

Precision targeting helps advertisers hit the mark with consumers

 By [Marcus Stephens](#)

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Advertising in the past was indiscriminate, and from the audience's point of view, often intrusive and annoying. That picture is changing rapidly as marketers begin to use targeting to deliver digital ads that are more relevant, engaging and interesting for the viewer.

In South Africa, marketers are beginning to wake up to the power of targeted advertising as a way to win the viewer's attention and then to guide the person down the customer journey by delivering messaging relevant to his or her needs and interests. To make this possible, there is a range of data we can collect about people using cookies. The data allows us, as publishers and marketers, to track a Web user's interests and behaviour.

From the tracking data, we can build a profile of the user's needs, desires, and where the person is in the customer journey that we can use to target advertising with more precision. It's important to note that this data is not used to personally identify a user, but rather to segment him or her at a very granular level.



Improving ROI

This allows marketers to improve ROI by delivering the right message to the right customers at the right time. It also means that brands can direct their digital budgets towards people who might be interested in their offerings rather than to those outside the target market.

Though this list is by no means exhaustive, there are three forms of targeting we find gives enormous value to brands that use them: retargeting, behavioural targeting and psychographic targeting.

Retargeting is about serving ads to website visitors - advertisements based on their earlier interactions with the brand's online properties and content. For example, if a visitor leaves an e-commerce site having searched for a Nespresso machine, he or she can be tagged with a cookie.

The next time there is an opportunity to serve an ad to this potential customer on a site or network, the person can be targeted with an ad promising a discount on a Nespresso machine. As such, retargeting is an effective way to nudge someone who is on the verge of making a purchase towards a conversion.

Advertisements displayed

Behavioural targeting is a similar concept. It makes use of information collected about a user's web-browsing behaviour (for example, pages visited or searches conducted) to choose advertisements to display to him or her.

For example, if a car dealership knows via cookie data that a user has been browsing the motoring section and searching for BMW Series 3 cars, it can serve an ad for a test drive to the potential buyer.

Then there's psychographic targeting, which is fairly new in South Africa and less familiar to marketers. The concept here is to use a range of information we can infer about a user's demographics, personality traits, interests and beliefs to target our ads.

Behavioural data is the starting point, but we can go even deeper than behavioural targeting allows. We can make

inferences about consumers' personality traits (are they adventurous or timid? fearful or optimistic?), socio-political beliefs, personal interests (music, sports, movies) and even their shopping habits (do they shop for fun and buy spontaneously or do they research every purchase carefully?).

Targeted ads

With enough psychographic data, we can target ads in a very sophisticated way. For example, a motor manufacturer could target ads at people who have a need for self-expression, young at heart and love to drive. And combined with retargeting, this becomes very powerful, because we can start to build a profile not only of who the customer is but also when he or she is showing intent to buy.

This is terrific for marketers, provided they use the access to data to create a better, more meaningful and more relevant customer experience.

While it is complex to deploy these strategies, they can lead to far better ROI by talking to the right people at the right time in the customer lifecycle. And they build better customer relationships by serving content to the audience that is actually interested.

ABOUT MARCUS STEPHENS

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