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AUDIENCE PLANNING IN SEARCH

ENHANCE KEYWORDS WITH AUDIENCE SIGNALS

INTRODUCTION

Sometimes the same keyword can mean different things for different users. For example, a user searching for "laptops" close to your store is probably looking for a different answer than a user searching for the same keyword in her office.

Learnings from programmatic display

While programmatic display has learnt a lot from search marketing with regards to auctions and bidding, it has successfully discovered how to use audience signals. In fact, a recent study from the Boston Consulting Group showed that using advanced audience targeting techniques can reduce CPA by 32% on average for display campaigns (1). What if search could learn from display and improve campaigns by enhancing keywords with other signals?

Inspired from programmatic display, this paper covers how you can enhance keywords with other signals to maximise relevance and performance through three simple steps:

1. Gather audience signals that matter
2. Target based on discovered insights
3. Engage users with a tailored ad

A framework to plan more relevant campaigns

Audience signals such as location, time of day, device and Remarketing Lists from Search Ads can help advertisers serve a more relevant search ad to their customers. But having more to deal with more than keywords can increase complexity.

It helps to have a framework to use in order to decrease such complexity. We lay out three simple steps to succeed: Gather, Target, Engage. We also feature case studies of clients who followed this approach. Here are the main steps in more detail.

THE APPROACH
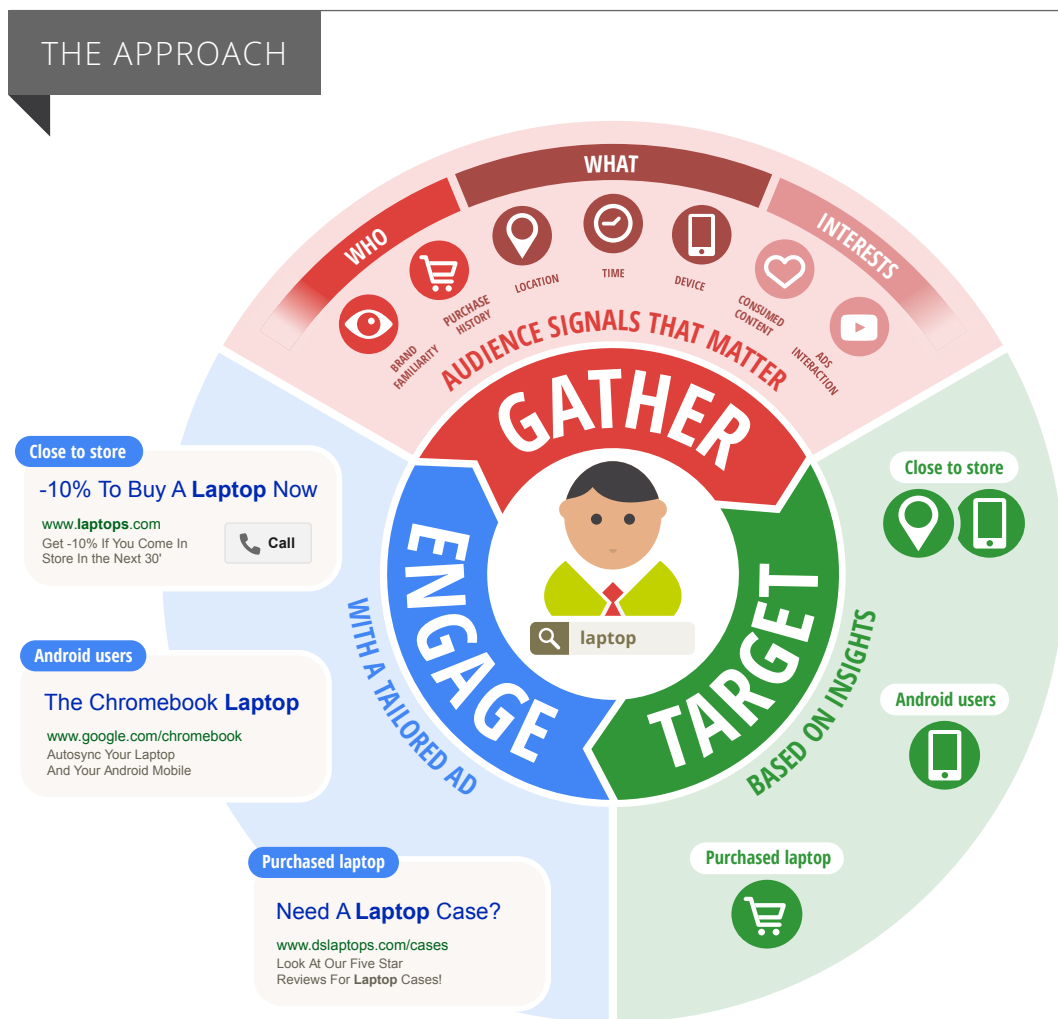
1. GATHER AUDIENCE SIGNALS THAT MATTER

This step is about identifying relevant signals for use in your search campaigns - an essential step for an advertiser to develop insights on who its audiences are, what context they are in and what their interests may be. Here are a few examples of types of signals you can identify:

Who: What is the user's relationship with you. For example: Have they ever visited the site? Have they ever purchased?

What: Time, location and device used.

Interests: Interests in specific categories based on consumed content.

2. TARGET BASED ON DISCOVERED INSIGHTS

Second, you can combine those signals, creating separate segments based on the insights you discover. Each segment can represent a different campaign. For example, here are a few different segments you could create if you were selling laptops:

"Close to store", based on device and location signals.

"Android users" might be more inclined to get a Chromebook.

"Interested in bags": If a user has bought a laptop through your website, he might now need a laptop case rather than a laptop.

3. ENGAGE WITH A TAILORED AD

In this step, you will need to match each segment with a tailored creative message. Messaging can be optimised for each segment through A/B testing to achieve best results. Post engagement, and through measuring results, you can reassess if there are any new signals you may be able to gather, returning back to the first step.

How marketers are doing it

Here are a few examples of brands executing search campaigns using an audience-driven approach.

Clarks

Clarks gathered audience signals on consumed website content by using AdWords Remarketing Lists for Search Ads (RLSA), constructing rules based on visitors' past activity on the Clarks website. For example, if a person had visited the site and looked into "school shoes", they were later shown an ad taking this into account. Finally, they adjusted bidding accordingly for individual users so as to limit the chance of getting priced out of auctions for high-cost generic keywords.

x7 increase in conversion rate

£
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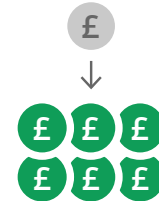
Return of £6 for every £1 invested

Specsavers

Specsavers, a high street optician chain, gathered location signals through search queries. Using such insights, Specsavers reached users when they were close to their physical stores. Finally, and to maximise engagement and relevance, they served creatives with customised copy based on the user's location. Results had a large impact on the number of eye exam bookings.

+189% in conversions

+30% in bookings

sk:n

Sk:n, the UK 's leading provider of non-surgical skin treatments, gathered time-of-day, location and device signals from search. Using these pieces of information, Sk:n combined those signals to target on-the-go busy professionals. Then, in order to drive urgency and ensure engagement, they displayed time-specific messages, such as the opening hours of each clinic, which change daily. Click-to-call extensions were scheduled to appear only during call centre hours to drive more call conversions.

+7% in conversions in prime locations
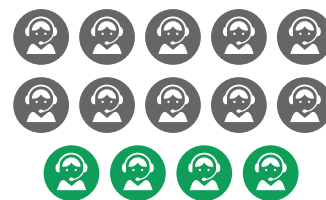
+42% in calls

Summary

Search marketing is a trusted channel among marketers because it conveys intent information. Still, marketers who do not enhance keywords with audience signals are missing out on results. Our advice would not be to change everything you currently do with search marketing, but you should start enhancing keywords with audience signals now via a test-and-learn approach.

After all, as one of our clients noted, "Today it's nascent and because only brands at the cutting edge are leaning into this, you're not going to lose out if you take it or leave it. But in six months time, this isn't something you can't be doing"[5].

Sources

1   *Average performance noted as per "Adding Data, Boosting Impact: Improving Engagement and Performance in Digital Advertising", Boston Consulting Group, September 2014.*

2   *Case study: Clarks Makes Big Strides with Remarketing Lists for Search Ads, June 2014*

3   *Case study: Specsavers Maximises Messaging Relevance at Scale, July 2014*

4   *Case study: Sk:n Clinics' Call Centre Sees Calls Increase 42%, January 2014*

5   *"What opportunities are there in search marketing with audience signals?", February 2015.*