

Report for

domestic**slice**



a slice of the life that surrounds you.

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Executive Summary

This report details our findings from a content audit and landscape analysis of Domestic Slice (D.S.), a lifestyle blog featuring posts on crafts, food, home and garden projects, and style. The goals of this report are to explain our understanding of the high quality efforts that go into creating and maintaining Domestic Slice, and to use industry research to suggest how it can go from high quality to industry leading quality.

We found that Domestic Slice is doing an incredible amount of things efficiently and successfully on the blog and social media accounts. As it was difficult finding ways to improve on current efforts, keep in mind that most suggestions and recommendations are geared towards taking Domestic Slice to the next level of online success.

Methodology

Overall, our methods for analyzing Domestic Slice focused on core strategy, post breakdown and categorization, design, workflow, and social media. We first conducted a landscape analysis, in which we took a closer look at three other lifestyle websites to discover some trends of the genre. We then started documenting materials from the Domestic Slice website, specifically blog posts, links, page titles, and images. The site materials were analyzed and grouped into categories. Next, the Facebook and Twitter pages were analyzed for post content, frequency of posting, frequency of outside comments/retweets, and friends/followers associated with the account. Additional information was gathered through our interview with Katie.

Key Findings

Core Strategy

After spending time reading your blog and speaking with Katie, we get the sense that your content strategy isn't exactly fixed; rather, the three of you as writers have reached an understanding about Domestic Slice that is both fully realized yet loose and open to growth as time passes. While you want to align yourself with other lifestyle blogs, something Katie said stood out to us: that Domestic Slice is a lens through which to view parts of everyday life as fun rather than work, and that each of you brings a different perspective to the blog. The fact that Domestic Slice features three regular writers gives your blog an edge over blogs that feature a single voice.

Over time, as you work to maintain the identity of Domestic Slice, remember that your unique writerly voices are crucial to the creation of this type of content. During our research of other lifestyle blogs, we noticed that two blogs, Cupcakes and Cashmere and Mint, are written by a single writer. These two blogs also use Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest and have accumulated thousands of followers. What these two blogs share in common is that they personalize their content in that they include details about themselves in each post. Domestic Slice also implements these tactics, but you might want to think about how they intersect with your core content strategy.

For instance, should blog posts communicate the identities of each of you individually, or should you work to create a unified identity for Domestic Slice, in which your purposes as an organization are fully laid out? Coming to a decision about what you want your core strategy to be will be crucial if you ever bring on other writers, who might have their own expectations of what Domestic Slice is.

Post Breakdown & Categorization

We noticed that the format of your posts seems to follow a trend that both fits within the genre of lifestyle blogs and has allowed you to create a consistent brand identity. While each of you as writers has a different voice and writes about different topics, the overall themes and goals of Domestic Slice are communicated through the clean layout and content across all of your posts.

Here are some of the trends and common practices we observed:

- All posts are tagged with one or more of Domestic Slice's five content categories.
- All posts are tagged with the name of the author, allowing users to locate all posts written by that author.
- A post may reference and link to sources of inspiration (if any).
- A post may reference and link to previous Domestic Slice posts, sometimes those by other authors.
- Almost all posts feature one or more high-quality photographs.
- All posts link to "Related Slices."
- All posts enable easy social media sharing.

Keeping qualities like this consistent will create a sense of trust in your readers, because each new post is an opportunity to reaffirm their expectations and encourage them to return to your site to read new content.

In particular, we especially like your way of referencing other blogs: you properly attribute your sources of inspiration (which your readers will appreciate, because it easily points them in the direction of further information), but your posts always bring the focus back to your own processes of creating or undertaking a project.

What's more, you provide a sense of narrative to your posts by telling a story about why you're interested in a topic. We've noticed that you sometimes break these stories and subjects into separate posts spaced a few days apart (supply and demand strategy). This is a good way to encourage readers to return to Domestic Slice to hear the rest of the story.

With all of this in mind, here are some suggestions we have:

- Recurring themes like "Slice of the Week" and "Did it Myself" are unique to your blog, and readers may be interested in reading all the posts that fall into those categories. Creating tags for these topics would allow the user to find them easily.
- In that same vein, you might want to consider increasing the number and kinds of tags available to organize blog content. Your five content categories provide a great baseline for topics and is highly appropriate for your navigation bar, but adding more tags could allow you to subdivide content further, which might suit your readers' needs.
- An archive would allow users to jump to posts composed in particular months. This feature is not

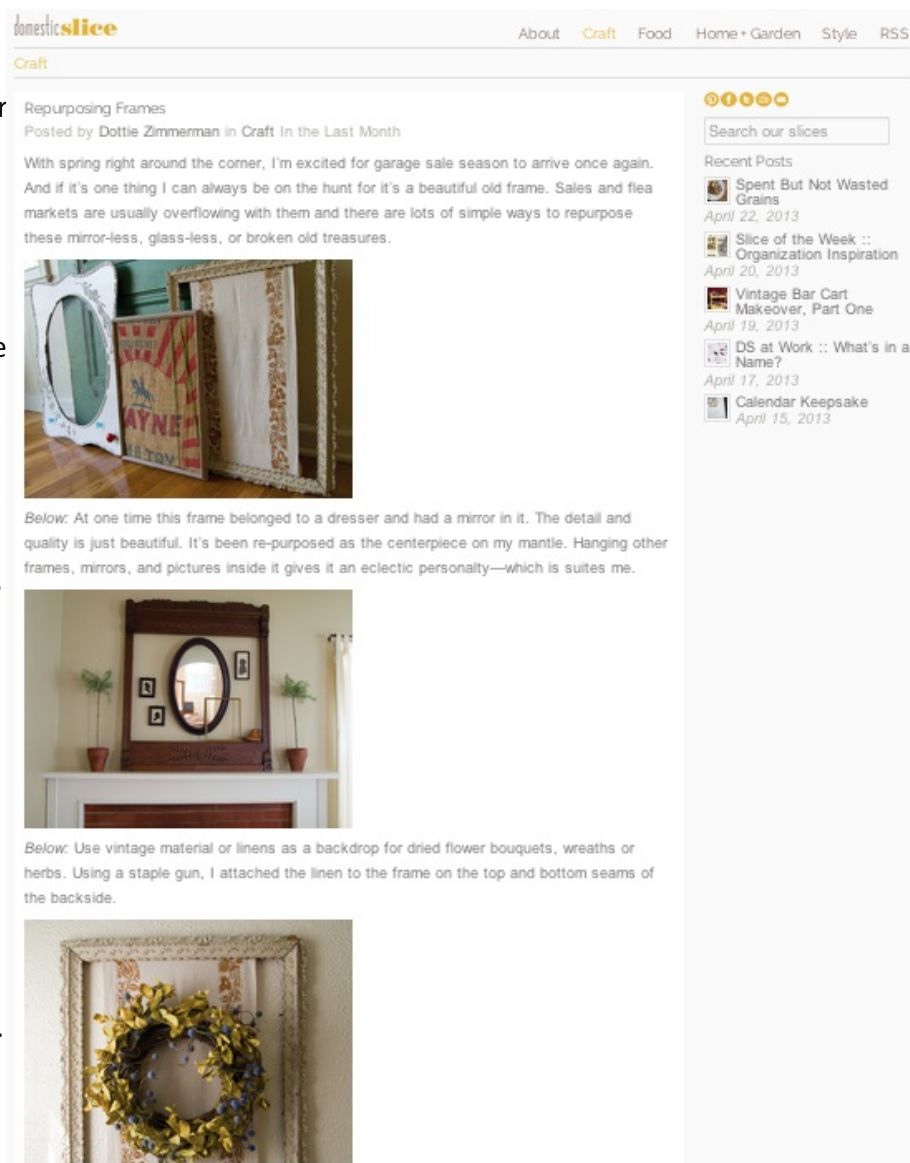
only a common hallmark of the blog genre, but it also allows the user to read content in any order they choose. For example, a reader might jump to December hoping to find posts focused on the holiday season. This would be especially useful if an existing tag does not exactly match up with what a user is hoping to find. While the search bar is a great way to find content on certain topics, an archive simply makes another search method available, and may be preferable to some.

- Creating a governing document with a set of general guidelines for what each post should include would easily let guest writers know what is expected of them.

Design

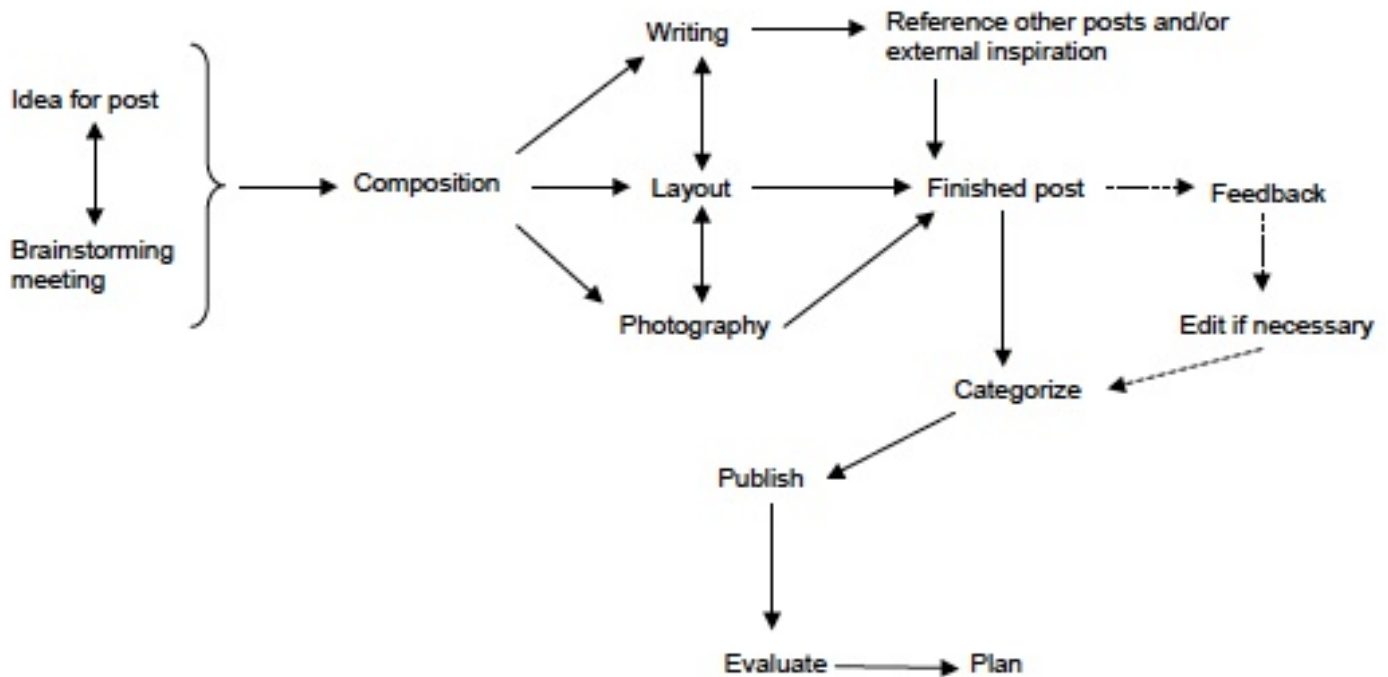
Domestic Slice certainly gives a nice first impression: the design is clean, intuitive, and aesthetically pleasing in terms of color and layout. Furthermore, text is very readable and photographs stand out against the neutral background. Your design and layout works well for the type of content you want to showcase. As you work to maintain these strengths, here are some design considerations we reached after exploring your blog as new users:

- On your homepage, you could think about potential uses for your header image slider. As one example of many possibilities, this space could maybe feature and link to recent posts. By allowing this content to change every so often, it provides a refreshing surprise to returning visitors to your site. They'll quickly see what's new, and also glimpse some of the beautiful photography that makes your posts so attractive and engaging.
- Again on the homepage, the flowing layout is beautiful and allows you to combine photographs with textual previews. However, the "Loading..." box at the bottom of the page (as a result of the endless scrolling) is very small and some users might not notice it. If this is combined with a slow load time, a user may form the incorrect assumption that reaching the bottom of your page (before new content has loaded) has brought them to the end of your content. With this particular design, links to "Older" and "Newer" posts may be more suitable, or else the use of endless scrolling should be made more apparent.



Workflow

The diagram below shows how we envision your workflow, based on our interview with Katie:



Although your workflow is basically linear, different steps inform each other. For instance, Katie mentioned that she sometimes makes layout decisions as she writes and inserts pictures, and vice versa. (In terms of design, this means that coming up with a set layout for posts might not be a good thing to add to a governing document.) It also seems like brainstorming meetings are pretty informal and sometimes sporadic. If you ever consider bringing on interns or other writers, you might want to consider laying out a formal and consistent workflow that ensures that all writers are on the same page, and that everyone is aware of the work everyone else is doing. For example, you might want to start a practice of reviewing each other's work for feedback before posts are published (since it seems like receiving feedback and editing posts is not currently a mandatory part of your workflow). You could also think about creating or adopting a style guide for editorial purposes.

Social Media

Domestic Slice uses social media outlets to great effect. Not only do you have a Facebook page and Twitter account; you also engage your viewers via Pinterest and Bloglovin'. Having a diverse social media presence improves your visibility.

Facebook

The Domestic Slice Facebook page does an excellent job of providing links to content on a regular basis. With 274 likes, it is your most popular and influential social media outlet. To get a better sense of Domestic Slice's Facebook presence across the board, we ran a content analysis on your blog, as well as four other Michigan-based lifestyle blogs: Mrs. Greene, 86Lemons.com, Whisk Kid, and Serendipity Mommy. Here were our findings:

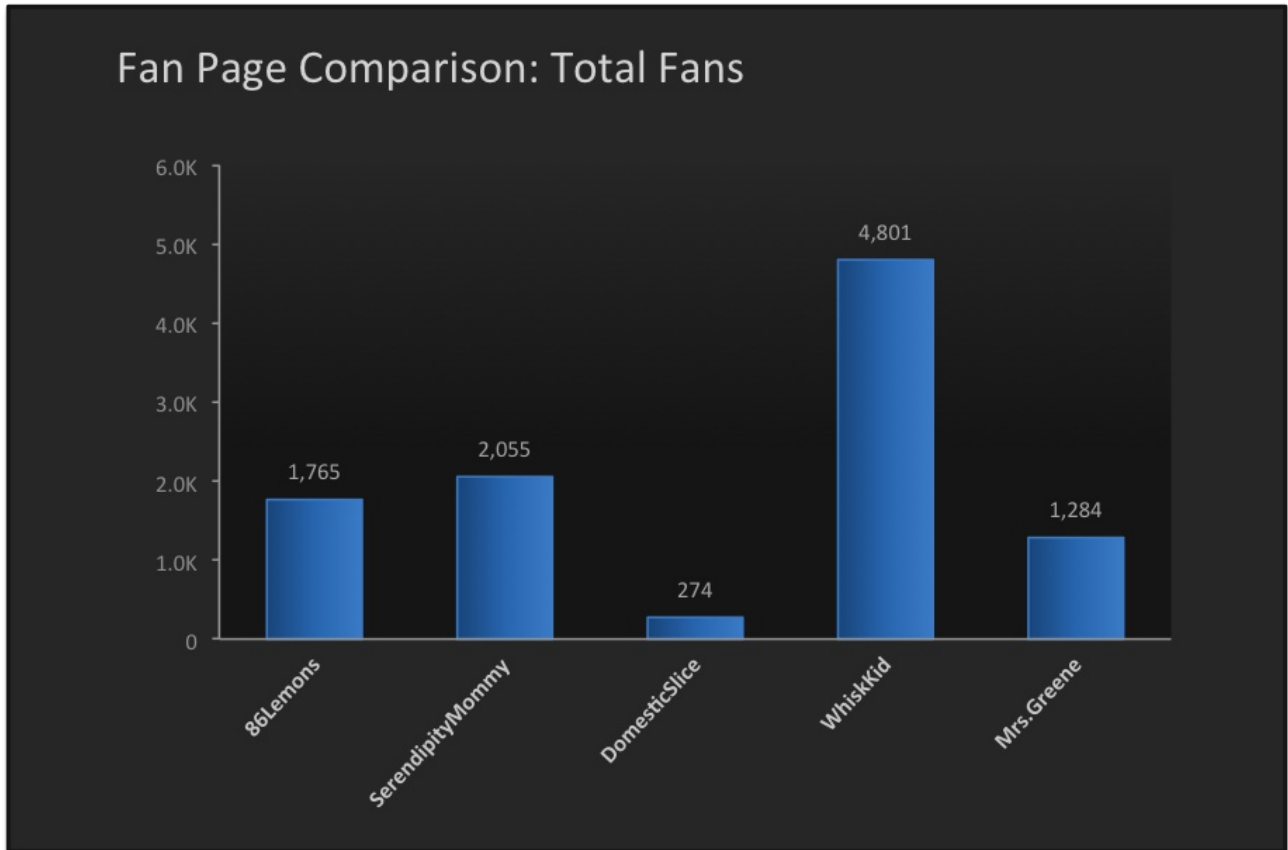


Fig. I - Total Number of Fans per Page

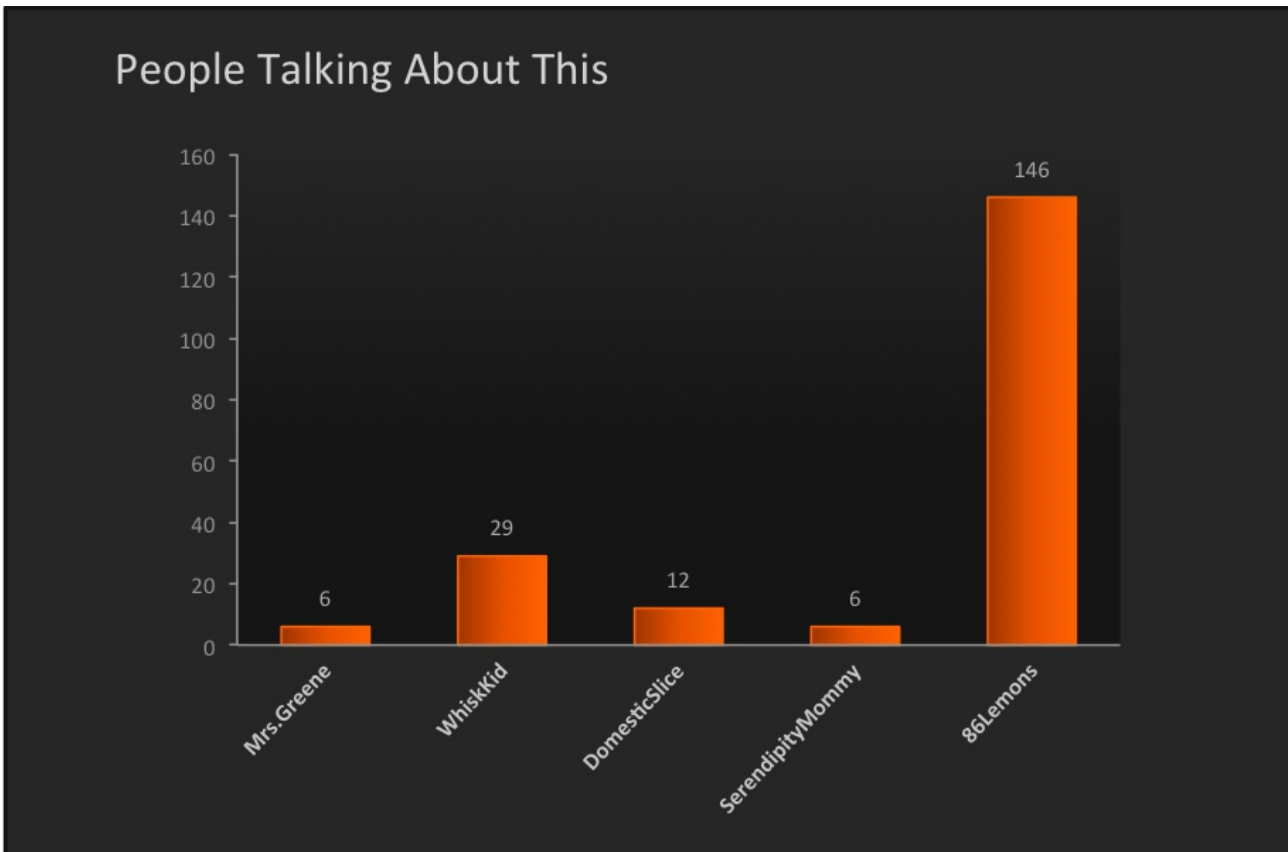


Fig. II - Number of People Talking About Each Page

Fan Page Comparison: Total Engagement on Admin Posts

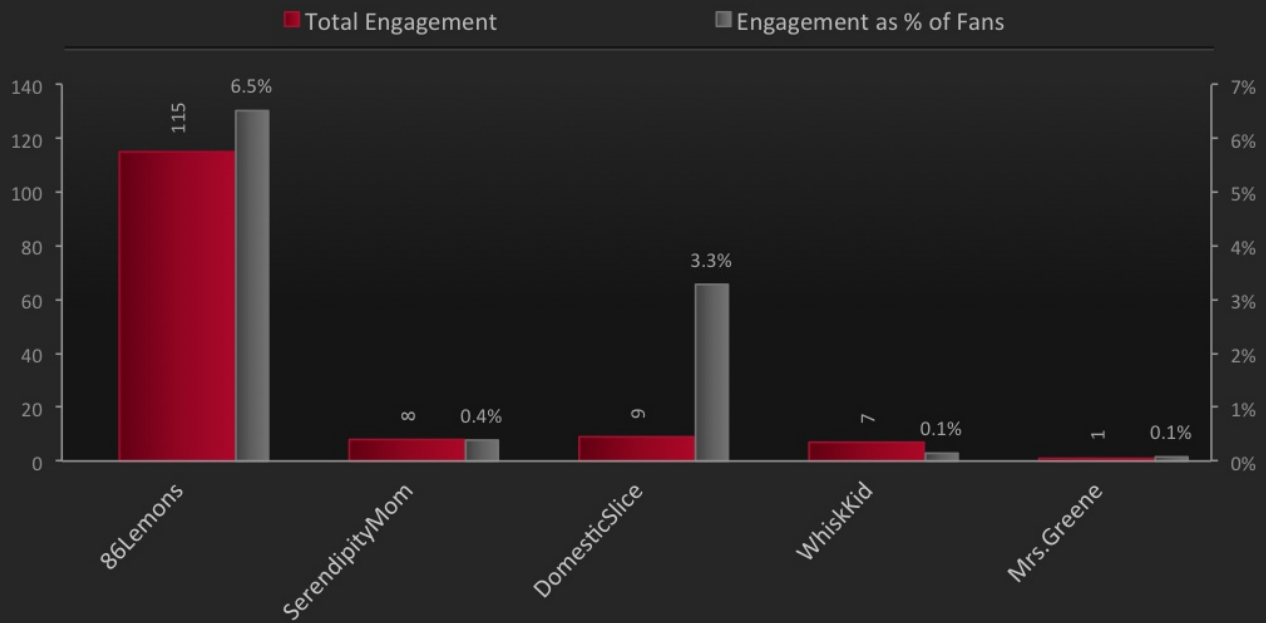


Fig. III - Total Engagement on Admin Posts per Page

Fan Page Comparison: Admin Posts

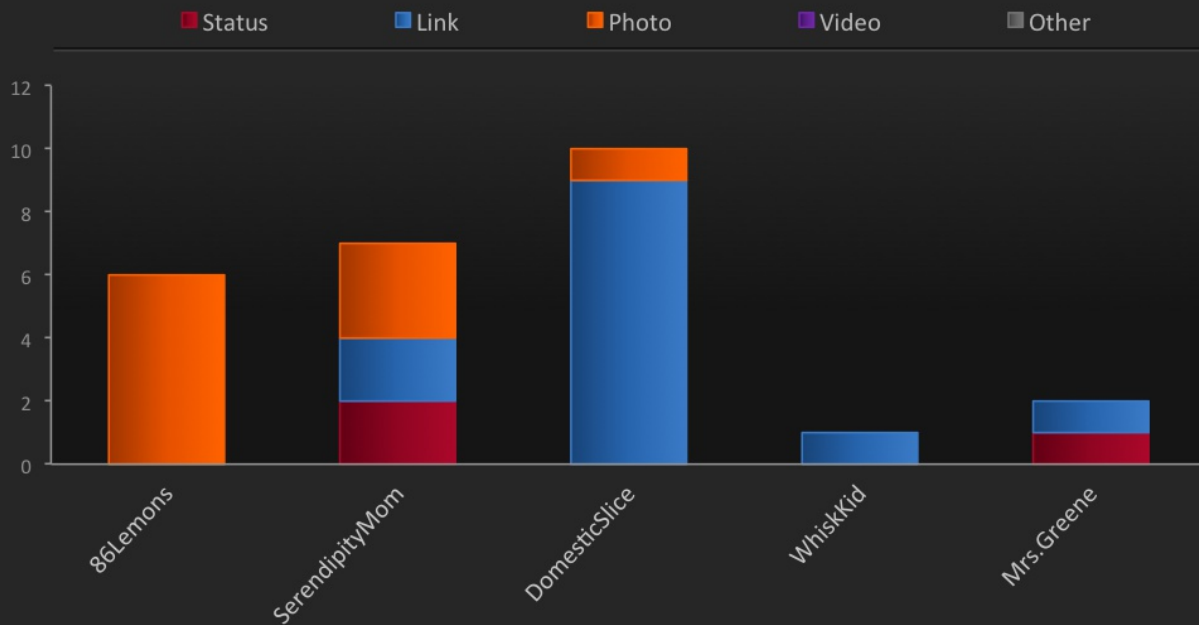


Fig. IV - Number of Admin Posts by Content Type

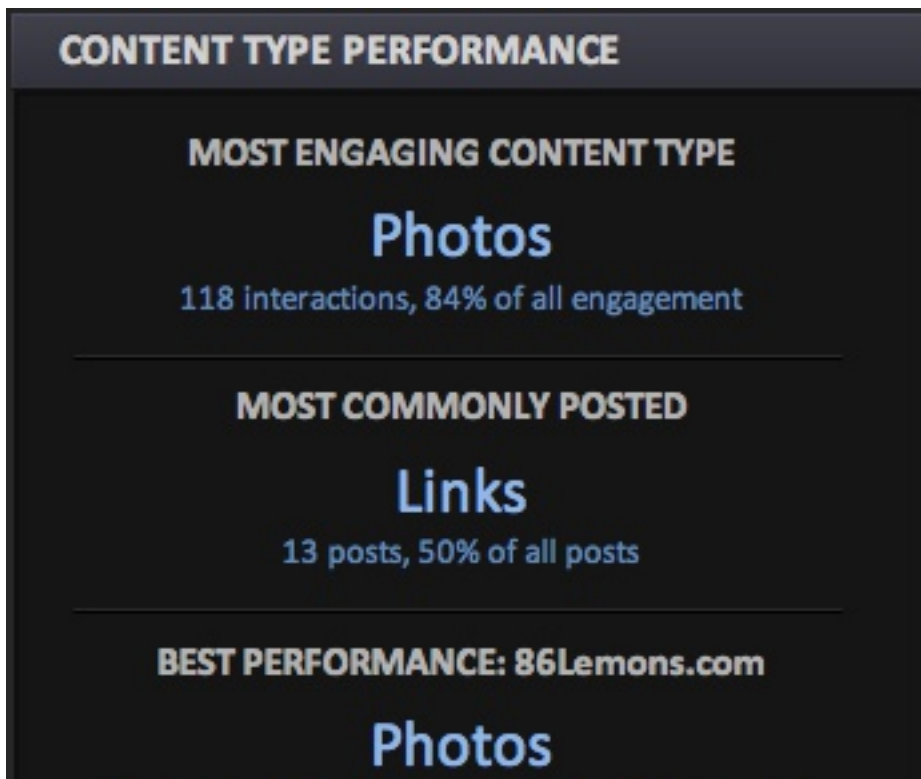


Fig. V - Content Type Performance

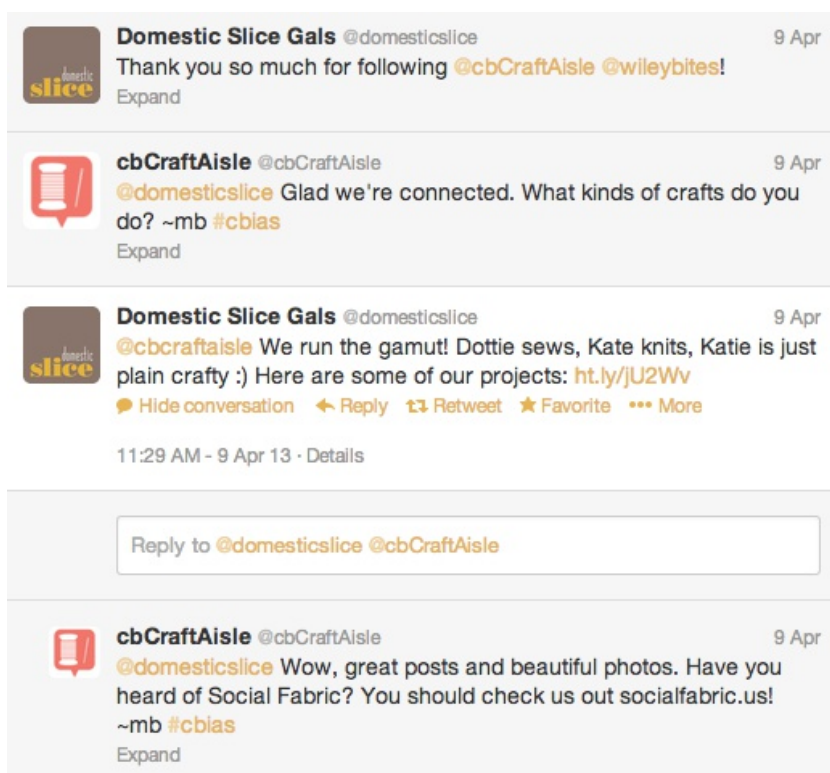
When compared with other blogs, Domestic Slice performs higher than average on fan engagement. Even though the Domestic Slice Facebook page has the fewest followers (Fig. I), it has the third-highest amount of people discussing it (Fig. II), and a relatively high percentage of fans that engage with admin posts (Fig. III).

Although your Facebook page has an above-average percentage for fan engagement, there are a few simple changes that would improve your page's visibility and number of followers, as well as increase your fan engagement. 86Lemons has around 1700 followers (Fig. I), but their numbers for fan discussion and engagement are through the roof (Fig. II and III). One of the reasons for 86Lemon's success is their liberal use of photo-type content, which accounts for 84% of all fan engagement (Fig. V). One possible

reason why uploaded photos perform better than links with generated photos is the difference in image display sizes. Photos retrieved from links are constrained to relatively tiny dimensions (no greater than 125 x 125 pixels), while uploaded photos can be much larger. Switching from hyperlinking your articles to uploading photos that contain the link within their description would increase the size (and appeal) of your Facebook posts.

Twitter

With 111 followers, the Domestic Slice Twitter account is your blog's second most popular social media outlet. Along with links to your blog articles, you often tweet at new followers to thank them for subscribing to the Domestic Slice Twitter feed, and engage in conversations with your followers:



Like your Facebook page, your Twitter account does a great job of reaching out to followers. We wanted to get a better picture of Domestic Slice’s Twitter followers, so we ran a social media analysis on your Twitter account. Here is a snapshot of your Twitter audience:

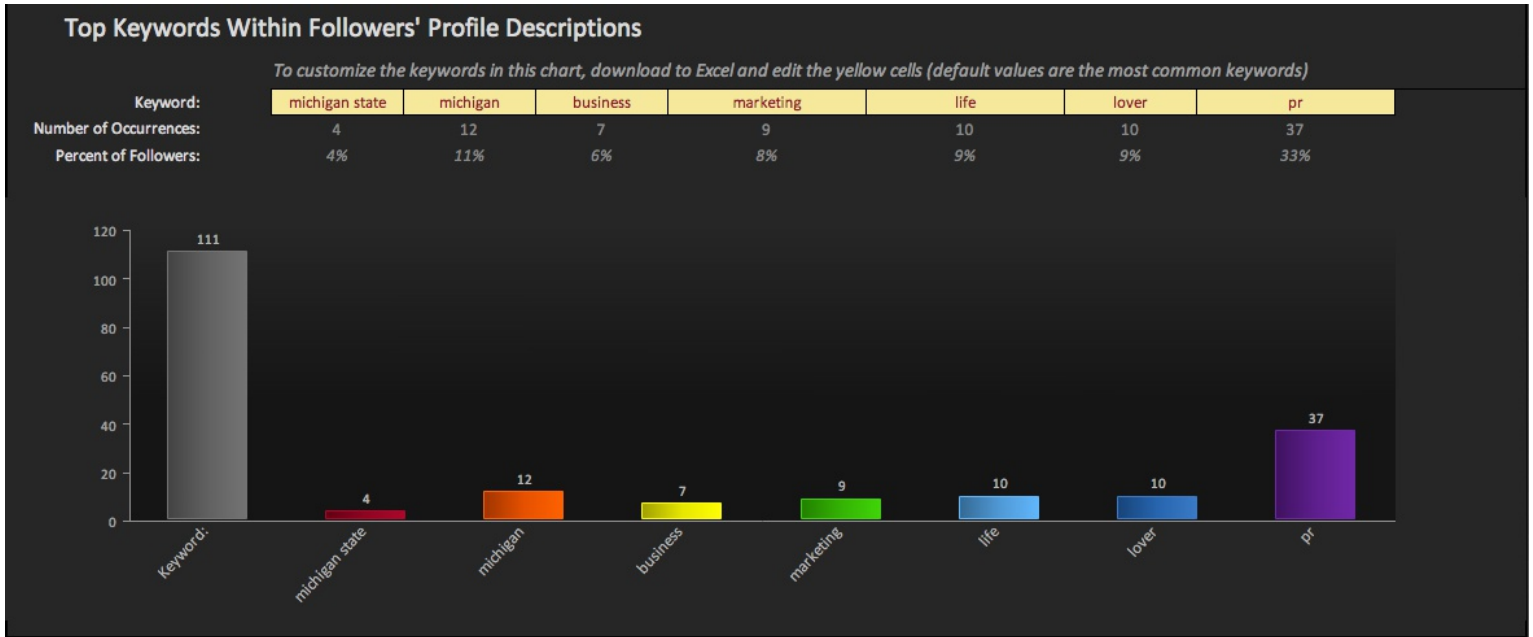


Fig. I - Top Keywords within Followers’ Profile Descriptions

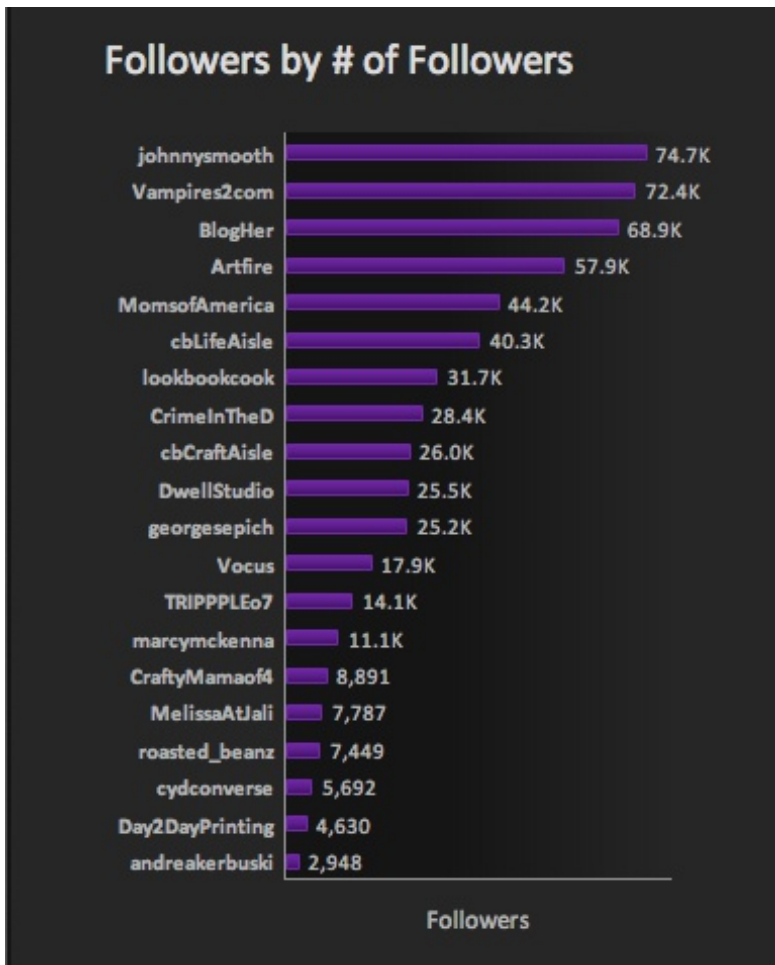


Fig. II - Followers by Number of Followers

The top keywords found within your followers’ profile descriptions gives some insight into the kinds of followers Domestic Slice is attracting. At 37 instances, “pr” is the most common keyword in your followers’ profiles, followed by “Michigan” at 12, “life” and “lover” at 10, and “marketing” at 9 (Fig. I). These keywords indicate that your followers are largely current or former Michiganders who have a career/are interested in public relations and/or marketing. Although this could be attributed to your backgrounds in PR and marketing and your circle of professional acquaintances, you should make sure that Domestic Slice’s Twitter account is not limiting itself to a PR circle (i.e., having a large audience section that is also trying to promote their own website, and is using your Twitter account for self-serving means).

Recommendations

As Domestic Slice continues to grow, here are some final take-aways to keep in mind:

- Developing a core strategy will allow you as an organization to create a set of formalized goals for Domestic Slice and develop a consistent identity for the blog. This will prevent unforeseen changes in voice, tone, or presentation from taking place in the event that you bring on new members. In considering what form your content strategy will take, you can think about whether your posts should communicate the distinct identities of the three of you, or if emphasizing the “brand” of Domestic Slice is more important. A governing document of best practices may be helpful for new/guest writers and/or interns, so that they are fully aware of what their responsibilities are when creating and categorizing content or social media updates.
- The blog’s design and the format and content of your posts is excellent. Their references to other posts/blogs and sense of narrative works well. In terms of organization, you might consider increasing the number and kinds of available tags and including an archive.
- Adding a style guide and formal method of reviewing each other’s work for feedback could be added to your workflow to keep all writers on the same page.
- Creating variety on your social media profiles is an important part of gaining followers or fans that repeatedly come back to your profile.
- You are great at social media posting and engagement to promote new blog content, but posting photos rather than hyperlinks allows the photo size to be larger and more appealing to fans and followers. Links to the blog post can still be included in posts to lead people to the site, but photos are proven to bring up fan count.
- The previously mentioned strategy is a perfect way to develop a consistent tone and voice through all social media outlets. A concise Domestic Slice brand could attract many more followers, and would also increase site traffic, because users would know exactly what they would be coming back to.
- Definitely continue the amazing job you do thanking fans for subscribing and creating dialogue between subscribers and Domestic Slice. These responses let fans know that someone is actually keeping up with your social media accounts, and that you’ll be there in the future if they need you.
- Seeing “PR” as the number one keyword associated with your followers should be a red flag. This often means that your social media posts are caught in a loop of PR professionals. Repost other lifestyle bloggers’ content relevant to your target demographic, and the favor is usually returned. This will get the Domestic Slice brand out to a specific audience interested in your content. However, be aware that including links to sites outside Domestic Slice can lessen the impact of your brand.
- Using a call to action, like “please retweet,” is a very effective way to get followers to spread your content. This helps a post stand out as vital information to your organization. Reposting / retweeting social media content from followers with high numbers of followers helps Domestic Slice with increased visibility on a huge network. This helps increase the effectiveness of the time spent updating your social media.
- When posting on social media, including links to sites outside Domestic Slice can lessen the impact of your brand by leading people to other brands from your account. It is fine to do, but keeping it at a minimum is the best way to help users focus on the D.S. brand.