


Meta's targeted healthcare advertising changes go into effect

Article



The news: Changes that limit how advertisers can target users with [health-related ads](#) on Meta's social media platforms go into effect this month.

While ads are ubiquitous on Facebook and Instagram, Meta plans to slowly introduce ads on its Threads platform this year.

Here's what the changes entail: Advertisers can no longer use certain health, financial, and political affiliation data collected by Meta for ad targeting purposes.

- Typically, advertisers place Meta's [tracking pixels](#) on their brands' websites to measure how often a Facebook or Instagram user visits their site, the products they view, and whether they make a purchase, per The Information.
- Brands then send the information captured by the pixels back to Meta, which uses the data to refine its algorithm and display the brand's ads to users who are likely to make a purchase.
- Meta is now restricting advertisers' access to much of this information.

What's driving the changes? Regulatory scrutiny over Meta's practice of sharing health information with advertisers to help them target their ads.

- Just last year, the FTC took enforcement action against online alcohol treatment platform **Monument** for allegedly [disclosing users' health data](#) to third-party advertising platforms, including Meta, without consumer consent.
- This included highly sensitive health information about customers receiving help to recover from alcohol addiction.
- Other companies to pass users' health data back to Meta and find themselves in regulators' crosshairs include Teladoc-owned [BetterHelp](#) and [GoodRx](#), which were fined \$7.8 million and \$1.5 million, respectively.

Why it matters: Healthcare advertisers will no longer be able to use certain types of health-related data for targeting purposes, such as whether a user completed an online purchase of a prescription drug or product intended to treat a certain condition, per The Information.

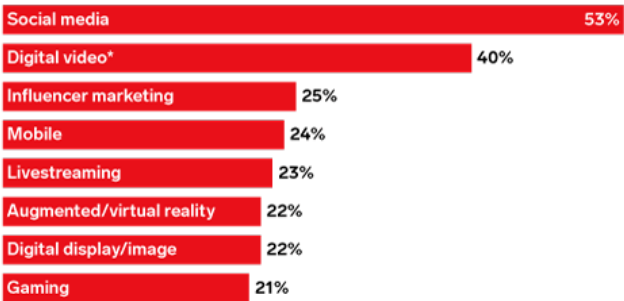
With limited purchase data on hand, ad campaigns running on Meta's platforms will be less targeted, and likely less effective. Advertisers will need to experiment with different approaches. This could include spreading ad budgets across a broader set of platforms or other digital channels to more effectively reach their target audiences.

The bigger picture: Healthcare advertisers will also need to contend with Meta's recent decision to ditch its fact-checking program in favor of a community-based [model for content moderation](#). The change means that advertisers will need to more strongly consider the potential brand safety risk since less restrictive content moderation policies could boost the spread of misinformation on Meta.

All told, the changes mean advertisers will have their work cut out for them to generate ad campaigns that both protect their brands' reputation and help them break through to their intended audience.

Media Types That Will Present the Most Challenges for Brands Safety in the Next 12 Months According to US Marketing Professionals, Sep 2024

% of respondents



Note: top 4 responses; *includes CTV
Source: Integral Ad Science, "The 2025 Industry Pulse Report: U.S. Edition" conducted by YouGov, Nov 18, 2024

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