

Trust is the key

Companies cannot presume that being trusted with contact details in one situation entitles a brand to contact an individual with other marketing messages.

Most people will swallow their data security fears for the sake of convenience and provide enough personal information to buy goods or source vital services online, according to new research from the UK Direct Marketing Association.

Nonetheless, consumers are concerned about revealing personal information for marketing purposes - hardly surprising when 23 per cent have experienced a security breach in the last six months.

But they remain surprisingly willing to divulge enough details to generate information or make it easier to buy items they want or need. Convenience, it seems, is a persuasive motivator.

Almost eight out of ten (79 per cent) will give name, address and email address to make an online purchase and almost six

out of ten (56 per cent) are willing to give credit or debit card details.

This is remarkable because only in two other situations are even a minority willing to reveal credit details - 'pledging support for a cause' (seven per cent) and 'creating an email account' (one per cent).

These are just some of the startling results of a fast.MAP/DMA Data Tracking Study, launched in June and carried out by online research company fast.MAP among a panel of 2,027 consumers whose demographic profile mirrors that of the UK.

The tracker will be repeated every six months to monitor changes in behaviour and opinion and help direct marketers to identify and overcome problems which might render people less likely to share data about their buying preferences and plans.

Social media wariness

Adults are most wary about revealing information when they are creating a social media account, when less than half (48 per cent) are prepared to divulge their name and only 18 per cent are willing to share their address - fewer than in any other of the suggested situations. And 45 per cent would not reveal any personal information.

Surprisingly, almost as many (41 per cent) would not reveal any details when pledging support for a cause -

although seven per cent are willing to give credit or debit

card details and two per cent would give bank details. Only just over half would reveal their name and just over a third (36 per cent) would give their address.

Fewer than three out of ten are willing to provide their telephone number - except when buying online, when 43 per cent will do so.

Although three out of ten will supply their date of birth when creating an email account, on average fewer than two out of ten will do so in other circumstances.

However, their caution makes them far more likely to divulge more sensitive information to brands they trust or have a relationship with. And they are alert for signs that companies are taking data security seriously, by having a secure website, for example, or asking for permission to use their data in other ways or promising not to share information with third parties.

Nor can companies presume that being trusted with contact details in one situation entitles a brand to contact an individual with other marketing messages. In fact, 72 per cent will not give permission for use of data by third parties - even if they are companies in the same group.

More than three-quarters don't want further phone calls; more than half don't even want to receive further direct mail and more than two-thirds definitely don't want SMS.

Specific permission

Marketers should note that, in the UK, more than half of those who have opted-out of those who have opted-out of appearing on the Edited Electoral Register, in response to an open question, said they had done so specifically to avoid



PAUL SEABROOK tells how to get up close and personal with consumers.

Unwanted marketing contact is most referred to this as 'junk mail' or 'spam'.

The rest cited reasons including: privacy; protection of personal data; disapproval of councils being allowed to sell the information; and not wanting to share personal details with any companies to which they had not given specific permission.

This highlights the need for brands to collect contact data if they want to continue to communicate with their customers, as well as continually working at building the relationships and trust which will enable them to do so.

And as EU and national laws governing data security become increasingly all-encompassing to combat identity theft as well as to protect personal privacy, the longer marketers delay, the more difficult it is likely to become, as the restrictions become more onerous.

Trust is a key ingredient in how much people will reveal. Eight out of ten consumers believe brands they trust will keep their data safe, which shows they are very aware of marketing issues and some have a very negative view of it.

Companies with a clear privacy policy gain an edge, but money-off and incentives motivate fewer than three out of ten adults to fill in their details.

Where/what will people supply?

Consumers are most likely to reveal more data when buying online than in any other buying or sourcing situation, although they are still reticent about divulging telephone, date of birth and bank details.

Conversely, they show most caution when creating a social media account.

Eight out of ten people derive confidence from obvious web security features and almost as many perceive as reliable companies which ask for permission to pass data to others or state they do not share data.

Three-quarters of consumers will pass personal details to companies with which they have a relationship, and 62 per cent will share them with organisations selling essential products such as insurance. However, 89 per cent will not give personal data to companies where there is no relationship (except as mentioned above).

A bad experience will over-ride trust and relationship goodwill and, unfortunately, almost half (49 per cent), have had a bad experience and now doubt that brand's ability to store data securely.

Denting the faith

Press coverage of lost or misused data also dents the faith of three in ten, while two out of ten doubt the trustworthiness of brands from which they receive unwanted marketing material.

Spelling and address errors are viewed as indications that the brand will take a similar slipshod approach to data security, as well as causing 29 per cent to throw away that marketing message unread.

Unsurprisingly, people unsubscribe once a product or service (and therefore marketing messages about it) is no longer relevant or required. They will also do so if customer service is poor or if they receive too many communications from the brand (a fact which echoes the findings about email marketing in the fast.MAP/DMA Digital Tracker).

Political parties, government and local government departments and services are least trusted as data handlers, but three-quarters trust the legal profession.

Although most adults are concerned about data security – only 12 per cent are not – only 39 per cent consider themselves responsible for their personal data security. A third feel it is up to the companies and organisations they deal with, 15 per cent the government, nine per cent the information commission and three per cent trade bodies.

Nonetheless, nine out of ten check their bank and credit card statements and destroy personal documents before discarding them. And eight out of ten store documents such as their driving licence in a safe place.

Paul Seabrook is director, fast.MAP online research company.

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