Evaluating the Web-Site & Digital Environment of Airbnb

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ABSTRACT

What began as a company in San Francisco to aid unemployed Brian Chesky and Joe Gebbia pay their housing rent and earn some extra cash, Airbnb today has disrupted and revolutionized the entire lodging industry by making provisions for additional rooms at the country’s contemporaneous travel locations/destinations during peak seasons when hotel rooms are sold out and the remaining ones are available at skyrocketing prices. In the following report, the current practices which have been implemented by Airbnb within the digital domain to enhance their brand recognition are discussed. The predominant sway of Airbnb’s digital environment in a conventional, as well as new framework, have been previewed pertaining to focus on guest association and measurement of outcomes in digital interfaces.

KEYWORDS

Consumer Connectivity, Digital Marketing, Measurement of Outcomes, Website Analysis

1. INTRODUCTION

Marketing is not the art of finding clever ways to dispose of what you make. It is the art of creating genuine customer value. (Kotler, 2014).

The above statement by Dr. Philip Kotler clearly communicates the vitality of marketing as an indispensable component of creating value for the customer. Pertaining to the hospitality industry in specific, a drastic paradigm shift has been observed from the application of traditional marketing practices to the adoption of marketing across digital platforms. A prime reason accounting for this shift has been the improvements within the domain of IT, technology and the spread of rapidly growing broadband services across the globe thereby forcing organizations to either adapt or perish to this segmental shift (Durmas & Efendioglu, 2016; Kotler, Kartajaya & Setiawan, 2017; Worner & Weill, 2018).

Apart from being more economically feasible/cost effective (by leveraging Email marketing, SEO & social media platforms) as compared to the traditional marketing practices, digital marketing also goes ahead to facilitate interactions with the targeted audience and cater to the booming marketing of mobile customers (Kotler, Kartajaya, & Setiawan, 2017). This not only increases the accessibility and reach of the marketing campaigns but also goes ahead to fosters a two way communication between the customer and the business thereby earning customer trust (customer testimonials acting as social proof) and snowballing customer engagement (Rodriguez, 2018).

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2. CASE STUDY- A JOURNEY OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION FROM AIRBED & BREAKFAST TO AIRBNB

The Airbnb business model relies on two factors: the host and the traveler. The objective of their every marketing strategy is to embolden and reach out to the maximum number of people across the globe and convince them to become travelers &/or hosts. Taking the aforementioned factors into consideration, Airbnb has implemented several clever customer acquisition strategies by optimizing their digital marketing strategy:

2.1. Inbound Marketing

2.1.1. Craigslist Integration

Craigslist is a site often used by people who were on a constant lookout for short-term accommodations. Not only did the Joe Gebbia and Brian Chesky know that this was their potentially existing untapped market but also were aware of the fact that they could do a better job at making the apartments listed on craigslist more alluring and likable than the online classified site. In order to achieve this, Airbnb had to siphon away customers from Craigslist and thus Gebbia and Chesky developed a software to hack into the online classified site to extract information of the property owners and sent them a pitch to list on Airbnb as well (Rosoff, 2011; Blanding, 2016).

After the bed and breakfast company received their first 1000 customers, Airbnb decided to attract qualified leads and reverse engineered Craigslist form to make the two platforms compatible. Whenever anyone listed accommodations on Airbnb, they got an option to automatically create a posting on Craigslist as well. This helped create additional inbound links for the user and drove more traffic to Airbnb (Teixeira & Blanding, 2016).

2.1.2. Google Display Network Partnership

In order to make their listings more visually appealing in order to attract more customers, Airbnb joined forces with Google and invested heavily into their Google Search Advertisements. This not only facilitated Airbnb to increase their listing from 10,000 to 80,000, but also went ahead to increase their reach international audiences with their banner ad campaigns that featured photographs of real rooms and apartments (Heussner, 2011). Airbnb continues to use digital marketing tools to expand their customer base and creates relevant content about a particular location by collaborating with local hosts. They leveraged Google Display Network reaching a wide range of customers with broad interests, choosing which sites or pages to appear on and engaging with customers with appealing ad formats. This has been explained in the diagram below (Figure 1):

2.2. Airbnb Website Redesign

Ever since Airbnb started off in 2008, they have constantly being updating and constantly redesigning their website in order to not only increase their conversion rate and user engagement, but also to improve their SEO and website structure.

Airbnb’s latest website redesign has a refreshed and minimalistic look with the following changes:
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