INMA GLOBAL MEDIA AWARDS

Category: Best use of mobile
Name of brand: AsiaOne
Name of product: AsiaOne mobile apps for iOS and Android
“All the top publications in one”

AsiaOne, Asia’s leading news and information website, recently launched a revamped mobile application with an improved interface and functionality. The new mobile app is designed to better feature AsiaOne’s partner content.

For our 20th anniversary last year, our concept is to “help our readers save time”, through our tagline “All the top publications in one”. The new mobile apps were designed and developed to reflect these aims.

The key objective in re-launching the new mobile app was to showcase our strength in news aggregation to our readers. The new app’s improved design and look was also developed with the goal of reaching out and making it more appealing to new groups of users, in particular younger readers in the 20-25 age group.

The major challenge was to ensure that the revamped app would be able to continue delivering a quality user-experience to readers while remaining relevant and giving value to advertisers.
and clients. AsiaOne’s two-member mobile team worked with global developer TigerSpike to finalise the concept of the app. A scrum team was also formed with other staff from the Technical, Sales and Product Development teams at Singapore Press Holdings’ (SPH) Digital Division, leveraging on the different areas of expertise of the people from the various sections.

All the stakeholders, ranging from sales, marketing, tech and editorial, worked closely for the entire duration of the project.

Conceptualisation and development for the app began in August 2014. All three apps were launched in the app stores on April 25, 2015.

**Staying relevant for the mobile reader**

The first iteration of AsiaOne’s mobile applications were released in 2011 for iPhone, 2012 for Android and 2013 for iPad. The apps had seen consistently strong performance and growth in terms of downloads and visits. However, by 2015, the app was beginning to look dated and due for a redesign.

More importantly, in the intervening years there had been significant changes in news and content consumption trends, with a dramatic rise in the use of mobile as a means for users to access news.

Previously, the app served to complement the AsiaOne website’s offerings, being a functional app that enabled a quick overview of the latest headlines, as well as easy reading of news articles. Content on the app was simply fed to the app from stories and articles published on the website.

The revised app was designed to cater to the specific demands and expectations of mobile users, which have increasingly become different from readers accessing the website on larger screens.

It is aimed at providing readers with a holistic and immersive experience. To this end, more emphasis was placed on multimedia storytelling techniques to present content in a more creative manner.

Besides the latest news, we also wanted to appeal to a wider demographic by prominently featuring AsiaOne’s rich variety of lifestyle content offerings, ranging from fashion and food to health and travel by introducing a new lifestyle section that was previously unavailable.
Today’s readers are also confronted with a huge amount of information from various publications and websites, further amplified by the impact of social media. AsiaOne’s mission is to help our readers save time so that they do not have to access a myriad of sources just to catch up on news updates.

The AsiaOne apps have been a popular source of daily news for its readers, providing the latest news and lifestyle content curated from Singapore Press Holdings’ suite of newspapers, including The Straits Times, The Business Times as well as numerous magazines and top-ranking websites.

Hence, for the first time the revamped AsiaOne app also features a wide-range of content from over 20 new titles, including international publications BBC, CNBC, The Wall Street Journal, Nikkei Asian Review, as well as web-only content sites such as Vulcan Post, MoneySmart and BikeZilla. The addition of content from regional and global content partners make it truly a one-stop destination for readers’ news and lifestyle needs.
New mobile solutions

AsiaOne’s mission is to help our readers save time by curating important and interesting news and lifestyle stories from our content partners. A few solutions were conceptualised around AsiaOne’s mission statement for the apps.

1. More content and scalability
Besides showcasing content from local newspapers, we can now feature new publishers as content syndication partners.

Using Tigerspike’s enterprise software, Phoenix, we are now able to feature content from external publishers more easily, allowing for more flexibility in controlling sections within the app. This flexibility has helped us push out more content from various partners, making their brands more visible.
2. My Favourites

Personalisation is a key aspect of improving our readers’ mobile experience.

This new feature allows users to customise the app based on their own reading preferences by selecting the sections that they want to read or are most interested in. When activated, only stories under categories chosen by the reader will be displayed, saving them time.

3. Better navigation

Upon launching the app, the reader will be able to get a full listing of the Latest News from all categories, so that he can be immediately updated on the most recent stories.

The Menu bar, which can be accessed intuitively from the left, allows users to quickly navigate to various sections, Photo Galleries, My Favourites or even the different Services, such as 4D & Toto, Horoscopes and Stocks. Readers are able to swipe from story to story, photo to photo, and also from section to section.
4. **Sleek and clean interface**

The new version of the app features an improved design that is sleek, clean and modern. For consistency, the typeface has also been standardised to follow AsiaOne’s revamped website.

5. **Better content display**

The app now gives greater play to using visual storytelling elements that serve to complement a story and enhance the reader experience. Besides just showing an article with text, the app is now able to support the displaying of in-line images, graphics and videos. This allows AsiaOne’s team of webknowledgists to display content in a more creative manner.

In this instance, it is clear the operator managed its recovery process well, and that mitigated the impact of the breakdown somewhat.

The challenge is, of course, to prevent a repeat of such breakdowns. Although the number of breakdowns can never be zero, the rising incidence of electrical faults and fires forms a worrying pattern that cannot be ignored.

Besides using popular techniques of hitting bags and wooden beams, they hit with bamboo and steel brushes to get their blood circulation flowing and to toughen up their muscles.

While some may question some of their conditioning methods, there can be little question that at least some of Shaolin gangfu’s conditioning exercises help its athletes withstand heavy hits.

Just watch the Shaolin monk, Yi Long, react to being kicked in the leg at 1:12 in the video below:

Not only does he not even budge, but he shrugs his shoulders as if to say, “Is that the best you can do?”

He has a similar reaction at 1:32 in the video below:
It also pulls full Photo Galleries that are related to the particular story. This helps readers to get a more comprehensive overview of a particular topic.

6. **New branding and ad opportunities**

Content partners are displayed prominently throughout the app. This not only helps to boost AsiaOne’s role as a premium aggregator, it also helps other publishers gain more visibility and to help with the distribution of their content outside of their native environment.
While conceptualising the app, our ads team placed a lot of emphasis on the way ads are being served. Ad banners have more prominence in the AsiaOne app, which was catered to be as ad-friendly as possible without being intrusive or disruptive to the user-experience.

The app also allows for sponsorship opportunities by dedicating one entire section to an advertiser to use for a specific duration.

*Jubilee at the Botanics, a client-driven project with a dedicated section for content within the AsiaOne app.*
7. Cross-platform compatibility

The app was also designed to be compatible with the Apple Watch, in time for the release of the watch in Singapore on June 26.
RESULTS

AsiaOne’s revamped mobile apps were launched successfully in AppStore on April 25, 2015. An official trade launch was held at the AsiaOne People’s Choice Awards ceremony on April 30.
Since the launch, the AsiaOne mobile app has remained as one of the top 10 free news apps to download in Singapore’s AppStore and Google Play Store.

Usage of the app remains consistent before and after launch. From May to November 2015, average pageviews across all 3 apps were 33,322,558. Meanwhile, the average time spent across the apps was 6 minutes.

The app has also received over 315,000 downloads since it was launched up to November 30, 2015.

The app has also garnered a positive reception from users. Less than a year after its release, the revamped app has already won Silver in the 2015 SPARK Awards in the “Most Improved Offering by a Media Owner” category. It has also been nominated in the “Best App – Media Owner” category at the 2016 Mob-Ex awards.