Remarketing Advertising: Catching the Ones that Got Away

Introduction

These days it is crucially important for any hospitality business to have a good looking website that supports the brand, encourages potential guests to make a booking and is easy for guests to use. There are also a number of techniques that can be used to drive more potential customers to your website and increase the chances that they will actually make a booking.

This guide will explain a digital advertising technique that gets people to return to your website if they haven’t booked the first time, providing a second chance to get the booking. This ‘Remarketing Advertising’ can help turn browsers into buyers and can be an incredibly powerful part of your business’s advertising mix to ‘capture demand’.

Remarketing advertising is a clever way of displaying advertisements online to people who have previously visited your hospitality business’s website and performed a pre-determined behaviour pattern, but didn’t make a purchase.

The remarketing advertising tools discussed in this guide are free to set up and can be used alongside complementary marketing such as Search Advertising, Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) and Social Media Marketing to reach an online audience and convert them into paying guests.

How Does Remarketing Work?

Remarketing advertisements are essentially adverts that follow customers who have shown an interest in a particular product or service around the web.

You’ve probably noticed remarketing advertising in action when you are online and you start to see advertisements for things you have previously viewed online. The following diagram shows how it works.
1. A potential customer arrives at a hotel website and, through website clicks, exhibits a behavioural pattern that triggers remarketing. This could be by looking at the restaurant’s menu, viewing the current offers or locating a particular room on the website.

2. The potential customer then starts browsing other websites – from Amazon to The Guardian newspaper – and begins to see ads for your business on the Google Display Network (GDN). The GDN is a vast network of websites that have made advertising space available to the GDN on which display ads then appear.

3. If the potential customer clicks the displayed advert, they are taken to a specified page that can be a regular page on the hotel website or, ideally, a dedicated landing page for the hotel’s campaign or for that particular advert.

4. The information about the viewer’s clicks feeds back into the remarketing system created by the hotel. The hotel’s campaign can then be fine-tuned based on the remarketing data received. The advert can be displayed any number of times though it is recommended that ads be limited to no more than three or four displays to avoid annoying potential customers.

Remarketing advertising is paid for on a Pay-Per-Click (PPC) basis, so the business only pays when somebody clicks its adverts. The amount paid is limited by the business’s set budget and is determined by an algorithm based on the competitive environment of the product or service being sold and the target audience.

Creating a Remarketing System

You can set up a remarketing system using Google Adwords and Google Analytics – both are free to join. Begin by creating a ‘Remarketing List,’ which are the actions, pages or combinations of pages that the business wants people to visit before the adverts are triggered. Some additional tracking code made need to be added in the website pages that will be used as trigger pages.

Once this is set up, select your Lists when you create either the search or display adverts in Adwords. Although this is a fairly simplified description of the process, Google provides plenty of detailed support information.

Why Does Remarketing Work?

It’s the audience that you’re reaching with these adverts that is so appealing to a marketer and what makes the ads particularly useful for a hotel or restaurant. It is important to choose the right points to trigger the remarketing advertising e.g. the sequence of viewing room pages and entering the booking system, but failing to complete a booking. Once a desirable behaviour pattern has been identified it is particularly important that the advertisement triggered is relevant to the potential customer.

Remarketing’s strength lies in its ability to capture the ‘undecided market’, allowing you to intelligently draw people back to your website and make a sale. The remarketing process is, however, a little more emotive with hospitality businesses than it would be for a product. For example, all that is needed to sell dishwashers is a trigger to an advert with a photograph of the dishwasher or similar products. With a hotel – where the business is selling an experience - you need to be more creative and base the ads on the behaviour of the customer.

Here are a few ideas of how this could work:

- If the customer visited the rooms pages and the spa pages, then it is likely that they are looking for a spa break. Trigger an advert promoting spa break packages.
- If the customer visited the rooms pages and the restaurant pages, then it is likely that they are looking for a dinner, bed & breakfast package. Trigger an advert promoting dining packages.
- If the customer looked at wedding pages and didn’t complete the enquiry form, then trigger an advert promoting wedding packages.

From Ignite’s experience and data analysis, we know that remarketing advertising works well at encouraging bookings and driving the right people back to a business’s website. Equally important, it is cost effective because the business only pays when somebody clicks on the remarketing ad; money isn’t wasted on advertising to people who aren’t interested in your offer.

Top Tips for Remarketing Advertising

- Always check that your Remarketing Lists are working properly before setting up the remarketing advert campaigns because the extra coding might cause errors that will need to be fixed before the campaign goes live. Try using Google Tag Assistant.
- If you can create your Remarketing List in Google Analytics (i.e. you don’t use Universal Analytics) it is always better to do so rather than creating it in Google Adwords. Analytics offers more detailed information for use when creating an audience profile. Make sure the Analytics and Adwords accounts are linked.
If you want to use Google Analytics Goals for remarketing remember to create the Goals before creating the Remarketing List because the Goals will be needed as conditions for the list.

Categorise audiences: remarketing is about targeting an audience that is already aware of the brand and whose behaviour is assessed in Analytics. This means you can categorise your remarketing audience in groups based on the pages they have visited, the Goals they completed - or didn’t complete, the visit durations, etc. Audience categorisation allows personalisation of the ads according to each category created and therefore improves the response to your adverts.

Once the audiences are chosen make sure the ads and landing pages are relevant to each one of your audience profiles. Also, choose your goal for each audience i.e. what actions do you want from the audience?

Be clear about what you want the customer to do when they reach the landing page, and make sure the design is consistent between the adverts and the landing page.

Split test adverts to develop a better understanding of your audience, e.g. which pages work better for triggering remarketing? What type of advertisement should be shown to people interested in a specific page?

Conclusion

Remarketing Advertising is a great way to encourage more bookings through your website. If you have invested in a good website and one of your objectives is to become less reliant on online travel agencies (OTAs) then this is a valuable technique to apply to your hospitality business.

Further Resources

American Marketing Association Dictionary
www.marketingpower.com/_layouts/dictionary.aspx

Chartered Institute of Marketing Jargon Buster
www.cim.co.uk/Resources/jargonbuster.aspx

Facebook for Business
www.facebook.com/business

Google Ads
www.google.co.uk/ads/innovations/remarking.html

Google Adwords Support
support.google.com/adwords/answer/2453998

Institute of Hospitality eBooks (Available through: Institute of Hospitality eResources Collection website
www.instituteofhospitality.org/info_services/eresources)


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