



Case Study

**Driving personalisation for better audience engagement, increased conversion rates and higher ad revenues**

Gaining the ability to dynamically personalise web content is a hot topic for publishers, brands and advertisers. Showing people what they're interested in will naturally boost engagement and satisfaction, and the same audience intelligence can be used to help advertisers accurately – and non-intrusively – reach their intended targets. Europe's leading online motoring community PistonHeads.com is using VisualDNA's unique data segments to boost its personalisation strategy for the benefit of both members and advertisers.

# Targeting by Personality Increases Engagement, Conversions, Revenue & Boosts CTR by 800%

## The business

PistonHeads.com is the UK's second-largest motoring website and Europe's largest online motoring community. The site has more than 100,000 used cars for sale and more than 250,000 active members who are busy on its forums 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The site is owned by Haymarket Media Group, which runs a number of major national and international publications, including Autocar, Campaign, FourFourTwo, Marketing, MediaWeek, PRWeek, Stuff and What Car?

Asked about key competitors, PistonHeads.com Executive Director Lee Williams names Google, eBay and Facebook rather than traditional publishers: "We are, increasingly, a big data business, and we have to compete for advertising revenues with the biggest players out there." PistonHeads.com is aggressively pursuing a strategy built around the personalisation of content to members, powered by its deep understanding of, and engagement with, its large active audience. The site gathers all kinds of intelligence on its members' browsing and commenting activities, supplemented with member-supplied data, and is starting to use this to dynamically tailor the content they see.

"Personalisation is a win-win strategy, because it means we can give our readers pertinent, timely offers, while giving our advertisers extremely well-qualified leads and/or exposure within a highly engaged audience," says Lee Williams. "Of course, data is central to personalisation, and we want to capture more quality data. We currently have around 400 data points per impression; with our goal of knowing and understanding more about the automotive car buyer and enthusiast than anyone, the variables per impression are likely to exceed 1,000. The usual answer is to buy in third-party data, but our own data is so rich that we can rarely find an external source that offers any demonstrable added value."



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## The approach

To help power its personalisation strategy by enriching its own data, and to reach out to complementary segments, PistonHeads.com decided to trial VisualDNA's uniquely rich data and dynamic segmentation. VisualDNA is the world's leading provider of psychographic audience data, helping brands and advertisers improve targeting, and providing its WHY Analytics platform to help publishers understand their audiences and extend their reach. A lead generation campaign for Magnitude Finance, the UK's specialist in providing bespoke funding for prestige automotive vehicles, was the ideal test-bed for PistonHeads.com's new approach.

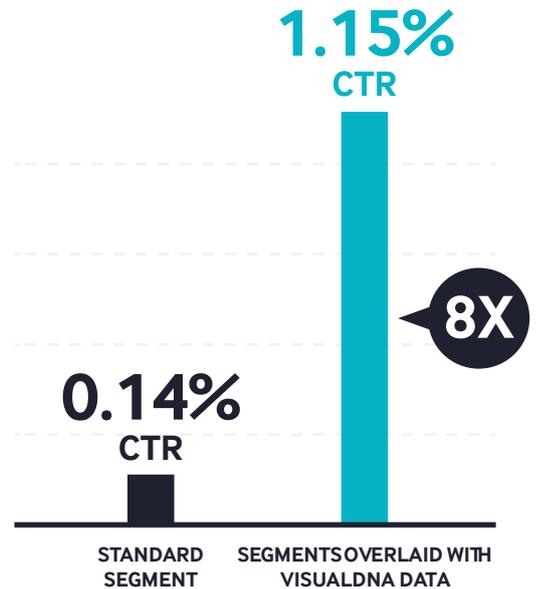
"It was quickly clear that VisualDNA wasn't just guesstimating like everyone else," recalls Lee Williams. "The segmentation was backed by impressively rigorous methodologies, and we could really see our existing segments come to life in the data. Our editors, community manager and sales team all saw a close fit between the segments and the people that we know qualitatively on our site."

PistonHeads.com split the first month of its Magnitude Finance campaign into two streams: the first using standard vertical targeting, and the second overlaying VisualDNA's segments. The results were startling: while the average CTR for the standard segments was 0.14 per cent, those overlaid with VisualDNA segments hit 1.15 per cent – an 800 percent uplift. The campaign generated hundreds of well-qualified leads for Magnitude Finance, driving high conversion rates.

"We already knew we had the right audience for this advertiser, but the uplift from the VisualDNA segments has taken it to the next level," says Lee Williams. "The stats clearly show how VisualDNA data enhances our vertical targeting, and we're delighted with how it performed. This is all helping our drive towards personalisation, which means happy members and happy advertisers."



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## New segments

With a unique approach based on psychographic surveys of web users and long-standing relationships with the UK's largest web publishers, VisualDNA is able to provide PistonHeads.com with detailed and accurate segments to overlay on its existing audience. For the Magnitude Finance campaign, the VisualDNA segments used were: High Performance Car Fan, Very High Income, Executive Employment, Loan Considerer, and Luxury Car.



*Big data and audience understanding can intersect to connect people to the services they need, delivering value to both consumers and advertisers.*



“The VisualDNA data has given us segments that we simply couldn’t address before,” comments Lee Williams. “This kind of insight helps us to understand our audience better and to demonstrate ROI to automotive manufacturers and other brands.”

He adds, “We have this phenomenally engaged audience and an index of almost everything about them. VisualDNA helps us scale out to new audiences outside of our core market. For example, with VisualDNA segments we can understand how to cross-sell luxury holidays to drivers of luxury cars.”

## Intelligent, dynamic targeting

By combining richer data and programmatic approaches, PistonHeads.com is now able to build new partnerships to push relevant and timely offers to its audience. For example: offering money-off deals when a motorist is due for an oil change, new tyres, or a new finance package.

“Big data and audience understanding can intersect to connect people to the services they need, delivering value to both consumers and advertisers,” says Lee Williams. “As an example, we see a person who backs out of buying a car at the last minute. When a similar car comes up for sale, we can get together with a finance partner, and flag it up to that person with a built-in finance offer, ready to go.”



## About VisualDNA

VisualDNA brings together psychology and big data to deliver new levels of customer understanding.

Our vision is to transform the way people are understood online by providing a new layer of data to the digital ecosystem. Our large team of data scientists works with our psychologists to harness the largest psychographic database in the world, plus 30 years of academic research into human understanding and online behaviour. We provide rapid and in-depth understanding of who an organisation’s online customers are and how best to communicate with them.

VisualDNA technology is integrated with all major communication platforms from Display, Email, CRM and Search to onsite personalisation, which means online merchants can create optimised campaigns and customer journeys with minimal implementation effort. Our global network reaches more than 340 million consumers, capturing insightful data on their online behaviour. Using powerful modelling techniques, our data scientists have transformed this data into more than 100 million deep UK profiles that combine demographic information with interests, purchasing intent and other psychographic information drawn from responses to visual quizzes. In the UK, we make our profiles available through 15 major advertising technology platforms, helping businesses access the actionable insights needed to achieve optimal marketing results.

For more information, please visit [www.visualdna.com/marketing-services](http://www.visualdna.com/marketing-services) or call +44 20 7734 7033

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## Personalisation for better results

As PistonHeads.com builds out its sophisticated big data management platform, VisualDNA is helping them personalise content and advertising – to the benefit of both members and advertisers.

“Publishers need to think ahead and recognise the growing competition from big search and social companies,” says Lee Williams. “The good news is that new technology means you can play them at their own game. Plus, if you can back that with deep knowledge of your own audience, then you can offer much better targeting to advertisers, with demonstrably higher CTRs or conversion goals delivering higher CPM.”

He concludes: “VisualDNA gives us the insight we can’t generate ourselves, helping us offer better value and results than our competitors. It helps us keep advertising highly targeted, relevant and timely – even at massive scale.”