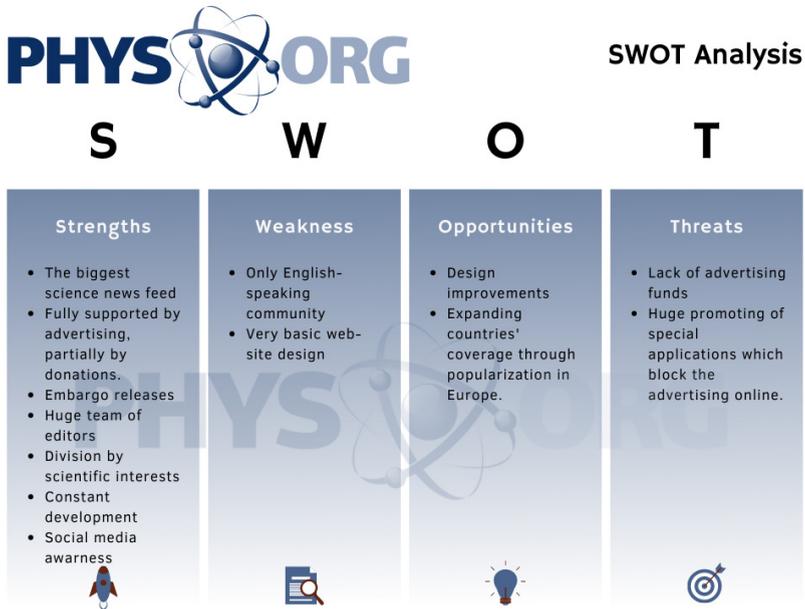


Figure 3. SWOT-analysis of the news aggregator Phys.Org. Source: Own elaboration.

According to the analysis, we see that one of the specific threats to the resource is the risk of popularity of special programs that block the display of advertising on sites. It is through advertising that Phys.Org gets the financial opportunity to survive. That is, political and any other bias can be a risk for the comfortable continuation of the resource.

3. ScienceDaily is one of the oldest aggregators of scientific news. The convenience of its use is that it has a collection of top news of each specialty. However, if the two previous resources were able to register and receive specific content by subscription, selected according to the interests of the recipient, then ScienceDaily does not have such an opportunity. A major shortcoming of the resource is the lack of clear information on financial security, which makes it impossible to fully implement the analysis.



SWOT Analysis



Figure 4. SWOT analysis of ScienceDaily news aggregator. Source: Own elaboration.

It is worth noting that despite the availability of relevant social networks in the resource, their activity stopped in early 2021. That is, the pages are not updated and the resource for promotion does not fulfill its function of attracting new audiences. Analyzing the visual design of the web portal, similar to the previous resource, there is a need to update or adapt for use by smartphones.

4. ScienceSeeker is a unique aggregate of popular science blogs from students, PhDs, scientists and all those interested in promoting scientific achievements. A significant advantage of the resource is the ability to receive a large amount of news from various sources and professionals, but the disadvantage is full responsibility for the appropriateness and veracity of information to bloggers. Thus, if the resources previously analyzed had a large staff of editors and journalists, the resource may exist autonomously, but has a higher risk of misinformation or unverified facts.

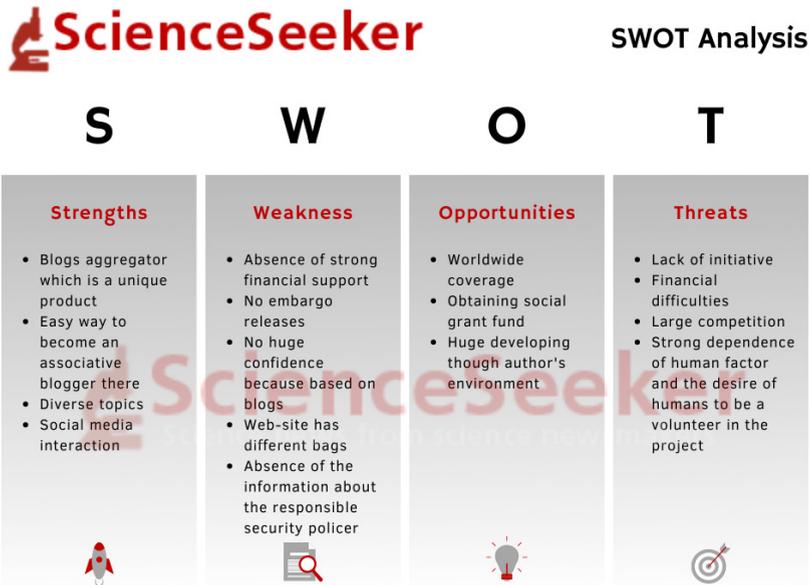


Figure 5. SWOT analysis of the news aggregator ScienceSeeker. Source: Own elaboration.

One of the important disadvantages of the site is that some functionality does not work. This criterion can lead to distrust of the new public, despite the considerable coverage of connoisseurs on social networks. The site needs updating, which means that it needs additional financial losses. The general idea of the aggregator of scientific blogs is interesting, because due to the large number of authors and their interested community, there is an opportunity for rapid “natural” promotion of the portal without additional funds.

However, the constant dependence on the amount of free time of scientists to support popular science publications causes a rather chaotic update of news on the resource and a great dependence on the human factor.

The four news aggregators analyzed above are American and mostly English-speaking. Thus, only a person who is fluent in English has the opportunity to freely receive materials and translate them into their native language. It follows that a journalist, namely a science journalist, needs to speak English at a high level. However, having an English-language

resource, we are usually familiar with English-language research. This is how the phenomenon of “British scientists” appeared (Sokolovska, 2017), about which any research the whole world learns very quickly.

Given that there are no aggregators of scientific news in Ukraine, there is a need to analyze their existence in the post-Soviet space.

5. Open Science is a resource that contains information in the form of press releases on the achievements and publications of n scientists. None of the other neighboring countries has a similar portal.

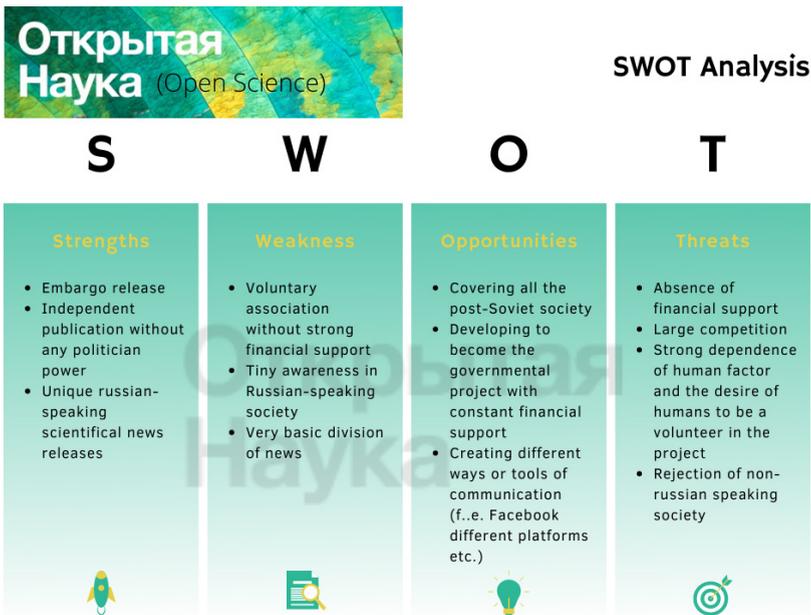


Figure 6. SWOT analysis of the Open Science news aggregator. Source: Own elaboration.

The undeniable advantage of the portal is its non-involvement in the political community and independence of scientific results. However, in order to apply for grants from the Russian Foundation for Basic Research, the competition application receives additional points through a clear plan to promote scientific results (RFBR, 2021). That is, in these circumstances, some dependence on state funding for research still exists, so one of the possibilities of the resource is full state funding of this initiative and

support for the development of the portal, its visual and informational improvement. The main threats to the development of the portal are the general dependence on the human factor, as well as the general political situation of the country, which cannot allow the resource to go beyond the Eurasian Economic Union due to Russia's image as a state in the political arena.

The analyzed aggregators of news allow us to draw conclusions and form the main criteria of the aggregator of scientific novelties for its further creation:

1. The presence of an editorial staff to quickly verify the veracity of information.
2. The presence of a link to the source of the message in the form of a scientific publication.
3. Perspective on multilingual content. In the context of promoting the scientific achievements of Ukrainian scientists, the translation of press releases into English is mandatory for the dissemination of news abroad.
4. Despite the contradictory possibilities of financial support by the state, there are not enough funds in Ukraine that would be interested in promoting science. As a result, we have rather unstable volunteer projects that are not supported by the state and do not have constant financial support. But in the case of the latter, the longevity of financial security ends in 3-5 years. That is why it makes sense for the selected projects in state support or in the existence of partnership assistance through which it is possible to obtain additional funding.
5. Qualitative promotion of the resource in social networks, because social networks are the first contact of the audience with the resource and the opportunity to build trust between participants.
6. Adaptation to mobile devices and quick and easy access to information through the use of tablets, smartphones, etc.
7. The presence of a news embargo.
8. Ability to submit your own news for publication.
9. Ability to register with accredited journalists to receive embargoes on press releases and industry subscriptions to scientific news.
10. Convenient modern design.

Having formed 10 main criteria of the aggregator of scientific news, according to which it is possible to create a high-quality latest Ukrainian product, we move on to creating its prototype.

Conclusion

In the paper, it was analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of the scientific news aggregators of the world. Some of them have government support, others have the support from foundations and an independent vector of news publishing. Nevertheless, the independence of the scientific press is one of the main criteria for the success of an aggregator and adherence to journalistic ethics.

The study was observer at the dual issue of funding, when governmental funding of aggregators allows the authorities to control the process of publishing information. While funds or crowdfunding platforms allow an aggregator to exist without political bias. In the contrary, this can lead to global questions of the existence of a scientific news aggregator as such due to a lack of funding.

After analyzing the above questions, it was decided that since the stakeholders of the aggregator are taxpayers, it is the state that should support the popularization of scientific results, as presented on the example of the largest scientific aggregator EurekaAlert.

The second most important factor in the creation of national news aggregators has become multilingualism, thanks to which the news of one country can be distributed around the world. Using the example of the Open Science resource, we saw a great lack of a resource for site visitors who are not native speakers of the national language of the resource.

Moreover, the work considered the issues of modern web-design, its convenience, a link to the original source of scientific news, the presence of an editorial board, embargo news, the possibility of registration for journalists and adaptation of content for mobile devices. The points considered are of great importance for creating a high-quality aggregator of scientific news at the national and international levels.

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DEL ZULIA

CUESTIONES POLÍTICAS

Vol.40 N° 75

*Esta revista fue editada en formato digital y publicada en diciembre de 2022, por el **Fondo Editorial Serbiluz**, Universidad del Zulia. Maracaibo-Venezuela*

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