BIZCOMMUNITY

Making smarter online advertising decisions

By Veruschka Khan

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Online advertising is about figures and goals. Impressions, click-through rates and unique visits. The beauty of online is that it is meant to be 'all about the numbers' - gaining the maximum exposure for your spend - while measuring your return on investment through analytics and reciprocal visits. Yet emotion still factors into buyers' decisions...to their detriment.



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I can liken it to the early days of Facebook marketing, where everyone scrambled for masses of followers - who ultimately did not become customers. High-traffic is valuable, but the intent of a browser's visit is *in*valuable.

There are essentially two reasons someone visits a website - *utility* or *engagement*. Out of the two, engagement is possibly the word that generates the most hype. But in all honesty, users might be highly engaged with a platform like Pinterest or Buzzfeed, but they are not necessarily visiting the site with the intent to buy. Many sites are very good at drawing traffic, entertaining readers and let's be honest - waste a little time. Brands that advertise on these sites will definitely get many views by default, but will they actually sell anything?

Engaged, but not in buying and selling

Research for Jirafe featured in *Forbes* magazine has proven that sites that focus on engagement (such as social media) is great for driving traffic but surprisingly ineffective at converting the traffic into customers, despite claims to the contrary.

It reminds me of the flyers that end up (usually in the trash) in my post box every week. You never look at them until the day you need a new appliance or have a craving for a pizza. Then it becomes really relevant. Chances are you will pore over the flyers in great detail looking for a bargain. That is where *utility* factors into the process.

It seems like common sense. Are you more likely to sell a fridge on a news site (where someone might be spending their morning catching up on the latest Oscar Pistorius headlines) or on a classifieds site where someone is browsing with the

intent to actually buy a fridge in the near future, doing comparison-shopping between new and second hand or contemplating their options? The problem is that there is a still a bit of bias towards utility sites that are viewed either as irrelevant or inappropriate for new brands (or as competition).

All about your end goal

Perhaps the practicality that factors into the decision - the sites are designed for ease of use and probably sound a little less glamorous than a site punting celebrity news. But if you are intent on selling, it makes more sense to place your brand in the heart of a page that is visited by people intent on buying. It's all about your end goal - whether you would like heightened awareness through engaged users, or increased sales and evaluation through users with buying intent.

As I've said, online advertising is about figures and goals. When making your next advertising decision, evaluate the goals of the (potential) customers browsing the site.

ABOUT VERUSCHKA KHAN

Veruschka Khan is the Head of Sales for Gumtree South Africa. She currently oversees several teams in charge of mobile and desktop ad sales and has many years of rich media experience.

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