

Targeted Ads

Facilitation Guide

Provide information to learners about what targeted ads are and how they shape our online experiences.

Overview

This module introduces to learners to target ads, including what they are and how they work, and shares best practices for how to be more aware of and better manage targeted ads.

For more information, be sure to watch the Series 2 videos from NYC Digital Safety.

Outcomes

By the end of this module, participants will be able to:

- Define targeted ads
- Describe how targeted ads work
- Use best practices to manage targeted ads

Format + Time Frame

This module provides an information overview of targeted ads, including what they are and how they work online.

This module will take approximately 50 minutes to complete. You can combine this module with others (notably the module on Ad Settings) for a longer learning experience.

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Materials

- Slide deck
- Facilitation guide

Lesson Plan

Activity	Materials	Time Needed
Introduction and welcome Greet learners and review the plan for this module.	Slides 1 and 2	2 minutes
Defining targeted ads Provide a brief definition of targeted ads and see if anyone has any questions or anything to add.	Slide 3	3 minutes
Discussion: Views on targeted ads Ask your learners to discuss and share their views and perspectives on targeted ads in small groups. Have them share their views to the entire group.	Slide 4	10 minutes
Targeted ads and their implications Explore what targeted ads are and what are some of the issues and implications posed by targeted ads. Pause for questions.	Slides 5 through 8	12 minutes
Benefits and drawbacks of targeted ads	Slides 9 through 12	10 minutes

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Review the pros and cons of targeted ads and see if anyone has anything to add to these lists.		
Activity: Viewing targeted ads on social media Put learners into pairs so they can discuss this activity together. Have them pull up a social media site and examine the targeted ads they are seeing. Have everyone share their impressions.	Slide 13	10 minutes
Wrap up, final tips, and final questions Review the closing thoughts and share the suggested resources. See if anyone has any final questions.	Slides 14 through 17	3 minutes

Considerations

Targeted ads can be a topic that can generate a good deal of debate and discussion. People can have strong feelings about advertising and the often predatory or invasive nature of ads. Consider leaving extra time for discussion and debate here, since your audience might have thoughts and experiences to share regarding ad and advertising more generally.

Options and Variations

This module pairs extremely well with a lesson on Ad Settings and you can easily merge and run those two modules together. The Ad Settings module can provide a more hands-on extension of the concepts unpacked in this lesson.

You can also provide this information and content to patrons via a service point by sharing the guided handout with them.

Assessment

The following are some suggested assessment questions that you can use and adapt for your own purposes. These questions can help you assess various things, including knowledge retention, personal views and preferences, and concept application.

You might consider asking these as a pre or post test, or you can have learners answer these as part of an exit survey or a follow-up survey. Keep reading for suggested questions and an answer key with further details and explanations.

Questions for Participants

What sorts of ads do you tend to see online?

[Free text response]

What are targeted ads?

- A. An ad that is about a very specific product that appeals to a very specific group of people
- B. An ad that airs during primetime on TV
- C. An ad that is aimed at a specific audience, such as specific demographic group
- D. A type of online ad that shows up on websites

Do targeted ads only target certain demographic groups?

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Unsure

Answer Key

What sorts of ads do you tend to see online?

Answer: Free-text option for learners to share their opinions

This free text question is designed to give you insight into your learners and can be used well as a pre-test question to help you better tailor your workshop content for your audience and to kick off discussion.

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What are targeted ads?

Answer: C, An ad that is aimed at a specific audience, such as specific demographic group

Targeted ads are ones that are aimed at, or targeted to, a specific group of people. This could be an age group, a group in a certain location, or other sorts of demographic groups. Targeted ads are increasingly sophisticated and are made possible by the amount of data that advertisers can obtain about people online.

Do targeted ads only target certain demographic groups?

Answer: B, No

Targeted ads can be aimed at anyone and everyone and regardless of demographic group, location, etc. there can be targeted or even individualized ads for that audience. It's an issue that affects all online users!

Connections to Other Modules

This module connects to many other modules. The following suggestions provide opportunities for exploration, connection, and potential programming. However, feel free to explore and make connections between other modules not listed here as well!

1.2 Data Minimization

2.1 Cookies

2.1 Algorithms

2.2 Social Media Settings

2.2 Ad Settings

These and other modules can be found at this project's website, nycdigitalsafety.org.

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About This Project

These materials were released in October 2022 as part of NYC Digital Safety: Privacy & Security. NYC Digital Safety: Privacy & Security is a partnership between New York City's three library systems — Brooklyn Public Library, The New York Public Library, and Queens Library — and METRO Library Council. With support from the New York City Office of Technology and Innovation, this project ensures that NYC residents can rely on public libraries for their questions about internet privacy and security.

Visit nycdigitalsafety.org for more information.