

COLUMNS

3 challenges with using video as a marketing tool

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Video has become integral part of the consumer journey, often being the deciding factor that convinces potential consumers to buy a particular product or service.

This trend is especially visible in the travel industry. In a study conducted by Ipsos MediaCT, 65 percent of respondents admitted looking for travel inspiration online, with travel videos influencing their decisions as to the type of journey and its destination.

However, the travel industry is faced with three major challenges associated with using video as a marketing tool.

1. Getting the audience

Most marketers use video distribution platforms such as YouTube or Vimeo to get audience reach for their videos.

The primary reason that marketers describe for using this approach is the global reach and engagement that these platforms provide.

YouTube alone has more than 1 billion users, with 100 million people taking a social action on YouTube every week. Marketers often hope that their branded content will be able to use YouTube to reach the nirvana of viral growth.

However, this approach needs a closer examination, since viewership and engagement is not evenly distributed.

According to TubeMogul, half of all videos get less than 500 views. This is borne out by reviewing the Web sites of many luxury travel companies that have spent tens of thousands of dollars to create high-quality videos.

For example, Ritz Carlton has uploaded 14 branded videos in the last four months with an average viewership on YouTube of 536 impressions.

Please note this is impressions, not uniques, so actual number of visitors is probably half of this.

One notable example is a beautifully developed video about the Ritz-Carlton Lodge in Georgia, which has received only 480 impressions since December.

Similarly, Abercrombie & Kent has uploaded 34 videos on its YouTube site in the last 12 months, with an average of 300 impressions. It has created some equally stunning videos, such as the private jet service for its customers, which has received just 2,536 impressions since it was made available on YouTube in December.

2. Collecting audience data

But the problem with uploading videos to YouTube is broader than this.

Since it is highly difficult to successfully implement a call-to-action (CTA) tool into the YouTube video, the path to purchase is not clear. This is even more the case with audiences viewing YouTube videos on mobile devices, where there are no CTA opportunities during the video play.

So what should the companies in travel industry do to address these issues?

According to Taylor Short, market research associate at Software Advice, "marketers should place branded videos directly on their own Web sites rather than YouTube channels."

The study done by Software Advice showed that 50 percent of respondents preferred viewing videos on a hotel's Web site that integrated the content with pricing and availability information.

Moreover, when the video is hosted on a company's Web site, data collection opportunities for marketers are almost limitless.

For example, brands can create profiles of the audience and optimize at each step of the path to purchase.

Also, if marketers want to try and retarget the audience profile from YouTube, they have to pay Google for the privilege of running media campaigns.

When companies host videos on their own Web sites, however, they do not incur any additional costs using the audience data gathered for retargeting potential customers.

3. Analyzing audience data

Current third-party sites provide interfaces on video viewership, but most of the analysis is skin deep.

Furthermore, many of the third-party sites use different definitions for viewership and engagement metrics, making it hard to create a common understanding.

Placing the video on their site allows marketers to swap in and out vendors that analyze consumer engagement or tie the data directly into their own marketing analytics systems.

There are number of vendors offering services that help marketers address most of these video distribution issues.

These vendors can help a marketer build an audience profile of the most brand receptive consumers and deliver them to watch the video. Some of these vendors also offer marketers the ability to guarantee performance and drive consumers all the way down the buying funnel.

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