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50 Days of Christmas – How to use your marketing data to create a better customer experience during the Holiday Season

The countdown is on. We are now 50 days away from that special time of the year when the most online sales are made… Christmas! It's just around the corner and the good thing about Christmas is that it always falls on the 25th of December so it makes planning a lot easier. If you haven't started yet, now is the time to bring your festive spirit out and plan your marketing activities.

The Holiday season is the best time of the year to boost your sales and create customer loyalty. Why? According to WL Panel, Christmas shopping represented 13% of all online transactions in 2013, winter and summer sales came just before, both driving 11% of the year's transactions. Also in 2013, Capgemini stated that £11b was spent on online stores during the holiday season, while eConsultancy reported that 61% of internet users did their Christmas shopping online
In this month "Ask the experts" article, we give you advice on how to create a better customer experience around the holiday season - thanks to your marketing data.

Dive into your data
What did you learn about your customers in 2013? Do you know when they bought from your website? Do you know which devices they used? Do you know the delivery option they chose? Do you know how much they spent?
Knowing the answers to these questions is crucial in planning a great Christmas campaign. Capturing the right data will give you a clear insight of your customers and help you personalise your campaigns to send the right message to the right individual. For example, if you know that some of your customers ordered their presents on your website in the last 2 weeks of November, it means they are early buyers. Therefore, sending them an offer in December will be too late. They will have done their shopping at one of your competitor's because they sent them the right offer at the right time. Knowing about your customers will help you always be one step ahead of your competitors.

Think Multichannel
Whether you are an in-store and online retailer, or solely based online, you need to think about all the different channels through which you interact with your customers. The data you have will give you insights on your customers and you will know whether they are more receptive to a Facebook message, an email or to a paper voucher received in their mailbox. It is all about

knowing your customers' preferences and delivering personalised messages through the right channel.

If you are both an online and in-store retailer, the Holiday Season is a great time to promote your click & collect service. Last year for Christmas, a survey conducted by eConsultancy recorded that 45% of shoppers purchased through click & collect services.

According to a study from IBM, purchases via smartphones and tablets during the Holiday season have grown by 63% year by year. The consistence of this trend has shown the importance of your websites and email campaigns being optimised for mobile and tablets.

Keep in mind that a customer might look at your website on their smartphone, then go in store to see the item but actually finalise the purchase on their tablet.

Start early

We've now past Halloween and Christmas decorations are already showing up in store windows. It is also the time for you to get your website in the Christmas spirit. According to Mediametrie, 75% of internet users ordered their Christmas presents between November 15th and December 15th in 2013. The key here is to start decorating your website and emails early. When customers can feel the Christmas spirit, they will be more eager to click in your emails and to buy from your store.

Advent Calendar

You don't need to be a child to love advent calendar, in fact, you can now find advent calendars with sample whiskey bottles or nail polishes inside. Advent calendars are appreciated by everyone because it sets a countdown to Christmas. Use this countdown idea when planning your Christmas campaigns. Send your clients and prospects special offers that are limited in time to create impulsive shopping behaviour and generate more sales.

The context is important

Don't forget that all the data you collect on your customers during the Holiday season isn't always good to be used in your future campaigns. The assumption around Christmas is that people buy gifts for other people so what they buy does not always reflect their preferences and the items they would usually buy. For example, I always buy toys for my nephews or Japanese comic book for my brother online for Christmas – do I want to receive retargeted emails during the year regarding other Playmobil or manga related products? No, I don't. But I do receive them anyway! So be careful on how you use the data and be sure to analyse the data you collect during the holiday season to avoid wrong retargeting. Remember that the context does not always match your clients' needs.

This article is a summary of Teradata's newsletter "Inside Digital Marketing". If this article was forwarded to you as a recommendation and you wish to receive further marketing news yourself, you can subscribe here.