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Behavioral INSIDER

THE INSIDE LINE ON BEHAVIORAL MARKETING

The Mind Set Of A Brand

by Steve Smith , Friday, February 29, 2008

MINDSET MEDIA COMES AT BEHAVIORAL targeting from a different direction and with a somewhat different aim from typical ad networks. Via intricate personality profiling, it promises to intercept online users whose "mindset" (personality traits) makes them most likely to consider particular brands and products. As co-founders Jim Meyer, CEO, and Sarah Welch, COO, explain, this approach does not require that an ad network know a user is already in-market for a product, just that she is the right type. The product will first be available via 24/7 RealMedia in about six weeks and hopes to lure more brand marketers online who are looking for better access to the top of the purchase funnel.

Behavioral Insider: What is a 'Mindset,' and how do you go about defining it?

Sarah Welch: We have 20 different element of personality and Mindsets are really gradients of these levels of personality. We have a typing survey that has about 75 questions that type people and we use to define personality. We have everything from Assertiveness to Spontaneity to Modesty to Openness to Leadership, Perfectionism, etc.

BI: And then how do those combine into usable profiles associated with products?

Welch: To profile a consumer group, we administer the survey to a representative sample of a client's customer group to see how their consumers differ from the general population in terms of concentration in particular mindsets.

BI: What is an example of a product's mindset?

Jim Meyer: People who drive pick-up trucks, for example, pop up high incidence rates of traits like assertiveness, bravado. They are lower on creativity, altruism, compliance to authority. We say that profile is "My Way or the Highway." Across all goods, people who buy organic goods -- fruit to cleaning supplies -- tend to be high in openness (receptivity to new experiences), seeing patterns in art and nature, high in creativity and tend to be in a dimension called leadership, collaborative and decisive decision making style. The profile of people who own Macs, for example, is not dissimilar to organic folks.

BI: So how do you map this knowledge against online behavior?

Welch: We have algorithms we apply to cookie pools that enable us to look for patterns of Web consumption that are predictive of psychographic traits. This fundamentally is how we identify target audiences, and that enables us to deliver those targeted audiences and media buys.

Meyer: Our thesis was that people reveal who they are in their heads by the way they consume the Internet, not only what they look at. We basically are model builders. We administer that survey on a panel of representative U.S. people with Nielsen where we can also see their Internet consumption, and we create analysis buckets.

If we have 10,000 people in the sample, then 2,000 of them are Assertiveness 5. And we say, let's look at their Internet consumption in aggregate. What patterns do we see in there that are different from the patterns we would see in the general population? And then we validate those patterns as predictive of that personality type.

BI: So you survey both a client's consumer group but then also do similar surveys across a sample of general Web users?

Meyer: It is exactly the same survey. We can use the survey to type a client's customer base or a buyer group of any kind. So we can go back to the client and say, your core customer looks like this. To actually enable them to buy those mindsets in media, we administer the survey on a panel, find the patterns in the anonymous clickstream data and that gives us equations that allow us to scale it on the Internet. It works like behavioral targeting in that respect, that once we have the algorithm we have a cookie pool, millions of people with longitudinal anonymous histories, and we can put our equations against those histories and flag them by personality type IDs. And then we can match ad inventory to the IDs and assemble buys for clients that are directed at specific mindsets.

BI: It seems that what you are doing complements or maps atop existing BT profiles.

Meyer: Right. It works at a different point in the marketing cycle. BT, if you talk to the guys in Detroit, is really useful to them when they intercept people who are in-market and have been to Kelly's Blue Book four times and can grab them because they are interested in a car. But what they can't do is use BT very well to fill the top of the funnel. They don't have the time or the energy to assemble 50,000 people at a time. And this is profoundly true when you get to consumer packaged goods, where there is no direct response ethic at all.

BI: What particular product types does this work most strongly with?

Meyer: Our top three focus areas are auto, consumer packaged goods, and financial services. What they have in common is, they are all highly brand-reliant. They spend enormous amounts of money on brand-building and generating brand awareness independent of whether they have a direct response business.

These are categories that are immensely competitive. They are highly commoditized. Everyone is trying to differentiate their products on what is increasingly psychographic or attitudinal dimensions. And as a general rule, those categories have under-used the Internet, particularly for branding. The big issue was that the Internet tended to talk to brand marketers in the language of direct response. They said, we're your accountable media. So we try to wrangle the complexity of that and put it into a proposition or form that would resonate with what brand marketers are trying to do -- which is differentiate at a psychographic level. And it enables the media plan to do what the creative plan does, which is talk to the right people.

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