

How to make your data work harder

Digital Advertising, the Single Customer View and the Always On consumer



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1. There is more data than ever before

As the world is changing so is the consumer. Advances in technology have driven changes in consumer behaviour and the ability of brands to gather insights on that behaviour.

A new type of customer has evolved. Known as the Always On Consumer, they are always able to buy, always able to act and always creating data.

This new consumer is demanding and discerning. They know what they want, expect it to be delivered to them and will let brands know (often publically) if their standards are not met.

Fortunately for businesses this greater level of expectation comes hand-in-hand with increased volumes of data. The Always On Consumer is producing vast amounts of data and it is up to brands to use this data to provide the service and experience that is required.

Brands that ignore the signals and don't use that data to its full extent will fall behind competitors that do.

2. What does the increase in data mean for marketers?

Getting an advertisement or marketing message in front of the right person, at the right time, and when they are in the right frame of mind is the goal of every marketer.

The digital world makes this ever-more achievable due to the number of channels that marketers have at their disposal.

The amount of data the Always On Consumer is now producing makes using these channels in a relevant and targeted way both an opportunity and a challenge.

It is the responsibility of marketers to use this data to optimise their channels to better understand their audience's preferences.

As data capture and analysis becomes more and more sophisticated, marketers are able to use broader sets of real-time information to put ads in front of relevant people.

However, the volume, velocity and variety of data available to marketers creates a challenge as well as an opportunity. Due to the evolution of the Always On Consumer there are more places to reach and find customers but also more places for competitors to find those same customers and huge amounts of data to make sense of.

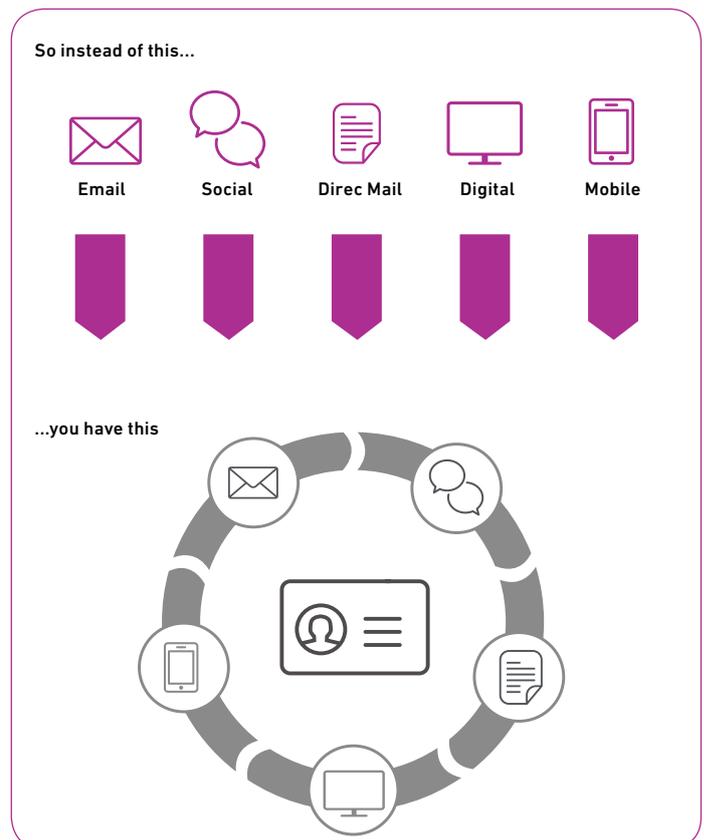
Critically, there are more ways to get it wrong.

The best way to tackle this issue is to remain focused on one of the fundamental principles of marketing - think about the consumer, who they are and what matters to them. The consumer experience is the driving force. Brands need to aim for a joined up and relevant experience for each customer.

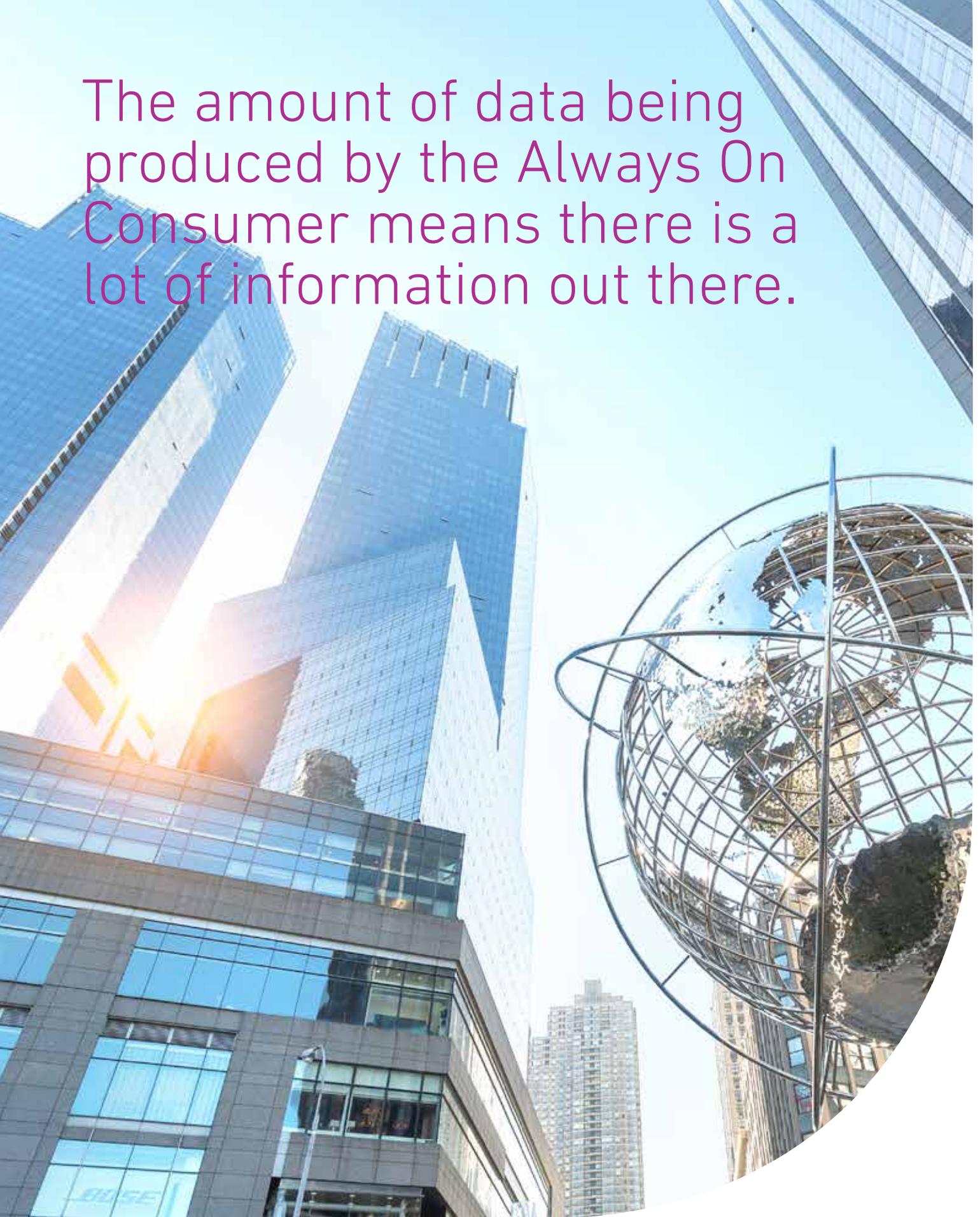
3. Cross-channel, not multi-channel

The best practice approach is to line up all channels and the data feeding into them to provide a more relevant and consistent experience. This is where the difference between cross-channel and multi-channel is important to understand and where many brands come unstuck. Multi-channel means having a presence in multiple channels. Cross-channel means joining up each channel and treating customers as individual people rather than individual contact points.

The majority of brands that have a presence online will have a number of different channels which they rely on – either for new customers or for existing ones. The objective is to stop seeing each channel as separate. Whether that's digital advertising, social media advertising, email marketing or direct mail.



The amount of data being produced by the Always On Consumer means there is a lot of information out there.



4. How to join up data

The amount of data being produced by the Always On Consumer means there is a lot of information out there - because of this it can get very complicated, very quickly.

However, the cross-channel view is an approach that is becoming the industry norm and it is increasingly what the consumer expects. If a brand does not adopt this as best practice it will struggle against competitors that do. Indeed, Experian research has revealed that 74% of consumers respond positively to brands that demonstrate that they understand them.

The three crucial requirements of joining up data to get a cross-channel view of customers are:



Achieve Single Customer View



Have good analytics



Have access to the required expertise

4.1 Getting the Single Customer View

The Single Customer View is a way of seeing your customers as individuals and requires a reassessment of your data and data handling processes to achieve.

It relies on the creation of links between different data sources and bringing a customer's contact points together. This is done by matching name, address and other identifiers such as email address and social media profiles, and applying a unique identifier to each individual.

This identifier is then appended to every item of data relating to that customer — allowing all data on an individual customer to be matched and brought together to create a single view or record of that customer.

You then have a picture of an individual, rather than disconnected contact points.

4.2 Good analytics

Transparency of what's going on (and where) is crucial. Brands attempting to optimise the way their data works across channels need to make sure they have the right level of analytics implemented so that they can continue to gather the correct data in order to continue optimising their approach.

Brands need analytics to make sense of the data that's coming in and deliver actionable insight. This is critical to better understanding customers and optimising the effectiveness of campaigns.

It is through sophisticated online analytics that you can see who your best customers really are, where and how they spend their time online, what motivates them and how to engage in more effective and profitable ways.

All your campaigns should be driven by sophisticated analysis rather than guesswork.

4.3 Invest in people and work with experts

The first two requirements are complicated and difficult tasks which, while extremely beneficial in the long run, require a level of expertise to implement.

To operate successfully at this level you need to have access to the expertise. Whether that's hiring your own internal experts or working with a specialist data and analytics provider such as Experian Marketing Services. Just be aware that attempting the above without the right level of understanding and expertise can lead to further problems.

Making your data work across channels and media is an ongoing process and will form the cornerstone of all future marketing efforts. Getting it right in the early stages with the right foundations securely in place is crucial and for this you need to have the correct long-term goals in mind.

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5. Making insights actionable

Joining up data and getting a cross-channel view of customers is an important first step. However, brands need to be able to garner executable actions from their data investments.

A joined-up view of customers means brands are almost instantly better placed to engage with customers via direct communications such as email marketing and direct mail. However, it's important to focus on what the real goal is here –releasing the power of these insights across all channels - including digital advertising.

The objective is to use messaging across all connections so that brands are engaging with hyper-connected consumers across all touchpoints as the same individual - with preferences tailored to that customer. Including your digital advertising efforts.



6. Including digital advertising in cross-channel marketing using linkage

While it's a relatively straightforward step to implement optimised email campaigns, when it comes to digital advertising – including social media advertising – it has historically been a different story.

Until now the inability to deliver audiences crafted to suit the marketer, as opposed to the media owner, has been a problem for brands when advertising in channels like television, digital display, social media and mobile web.

For instance:

- Behavioural targeting doesn't look at whether a person is a customer or prospect. Neither does it look at their worth as a potential customer

- Television advertising is still all about ABCs - which are invariably simplified versions of expensive segmentations

Execution has been difficult without a common currency to make audience creation and selection reflective of the needs of the marketer and who they want to target and why.

In addition the experience for the consumer has been less than optimal because it has not been possible to tailor digital ads to the required level to make them personal and relevant.

However, that problem has been solved. Organisations like Experian have created links between data and advertising inventories to create not just views of what people are like but the keys to finding them in different channels. Things like email, mobile number, device ID and cookie ID have all been amalgamated to create accurate audiences.

This process enables marketers to find their audiences with media by fully utilising their consumer insights to succinctly focus the right adverts on the right people.

The advantages of this approach include:

- Better targeting within channels, not just ABC1s
- Not only more effective and efficient ads but a better and more relevant experience for the consumer
- Ability to differentiate between customers and prospects
- Same data across the channels – joined up thinking and messaging - means measurement is more consistent and accurate
- Consumers can be found anywhere and the benefits of high-quality analytics and data (and the investment entailed) are not limited to direct mail and email targeting

7. Making data work across channels

In conclusion, the cross-channel approach is the next step in marketing strategies and this includes not only a brand's communications but its media efforts as well.

Yes, the Always On Consumer represents challenges – but it also represents opportunities. The brands which tailor their customer experience in line with each individual's wants and needs will outdo their competitors.

Digital advertising has to be part of the cross-channel proposition. In the past it may have been difficult to focus your advertising on specific audiences but now the situation, and the possibilities entailed, has changed. Linkage means it's possible to be more specific with digital marketing campaigns and target relevant audiences with relevant adverts.

With the emergence of programmatic advertising it is possible to deliver relevant adverts in real time. Calculating which customers are most suited to which adverts and which adverts those customers are more likely to be interested in. The relevant adverts are then delivered to the relevant customers. Both advertisers and consumers are better off.

For more on Programmatic advertising read [this article](#).

We have noted that the Always On Consumer is demanding and discerning. Brands need to understand their customers in order to be able to give them what they want, the way they want it. This counts for all channels together.

8. Next steps

Brands which are currently aiming towards a cross-channel and joined up approach should bear the following steps in mind:



Invest in a Single Customer View and upgrade your analytics

These are key areas that need to be tackled for a brand to make its data work to the optimum. A Single Customer View is crucial to be able to provide the best customer experience and detailed and accurate analytics are necessary to be able to continue to develop a brand's approach.



Invest in linkage

Linkage is vital to a brand's ability to create relevant audiences for their adverts and messages. Sometimes this will require sharing your data, so make sure you use an industry-trusted third party that can securely and compliantly handle your customers' personally identifiable information (PII data).



Work with experts

Working with data requires expertise, especially if brands wish to guarantee the successful implementation of processes such as Single Customer View and Linkage.

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About Experian Marketing Services

Experian Marketing Services is the leading global provider of consumer insights, targeting, data quality and cross-channel marketing. We help organisations intelligently interact with today's empowered and hyper-connected consumers.

By helping marketers identify their best customers, find more, and then coordinate seamless and intelligent interactions across the most appropriate channels, Experian Marketing Services can deepen customer loyalty, strengthen brand advocacy and maximise profits.

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