Cracking the code on CPG retail marketing: Inside our experimental Sprint with 4th & Heart

PART 1: A CPG case study on boosting retail visits with geo-targeted ads, retailer-optimized paths to purchase, and performance-driven creative.

HOW IT STARTED

There are great customers - and then there's 4th & Heart.

This all began as a bit of an experiment. We wanted to put Pear's products to the test by using them ourselves, running paid media and building audiences the way we'd advise our brands to. But to do that, we needed one important thing: a brand willing to hand over the keys to their Meta Ads Manager.

Enter Sarah, Marketing Manager at 4th & Heart. Only she would reply to an email titled "Crazy Idea" with "Can't wait!"

Together, we mapped out a two-sprint campaign designed to increase sales velocity across three of their biggest retail partners: Whole Foods, Sprouts, and Sam's Club. The plan was simple (in theory):

- Build customized paths to purchase for each retailer
- Track and fingerprint retail-interested shoppers online
- Retarget those shoppers with hyper-targeted creative and retailer-specific incentives

How would we measure success?

- Performance on Meta (CTR, CPC, link clicks, etc.)
- Verified retailer visits via Pear Vision

Sprint 1 was all about testing. *Which ad format drove the most interest and the highest engagement? Which shoppers were most primed for retargeting?* The answers would set the stage for Sprint 2.

SPRINT 1: TESTING WHAT WORKS

Sprint 1 was all about experimenting – six different campaigns ran for 21 days, each designed to test a specific shopper path or format:

📍	**STORE LOCATORS**	Drive traffic to Sprouts and Whole Foods only
🔗	**PEAR CONNECT**	Use our optimized ad units for Sprouts and Whole Foods
🛒	**DIRECT-TO-CART**	Implement one campaign to Whole Foods, one to Sprouts, one to Sam's Club
▦	**LANDING PAGES**	Utilize Aisle Rebate to test shopper response to a promotional offer

Each campaign had the same goal: drive engaged, ready-to-shop consumers to the best retailer for them. What set this test apart was the targeting power behind the scenes. Most brands or agencies rely on a static 5-10 mile radius around store addresses. Pear does it differently:

- We target by zip code, not loose geography
- We cross-reference real-time inventory – if a store in your zip code is out of stock, you won't see the ad

That means brands don't waste impressions (or budget) showing ads to shoppers who can't actually buy. This smarter approach to geotargeting and inventory syncing made every campaign more efficient – and laid the foundation for Sprint 2's retargeting strategy.

SO WHAT HAPPENED?

Like any good test, Sprint 1 came with both surprises (some good, some bad) and clear winners.

What went well:

- Pear Connect crushed: It delivered the lowest CPC, highest CTR, and strongest retailer engagement by a wide margin. We proved that when shoppers are given a fast, local path to purchase, they take it.

- Sprouts and Whole Foods saw massive retailer visit spikes: These two retailers consistently saw massive retailer visit gains in Pear Vision during the 21 days (compared to the entire month previous)

sam's club
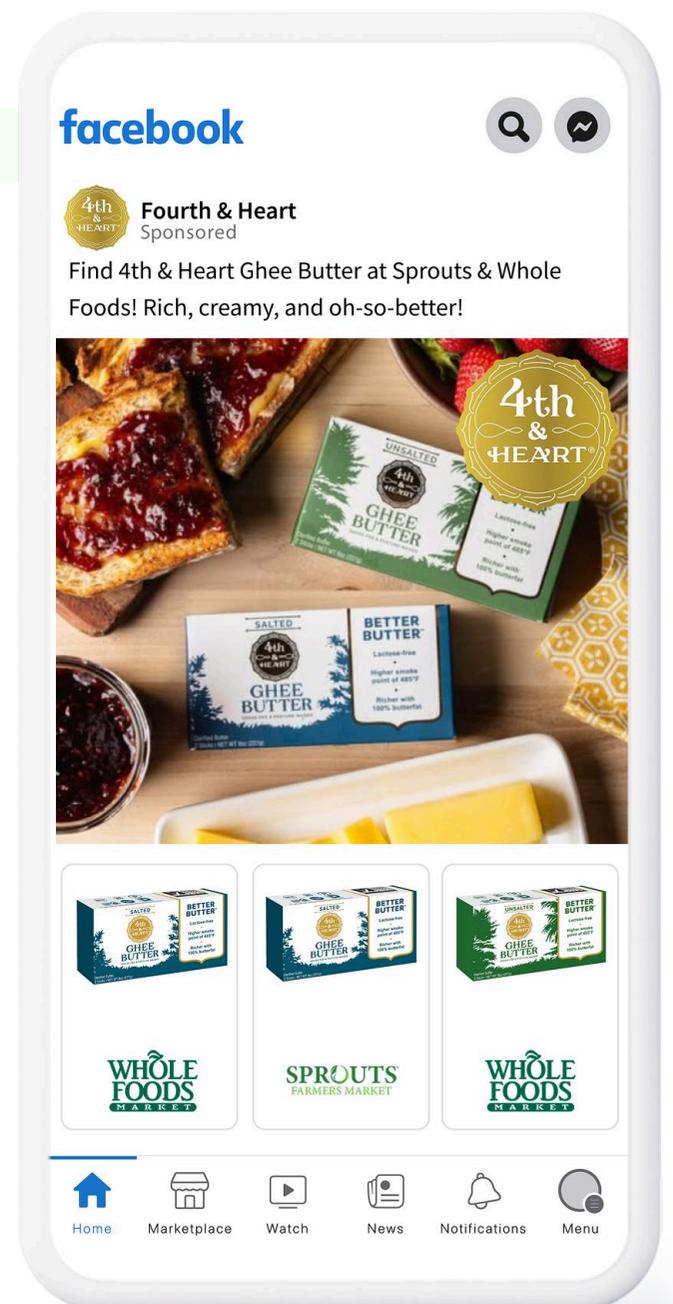
2.05x
drop in retailer visits

SPROUTS FARMERS MARKET

110.4x
increase in retailer visits

WHOLE FOODS MARKET

79.4x
increase in retailer visits

- Geotargeting with inventory data pays off: By only showing ads to people in zip codes with confirmed in-stock inventory, we avoided wasting spend on out-of-stock stores and saw stronger downstream engagement. Campaign 3 to Whole Foods used the same creative and direct-to-cart link 4th & Heart had run the previous month in a brand-led campaign. The only major difference? Pear used a general audience with inventory-based geotargeting, while 4th & Heart targeted a warm audience without it. Despite starting colder, Pear's campaign delivered a $0.09 lower CPC and $1.30 lower CPM – proving that inventory-informed targeting can outperform audience familiarity alone.

What didn't go well:

- Sam's Club underdelivered: Despite having a direct-to-cart link, Sam's Club saw lower engagement across the board. The reasons aren't definitive, but we have a few strong theories:
  - Creative fatigue - this was the only retailer where the same creative had been used in multiple recent campaigns
  - Limited footprint - fewer store locations than Sprouts or Whole Foods
  - Membership barrier - shoppers may have hesitated to engage knowing a membership is required to purchase
- Aisle Landing Page didn't perform: Shoppers didn't meaningfully convert on the rebate page. We learned that for this audience, seamlessness beats incentive. A frictionless path to buy works better than an offer buried behind a form. Another factor? The rebate amount wasn't compelling enough. Since it applied to 4th & Heart's lower-priced SKUs, the dollar value didn't feel significant to shoppers – especially compared to simply buying in-store without extra steps.
- Direct-to-Cart had weaker engagement: Across both Sprouts and Whole Foods, the D2C links saw fewer clicks and lower visit rates than Pear Connect or Store Locator traffic. That told us something important: people aren't always looking to check out online – they're looking to find it nearby.

WHAT THIS SETS UP FOR SPRINT 2

We now know the format that works (Pear Connect), the retailers that respond best (Sprouts and Whole Foods), and the audience segments that clicked (and visited retailers). We'll rerun all five campaigns, this time targeting lookalike audiences from Sprint 1. With more qualified shoppers in the mix, we expect to see improved performance across all key metrics.

But that's not all! With stronger audiences coming out of Sprint 2, we're teaming up with Sarah to test some theories in a third sprint. It's time to get a little experimental.