

Project: Proposed Marketing Campaign

Business Type: Independent opticians

Att: Sohail

The marketing objective is to generate targeted leads for an independent optician's practice. The main identifiable problem / barrier / obstacle is nearby competition, who offer free eye tests as a lead generator. However, on the surface, this may be the only significant difference so this factor needs to be addressed and clarified to the target audience.

There is a need to educate the target market about the quality of service offered by the independent optician, against a backdrop of multiple high street providers, such as Specsavers and Vision Express. The large multiples have, through the use of various media, created the perception that they are cheaper and better.

Once the target market realises there are distinctly 2 levels of service, then opinions can be swayed in favour of the independents.

To begin, the pros and cons, advantages and disadvantages need to be clearly identified and communicated to the target market, in what appears to be an objective observation. Although the essence of the communication must be based on facts, it can obviously be heavily biased towards the independent.

Independents

Pros	Cons
Personal, unhurried consultation High quality eye tests Highly experienced & qualified optometrists Wide range of precision lenses and extras Wide choice of frames Quality aftercare & support	Initial eye test fee

Multiples

Pros	Cons
Free eye test Quick eye test Employ several optometrists Range of precision lenses and extras Wide choice of frames Limited aftercare	Will recover the loss in other ways Limited time for quality eye test Detached, impersonal service High costs of additional features

Marketing proposal:

1. It is important to point out to the target market, in all marketing communications, that everything offered by the multiples is not as it might first appear to be.
2. The independent needs to focus its campaign on the quality eye care service they provide as opposed to the range of frames etc.
3. It should be emphasised that eye health is better treated by a dedicated specialist rather than a general supplier of glasses, who is more concerned about generating profits.
4. A highly professional optometrist is more likely to recognise the symptoms of serious eye diseases such as glaucoma, uveitis and many more.
5. The independent works to build a personal relationship with his patients and has more of an invested interest in the patient's long-term welfare. The multiples employ many qualified optometrists who are simply employed by the company, may be looking to move on, and are therefore less likely to form relationships with their clients.

Recommendations:

A one page sales letter to accompany the leaflet, explaining the differences between the service you provide and the perceived value of service offered by the multiples.

Why? There is need for better education about the levels of service and eye care available.

It is better to put the letter and the leaflet together into an envelope. The envelope should have a compelling headline / slogan on the front.

Why? Most leaflets don't get read and are usually binned. An envelope will always get opened, unless it's a bill. Once opened they will read the letter.

Long term you must work towards becoming a fundamental part of the community. Coffee mornings was mentioned, which is okay but a more powerful way of getting your business to the forefront of people's minds is to help the community in some way and generate plenty of publicity within your catchment area.

For example, sponsor something or someone in a good cause. Organise a fund-raising campaign for something that's important to people in your area. Portray yourselves as a caring business within your community.

To facilitate this use social media. Create a dedicated Facebook page. Run an advertorial in the local newspaper based on a case study. This can be especially powerful if you identified a serious eye problem with a patient. You must demonstrate that you are a caring business and not just a provider of services.

Obtain as many testimonials as you can, from existing patients, identifying them only with initials etc., and use the best ones in all your marketing.

To follow-up with your initial letter and leaflet drop, use postcards for future marketing. There are plenty of images that can be used to front a postcard, all of which can instantly attract attention. Everyone reads postcards.

Try associated marketing with other businesses. Can you get any other local businesses to recommend your services to their customers? In return you can recommend your patients to them. This can only work with selective businesses but look around you and see if any others can recommend you in return for a free eye-test, a free lunch or something similar.

Just a small point but quite often relevant to acquiring new clients is your email address. Yours is currently: armitageallopticians@gmail.com – businesses that use a free email account are perceived to be less professional. Can you get an email like, info@armitageallopticians.co.uk

Because you operate in a small area with a population of less than 17,000 then your direct marketing will be limited to door to door marketing drops and local ads. That's why a community campaign strategy would work well for you in the long-term. Of the 17,000 population, approx. 11,500 will either wear glasses or need glasses so it's still a sizable market.

However, it can be costly to roll out a campaign capable of reaching every household, therefore the addition of a one-page, lead generating direct marketing letter will somewhat justify the costs.