

Why You Should Align Your Ads to Your Customers' Activities

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Date : April 26, 2016



Over the years, technology has made reaching consumers easier—but not always better. The early days of the Internet brought advertisers in with the promise of revenue via banner ads. But as early as 1998, researchers were already coining the term "banner blindness" to describe why myriad have difficulty finding information located in a banner ad. So, what was the problem?

Researchers felt online users were in search mode, which deemed banner ads as irrelevant for their own personal search. They became so desensitized to banner ads that, by 2013, one study indicated that 86% of consumers "suffered" from banner blindness. To reduce the friction along the customer journey, **digital advertising** needed to find a way to insert itself contextually into consumers' search. Without the right strategy to do so, **brands** would continue to hit road blocks.

Organizations today must be able to adapt technology in a way that lets **brands** learn about the customer without the ads being an irritation. By doing so, **brands** can develop meaningful and targeted advertisements **designed** around an individual's contextual needs and intent.

Marketing that involves personalized calls-to-action can result in a 42% increased conversion rate.

To stay relevant in a **social** media based environment—especially at a time when more Millennials become experience loyal rather than **brand** loyal—the customized experience becomes crucial.

Moreover, the surge of mobile use will contribute to the increase of US net mobile **advertising** to \$28.48 billion. With so much at stake, new concepts in **marketing** and **advertising** continue to roll out in an effort to create a hybrid **digital** ad model that incorporates situational strategies. Beacon technology and native ads are just a few of the trends attempting to offer a solution that straddles traditional ads with a situational twist. Many of those **digital** ideas have been experimented with in the recent past and have shown the possibility of catching customers' attention.

However, the problem with anything new is that it can quickly take on novelty status, and it can become a fad that customers find interesting but ultimately unsustainable. Getting someone's

attention doesn't necessarily attribute to a purchase if the right customer isn't receptive to the information, so pairing the right technologies with a situational strategy is crucial for higher engagement and consumer adoption.

As traditional methods of **advertising** continue to leave customers disinterested and **brands** feeling frustrated, the context in which an ad is presented is becoming a necessary part of understanding who the customer is.

Meeting Customers Where They're at

Today, location-based strategies have increased in popularity because they are able to help **brands** vie for and retain the consumer's attention. But location-based technology shouldn't aim to simply target coupons within a geographic range, they should relieve customer's feelings of intrusion (another casualty of banner blindness) and work in the context of a user's situation to enhance the overall shopping experience.

Marketing to the situation instead of directly to the customer, satisfies the intent at each point in the customer journey, and that satisfaction is a more valuable experience compared to the adverse reactions that can be brought on when **brands** solely base their strategies against the habits of a consumer.

Situational Marketing

Here's an example of how situational **marketing** works:

Your target customer has just finished a movie with the kids in tow, and it's dinner time. An advertisement comes on her screen as she searches for nearby restaurants. The ad shows her how to get to your nearest restaurant location, phone number and hours of operation details as well as the restaurant's latest introduction of "Kids eat free Wednesdays." Yes, there are other restaurant choices she can choose, but after being incentivized with your info, your chances of gaining a new patron increase.

By understanding the context in which the ad is introduced, the information is deemed helpful rather than a nuisance, the consumer is more likely to engage, and there is a greater chance of creating a positive **brand** experience. From a **marketing** standpoint, the enhancement of this purchasing experience can be reflected through conversions, **social** engagement, or even reviews and recommendations.

Situational **marketing** causes us to ask different questions when thinking of strategy. These questions include "What is on the to-do list for my customer?" and "How can our **marketing** plan check items off that list?" Situational **marketing** is about drilling deeper and asking when, where, and how a customer would want to receive an ad.

By aligning our **advertisements** with the activities of our customers, we regain control of the conversation, drive value for users, and ultimately drive in-store purchases.

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