

Retargeting/Consumer privacy = Value exchange?

By  Mari-Louise Kaplan

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Complicated? Yes. Unless you know the formula.

It's happened to all of us. Getting a message just before lunch advertising a special on the specific type of hamburger you like to eat – at a restaurant only a minute from your current location. Or the car garage phones about the problem you didn't know your car has; or you receive a suggested alternative way to work because there has been an accident on your usual route – before you set off from your house...

This is not 'black magic', but merely the digital marketing practice of retargeting. Retargeting is one way that marketers have come up with to increase the display frequency and viewership of their digital ads. Simply put, retargeting focuses on visitors who visit a website but leave without buying anything. Marketers then 'chase' these visitors all over the Internet with reminders of the products that they searched for, or the websites that they used to search on, creating a myriad of underlying privacy concerns for end users.



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Yet, 'Virtual stalking' is how many people refer to this practice of being tagged and stalked without permission while browsing through an e-commerce site with the use of cookies. This is viewed by many consumers as an encroachment on privacy, whose biggest fear is that personal data can be stolen or leaked, and misused somehow.

Other people simply don't seem to mind that much, as long as they get something of value to them in return.

Digital Marketing and POPI

The Protection of Personal Information Act (POPI) and what it means for the digital advertising and media industry is a relatively new concept, but one that can determine the future of the entire industry. Basically, there are two possible outcomes:

- POPI can boycott the future of digital marketing evolution like retargeting and predictive targeting, or
- POPI can be the best thing to happen within the digi-marketing universe.

Most likely, the balance will be determined by the way the digital marketing and advertising community reacts to the Act's

guidelines for compliance.

If your organisation collects and uses personal data then POPI applies to you. To avoid fines or jail terms (yes, really), digital marketing providers need to get to grips with the guidelines of the Act and take any enforcement notice from the Information Regulator seriously.

According to Grant Shippey in his article *POPI: there are actually massive positives for digital marketing**, POPI doesn't restrict the collection of people's personal information but it does stipulate strong guidelines for how that information can be used.

"Direct marketing has functioned effectively in many countries that have had data protection laws for decades and is a legitimate interest that organisations can pursue to find new customers. The big change or implication of POPI is that in future, any direct electronic marketing to prospects will need to be opted into," says Shippey.

"POPI aims to put an end to mindless spamming where bulk communications are sent out in the hope that someone might be interested. Finding quality leads and then targeting just those who are interested in particular goods or services is in line with what POPI wants to achieve".

How should agencies approach digital data privacy?

"The current privacy debate is focused on privacy being lost -- the debate needs to move to privacy being exchanged." Tom Goodwin, founder of the Tomorrow Group in London, makes an interesting point.

Try to create a value exchange aided by a degree of opting in, e.g. "If you allow us to track your every online move, you'll receive something of real value in return." This makes sense of Facebook's decision this year to announce its new privacy terms but also to explain how consumer information would be used to make better advertising.

End users are entitled to not being bombarded with brand messages, therefore it's a good idea for advertisers to follow six easy rules regarding retargeting and other campaigns that require data:

1. Know who is impacted, who is responsible, what data is regulated, what acts are regulated - basically, what does POPI say about your strategy?
2. Understand the risks (and the penalties for non-compliance) and know how to mitigate them.
3. Take the opportunity to affirm to customers that the systems you use are integrous and follow the new legal requirements.
4. Get your clients (the advertisers) to accept that not all visitors will actually buy something from their websites.
5. Never overdo retargeting as it can create a negative brand perception.
6. Ensure that products are not shown after they have been purchased.

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ABOUT MARI-LOUISE KAPLAN

Mari-Louise is a creative strategist and TTL copywriter. Her offering to organisations and advertising agencies is somewhere between using left-brain neuromarketing to understand the behaviour of the target consumer and applying right-brain linguistics to make an emotional connection and trigger the desired action. She loves talking, sharing and learning, so drop her a note anytime at marilouise.kaplan@gmail.com!

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