Google™

By using Remarketing Lists for Search Ads, Etihad Airways dropped its cost per acquisition by 60%

About Etihad Airways
- Flag carrier airline of the United Arab Emirates
- Founded 2003
- More than 20,000 employees
- Head Office in Abu Dhabi
- www.etihad.com

About DigitasLBi
- Global marketing and technology agency that transforms businesses for the digital age
- www.digitaslbi.com

Goals
- Reach consumers who have left the website's funnel
- Engage returning users, whose potential to convert is higher than new users
- Deliver a better user experience
- Develop a partnership with Google to deploy advanced and innovative marketing strategies
- Improve return on investment

Approach
- Used Remarketing Lists for Search Ads (RLSA)
- Created customised audience segments based on value and recency
- Optimised bidding for returning users on search

Results
- Strong uplifts across the board
- Notable efficiency gains in customer acquisition
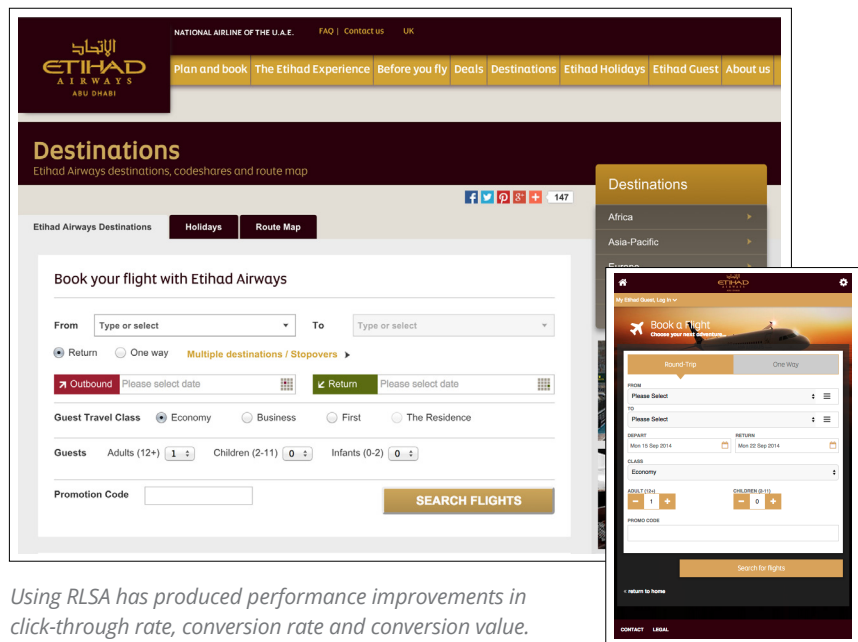- Average cost per acquisition using RLSA 60% lower than regular search

Etihad Airways is the national airline of the United Arab Emirates. Since its 2003 launch, it has become one of the fastest growing airlines in the history of commercial aviation. With the addition of new routes in early 2015, Etihad Airways will grow to 110 passenger and cargo destinations.

Engaging consumers who count

Based on the understanding that a returning user has a much higher tendency to convert than a new user, Etihad Airways wanted to re-engage audience members who had dropped out of its website's sales funnel. Therefore, the company decided to launch Remarketing Lists for Search Ads (RLSA). This feature enables advertisers to customise search campaigns for people who have previously visited their site, and tailor bids and ads to these visitors when they're searching on Google.

"RLSA appealed to us as it gave us the opportunity to engage with our customers in a more unique manner and help us in showcasing our product benefits," explains Ahmed Elmi, PPC manager for Etihad Airways. "Data shows that returning guests have more value and higher uptake in comparison to new users. RLSA allows us to capture them in the most efficient and precise manner."

The Etihad Airways team was also keen to take advantage of the opportunity to use site visitor data in driving efficiency. For example, RLSA helps in pre-qualifying a user and adds a level of audience intelligence to the approach. If a consumer is looking for a business class ticket, the airline can craft a strategy on search around him or her, and then serve specific ads and bid higher on these premium users.

Using RLSA has produced performance improvements in click-through rate, conversion rate and conversion value.

"By using Google's RLSA, we've been able to re-engage users in a smarter way, which allowed us to improve our revenue volumes by improving click-through rates alongside better site conversion."
— Justin Warby, Vice President Direct Sales, Etihad Airways

A positive impact on the bottom line

Etihad Airways describes the implementation of RLSA as both seamless and straightforward. Once the tags were in place, they instantly started creating lists based on what they knew about previous site visitors. This activity produced performance improvements in click-through rate, conversion rate and conversion value. The cost per acquisition with RLSA has on average been 60% lower than regular search.

"We were pleased by the level of reduction of our cost per acquisition and its positive impact on our sales," Ahmed says. "RLSA has allowed us to invest in our pay-per-click advertising in a more efficient manner, giving us the ability to drive more sales from paid search. It has also allowed us to attract a higher number of premium travellers. RLSA is now a core element of our search marketing strategy and is at the heart of any strategic pay-per-click project in the future."