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Customer Preferences in Online Advertising–Part 3 of 3

By Karon Thackston

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In part two of this series, we discussed the annoyance factor of online ads and how to overcome them. In this last article, I'll tell you how to use behavioral traits to direct advertising efforts rather than demographics.

I am a strong proponent of defining your target audience. If you don't know who you are communicating with, how will you be able to do it effectively? Jupiter Communications' (www.jup.com) survey backs up my claims.

What Difference Does Behaviorism Make?
I'm sure almost everyone has heard the phrase features vs. benefits. The entire premise behind this statement is that you must tell the audience what's in it for them. How, if you don't know their concerns, their hopes and their needs, are you going to define benefits that will make a difference to your target customer?

The difference between demographics and behaviorism is that one tells you the basics and the other tells you the details. Demographics let you know that your customer is a man employed in upper management who is 45 years old, has 2 children and makes approximately \$50,000 per year.

Behaviorism tells you that, because he's a man, he is compelled by information–type ads. (If he were a she, she would most likely respond to animation or sound.)

It also tells you that he's burned out on corporate politics, having a mid–life crisis, can't bein' to think of how he's going to pay for college for 2 kids and is in bad need of a raise! Now... which profile do you think you could communicate more effectively with? The demographic or the behavior? (It's a rhetorical question!)

Target Everything About Your Advertising

People hear the phrase "target marketing" and "target audience" all the time. But do you understand how extremely important those phrases are to the success of your marketing campaign? You simply must, **MUST**

know your target audience.

When you communicate with them through advertising, you absolutely have to be able to address their fears, their problems and their concerns with a solution. They want to know what's in it for them. If you don't understand what they need, you simply can't answer that question.

Targeted advertising increases sales!

When you create an advertising piece, especially online, every aspect should reach out and grab your target customer. This means the copy (especially), the design, the colors, the photos, the graphics, the packaging (if applicable), the ordering process... absolutely everything.

Segmenting Your Broad Market

One trouble that often plagues businesses is the fact that their target audience is so broad. If that is the case with your company, try segmenting the market and appealing to each segment's behavioral traits.

For example: perhaps you're a Real Estate agent. You need a Web site and want to appeal to several segments of the Real Estate market. What can you do to incorporate the behavioral traits and other preferences of so many people?

Divide your site into smaller areas specifically targeted to each segment. You might choose to have a link on

your home page that says "Need to sell your home? Click here!" In that section you can speak specifically to the needs and concerns of home sellers. (Who are usually women!)

Another area might be directed toward home buyers. These people want lots and lots of information, including pictures. Be sure to give it to them along with some articles dealing with hiring a moving company, transferring your utilities to a new address and how to prepare children for a new school. Get it? Major decisions require lots of information.

Keep Focused On the Customer

Above all, keep focused on your customers and their needs. Resist the temptation to use your favorite shade of pink as a primary color in your Web design

if your customers are mostly men. Remember that you can choose to include an optional flash presentation within your site if you're dealing mostly with women. And always, always address your target market's concerns and needs with benefit-oriented copy.

By combining the information within the 3 parts of this series, you can truly make your online advertising more powerful... and more readily received by your customers.

***The initial survey (about which I have written this commentary) was conducted by Jupiter (www.jup.com), a worldwide authority on Internet commerce.

Karon is Owner and President of KT & Associates who offer targeted copywriting, copy editing & ghostwriting services. Subscribe to KT & Associates' Ezine "Business Essentials" at BusinessEssentials-subscribe@topica.com or visit her site at <http://www.ktmarketing.com>

Customer Preferences in Online Advertising–Part 2 of 3

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In part one of this series, we discussed the fact that studies show information leads over entertainment. We

discovered that Web site visitors are primarily looking for information, and therefore, ads should be more information-oriented.

The second of the three discoveries in the Jupiter Communications (www.jup.com) survey that I will comment on is the discovery that some online advertising is seen as an extreme annoyance. Let's be sure your ads aren't included in that group.

What They Hate

No one likes to be bombarded with advertising. We all see it everywhere we go. It's on television, the radio, billboards, and even grocery store carts for goodness sake. However, online advertising is viewed as the most aggressive.

Jupiter found that 49% of those surveyed said online advertising was the most intrusive of all. Many were willing to tolerate ads in broadcast or print media, probably due to the fact that they could leave the room, change the station or turn the page. However, online ads hold an extremely negative reputation.

From my experience, this is most likely due to the fact that online ads often have a "used car dealer" air to them. I have seen many that look like they're all produced from the same template.

These ads promise the sun, the moon and the stars. They scream about why you simply must buy the product or service. Then, to make it worse, the site captures your email address and you receive hundreds of email advertisements via an autoresponder that apparently has no end.

The Worst Possible Ads

The worst offender is pop-up ads. These are the advertisements that pop onto the screen as you click

through a Web site. They advertise specials or offer subscriptions to Ezines, etc. Once thought to be a tremendous sales tool, these ads have become increasingly offensive.

Sixty–nine percent (69%) of those in the Jupiter survey viewed pop–up ads negatively. Almost 25% found them so annoying they would completely avoid sites that used them. That's a powerful statistic. Can you afford to have 25% of your Web site traffic never return simply because you employ pop–up ads?

What We Can Do To Make It Better

So, now that we know what our site visitors hate, how can we adjust our advertising in order to please them (and make them buy)?

Here are some recommendations to consider when creating your next piece of advertising:

1. Don't do "anything and everything" to get the buyer's attention. Everyone that comes to your site isn't going to buy. The harder you try to get their attention and force them to read your ad, the harder they will try to escape.

2. Remember from Part 1 in this series, site visitors are looking for information primarily. Include your ad along with other, useful information. Perhaps you might try offering a free report or article that provides information the visitor can use. At the bottom, insert an advertisement for a product or service you offer that can help them further.

3. Don't use pop–up ads.

4. Keep your target audience in mind. Business people aren't going to have the time or inclination to participate in game–type ads. On the other hand, teenagers love them. If your target group is younger people, games might be the thing for you. Design your ad to meet the preferences of your target customer.

Using these suggestions will help your ads be more readily received – instead of avoided at all costs!

In Part 3, the final article in this series, we'll look at the behavioral aspect of online advertising and discover

what characteristics and traits should be kept in mind.

Karon is Owner and President of KT & Associates who offer targeted copywriting, copy editing & ghostwriting services. Subscribe to KT & Associates' Ezine "Business Essentials" at BusinessEssentials-subscribe@topica.com or visit her site at <http://www.ktamarketing.com>



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