

A Guide to Holiday Social Advertising for Retailers



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Some \$884.50 billion in total holiday retail sales are predicted for 2016. To put this spend into perspective: in 2015 back-to-school trailed far behind at \$68 billion and Mother's Day at \$21.2 billion.

With consumers facing seasonal messages and advertisements from all different directions, it takes careful planning and strategizing to execute campaigns that will break through the noise. Social media advertising is one of the most personalized tactics in a marketer's toolkit, enabling brands to reach consumers with relevant messaging through native and engaging ad formats.

Here are some tips on making your [social](#) holiday campaigns the best ones yet.

Timing

Just 10% of people do most of their holiday shopping before October. By Black Friday in November, that number climbs to 45% and 54% wait for December or even later. On social media the search for holiday ideas starts early. For instance, on Pinterest 45% of Pinner's begin planning for holidays at least 60 days out (that's 21% higher than the general population). The sooner you add your social media content, the more likely

you are to get noticed and stay top-of-mind throughout the busy holiday season.

Pre-Test

The pre-holiday period is a huge opportunity to test. See which products and messaging audiences respond to in order to focus on top-performers when sales start. Leverage all of the audiences you've driven to your site and dynamically retarget users based on product pages they have viewed. A/B test ad types against one another depending on your goals. For example, link ads can be great to promote sales and discounts; meanwhile carousels can be great for showcasing product variety. Drive buzz and excitement in the run-up to Black Friday and Cyber Monday sales. Seed your sale announcement to core users – customers, fans, site visitors, and email subscribers – then reach your entire target audience on the day of a sale.

Messaging

- Plan a messaging strategy around what is happening at the time. In the beginning, focus more on driving awareness and engagement by promoting valuable content that's shareable. Then move people further down the funnel with consideration- and conversion-led content with strong calls-to-action that will prompt them to act on their purchase intent. Brand messages should help users plan or give them ideas and inspiration during October, a pre-holiday planning month. From Thanksgiving onwards, an important sales period, messaging should be much more conversion-focused.
- Customize language and the holiday event to your target user. The market will be cluttered so stand out through relevancy. Increase the relevance of communications by focusing on categories/products users have expressed an interest in, e.g. if they have been to a party dresses page, then retarget them with a selection of dresses or

accessories to complement their purchase.

- On Pinterest, build content that is helpful and informative. Focus on how your brand's products/services solve challenges for consumers. A retailer could have Pins with themes such as '6 Office Party Outfits', 'Tips for buying wearables for your loved one', or 'Party planning guide.'
- For Twitter, create infographics that include valuable sale shopping tips. That kind of shareable content will increase engagement as well as organic reach. Capitalize on the season's buzz by using tweets to tap into live conversations about the holidays.
- Snapchat's Snap Ads – completely viewable, full-screen video – is an extremely powerful video experience. Advertisers have an opportunity to get in front of an audience of 150 million daily active users, including a highly engaged Millennial audience. Leverage this opportunity to capture their attention with short, concise video (3-7 seconds) that showcases your key holiday brand story.

Targeting

Target users based on their online and offline purchase behavior with third-party audiences from data providers such as Datalogix and Acxiom. These audiences can be synced to Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts and activated across your campaigns.

- Start with broad targeting and narrow down the audiences once you've gathered enough learnings.
- Use CRM data to re-engage lapsed customers and ensure customers are aware of your latest offering and/or promotions.
 - Leverage audience segments from last year's holiday efforts. For instance, create lookalikes off of holiday buyers and/or people who visited specific category pages.

- Develop a retargeting strategy.
 - Leverage audiences that have recently visited or purchased from your website and segment them by product/category page so you can personalize your retargeting approach to them.
 - Retargeting doesn't have to be limited to web audiences. You can also retarget users who have engaged with your brand's content in Tweets or Pins; watched a video on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter; engaged with content on Pinterest; interacted with a Canvas Ad or Lead Ad on Facebook or Instagram.
 - Tap into custom audience segments offered by social platforms and third-party data providers for targeting. Snapchat is one platform that has released audience categories – Snap Lifestyle Categories – to reach users based on how they engage on the platform: fashion and style gurus, film and TV fans, foodies, sports fans, and more.

Ad Format

- Increase product consideration: Ad formats that showcase multiple products and enable storytelling like Carousel Ads on Facebook and Instagram and multi-product tweets on Twitter are very effective. Also tap into the richer, more immersive in-ad experiences, e.g., Facebook's Canvas Ads and Snapchat's Snap Ad Web View unit. Both of these types of ads, which load quickly, enable users to click into a mobile experience that can be completely customized to showcase gift ideas or sale items. Promoted Pins are another unique ad product since so many users actively save Pins to come back to the content later. They're also a huge traffic-driver, so use keyword targeting to ensure users searching and planning on Pinterest find your products. Bring your ideas to life by combining products on a single Pin in a

way that shows people how they can use your products during the holidays. For example, show how to use a frying pan to create the perfect winter brunch or how a Pinner can stay fit throughout the holidays with wearable tech products. Or create a Pinterest Board dedicated to an offers overview or gift guide to make things even easier for shoppers.

- Drive online sales: Dynamic Ads, which can be used across Facebook and Instagram by retail and travel brands, are the most powerful way to retarget audiences who have visited your site. In the run-up to the holidays, you'll likely have heavy traffic and many users browsing your site, so Dynamic Ads can help personalize your retargeting approach. Leverage website behavior to determine the most relevant ads to serve to retarget, upsell, and cross-sell. Facebook recently added the capability to sync to your in-store product catalogue so products that have sold out are updated and not served to users.
- The days of relying on organic social media to deliver your message are long gone. To reach specific audiences that you can convert into buyers, you need paid social media: the vastness of its reach, its finely tuned targeting and array of compelling ad units.