

Recommendations for the Redesign of the Discovery Channel Website

[Discovery Website](#)

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Executive Summary

For this report, we analyzed the organization, navigation, and labeling used on discovery.com, the main online portal for media company Discovery, Inc., with an eye towards recommending changes in those areas if warranted. The main site is larger than the 15-30 pages suggested range (and grows considerably if various subdomains like corporate.discovery.com and go.discovery.com are included, not to mention the family of websites dedicated to the different channels that Discovery owns), so we've intentionally limited our focus by grouping certain pages together and ignoring others. We've also approached the overall site organization as a hierarchical one. These tactics and choices allow us to address the most important structural and navigational elements and their relationships.

Introduction

Discovery Channel (known as The Discovery Channel from 1985 to 1995, and often referred to as simply Discovery) is an American pay television network and flagship channel owned by Discovery, Inc., a publicly-traded company. Discovery.com contains a variety of content related to the Discovery channel's programming, as well as content associated with five topics: Nature, Exploration, Motor, Science, and Tech. It also includes important functional features like Discovery Go, which allows visitors to watch streaming versions of Discovery channel shows (even without an account), and links to TV schedules, a "Watch Live" stream (account required), and the Discovery Store.

While the site is well-designed, eye-catching, and in certain respects "TV-like" with its large fonts and image-enhanced menus, and the content, much of which is likely familiar to its cable TV customers, is never more than a couple of clicks away, we nevertheless believe some improvements might be made to the information architecture of the site. We've created a site map of the existing site and developed a new one with proposed changes reflecting both our analysis of the site's strengths and weaknesses as well as opportunities to make the site easier for users to enjoy and for developers to build and maintain over a long timeline. Our recommendations are of course not without risk, and it would be wise to perform extensive user experience testing before rolling these changes out to the live site.

Site Map of Existing Site & Discussion

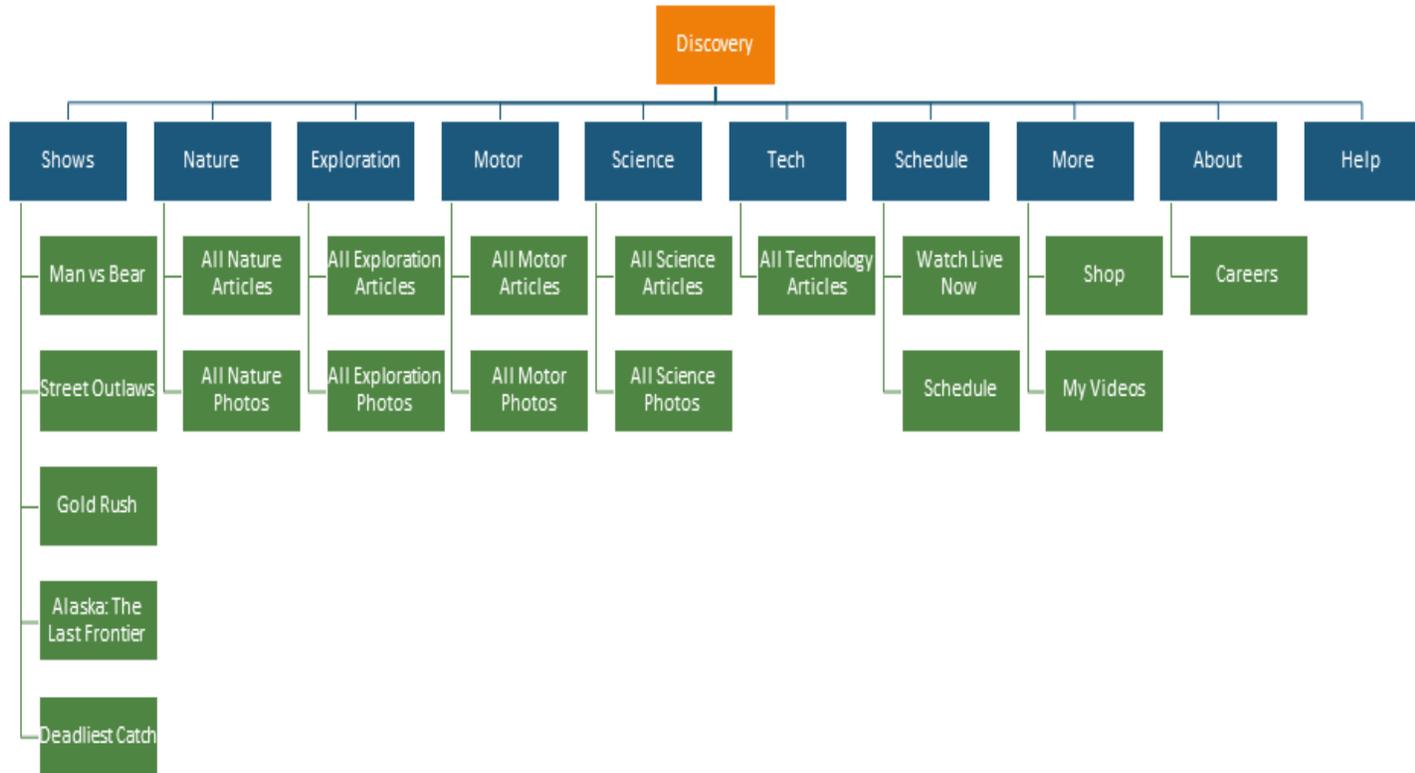
The Discovery.com website is currently set up to captivate their audience by using appealing photos as their focal point. The photos dominate a large portion of the main home page, are visually appealing and appropriate for a tv channel website. The images are associated with six of the eight main labels / menus that are conveniently located at the top of the page in bold font making it easy to find. The major categories (also referred to as sections or topics) are as follows and can also be found on the Figure 1 below: 1) Shows, 2) Nature, 3) Exploration, 4) Motor, 5) Science, 6) Tech. There are also labels for Schedule, which takes you directly to their TV programming, and More, which expands to a short menu. As you hover over each category label in the navigation bar, it lists the subcategories and displays a strip of images linking to different, categorically relevant kinds of content.

Discovery.com allows visitors multiple ways to watch the many shows they offer. At the very top of the homepage is a banner with links to watch “Full Seasons” or “Live Now” TV. The “Live Now” option includes the title of the show that is currently being broadcast. When clicked, both of these options take you to the go.discovery.com site which contains various ways to browse, search and view content from their shows. As you scroll down the homepage you can also watch trending videos without having to click on or search for another page.

In regards to the navigability of the site, the current layout is easy to operate, mostly due to the heavy use of images. The most important information is highlighted at the top of the page along with a search bar for those that are looking for something specific. This placement is typical of many websites making it predictable and easy to find. The site is great for browsing

and stays up to date with current events. Users are encouraged to view more articles and photos by advertising many on one page. Overall the site is easy to figure out with language that makes sense and links that directs the user to content that would be expected.

Figure 1, Existing Site Map of Discovery Website



Re-Design Site Map & Discussion

In order to streamline the site, the major categories in the navigation bar other than the Shows menu - Nature, Exploration, Motor, Science and Tech - can be moved and collated under a single new navigation bar menu labelled “Topics.” The benefit of this reorganization is that new topics can be added to the topics menu instead of trying to jam them in a crowded navigation bar. As a case in point, Discovery.com's sitemap (<https://www.discovery.com/site-map>), lists another category, “Gear,” in addition to the five categories in the navigation bar. This

link directs visitors to a customized "file not found"-style error page

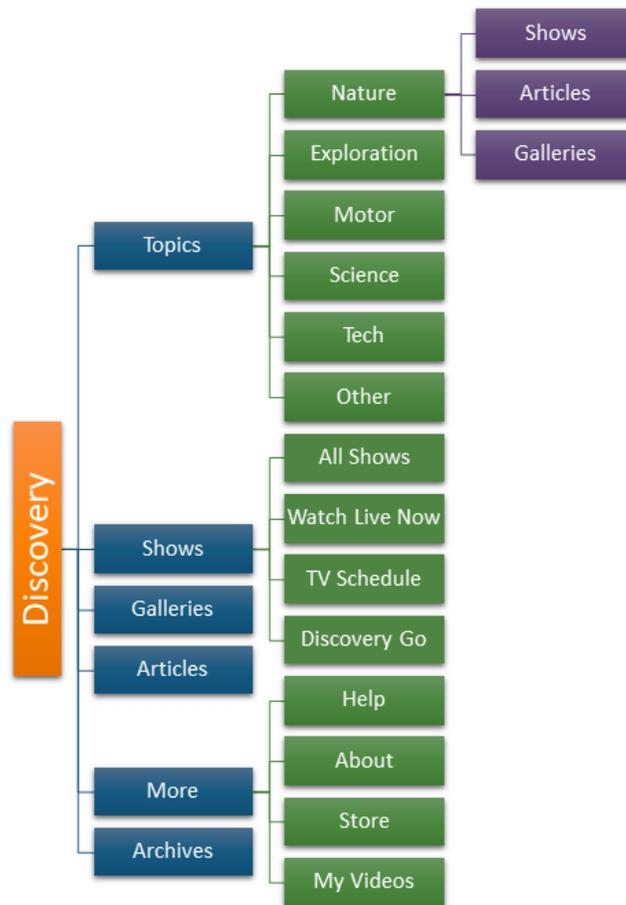
(<https://www.discovery.com/content/discovery-com/en/gear.html>). Of course, adding a link to this page in a topics menu is not going to change the fact that the page doesn't exist or is not ready yet, but it's nevertheless a good example of how a topics menu would accommodate an organized expansion of content. Moving all the navigation bar topics into a Topics menu would also leave room to add "Galleries" and "Articles" as new labels / menus in the navigation bar.

An additional feature that we have incorporated into the new site design is the "Archives" category. Taking a user-centered approach, this category allows the user to search through the site's older content. Due to the amount of media that Discovery.com generates, we thought it would be helpful to give users a simple way to return to their earlier "discoveries." The proposed archive category would contain sub-categories for Shows, Articles and Galleries.

We have decided to keep the major category for "More" but have made some minor changes. In addition to the subcategories of "Store" and "My videos" we have added the following two sub-categories "Help" and "About". The added sub-categories are important enough to be placed at the top of the page and make sense to be placed under the "More" category.

Moving forward with the user in mind, we also created sub-categories for each of the topics located in the "Topics" menu. These sub-categories are: Shows, Galleries, and Articles. For users who wish to view various types of media on a specific topic (e.g., Nature - Galleries or Science - Articles), this method of organization allows them to do so with ease. Although this may seem like a minor adjustment from the previous design, the inclusion of sub-categories also brings a level of cohesiveness that had been missing before. The new site map we created strives to clear up space to allow for a more efficient navigational path for the user.

Figure 2, New Site Map of Discovery Website



Recommendations

Overall the Discovery.com site is user-friendly and very appealing but could use some restructuring of their main topics to simplify the browsing process. With our above-restructured site map, we believe that this will create a better user experience with the site. One of our main goals with the redesign is to create an enhanced sitemap created with the users in mind. One of the leading elements of discovery.com is the ease of use and the fantastic use of images throughout the site. A provisional recommendation we would like to see realized is to have a collection of images/thumbnails of images in the section when a user hovers over a link on the

site map. This would continue the use of brilliant images by bringing them into the site map. We believe that this feature will aid users in finding exactly what they want when they have a query.

Another important feature in our provisional redesign recommendations is to have the “Help” and “Store” pages to be placed under the “More” menu. We believe that these pages would be better suited under the “More” menu for a more intuitive sitemap design. The sitemap as it stands is very simple, but we would like to build off of that simplicity to make it more intuitive and to present a hierarchical scheme that the user is able to view. The “Help” and “Store” pages are important features of the site and we believe that placing them in the “More” menu will make for a cleaner and more organized sitemap.

If Discovery would like to move forward with our team’s re-designed site map for their website, we would like to recommend conducting user testing with the new design. A focus group they would include already frequent users of the site, individuals who watch Discovery Channel shows, and individuals who have never used discovery.com. This demographic would give a broad opinion of the changes to the site map in order to conclude if this is the right way to go with creating a better platform. After this data has been collected, we believe another meeting would be best to discuss how to move forward as well as the pros and cons of the redesign.