

Audience engagement and online marketing

Contributed by Administrator
Wednesday, 27 August 2008

“The campaign is not performing.” This statement sets off alarm bells among sellers of online advertising everywhere. In the simplified world of online advertising, the statement is explored through three questions:

- Is the campaign delivering impressions?
- Is the campaign delivering clicks?
- Is the campaign delivering conversions?

More often than not, the statement is focused on conversions. Furthermore, the recession and tightening budgets have spurred the notion of measurable results. However, comScore, Tacoda and Starcom effectively demonstrated in Q1 that “Natural Born Clickers” are a reason to be skeptical of click-through rates.

Companies with effective inventory planning tools should be able to accurately propose impression volume to deliver for campaigns.

Often online advertising sellers and network building publishers are not involved in establishing the goals of a specific campaign. This is the purview of the brand marketer and their agency. In June 16’s Advertising Age, Doug Brooks and Ed See point out in CMO Strategy that marketing drives just 9% - 15% of short term sales behavior for most businesses. Weather, in-store experience, and macro-economics apparently account for much more.

Is it any different online? How many businesses have a product or service that is impervious to economic trends? How many of these campaigns are for impulse purchases that are made in quarter? Arguably, ecommerce is more impulsive than buying in a store (and more fuel efficient on the front end, although I’m not sure how the energy used for shipping products balances out against driving to store). However, economic trends and the credit crunch are impacting consumers across the U.S.

The new focus for savvy online advertisers should be audience engagement – but many of them are seeking this engagement opportunity through sites where consumers spend only 39% of their time online – the major mainstream sites.

Brand marketers and their agencies are seizing the opportunity to engage with consumers in meaningful, brand building ways (widgets, content, games, entertaining banners) where the consumers spend their time – the premium long tail. It is about engaging the consumer respectfully, when they are in the right mood to learn about your brand and develop an affinity – and you should recognize that consumers learning about your brand may not entail a click or conversion.

Advertisers who invest in the long tail can’t just expect clicks or conversions. Nor can they just run the campaign and hope for the best. They should look into engagement studies to understand if their creative, message and placement on the long tail are resulting in greater awareness, affinity and long term purchase intent. We’re so confident it does, we guarantee that advertisers will broaden their horizons to the quality long tail.