

Introduction

Image sharing sites like Flickr have long provided the functionality of allowing users to assign tags or keywords to images - both those that they've uploaded themselves and images uploaded by others in the community. Video sharing sites such as YouTube allow people to assign tags to the entire length of a particular video asset. But the simple fact that video, unlike still images, tends to be a linear experience that unfolds over a duration of time limits the usefulness of a tag applied to the entire clip, especially with longer clips. Some image sharing sites also allow users to draw rectangles around a certain part of a still image and assign tags to that subsection of the image, which of course makes it easier to draw attention to minor details and, in effect, create a deep-link to a piece of an image. To date, only one major video sharing site has launched similar functionality for video, but several smaller sharing sites and technology startups are beginning to enable it.

Most of the companies are focused on simple time-based tagging. In other words, the ability for a user to pause a video at any point along the timeline and write an appropriate comment regarding what's happening at that particular point in the video. Content producers themselves are obviously also free to create their own set of tags. In either case, the result is a table of contents or index, much like DVD chapters and associated scene index menus.

The implications for marketers are significant. As consumers become increasingly used to long-form video content as a source for product information, brand research and/or entertainment, the ability for marketers producing that content to provide deep-linking to certain key points will maximize efficiency and search-ability of the video assets. Video tagging provides a simple form of interactivity and affords the user a much greater level of control over a video than what they're used to - which tends to be limited to play, pause, rewind & fast forward. This enhanced level of control will be key to a more satisfying user experience - people expect full control of any and all digital content, and tags combined with deep linking begin to provide that control.

Long form video content itself is an excellent way for companies to provide detailed product information or brand experiences much like the still image- and text-based experience that is commonplace on the web today. But it also affords marketers the ability to deliver that content in a rich and deeply engaging way. It's the power of deep product info (which the user is "pulling" rather than having a short commercial message pushed at them) combined with the raw emotive power of moving images, sound and music.

Vendor Landscape

There are several companies currently building out video tagging technology. Those we have uncovered to date are: [Veotag](#), [Click.TV](#), [Viddler](#), [Motionbox](#), [BubblePly](#) and [Mojiti](#). Microsoft is also reportedly working on its own version, but has not publicly announced a development timeline or release date. Video sharing & syndication site [Gotuit](#) recently announced "SceneMaker," a platform for tagging videos distributed on their network. Each company is taking a slightly different angle in their approach, with Viddler and Motionbox focused primarily on empowering the content creator or uploader to enhance their own videos with tags. BubblePly and Mojiti are focused on community-based tagging, allowing anyone to edit a video by writing tags and adding graphical elements like speech balloons and captions. Veotag and Click.TV have more immediate marketing implications - we'll explore those two companies in a bit more detail. One feature they share is basic reporting that can show popularity of the different tags, providing insight into what pieces of the content are most appealing at an aggregate level.

Veotag (<http://www.veotag.com>)

The company has perhaps the simplest and most polished user interface, both for adding tags and for consuming tagged content. They seem to have a focus on business/enterprise and education. The player is straightforward, with the tag index appearing either next to or below the video window itself. The index simply lists the tags and corresponding time codes, and clicking any tag jumps directly to that point in the content. Veotag supports subsections, which can help to provide broad overview upon a quick scan of the first-level index, while also allowing easy access to sub-chapters.

Like all of the players listed here, Veotag supports multiple originating video formats/codecs, including Quicktime (official documentation says Quicktime support is coming, but our tests worked with minor issues – including lack of full control over video until entire file has downloaded), Flash Video and Windows Media. It is the ONLY company, however, that can actually deploy in original format. All of the others digest the content and convert to Flash video. All deployments on platforms other than Veotag, then, must be in Flash video.

Veotag currently only supports tagging by the content producer. Consumers cannot add their own tags or comments. This may be a good thing for marketers who wish to enable deep linking and enhanced usability of their long form content without opening up to true community dialog. Consumers can share and email deep links within the video, which helps to maintain some word of mouth potential.

Veotag's pricing model has several tiers, ranging from free (ad supported) to Basic Business at \$495/year and up to 2400 total minutes to Enterprise at \$9,995/year with 12,000 total minutes. Additional minutes can be purchased at a negotiated rate.

At the higher pricing tiers, starting at Basic Business, the company also supports customized players and synchronized PowerPoint slide shows.

Click.TV (<http://www.click.tv>)

Like Veotag, this company supports basic tagging of video clips. In addition, they are enabling some very powerful additional features, including distinct multiple sets of tags, which Click.TV calls "playlists." The content producer can create their own playlists AND (if desired) open it up to the community to create their own playlist. The tag-browsing interface appears as an overlay on

top of the video content, showing up only when the user hovers their cursor over the video window. Multiple playlists with source titles run down the left hand side, and each spawns a row of square icons, indicating a tag along the timeline. Mouseover each square to get a preview – the first few words of the tag. A click on any square jumps playback directly to that point in the video. A running blog window usually appears below the video, showing the full text of the tags as the video plays. The blog interface also allows the user to post comments (if enabled by content owner).

Where Click.TV gets really interesting is the search feature. Simply type a term into the box, click the arrow, and the system automatically creates a playlist highlighting the tags where your search term appears. AND it begins to play the video, but only those sections where your tag appears. It effectively creates a dynamically edited, personalized version of the video showing the user ONLY those portions that are of the most interest. You can continue to navigate the video by clicking other tags or send your playlist to a friend, who then gets access to the complete video, but defaulted to your search-term-only playlist. The best example of how this could be used is sporting events. See this demo (<http://www.click.tv/ctss/worldcup.html>) featuring the controversial head-butt incident during a recent World Cup Soccer match. Type “Zidane” into the search box to see how it works.



Imagine this capability applied to an automaker’s long form content. Let’s say that they’ve produced a 20-minute documentary covering a new model. As a consumer watching that content, if I’m particularly interested in the engine, I could type that into the search box and instantly get ONLY the content from that video that relates to the engine. Consumer control to the next level.

Click.TV has not yet established their pricing model.

Click.TV’s search interface showing the result of a search for “Zidane.”

Implications & Recommendations

As marketers produce more and more video content that runs longer than 15 or 30 seconds, video tagging will become a powerful tool for enabling maximum consumer control and relevancy. It will allow for rapid navigation and customization. It can ultimately help to expose detailed meta data (the comments/tags) to search engines, greatly increasing the accuracy of video search and improving consumer discoverability.

Marketers should consider tagging existing video assets to tap into these features, and should encourage production partners to consider this functionality during the content development process.

About the Author

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Lockhorn is a member of the agency's Advanced Marketing Solutions (AMS) team and is focused on interaction with video across all platforms. He supports client teams with research, education, and ideation. During his 10-year tenure at the agency, his various roles have centered around the intersection of media, creative & technology. He writes a regular column for [ClickZ](#) and is a frequent speaker on emerging media.

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