

Consumers send countless messages each day about their likes, dislikes, and buying patterns. Are you listening and responding?

# Audience Targeting in a Data-Driven World



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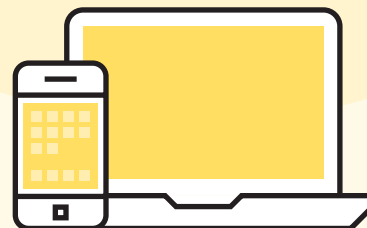
# Introduction

The world is full of potential new customers for your business. Yet competition for their attention is fierce at a time when more than 85 million new blog posts go out each month on WordPress and consumers see up to 10,000 branded messages each day.<sup>1</sup> To stand out, you need to sidestep people who are unlikely to become customers and zero in on those predisposed to your products or services. Fortunately, the digital age is generating compelling data that can help you direct the right messages to the right audiences. Welcome to the world of audience targeting.



**“When people consume content on a mobile device or laptop, they’re sending signals on what they care about, believe in, and are thinking about purchasing.”**

- **Jeff Sutton**, Vice President, Audience Targeting, Programmatic & Data Strategies, Advance Local



PART

1

# What Is Audience Targeting and Why Does It Matter?

In one form or another, targeting specific audiences has gone on forever. What's changed are the methods, the technology, and the precision. In the digital age, audience targeting is the art and science of using data from a variety of sources to reach distinct audiences across networks, platforms, and devices.

# Audience Targeting Through The Ages

## GEOGRAPHIC TARGETING

A physician's sign lets people in a local area know where to find health care.



## DEMOGRAPHIC TARGETING

Companies align ads with radio and TV shows designed for viewers of different socioeconomic types.



## SITE AND DOMAIN TARGETING

Pioneering Internet users see tech-related ads when they visit websites.



## CONTEXTUAL TARGETING

Newspapers publish shipping tables with adjacent ads targeted to shippers and travelers.



## PSYCHOGRAPHIC TARGETING

Advertising targets audiences by lifestyle and self-image rather than product features.



## DIGITAL AUDIENCE TARGETING

Increasingly sophisticated tools analyze behaviors, predict actions, and enable cross-device, native, and integrated targeting.







# Audiences are People First

In the old days, consumer analysis was limited to such broad demographic factors as gender, age, and general level of affluence. “With today’s audience targeting, we have the ability to think completely differently,” says Jeff Sutton of Advance Local. “People are not monolithic. Over the course of the day, they may be multiple things. Audience targeting is understanding how to see the same person in multiple dimensions and message them in multiple dimensions.”

Thus broad “types” become individuals with specific tastes and behaviors. Melissa Eggleston, content strategist and author of the book, *The Zombie Business Cure*, says, “Thinking in terms of behaviors is a nice way to classify audiences versus just slicing it demographically and saying, ‘All Millennials are this or that.’ Digging into the research a little bit will help.”

# Catching Zs: Understanding the Signals Consumers Send

Even if you've never heard the term ZMOT—coined by Google, for “zero moment of truth”<sup>3</sup>—chances are it's already changing the way you interact with customers.

While previous generations of shoppers experienced their first “moment of

truth” by examining a product inside a store, today's consumers have pushed that moment forward by searching their options online long before they interact with your company. This ZMOT yields valuable signals that can help you better target your marketing efforts.

## ZMOTs SIGNAL WHAT INDIVIDUAL CONSUMERS CARE ABOUT:



Home decoration



Dining out



A graphic design to help their business



A new accountant



Next summer's vacation

88%

Consumers who experience a ZMOT online before making a purchase<sup>4</sup>







## A Note on Privacy

Amid growing online privacy concerns, it's important to understand that audience targeting involves connecting to devices rather than gathering names, home addresses, telephone numbers, or other personal information. For example, when someone uses a smartphone to research cars, a dealer

might target an ad to websites viewed on that phone, assuming that the anonymous user is in the market for a vehicle. In some cases, targeting strategies may involve sending email messages (see Part 3) but only when consumers actively express an interest in receiving information.

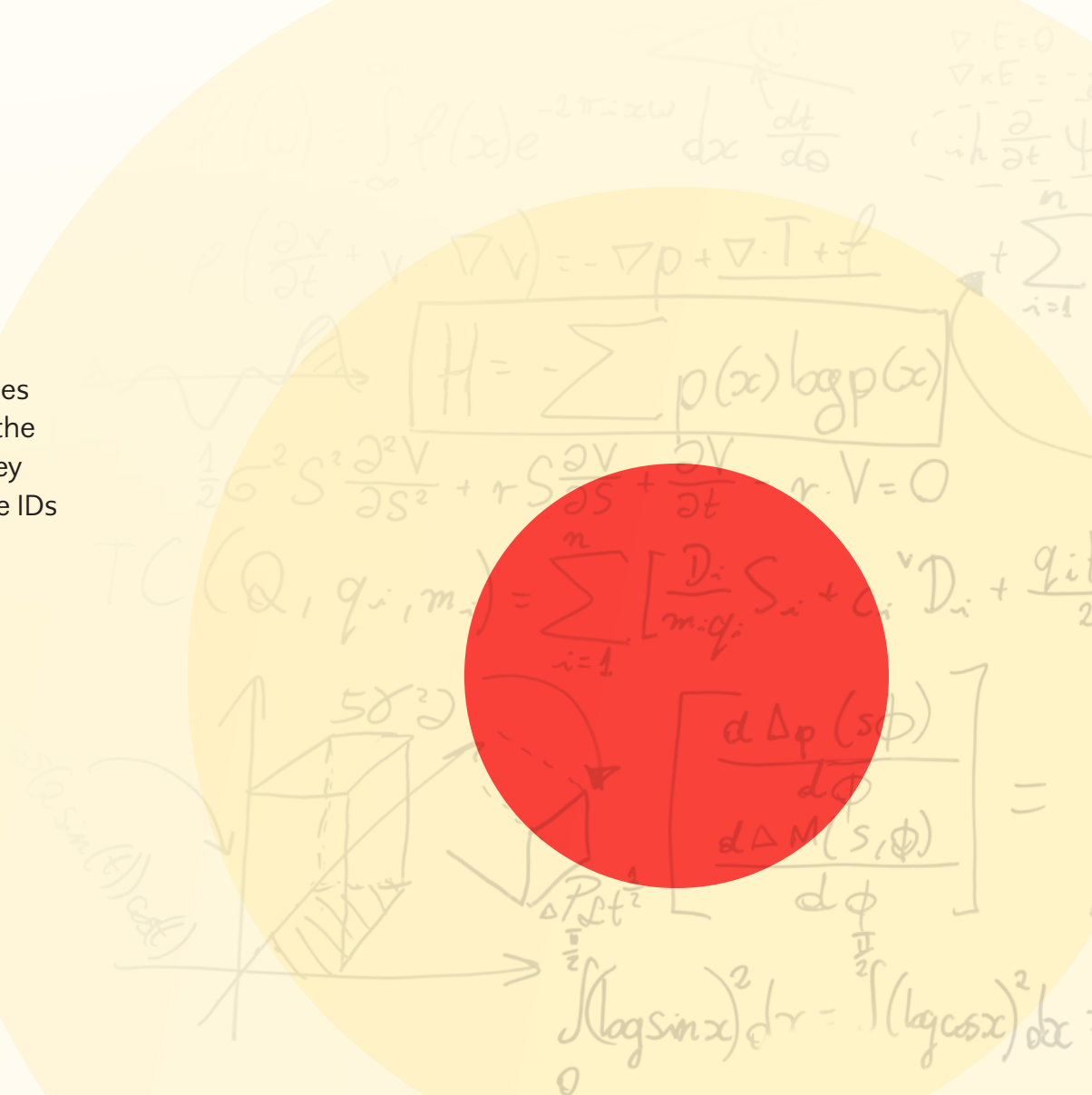
## PART 2

# Targeting by the Numbers

Absorbed en masse, all of those untold millions of combined signals sent by consumers would amount to a wall of incomprehensible noise. The next step involves filtering what's useful from what's not, and organizing the valuable information into categories that can help your company target potential customers and grow.

# How Signals Become Data...

Say you run a tourist-related business. These days, your potential customers are heading to travel booking websites such as Travelocity, Expedia, and Trivago to check out all the options and compare prices. As they search, the clues they leave behind in the form of cookie data and mobile device IDs are packaged and sold to data companies.



# ...And Data Become Insights...

Sophisticated analysis tools can take data from a variety of sources, break the numbers down, and draw general conclusions about individual consumer preferences, using these methods:

## OBSERVED



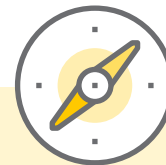
Data observed from the way users read content while searching for information

## DECLARED



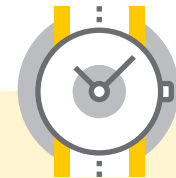
Analysis of information readers actively input, such as a zip code for weather information

## INFERRED



Using data to make subjective but informed assessments of consumers' interests or intentions

## PREDICTED



Online and offline data modeling suggests future behavior, including the likelihood and timing of purchases

# ...And Insights Lead to Targeted Audiences

Based on observed, declared, inferred, and predicted information, audiences (or, rather, the devices they use) can then be targeted to the needs of specific marketers, based on factors such as:

## GEOGRAPHY



Where do various audiences live and spend their time?

## INTERESTS



Are they passionate about history, philanthropy, sports, or other areas?

## LIFESTYLE



Do they lead active lives, focus on their children, climb a career ladder, or enjoy travel?

## DEMOGRAPHICS



Do they own a home or a pet or speak multiple languages?

## REAL-LIFE EVENTS:

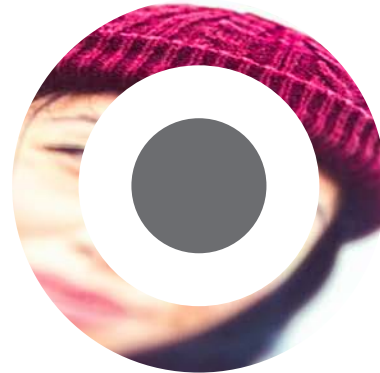
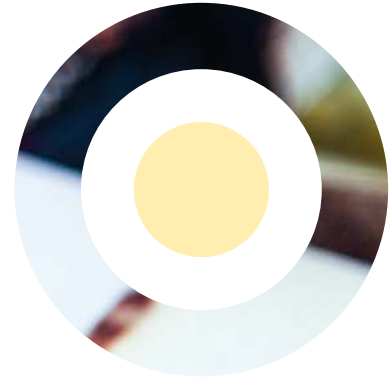


Have they changed jobs, sent a child to college, retired, refinanced their home, or become grandparents?

# Know Your Audience-Targeting Goals

To get the most from detailed audience-targeting data, be sure you've carefully thought through what your underlying business goals are, advises content strategist and author Melissa Eggleston. Are you looking to increase sales to a certain age group? Boost

overall awareness of your brand? "Every part of your marketing strategy should be supporting those goals," she says. "Otherwise you're just throwing stuff out there and hoping it works. Trying to be everything to everybody is the surest way to fail."







## Find Expert Help

Through services such as Google Analytics, Facebook Ads, and Amazon's Advertiser Audiences, internet giants are making it easier for companies to glean data and target ads to specific audiences.

Still, an effective audience-targeting program takes time and dedication to make sure you use your limited resources in the best way and on the right platforms to deliver results. "It's as much an art as a science," says Jeff Sutton of Advance Local. "Finding a marketing specialist you can work with who really understands how audience targeting works can be a critical advantage for a small business."



PART **3**

# Targeting the Customer's Journey

## Case study: Travel

Now that we've seen how data becomes targetable information, let's see how companies in one sample industry can use that information to target likely customers. Chances are, a similar approach could help your business, whatever field you're in.

# Travel Data on the Rise

Thanks to data collected by online booking sites and other sources, travel businesses can now:

- Target travelers interested in certain regions.
- Zero in on specific properties they love to visit.
- Use “premium” travel data to reach frequent travelers or top-tier spenders.
- Target travelers by devices they use to make purchases (mobile, laptop, etc.).



## 1. DREAMING



## 2. PLANNING



## 3. BUYING



## 4. EXPERIENCING



## 5. SHARING

### TRACKING EACH PHASE OF THE JOURNEY

Any travel experience breaks down into five distinct stages, each presenting opportunities to put your business on a traveler's itinerary.



# Dreaming

In the United States, 37% of travelers think about planning a vacation at least once a month, and 17% consider it each week.<sup>6</sup> As they feed their dreams with online searching, here's your first chance to engage them.

## SIGNALS THEY SEND

- Starting to research the next trip
- Looking at friends' vacation pictures on social media
- Reading travel-related content
- Watching travel and destination videos
- Loving the Travel Channel

## HOW YOU CAN ENGAGE THEM

- Targeted display advertising
- Content marketing
- Targeted email with offers\*
- Search engine marketing

\*For consumers who have voluntarily submitted an e-mail address (see "A Note On Privacy," page 10).





# Planning

Their dreams have solidified into a commitment to go—somewhere. Now, they're starting to consider the nuts and bolts: when to travel, for how long, and how much they have to spend.

## SIGNALS THEY SEND

- Researching destinations
- Checking flight pricing and availability
- Sharing destination images on social media
- Searching for travel deals

## HOW YOU CAN ENGAGE THEM

- Targeted display advertising
- Content marketing
- Targeted email with offers\*
- Search engine marketing

\*For consumers who have voluntarily submitted an e-mail address (see "A Note On Privacy," page 10).



# Buying

They've decided on a destination and are ready to take the plunge. Now it's just a matter of finding the right deals.

## SIGNALS THEY SEND

- Comparing pricing on travel aggregator sites
- Shopping for hotel, airline, and car rental
- Conducting search queries around pricing

## HOW YOU CAN ENGAGE THEM

- Targeted display advertising
- Search engine marketing
- Targeted email with offers\*

\*For consumers who have voluntarily submitted an e-mail address (see "A Note On Privacy," page 10).





# Experiencing

Even after a trip is underway, travelers continue to make important choices, from which side trips to take and where to dine to changing accommodations if they're not satisfied.

## SIGNALS THEY SEND

- Comparing pricing on travel aggregator sites
- Shopping for hotel, airline, and car rental
- Conducting search queries around pricing

## HOW YOU CAN ENGAGE THEM

- Targeted display advertising
- Search engine marketing
- Targeted email with offers\*

\*For consumers who have voluntarily submitted an e-mail address (see "A Note On Privacy," page 10).



# Sharing

They're back, they had a ball, and they can't wait to tell the whole world what they did. As they share their experiences, here's an opportunity to expand your network and maybe even get them thinking about the next great adventure.

## SIGNALS THEY SEND

- **Commenting and reviewing**
- **Posting videos and text on social media**

## HOW YOU CAN ENGAGE THEM

- **Social targeting**
- **Mobile location targeting**

# What's Ahead For Audience Targeting?

**"Audience targeting with display ads, banners, and search engine results is going to give way to the Internet of Things. That means connected devices, appliances, and speaker systems where you speak your desire into the air and things happen. If my refrigerator knows what's on my shopping list, that data isn't just going to help me shop. It's going to help someone send marketing messages my way."**

• Jeff Sutton, Advance Local



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## ENDNOTES

1. <https://wordpress.com/activity/>
2. <https://www.redcrowmarketing.com/2015/09/10/many-ads-see-one-day/>
3. <https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/marketing-resources/micro-moments/zero-moment-truth/>
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