

Data-driven telecoms PR and content marketing

Making LoRaWAN stand out in a crowded LPWAN market

Media data analysis and the market opportunity

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What's in this report?

- An assessment of the LPWAN market
- A data-led overview of online media analysis and where the opportunities are
- A PR perspective on cutting through the noise and standing out

The LPWAN market

There is no doubt that LPWAN has been one of the hottest telecoms trends for 2017, and interest in this technology shows no sign of slowing.

With ABI Research predicting four billion IoT devices will rely on Low Power Wide Area Networks by 2025, it's forecasted that this technology will become the fastest-growing connectivity segment in the market.

Licensed vs unlicensed

There has been significant debate as to whether unlicensed variants will be superseded in the not too distance future, particularly as Narrowband-IoT (NB-IoT), which operates over licensed spectrum, is rolled out over the next few years.

“LPWAN technologies operating under unlicensed spectrum have the early market advantage and provide the quickest time to deployment, and the lowest infrastructure and operating costs for many IoT applications. However, emerging 3GPP LPWAN technologies like eMTC and NB-IoT are promising similar performance and have many more advantages.”

- Samuel McLaughlin, Research Analyst at ABI Research

Although unlicensed technologies account for almost three quarters of LPWAN usage today, the message from analysts and the media alike is that they are set to be displaced by their licensed counterparts.

But the reality is different.

For technologies such as LoRaWAN, there are specific sectors, such as utilities and retail, where this standard is a perfect fit and will continue to thrive.

And, when it comes to LPWAN, the media is currently dominated by NB-IoT hype.

At XYZ, we have conducted a market and data analyst to identify if there's an opportunity for technologies, such as LoRaWAN, to take back Share of Voice and use PR to assert that it does, and will continue to, have a valuable place in the IoT market.

Online media analysis

When it comes to understanding how different technologies are perceived, Google is what matters.

The availability of so much content, and so many ways of consuming it, is great news for audiences. But it's a challenge for vendors looking to make their voices heard and emphasises the importance of generating coverage where Google places value.

After all, Google is the first port of call for anyone looking to learn more about LPWAN or identify the solution that will fit their needs from a purchasing perspective. If Google doesn't place value on a piece of content from a lower-tier publication, the likelihood is that no one else will either.

A Google search will not show every article ever written about LPWAN, and nor should it. Not all coverage is generated equal. So, when it comes to a PR analysis we focus solely on 'sticky coverage'.

Sticky coverage

The goal of a PR campaign.

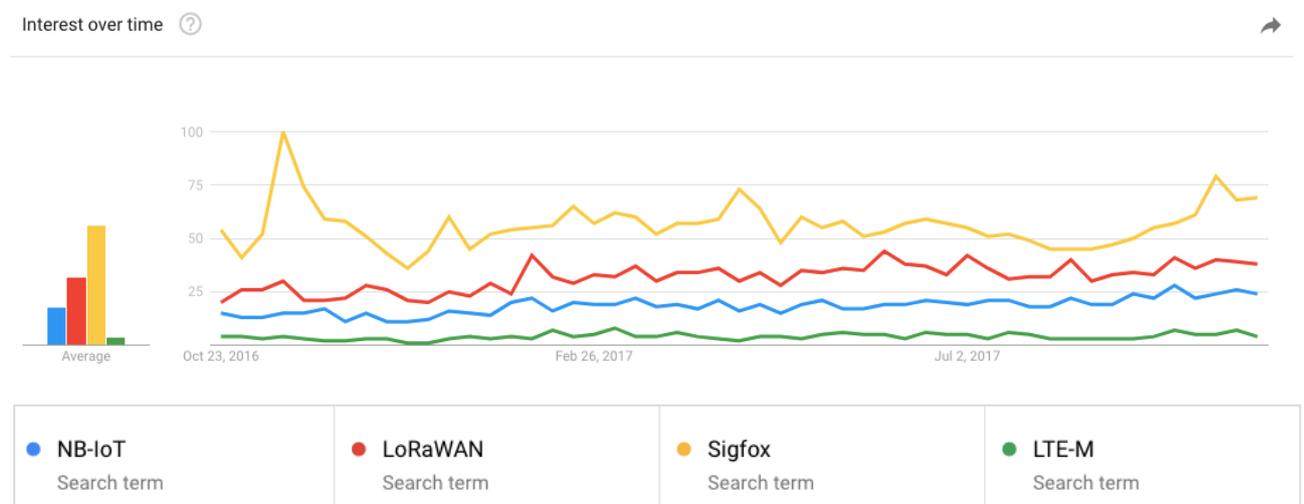
Defined as search results that rank highly in Google for long periods, promoting greater brand awareness and acting as a vehicle to more effectively reach decision makers.

What are we looking for?

We use a combination of Google's results and our own proprietary tools to understand the market from an organic search point of view – i.e. if Jo Bloggs were to search for LPWAN, what would they find?

Google trends

The first port of call is Google trends, which details the number of searches for a specific term over a set period of time. In the results below, we can see that, despite analyst forecasts, there is still significantly more interest in the unlicensed LPWAN technologies when contrasted with licensed alternatives. When we compare LoRaWAN with NB-IoT for example, we see that the unlicensed player saw 74.5% more Google searches.



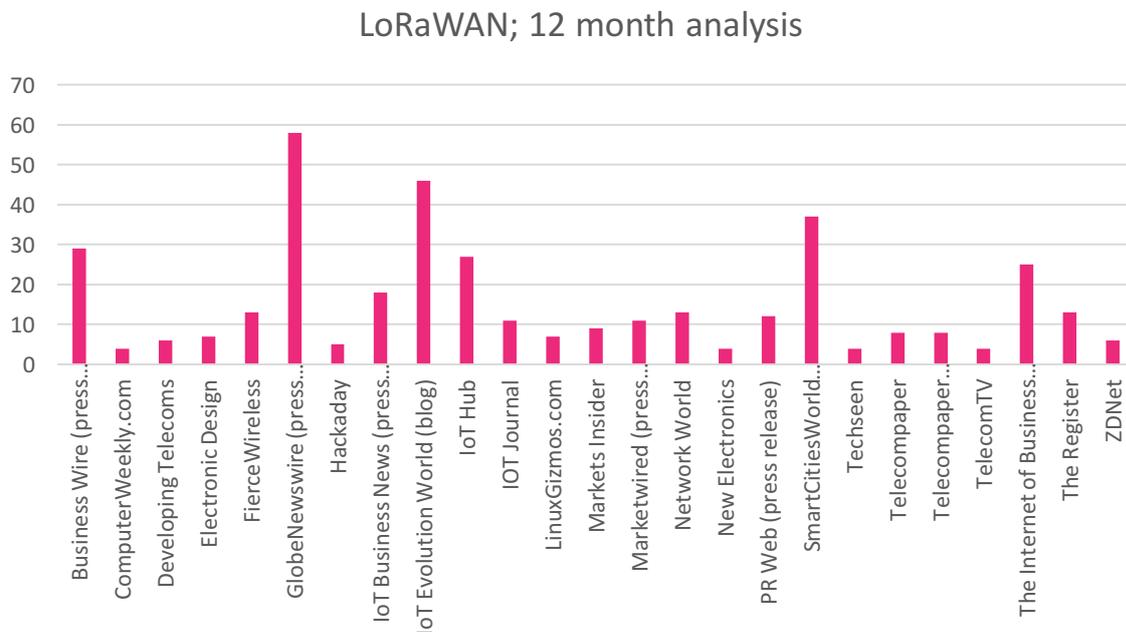
When it comes to standing out in the media, the LPWAN market poses a particular challenge as it encompasses a number of key technologies fighting for share of voice. For vendors operating in such a crowded landscape, garnering the right kind of media coverage and maintaining visibility is not easy.

So, bearing in mind what the data shows us about interest in the various technologies, does the media coverage reflect this?

As we're looking specifically at LoRaWAN we have conducted a 12-month media analysis for both this technology and its biggest licensed competitor NB-IoT to find out.

LoRaWAN analysis

This is an analysis of the 633 pieces of sticky coverage showing on Google over the past 12 months, and highlights the top 25 titles covering the keyword “LoRAWAN”.



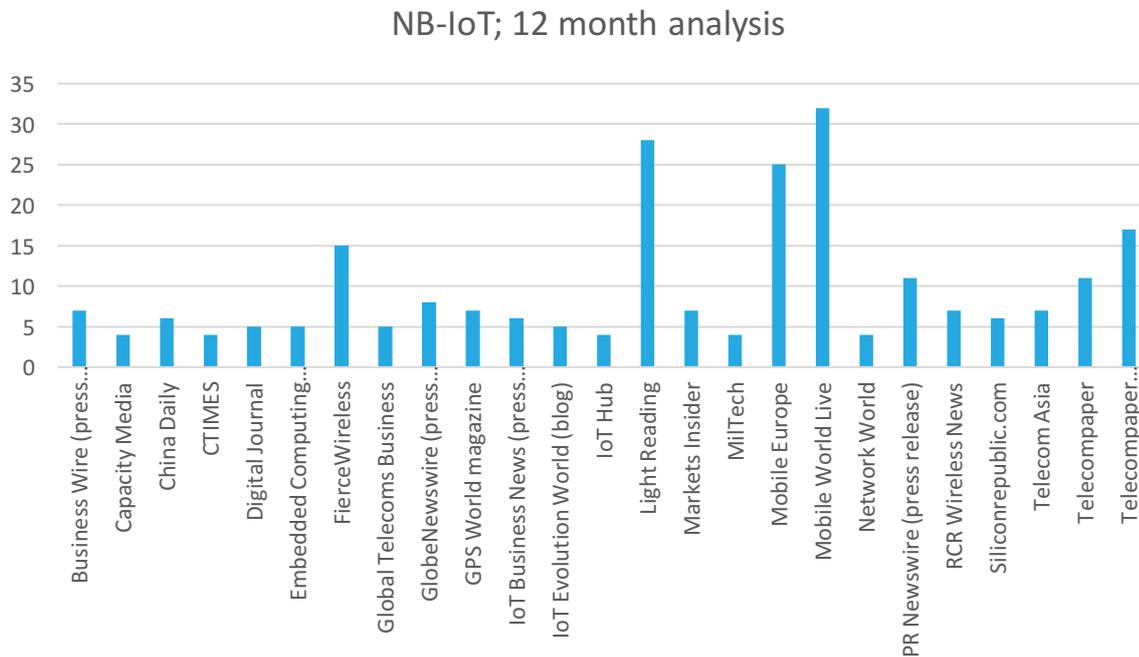
While a number of the titles you would expect – including Fierce Wireless and Computer Weekly – are there, what we also find is a heavy focus on newswire coverage.

Many companies operating in this crowded space will find a newswire attractive at first glance. If they have a lot of information to share, it's easy to blast several releases out there in the hope that some of that news will hit the right target, influence a prospect, or gain traction for the brand. Although it can help SEO in the short term, there are some inherent problems with a newswire approach:

- **It isn't sticky** Yes, it temporarily boosts SEO at the time of the release itself, but newswire hits have a short shelf life. A week or two after running it, all the evidence is gone. They'll be displaced in favour of meatier editorial pieces and stop adding value, since Google's algorithms are clever enough to distinguish "real" articles from newswire hits.
- **Who reads newswires?** We certainly don't, and the media don't either. Once in a blue moon a journalist may pick up a story from a newswire hit. But for a smaller player in the LPWAN space, a release issued via a newswire service is going to deliver minimal bottom-line impact.
- **What value does it add?** The benefit of an article on, say, Light Reading is that the industry trusts the publication to get the story right and give interesting commentary around it. As a result, it has a high, engaged readership and offers far more ROI than issuing a story over PRNewswire.

NB-IoT analysis

When we repeat the process for the keyword “NB-IoT”, we get a very different picture.



Although Google Trends shows significantly more searches for LoRaWAN, this perceived interest is not reflected when it comes to media coverage. There is a relatively small difference in the number of NB-IoT versus LoRaWAN articles, with the former clocking up 607 pieces – only 26 fewer than LoRaWAN.

Additionally, while LoRaWAN has a heavy focus on newswire coverage, NB-IoT has seen a huge number of chunky editorial pieces with influential telecoms titles, such as Mobile Europe, Global Telecoms Business and Light Reading.

The term NB-IoT therefore benefits from being associated with reputable publications that are “stickier” in the long term.

We can see that in terms of the prevalent publications for each term, NB-IoT is coming out on top, however, what happens when we delve a little deeper and look at the content of the coverage?

A PR perspective

The data shows that there is a significant amount of interest and noise in the media around the topic of LPWAN, but also a number of opportunities for LoRaWAN adopters, in particular, to add to and steer the conversation.

Messaging opportunities

NB-IoT is coming. Its supporters are incredibly vocal about why it is set to disrupt and displace all that has existed before it.

This means that, now more than ever, those in the LoRaWAN space need to stand up and demonstrate how the benefits of this technology extend far beyond what is currently being presented to the media. There are entire industries that will benefit from using the technology – both now and in the future.

By acknowledging the comments on unlicensed spectrum and addressing them head on in the media, companies can not only re-educate the market on LPWAN, but head off concerns from potential customers.

There is ample opportunity, therefore, for LoRaWAN players to drive this issue themselves.

Media opportunities

By ditching the newswire approach for a more targeted strategy, LoRaWAN companies can look to achieve the more substantial editorial pieces that their NB-IoT counterparts are seeing.

It's clear from our research, that putting thought leadership and earned coverage first is infinitely more powerful than relying on a newswire campaign. Features, Q&As, case studies, interviews, and opinion pieces are far more effective for a joined-up marketing and PR strategy too.

From Network World to Mobile Europe, the telecoms media is widely covering LPWAN. It is therefore vital for companies that work in the LoRaWAN space to ensure they are included in these conversations.

In addition to being editorially-led and telling the story in a way that's targeted to the publication's audience, these types of articles also tend to stick on Google's search rankings.

Key takeaways

- X** ● Google trends shows there is significant interest in LoRaWAN technology
- Y** ● The newswire heavy approach of LoRaWAN proponents can be improved by editorially driven PR
- Z** ● There is a gap in the wider LPWAN space for thought leadership, and LoRaWAN organisations are perfectly placed to fill it

To find out more about how we can help you to stand out against the competition, get in touch: hello@xyzcomms.com, or book a free PR consultation [here](#).