



'Targeted Virgin Keywords' on Google AdWords help PYOTravel.com reach out to 50% of its customers



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Darren Goh
Marketing Director, PYOTravel

ABOUT GOOGLE ADWORDS

Google AdWords is used by thousands of businesses worldwide to attract new customers cost-effectively. AdWords uses keywords to target ad delivery to web users who seek a particular product or service. The cost-per-click (CPC) pricing means advertisers only pay when an ad is clicked on. Advertisers benefit from a massive distribution network and choose their own support level and spending.

For more information on launching your own campaign, visit <http://adwords.google.com.my>

Business

Launched in March 2006, PYOTravel.com or Plan Your Own Travel.com started out with less than ten staff. Today it houses over 30 employees across the largest localized B2C online distribution network in Asia Pacific.

The travel site offers a huge selection of accommodation, transfers and tours via its 20 localized travel portals in countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, Japan, China, Australia, Thailand, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, The Philippines, United Kingdom, and the United States. In addition, PYOTravel has more than 10 call centers world wide for the convenience of our customers to call in for various supports

Headquartered in Malaysia, PYOTravel’s target audience is mainly FITs (fully independent travelers) and young professionals.

Approach

When PYOTravel first started out, it was placing banner advertisements on popular portals like The Star (Malaysia), AsiaOne (Singapore) and the Apple Daily Online (Hong Kong) etc to create awareness of the new online travel booking portal.

It was also spending 70% of its advertising budget on offline marketing methods such as print ads and participating in travel fairs. Only 30% was spent on online advertising, something rather unusual for an Internet-based company.

“Even if people do not click on the ad links, it’s not a total waste because with AdWords’ impressive results, our advertisements usually appear in the top three spots, giving PYOTravel the airtime it needs.”

Today, the company no longer advertises on popular portals. It is also spending 70% of its advertising budget on online advertising with the remaining 30% spent on travel fairs and print media.

The reason? Google AdWords.

About two months after the company started its operations, it decided to give search engine marketing (SEM) a try because SEM’s targeted focus enables direct outreach to its target audience of FITs and young professionals. Also PYOTravel had no way of knowing if its print ads worked because there was simply no way of tracking.



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Mr. Darren Goh, director of marketing for PYOTravel shares, “Our parent company Reliance Pacific Berhad is very into online advertising and they have had experience using Google AdWords. So we decided to take a leaf out of their book and tried out AdWords ourselves.”

“It wasn’t too hard. There were readily available online resources like YouTube videos showing how to use AdWords. With a healthy dose of experimentation and trial and error, I set up my first campaign consisting of 20 ad groups with 10 keywords each in about 1 hour. Piece of cake,” Darren recalls.

Since then Darren has launched about 15 campaigns. A typical campaign has about 450 ad groups consisting of 10 keywords each.

When asked to share his favourite AdWords feature, Darren was emphatic, “Definitely the AdWords Editor – it enables me to work on the campaigns offline before uploading them onto AdWords. This is definitely an important time and money saver as I don’t have to spend money and take up bandwidth to work on the campaigns online.”

The company’s strategy for keyword choice is rather unusual. Darren is very proud of his ‘virgin and targeted keywords approach’ where he chooses very specific (hence cheaper) keywords like ‘Baiyoke Hotel’ which are popular with users but not very much sought after by advertisers. Rightly so because this ‘virgin keywords approach’ has enabled the company to reach out to 50% of its customers. “This particular approach works for PYOTravel because our customers being independent travelers know specifically what they are looking for so it saves us a lot of money not bidding for generic keywords such as ‘Hotels in Bangkok’.

Results

Since 2006, PYOTravel has increased its investments in Google AdWords by 300% because it is seeing 100% return-on-investment year-on-year with a success rate of 50,000 clickthroughs and 500 conversions every month.

“Even if people do not click on the ad links, it’s not a total waste because with AdWords’ impressive results, our advertisements usually appear in the top three spots, giving PYOTravel the airtime it needs,” Darren affirms.

Darren felt the one thing that cannot be measured in terms of monetary value is the dedicated support offered by Google. Google often goes beyond the call of duty to offer expert advice to PYOTravel in terms of website optimization and keyword strategy. “What I like very much is that Google does not see PYOTravel as a customer but rather a partner. If PYOTravel.com succeeds, Google succeeds and I think that’s the spirit that drives the Google staff to enhance our online advertising experience.”

Musing on the success of Google AdWords, Darren indicates that PYOTravel will continue to use Google AdWords for years to come because of its transparency in offering insight, ability to track results and ease of use. “I am very happy with what AdWords is offering at the moment and we will continue to increase our AdWords expenditure as more features are added to make our ad dollars more worthwhile.” In fact, the company is looking to push out more visual advertisements in the near future.