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Targeted marketing: A tool to streamline retailing

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Marketing lies at the heart of any successful business. There are various functions under the aegis of marketing like advertising, public relations, promotions and sales. The process of introducing and promoting products or services to the customer is marketing. A company may be offering the best of the products and services in their respective industries but the potential customers will never know about them if they are not marketed properly. Without marketing, sales may crash and companies may have to shut doors.

The process of marketing has evolved over the years and targeted marketing is the way to go. Targeted marketing makes the promotions, pricing and distribution of products and services simpler and more cost effective. It provides a focus to all of the marketing activities. Targeted marketing basically involves breaking a market into segments and then focusing on any one or the few key segments that are significant to the company.

To better understand this concept, let us take the example of a newfangled catering service that offers services in the client's home. To market the services, instead of advertising through newspaper inserts the company could target its market and start an e-mail campaign that goes only to particular residents. The market division can be done in many ways depending on the target consumer. Three most common types of marketing are geographic, which is based on location such as home addresses, etc.; demographic, which is based on measurable statistics such as age or

income; and lastly psychographic, which is based on lifestyle preferences.

There are certain nifty tools available online that can give great insight on the target audience. When social media came into being, it was purely a hub of social networking. Today, however, it has evolved tremendously and has many new features that are considered lucrative for both marketers and small businesses. These features can help you track the target audiences in real time through the fan pages of various companies. They also provide graphical data about every person who interacts with the page, the daily active users, demographics, page views, media consumptions and even external referrers. With this detailed information about the fans and visitors, the companies are bound to zero in on their target audience.

These fan pages have attractive landing pages for the customers, which does little to convert visitors into prospective consumers if the page fails to generate traffic. The marketers in such situations turn on to Pay-Per-Click (PPC) campaigns. There are four different ways of driving traffic into the landing pages using PPC and they are text ads, display ads, social media ads and retargeting.

Most ads are either based on Cost Per Click (CPC) or Cost Per impression (CPM). CPC is the cost an advertiser pays each time a user clicks on the ad and CPM is typically the cost per thousand impressions. In this, the advertisers pay a set amount for every thousand times the ad is displayed whether that results in any click-through or not. Without a PPC campaign, a company page might get lost in the numerous variables that influence the success of the ads.

Let us delve into the different ways of driving traffic through PPC:

Text advertisement

In this case, marketers bid on keywords for ad placement on websites or in search engines. There are mostly no images required in text ads as the text does all the talking.

Display ads

These kinds of ads involve graphics, video and sometimes audio. Display ads are now mostly incorporated into web browsers.

Social media advertising

This is another evolving tactic for driving landing page traffic. Each social network has its own specifications and user base. The ads in this could either be in text or display format.

Retargeting

In retargeting, the best practices of traditional advertising are made use of. The idea here is to expose the prospective consumers to the same message several times before making a purchase. For instance, radio ads are repeated several times during a day or drive time that increases the odds of the same consumer hearing the message multiple times. Retargeting does just that by tracking prospects, who have visited a website, and focusing future ads to the same audience. Some online retargeting tools include AdRoll, Google Remarketing, ReTargeter, etc.

Refining and creating new web content is another option that online marketers have for marketing. There are various

tools and guidelines on how to best handle the web content and achieve better conversations. One can stay organised and save time by making use of the suite of invaluable templates.

The web content produced can be presented in many different formats. The businesses need to decide whether to opt for a non-traditional or humorous approach for their web content strategy. Apart from this, the current culture of 'Share everywhere' needs to be checked and it is essential that companies having a more holistic approach when deciding what, when, where, and how to connect with various consumers across the social web.

It is advised to create a holistic system that allows the companies to communicate with customers across a number of social channels, drive conversation, and influence customers. More and more people must be allowed to contribute towards the content through a wider online presence, which in turn keeps them engaged. The corporate site should not be viewed as the central point of engagement. The companies can utilise the edge of network to deliver fresh, compelling and timely content that engages users and keeps visitors returning to the site. Another way of revamping the website is by listening to the target audience members and their online conversations. The web content can be built based on the insights gained from the conversations.

If it is a brick-and-mortar store, then trying to satisfy a wide range of different needs is rarely effective. Instead, one should identify the customers and categorise them into different groups (such as the most lucrative and the least lucrative group). The companies can begin by looking for people with similar characteristics among the existing customers. The costumers can also be segmented on the basis of their age, gender and income. Business customers can be segmented based on the industries or by the size of their respective businesses. Another key factor that could help segmenting the customers could be location, whether it is targeting local customers or looking for export opportunities. Segmenting the market enables the companies to differentiate between different customer groups and understand their similarities and dissimilarities. With the help of this, the companies can have a clearer approach and also better understand what aspects of its offers appeal to each of the group; thereafter, the companies can adapt the product or service to more closely match their requirements.

Prepping the store to match customer preferences can help one stand apart from other players. Hence, it is important to ensure that the messaging is accurate and practically possible while communicating to the customer. Skilled communicators are essential to driving the conversation about the product. Value props further incentivise the customer experience. This can be done through trail versions, specialist demos or giving away samples of the product so that customers can experience the product or service in real time.

Knowledge plays a key role when it comes to identifying which group of customers should be targeted. Market research is one way that helps companies understand more about the needs, tastes and spending habits of different groups of potential customers. This also talks about the customer segments that mostly respond to a marketing and sales activity and buy the products. A SWOT analysis would also help the company to assess its strengths and weaknesses as a business and spot the opportunities and threats that are looming in the market. It also helps the company evaluate if it is in a position to carry out a strong marketing and sales campaign with the target groups of customers. Significantly, it will also enable the company to see how it measures up against the competition.

Keeping a wary eye on the competitors is also critical. How are they working with the target group/s? Would the company do better or worse? Where are the gaps – in its offerings or in its marketing? Are groups of customers being ignored by rivals? Could the company target these profitably?
This combination of market research, SWOT analysis and benchmarking gives a detailed picture of the marketplace and the company's own potential. This in turn also tells the marketers where they should be directing their marketing activities and how. Only when they are armed with this knowledge can they confidently tailor their message to different segments of their market and have persuasive conversations with their potential customers.