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3 eCommerce Mistakes to Avoid for Holiday Ad Campaigns

How much will your eCommerce business waste on advertising this holiday? Here are 3 common eCommerce mistakes to avoid.

A significant portion of retailer advertising budgets are spent during the holiday shopping season. But every time you pay Facebook, YouTube, Google, etc. to drive visitors to your website that don't buy, you are throwing away those holiday advertising dollars.

So why is so much eCommerce advertising wasted during the holidays? It's a complex question, and optimizing your advertising conversion funnel is equal part art and science. Many steps – designing the campaign goals, target audience, media placement, creative design, offer, etc. – require creativity, judgment, and analytical acumen.

But there is one step that costs eCommerce companies millions in lost advertising spend that is easily measured and addressable: your bounce rate.

Bounce rates for eCommerce ad campaigns measure the percentage of visitors that interact (e.g. click, complete form, etc.) with your website or landing page after clicking on an ad. And it is amazing how many shoppers drop off in this one step.

High bounce rates on ad campaigns present the worst possible situation for retailers. If you have a bad advertisement that no one clicks on, it hasn't cost you anything. If a visitor comes to your website organically and doesn't buy, you've lost a potential order, but it still hasn't cost you anything. But when a visitor clicks on an advertisement and leaves immediately without buying, you've now paid money to lose an order.

Quit wasting your holiday ad budgets with high bounce rates. To stop the bleeding before it starts, here are 3 common eCommerce mistakes to avoid this holiday season.

Bounce rates destroy the ROI of holiday advertising

Your landing pages aren't fast enough

Research shows that as mobile page load times go from 1 to 5 seconds, the probability of a shopper bouncing increases by 90%. So do you think shoppers have more or less patience after clicking an online ad? Probably less.

Unfortunately, many retailers focus their attention on landing page design, layout and features rather than fast page load times. This results in pages with high resolution images, 3rd party applications, and social integrations that are engaging, but can create delays and failures in your pages. And if shoppers are leaving your landing page before it loads, it doesn't matter how beautiful and engaging it is.

You should be making speed and performance your number one priority when building your ad campaign landing pages. It is essential to engage a visitor immediately after clicking an ad, which means optimizing page elements and 3rd party apps so the page appears immediately. Once you do that, you've earned yourself the right to dazzle them with your merchandising and creative prowess.

But even if you have a performance-focused development team, don't assume website optimization methods are applied rigorously for all your landing pages. Many performance initiatives only focus on the highest trafficked pages, such as the home and category pages. If you are using "deep link" landing pages at the sub-category or product detail page level, you may find that these pages don't receive the same performance tuning as the fastest pages on your site.

You don't warn vendors about your ad campaigns

How many vendors on your site would be impacted by a sudden spike in traffic from an online ad campaign? For example, the average retailer might have a hosting provider, CDN, security service, and between 30-50 third party applications that build the shopping experience. When you launch a new ad campaign that drives millions of visitors within a few hours, can you rightfully expect that all 50+ vendors will react the way you want?

Sure, these vendors forecast traffic based on historical patterns, and are all built to scale quickly and absorb your traffic peaks and troughs. But if one vendor sees your traffic as an attack on their servers and stops responding to requests... your ad campaign will flop.

And it will cost you money, especially when those vendors are slowing your landing pages and increasing your bounce rates.

You don't change or A/B test your landing pages

It's getting almost too easy to manage dozens of ads and placements on platforms like Facebook, YouTube, etc. Each ad can spotlight a different promotion and unique landing page. Then, marketers can rotate those ads through each media placement until they find an overall winner.

However, retailers should be unbundling the ad and the landing page, and more aggressively A/B testing different landing page versions. You may find that a better landing page can take an ad that delivers a relatively small number of clicks, and turn it into a winner by producing a more consistent flow of orders.

Just be careful about the performance of these landing page iterations. We find that ad campaign landing pages are sometimes left out of performance optimization steps in the push to release them quickly. However, by using an automated cloud based eCommerce acceleration technology (like Yottaa), every page is automatically optimized to load in seconds as soon as it is released. As a result, your team can focus on the features and design that are going to convert those clicks to orders, rather than banging their heads on making pages that load in less than 3 seconds.

Don't let slow landing pages burn your advertising campaigns

This holiday season, you can spend millions on ad campaigns that drive visitors to your site. But you are better off burning that money if your landing pages are slow and unengaging.

Get the fundamentals down before you get fancy with ad creative and statistical models. Make sure your landing pages will be both fast and engaging on all devices. Cloud based eCommerce acceleration technologies will automatically optimize, sequence, and suppress faulty page elements that would otherwise slow your pages and make shoppers bounce.

Make sure you are applying these types of eCommerce acceleration technologies and methods to your holiday landing pages this year. It's the first step to reigning in those expensive holiday bounce rates, and securing holiday shoppers before they buy all those gifts somewhere else.