

# Facebook offers users control on ads viewed (Update)

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Facebook said Thursday it would begin allowing users more information about the ads delivered to them, and to block marketing messages they don't want to see.

In a blog post, Facebook said its users "tell us they want more control

over the ads they see" and that the huge social network is responding to that.

"That's why we're introducing ad preferences, a new tool accessible from every ad on Facebook that explains why you're seeing a specific ad and lets you add and remove interests that we use to show you ads," the post said.

The option will be available in the United States in the next few weeks, "and we are working hard to expand globally in the coming months," the statement said.

As an example, Facebook said, "if you're not interested in electronics, you can remove electronics from your ad interests."

At the same time, Facebook noted that it would draw from users Web browsing activities—and not just from Facebook—in an effort to target ads for specific users.

"Today, we learn about your interests primarily from the things you do on Facebook, such as pages you like," the blog post said.

"Starting soon in the US, we will also include information from some of the websites and apps you use. This is a type of interest-based advertising, and many companies already do this."

Facebook will also allow users to opt out of this targeted advertising.

"If you don't want us to use the websites and apps you use to show you more relevant ads, we won't," Facebook said.

Jules Polonetsky, executive director at the Future of Privacy Forum in Washington, said Facebook is expanding how it uses targeted ads while

at the same time adding controls.

"It's a big step forward in giving users more control over advertising," Polonetsky told AFP.

"This new ad preference manager definitely goes beyond what is in the market and will likely spur other companies to do the same. It's clearly positive to show people what's going on behind the scenes and the key part is to let people out if they are not interested."

But Bradley Shear, an attorney specializing in social media and privacy, said the Facebook action raised concerns because it effectively shares browsing history with advertisers.

"Facebook uses the data you post and gleaned from your digital activity (posts, messages, and now websites visited, etc...) to make money," Shear said in a blog post.

"I don't advise anyone who values their privacy to post personal information to Facebook because it has an abysmal record when it comes to protecting user privacy."

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