Engaging New Adult Hunters with YouTube Advertising

Executive Summary
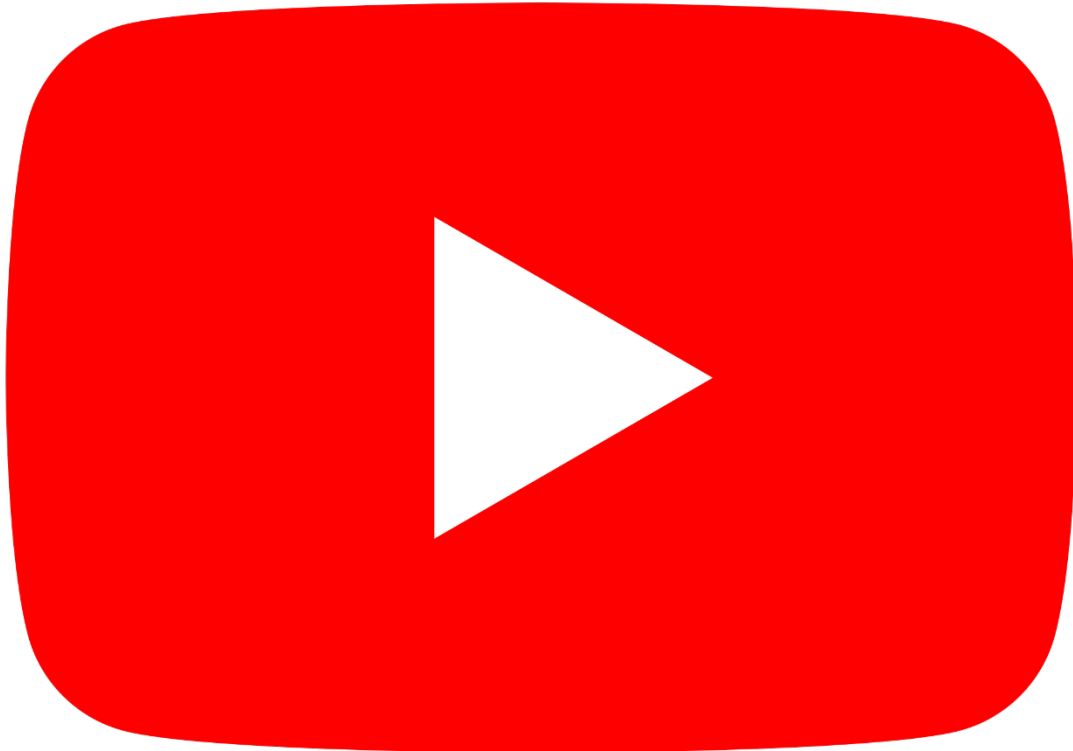
This project was a joint effort of The Association for Conservation Information and DJ Case & Associates. It was funded by Multistate Conservation Grant F23AS00007, a program funded from the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program, and jointly managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

More and more it seems like the answer to the question, "How did you learn to do that?" is YouTube. This is as true with hunting as it is with other topics. This makes YouTube seem like the perfect advertising platform to reach potential new hunters. Our goal was to determine whether or to what degree this is true.

We worked with 4 pilot states (Texas, Tennessee, Maryland, and Iowa). On behalf of each state, we purchased advertising designed to drive viewers to a website where they would learn about hunting. To make the data more comparable from state to state we built a very similar landing page for each state with a similar and easily remembered URL.

The entire campaign generated 7,091,748 impressions and 14,543 visits to one of the 4 landing pages. Of the 14,543 individuals who visited a landing page, 25.35% pushed a button for further information. Below are all the buttons available for additional information, listed from most to least popular:

- Watching a video
- Licensing
- Certification
- Reading an article
- Taking a class
- Take the National Deer Association *Deer Hunting 101* class

In addition to sharing this information with the R3 Community to help them improve their media buying strategies, we are also using the results of this study to refine our media strategy for the second phase of this project funded by a 2024 Multistate Conservation Grant.

Need

State fish and wildlife agencies and the R3 community are working hard to reverse the downward trend in hunting participation, while also becoming more relevant to a younger, more diverse audience. A critical part of this effort is reaching and engaging the so-called "adult-onset hunters"—people who did not grow up in hunting families but who have an interest in the activity. It's easy for states to reach their current and recently lapsed hunters because they have a list of license holders and their contact information. But how can they reach individuals who are considering hunting but are not ready to buy a license? There is an urgent need for systematic testing of new methods to help states find and engage the young adult audience with latent interest in hunting.

Purpose

When you ask nearly anyone these days where they learned how to do almost anything (fix their car, make dinner, fish, build a cabin, or hunt) the answer is almost always YouTube. This suggests that YouTube would be an ideal platform to deliver messages encouraging hunting to potential new hunters. This project was designed to see if that is the case.

Methodology

We worked with four pilot states (one from each AFWA region). The pilot states selected were Texas, Tennessee, Maryland, and Iowa.

On behalf of each of these states, we bought YouTube advertising and used it to drive viewers to a website where they would learn about hunting in their state. To make the data more comparable from state to state we built a very similar landing page for each state with a similar and easily remembered URL.

Texas	HuntTX.org
Tennessee	HuntTN.org
Maryland	HuntMD.org
Iowa	HuntIA.org

The goal was to use similar, memorable URLs so the individuals watching the video advertisements could recall the URL and go back later to see it on their own if they chose to click while they were watching YouTube.

We also wanted to know what sort of content the individuals coming to the URL were seeking. To make the webpages as similar as possible and contents of different types equally attractive across states, we created 4 almost identical one-page landing sites.

Individuals who saw the ads and clicked or typed the URL in a search engine were taken to a one-page website with six easily understood options.
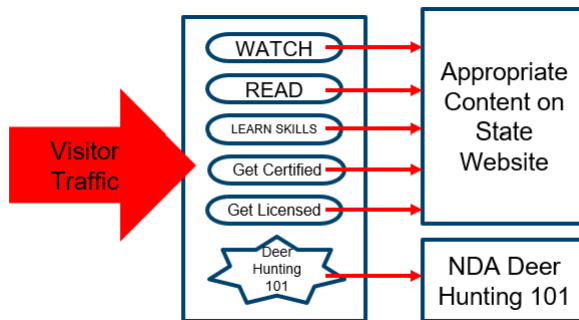
Watch – Videos about XYZ hunting experiences.

Read – Articles, how-tos, and tips on hunting.

Learn Skills – Take a class or go to an event to grow your skills.

Get Certified – Hunter education is mandatory for anyone born after 19XX.

Get Licensed – Purchase your XYZ hunting license and tags.

Deer Hunting 101 – Online course offered by the National Deer Association.

The first four links took the viewer to relevant pages on the official state agency website where they could learn, purchase a license, etc.

Once these landing pages were all set up and linked to the official state agency sites, we began placing ads to drive traffic to the pages.

Online Video

We then worked with each of the states to collect existing commercials that could be modified with the test URLs to be used for online video ads. We placed the video ads on YouTube and TV Everywhere as well in order to have another online video platform to compare to YouTube.

Texas
30 Sec: https://youtu.be/yNsLRyOz-yw
15 Sec: https://youtu.be/mc1DLyGjEC4

Tennessee
6 Sec: https://youtu.be/DHbgxBuiaUA
30 Sec: https://youtu.be/9qmJ_XSRJ3I

Maryland
15 Sec: https://youtu.be/d3N5_-rw7Cs
30 Sec: https://youtu.be/4ukGoo106AU
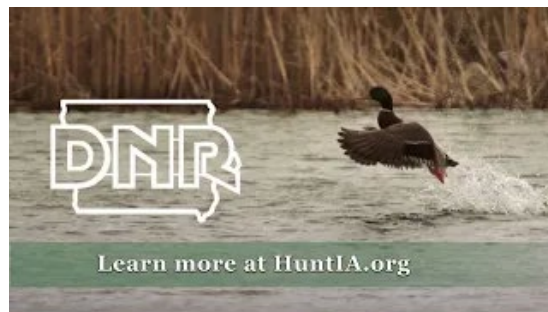
Iowa
15 Sec: https://youtu.be/pSppSfh_GEE
30 Sec: https://youtu.be/Z7SpFwJdC0I

When a YouTube user selects a video to watch, a commercial is inserted before that video. The viewer has 3 options:

1. Watch the entire commercial.
2. Skip the commercial after 6 seconds have played.
3. Click on the commercial and go to the advertiser's website.

TV Everywhere is more like traditional TV. The viewer is watching a video, show, or movie and commercials are periodically embedded in the content. Some commercials run alone. Others run in clusters of two or three. TV Everywhere platforms often do not let the viewer skip any of the commercials. The ads can be clicked if the viewer is watching TV Everywhere from their computer, phone, or tablet. If they're streaming on an actual TV, it's not clickable.

Completion Rates

Online video users are not nearly as likely to click an ad and leave the video platform as those who see a display ad in a motionless environment. For that reason, easily remembered URLs were featured prominently in ads, allowing viewers to remember the URL later and visit the website at a more convenient time.

YouTube video completions varied more from state to state as the states provided different length commercials and shorter videos are more likely to be watched to completion. TV everywhere completions varied less as the platform tends to force viewers to watch the entire spot.

YouTube

	Impressions	Starts	Completes	Completion Rate
YouTube - Maryland	652,199	650,656	184,684	28.32%
YouTube - Tennessee	989,494	981,972	922,778	93.26%
YouTube - Texas	741,897	734,632	190,835	25.72%
YouTube - Iowa	727,498	725,262	223,520	30.72%
Combined	3,111,088	3,092,522	1,521,817	48.92%

TV Everywhere

	Impressions	Completes	Completion Rate
New Hunter Recruitment - Iowa	767,469	632,449	82.41%
New Hunter Recruitment - Maryland	756,892	659,342	87.11%
New Hunter Recruitment - Tennessee	963,731	868,305	90.10%
New Hunter Recruitment - Texas	1,030,938	881,432	85.50%
Combined	3,519,030	3,041,528	86.43%

Online Video Ads – Results

Our ad placements on YouTube generated 3,111,088 impressions and 1,521,817 video completions. TV Everywhere placements generated 3,519,030 impressions and 3,041,528 video completions.

	Landing Page	No Button	Watch	Read	Learn	Certified	License	NDA 101	Total Clicked	Click Rate
Direct*	2337	1842	97	83	76	100	120	19	495	21.18%
YouTube	39	33	2	1	1	0	2	0	6	15.38%
Xandr**	54	52	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	3.70%
Total	2430	1927	100	84	78	100	122	19	503	20.70%
		79.30%	4.12%	3.46%	3.21%	4.12%	5.02%	0.78%	20.70%	

*Typing URL directly into a browser rather than searching. Since our URLs are all brand new and only being promoted via this campaign, we are crediting all direct traffic to video advertising.

** Xandr is a TV Everywhere platform.

YouTube and TV Everywhere generated 6,630,119 impressions to our messages. Of those, only 2,430 visited one of our landing pages.

Of the people that came to our landing pages, only 20.70% chose one of our six calls to action. The most popular were licensing, certification, and watching an educational video.

Paid Search

Because YouTube and TV Everywhere were driving such a low percentage of impressions to the website, we expanded the campaign to include paid search. Paid search places sponsored links above a user's search results when they search for specific terms/keywords. In this case the keywords we selected were hunting related. The lists below show the top search terms in order of popularity for each state. Beside each list of keywords is the paid search ad that appeared when someone searched a hunting-related term in that state.

TEXAS

- Hunting license Texas
- Texas hunting license
- Texas hunting license online
- Public hunting land in Texas
- Hunting leases in Texas

Hunting In Texas | Texas Hunting Resources | Learn Hunting in Texas
www.hunttx.org
Texas offers a variety of hunting from big game to small game and everything in...

TENNESSEE

- Tennessee hunting license
- Tennessee wildlife resources agency
- Public hunting land in Tennessee
- Hunting license Tennessee
- Tennessee public hunting land

Hunting In Tennessee | Tennessee Hunting Resources | Learn Hunting in Tennessee
www.hunttn.org
Tennessee offers a variety of hunting from big game to small game & everything in between....

MARYLAND

- Maryland hunting license
- Hunting license Maryland
- Hunter safety course Maryland
- Hunting season Maryland
- Public hunting land Maryland

Hunting In Maryland | Maryland Hunting Resources | Learn Hunting in Maryland
www.huntmd.org
Maryland offers a variety of hunting from big game to small game and everything in...

IOWA

- Iowa hunting license
- Iowa public hunting land
- Iowa hunting seasons
- Hunter safety course Iowa
- Hunting license Iowa

Hunting In Iowa | Iowa Hunting Resources | Learn Hunting in Iowa
www.huntia.org
Iowa offers a variety of hunting from big game to small game and everything in between. Ta...

Paid Search - Results

	Impressions	Clicks	Click-Thru-Rate	**Cost/Click**
Iowa Hunting Resources	16,301	2,033	12.47%	$2.98
Maryland Hunting Resources	15,966	2,231	13.97%	$2.82
Tennessee Hunting Resources	24,265	2,786	11.48%	$2.24
Texas Hunting Resources	19,144	2,027	10.59%	$1.70
Total	**75,676**	**9,077**	**11.99%**	**$2.42**

	Landing Page	No Button	Watch	Read	Learn	Certified	License	NDA 101	Total Clicked	Click Rate
Google	9321	6853	266	245	214	637	1050	56	2468	26.48%
		73.52%	2.85%	2.63%	2.30%	6.83%	11.26%	0.60%		

Paid search generated 75,676 impressions and 9,077 clicks for a click thru rate of 11.99% and a cost per click of $2.42. Of the 9,321 people who landed on one of the landing pages, 26.48% chose to learn more by clicking on a button. Licensing was the most popular choice followed by certification.

Facebook (Texas Only)

The comparative success of paid search over online video advertising encouraged us to consider other avenues. Our first choice was Facebook. Texas was the only state that granted us advertising permission to their Facebook account, so we were only able to test Facebook in Texas.

The ads shown here ran on Facebook and Instagram (another social media platform owned by Facebook's parent company, Meta).
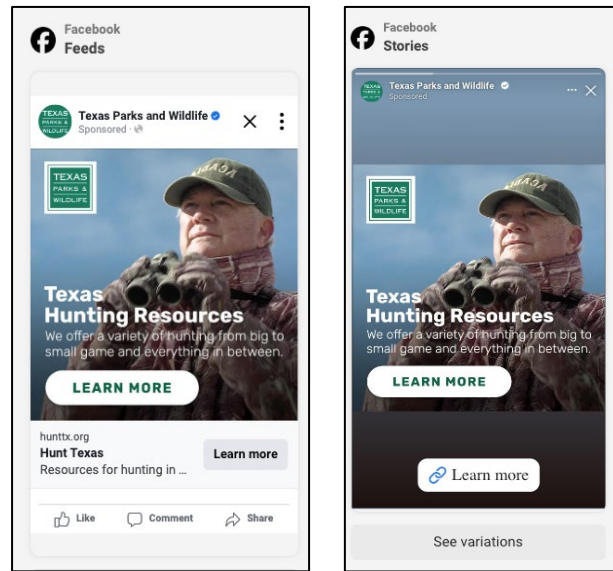
Facebook Advertising Results

IMPRESSIONS	402,878
CLICKS	5313
CLICK-THROUGH-RATE	1.32%
REACH	163,627
FREQUENCY	2.82

Facebook Engagement

PAGE ENGAGEMENT	3,725
POST REACTIONS	650
POST COMMENTS	72
POST SAVES	36
POST SHARES	48
LINK CLICKS	2,919
Cost Per Click	$1.03

	Landing Page	No Button	Watch	Read	Learn	Certified	License	NDA 101	Total Clicked	Click Rate
Facebook	2343	1706	307	105	61	64	71	29	637	27.19%
Instagram	23	16	3	0	3	1	0	0	7	30.43%
Total	2366	1722	310	105	64	65	71	29	644	27.22%
		72.78%	13.10%	4.44%	2.7%	2.75%	3%	1.23%	27.22%	

Facebook advertising in Texas generated 402,878 impressions that resulted in 5,313 clicks or a click-through rate of 1.32% and a cost per click of $1.03. Of the 2,366 people who landed on one of the landing pages, 27.22% chose to learn more by clicking on a button. Watching a video, licensing, and certification were the most popular button options.

Comparing Results (all media)

All States – Entire Campaign

	Landing Page	No Button	Watch	Read	Learn	Certify	License	NDA 101	Total Clicked	Click Rate
Facebook	2410	1771	308	105	61	65	71	29	639	26.51%
Google	9321	6853	266	245	214	637	1050	56	2468	26.48%
Direct	2337	1842	97	83	76	100	120	19	495	21.18%
Unknown	333	287	8	7	7	8	16	0	46	13.81%
YouTube	39	33	2	1	1	0	2	0	6	15.38%
Instagram	23	16	3	0	3	1	0	0	7	30.43%
Xandr	54	52	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	3.70%
Other	26	3	4	7	1	6	4	1	23	88.46%
Total	14543	10857	689	448	364	817	1263	105	3686	25.35%
		74.65%	4.74%	3.08%	2.50%	5.62%	8.68%	0.72%	25.35%	

Texas – After Facebook & National Deer Association (NDA) Banner

	Landing Page	No Button	Watch	Read	Learn	Certified	License	NDA 101	Total Clicked	Click Rate
Facebook	2304	1682	301	102	58	63	69	29	622	27.00%
Google	1366	901	45	45	31	121	201	22	465	34.04%
Direct	387	207	34	29	25	35	42	15	180	46.51%
Unknown	59	56	0	0	0	1	2	0	3	5.08%
YouTube	39	33	2	1	1	0	2	0	6	15.38%
Instagram	23	16	3	0	3	1	0	0	7	30.43%
Other	14	1	2	3	1	3	3	1	13	92.86%
Total	4192	2896	387	180	119	224	319	67	1296	30.92%
		69.08%	9.23%	4.29%	2.84%	5.34%	7.61%	1.60%	30.92%	

The entire campaign generated 7,091,748 impressions and 14,543 visits to one of our four landing pages. In Texas, where all media channels were tested, paid search was slightly more cost effective than Facebook and both were more effective traffic generators than TV Everywhere or YouTube.

Of the 14,543 individuals who visited a landing page, 25.35% pushed a button for further information. Below are the buttons they chose for additional information listed from most to least popular:

1. Watching a video
2. Licensing
3. Certification
4. Reading an article
5. Taking a class
6. Take the NDA Deer Hunting 101 class

In Texas, watching a video was more popular than certification due to the large numbers of Facebook users who chose to watch a video.

All States – Prior to NDA Banner (in order of traffic generated)

	Landing Page	No Button	Watch	Read	Learn	Certify	License	Total Clicked	Click Rate
Google	3855	2824	107	100	93	300	431	1031	26.74%
Direct	1445	1190	53	48	42	51	61	255	17.65%
Facebook	106	89	7	3	3	2	2	17	16.04%
Unknown	97	72	3	5	5	3	9	25	25.77%
Xandr	54	52	1	0	1	0	0	0	0.00%
Other	12	2	2	4	0	3	1	10	83.33%
Total	5569	4246	173	160	144	359	504	1340	23.58%
		75.94%	3.11%	2.87%	2.59%	6.45%	9.05%	24.06%	

All States – After NDA Banner (in order of traffic generated)

	Landing Page	No Button	Watch	Read	Learn	Certified	License	NDA 101	Total Clicked	Click Rate
Facebook	2304	1682	301	102	58	63	69	29	622	27.00%
Google	5466	4029	159	145	121	337	619	56	1437	26.29%
Direct	892	652	44	35	34	49	59	19	240	26.91%
Unknown	236	215	5	2	2	5	7	0	21	8.90%
YouTube	39	33	2	1	1	0	2	0	6	15.38%
Instagram	23	16	3	0	3	1	0	0	7	30.43%
Other	14	1	2	3	1	3	3	1	13	92.86%
Total	8974	6628	516	288	220	458	759	105	2346	26.14%
		73.86%	5.75%	3.21%	2.45%	5.10%	8.46%	1.17%	26.14%	

Audience Analysis

Online advertising attempts to maximize results by assessing individuals who respond to an offer and modifying subsequent ad placements to create impressions with people who are more and more likely to be motivated by the offer. By pulling the data collected about those who responded to the offer, we're able to learn some things about our target audience. The users driven to the landing pages by this campaign spent 3-4 minutes on site on average. This shows that they were interested in the topic and thus good representatives of our target audience. Here's what we learned:

Our original target audience was defined as:
- 25-50 years old
- Did not hunt as children
- Outdoorsy people who might want to learn to hunt

After our campaigns, we analyzed our audience demographic results through indices powered by third party data analyzing companies who work with the media buying firm we used for this project, [1]Magnitude of Change. These indices are powered by [2]Quantcast Measure along with other 3rd party data sources. Quantcast Measure is a network of over 100m+ web and mobile destinations with direct measurement code embedded. One part of indices is browsing interests, which are the content topics that represent the interests of your users based on their online browsing behavior across the entire web. The second part is monitoring 3rd party data points around users' offline behavior through partnerships with [3]Experian, [4]Polk Automotive Data, shopper reward cards, and other partners.

These statistics are then communicated as indices for easier comparison. An index of 100 is the baseline. Above 100 means a group is more likely to have that characteristic than average. An index of below 100 means a group is less likely to have that characteristic than average. We searched for unusually high or low indices that we felt might give us insights into our audience. For example: a person who drives a full-size pickup truck is 193% more likely to be a new hunter than the average person.

[1] Magnitude of Change, 2024, www.magnitudeofchange.com/

[2] "Quantcast Measure: Audience Insights & Measurement Platform." Quantcast, 2024, www.quantcast.com/products/measure-audience-insights/

[3] Experian, www.experian.com/. 2024.

[4] "Sharing Insights Elevates Their Impact." S&P Global, www.spglobal.com/mobility/en/products/polk-automotive-solutions.html. 2024.

Our indices revealed our audience:

- Often shops at Lawn & Garden, Tools/Hardware & Automotive stores.
- Is 182% more likely to belong to the "Road Trip Families" market segment. This market segment is characterized by higher income family units who travel as a family. According to a market segmentation guide from [5]Oracle, their purchasing behavior includes "coolers, camping equipment, GPS systems, and RV accessories."
- Is 44% more likely to belong to the "Patriotic Americans" market segment. According to a market segmentation guide from [6]Oracle, this market segment is characterized by folks purchasing "Independence Day gear, Americana home décor, and gear representing the U.S. Armed Forces."
- Is 46% more likely to belong to the "Technology Novices" market segment. According to an audience guide from [7]Experian, this market segment "considers technology as having a limited impact on their lives and are generally disconnected from emerging technology."

---

[5][6] Oracle Data Cloud, "Activation Playbook." 2020. https://www.oracle.com/a/ocom/docs/cx-activation-vertical-playbook-2020.pdf.

[7] Experian, "Attitudes and Psychographic Data: Get inside the mind of your consumers." 2016. https://www.experian.com/assets/marketing-services/product-sheets/attitudinal-and-psychographic-audiences.pdf

Here is a group of characteristics that are more likely to indicate a potential new hunter:

Vehicles/Pickup Trucks/Full Size Truck **293** INDEX	Maintenance **260** INDEX	Vehicles/Pickup Trucks/Mid Size Truck **243** INDEX	Do It Yourself **166** INDEX	Adventure **198** INDEX
Rugby **251** INDEX	Fishing **243** INDEX	Skiing **223** INDEX	Conservation **191** INDEX	Agriculture **293** INDEX

Here is a group of characteristics that are less likely to indicate a potential new hunter:

Tennis **86** INDEX	Swimming & Diving **80** INDEX	Investing/ETFs **84** INDEX	Computer Software **85** INDEX
Hair Care **93** INDEX	Books & Literature **82** INDEX	College & University **95** INDEX	

While this project was ongoing, we were working with the same media buyer on a different but similar project (attempting to drive traffic to LearnHunting.org). We took advantage of that opportunity by analyzing the audiences from that other project, which uncovered these additional characteristics that are less likely to indicate a potential new hunter:

Board & Card Games **90** INDEX	Online Games **88** INDEX	World Soccer **92** INDEX	Swimming & Diving **71** INDEX
Investing/ETFs **79** INDEX	Computer Software **91** INDEX	Web & Graphic Design **54** INDEX	Mathematics **73** INDEX

Recommendations

This section outlines our recommendations for organizations advertising online to engage with new and potential hunters. This project was a crucial first step in identifying the media channels and content preferences of new and potential hunters as well as formats that these audiences find compelling. This effort will help to determine the best media and message mix that we will test further in the second phase of this project. For the time being, these are our recommendations based on Phase One:

Media Channels

1st Channel - Paid Search

What is it? Paid search displays ads to people who search for specific keywords on search engines like Google, Bing, or Yahoo.

How it works: Paid search locates and drives the users who already have the motivation we are seeking to our landing page. This helps us identify internet users who may not frequent YouTube, Facebook, or other social media sites. We found that paid search was the most reliable method to target new hunters because it is hard to target new hunters as a subset of all hunters. However, by focusing on paid search keywords like "hunting for beginners," "beginner hunting tips," or "how to X," we were able to focus on folks who are actively seeking to learn about hunting.

How and when to use it: Paid search was the most effective marketing tool during this campaign. To use it, focus on keywords that are specific to the types of things your audience would be looking for when using search engines. Consider using keywords that make your ads specific to your state. (e.g., Alabama hunting for beginners, etc.) Accurate keywords help finetune the audience that will see your ads.

Hunting In Texas | Texas Hunting Resources | Learn Hunting in Texas
www.hunttx.org
Texas offers a variety of hunting from big game to small game and everything in…

Hunting In Tennessee | Tennessee Hunting Resources | Learn Hunting in Tennessee
www.hunttn.org
Tennessee offers a variety of hunting from big game to small game & everything in between.…

Hunting In Iowa | Iowa Hunting Resources | Learn Hunting in Iowa
www.huntia.org
Iowa offers a variety of hunting from big game to small game and everything in between. Ta…

Hunting In Maryland | Maryland Hunting Resources | Learn Hunting in Maryland
www.huntmd.org
Maryland offers a variety of hunting from big game to small game and everything in…

2nd Channel - Facebook

What is it? Facebook is a popular social media platform frequently used by hunters to post about hunting.

How it works: This platform's unique targeting options and the increased trust of ads seen on Facebook make this platform highly beneficial to target new hunting audiences. Furthermore, Facebook is capable of accurately targeting potential audiences for hunting media, which helps provide content recognition through repetition and increased relevancy.

How to use it: Although we were only able to test it in Texas, Facebook proved to be the second most effective marketing tool we used in that state. The preliminary results suggest that Facebook marketing is effective as an addition to paid search. Due to the ease of use, Facebook marketing may even be a good first stop for agencies looking to increase their online traffic. Do note that the current algorithm often flags content depicting obvious images of firearms. If your ad includes an image of a firearm, it is possible that Facebook's content moderation algorithm may reduce the number of viewers who see the ad. In general, we recommend using hunting images that do not feature obvious firearms. A barrel poking over a shoulder or an image that shows a small portion of a firearm in a larger photo can sometimes make it through on Facebook.
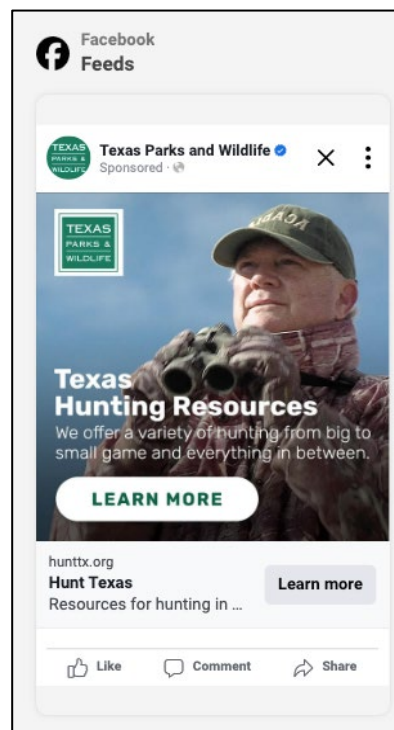
3rd Channel - YouTube & TV Everywhere (to a lesser extent)

What is it? YouTube and TV Everywhere are methods of putting ads in front of people watching videos. On YouTube, the ads run as a commercial at the start of the video. TV Everywhere often puts ads mid-stream and is like traditional TV ads most people are familiar with.

How it works: We found that these methods are good at the top of the marketing and outreach funnel by generating awareness. While viewers can click on an ad (unless they are watching on a TV with no clickability), many viewers tend not to click on a link that will take them away from their video. Some viewers follow up later, as evidenced by the direct traffic to our temporary websites. This doesn't mean that video ads have no value, as they build multiple exposures to your campaign, increasing recognition and follow-through. That's why this is effective at the top of the funnel. YouTube and TV Everywhere are effective at creating initial awareness that increases the likelihood of engagement with follow-up marketing tactics.

How and when to use it: Because you can force viewers to watch at least part of your commercial, YouTube and TV Everywhere offer two advantages early in your campaign. First, it can help you spur the most interested viewers (who will remember your URL or write it down) to action. Second, it can create that first impression making it more likely that viewers will notice other ads later in the campaign.

If you have a limited budget for video content, run it earlier in your campaign. Edit your commercials so that your core message, brand, and call to action are all included in the first 6 seconds. That's the amount of time YouTube forces the viewer to watch your spot before they can skip it. If you are confident in your spot's ability to communicate in those first six seconds, only buy shorter spots to stretch your budget. Make sure your commercials look like the display ads that you will run later. The repeat exposure concept is only effective if all your messages are similar enough to register as repeat exposures.
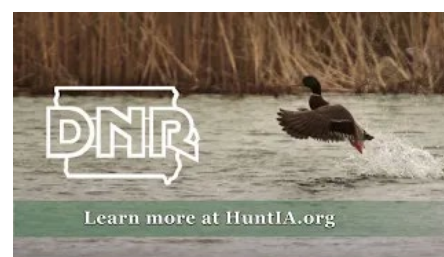
4ᵗʰ Channel - Display Retargeting

What is it? Display ads are still ads that contain images but no sound. They show up as banners, side columns, or pop-ups on websites. Retargeting technology uses a tracking pixel on your landing page to place your ads on web pages visited by individuals who have visited your landing page. This strategy will place your ads in front of individuals who are interested enough in your offer to visit your landing page.

How it works: This technique drives users deeper into the conversion funnel and potentially across the finish line. By showing the most interested individuals—those who visited your landing page—more ads, this not-so-subtle reminder of your campaign is a great way to build recognition and encourage action. In this case, the action was to visit our website and click on a button for more information.

How to use it: YouTube was effective at the top of the funnel but required assistance from other platforms and display retargeting to encourage audiences to visit a landing page or click on a link on a landing page. Display retargeting is essential for a thorough campaign. Be sure to incorporate it with other forms of media messaging that can help build a contact list to retarget with display ads.
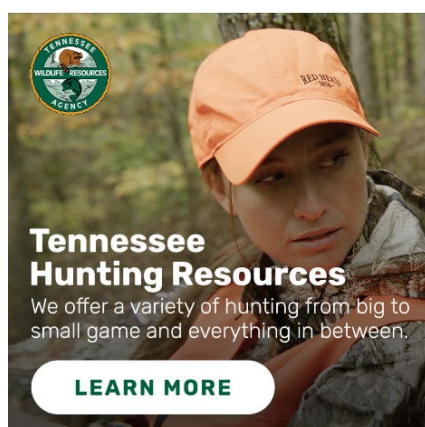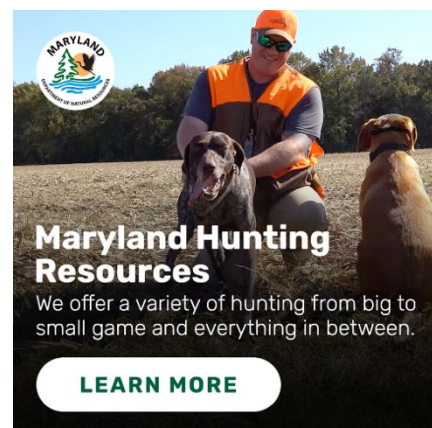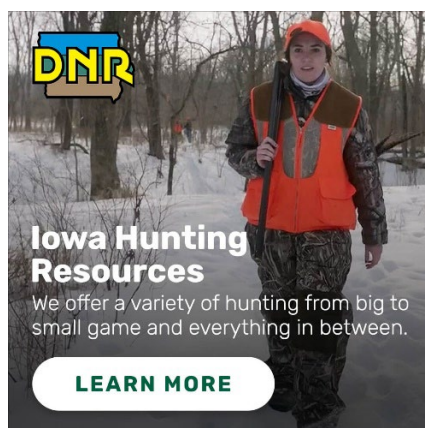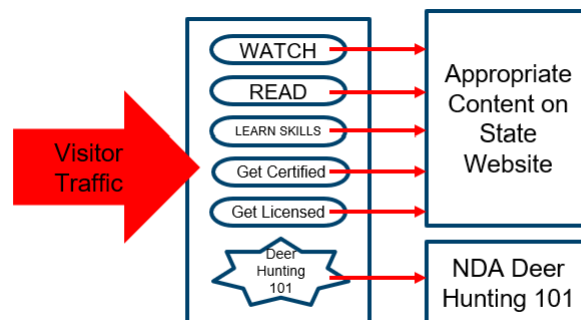
Content Choices

The second issue we explored in this study was the type of content (or action) the visitors to our temporary landing pages selected.

After clicking one of the ads, they were taken to a landing page that equally offered these buttons:

- **Watch** – Videos about XYZ hunting experiences.
- **Read** – Articles, how-to content, and tips on hunting.
- **Learn Skills** – Take a class or go to an event to grow your skills.
- **Get Certified** – Hunter education is mandatory for anyone born after 19XX.
- **Get Licensed** – Purchase your XYZ hunting license and tags.
- **Deer Hunting 101** – Online course offered by the National Deer Association.

Based on the visitors' choices, here are our recommendations for the content/actions you should make available on your new Hunter landing pages.

1st Choice - Watch

What is it? During our project, this button brought folks to a separate landing page for video content on an agency's YouTube channel or website. However, this can mean YouTube links, specific videos, playlists, and more. Any moving visual content, regardless of the length, could be used here.

Why include it? Our results showed us that site visitors are most interested in watching a video. They clicked on the "Watch" button more than the other offerings. Video-based content is a popular content type for a variety of reasons. Recent studies have shown that the modern American attention span is roughly 6 seconds, due in large part to the "endless scroll" familiar to today's social media culture. Moving content is more engaging and offers a mix of visual and auditory components.

Also, new and existing hunters interested in our landing page are going to be more willing to watch a video if they already have their hunter education permit and a license because a video is preferred over reading an article and the commitment of signing up for a program is relatively high. Since video is a simple action and a popular content type, users not interested in the other offerings may default to it.

How to include it: There are multiple ways to include video content on your landing page. While you can send someone to a separate location, you can also embed a video in the landing page that will start playing when you click on the button. This may be effective for situations where you have specific content that you would like to share instead of sending your audience to a collection. Depending on how you set this up, keeping the video on your page may also help encourage someone to stick around and potentially click other buttons.

2ⁿᵈ Choice - Get Licensed

What is it? This button brought site visitors to the state landing page for purchasing a license.

Why include it? New and existing hunters who are planning to hunt during a season must purchase a license. Having a button dedicated to this purpose can serve as a reminder and a simple shortcut. Instead of having to look for the right location, these individuals were brought straight to the place they needed. It is likely that the reason why getting licensed is so high on our list of preferred buttons is because it is a legal requirement. The likely reason why video outperformed this legal requirement is because watching a video is interesting regardless of whether or not you have purchased a tag or license and more enticing than reading or signing up for a class.

How to include it: When developing websites, it is important to reduce the number of clicks required for a person to find what you are offering. If an individual must click more than a couple of times, studies show that this decreases the likelihood that they will make it to the end. In this case, instead of a link to the licensing page on a state website, make sure the link goes straight to the purchasing application whenever possible. If someone has more questions, they will be able to find that on their own. We want to maximize the purchasing behavior of new and existing hunters by offering the opportunity to do so in as few clicks as possible.

3rd Choice - Get Certified

What is it? This button brought site visitors to their state's hunter education landing page.

Why include it? Hunter education, though the details vary by state, is mandatory for hunters who are planning on purchasing a license and going hunting. For new hunters, this button may be one of the most important first steps on their hunting journey. Just like getting a hunting license, the legal requirement of having hunter education certification means that new hunters will seek this opportunity.

How to include it: Including hunter education options on a landing page or in your marketing efforts is just like purchasing a license. We want to make sure to offer the exact page folks will need to sign up at and reduce the number of clicks they need to get there. It is likely that since hunter education may not be a legal requirement depending on your state or a participant's age, and because many hunters already have hunter education, this option was second to purchasing a license.

4ᵗʰ Choice Read

What is it? This button brought site visitors to a page on their state's natural resource agency's website where they could read articles about hunting in their state.

Why include it? Offering a place to read about hunting as a foil to a button offering videos about hunting is a great way to understand hunter preferences. Also, written instructions, guides, or information offer people an opportunity to print resources. In some cases, people may prefer to read articles rather than watch a video. While certainly less clicked on by visitors, offering this option is always going to garner some number of clicks, even if it's not a primary desire. There are copious amounts of free, written information available for new and existing hunters on the internet. However, a large amount of this information is made by members of the public who may be misinformed, unduly opinionated, or utilize poor communication methods that may make hunting seem more complicated for a new hunter. By including your state or agency's informed, state-specific, and non-biased hunting information, you can help direct new and existing hunters to relevant, useful hunting information.

How to include it: Like videos, including written hunting materials can include embedding a specific article in the website or lead an individual to a collection of specific hunting articles. Materials to read can include handouts, articles, books, stories, blogs, or more.

5th Choice - Learn Skills

What is it? This button brought site visitors to a page on their state's natural resource agency's website to sign up for classes or courses that their state offers. Many agencies and organizations develop programs for hunters, regardless of whether they are new or seasoned, to help recruit, retain, and reactivate them.

Why include it? While some people prefer to learn skills on their own through forms of self-study like reading articles, watching videos, and time in the field, others prefer to learn hunting skills from an instructor. This option directs folks to in-person classes that participants can sign up for.

Although we recommend including this option in any marketing efforts, be advised that compared to the other offerings, taking a course is possibly the biggest commitment. This decreases the likelihood that people will pursue this option. Watching videos, buying licenses, reading materials, and getting hunter ed (depending on your state's requirements) are low-impact activities and can be done from home.

How to include it: Depending on your goals, including courses as part of your marketing efforts could involve sign-up forms on your site, ads for a specific program, or a program calendar.

Conclusion

Through this project, we discovered a great deal about how to use online advertising to promote hunting. Following these guidelines, as appropriate, will help R3 practitioners use online ads more effectively as part of their marketing mix. However, this project also highlighted a variety of new approaches that need to be tested to further refine these guidelines. We have been awarded a second MSCG for Phase 2 of this project, which will allow us to fine-tune our marketing efforts and our offerings. Our intent is to modify the media mix and targeting based on what we have learned this year to arrive at the optimum paid media mix to drive the audience to hunting-related content.