



ESSENTIALS FOR RETAILERS





Introduction

During summer months, we think of warm and hot summer days and nights, family vacations, shorts and t-shirts, and enjoying summertime activities not available during any other season.

For email marketers, summer is the advent of one of the biggest promotional events of the year, where summer sales and promotions, new inventory, and perfectly timed promotional campaigns encourage consumers to make timely seasonal purchases, whether online or at brick-and-mortar stores.

A recent trend this summer and past year is the unprecedented diversity in weather conditions across seasons and regions throughout the world, and in particular, across the United States. It seems not long ago that when seasons changed, each region had forecastable and expected weather conditions, but this is no longer the case.

For example, in May 2015 record heat waves hit Seattle and the Northwest, while the Midwest, Southeast and some areas in the Northeast experienced torrential flooding and multiple severe thunderstorms. With the unpredictable nature of today's weather, marketing to consumers needs to be more precise, timely, and personalized to meet consumer demand and to fulfill the modern role of a brand.

As we continue in an era where consumers are bombarded with information from retailers on what and when they should buy, and as the ever growing competition vies for the ears and attention of every consumer, the absolute need for personalization, targeting, and smart promotion becomes ever more necessary. Retailers need to not only gain the attention of consumers, but to encourage them to make the best possible purchase catered specifically to their needs and wants.

Email Personalization

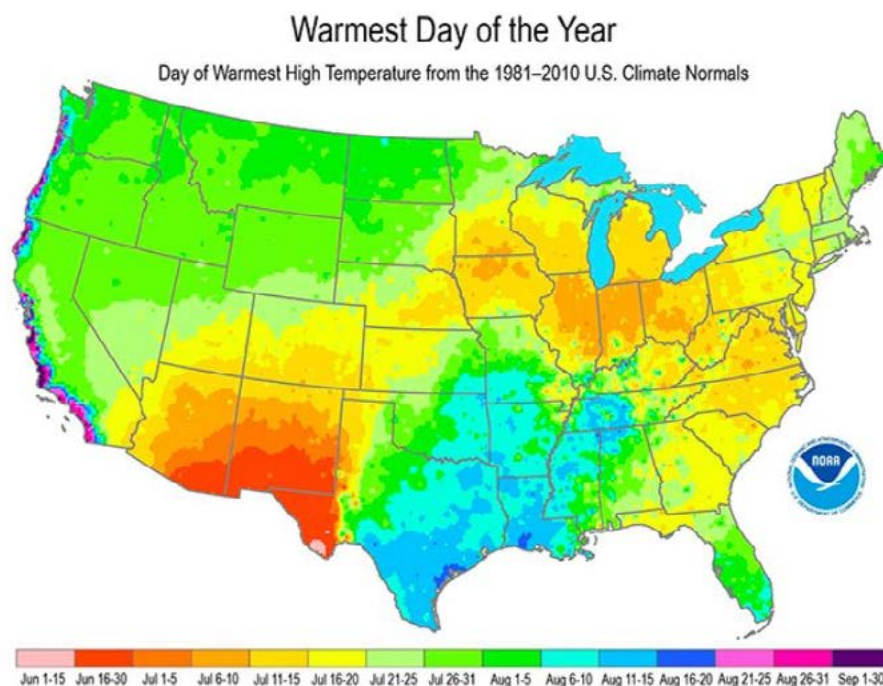
Many of the world’s biggest brands have fully embraced personalization and hyper-targeting as the best means of successfully doing business. Coca Cola, one of the world’s most influential brands, for example, launched the “Share a Coke” campaign. The brand personalized its labels with 250+ popular names and, according to The Wall Street Journal, the effort “reversed a decade-long decline in U.S. Coke consumption.”



The results are in: according to a MarketingLand.com study, personalized emails can produce transaction rates and revenue six times higher than non-personalized messages. The study also found that although personalized emails deliver **6 times** higher transaction rates, 70% of brands fail to use them. Based on data compiled in Britain, digital marketing solutions provider Webtrends tells us the average consumer has 260 unopened emails in their inbox, 56 of those from consumer brands. Sixty percent say they would open those messages if the subject line was personalized.

<input type="checkbox"/>	★	<input type="checkbox"/>	Old Navy	Check out our summer shorts
<input type="checkbox"/>	★		Zumiez	Jack, summer shorts have arrived!
<input type="checkbox"/>	★	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rebecca Taylor	Shop our July swim sale
<input type="checkbox"/>	★	<input type="checkbox"/>	swimsuitsforall	Celebrate with a new swimsuit!

One of the things email marketers often take for granted is the profound effect weather conditions can have on consumer purchase behavior. For example, if an outdoor retailer is sending out an email promotion about enjoying outdoor furniture or barbeque grilling on a beautiful summer day, performance for subscribers living in a climate where it is cold and raining will likely have a much poorer response and take less meaningful interest in that email, creating a disconnect with the brand.



Precise weather targeting has a significant impact in the context in which emails are received, opened, and responded to, resulting in better performance and higher sales. Weather marketing is an essential for for effective retailers to best target consumers.

The people have spoken. Yahoo says, “Content personalization represents the fulcrum balancing the consumer ‘need to know’ with their ‘want to know.’” Seventy-eight percent of surveyed consumers told Yahoo they want some degree of personalization, with 62 percent preferring a mix of algorithmic and curated content. If a brand is not personalizing, they are neglecting the majority of the population.

Knowing When the Time is Right for Your Consumers

As all retailers know, the weather varies during a particular season across regions of the US more than the emotions experienced by each country during the World Cup; there are many ups and downs that are sometimes predictable, but there are also times of utter shock or surprise. Even the warmest day of the year varies incredibly across the US during a four-month period. As we can see from the map provided by NOAA, there are a minimum of 15 different weeks of the summer when the hottest day of the year typically hits a microclimate.

With these various microclimates across the US, it seems daunting to tailor personalized messages based on the current or forecasted weather conditions of each and every consumer, but this is what consumers expect. Factor in tracking weather on a granular level, weather fluctuations across cities and regions, and the scenario becomes even more daunting. However, this level of personalization in retail marketing emails gains more opens, more clicks, and higher response rates due to the relevancy and timeliness of the message. Retail marketers also now have access to tools that allow them to plan in advance for any type of weather scenario, eliminating the burden of having to anticipate different weather scenarios for different regions.

Leveraging advanced weather-based marketing technology allows brands to automate segmentation down to the zip code level to set emails to send only when certain weather or emergency conditions are met, both for immediate and forecasted conditions. This allows for strategic timing for email marketing initiatives to not only personalize each and every email sent to a consumer, but to send these emails at the most relevant time, when they are most influenced by their local weather conditions. For example, if it's 70-80 degrees, sunny and clear on the West Coast and less than 30 degrees in the Northeast, it would be essential to custom tailor your messages to reflect the weather conditions of your consumers in order to ensure the most relevant content is being delivered.

Email marketers would disadvantage themselves by sending an email promoting summer clothing and accessories at a time when the weather does not match the content, such as if it's cold, windy, or rainy in a consumer's region. Having the ability to create multiple campaigns with custom creative for different conditions, times and locations maximizes the amount of attention consumers pay to a brand's messaging.

Cross Seasonal Merchandising

Cross-seasonal merchandising has a profound influence on driving incremental product sales in a majority of retail categories. The practice involves displaying products from different categories (or store departments) together, in order to generate additional revenue, known sometimes as add-on sales, or incremental purchase.

“Cross merchandising is important because people buy solutions, not products, and retailers tend to sell products and not solutions. So they need to combine things that tend to cross departments,”

- Neil Stern, a senior partner with McMillan Doolittle, a retail consulting firm in Chicago.

During the months where seasons are in transition, this can prove to be an incredibly effective way to boost the sales of seasons coming to an end, and those just beginning. For example, the holidays are a great time to cross-seasonal merchandise. A full display can be permanently devoted to the holidays and change with the seasons so the display is a big draw for cross-seasonal merchandising. Cross-seasonal merchandising also gives brands the opportunity to promote special sales and discount incentives to drive consumers to make a purchase decision. Most brick-and-mortar retailers merchandise stores down to a science, always in consideration of the seasons, yet when it comes to deploying marketing messages, the same brands fall terribly short by neglecting to factor in weather targeting solutions that allow for cross-seasonal merchandising errors to diminish brand trust.

Cross-seasonal merchandising, combined with weather targeting solutions that allow marketers to create and deploy relevant, hyper-targeted email triggers, based on the real-time weather of their subscribers, can achieve significantly higher conversion rates and revenue per email delivered; these are key metrics that every retailer is looking to improve upon.

Conclusion

It is essential for retailers to continually access technologies that will increase the bottom line of their annual and seasonal sales and to utilize competitive marketing strategies to always understand one's competitive landscape. Retailers are now connecting with digitally savvy consumers through a variety of touch points, including the Web (76%), email (73%), brick-and-mortar stores (50%), and mobile (43%), according to CMO.com. With these trends, retailers are being driven to find new and innovative technologies to effectively target these consumers.

With weather targeting and competitive intelligence tools available to retailers today, it is becoming easier and more effective to better plan ahead and avoiding unpleasant, costly mistakes, such as sending out email campaigns that have no relevance to recipients. Understanding weather's influence on their products and services will allow retailers to make smarter decisions when it comes to marketing to their consumers, who increasingly demand more relevant and personalized content from the brands from which they purchase.

Personalization is obviously becoming a must for all email marketers. Consumers continue to embrace brand loyalty and in return, want these brands to know who they are and what they want. These consumers are seeking deeper connections with retailers and are increasingly connecting with brands that anticipate their needs and wants, understand their lifestyles, including geography, offer suggestions based on their unique profiles, and make them feel like an appreciated consumer.

About Skymosity

Skymosity is the leading Weather Targeting™ Platform, powering advanced weather-based technology for some of the world's biggest brands. With patent-pending solutions for SMS and Weather-Based Email Trigger™ automation, plus website personalization and analytics based on weather, the Skymosity Weather Marketing Cloud™ helps businesses seamlessly leverage big weather data.

For more information, visit www.skymosity.com.

