

When good things come in online packages: U of T undergrad unwraps Bowbox

August 1 2012, By Gavin Au-Yeung



What's in a bowbox? Almost anything you like. Credit: Image by U of T News

University of Toronto's Behrad Ghadiri wants you to think inside the box.

Ghadiri, in his fourth year of studying computer science, recently launched a web start-up called BowBox that aims to build the thrill of [anticipation](#) into online exchanges – and it's proving to be a popular concept.

“It’s like making a personal mix-tape with videos, pictures, and text,” explains Ghadiri. “Putting the different forms of media together is what makes BowBox unique and special to users.”

What separates BowBox from other sharing services is that items are

revealed in the order the sender places them in the “box”. This way, the surprise is similar to that when opening an actual gift box (with a bow on top) and taking out the items one by one.

Three months ago the website was only an idea, something Ghadiri thought he’d develop for his own, personal use.

“I never thought it would become something that other people would use,” he says.

But BowBox – a company which currently comprises Ghadiri and two friends - has accumulated a staggering 10,000 users since its launch a month ago. And Ghadiri accredits much of the site’s growth to the social news website Reddit.

Ghadiri introduced BowBox through a simple posting. The post drew vast attention and even prompted a blog piece on The Next Web.

Reddit, a forum where critics give a quick “thumbs up or down” to ideas, isn’t always nurturing. But users were quick to offer feedback, provide moral support and encourage the website’s evolution and growth.

“As programmers, we make the site functional – that’s the hard part – but we may completely miss something else,” says Ghadiri, as he jokes about forgetting to put a “cancel” button to the box creation process.

One crucial piece of feedback from the Reddit community helped Ghadiri refine the registration process for users. Originally, registering required synchronising a Facebook or Twitter account, but that changed when Ghadiri discovered many people didn’t want to provide their account or didn’t even have one.

“I’m not sure where we would be without the support of the Reddit

community,” says Ghadiri. “It’s hard to find users who are willing to sign up, especially for something they are not familiar with.”

Still in the early phases of the start-up, the website’s main priority is increasing the number of users and boosting their satisfaction. But Ghadiri has plans for monetizing the idea in the future.

“One idea is to use affiliate marketing,” says Ghadiri. “So if I send you a box with a song inside, it can recommend similar songs or maybe link to iTunes so you can buy the song.”

But for now, he’s ecstatic about the growth and popularity of the website.

“BowBox isn’t just another photo sharing website,” says Ghadiri. “And it’s very exciting to see other people being able relate to this concept, and to know that I’m not alone with this concept.”

Provided by University of Toronto

Citation: When good things come in online packages: U of T undergrad unwraps Bowbox (2012, August 1) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-08-good-online-packages-undergrad-unwraps.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.