What Is Consumer Data? A Guide For Marketers

Description

The Leads Ware House

By James Schulze

This article discusses consumer data, typical fields available, how it differs from leads, and how marketers use it in customer acquisition campaigns. It also highlights the importance of data accuracy and how data append and validation services can help marketers improve the accuracy of their own databases.

Every successful marketing campaign starts with the same basic requirement: **finding the right people.** A company can have a great product, competitive pricing, and an effective sales team, but none of those things matter if its marketing reaches consumers who are unlikely to buy. That is where consumer data comes in.

Consumer data gives businesses information they can use to identify, segment, and reach potential customers based on characteristics such as geography, age, income, homeownership, and other available attributes.

For marketers, consumer data turns a broad audience into a targeted one. At The Leads Warehouse, our consumer data has **360** different data points that allow a B2C company to hyperfocus on a demographic with actionable insights.

What is consumer data?

Consumer data is information about individuals that can be organized and used for marketing analysis, customer acquisition, and other legitimate business purposes. Depending on the data source, a consumer record can contain information such as:

- Name
- Mailing address
- City, state, and zip code

- Phone number
- Email address
- Age
- Estimated income
- Homeowner status
- Household characteristics

The exact information available varies by database and provider.

For marketers, the value isnâ??t simply having millions of consumer records. The value comes from identifying **which consumers fit the audience a business actually wants to reach.**

Consumer data vs. consumer leads

Consumer data and consumer leads are related, but they are not the same product. A consumer lead is generally created when someone takes an action indicating interest in a particular product or service. The consumer might complete a form, respond to an advertisement, request information, or call a business. Consumer data does not necessarily indicate that the individual recently expressed interest in the product being marketed.

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If an insurance agent purchases a real-time insurance lead, that consumer recently took an action related to insurance. If the agent purchases consumer data based on age, geography, homeownership, or other characteristics, the agent is identifying a potential audience.

In many cases, consumer data can help in creating consumer leads. Data can be used for remarketing on Meta or mail campaigns, creating a compliant opt-in lead for a company.

The marketing strategies and economics are different, but leads and data can work together.

How marketers use consumer data

One of the biggest advantages of consumer data is flexibility. A home services company might want homeowners within specific zip codes. A financial services marketer may want consumers within certain age or income ranges. An insurance organization might build an audience based on geography, age, or household characteristics.

Instead of asking, â??Who can we market to?â?• consumer data allows a business to ask, â??**Who do we *actually* want to market to?**â?• That is a much more useful question. The most complete opt-in lead generated off a long-form page might have **12 to 15** data points available, with only **2 or 3** of the fields offering filtering. Consumer data can provide many more data points. At The Leads Warehouse, consumer data can be filtered across **360** different consumer attributes.

Consumer data can be highly targeted

Modern consumer databases allow marketers to segment audiences using multiple criteria. Geography is one of the simplest examples. A campaign might be built around a state, county, city, zip code, or combination of markets. Additional filters can then narrow the audience based on age, estimated

income, homeowner status, household characteristics, or other available attributes.

Those criteria can also be layered. Instead of purchasing every consumer within a geographic market, a company might target homeowners between certain ages who fall within a particular estimated household income range.

The more targeted the audience becomes, the smaller the available universe will generally become. But a smaller, more relevant audience may be considerably more valuable than a massive database of consumers who have little connection to the product being marketed.

Consumer data is used across many industries

Consumer data can support customer acquisition campaigns across insurance, financial services, home services, automotive, real estate, telecommunications, legal marketing, retail, and many other industries.

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The same underlying consumer database can have completely different applications depending on how the audience is selected. A solar company and an insurance agency might both purchase consumer data, for example, but the audiences they build could look completely different. That versatility is one reason consumer data represents such a large category within direct marketing.

Consumer data for direct mail

Direct mail is one of the clearest examples of consumer data in action. A company defines the audience it wants to reach, and consumer data is used to build the mailing list. Instead of sending marketing materials indiscriminately across an entire region, the business can target consumers or households meeting its criteria. The creative, offer, frequency, and sales process still matter, but consumer data provides the foundation: **who receives the marketing in the first place.**

Consumer data is ideal for direct mail as TCPA consent isnâ??t needed. Highly accurate, highly filtered data allows maximum customization for the marketer. Considering the U.S. direct mail market is more than **$36 billion**, it is a massive addressable market. Data is more important than ever. Mail marketers are shifting from volume to quality. In spite of social media, web-based marketing, and more, direct mail is not dying; it is evolving. It has transformed from a stand-alone mass-delivery tool into an expensive, precision-guided, digital-integration tactic.

Consumer data for outbound marketing

Consumer data can also support outbound telephone and email marketing when appropriate. For telephone campaigns, businesses need to consider the source of the data, Do Not Call (DNC) requirements, applicable federal and state regulations, and the technology being used for outreach. Email campaigns have their own considerations, including deliverability, permissions, applicable regulations, and data quality.

The important distinction is that having consumer contact information does not automatically mean every communication method is permitted. Marketers need to consider both **who they want to reach and how they intend to reach them.**

Not-for-profits and political groups almost exclusively rely on consumer data. These verticals are not subject to TCPA requirements, and sorted quality consumer data provides the microtargeting needed for not-for-profit and political campaigns. For more information on regulations for telemarketing and email campaigns, read our blog, â??Why Is It So Hard To Connect With Prospects Today?â?•

Data accuracy is critical

Consumer information changes constantly. People move. Phone numbers change. Email addresses become inactive. Household circumstances change. New records enter databases while older information becomes outdated. Data providers use various processes to update, append, validate, and maintain consumer information.

Marketers should understand what fields are included, how the information is maintained, what validation processes are used, and how closely the available data matches their targeting requirements.

The cheapest consumer data is not necessarily the least expensive marketing campaign if inaccurate information wastes marketing dollars and sales resources. At The Leads Warehouse, our consumer data is updated in real-time from multiple online and public sources reporting new consumer information as it becomes available. This new data is constantly appended to our current data to create best-in-class consumer data files.

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Consumer data can enhance existing customer information

Consumer data isnâ??t only useful for finding new prospects. Businesses may already have substantial first-party customer or prospect databases containing incomplete information. A company might have a consumerâ??s name and address but lack a phone number or an email address. Another database might have contact information but lack demographic attributes that would improve segmentation.

Data append and enrichment services can help fill some of those missing fields, making an organizationâ??s existing database more useful without requiring it to build an entirely new audience.

For companies with large customer databases, improving existing data can be just as important as acquiring new data. At The Leads Warehouse, we offer substantial appending and validation services to enhance existing B2C databases.

Consumer data is a starting point, not a sale

Consumer data should be viewed as the beginning of a marketing process. Unlike a real-time lead or inbound call, a consumer data record generally does not represent someone actively asking to purchase a specific product or service at that moment. The marketer still needs to create the interest. That may happen through direct mail, outbound calling, email, digital audience creation, or another appropriate marketing channel.

This is also why consumer data can often be acquired at a substantially lower cost per record than an actively generated lead. The business purchasing the data is taking responsibility for more of the customer acquisition process. Companies with strong marketing and sales infrastructure can use that difference to their advantage.

Conclusion

A successful consumer data campaign begins by defining the desired customer before purchasing the data. What geography does the business serve? What age groups are relevant? Does homeownership matter? Is estimated household income important? Which contact fields are required? How will the audience actually be marketed to? Those decisions should drive the data purchase, not the other way around. From there, businesses can test audiences, measure response, refine targeting, and expand the segments that produce the best results.

Consumer data gives marketers the ability to reach enormous audiences, but its real power comes from narrowing those audiences intelligently. For businesses looking to expand customer acquisition, **high-quality consumer data can provide the foundation for more targeted, measurable, and scalable marketing campaigns.** Are you ready to talk about how you can use consumer data to grow your sales pipeline?

About the author

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James Schulze is the President and CEO of The Leads Warehouse, a marketing data company with over 20 years of experience in bringing lead generation solutions to companies selling into the home, automotive, financial, insurance, health and life, and legal sectors. He works directly with clients to optimize conversion strategies and ROI across multiple verticals.

Connect with James Schulze on LinkedIn:
https://www.linkedin.com/in/james-l-schulze

Read additional market analysis and commentary from James Schulze on Substack:
https://jameslschulze.substack.com

If you are serious about growing your business, high-quality consumer data is important. Our team works with agencies to maximize their ROI on consumer data. Call **1-800-884-8371** or visit The Leads Warehouse to get started.

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Author
jimtlw-media