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MKT 445

Week 3 Case Analysis: Case Study # 8 – TurboTax Super Status

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The TurboTax e-campaign was incredibly successful because it used a widget to proliferate its way through the web, and it employed social media as its distribution engine. Coined as the “Super Status Campaign,” this was the first ever “user generated content (UGC) campaign where potential players were invited to solve challenges” (Ryan, 2011, p.72), and then post their answers as their status update on Facebook, Twitter and MySpace. The campaign used a “grabbable/embedded widget” in different sizes that could be easily displayed in status updates, blogs, and other websites. The contest had some nice prizes like trips to NY and LA, and it had a final contest to raise awareness for the April 15th tax deadline. Harvesting the power of social media to spread the word about the upcoming tax season proved to be a very successful way to reach the target audience and make the brand go viral. At the time, this type of e-campaign was considered a “successful experiment in social media” (Ryan, 2011, p. 72) and it got much praise. It was recognized by industry experts such as AdAge and Social Media Today. It also went on to win the Online Media, Marketing and Advertising (OMMA) award. Below please find the e-campaign challenge, the target audience, important and measurable KPI’s for the campaign, as well as, the campaign recommendation and rationale:

Challenge

TurboTax wanted to engage their target audience in a fun and creative way to send a credible and persuasive message that preparing your own taxes is easy, and that the TurboTax software can guarantee the biggest possible tax refund.

Target Audience

The target audience is online social media users that are looking to save money by preparing their own taxes, and think of this as an easy and doable task.

Measurable Key Performance Indicators

Digital Campaign progression – the widget came with a tracking device that recorded a delivery of more than 6 million unique impressions. “TurboTax judged more than 5,000 entries that were estimated to have garnered around one million direct views within players extended online networks through their status updates based on average friend/follower statistics published in April 2009” (Ryan, 2011, p.72-73).

Campaign Success

The Campaign set out to meet the following key objectives:

- a. **Achieve targeted number of banner impressions of 200 million** – this key objective was met and exceeded three times the pre-campaign goal. This was measured by the widget’s contest module that kept track, the microsite, and buzz about the contest went viral across the web using social media, and it even got posted to people’s profile pages. All of these created a lot of buzz about the contest and the brand.
- b. **Create content engagement of 400,000 views/interactions** – this key objective was achieved by making the entries status updates. The 5,000 direct entries generated an “estimated 1 million direct impressions across players’ social networks (per average friend/follower estimates published in April 2009” (Ryan, 2011, p.73). The social networking engine made this quickly go viral.
- c. **Create consumer and media buzz** – this key objective was met with the culmination of winning the prestigious OMMA award. This interactive e-campaign resulted in a lot of consumer buzz for both the campaign and the TurboTax brand. The individual

contests using for the first time ever the UGC method prompted media coverage of the e-campaign and got the attention of high profile industry commentators such as AdAge and Social Media Today, as well as, others. On this key objective, this e-campaign was indeed a winner.

Rationale

This first of a kind super status campaign maximized UGC brilliantly with a widget. It provided creative and interactive content, and incentives like high value prizes for the users in order to engage them, and then use them to propagate the brand on their social media as a status update that they played the game. The embedded widget made it possible for the contest to quickly go viral on social media, blogs, many websites, etc. This e-campaign was part of a fully integrated marketing campaign. It was well supported by “TV spots, sponsorships, YouTube homepage placements, display ads and search marketing efforts, as well as co-branding and promotional features via the broadcaster NBC” (Ryan, 2011, p.72). This was marketed to a selected targeted audience of online social media users that wanted to save money, and felt that they could use the software to easily prepare their taxes. This innovative and creative e-campaign is a great example of how powerful social media is, especially when combined with great content that is interactive and with persuasive prizes like trips that easily lured users and then used them in social networking status updates to make the brand go viral.

Recommendation

Considering that this campaign met and far exceeded all of its key objectives to include winning the prestigious OMMA award, it is my opinion that no recommendations

are necessary for the campaign itself. The marketing team did its job extremely well, and made TurboTax a well-known brand. We have been using it for a few years ourselves. However, this type of e-campaign model could be recommended for other businesses, and the prizes do not need to be as grandiose. It could be for various types of other contests, such as discounts, earn extra points, free gifts, etc., in order to create social media buzz about a brand.

References:

Ryan, D., & Jones, C. (2012). *Understanding Digital Marketing: Marketing Strategies for Engaging the Digital Generation*. 2nd ed. Kogan:London

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