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3 Key Aspects to Building a Successful Online Apparel Business

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3 Key Aspects to Building a Successful Online Apparel Business

We are in a time where being a young entrepreneur is more common than not. Entrepreneurship has become a means to solve problems in society by ourselves instead of waiting for someone or something else to magically solve the issues that bother us. Personally, being an entrepreneur and a student in the business school, I have yearned to discover a way to combine those two things and make them be able to co-exist more cohesively.

As I have been preparing to launch a clothing line myself, I decided that it would be of value to share what I have learned in hope that another entrepreneurial spirited student interested in also starting a business can use some or all my knowledge as a resource. With that said, I will mainly be addressing the clothing industry. One thing to keep in mind is that all the tips I will elaborate on are applicable to other online businesses.

The clothing industry is definitely a hard one to penetrate and maintain increasing traffic on website. The 3 major things that I have identified as essential for a successful online business, in this case apparel business, include;

1. Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
2. Brand/Company Focus
3. Content consistency

Search Engine Optimization

Search Engine Optimization is a concept that a lot of small online businesses haven't implemented and surprisingly a number of large companies too. I have been keeping track of what my potential future competitors are doing, and one thing that they are significantly lacking in is having a strong SEO. I have searched important key words that apply to African fabric

clothing industry (i.e., African fashion, African apparel, African clothing) and the top brands that I expected to show up didn't show up.

Popularity is something that an online business needs to pursue to constantly increase their SEO. Search engines today are looking for sites that other people think are the most relevant. Building inbound links, social media following, and off-site mentions will help your search engine rankings.¹ Start with selecting a website name that will be easy to look up and remember. Many businesses have overly generic wording as names or hard names to write up that causes their name to be mixed up with other search topics.

Another way to help hone the website's popularity is by developing an SEO-friendly platform. Make sure your website is mobile friendly and works with every brand of web browser. In today's world, more than 50% of users are browsing the web with tablets, phones and other types of mobile devices. If your website is not mobile friendly, then you could be missing out on half of the audience trying to view your website.² It is very important to also focus significantly on the layout of your landing page on all those platforms because it will significantly influence the customers desire to spend more time on your website.

After getting popularity and having more visitors coming to your website, what you have the customer do next is important. Once they are there, you have to get them to take some kind of action. This may be getting them to fill out a form or buying some sort of loss leader product.³ Ensure that there are call to actions on all pages in one way or another.

¹ Score. "What You Need to Know About Websites" *Score*, Jan 27, 2015

² Score. "What You Need to Know About Websites" *Score*, Jan 27, 2015

³ Score. "What You Need to Know About Websites" *Score*, Jan 27, 2015

Once you have some information from them, you can proceed to the final step—learning how to make money with your prospects and/or current customers. When you collect information about the people who have interest in your product or service, you can build a demand generation engine to sell them higher dollar items that help increase your profitability.⁴

Brand/Company Focus

One problem most new clothing brands have is trying to please too many people. "You can't be something to everybody, but you have to be everything for somebody," says Gurnani. Gurnani added on to say that targeting helps in consolidating marketing efforts and communicating to the right audience.⁵ Targeting a specific mark is essentially referred to as niche marketing.

Niche marketing is a targeted marketing plan that focuses on one particular section of the market that has high potential to connect with a product or a service. Instead of casting a wide net in mass-media and large-event marketing, niche marketing zeroes in on strategically selected venues and media platforms that have high concentrations of these targeted consumers.⁶

Everything you do on your website should be focused towards a specific niche market. Through having focus towards a specific niche market, you maintain relevancy. Your content—keywords, graphics, headers, titles, etc.—should be targeted to the end user that you have in mind. If you have multiple targets, you can create additional pages that follow this same guideline.⁷ By focusing on particular types of customers or groups, you can better attract and retain the

⁴ Score. "What You Need to Know About Websites" *Score*, Jan 27, 2015

⁵ Baruah, Joyshree and Rajiv Singh. "Why a Bunch of Online Fashion Startups are Going Niche Startups" *The Economic Times*, Mar 14, 2016

⁶ Baruah, Joyshree and Rajiv Singh. "Why a Bunch of Online Fashion Startups are Going Niche Startups" *The Economic Times*, Mar 14, 2016

⁷ Score. "What You Need to Know About Websites" *Score*, Jan 27, 2015

customers you are specially targeting since you will have content, designs, and products that are both desired by them and that meet their needs.

Content Consistency

Consistency is a very vital part of building a business. Through consistency you are able to build customer trust which eventually helps contribute to company's growth through driving sales and leading to an increase in customer base especially through word of mouth. Per our present state as a technologically advancing generation, word of mouth more so means sharing what you like on social media.

While starting a business, it is important to do things that will keep customers engage with your brand and make them feel your brand is leading towards stability. One of the most important ways businesses can distinguish themselves from their competitors is through consistency. Producing high-quality, consistent content helps brands establish themselves as thought leaders in their industry. The regularity of your content has a direct influence on how credible people think you are. The more consistency, the more the credibility. Also, the longer you produce content the more you are legitimized as a business.⁸ Even as a start-up, the company can establish a sense of leadership through the types of consistent content published. In regard to what consistent clothing content would look like includes; constant product posting, changing versions of products through color scheme adjustments, material alterations, style improvements, or even keeping up with seasons through themed promotions.

⁸ Boitnott, John. Why You Must Push Out Content Consistently To Be Successful

Interesting enough, content consistency affects traffic and SEO which have already been discussed as major factors that contribute to business growth. It's important to note that two of the most important factors that affect SEO are quality and frequency. For businesses to take advantage of the power of content, they need to have both characteristics. Consistent content shows search engines that a website or blog is well maintained and that the information within it is valuable to specific search criteria.⁹

The things that I hope have been key takeaways from this article include; One, learn how to maximize SEO for your company's advantage through consistency and quality of website. Two, maintain a brand that has a key niche market in order to have multiple customers be in love with your product than having no one fully invested in the product. Three, being consistent with content establishes credibility and contributes to brand awareness which is in turn connected to improved website traffic and SEO. It is understandable that doing all these things as a startup will be hard but remind yourself that it will all be worth it because you will be contributing to starting a business with a firm foundation.

⁹ Boitnott, John. Why You Must Push Out Content Consistently To Be Successful

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