

Facebook addresses privacy fears while ramping ad targeting

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Facebook on Thursday made it easier for people to understand and control how their information is used at the leading social network while expanding its quest to better target ads.

The simplified data policy came as Facebook announced that work to

improve targeting of [ads](#) in the United States is expanding to other countries.

Several months ago, Facebook began using information such as where people go on the Internet to help target ads.

For example, visits to an array of travel-related websites could prompt vacation ads to pop up for a person at the social network.

Feedback from a website where someone bought a stereo would raise the likelihood of them seeing ads for speakers or other accessories.

New ads come with a built-in option of people seeing why they were shown the marketing messages and allowing them to remove "interests" from advertising profiles at Facebook.

"We also wanted to make sure people could turn that off," Facebook advertising vice president Brian Boland told AFP.

"We are not changing the ways and places people opt-out, but we are going to enhance the way we apply those controls."

If a person opts out on any device, the choice will be applied no matter what smartphone, tablet, or computer they use to access Facebook, according to Boland.

"In order to apply that setting for most publishers, you would have to go into the settings on each device to limit tracking," Boland said.

"What we are doing is if we see that setting once, anywhere, we will apply it across everywhere you use Facebook."

Facebook is expanding the ad targeting update to Britain, Ireland,

France, Germany, Canada, and Australia with more countries to be added in the future, he said.

Privacy basics spotlighted

Steps taken by Facebook on Thursday included launching a "privacy basics" education center that uses animation and video to walk people through tasks such as deleting posts or blocking unwanted viewers.

The effort by the California-based firm is in response to concerns by regulators and social network users regarding how well privacy is safeguarded online, Facebook chief privacy officer Erin Egan told AFP.

"They want information in an easily accessible format," Egan said.

"How it is collected and how it is used, in simple and precise data policies."

The education center is starting with 15 short instructional videos in more than 30 languages, and provides the option of sending links to friends so insights can be shared.

Facebook also rewrote its data policy to make it easier to understand and navigate, and to add a part regarding information collected when people use a "buy" button being tested at the social network in the United States.

Information is collected when people use Facebook services for purchases or financial transactions, like buying something on Facebook, making a purchase in a game or making donations, according to a the policy.

"We are just being more clear," Egan said about Facebook's re-written

data policy.

The advertising profile feature in new Facebook ads will reveal what, if any, targeting information came from purchases or other financial transactions, according to Egan.

Nothing was changed regarding data policies at Facebook-owned applications such as WhatsApp, the privacy officer said.

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