IS PRINT RETARGETING FOR YOU?

BY HEIDI TOLLIVER-WALKER

Most of us are familiar with retargeting to a certain extent. We go to a retailer's website and browse the collection of shoes. We linger on a pair, get distracted, then move on to something else. The next time we go on Facebook, do a Google search, or check our email, an ad pops up for the very pair of shoes we most recently browsed.

Coincidence? Of course not. This is the result of online retargeting, and it's highly effective. But did you know that you can do retargeting with direct mail, too?

WHAT MAKES RETARGETING SO EFFECTIVE?

Statistics show that 96% of people who visit a website are just browsing.[1] They're interested in a product, but they aren't ready to make a purchase right away. Reminding them of the "purchase that got away" can often be all it takes to get them to convert to a sale.

Invesp, a company specializing in online conversion rate optimization, recently compiled an infographic on the power of this type of targeting. While the data relates to online behavior, what's important is not the channel used to do the retargeting. It's the retargeting itself.

Here are three pieces of data from the infographic that every marketer should know:

- The average click-through rate for a retargeting ad is 100% higher than a traditional display ad.
- 26% of customers will return to a retailer's website after retargeting.
- Website visitors retargeted with display ads are 70% more likely to convert on the retailer's website.[2]

Retargeting is not just a follow-up marketing touch. It's a reminder to purchase a product or service that consumers picked out themselves. That's what makes retargeting so powerful. It's not trying to convince a consumer that they need or want something; it's reminding them to, go back to your website and purchase something they were sufficiently interested in.

Retargeting, regardless of channel, is similar to abandoned shopping cart emails: "You left this in your shopping cart. Don't forget to check out!" According to Rejoiner, an abandoned shopping cart email service, with a smart abandoned cart email program, orders can be converted 10% to 15% of the time.[3]

This is great news for marketers and the print shops serving them. With the flood of online advertising, direct mail retargeting combines the tangible impact of print with the power of a secondary marketing touch.

Print is also a powerful "multiplying force." Direct mail not only has more cut-through power than online ads, but studies show that information in print is embedded more deeply into memory, resulting in higher levels of recall.[4] Studies have also shown that consumers consider print to be more trustworthy than digital channels.[5] They're also more likely to take the brand's message seriously and feel more valued.[6] Taken together, this makes print retargeting incredibly powerful.

[1] https://blog.kissmetrics.com/what-converting-websites-do/
[2] https://www.invespcro.com/blog/ad-retargeting-2/
[3] "Abandoned Cart Email Guide" (Rejoiner.com)
[4] https://www.forbes.com/sites/rogerdooley/2015/09/16/paper-vs-digital/#4c825a0c33c3
[5] http://printinthemix.com/Fastfacts/Show/749
[6] "The Private Life of Mail" (Royal Mail)

DIRECT MAIL RETARGETING ON THE RISE

Retargeting online and through email has been around for awhile. Marketers place cookies on their traditional or mobile websites or apps to track where website visitors go and what they view. If the visitor leaves the site without making a purchase, the brand matches the shopper to their Facebook or Instagram profile, Google activity, or email, then sends them a follow-up touch within minutes of leaving the site.

This capability has now expanded to include hard-copy mail. The process is much the same, except the person receives the follow-up in print (usually a postcard) within days instead of minutes. Because matches are made using IP addresses, Internet privacy laws prevent marketers from knowing the individual identities of those they target. However, because consumers have already "raised their hands" as being interested in the product or service, they don't need to be convinced of their interest in it—they just need to be nudged to finish the purchase.

One of the companies offering this service is PebblePost. Calling its service "programmatic direct mail," PebblePost analyzes the visitors' activity on a desktop or mobile website or mobile app in real time, then allows customers to segment their site visitors according to their campaign goals (for example, anyone who looks at running shoes). PebblePost then mails a printed piece designed to retarget that visitor. The mailer is inserted into the mail stream within 12 to 24 hours of when the person first looked at the product on the site.

PebblePost claims that direct mail sent through its platform generates response rates of around 20% and subsequent conversion rates of 40%. (This results in an ultimate conversion rate of 8% of those retargeted.) This is measured by return visits to the website or app or other method, such as using a campaign-specific 800 number. Compare this to the average 3.4% response rate for direct mail reported by the CMO Council and 4.4% reported by DMA.

ReachDynamics is another company offering retargeting with direct mail. It bases its service on a network of more than 350 million opt-in cookies, and its extensive network of third-party partnerships allows them to tie those cookies to a postal address. Customers use a self-service portal to design and launch campaigns for which customers pay on a per-piece basis. Marketers can send mailings out right away, schedule them to be mailed at a later date, or create sequences based on campaign goals. For example, they might want to see if the visitor returns to the site to make the purchase (say, within a week) before following up with a retargeting email or, if the email does not trigger response, follow up with direct mail.

THE "STICKINESS" OF PRINT

With the glut of digital marketing starting to take its toll on consumers' psyches, the growth of direct mail retargeting comes at a great time for marketers.

"With all digital overload, there is something very sticky and psychological about receiving a direct mail piece in the mail," notes Eric Castelli, CEO of ReachDynamics. "There is something about the physical mail that gets through the marketing clutter. There is additional cost, but you are getting additional attention that you aren't getting with display or Facebook, too."

While companies like PebblePost and ReachDynamics offer platforms for marketers to do their own direct mail retargeting, larger commercial printers and marketing services providers are developing their own in-house expertise. White label solutions are also being developed.

The growing interest in retargeting with direct mail should be no surprise. It opens a new avenue of opportunity to reach customers and prospects who have already engaged with a brand. "The ability to convert digital to direct mail is a powerful movement we've seen a lot of traction with," concludes Castelli. "Lots of marketers think direct mail is dead, but this perception is changing as we are more and more able to tie digital activity to postal."

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