



CASE STUDY

National Geographic Goes Wild for Testing and Targeting



THE BACKGROUND

The National Geographic Society has been sharing its amazing stories and inspiring people to care about the planet since 1888. It's one of the largest nonprofit scientific and educational institutions in the world, and its interests include geography, archaeology and natural science, and the promotion of environmental and historical conservation. The Society publishes an official journal, National Geographic Magazine, in 34 languages, as well as other magazines, books, school products, maps, other publications, and web and film products in numerous languages and countries. Its various media properties reach about 360 million people monthly.

I can launch tests very quickly. I can run marketing campaigns very quickly. I can see results quickly. And it has been a positive return on investment in terms of our digital marketing.

—Mia Vallo

Director of Marketing and Business Intelligence,
National Geographic Society

Challenges:

- Boost subscription base and membership registration program
- Target specific offers or content to visitors
- Launch tests quickly to improve conversion rates and website engagement

Solutions:

- Daily A/B testing on order pages, paid search, and house media campaigns
- Geo-target specific offers to website visitors
- Offer specific promotions or content to visitors

Results:

- Dramatic improvement of response rates for magazine subscription acquisition and member registrations
- Huge spike of conversion rates within just a few days of campaign roll-outs
- High-impact performance based on small changes
- Positive return on digital marketing investment

THE CHALLENGE

National Geographic wanted to boost both its subscription base for all of its publications, as well as its Society membership registration program. In order to accomplish both goals, the publisher needed to understand which creative, placement and elements performed the best, and then act on that information. It wanted a solution that could help launch tests quickly to improve conversion rates and engagement on the website, all while having the ability to be nimble in launching tests, pausing, activating, and then rolling out winning test campaigns.

Having seen different responses from all visitors, National Geographic also wanted to target specific offers or content to its visitors—new and returning—in order to truly understand how each visitor behaves differently on the website.

THE SOLUTION

In order to increase conversion rates for subscriptions and membership registrations—as well as boost website engagement—National Geographic started doing daily A/B tests on the order pages, paid search and house media campaigns, as well as geo-targeting specific offers to their website visitors.

“Before, we were only able to run one or two test campaigns at a time.” says Mia Vallo, director of marketing and business intelligence, at the National Geographic Society. “Now we’re able to run dozens of campaigns simultaneously. At one point we had twenty-plus campaigns running.” Plus, she adds,

“In the past, it would take at least a few weeks to run a test, from designing the test, getting the creatives done, and then launching the test. Now we’re able to launch tests quickly and roll out that winning test generally within just a few hours or a few minutes.”

The user experience was also improved by offering up specific offers or content to visitors. For example, National Geographic now geo-targets people who live in the U.S., the UK, and visitors who live outside of those two countries. Now, a U.S. visitor sees an offer in dollars, as opposed to somebody who lives in the UK who sees the offer in pounds.

THE RESULTS

- ✔ Monetate has helped dramatically improve response rates for magazine subscription acquisition, as well as member registrations.
- ✔ National Geographic saw a huge spike within just a few days of rolling out campaigns, realizing high-impact performance based on small changes.
- ✔ “I can launch tests very quickly. I can run marketing campaigns very quickly. I can see results quickly. And it has been a positive return on investment in terms of our digital marketing,” says Vallo.



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