

Psychographics Defined

Using Behavioral Descriptors for More Effective Marketing

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Psychographics and demographics are similar in that they both refer to the characteristics of groups and individuals. Where they differ is in what types of characteristics they describe. Demographics uses *traits* of people such as age, gender, occupation, home size, income, number of children, etc. Psychographics instead focuses on people's *actions*, including preferences and lifestyle choices.

I'll use myself as an example. The fact that I'm married and have no children describes me from a demographic angle. I also love Thai food – extra spicy – a psychographic descriptor. If you are opening a new Thai restaurant in my area, you care much more about my food preferences than my marital status.

I'm not proposing that psychographic data is a superior way of defining your target audience than demographics, sociographics or any other method. However, I do see many of our clients automatically defaulting to demographic data alone. Others are incorporating psychographics but in a less than scientific manner. Either way, you could be shortchanging your marketing ROI potential.

Please consider the following suggestions:

1. Use your entire company to define your target psychographics.

I have worked for large companies where the Sales Department, Marketing Department, Accounting Department, and Merchandising Department would all describe target customer characteristics in different ways. They are all correct, just their point of reference is different due to the nature of their jobs. Using a cross section of your employees to create a holistic description of your target client is best.

2. Brainstorm with an Advertising Agency.

Most of the people I've met who understand and use the terminology are working for an ad agency. If you use one, don't forget to include them in the conversation. They should have good case studies or anecdotes about using this type of data in marketing.

3. Develop a checklist for every marketing campaign.

When working on the details of a marketing campaign the basics can get pushed to the side – the old forest-for-the-trees adage. Develop your own checklist of questions that you ask before starting every campaign. What values does your target have? What is their purchasing or donation behavior? What benefits do your targets want to gain? I'm sure you can come up with a dozen more relevant questions.

4. Find out what mailing lists exist.

After you have your ideal client definition completed, find out what mailing lists exist that reflect your target psychographics. We live in an age where detailed information on our actions (particularly our purchasing actions) is being gathered every day. You might be surprised just how much detail some mailing lists can deliver. The people here at Daniels Graphics would be happy to help find and purchase these lists for you.

If you would like to learn more, I found the article at the link below to be particularly interesting since it takes a swing at providing profiles for seven different psychographic groups.

<http://www.northcrossing.com/PsychographicMarketing.html>