Abstract

General social media statistics reveal that 2.5 billion people log in to social media daily (GlobalWebIndex, 2016). In this regard, social media has become more prominent among higher education's primary audience; the most frequent internet users are teens and young adults between ages 12 and 29 years (Pew Research Center, 2010). Higher education institutions show increased interest in the potential of social media as a marketing tool to reach and attract future students (Constantiades & Stagno, 2011). Facebook and Twitter are leading social media platforms for higher education institutions. A&M-Commerce leverages student enrollment data to create unique audiences for every campaign. This allows the institution to target specific locations from which a majority of students come from. The next step is to define audience, while filtering down to specific age groups to target the audience. The final objective is to engage and attract the audience to the landing page using Facebook campaign analytics.

Facebook

To build a Facebook Social Media campaign, there is need to first log in to the Facebook Manager with a user account. From there, one can build a campaign by selecting an objective. For example, if the goal is to send a specific target audience to a website for extended registration hours, select “Send people to your website” and add a landing page. Time a potential audience is going to be reached on the ad set, track the ad set. Tracking pixels can be added to measure interactions on the website. The next step is to define a target audience by selecting locations and customer attributes, specific to the goal of the campaign. This is the step where most people get it wrong. For example, by only selecting Texas, the audience definition below appears to be too broad, while most people think the potential reach is good at 19M people; they might not be the best audience for the targeted ads. Deciding on a filter selection strategy for Higher Education before running any ad is crucial to maximize one’s return on investment. A large audience might not always yield the best results, by filtering down the audience to specific locations, age groups or attributes, there might be an increase of engagement and interaction.

Too Broad: A large audience might not provide the best results

A&M-Commerce leverages student enrollment data to create unique audiences for every campaign. By analyzing student enrollment data, the institution has the ability to target specific locations from which a majority of students come from. Other examples include filtering down to specific age groups to visualize the age distribution of the university’s student population. A final option that Facebook offers is detailed targeting. This allows narrowing down to specific interests and additional attributes such as demographics. A couple of examples of an effective filtering strategy for Higher Education include filtering for: Top Feeder Counties, High Schools, Top Transfer Institutions, Age groups, Ethnicities and program of interest. After deciding on a filter selection strategy, it will be necessary to set a budget and a schedule for when the ad set will run. For this particular ad, A&M-Commerce ran it two weeks prior to the start of the extended registration week, and the internal client provided a $200 budget.

Twitter

Building a Twitter Social Media campaign is a bit different from the Facebook campaign despite that they both have the same end goals. It starts with logging in to the Twitter Ads manager with a user account. The next step is to set up a campaign objective. If the campaign is to send the target audience to one’s landing page, by selecting the “Website clicks or conversions” the target audience will be redirected to the website every time they click on the ads. The next step here is to define the campaign. For example; Spring 2016 - Extended Hours-Awareness was used in a campaign by A&M-Commerce. One can set a budget and choose a maximum charge from the total budget. Next is to select when the campaign should run.

The next step is to define the filter strategy by selecting a specific target audience. In this process, one needs to look into the raw data for demographics by selecting twitter handles of Top high schools, Top transfer institutions and Top county zip codes. Targeting usernames simplifies reaching users with interests similar to followers of any of those accounts. For example, enter @f坛muc to target people likely to be interested in advertising on TAMUC College.

Twitter Analytics

The final step to take here is to analyze the campaign performance and Twitter analytics. For this campaign, A&M-Commerce set a budget with reach goal and there were 16,788 impressions i.e. people that saw the campaign which resulted in 580 engagements on the website. This means that the cost per click (CPC) was $0.34 cents ($200 / 580 clicks = 0.34). Comparing CPC to the CPC of $0.14 cents ($200 / 1,414 clicks = 0.14), the CPC for this campaign is too high, there is need to edit the campaign filters until the performance improves.

A&M-Commerce	Twitter Analytics

Campaign Results & Twitter Analytics

The next step is to analyze campaign performance and Facebook analytics. For this specific campaign with just $200 budget, 37,742 people were reached that resulted in 1,414 website clicks. This means that the cost per click (CPC) was $0.14 cents ($200 / 1,414 clicks = 0.14). The lower the CPC, the higher one’s return on investment (ROI). Lowering a larger portion of the target audience is being reached with the same amount of money. Conversely, if the CPC is too high, there is need to edit the campaign filters until the performance improves.

Campaign Results & Facebook Analytics

Facebook allows for a breakdown of performance by different attributes. In the example below, there is a breakdown by gender and also by age groups. Interestingly, men were more likely to click on the ad set above than women (Male: 58%; Female: 42%). When looking at age groups, 13-17 year olds were highly likely to click on the ad set to learn more about extended registration hours, while 18-24 year olds were reached, but saw the ad less time than their younger counterparts.

Performance by Gender

When looking at performance by devices, all the audience interactions came from only two categories, Mobile News feed and audience network. However, while the Mobile News feed saw a significant amount of reach, only 7% clicked on the call-to-action, resulting in a high CPC of $0.42, while the audience network interactions, were by far more likely to click on the ad, 93% of people who view the ad set, click on the call-to-action, resulting in a much lower CPC of just $0.12 cents, thus improving our campaign results.

Performance by device

Interestingly, Twitter analytics gives a breakdown on the platform used by the target audience, the gender distribution, their interests as well as the handles they follow. In the example illustrated here, 563 audiences out of 580 engaged from iOS devices which accounts for 96.7%. Also, males were more likely to click on the ad set than females (Male: 365 Female: 196). When looking at performance by device, all audience interactions came from only one category, Mobile News Feed.