Marketing with Peanuts: Using Facebook Advertising to Reach Your Patrons
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Introduction

During Fall 2016, the Virginia International University (VIU) Library used Facebook advertising with a budget of $90. Over a nine week period, The VIU Library advertised collections, facilities, services, and technologies available to our patrons reaching numbers equivalent to our student body while increasing visits and likes to our Facebook page.

Marketing plan fall 2016

October 18- EBSCO Discovery System

October 24- Computer Science eBooks

October Nov 1- Proquest Dissertation and Thesis

November 7- RefMe

November 14- Interlibrary Loan

November 28- Study rooms

December 5- Computers tables

December 12- return your books

Not used- Boost Library Facebook page

Objectives

In Fall 2016, The VIU Library created a marketing plan. The objective was to promote collections, facilities, services, and technologies. The student population consisted of 998 students from around the globe with only three percent coming from North America. Many students reported anecdotally that their previous library was very different from the one at VIU. The Director of Library Services outlined what and when to promote strategically during the term for the most impact. With the marketing team, the VIU Library created each Facebook post and the marketing team would boost each week. The budget for the project was $100, but only nine promotions happened and $90 spent.

Methods

Each week, the VIU Library staff created a post on its Facebook page and the marketing team would boost the post. Facebook advertising allows you to target your audience. In our case, the marketing team chose people who liked our page between the ages of 18-65 years old living within a twenty-mile radius of Fairfax, VA. One can select how many days the ad will run and select a budget for the week.

Facebook will provide analytical information so one can see who and how one reached that audience. Looking at the Boost Post example from our eBook promotion, there were 940 people reached. There was 24 total engagements and Facebook lists how students interacted with the post by measuring photo clicks, page likes, post likes, and page shares. Another helpful metric was seeing the demographics of age and gender of the people engaging with the Facebook page. Although a country demographic exists, this metric was not helpful since everyone resided in the United States.

Results

The use of Facebook ads dramatically increased the number of people reached during the Fall 2016 term with 386,146 or ninety-nine percent of the year's total from 1,417 in the spring and 3,704 in the summer. This success was despite lacking administrative control to boost those ads. Delays due to communication or workload errors cause the entire project to start a week late and the Director of Library Services dropped the first ad about *Boost Library Facebook page.*

Another problem was that the ads did not run the full week and results ran 1-4 days depending on the administrator. While not executed properly, the plan had some measurable success during four weeks of the campaign.

EBSCO Discovery Service

Our first ad lasted three days and promoted our new *EBSCO Discovery Service.* The ad reached 977 people with downloads almost doubling from 469 in September to 905 in October.

Computer Science EBooks

During the second week, we advertised eBooks to computer science students since they complained to our accreditor that the library did not have enough books on their major. Using data visualization, we made a bubble chart based on the 3,906 subjects contained in the 12,212 computer science eBooks we subscribe. This ad reached 940 people. In comparing the eBook usage stats, the usage increased from 1,362 in September to 1,883 searches during October, when the ad ran. The download count improved from 75 in September to 163 in October.

ProQuest Dissertations and Thesis

Our next measurable success was in the promotion of *ProQuest Dissertations and Thesis.* This ad ran the longest with a four-day campaign reaching 852 people. During October, PQDT had 6 searches with 3 downloads. After the ad ran in early November, the searches increased to 58 with 14 downloads.

Returning Library Materials

Our last ad campaign was a reminder to students to return their library materials. Run during finals week, the ad reached 852 students and had perhaps the most success. While the ad ran only one day, students returned 50 of the 53 books that were due.

Weekly ad reach total by semester 2016
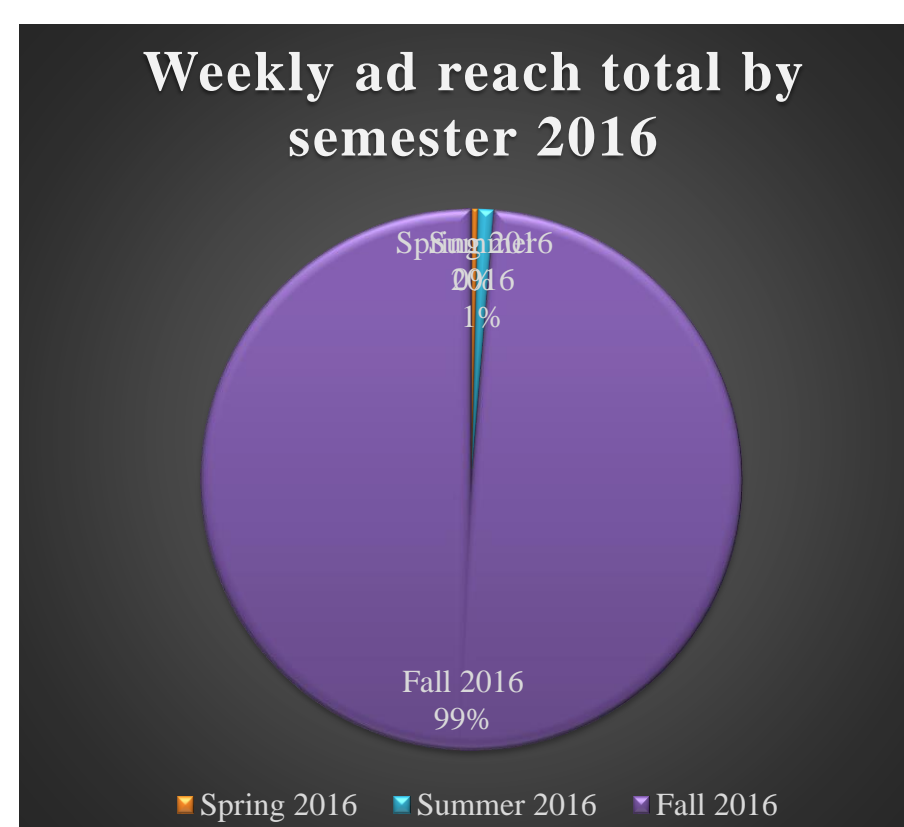
Conclusions

Facebook advertising is an inexpensive way of reaching a large audience. A library can promote many of its collections and services directly to students. Facebook's ability to reach age and gender demographics in a specific location makes newspaper, letters, email, or sign adverting obsolete. In addition, the time to create and distribute an ad takes only a few minutes.

Choosing the correct wording is also important. The message should grab the reader immediately with action verbs; use an excited tone; and short sentences. Consult writing techniques for the internet for the best results.

Careful consideration to timing is important as well. Choose dates based on when students need the services or collections. Our marketing campaign began in mid-October when students begin to focus on end of the term projects.

The visuals representation is very important as well. Using data visualization techniques or clear, eye-catching photos will lead the reader to the message. Consult with a graphic designer and ask for feedback from students before posting.

Lastly, make sure the administrators in charge of boosting the post understand exactly how long the ad should run. The VIU Library now has control of boosting the ads, but during our 2016 marketing campaign we did not which led to delays and shortened running periods.

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