

THE EBOOK OF

# Getting Creative With the Holidays

A Facebook, Instagram  
and Pinterest Guide for  
E-Commerce Brands



**SMARTLY.IO**

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# The Lowdown on Holiday Advertising

It's the most competitive time of the year; this ebook will help you plan, set up, and optimize your Facebook campaigns and ad creatives for 2018 – and provide insight into a channel you may or may not have tried yet: Pinterest!

## Ebook at a Glance

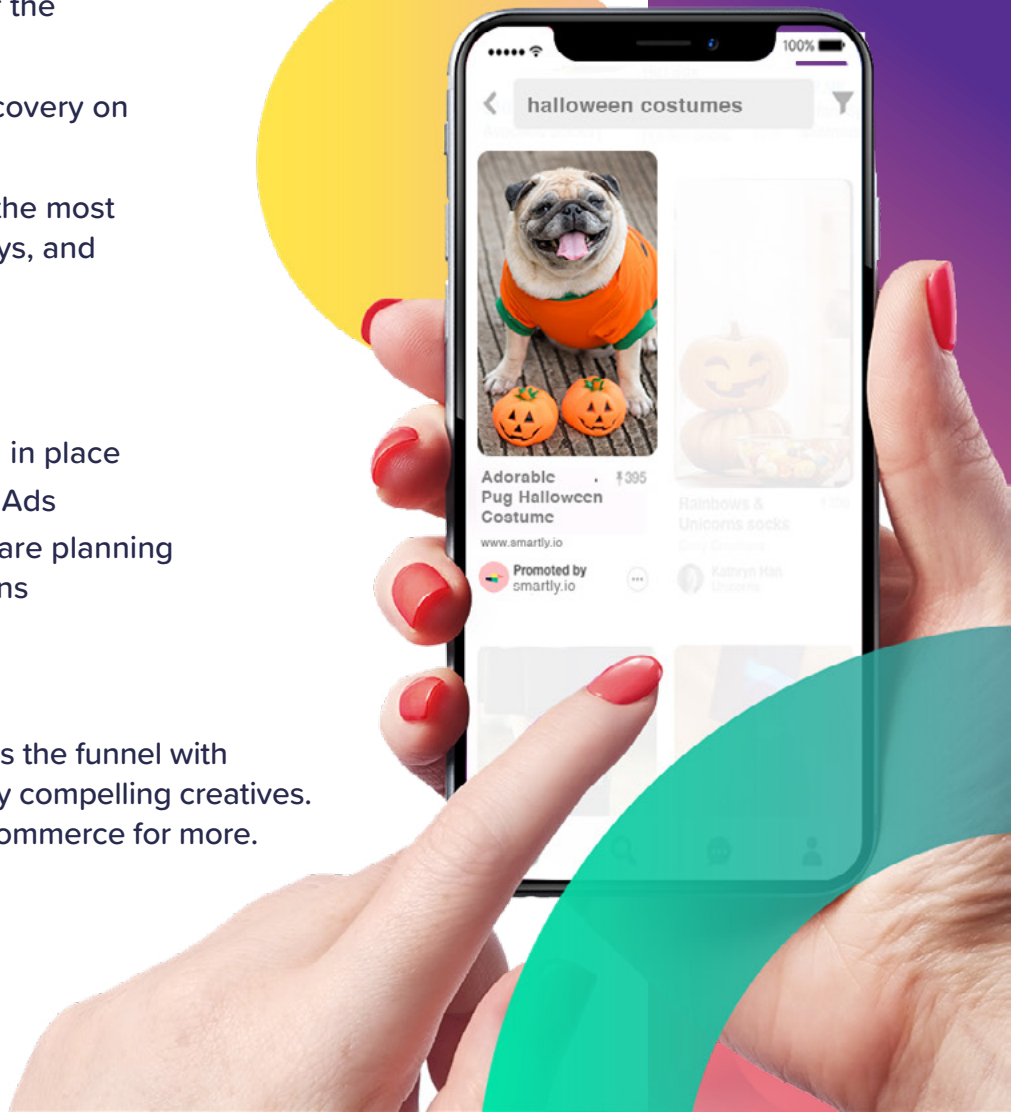
- Learn why and how to run vertical mobile ads with an introduction to Stories Ads
- Creative automation explained: save time, money, and resources while driving performance
- Read about mobile-first strategies to reach on-the-go shoppers
- Optimize your campaigns for the highest ROI
- Drive brand and product discovery on Pinterest
- Access a handy calendar of the most important holiday events, days, and dates globally

## Level of Experience: Advanced

- You have the Facebook Pixel in place
- You're familiar with Dynamic Ads
- You use product catalogs or are planning to use them in your campaigns

## Smartly.io for E-Commerce

Scale customer acquisition across the funnel with automated, localized, and visually compelling creatives. Visit [www.smartly.io/solutions/ecommerce](http://www.smartly.io/solutions/ecommerce) for more.

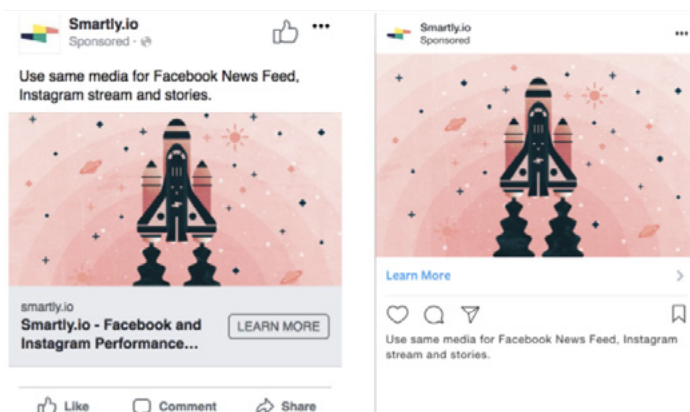


# Instagram Stories Take the Center Stage – Winning Creative Strategies

Instagram Stories is a vertical, full-screen ad format that is taking the advertising world by storm. This mobile-only, fleeting ad format is great for driving performance and diversifying your ad formats beyond the feed. Users love Stories as they are interactive, playful, eye-catching, and short-form – with Smartly.io, it's easy to get started with Stories creative and vertical video content. Read on for inspiration and examples from brands that automate storytelling with us.

## What You Can Run on Stories

- Still images
- Videos
- Single 15-second ads
- Carousel ads: maximum three cards, up to 45 seconds in total length
- Horizontal and square creative: when you run square ads, the rest of the space is filled with a similar tone blur to cover the entire screen, as seen on the right-hand side below



Facebook Feed

Instagram Feed



Instagram Stories

# Tips for Creating High-Performing Stories Ads

## Design Considerations

- **Include action cues**, such as arrows at the bottom of the ad, prompting the user to swipe up, or animations that draw the eye towards the bottom
- **Mimic organic user behavior:** CTA, stickers, text, drawings, overlays, content shot with an iPhone.
- **Branding:** show the product with logo and/ or show the product in use
- **Reuse existing materials:** stack three square product images on top of each other to use the space
- **Repurpose existing images** and footage by reframing them into the 9:16 format
- **Take advantage of the timeline** on the top of the story; create an element that continues to travel across the screen during the story length of three cards in Stories Carousels

## Video Tips

- **Video made easy:** add simple moving elements such as animation cues, GIFs, moving overlays to still ads
- **Sound and captions:** design for sound-off but delight with sound on
- **Keep it short and sweet:** less than 15 seconds unless your story demands the full time (or the 30-45 seconds when using Stories Carousels)
- **Include branding:** with live action footage, make sure your brand is recognizable through and through

## Narrative Strategy

- **Rethink the story arc:** open with your main message and hero product
- **Tell more complex stories with Carousel:** if you have a longer narrative, break it down to a three card Stories Carousel
- **Be aspirational:** Take the user on a real-life journey behind the scenes.



# Consider Creative Automation

Imagine you have:

**3** seasonal campaign concepts

×

**5** different language markets

×

**8** distinct ad formats

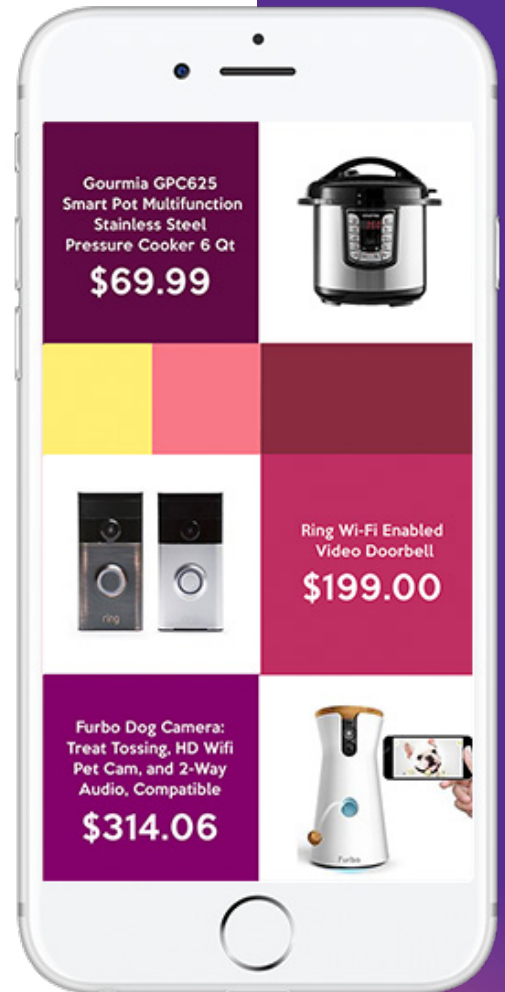
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**3** ad platforms

=

**360**

potential ad creative versions... multiplied by the number of products advertised!



## WINNING ADVERTISERS BUILD A CREATIVE ENGINE

### 1: Scale with High-Quality Creative Automation

**What:** Automating video and still creatives from any content feed

**Solutions:** Smartly.io Video Templates - Stories first! Build, design, and iterate short-form, mobile-friendly video campaigns quickly and easily from a single interface.

“Scaling video with up-to-date products and prices wouldn’t be possible without a creative automation solution like Video Templates.”

SADIE DARYAN, GLOBAL SR.  
MANAGER, CHANNEL INCUBATION

ebay™

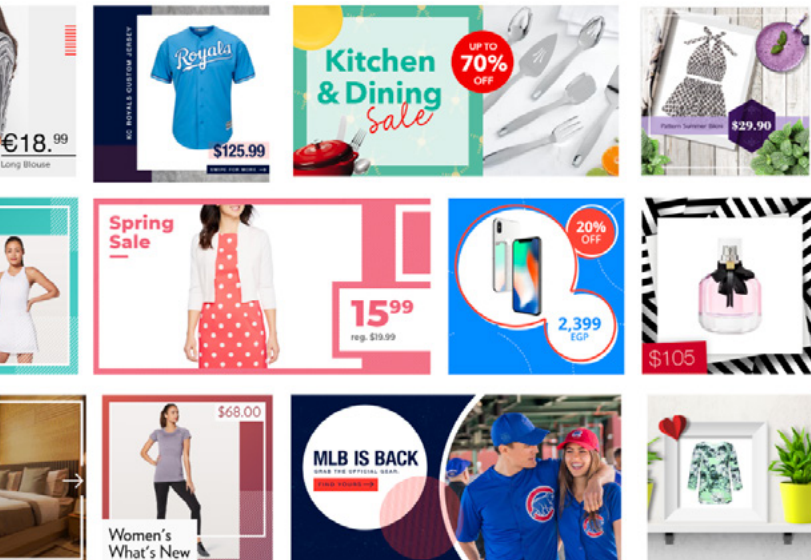
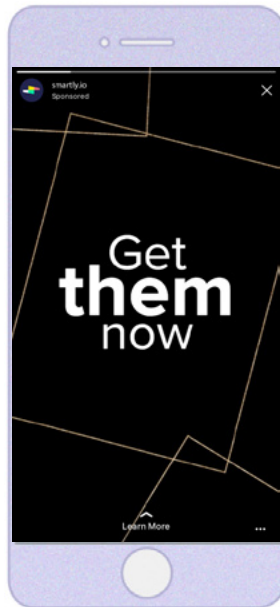


# NEW



## SMARTLY.IO VIDEO PRESETS

Take brand storytelling to the next level - choose from over 40 presets available directly on the platform. This holiday season, we're offering seasonal video presets, which can be used interchangeably with our evergreen presets customized to your brand.



“Dynamic Product Ad campaigns with Image Templates outperform regular retargeting campaigns with a 3.1× click-through rate and 68% decrease in cost per action.”

ANKIT KHEMKA, GROUP HEAD  
SOCIAL MEDIA AND MOBILE



### Smartly.io Image Templates – Always On-Brand

Design overlays that will automatically pull all content from your product feed in this “in-platform photoshop”. Pull dynamic elements like price, product name, image, and more to run always-up-to-date ads that change based on your product availability.

# Smartly.io Automated Ads - The Freedom of Personalization

**Automated Ads is a feed-based advertising solution that works in tandem with both Video and Image Templates. It automatically creates ads based on the rules you set in your templates and the content in your feed – in addition to creative, Automated Ads can use any data point in a feed, whether API or even as simple as a Google Spreadsheet published on the web. This way, you can target and tweak creatives based on eg. weather, pollen levels, sports results, locations, anything you can imagine!**

## **2. Combine Creative Automation with Ad Buying and Automated Optimization**

The best part about having creative automation and ad buying under one roof is that you don't have to import your ads separately, but launch campaigns as soon as your templates are designed. This way, you can drive performance through various optimization features on the Smartly.io platform, have all the campaign data in one place, and tweak fast based on results. All changes you make go live instantly after editing creative templates.

## **3. Learn and Iterate With Creative Testing**

Easy workflows allow you to run A/B tests as well as Lift tests on Facebook. Our Planning tool estimates the required data and investment needed to get conclusive results. The Statistical Significance Calculator tells you when the data is comprehensive enough to draw conclusions. With our Creative reporting, you'll be able to easily see what works and iterate based on the findings.

90 °F





## CHAPTER 4

# Winning Mobile Strategies

- 56% of US shoppers say they use smartphones when shopping in-store during the holiday season
- 43% find mobile shopping more convenient than in-store
- 48% of holiday shoppers agree their mobile device allows them to make more informed purchase decisions during the holidays\*

## Mobile Best Practices – Creative

- Include Your Brand Early and Often
- Keep the video length around 15 seconds:
- Capture attention quickly: open with something exciting
- Design for sound off but delight with sound on
- Experiment with platform-specific design: add stickers to Stories ads, play with animations

*\*Source: FB IQ Research*

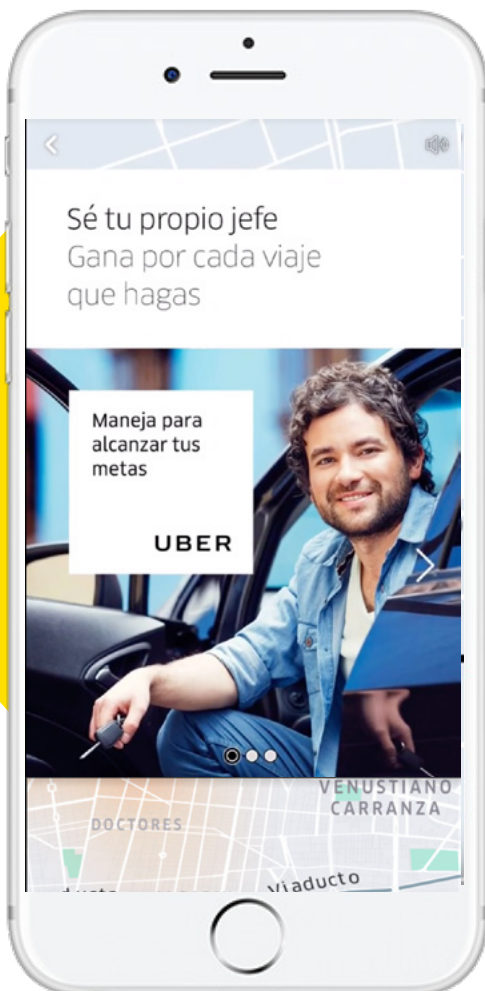


# Mobile-First Facebook Ad Formats – Highlights

## Canvas

Canvas is an interactive, full-screen mobile ad that can include elements such as images, text, carousels, a header and footer buttons, store locators or videos.

- Great for immersive brand experiences
- Inspire and drive sales at once
- Acts like a mobile landing page



“Canvas was our best ad format in Q4 2016, and we’ve seen up to 3x better results compared to our KPIs. Using Smartly.io’s Automated Canvas Ads with dynamic targeting, we’re finally able to scale them by supporting multiple city/zone launches at once.”

YOANN PAVY, PAID SOCIAL MANAGER



## Smartly.io Offers Automated Canvas Ads

With feed-based ad creation, you can scale your Canvas Ads automatically and tweak the content based on product categories, for example. You can even include targeting information in your feed so that you automatically target customers based on their location or interests.

### Collection Ads

- Collection combines branding with direct response advertising
- Features a prominent video or image with four related product images in the News Feed
- Opens into a full-screen shopping experience with multiple products
- Now also with tabs to feature different product categories

### Automate Collection Ads

Collection ads are created from your product catalogs, so they're easy to set up once you have those in place. Just upload the main image or video – the rest of the images are pulled automatically. The main visual creative can be an awareness driving asset; an edited TV commercial or promotional video, an editorial image or user-generated content such as reviews or tutorials that feature several products. During the holidays, Collection is a great way to advertise gift guides or render TV commercial shoppable with related products. After the holidays, Collection can serve to promote sales.



“Collection ads allowed us to successfully drive new, high-value traffic to our online store in a cost-effective manner. Our cost-per-click dropped 50% after adopting this automated ad format.”

CHARLOTTE BLAKENEY, FOUNDER

*by charlotte*

## CHAPTER 5

# Build the Right Audience

Audiences are a macro level strategy for optimizing your Facebook and Instagram campaigns. In addition to following creative best practices, pay attention to how you target and build audiences.

The most effective way to reach people who've shown interest in your business and your existing customers on Facebook is to create a Custom Audience either using Facebook's Pixel or SDK, for targeting your ads. There are a few different types to choose from:

## Custom Audiences From Lists

You can upload a customer list as either a CSV or TXT file. The customer list is hashed locally on your browser and then sent to Facebook. You will be able to securely define a custom audience that matches your customer list without running into privacy issues.

## Here are the best practices to maximize the number of matches between your list and Facebook users:

- The more data columns you have in the list, the more likely it is for Facebook to find matches
- Always include the country code and country data as their own columns in the list, even if all your customers are from the same country. Facebook is a global platform with two billion active users – these fields help to narrow down the search for matches
- You can have up to 3 columns for alternative email addresses
- Separate first and last names in separate columns
- Facebook accepts multiple formats for date of birth, phone numbers and e.g. zip codes, but it's always worth double-checking everything before you upload the data





### Website Custom Audiences

The Facebook Pixel and SDK gather information about your website visitors and app users to build audiences that you can then use to target ads to on Facebook, Instagram and Audience Network.

Without the pixel you can't effectively track or optimize for conversion or retarget audiences like:

- People who visited your a specific page or category on your site
- People who visited during the past X day, e.g. just the last month or in the last 180 days but not in recent weeks
- People who visited your site X times during the holiday season

### Lookalike Audiences

Once you've created Custom Audiences on Facebook, you can use them as seed audiences to create Lookalike Audiences. These are new people who are likely to be interested in your business, because they 'look like' your existing customers (similar behavior and interests). Lookalikes are a great way to prospect for new customers.

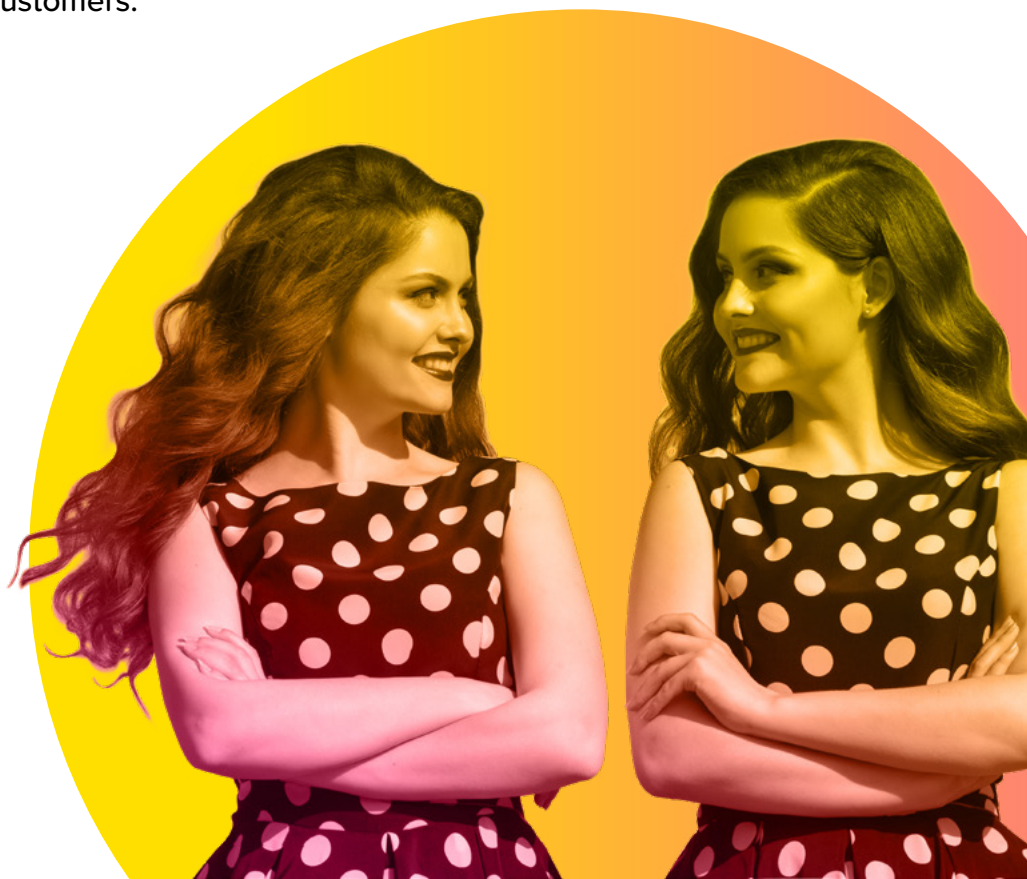
The size of a Lookalike Audience can range from 1-20% of the total population of the country you're targeting, with 1% audiences being the closest match to your seed audience.

- Note: you need at least 100 conversions within the last 180 days to be able to create a Lookalike Audience.

**Tip for seasonal campaigns:** upload your CRM data from previous holiday seasons and/ or high-value spenders to use this as an extra-relevant seed audience for your Lookalikes.

### International Lookalike Audiences

If you're expanding to new markets where you don't yet have any custom audiences, International Lookalikes is a great tool. It uses an existing custom audience (chosen by you) to create a lookalike in the new market.





## Lookalike Expansion

Internally we've dubbed this feature "Lookalikes on steroids" as it has supercharged campaign performance for large advertisers like the clothing e-tailer TechStyle, for instance.

Lookalike Expansion creates a lookalike audience based on all the people who have converted in any of the ad sets in a campaign, and adds a new ad set to the campaign. This is a lookalike of people who've taken action based on your Facebook campaigns, meaning they are the people most likely to convert. Even better, this new audience continues to update automatically when the original campaign gets more conversions, making it a self-improving loop.

### Important notes on Lookalikes Expansion:

- Track CPAs (cost per acquisition) for the ad sets that are converting well
- Using lookalike expansion might not be the best option for you, if you're not hitting your KPI goals despite good conversion rates

## Broad Audiences

Broad Audiences are great for prospecting new customers. They are used in conjunction with dynamic, feed-based campaigns, just without the retargeting rules. When you choose to run your campaigns with Broad Audiences, Facebook's algorithm will automatically pick and choose the products from the feed and show them to users who are most likely to convert.

## Granular Targeting

Facebook offers a variety of targeting options from demographic and location-based options to interests and custom audiences. With Smartly.io's Automated Ads solution we can localize your creatives and target the zip codes, cities or locations your products or service are available in. You can also include interests or custom audiences in the list to more narrowly target products from specific categories to specific people.



## Audience Strategy When Scaling

If you're aiming to scale your spend to reach larger audiences this holiday season, we have one final piece of advice about audience strategy:

### Think before you split.

When Facebook first launched its advertising platform, an essential part of the pitch was that advertisers could reach people in a more precisely than ever before. As a result, many advertisers have adopted highly granular targeting strategies. From our experience, large advertisers usually rely on more simple setups.

### Why is that?

Facebook's revenue per user has been growing steadily since the launch of the platform, from \$5 in 2011 to \$15.98 in 2016. While the number of ad placements has grown, this growth in revenue isn't due to just showing more ads per person.

Facebook is optimizing ad delivery to get better results for advertisers, creating different tools for marketers to reach audiences that are most likely to convert.

While many companies like to think they know their customers inside out, Facebook has extensive user data that offers unparalleled opportunities to target the right customer profile. Advertisers should indeed rely more and more on the powerful algorithms that Facebook has created. We recommend using as large audiences as possible in your campaigns and not splitting them. This way, Facebook will find the people who are most likely to convert.

## When to split?

- 1. You have audience-specific creatives**  
e.g. different creatives for men and women, ads in different languages, ad creatives targeting different cities
- 2. Your audiences have different conversion value** and thus you want to bid differently for them and should keep them in different ad sets e.g.
  - you know from your data that the lifetime value of iOS installs is higher than Android installs
  - women age 18-34 are most likely to become return shopper
  - or remarketing to people who abandoned shopping carts has high conversion rates

- 3. You want insights beyond the results Facebook provides** Facebook provides some reporting breakdowns like age, gender, placement, and device. If you want to learn more about who converted, like breakdowns by interest, city or custom audience, you may want to split audiences
- 4. You want insights for 3rd party tracking** like Google Analytics on an ad set level, like having different UTM tags for each individual audience

For these last two points, remember the trade-off. Most likely you're hurting your delivery by splitting these audiences. Consider whether the information you're getting is worth risking your ad delivery. During peak seasons like the Q4 holidays, using larger audiences and accessing less detailed measurement data may be worth it.



## CHAPTER 6

# Beat the Competition With Campaign Optimization

During the festive season, CPMs (cost per mille) can increase as much as 50%\* – everyone is looking for the slice of the holiday spend. It isn't enough of to have carefully built audiences or on-brand and relevant creatives, you need to make sure to bid high enough to reach your consumers, too.

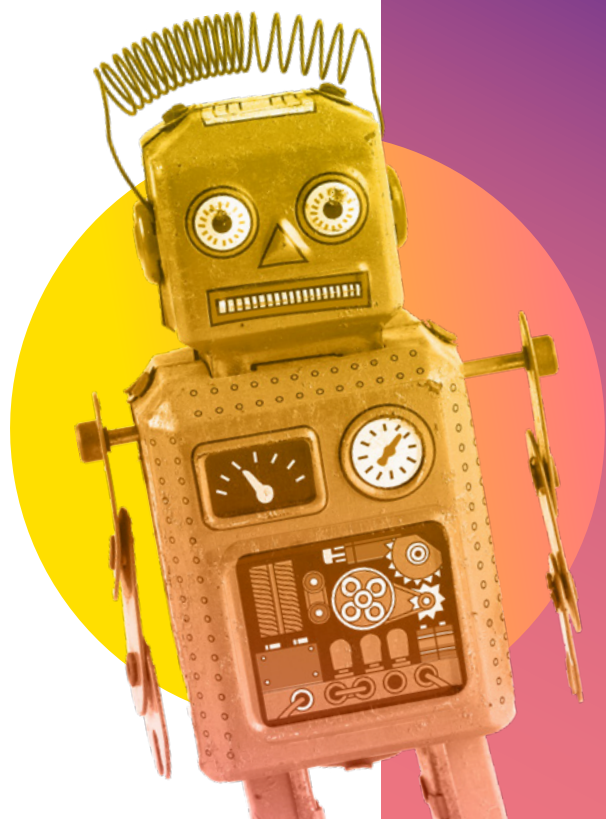
When it comes to Facebook advertising, there are many options to optimize campaign performance. In many cases, a good bulk of the work can be easily automated, while others require more human attention.

## **New: Value Optimization**

Instead of minimizing Cost-per.Action, like the regular conversion-optimized bidding (formerly 'oCPM'), Value Optimization aims to maximize your Return on ad spend (ROAS or ROI). It measures revenue reported with Purchase events by your pixel or app. As this is a newer feature, you will need to fill certain requirements in order to be whitelisted for this feature: your pixel/SDK must be getting more than 100 Purchase events monthly from Purchase-conversion optimized ad sets, with a 7-day click-through conversion window.

## **Optimization Actions – Which Ones to Automate?**

A good rule of thumb is to consider the length and goal of your campaign. If you're running longer, ongoing campaigns such as branding or prospecting campaigns, it's a good idea to set up more automation around bids, budgets, and for example, rotating creatives.



If you're running limited offers, flash sales or short seasonal campaigns, consider implementing automated optimization triggers that scale budgets and bidding quickly based on campaign performance. You can also monitor them manually if you experience a lot of volatility during flash sales.

### **Ad Creation**

As mentioned in the creatives section, ad creation for both prospecting and retargeting campaigns can be fully automated by tapping into image templates. All you need is a feed to pull the content from, and a designer or a design-savvy person who will create the campaign image templates in the editor. Once these are in place, you won't have to worry about your creatives not being on-brand or visually compelling.

### **Ad Rotation**

Ad fatigue is the number one enemy of effective online campaigns. How to fight it? Refresh your campaigns periodically by rotating ads based on various sets of rules (such as prioritizing high-performing ads or switching creatives after a set time). Automating ad rotation is a great idea for longer campaigns that have multiple ads; the Smartly platform has a bespoke solution that does just that.

### **Triggers i.e. Optimization Strategies**

The Smartly.io Optimization Strategies (Triggers) are "if this, then that" rules that help advertisers decrease manual work by enabling automatic changes to campaigns, ad sets or ads based on preset conditions. You can, for example, change bids and budgets, pause non-performing campaigns, ad sets or ads, and send email notifications on major changes.

Triggers can be an extremely powerful tool for your Facebook advertising, and save both time and money. As mentioned above, this type of automation works best on ongoing campaigns with longer time frames.

**Smartly.io Optimization Strategies can help you in many ways, including:**

- Driving better results (lower CPA, more conversions, etc.)
- Increasing ad delivery
- Reducing manual workload



## What is Best Adjusted Manually?

The holiday season shoots the competition sky high for advertisers; what normally works for you probably won't yield the same results during the most competitive days.

As a rule of thumb, you should increase both bids and budgets during the festive season, particularly around certain festive dates (see the handy holiday calendar at the end of this ebook).

Smartly.io's campaign optimization experts have compiled a list of recommendations for making sure you have enough budget and high enough bids to reach your advertising goals.

## Increased Volume Calls for Increased Bids and Budgets

- If you have daily or weekly budgets, you should increase your spend during the holiday period or specific holiday dates like Black Friday
- If you are bid-constrained rather than budget-constrained, you may still need to raise budgets to ensure they will not max out while pursuing high volume customers
- Be prepared to bid way higher than what you usually would – your basket size is likely to increase during the festive period, so should what you're willing to pay for conversions
- If you're bidding high and still not spending your budget, try increasing also your budget – Facebook takes both into account in the pacing algorithm

## Consider Holiday Timing

During the holiday season, your performance changes and fluctuates much faster compared to the rest of the year. Here are some specific things to look out for:

1. Black Friday and Cyber Monday are well known, but the weekend between them is also a busy shopping time. Budgets and bids should be set higher than average to compete on these days, see more in our Holiday Calendar
2. Be wary of the final shipping days – e-commerce purchases slow down before December 25th. Take this into account with your campaign schedule
3. Some advertisers see a final spike on Dec 25th and 26th as consumers consider returns or spend gift cards. You may want to increase bids and budget on these days

## CHAPTER 7

# Get Discovered on Pinterest

With more than 200M active Pinners and a 40% year-over-year growth, Pinterest reaches an increasing amount of users who are actively looking for inspiration. Pinners use Pinterest to be inspired, to discover new brands and products, and to help them make purchase decisions while pinning: 72% of users have bought a product after seeing it on Pinterest\*. Pinners are also planners and they start researching twice as early as users on other platforms.

## Automation Solutions by [Smartly.io](#)

Scaling your Pinterest advertising efforts shouldn't equal with ramping up your team's headcount as well. With [Smartly.io](#), your team can connect several Pinterest accounts at once, have multi-user access, create branded pins at scale, save pins as drafts, and schedule them. Automation allows teams to re-allocate their time on more strategic work and wave goodbye to manual work and iterations. Automation of creatives also helps advertisers create high volumes of appealing ads while fighting creative-fatigue. [Smartly.io](#)'s bespoke tool Image Templates enables you to create ads that are always:

- Personalized
- Relevant
- True to your brand
- Native to the platform

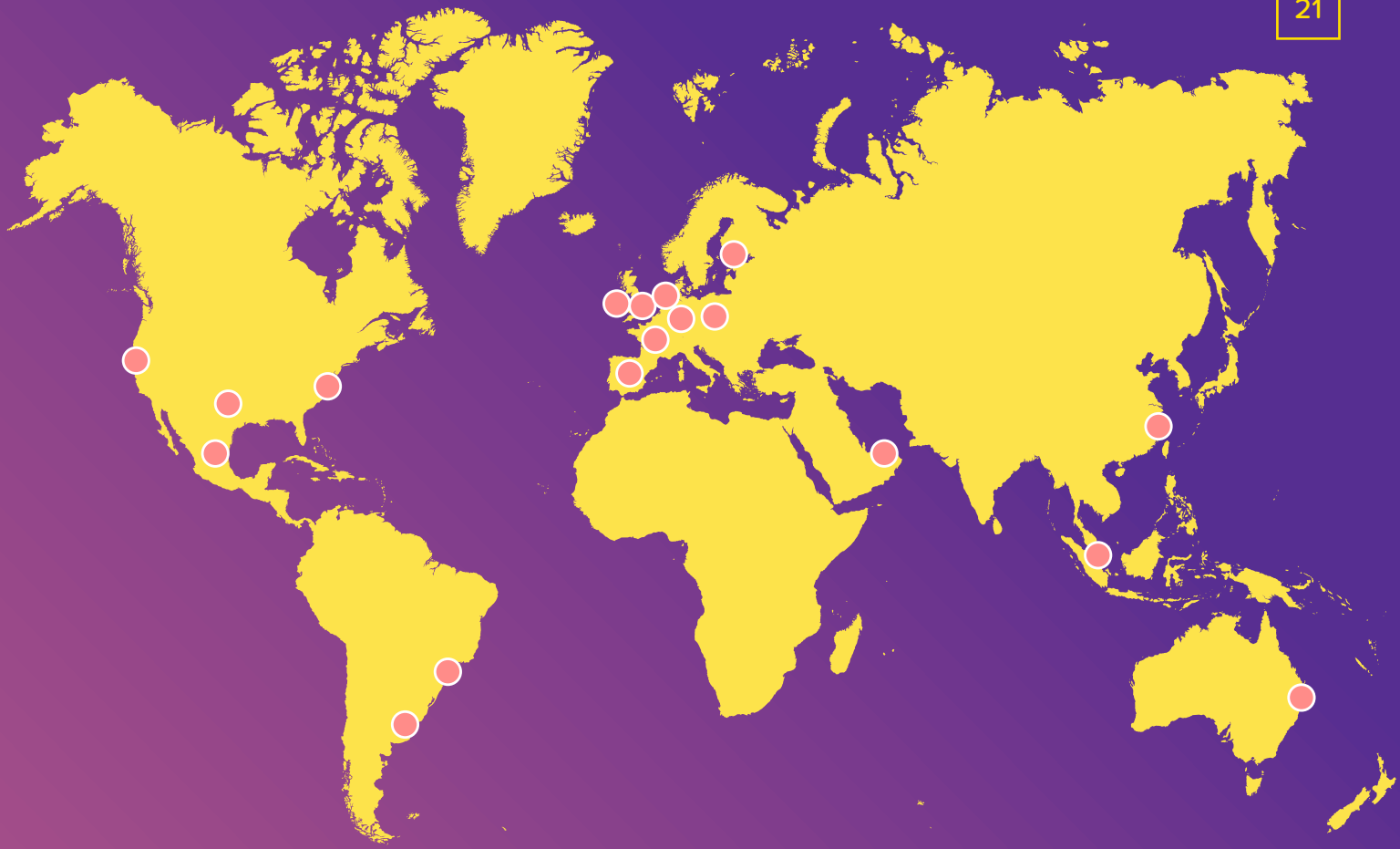
## Optimize Your Campaigns

Managing complex campaigns and measuring results is essential when optimizing for performance. In [Smartly.io](#), advertisers are able to quickly drill down into results on any level cross-account to optimize their Pinterest advertising and reach the best results.

## Content Tips

- Pinners are planners who cherish different life moments - start posting pins up to three months before a moment
- Create a brand-unique look and feel so that your customers always recognize your brand
- Create Pins that are true to the platform - Users can spot a





## CHAPTER 8

# Smartly.io Makes Online Advertising Easy, Effective, and Enjoyable

We combine creative automation, ad operations, and outstanding customer service to help over 600+ brands scale their results – not headcount on Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest.

- **\$1 Billion in Annual Ad Spend**
- **250+ employees**
- **17 offices around the globe**

# Holiday Calendar for Advertisers

OCT  
**31**

## Halloween

Dig out your scariest creatives for your terrific holiday deals.

US, MUCH OF EUROPE

NOV  
**11**

## Singles' Day

This fun fest has young singles celebrating in various Asian countries – also with their wallets!

ASIA

NOV  
**22**

## Thanksgiving

Kicks off the last leg of festive advertising.

US

NOV  
**23**

## Black Friday

Crucial for US advertisers, yet it's starting to gain popularity elsewhere, too.

US, MUCH OF EUROPE, ASIA

NOV  
**26**

## Cyber Monday

Whip out those online deals to spice up your sales.

US, MUCH OF EUROPE, ASIA

NOV  
**27**

## Giving Tuesday

#GivingTuesday kicks off the charitable season, plan campaigns that involve your customers in doing good.

US

DEC  
**10**

## Green Monday

The second Monday in December is one of the busiest shopping days – you don't want to miss this.

WORLDWIDE

DEC  
**12**

## The 12/12 Shopping Holiday

Coined by the Chinese giant Alibaba, many retailers offer large discounts on 12/12.

ASIA

DEC  
**22**

## Super Saturday

Also known as Panic Saturday, advertise on this shopping date if you have physical stores or virtual presents like gift cards.

WORLDWIDE

DEC  
**26**

> JAN 1

## Sales Begin

Many customers start bargain hunting right after the 25th – time to ramp up advertising again.

WORLDWIDE