Developing Cross-Media Designs for Small Businesses

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Introduction

Small businesses would prosper if they had a successful marketing plan. A majority of large corporations have flourished because they integrate both print and electronic media to reach a large audience ("Cross-Media," n.d.). In present times, a large number of small businesses do not have enough knowledge on how to use both print and digital platforms to their advantage (Pounds, 2012). Most of the graphic design companies they hire create print advertisements, but they do not emphasize the power of digital advertising (Agrawal, 2008). If graphic design companies don't encourage small businesses to integrate print and digital advertising, they will lose out on increasing their sales, and the small business will try to integrate the two without the knowledge of how to manage them successfully (Pounds, 2012). Graphic design companies need to think of new ways to increase advertising sales by designing advertisements that incorporate both print and digital media.

Small businesses need an effective marketing plan in order to reach a large audience, a method called cross-media advertising is used to advertise to many different types of people using both print and digital media (Pounds, 2012). Unfortunately, many small businesses don't use the Internet to advertise their services (Rothstein, 2011). There are many reasons why small businesses don't emphasize the internet in their marketing campaign, and Rakesh Agrawal gives a good explanation. One of the major road blocks for owners is that they don't know how to handle things like search advertising. Owners simply do not have the time to run a website and make sure it appears in search boxes (Agrawal, 2008). Lisa Barone states that small companies need a website because many customers look for nearby businesses on the Internet (Barone, 2009). Cheryl Sowa states that local companies who don't have a website are falling behind because the Internet is used by so many people (Sowa, 2010).   Creating and managing a website

is a long and difficult process, and many owners may be discouraged and do not think it is a tangible goal. Agrawal also makes a very interesting point by stating that they go unnoticed by many publishers, because their sales representatives would rather work on pricier campaigns rather than helping a small business set up an inexpensive website (Agrawal, 2008). The fact that many companies are not focusing on small businesses needs to be brought to attention, because they do have needs that are unmet. In present times, the Internet is becoming the top communication medium. The amount of money spent on digital advertising is growing; with sales projected to grow in the future (Rothstein, 2011).Graphic design companies need to encourage small businesses to start incorporating digital media into their advertising plan.

Even though digital advertising is important, print advertisements are still needed. Cross-media advertising can increase sales in a graphic design company because it requires advertisements on multiple platforms. In present times, there is an increased need for cross-media advertising because businesses need to reach to a diverse range of customers (Pounds, 2012). Small businesses need the help of a graphic design company in order to make a successful cross-media marketing campaign, because they do not have the technological or design experience needed in order to make advertisements. Print advertisements are still important, but it is an industry that is declining due to the rise of the Internet. If graphic design companies don't stress the importance of cross-media advertising to small businesses, graphic designers will lose out on making more profits, and small businesses will lose out to many competitors who have many different types of advertisements ("Cross-Media," n.d.).

In order to encourage cross-media marketing for small businesses, the designers need to develop print and digital advertisement that work together to always keep the customers informed and aware of the business. Some companies like Allegra use things like direct mail, e-

mail and PURLs to work together to keep in touch with the customer ("Cross-Media," n.d.). Although this is a very effective plan, graphic designers should go beyond this and use many types of print advertising to promote a company's website. Businesses should not only send direct mail but the website and e-mail address should be included in the company's main display, catalog, and business cards. Many customers who are avid Internet users might be attracted by a small company's website. The person designing the website could work to make the website as attractive as possible, and it should have the ability to appear in major search engines. It is important to use the strategies that many other companies have made and try to expand them by promoting the company's website as much as possible using print advertisements. In order to do this research, a small company needs to be found, and the designer will make a website and print advertisements. The small business should be in charge of keeping in touch with the customers and also promoting their sites using social networking sites like Twitter and Facebook. It is important for the small business owner to be enthusiastic about using their website, and to find ways to distribute the print advertisements as much as possible. The designers should also work hard to promote the business whether it's through sites like Twitter or handing out flyers or business cards. It is also important to find the target audience and make them the focal point while making the designs. In order to find if this strategy was successful, the rate of increase of customers should be measured. It would also be helpful to send customers a survey over what they think of the business and figure out if the advertisements had anything to do with them purchasing from the business. In the end, the designers will ask the small business their opinion about whether or not the plan was successful, and ask them to recommend ways in which this method could improve and achieve better results.

Literature Review

Cross-Media Marketing

Cross- media marketing is a concept that has been explored by many researchers. Cross-media advertising is defined as "a strategy used by business owners to market a business using various types of media" (Jane, n.d.). Michael Ninness states that businesses adopt a cross-media campaign when they feature different ways to reach to customers, such as PURLs or direct mail, and include design elements that are repeated on both the print and electronic platform (Ninness, 2009). A cross-media campaign lets a business send a message to their customers through multiple channels and enables them to reach a larger audience (Busch, 2011). The concept of cross-media has been around for some time, but it has become more popular due to the rise of the internet (Davidson, 2010). Susie Harwood states that cross- media has become more popular because of the increase in channels available to people (2006). David L Zwang claims that businesses have to develop a cross-media campaign because there are so many different channels of communication, and it is becoming more of a challenge to reach customers (2011).

Cross-Media Marketing and Small Businesses

Cross-Media marketing can be very beneficial to small businesses. There are articles that support the use of cross-media marketing in small businesses. In the article "75% of Small businesses Believe in Cross-media marketing," Howie Fenton reports that 75% of customers would like to get a combination of e-mail with direct mail (2011). These findings show that customers are interested in hearing from their companies through various methods (Fenton, 2011). Developing this type of campaign isn't exclusively for large businesses, and it is flexible enough to meet different types of budgets (Busch, 2011).

Supporters of Cross-Media Marketing

Researchers who are supportive of cross-media marketing believe it can bring many positive outcomes. Ninness gives an example of a company called Montage Graphics, a company who has adapted successful cross-media marketing campaign and in 2008 had a growth rate of 15% (2009). Montage graphics uses a personalized cross-media approach; they have a trademark named Particlelogic tools, which is a strategy that sends advertisements through direct mail, the internet, and e-mail (Ninness, 2009). Ninness states that Montage graphics save time and money because they use the same graphics in different programs (2009). Ninness gives very strong evidence by showing how one company has profited with cross-media advertising. In the article "Marketing Masters", Chris Bauer states that a company called Cross-Media is successful because they serve both big and small companies (2006). Cross-Media wanted to help small businesses by creating integrated campaigns that include printing and marketing services (Bauer, 2006). Cross-Media was successful because they offered services at attainable prices and helped companies reduce costs by being their main provider of all their marketing needs (Bauer, 2006). The company Allegra specializes in helping businesses create a cross-media marketing campaign ("Cross-Media," n.d.). Allegra believes in putting the customer as a priority when it comes to making a web page and sending e-mails, and they stress the importance of finding the target audience when it comes to sending direct mail ("Cross-Media," n.d.). They strongly believe that customer feedback is important and it should be an important feature in web and print platforms ("Cross-Media," n.d.).

Adapting a successful cross-media campaign

In a blog written by Ramin Zamini, he states why companies need to take several things into consideration before adopting a cross-media campaign (2011).Zamani states that while some companies are successful in adapting cross–media campaigns, other companies struggle because

they don't have a clear strategy (2011). Some of the reasons a company might fail are not setting

tangible expectations, not developing the right strategies, and a lack of knowledge on the

audience they are trying to sell their services to (Zamani, 2011).

Ninness and Bauer both present very strong cases in which cross-media marketing was

successful. They managed to show the increase in profit these companies had when they adopted

these marketing techniques. They both show how cross-media marketing can benefit the graphic

design company and the businesses they are giving their services to. What was missing in

Ninness and Bauer's articles was evidence that other companies were successful using this

technique as well. Zamani made a good point in his article by stating that while some companies

might be successful using cross-media campaigns, others might fail because they do not know

how to implement the techniques properly (2011). He also does a great job of explaining what

companies should take into consideration if they want to create a cross-media campaign

(Zamani,2011).

There are several articles that show how to capture the attention of audiences, and how

find the right channel to use. Manfred Schwaiger and Hugh M.Cannon made a study that sought

to find the effectiveness of cross-media advertisements (2010). Their article provides valuable

insight on the concept of cross-media. They made a study on students in Germany to see if cross-

media synergy was more effective than using print or the internet alone, and found that internet

advertising became more effective when it was used with print-advertising (Schwaiger, Cannon,

2010). Because most people do not pay attention to internet ads, they found that a priming

synergy effect could be the most effective method, because it uses print advertising first to help

promote the ad on the internet (Schawiger, Cannon, 2010). This article definitely contributes

valuable information, because it shows how these two platforms can work together successfully to catch the viewers' attention (Schwaiger, Cannon, 2010).

There are various articles that give advice on how to design a cross-media campaign. Busch states that the components of a cross-media campaign are audience, media, and message (2011). Finding a target audience is important, Harwood believes that it should be the first step in creating a campaign (2006). It is important to find the right type of media in order to get the audience's attention at the right time (Harwood, 2006). In terms of the message, the print advertisement needs to have a "call to action", which shows how you can contact the business (Jane, n.d). In an article named "Branding pointers for small businesses," several tips are given for small businesses when they are in the process of branding. One of the tips is that they need to have a consistent message in both the digital and print platforms, because it helps establish their image (Anonymous, 2011).

The articles published on the subject of cross-media can definitely help businesses set up the right strategy. Schwaiger and Cannon's findings show that print can be used to promote the digital platform (2010). Busch's article is helpful because it can help small businesses identify the main components of a campaign, and they could create one that is tailored to those three elements (2011). By finding the target audience, businesses will have more information on their customers and it will be easier for them to choose the correct type of channel to display their message (Harwood, 2006). Cross media advertising can also help small businesses with branding, because it helps establish the image of the company (Anonymous, 2011). Cross-media marketing can be a very useful tool for small businesses, and it is important for small businesses to realize what value this type of campaign can have to their organization.

Method

Moving Company

For the method, research will be done on a small moving company located in Houston, Texas. This company does not have a name yet, but they have been in business for a long time. They move furniture for both homes and businesses. The owner does not have that much experience with online marketing, and they could use help with creating a fully functional website. Currently, they are in the process of creating a name for the business.

Research

This moving company is in great need of both online and print advertising. The first step would be to evaluate how their business is performing in terms of the number of customers they have. After that initial observation, a website will be created that includes their contact information. Then, it is important to make the business more visible on search engines. The website will contain key words that will help it appear on the search results page. The company will also list their business on Google Local so that potential customers will have a better chance of finding them. There also needs to be a print advertisement for their company. This ad will include a QR code that will link to their website. When both the printed ad and website are ready, the company will work in handing out their ads to potential customers.

After the website and ads are completed, there will be close observation on whether or not the advertisement helps their business. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the website, Google Analytics will be used to measure website traffic. There will be close observation on how many visitors the website gets. After that, Google Analytics will be used to measure the number of times customers visit the website with the QR code provided in the print advertisement.

After these observations are complete, it is important to determine if the cross-media strategy is effective in helping their business. The number of traffic the QR code generates will determine how well the print advertisement works in promoting the website. Customers will be asked to fill out a survey that asks them about how they found out about the business. There also needs to be a comparison between the number of customers before and after the cross media campaign. This experiment will determine if cross-media can help increase their visibility and profits.

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