

COLUMNS

Getting the most out of holiday retail campaigns

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By A LUXURY DAILY COLUMNIST

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The 2015 holiday season is approaching fast and it promises to be generous to retailers. In fact, eMarketer forecasts that United States retail sales in November and December will increase 5.7 percent year over year, reaching \$885.70 billion.

With more than 87 percent of consumers using smartphones or tablets to shop and 68 percent conducting pre-purchase research on smartphones, it is likely you will have a generous helping of mobile advertising in your fourth-quarter budget.

But with 49 percent of all digital ad spend going to mobile in 2015, there is bound to be a lot of noise on the mobile ad front.

So how can you stay ahead of your competitors this holiday season?

How can you maximize your ad campaign investments and available technologies to deliver the right messages to the right customers, at the right place and time?

Here are some tips to help you get the most from your holiday campaigns:

Make your target list

If you are running holiday campaigns, it is likely you already know exactly who you want to reach with your message.

But have you considered fine-tuning your efforts by targeting likely consumers based on real world behavior such as where they go?

For example, if your product appeals to sports enthusiasts, do not simply serve your ad to consumers who subscribe to the "Sports Illustrated" publication online. Expand your audience by delivering messages near a gym or sports arena.

Map your message

Other brands can create lots of noise during the holiday season, so it is important to have a laser-focused message

that cuts through the clutter and pay close attention to consumer context.

Ads often perform very differently based on location, which reveals nuances in local culture that can be addressed by refining your communication to known demographics.

Consider varying your message when you target specific locations such as a gym or sports arena, reaching consumers with a message that connects with their emotional mindset at a particular point in time.

Match content and format

The best target list and messaging can fall on deaf ears if your creative execution and ad format do not match the content that you are delivering.

For example, if you are selling the fastest sled available, a static banner ad cannot demonstrate its speed. Instead, you need video which we have seen can lift performance by three times or more.

Or, if your brand is aligned with an issue, say a toy that promotes technology education for girls, look to native ads, which have been shown to better engage consumers on social issues.

Consider seasonal ad limitations

Ad inventory is more limited in the fourth quarter. Though, with higher seasonal order sizes, it pays to adjust your budgets to maintain or even increase your ROI and avoid being blocked from reaching your perfect customers.

Consumers spend more time shopping and visit more out of the way places during the holiday season, so you may want to consider multiple applications, sites and media to create a surround-sound effect for your campaign.

Optimize your ads

You are probably spending more for ads during the holidays than other times of year, so do not forget to take the extra steps needed to increase your ROI.

Be certain your creative is optimized for mobile and for the ad formats that you have selected.

Research shows that smartphone shoppers who go to mobile-optimized sites have conversion rates that are 160 percent higher than the rate for non-optimized sites.

Similarly, make sure it is easy for consumers to make purchases online by including relevant information, including videos and reviews.

Making content shareable will also help drive sales.

WITH THE MISTLETOE hung and the tree decorated earlier in the season with each passing year, plan your advertising campaigns and purchase your inventory accordingly.

Since fourth-quarter ads represent a disproportionate percentage of your annual ad budget, and mobile being a moving target, get the most out of your investment by testing your ad efficacy early and often.

Remember your essential ingredients: fine-tuned targeting, mapping messages, matching content, using location and optimizing to help your mobile ads find their way home this holiday season.

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