

Most Americans dislike behavioral advertising: survey

September 30 2009



A man surfs the web at an internet cafe. Privacy advocates have long criticized behavioral advertising and a new survey suggests that contrary to the claims of marketers, most Americans don't like it either.

Privacy advocates have long criticized behavioral advertising and a new survey suggests that contrary to the claims of marketers, most Americans don't like it either.

The survey of 1,000 adult Americans was organized by professors at the University of California at Berkeley and the University of Pennsylvania who published their findings on Wednesday.

Sixty-six percent of those surveyed said they do not want marketers to

tailor advertisements to their interests.

The disapproval rate is even higher -- between 73 percent and 86 percent -- when Americans are informed of three common ways that marketers track their activities online and offline, the study found.

Behavioral targeting involves tracking a user's activities, generally through the use of files known as cookies, and then tailoring advertisements based on those actions.

Marketers have long argued that it provides users with ads that are more relevant to their interests.

The survey found that younger Americans -- those between ages of 18 to 24 years old -- were less likely to object to tailored advertising than older ones but 55 percent said they do not want tailored advertising.

Eighty-six percent of the young adults said they do not want tailored [advertising](#) if it is the result of following their behavior on websites other than the one they are visiting.

Sixty-eight percent of those surveyed said they "definitely" would not allow themselves to be followed on websites even if it was being done anonymously while 19 percent said they would "probably" not allow it.

Ninety-two percent said there should be a law that requires websites and [advertising](#) companies to delete all stored information about them.

"It is hard to escape the conclusion that our [survey](#) is tapping into a deep concern by Americans that marketers' tailoring of ads for them and various forms of tracking that informs those personalizations are wrong," the authors of the study said.

"Exactly why they reject behavioral targeting is hard to determine," they said. "There may well be several reasons. One may be a general antagonism to being followed without knowing exactly how or with what effects.

"Americans may not want their behavior on one site to somehow affect the interaction with subsequent sites," they said.

"The rejection of even anonymous behavioral targeting by large proportions of Americans may mean that they do not believe that data about them will remain disconnected from their personally identifiable information," they said.

"Whatever the reasons, our findings suggest that if Americans could vote on behavioral targeting today, they would shut it down," they added.

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Citation: Most Americans dislike behavioral advertising: survey (2009, September 30) retrieved 9 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-09-americans-behavioral-advertising-survey.html>

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