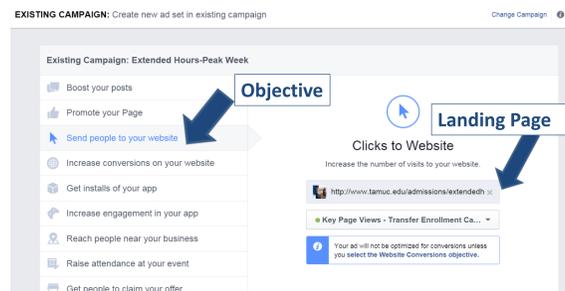


Abstract

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 target 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 (Constantinides & Stagno, 2011). A key research theme in this field is marketing communications. A gap between the information that potential students want and the information provided by universities in their traditional forms of communications has been identified by past research (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006). The aim of this presentation is to inform higher education institutions on best practices to make better informed decisions when applying social networking tools. This presentation will provide an overview of the current social media and internet landscape, focusing on two prominent social media platforms: Facebook and Twitter. These leading social media sites are two out of five that account for more than 1.84 billion active monthly users (Pew Research Center, 2010). Key strategies that will be covered include; how to manage campaign objectives, filter selection, media and content placement, and learning from campaign analytics. Using these tactics has allowed for a cost per click (CPC) reduction by over 1000% at our institution. Furthermore, analyzing campaign results in this project, suggests that social networking tools can help discover institution specific market segments, and has the ability to reach and build relationships with a specific target audience. This research presentation proposes new ways and ideas to enhance current social media networking strategies in higher education to optimize return on investment.

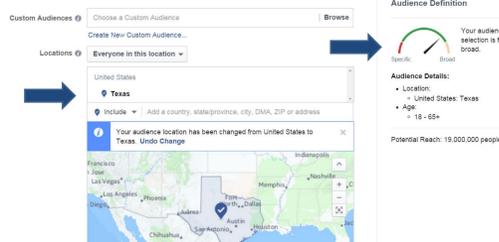
Facebook

To build a Facebook Social Media campaign, there is need to first log in to the Facebook Ads 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. Every time a potential prospect clicks on the ad set, they will be redirected. Tracking pixels can be added to measure interactions on the website.

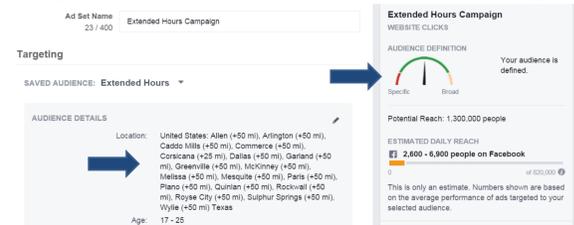


The next step is to define a target audience by selecting locations and customer attributes, specific to the goal of the campaign. This is the step where most people get it wrong. For example, by only selecting Texas, the audience definition below appears to be too broad, while most people think the potential reach is good at 19M people; they might not be the best audience for the targeted ads. Deciding on a filter selection strategy 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.

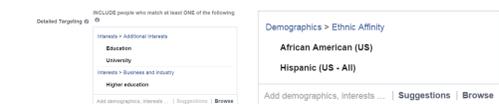
Too Broad: A large audience might not provide the best results



Just Right: Filter down your audience to specific locations & ages



Detailed Targeting Example



Set a budget & a schedule



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 an audience 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 extended registration week, and the internal client provided a \$200 budget

The next step is to curate images and content that will attract the target audience. Remember, the overall goal is for the audience to click on the call-to-action to be redirected to one's website. There is need to ensure that the correct landing page is linked to the ad set, and test the link prior to running the ad. At A&M-Commerce, the marketing department part partners with the university to provide the text, headline and images for this specific ad set. Important to note is that the image dimensions need to be resized to fit Facebook guidelines, there should also not be more than 20% of wording on the image, or the ad will be denied by Facebook. Also, make sure that image and content looks appropriate across other devices including mobile devices and audience networks. Finally, let the campaign results run, and analyze results to increase performance.

Images/Content



Let the campaign run!



Campaign Results & Facebook Analytics

The final 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), meaning 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.



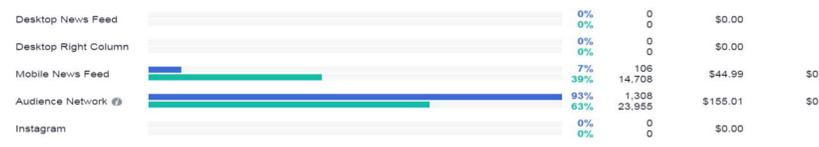
Facebook allows for a breakdown of performance by different attributes. In the example below, there is a breakdown by gender and also by age groups. Interestingly, men were more likely to click on the ad set above than women (Male: 58% Female: 42%). When looking at age groups, 13-17 year olds were highly 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 audience, 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



Twitter

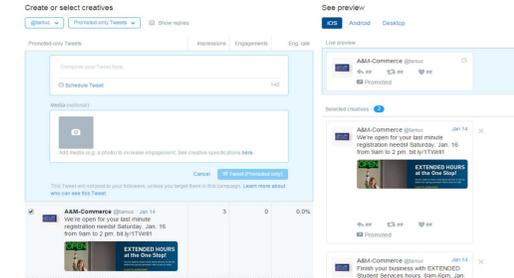
Building a twitter Social Media campaign is a bit different from the Facebook campaign despite that they both have the same end goals. It starts with logging in to the Twitter Ads manager with a user account. The next step is to select a new campaign objective. If the campaign aim is to send the target 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 name 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 daily 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 counties zip codes. Targeting @usernames simplifies reaching users with interests similar to followers of any of those accounts. For example, enter @tamuc to target people likely to be interested in advertising on TAMUC.

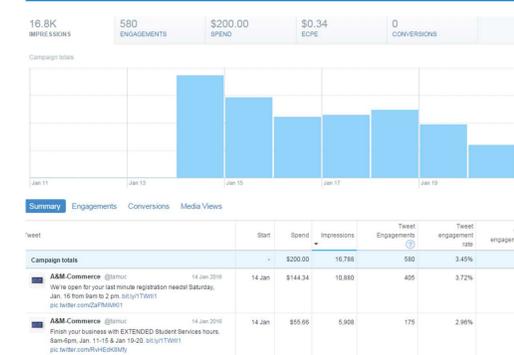


The next is to select creatives that will run alongside the message for the campaign. Media can be added to attract the target audience and increase the engagement. In A&M-Commerce, the marketing department creates media content as well as marketing text to run the ad campaign. Ensure that the image and content looks appropriate and the link to the landing page isn't broken. Finally, let the campaign run.

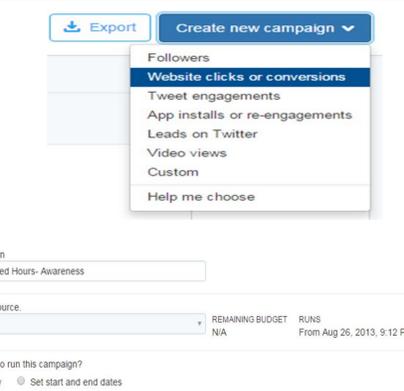
Images/Content



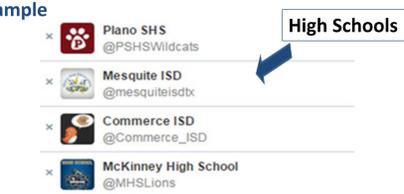
Campaign Results & Twitter Analytics



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, 561 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).

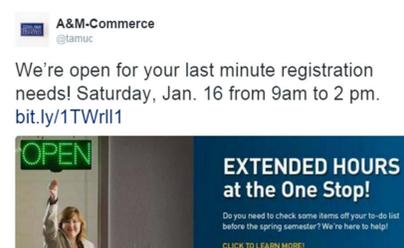


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Let the campaign run!



We're open for your last minute registration needs! Saturday, Jan. 16 from 9am to 2 pm. bit.ly/1TW11l

