Jan 1st, 12:00 AM

Best Practices for Targeted Marketing for Fashion Entrepreneurs

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Best Practices for Targeted Marketing for Fashion Entrepreneurs

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Keywords: Fashion Advertising, Internet Advertising

A key to a business’s success is reaching the target market, which ensures that consumers are exposed to the retailer’s offerings and by turn, inspired to purchase. For fashion brands and retailers, the competition continues to grow as e-commerce enables companies to enter the market relatively easily thereby likely affecting the product life cycle (Moore & Fairhurst, 2003). As fashion entrepreneurs enter this competitive market and are seeking best practices to reach their specific customers, which strategies are needed for success? How can the entrepreneurs efficiently reach their target market? What are experts telling these entrepreneurs? Which marketing strategies really work?

Popular branding strategies include the promotion and expansion of the brand (McColl & Moore, 2011). This includes advertising plans to reach the customers through specific advertising channels to communicate the products the retailer has to offer. The goal of advertising is to go beyond the colors, logos, and jingles, although important elements, and provide depictions of experiences and feelings they are seeking. After identifying a target market, a retailer can determine how to gain trust from the consumer and how to turn trusted consumers into loyal customers (Garrett, 2014). The brand strategy ensures the brand can withstand competitors and communicate its value, quality and image (McColl & Moore, 2011).

The purpose of this study was to determine the most effective fashion advertising appeals for reaching particular target markets. To address these issues, we tested eight popular pieces of targeted advertising advice via the Theory of Reasoned Action framework.

**Method.** Advertising advice available to entrepreneurs was assessed via internet resources, popular press books and academic textbooks using a summative content analysis. This resulted in advice per eight marketing channels: social media, product websites, retailer blogs, email, bloggers/influencers, product videos, mobile apps, and tv ads. Then a questionnaire was distributed via social media and online courses, resulting in 312 usable surveys (63.7%).

**Findings.** Participants had a mean age of 41 (range=18 to 85), were mostly female (89.7%) and Caucasian (70.8%). When participants were asked to recall ads they had seen on the eight channels, the most frequently recalled were on social media (75%), email ads (70%), and ads on product websites (68%).

**Consumer Attitudes.** Attitude toward advertising was measured with 30 questions (Pollay & Mittal, 1993), reduced to five factors named Undesirable, Desirable, Informative, Entertaining, Misleading, and Economical. The strongest attitudes were Informative (M=4.23), Entertaining (M=3.37), and Undesirable (M=3.25). Participants had strong attitudes towards advertisements that seemed to convey information, were entertaining, and to which exposure was undesirable. ANOVA computed a significant difference between males and females for the informative factor, wherein females found advertising to be generally more informative.
(M=4.26, F=8.865, p<.05) than males (M=3.67). No significant differences were computed for ethnicity and annual income.

**Pressure to Buy.** ANOVA indicated that participants who considered ads as a source of trend information felt encouraged to follow those trends (M=2.96, F=49.626, p<.0001) and felt obligated to follow those trends (M=2.26, F=19.278, p<.001) more so than participants who did not feel obligated to use ads as a trend resource (M=1.95 and M=1.62, respectively). There was not a significant difference between the groups when asked if they tend to shy away from the trends seen in targeted fashion ads.

**Intent to Buy.** When participants were asked if they had given thought to purchasing items seen in targeted ads, 80.1% responded “yes” and 19.9% responded “no”. When participants were asked if they have actually made a purchase from the targeted advertisement channel, 44.6% responded “yes” and 55.4% responded “no”. Although participants had given thought to purchasing items from a targeted ad, the impulse mostly did not result in a purchase.

**Purchase Behavior.** To glean more specific information that would connect the marketing advice with targeted ad purchase behavior, the researcher further analyzed the data filtered for the participants who indicated they have previously purchased items they saw in targeted ads. The most effective advertising channels were from ads on websites (62.6% conversion) and through email (57.89% conversion).

When attitudes toward advertising were compared to purchase intention, ANOVA indicated a significant relationship between the attitudes, “desirable” (F=9.589, p<.01), “misleading” (F=7.625, p<.01), and “informative” (F=13.913, p<.0001) and purchase intention. When participants had strong attitudes towards desirable advertising and/or toward informative advertising, they thought more about purchasing the products in the ad. When participants had strong attitudes towards misleading advertisements, they felt less obligated to purchase the product from the advertisement.

When pressure to purchase was compared to intent to purchase, ANOVA computed a significant result. Participants who had given thought to purchasing items seen in targeted ads felt more obligated to follow the trends in targeted advertising (M=2.17) than participants who were less likely to consider purchase (M=1.60; F=10.790, p<.001).

When intent to purchase was compared to reported purchase behavior, chi square analysis indicated a significant difference ($X^2=19.616$, p<.0001). Just over half of the simple (51.4%) followed through on a purchase after indicating they considered purchase. Therefore, the Theory of Reasoned Action is considered to be a good framework in this context of targeted advertising of fashion brands.

**Discussion.** TRA predicts that attitudes and subjective norms positively relate to the intent to perform a behavior, which is positively related to performing that behavior. In the current study, desirable and informative advertising attitudes provided a significant relationship to intent to purchase. Pressure to follow trends had a significant effect on purchase intention. Lastly, purchase intention had a significant effect on reported purchase behavior. In conclusion, the TRA model provided a proper framework to predict purchase behavior from targeted advertising employed by fashion entrepreneurs.
References
