

FourFourTwo (FFT) website analysis:

FourFourTwo (FFT) is a print and online football magazine that pledges “(3) to bring a level of insight about the game that is impossible to find in any other football magazines, websites or newspapers.” Established in 1994 after the England football team failed to qualify for that year’s World Cup in the United States, the magazine is published by ‘Future’ and is made up of nine editors and staff writers (personnel list image A below left). Profit is made by selling hard copies of the magazine in shops, through monthly subscriptions (image B, below right). According to the FFT media pack, the audience is 91% male with 65% aged between 16-35 and 64% falling into the ABC1 adult category, and the FFT ‘About us’ section describes their audience as individuals who are “(3) knowledgeable about the game and vary in age from youngsters to senior citizens.”

Image A (3) (below left), Image B (7) (below right) are Screen shots taken from the FourFourTwo website.

Me

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MAGAZINE/WEBSITE

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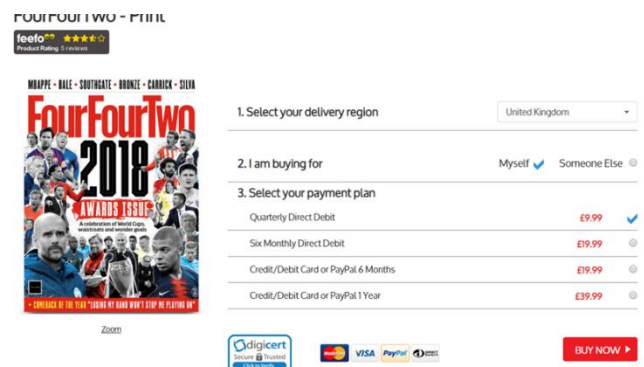
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UK digital editor Joe Brewin

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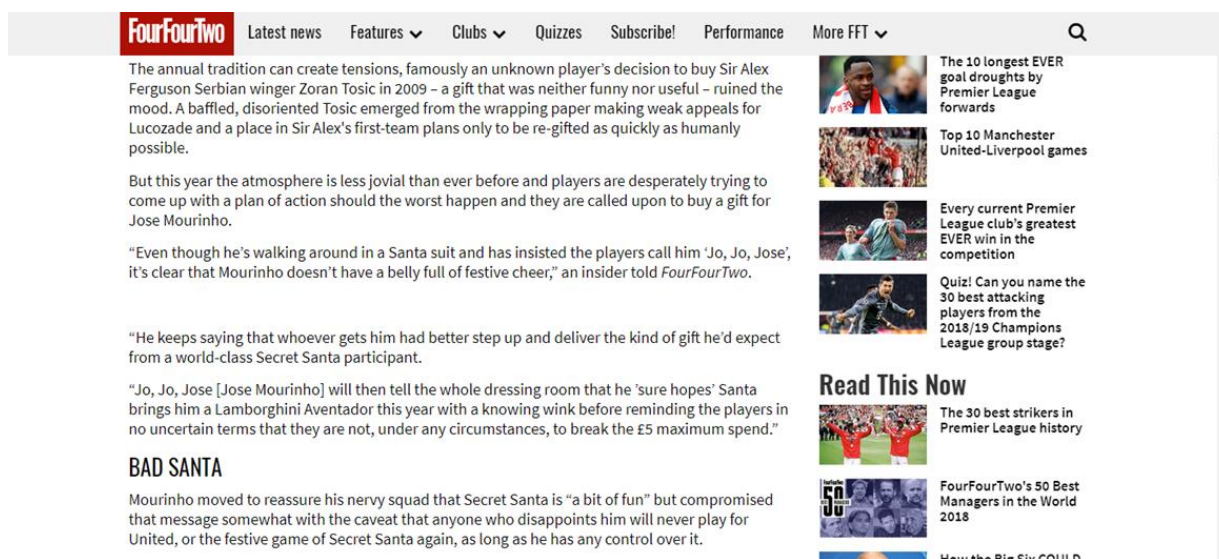


Features produced in their print magazine are more analytical and exclusive than online features, as the publishers want people to buy the magazine, which costs around £8.00 in a shop. FourFourTwo pride themselves on their in depth features and include: “(3) It is not unusual for the editorial team to dedicate 12 pages to a single story when necessary, taking the readers deeper than they’ve ever been into the chosen topic using the world’s best football writers” in their ‘About us’ section of the website. Moreover, the production of the magazine takes a lot longer than the publishing of online stories; therefore writers can dedicate more time to writing analytical and highly-researched features. Andrew Murray who is a staff writer at FourFourTwo highlighted the difference between web and magazine stories. “It takes about six weeks to produce each issue of the magazine. When we start working on it (the magazines), to hit the newsstands things can’t be as dated, so it is more story and feature led, whereas, online you’re looking for clicks and it needs to be quite timely.”

FFT do publish analytical features online, however they are not as detailed as print. This is because they have less time, but also because online features are free to view and will act as a taster to what can be viewed in the monthly magazines. However, the structuring of online is completely different to print. Paragraphs in online features are short and seldom exceed two sentences, similar to news sites like the BBC. This is evident in images C and D (below).



(1) Image C (above) and Image D (Below) screenshots taken from FourFourTwo website:



The tight structure ensures the story is fast paced and also means that the reader does not have to work too hard. Online features typically stick to the more popular football teams and individuals as they are more widely supported and attract more viewers. “You’ll focus on the big six Premier League Teams and maybe Real Madrid, Barcelona and maybe Juventus” said Murray. For example, the ‘Secret Santa’ story in Image B (above) concerns Jose Mourinho and Manchester United who are famous footballing figures. The structure of the story on image D, is like that of a news story, however the report is a fictitious and satirical piece. This story will be promoted on social media (see image E below), to the magazines 1.8 million social media followers on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. FFT occasionally break news stories like match reports, however, Murray is quick to stress that FFT is not a news breaking site. “We don’t break news stories very much. You don’t come to FourFourTwo to get breaking news stories or those kind of deep down exclusives that the newspapers would get. They are quite expensive to pay for and a reader doesn’t naturally come to FourFourTwo for those stories.” Despite the story being an entertaining and amusing read, the feature’s enticing heading and news like presentation, suggests that the story is actually true.

Once readers figure out that the story is not genuine, readers may feel like they have been misled, as they thought they were going to get an inside, exclusive scoop of the Manchester United football team.

Image E (Below) is a screenshot taken from the FourFourTwo Facebook page

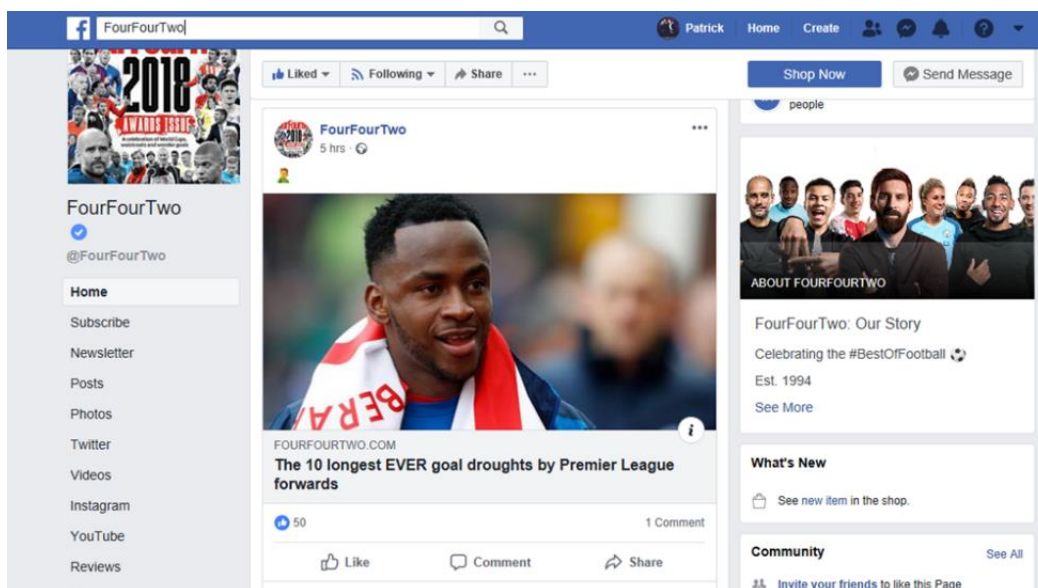
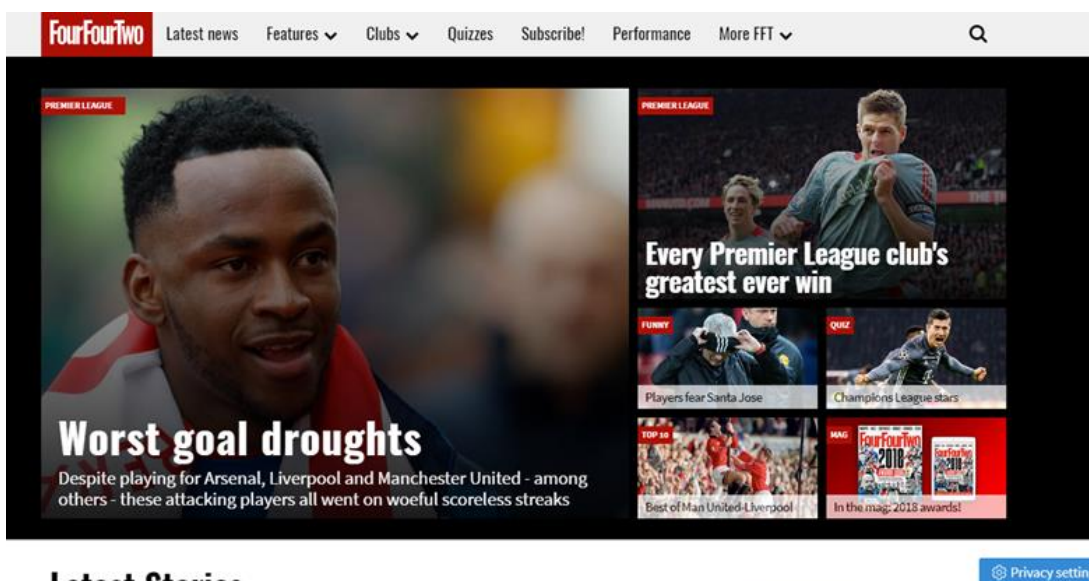


Image F (Below) is a typical FFT home screen. The simplicity of the layout of the website is extremely important for a website like FourFourTwo. With the utilisation of dominating images, a sharp red, black, white and grey colour scheme and the way in which different stories and sections are spaced out, the website resembles the magazine.

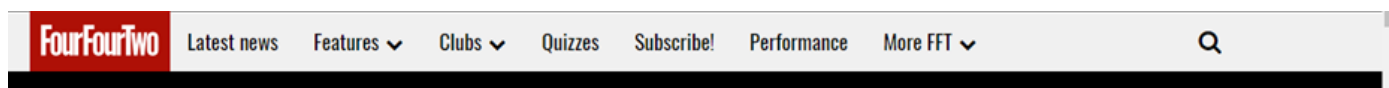
Image F: a typical FourFourTwo home screen (6)



Firstly the colour scheme in image C (above) is extremely important. According to Maier 2012 (8) "Red can actually have a physical effect on people, raising blood pressure and respiration rates. Dark red, when combined with white and grey, gives a very elegant and professional impression" therefore the choice of red in conjunction with the black, white and the grey is effective as it not only makes the website look and

feel more professional, exciting and of a high quality. Furthermore, each page uses the same colour scheme and is set out in a similar kind of way. (2) (Beaird and George, 2013) highlighted this importance saying, “The consistent use of a very limited colour palette also helps to unify the pages.” The sites colour uniformity ensures the reader that they have not gone off track when surfing through different stories. However, in image D previously, the colour scheme is lighter and deviates slightly from the dark and dramatic home screen reader first sees when website is opened. The sudden change can reduce the sense of unification within the website and lead some readers to believe that they have accidentally accessed a different website and leave them feeling confused.

Image G: Site Navigation Structure on the FFT website homepage (6)



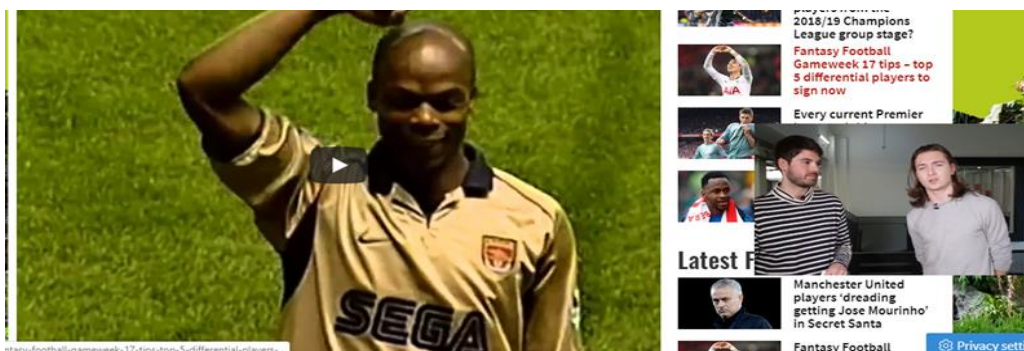
Furthermore, the navigation structure seen in image G (Above) is present in the masthead of every single page on the FFT website. This importance of the same navigation block is exemplified by (Beaird and George, 2013) (2). “A navigation structure that not only changes when hovered over with the cursor, but also indicates the active page or section helps users to recognise where they are, and how to get where they want to go.” The presence of this structure enables the reader to go from page to page without getting lost or confused; thus making their reading experience more pleasurable. This is vital to ensuring that readers and viewers continue to use FFT for their features, because if the layout of the website is too confusing to figure out, then the reader will simply find another website to refer to. Moreover, the masthead is not too domineering. This is important because it ensures that the attention and focus is fully on the stories and the advertisements that encompass them.

The feature writers of FFT face hefty competition from other sites such as The Guardian, Goal.com and GivemeSport.com who are also known for their football features and articles. In order to get as many subscribers as possible there is a large focus on Search Engine Optimization (SEO). Staff writer Murray highlighted this focus. “In terms of SEO obviously we focus on the big six Premier League teams as that is what gets the most clicks so it is more optimised for those searches” said Murray. “Also, major polls stories such as top 100 players in world football, top 50 managers in world football and other lists like that we try to get as high in google as we can. “If you google, top 100 players, FourFourTwo is one of the first to come up in google



Image H: (7) Screenshot is a feature titled, “Every current Premier League club’s greatest EVER win in the competition” written by Back of the Net.

important to Image H an example of 100’ stories.



us.” (below) is their “top

In the story on Image H, each Premier League team its own designated section and explanation along with highlights of the mentioned match embedded within the story. It is vital that when played, the videos do not take the reader away from the FFT site and to a different web page. Furthermore, individuals who want to skip to their desired team, without reading the entire feature can do so by simply scrolling down. FourFourTwo readers may skip pages in the magazine to go to a particular section and they can do this online by choosing what pages to look at and by scrolling down. Moreover, when it comes down to advertising, FFT also aim to place advertisements in stories that generate the most views. This is evident in their media pack (4) which says: "Alongside content from the print version of the preview, the online hub features unique editorial content and user-generated content that achieves significant organic traffic and reach." This is prominent in the positioning of the advertisement in the bottom right of Image E above). The advertisement is an automatically played video, and its' positioning to the right of the page means the ad can be seen and understood, without getting in the way of the story. This ensures that both the reader and advertiser are satisfied, as the story is not disturbed and the advertisement can be seen and heard by potential customers. .

Overall, the FourFourTwo website has a professional appearance and is very easy to use. The layout of the website and advertisements ensures that its' entertaining features and videos are always the centre of focus. The choice of the colour scheme excites the readers and also reinforces a sense of professionalism, while not being too overbearing. However, the fictitious stories and the news like structure of their satirical stories could make some members of their audience feel that the website is unreliable; and therefore they could look elsewhere for genuine stories.

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