

Most consumers are creeped out by ads that follow them across devices

Article

Consumers are wary of how companies collect and use their personal information for digital advertising, having witnessed companies fail to protect and properly handle user data. Not

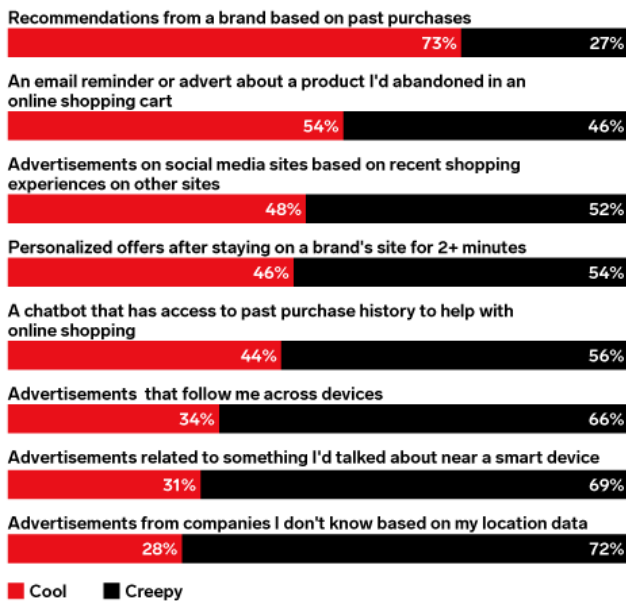
many know how it works, but they're aware of its outcomes when they perceive ads as invasive.

Despite transparency initiatives aimed at educating users, how advertisers use consumer data can be problematic for the consumer. Some advertising practices that presently use third-party cookies can produce experiences consumers are more likely to feel are "creepy."

In the December 2020 Cheetah Digital and Econsultancy survey of consumers in the US, UK, Australia, Spain, France, and Japan, respondents evaluated brand interactions on whether they perceived them as "cool" or "creepy." About two-thirds felt that ads that follow them across devices are creepy. In the US, 54% felt this was creepy.

Internet Users Worldwide Who Feel that It Is Creepy vs. Cool for Brands/Retailers to Interact with Them, by Interaction Type, Dec 2020

% of respondents



Note: ages 18+

Source: Cheetah Digital, "Digital Consumer Trends Index 2021" in partnership with Econsultancy, March 16, 2021

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Even if consumers recognize how they benefit from their data being used for more relevant advertising, advertisers risk consumers perceiving some ad experiences negatively.

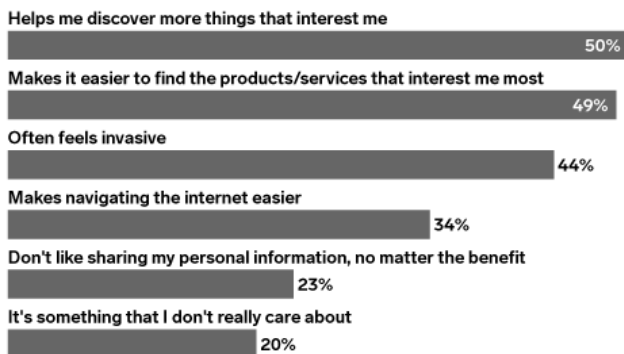
"There's a creepiness-convenience scale with most things in technology," said Kurt Donnell, president and CEO at Freestar, which manages programmatic ad sales for publishers. "When it

feels like things are following you around too much, there's a problem. At the same time, it's better for me to see the shoes I actually want versus a purse for my wife."

According to a March 2021 Merkle survey of US adult internet users, respondents said that, when brands use their data in advertising, it helps them discover (50%) and find (49%) products or services that interest them. But 44% also said it often feels invasive to them.

US Internet Users' Attitudes Toward Brands Using Their Data in Advertising and Marketing, March 2021

% of respondents



Note: ages 18+

Source: Merkle, "Consumer Experience Sentiment Report," April 22, 2021

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One-to-one targeting and retargeting practices will diminish in scale as third-party identifiers are voided from the ecosystem, as marketers instead rely on smaller, more fragmented sets of opted-in first-party data. Likewise, contextual or cohort-based targeting approaches may serve to ease some consumer frustrations in the mid- to long term.

According to a March 2021 LoopMe survey, half of US adults said ads that promote the same products over and over are most off-putting to them. Another 22% most disliked seeing ads for products they don't need, and 19% cited seeing ads for products they've mentioned only in private.

"I think brands are more open to going back to the idea of contextual messaging, even though we spent several years talking about one-to-one messaging," said July Hong, vice president and group director of media technology at Digitas. "I do think there should be a bit of a reset in our world. Publishers have information about what content resonates. We've come to a place where content and context didn't seem as valuable because we had all this cookie data,

and regardless of where you were, we knew who you were. It wouldn't necessarily be a bad thing to kind of go back to the basics to some extent.”

To learn more about how consumers feel about marketers' use of their data, Insider Intelligence subscribers can read our recent report: