

UNIVERSITY OF TARTU

Faculty of Economics and Business Administration

Ketly Juursalu

**ONLINE MARKETING AND CHANGING PRIVACY POLICIES – HOW IS THE
INDUSTRY CHANGING, AND WILL IT LOSE ITS MAJOR ADVANTAGE?**

Master Thesis

Supervisor: Tanel Mehine

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I have written this Master's Thesis independently. All viewpoints of other authors, literary sources and data from elsewhere used for writing this paper have been referenced.

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Abstract

Ample access to user data allows online marketers to display highly personalised advertisements to their target audience on the internet. Privacy policy regulations threaten unfettered access to data and impose challenges on marketers, reshaping the online marketing industry at its core. This main thesis gathers online marketing practitioners' views on how their industry has been affected by the policy changes, what coping mechanisms are developed, and derives an understanding of how the future of online marketing could look like under tightened privacy policy regulations. The results of expert interviews show that the regulatory impact for practitioners was drastically limiting their access to essential data, but solutions are evolving, and online marketers look predominantly confident in the future, feeling that fast-shifting dynamics were always part of the online marketing industry.

Introduction

In today's digital world, people spend a large portion of their daily life online accessing, processing and transmitting information on every single interaction. As individuals use the Internet for communication, education, decision making, purchasing, entertainment, and so much more - private and public organisations, on the other hand, are the ones making the majority of these interactions happen. All those online interactions generate digital footprints of users' journeys through the Internet, which are essentially accessible information. Tracking this information allows organisations to analyse and predict user behaviour and intent, which helps them to create user-friendly experiences and derive starting points for innovation.

The process of digitization and rapid technological developments have decreased the costs in data handling for the collection, processing, and storage of data and allowed multiple marketing fields to conceive data as an integral part to an unprecedented degree (Bleier et al., 2020; Goldfarb & Tucker, 2019a, 2019). Firms develop their entire business models around gathered user data, and consumer data-based advertising decisions can drive selling activities to target the right customers (Bleier & Eisenbeiss, 2015; Jia et al., 2018).

The collection of web users' data imposes an opportunity for online marketers to target their campaigns better. Considering the importance of data-driven decisions for marketing, the access to vast web data is ancillary, strengthening the importance of this data source, leading to terms such as marketing intelligence to describe the impact of gathered user data for businesses (Lies, 2019; Saura, 2020; Wedel & Kanan, 2016).

Further, the availability of data allows for innovation with new companies and markets emerging that create solutions based and enabled by user data. Therefore, user data became an important key input for technology-based innovations and online advertising. (Jia et al., 2018)

For many years, social platforms and businesses have turned on a technical level to cookies to track users' activity and gather data (Albrecht, 2003). Cookies can be described as the memory of the internet, keeping a record of occurring transactions and storing this data for later interactions. First-party cookies help marketers learn what the users did on the tracked website and how long they were browsing (Papadogiannakis et al., 2021). Online marketers use these cookies as data sources to improve the customer experience and brand perception by serving personalised messaging at the right time and placement. Studies have shown that most customers leave websites if the user experience is poor (Tieman, 2018). Even though cookies are only basic analytics, an effective marketing strategy and better user experience can be developed by implementing them.

Despite all the benefits user data have for marketers and users themselves, data leaks and scandals have shown that companies can recklessly mistreat user data and use the information for not intended purposes. Discoveries have confirmed that consumers' personal data have been collected without their consent (Martin & Murphy, 2016). Facebook had evidentially granted selected business customers, under a special arrangement, access to user data beyond its own usual privacy rules, violating users' privacy (Dance et al., 2018). The Facebook & Cambridge Analytica scandal about shared privacy data for political advertisement made big news in the broader public and is perceived by some as the awakening moment for a far-reaching privacy movement (Graham-Harrison & Cadwalladr, 2018; Lapowsky, 2019; Wong, 2019). Research has shown early on that individuals get more concerned when not knowing what data about them is stored and how it is being used (Mayer & Mitchell, 2012). Also, the call for governments and lawmakers to regulate the online privacy environment emerged already in the early stages of the internet (Milberg et al., 2000).

Regulators addressed privacy policy concerns with different regulatory attempts over time, limiting the free access to user data for commercial purposes continuously and step by step. The implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in the European Union in May 2018 meant a landslide change for marketers, affecting their access to data and daily routine tremendously. Users had now, for the first time ever, to opt-in for tracking instead of tracking by default, and therefore consent for collecting user data was needed (Wolford, 2018). Consecutively, big tech companies such as Google, Apple, and Microsoft started introducing stricter privacy and tracking policies to address changing regulations and account for a changing privacy perception on the web (Google, 2021; Apple, 2021a). While GDPR influences mainly website tracking, Apple went one step further with the iOS 14 update launched in early 2021. Apple now enables users to opt out of any data sharing with downloaded apps. (Apple, 2021b)

While these implemented changes seem favourable from a user perspective, they inherent a fundamental threat for online advertisers, supposedly attacking the core advantage of their business model. With these changes, marketers have less access to data and must change and adapt their strategies. Privacy policy changes have been addressed by research mainly from a user angle or advertising performance level. The view from and implications for online marketers and online marketing as an industry has not received the necessary attentiveness yet. Given that online marketers are responsible for getting the right content in front of the correct audience, their function is partially responsible for making the internet and web work as efficiently as possible. Understanding their role better and finding out how they

have been affected by changing regulations can help strengthen the overall understanding of the effects of privacy policies and the internet as a whole.

This main thesis investigates how recently changing digital privacy policies are reshaping the existing online marketing industry and how the changing regulations are influencing practitioners in the industry. In order to achieve the aim of the work, the following research tasks have been set:

1. To understand the relationship between online marketing and data transparency and its importance.
2. Investigate how online advertisers have coped with current privacy policy changes and how their work has been affected.
3. Derive and conceive a future outlook for the online marketing industry and understand how changing digital privacy might reshape the existing web marketing.

This paper starts with a brief overview of the relationship between online marketing and online data privacy. Further on, it looks into which changes are already in effect and what changes are to come. Based on the experience and market knowledge of digital marketing experts and practitioners, this study derives an understanding of how recent developments in data privacy policies have affected campaigns and what measures have been implemented to cope with the changes. Finally, online advertisers provide a perspective on what the future outlook of online marketing could look like and whether digital marketing can coexist with data privacy.

This thesis is written in Article format and follows guidelines from the International Journal of Research in Marketing and the University of Tartu guidelines.

Keywords: Online Privacy Policy, Data-based marketing, Online marketing, Digital marketing

CERCS: S191 Market study, S265 Press and communication sciences

1. Literature review

1.1 Starting point – Online marketing and data

This section is meant to describe the general relationship between online marketing and data and exemplify show how data are used for advertising purposes on the web.

The Internet and the world wide web are built on data, and data collection is ubiquitous and a premise for a functioning web. The heavy data reliance on traditional marketing is further reinforced by online marketing (Lies, 2019; Saura, 2020; Wedel & Kanan, 2016). Every move online is being tracked, and data about users are collected and analysed (Evans, 2009). Researches on the early days of the Internet claimed that data were mainly valuable for IT experts to report back the website usage - by counting log files, they could report back the number of people on the page and, therefore, the profitability of being online (Kiang et al., 2000).

Further studies on data mining in 2001 supported the belief that data is a necessary part of marketing decision making (Shaw et al., 2001). As businesses were turning more towards being customer-centric, the need for data and using it in marketing activities became crucial (Evans, 2009). At the same time, in the early internet development days, companies struggled to use the available data because of its large volume - they did not properly know how to separate information relevant to a particular user (Shaw et al., 2001).

Previous studies conducted were mainly focused on researching the evolution of data usage in marketing (Kumar, 2015). Having a lot of data about the customer used to be a great thing. Marketers figured out ways how to lower advertising spending and gain loyal customers by using data about them - customised emails and offerings were created based on historic page behaviour data, preference and purchase behaviour (Sharma & Sheth, 2004). Companies focused on the importance of winning customers over by offering excellent online experiences - and a need to have more data grew instantly (Evans, 2009).

Even though paid options were available, in 2005, Google changed the entire industry by launching a free web analytics tool called Google Analytics, aiming to provide marketers with more visibility and encourage publishers to deliver a better user experience (Youens, 2020). At first, this simplified significantly conducting learnings of the website visitors and potential customers, and it also offered a lot of opportunities for remarketing.

While Google Analytics increases data visibility, Google is also heavily contributing to the data generation for advertising by allowing tracking on all its popular products and services, such as Google Search, Gmail, Youtube and more (Bleier et al., 2020).

Retargeting customers based on their website activities was another breakthrough event in marketing. Online marketers could create lists of people - for example, users who visited a web page in the past 30 days, or only visited specific pages on the website, or engaged with a specific product and retargeted them with personalised ads. (Lambrecht & Tucker, 2013)

While the initial tracking is based on first-party cookies that only track users on the current site, the third-party cookies can track user behaviour across multiple websites and social media platforms, leading to a detailed user profile. This helps digital marketers find users on different platforms/sites based on their profiles and serve very personalised ads. (Hormozi, 2005) For example, when users search for Nike shoes in Google Search, they might notice on different social media sites that they get served either Nike shoe ads from different retailers or even from Nike competitors. This also happens across the internet, on different websites served as banner ads.

The given examples indicate what opportunities data availability can give digital marketers. Internet users' traits, habits, attributes, online footprints, and website browsing behaviour are all used to identify and target consumers who are more likely to engage with the displayed ad (Goldfarb & Tucker, 2011; Jia et al., 2018). Users are classified according to specific characteristics, and their data are used to identify particular user categories for relevant advertising. These user profiles are used for advertisement targeting through paid media channels such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Google Adwords (Goldfarb & Tucker, 2011). As a result, personalised recommendations, specific (re-)targeting ads, and data-driven products and services are created that are solely based on user data (Jia et al., 2018). This has a fundamental effect on the effectiveness of online advertising campaigns (Goldfarb & Tucker, 2011).

1.2. Current point – Implemented changes on the data privacy policy that affect online marketing

As the focus seemed to be on profitability and making online user journeys as smooth as possible, the users' privacy was not necessarily a concerning topic. Mainly because the internet evolved rapidly, and the regulators had a hard time keeping up with its pace (Martin & Murphy, 2016).

However, public concerns over the use of personal data for commercial interest and a lack of regulatory actions after data breaches and data misuses amplified the feeling of insufficient data privacy protection (Jia et al., 2018). The main concerns around online data policy emerged when social media platforms flourished. Individuals started to think about the data they were unknowingly publishing on the internet for the first time (Mayer & Mitchell, 2012). While data brokers were collecting extensive data about those individual users beforehand, that practice stayed widely unknown (Federal Trade Commission [FTC], 2014). For example, U.S. data brokers act as an intermediate gateway and categorize and combine user data into profiles and store billions of data elements that touch nearly every U.S. citizen. Some databases store information of about 700 million consumers worldwide with up to thousands of data segments per individual. (FTC, 2014)

For the first time, Internet users became aware that they do not only act as consumers of goods and services anymore but also inherit a role as public producers of valuable data (Jia et al. 2018). Additionally, only a few users were fully aware that they had been constantly tracked, mainly because online privacy was not a mainstream topic that people or businesses addressed publicly. Companies' lack of transparency on using sensitive user information and consumer data imposed a source of concern for policymakers (FTC, 2014). As online privacy concerns reached the wider public, fragmented laws around online privacy policy emerged with limited scope affecting only users from certain countries or tracking on government pages.

The first more significant regulative attempt was the Data Protection Directive 95/46/EC in several EU countries that concerned the rights of individuals in regards to personal data procession in 2003/2004 (Goldfarb & Tucker, 2011). To further address the consequent development of the internet and to put a tighter grip on the privacy policy management of private organisations, the EU introduced the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in 2016, which entered two years later, in May 2018 into full force. Firms are commissioned to a higher degree of privacy, data management, and control. (Jia et al., 2018) The position of the users' privacy was enhanced by granting users certain rights and introducing new procedures in data processing for businesses, giving more control to the individual user over their own data.

Consequently, users now must opt-in for data collection, which is a fundamental change compared to previous regulations with tracking by default. Users now have the right to access, amend and remove their data. Violations of those rights and data handling or data flow became punishable with fines of up to 4% of the global revenue. (Jia et al., 2018) The implementation of the GDPR in the EU influenced other countries to introduce a stricter stance on privacy

policies and launch their own consumer privacy protection laws, such as California's Consumer Privacy Act also in 2018 (Becerra, 2018).

The changing privacy policy regulations and public attitude towards data collection meant for marketers less access to user data and the necessity to convince users to opt-in and allow the tracking of individual personal data as users are now in control. Having the GDPR in effect, marketers can not collect data without consent anymore (Goldberg et al., 2019). Marketers turn to the ubiquitous cookie banners on websites or tick boxes before sign-ups to ensure compliance and transparency for the entire process (Appendix 1; Appendix 2). Marketers also must explain the usage and purpose of retargeting cookies or promotional sign-ups in the privacy statement. At the same time, that does not mean that marketers have the data to use forever - the opt-out option needs to be as easily accessible for the users as the opt-in option. Surveys show that the level of consent to the usage of cookies in 2021 varies drastically. Exemplary, the acceptance rate in the US of 32% is very low, while people in Poland (64%) are more likely to accept cookies (Statista, 2021).

While gaining the approval to capture user data for marketing purposes seems likely to be harder, research argues that the quality of the data will be better (Bleier et al., 2020). Furthermore, people who consent to tracking for marketing purposes and/or agree to receive newsletters or other promotional offers are likely to have a high intent towards the advertised product or service and are more likely to become a customer or repurchase. These research findings are confirmed by a survey of Acoustic, the largest independent marketing cloud, conducted in 2019. Acoustic found out that the latest GDPR changes had a rather unforeseen positive effect - the engagement for email marketing increased gradually since the GDPR implementation up to 19% (Acoustic, 2019). The smaller audience consisted now of individuals that were more likely to engage with the brand and its advertising.

As the GDPR turned out to not be as harmful as first thought for marketers and their data reliance, the latest update by Apple might have made email marketing and tracking even more difficult. Apple changes add another user data protection layer under the data policy rules. In April 2021, Apple launched the iOS 14.5 operating system, whose key development was to support users' privacy concerns and give the power of data back to the users' own hands. Apple states that it firmly believes that people should have a choice over their own data and how and by whom they are used. (Apple, 2021) Consequently, the Apple App Store required app developers to add additional and more transparent information about how the user's information will be used. Additionally to this, as many users already have downloaded apps and opted in

for tracking without their knowledge, a feature called App Tracking Transparency allows now users to easily opt-out from apps tracking them.

Furthermore, a message banner is letting every user decide whether they want a specific app to track and use their data or not. (Apple, 2021)

For marketers, and especially their used advertising platforms such as Facebook and other channels, this meant huge uncertainty as Apple devices' usage increased to over 1 billion users in 2021 (Dean, 2021). A considerable portion of social media platforms' income relies on selling ads (Evans, 2009). If the platform cannot track the users, it is impossible to track basic performance metrics for campaigns, such as the number of purchases or downloads through specific ads. Therefore, assessing the return on investment for online campaigns in these channels is affected. The information companies get through tracking is essential for personalised advertising too. Without this, companies can not include users in geo-targeting, e.g. local shops advertising upcoming offers for nearby users, nor create personalised campaigns according to users' interests. Among these changes, marketers also lose the real-time data overview and granular performance reporting based on gender, location and age. Also, the existing retargeting lists, such as website visitors lists or page engagers lists, are going to decrease due to the fact that if a person opts out, they are removed from every retargeting list too. (Facebook, 2021)

Facebook stepped out on behalf of advertisers and small businesses by running a full-page advertisement in The Wall Street Journal (Appendix 3). The main message was to bring more awareness to how Apple is affecting the future of the free internet and how the loss in data influences especially small businesses' return on investment and advertisement. Even though the effect of Apples' App Tracking Transparency was not apparent within the first few months, by December 2021, the first reports confirmed the global opt-in rate to be 46% (AppsFlyer, 2021). This means that not even half of the users are comfortable sharing their data with different apps, leaving marketers with fewer data. The people who allow tracking became extremely valuable for marketers.

With Facebook taking the marketers' side publicly in the battle for privacy policies (and essentially advocating their own interest in selling targeted ads), actions followed. Facebook's released Aggregated Event Measurement gives marketers an opportunity to measure web and app events without preaching users' privacy. When prior to this, advertisers could measure, e.g. add to carts, initiated purchases and purchases completed as a row of actions from one user, then now, they would need to prioritise events they wish to track. Bypassing user data by

focusing on events surely helps marketers to at least track the most important events for their campaigns but also raises questions about Facebook's override.

Another big update from Apple followed the same year in September when iOS 15 launched - taking privacy measures even further by implementing changes that directly affected email marketing and general lead generation online. The feature called Mail Privacy Protection allows users to hide their email activity, such as when and if they open the email, what they clicked on within and their location and IP address. (Apple, 2021) The email open rate is a crucial indicator of email engagements for marketers. The higher the open rate, the more successful was the email sent (Georgieva, 2013). Many essential parts of email marketing have become less reliable. Such as subject line testing - without accurate open rates, marketers can not confidently say which messaging approach is working the best with their audience. The same goes for identifying highly engaged users and those who are somewhat inactive. As highly active users are more valuable to marketers, there used to be a reliable opportunity to conduct special offers to these individuals as they are more likely to convert (Sahni et al., 2018). Among these examples, email marketing will be less accurate not only in terms of learning about your audience but in terms of data that makes email marketing effective (Bawm & Nath, 2014). Data on when is the best time to send an email or which time of day the engagement is the highest is not as reliable as it used to be.

Regarding lead generation, iOS15 also launched a feature that allows users to hide their email addresses by creating a masking email address (Appendix 4). However, this feature is not considered as impactful as the Mail Privacy Protection feature as it is only available for Cloud+, paid subscribers of Apple (Apple, 2021). At the same time, marketers should be aware that the increase in fake-looking email addresses might occur through online lead generation forms. For example, especially B2B businesses that use gated industry-relevant whitepapers or ebooks as part of their marketing nurturing funnel might experience a drop in the quality of email addresses left in the forms. Using email masking, they will receive the piece of content from a user perspective, but from a marketer's standpoint, there is no way they could reach out to this person again using the masked email given.

Some businesses have taken drastic turns by leaving Instagram and Facebook's advertising behind (Rock Content, 2021). At the beginning of the year, Meta announced an estimated advertising spend loss of 10 billion (The Journal, 2022). This can only indicate the number of advertisers leaving. As the most prominent advertising platform, Meta is currently struggling to adjust to the new privacy changes; additionally, businesses and marketers are

exploring other advertising platforms such as TikTok, LinkedIn, and Twitter to see better results (Conger & Chen, 2022).

Advertising on multiple platforms became paramount for marketers for tracking reasons as well. If users opt-out of tracking on the Facebook app, they might still allow tracking on another platform such as Twitter. This loophole allows marketers to generate additional user data and learnings on their actual target audience when engaging on different platforms. Therefore, marketers have taken a broader approach by testing out different platforms. Also, nudging users to opt-in to interesting-seeming company updates, lotteries & prizes, or other content is a way for companies to have users accept the consent in tracking.

The observed changes in privacy policies through regulations and laws as well as through tech industry developments and changing awareness of businesses and individuals on privacy issues are tremendous. Compared to the early years of the web, users are now way better protected in their privacy, which also means that online marketers are missing out on a lot of data.

1.3. Future point – Upcoming changes on data privacy policy

As the general tendency on data privacy policy is getting more restrictive, upcoming changes seem to continue to shake up the online marketing industry. Google announced in June 2021 that it would phase out third-party cookies in late 2023, having new tracking technology to replace them. The reasoning behind this is "to create web technologies that both protect people's privacy online and give companies and developers the tools to build thriving digital businesses to keep the web open and accessible to everyone, now, and for the future"(Google, 2021).

Even though the same decision was already made by other internet browsers such as Firefox and Safari in 2019, Google's step out has the highest impact of them all (Mozilla, 2019; Apple, 2019). Not only is Google's Chrome browser the market leader with ~60% market share in Europe (Firefox ~6%, Safari ~20%), but also their widely used Adwords advertising platform and Google Analytics tracking solution will be affected by those changes (Sparkes, 2022; Statista, 2021). Third-party cookies go wider than first-party cookies, tracking users across multiple websites and allowing advertisers to create user profiles based on their overall online behaviour (J. R. Mayer and J. C. Mitchell, 2012). These user profiles are used for advertisement targeting through paid media channels such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Google Adwords. The disabled third-party cookies are already weakening the access to reliable user

data for marketers, leaving marketers to expand their current remarketing campaigns and readjust budgets according to internet browsers to make up for the lost reach (Leon, 2021).

Google is currently working on an alternative option for third-party cookies called Topics. Topics collect data about users based on their browsing history. It categorises different topics the user might be interested in, but only if they browse on topic enabled websites. If the site is not listed, there will be no data recorded. However, the topics will be categorised about each user every week. This gives advertisers a very general aim on whom to advertise by knowing the users' interests but no further individual related data. (Google, 2022)

Google sets the example of how big ad-tech platforms seek solutions for online marketers to maintain the same/similar performance for advertisement campaigns with similar alternatives. As many speculations arise on what is next after cookies, different third-party data alternatives emerge.

One alternative could be contextual marketing with AI support, serving ads based on themes users were interested in and not their historical profile. The future of online marketing could be very much relying on AI to predict user behaviour, and the ads might be targeted and created based on predictions. However, the question arises if this is entirely compliant with privacy matters. (Ma & Sun, 2020)

Another more controversial method is called fingerprinting, where companies can collect data about users' operating systems, computer types or languages and create a wider profile of the user. When this might seem like personal data, it is actually something that is not covered by cookies and users can not really opt-out from. (Nikiforakis et al., 2013) The future will show what solutions and strategies tech companies will use to protect their advertising-based business model.

While the introduced GDPR sets the overall regulative frame for businesses on the Internet on how to treat user privacy, it can be observed that the changed privacy policies also seem to create additional privacy protection layers and a field for competitive advantage or market positioning for businesses towards consumers. As the development of GDPR was directly linked to the rise of social platforms and their misuse of user data, actions taken by big tech companies show different approaches to accounting for the implemented regulations. Apple, for instance, started to position itself as a very data protective entity that values its user's privacy and develops tools that help users guard their data from other parties while browsing the internet. On the other hand, data reliant Facebook took the stance for marketers and tried developing new approaches for behaviour and event tracking, while Google is also officially acting in the best interest of user's data privacy by eliminating third-party cookies but is

working on new solutions to capture the necessary data for advertising in GDPR-compliant ways.

This shows that while GDPR sets the overall rules for big tech companies, different approaches are taken by the enterprises, adding various and different layers of protection to the data protection while simultaneously trying to find solutions for necessary data collection. After all, the regulative frameworks, such as the GDPR, need to evolve and address conducted changes by the tech companies according to the needs and demands of the public at the time.

For now, the economic impact of tightening privacy policy regulations has been the focus of the past and, since the implementation of the GDPR, increasingly also of recent research. Those findings show the tendency for rising costs and barriers for firms on the Internet. While the costs for marketing have been shrinking for many years, and online marketing has become a very cost-efficient way of promoting a business, this has changed recently. Data regulation and compliance can also create barriers to future innovations and hamper market entry for new businesses, harming the overall business development. (Krasteva et al., 2015, Campbell et al., 2015) Compliance and data privacy costs harm small firms increasingly compared to well-established firms. Especially advertising effectiveness has decreased significantly (Goldfarb & Tucker, 2011, 2012). Also, online web traffic and sales are affected, showing dropping page views and conversion rates for EU firms. A changing investment climate raises questions on whether data regulation could create a push to create new forms of innovative enterprises and solutions for online marketers at a later stage that are based on these tightened data regulations or whether regulations are harmful to businesses. (Goldberg et al., 2019)

2. Methods

2.1. Introduction to the empirical methodology and data collection

The literature review has shown what privacy policy changes were introduced and how they have affected the online marketing industry over time on a performance and efficiency level. Also, the attitude of web users on privacy matters has been studied to an extensive degree. Little is still known about how online marketers perceive the implemented changes and how privacy policy changes have affected the industry. After building the theoretical and practical foundation in the literature review, this work examines and analyses how the latest privacy policy changes have affected online marketing advertisers' actual work and performance with

qualitative research. In-depth semi-structured expert interviews were conducted with digital marketing professionals, mainly experienced in PPC (paid-per-click) advertising and/or email marketing. Qualitative tools are particularly suitable for in-depth study, especially in a situation where knowledge of the current and the future situation is sparse. The aim was to gain close personal insights into the perceived current online marketing situation and gather opinions on what online marketing could look like in the future and how professionals assess the impact of privacy policy changes in the longer term.

The semi-structured interview as a data collection method was chosen as it allows to study personal perspectives, which was needed to find out the experts' experiences. Moreover, the reason for the interview being semi-structured was that the author of the thesis is knowledgeable enough about the topic to direct the interview and ask additional questions if needed. Conducting the interview with open-ended questions aimed to allow a chance to ask additional questions if the answer given were not sufficient enough to meet the goal of the thesis, which structured interviews or questionnaires most cases do not allow for.

However, interviews and semi-structured interviews mostly come with sample limitations. It is very time-consuming to interview a larger sample of individuals, analyse and categorise the transcriptions and draw conclusions based on the results. Choosing experts in the field of online marketing with professional experience in privacy policies matters allowed to receive answers from a reduced but very knowledgeable set of experts who understand the implications and seriousness of the topic and can draw conclusions on how everyday work is affected. (Adams, 2015)

Additional research method limitations could be in the reliability of results. Interviews rely on the participant's ability to remember specific situations when asked. Some interviewees might forget specific points when put in the spotlight, and some might have other personal/professional factors in their lives that might affect the answers at this moment. However, this is where semi-structured interviews benefit from their flexibility in asking questions and reverting to the same topic from multiple question-angles. Identifiable patterns in the answers to similar questions allow a better interpretation of results, which can be seen as more reliable.

This paper targeted the advertising professionals in the field, who are specialised in online marketing in their everyday job, not marketing as a whole. The interview covers the interviewee's professional experience on this topic, trying first to find out how vital tracking really is within online marketing and dives into how changes regarding the privacy policy have

affected their work. Additionally, the opinion on the future outlook of online marketing will be shared.

As mentioned above, the expert interviews were semi-structured with open questions; therefore, the questions listed in the interview plan (Appendix 5) were just an indicated plan and direction. The interview questions were conducted with the goal of finding answers to this thesis's main objectives - how changing privacy policies are reshaping the online marketing industry and based on that, to find out how the practitioners have been affected so far. Therefore, the questions were segmented into four themes. The first themes' goal was to give an overview and understand the interviewees' relation to online marketing and the extent of their experience.

The second block of questions focused on determining the advantages of online marketing. This theme aimed to find out if data transparency is the main advantage of online marketing in the practitioners' view. Some indirect questions were asked to support the answer to the direct question. Questions related to which metrics or factors are considered the most important aimed to see whether certain success factors are related to tracking and data transparency and, therefore, would most likely be affected by any privacy policy changes.

The third theme questions aimed to find out practitioners' outlook on changing privacy policies and how it has changed their everyday work as online marketers. Opinions and experiences on the current market situation were crucial to understanding what has been the extent of the change and what measures practitioners have taken to cope with the changes.

The last block of the interview focused on the future outlook of online marketing. As previous research indicated the privacy policy changes being somewhat negative, it was an excellent opportunity to hear from practitioners themselves if they consider it a threat or opportunity to the online marketing industry. Therefore, a significant part of this thesis was to find out the possible future outlook for online marketing, considering what online marketers think the industry will look like in a few years.

The interviewees were aware of the interview topic beforehand to make sure they had gathered their thoughts around the theme. As online marketing consists of many different layers and aspects, it was essential to share the direction of the interview to make sure the interview would be a success and interviewees were primed to think about their current work from a data and privacy policy perspective.

2.2. Sample

The interview was conducted using a non-probability sampling technique such as purposive sampling (Sharma, 2017). This sampling technique helped the author to collect responses from selected experts in the field, which ensured that the answers would be relevant and lead to better insights. All the interviewees selected had a minimum of 3 years of experience in online marketing and are therefore considered highly qualified practitioners in online marketing. The selection was also based on their field of expertise, keeping in mind the aspects of digital marketing that most likely are affected by changing privacy policies. The preferred participants were proficient in paid-per-click advertising and email marketing.

The interview sample consists of 11 online marketing practitioners. Studies suggest that the majority of new data is produced within the first 6-7 interviews. In contrast, some argue that 12 or more interviews start to indicate data saturation, meaning no new data and insights are discovered (Guest et al., 2006, Bunce & Johnson, 2006; Francis et al., 2010).

As most of the participants wished to stay anonymous, there are no specific details listed about the interviewees; however, the interviewees' positions, the field of activities and years of experience can be seen in Appendix 6.

The author of this thesis reached out to experts via LinkedIn, as indicated in Appendix 7. LinkedIn was chosen as a platform as it helped to search and connect with individuals whose current position indicated being an online marketing practitioner. In addition, the author of this thesis reached out to practitioners in English, and since the experts were from different countries all over the world, all the interviews were conducted in English.

The interviews lasted 20-30 minutes and were conducted over online meeting technology through Zoom and were recorded for analysis purposes. Afterwards, the interview was transcribed and analysed. As all the participants will be anonymous, this master thesis does not include original interviews or transcripts.

2.3. Data analysis

The qualitative interview was analysed using data-driven thematic content analysis. Thematic analysis is considered a commonly used analytical way for semi-structured interviews, as people express their opinions, experiences, and knowledge regarding the topic - it helps to find patterns within complex verbal data (Blandford, 2013).

A deductive approach was taken, which involves pre-defined themes based on the findings in the literature review. As the basis of this data analysis, a 6-step guide by Braun and Clarke (2006) was followed.

The first step of the analysis was to transcribe the interview audio in order to conduct further analysis. Once again, the author was familiarised with the transcribed data making sure the data was understood, taking into account the topic of this thesis. As the deductive approach was chosen, the second step, coding, was based on initially identified themes. The audio transcription was coded into relevant labels that described the overall content. Coding helped to sort overall raw data and see the patterns among all the replies. Generally, the same codes were assigned if the opinion or feeling indicated the same thought; however, throughout the analysis, new codes were also generated. In phase 3, the codes were assigned to themes. This allowed recognising if any new theme might have occurred or whether all the pre-identified themes could include all the codes. In this case, all the codes assigned got matched to pre-identified themes.

The fourth step was mainly to re-evaluate whether all the themes were valuable enough standing alone or if there were themes that could be merged. This required evaluating if each theme had enough data to support the analysis within the theme. After the re-evaluation, no changes were made, and the themes were refined as of the fifth step. In total, there were four themes identified:

1. Advantages of online marketing
2. Relationship between privacy policies and online marketing
3. Privacy policies and online marketing in the current situation
4. Online marketing future outlook from privacy policies perspective

The last step was to conclude the findings within the themes and interpret the thematic analysis in the next section of this thesis. The composed thematic coding table can be seen in appendix 8.

3. Results and discussion

The presentation of the results and the critical discussion of the gathered expert interview insights will be structured according to the identified themes.

3.1. Advantages of online marketing

The first two goals of the expert interviews were to gain an understanding of the relationship between online marketing and data transparency and its importance from a practitioner's standpoint. The results confirm that access to data is the basis for decision-making and benchmarking in online marketing, allowing practitioners to make an informed decision and is used in the industry in an inherently ubiquitous way.

Specific user data and tracking related metrics or tools are considered of outstanding importance to online marketers. Interviewees mentioned on-platform metrics such as reach, clicks and engagement.

"I always look first at how the campaigns are doing on the campaign level, meaning how many people we reach and how is the engagement - if the engagement is high, I can be sure that I am reaching the right people." (Interview 2)

This strongly aligns with previous research that indicates being visible and having communities engaging with designed content should be the primary goal of every marketer (Cheong et al., 2010). In addition, the platform-based data helps digital marketers make informed decisions, justify marketing spending, and help to put the focus where the highest return on investment is delivered (Zahay & Griffin, 2010).

In terms of email marketing, unanimously, the open rate was one of the top metrics marketers looked into when measuring a campaign's success. In addition, email marketing is considered one of the lowest cost marketing options with a high return on investments - mainly because of the email lists that contain many valuable prospects who are getting free weekly/monthly updates or special offers (Jenkins, 2008). The open rate often indicates how well the email campaign was perceived and/or if A/B tested, which headline performed the best (Bawm & Nath, 2014).

"Although it depends on the company, often it is also click-through rates. Who, out of your audience, clicks on a link in your email to get to the website to convert - either to get in touch or to make a purchase." (Interview 6)

The click-through rate helps marketers understand if the email's content was engaging (Budac, 2016).

At the same time, for almost all interviewees, the website traffic data and its performance data were considered as a clear advantage for online marketing compared to other traditional advertising forms with less visible success KPIs. Responses mentioned Google Analytics

specifically, as on this platform, analysis of website performance and segmentation of specific users on the page are possible.

"... and I also need to use Google Analytics on a daily basis to review campaign performance. I am able to see which content users engage the most with and from which pages they bounce off. This allows me to make changes in the campaigns." (Interview 5)

"Google Analytics is the most important tool for PPC. It provides all of the data and metrics that we need to determine the performance of a campaign. The top-level metrics would be things like conversion rate and ROAS, return on ad spend." (Interview 11)

This corresponds with previous statements which claimed that Google Analytics revolutionised online marketing by being the first interface that displayed data the easiest to understand for everybody (Youens, 2020). For the ability to track the number of users and users' session duration on-page, but also for lead generation and content downloads count, online marketers see Google Analytics as of paramount importance for KPI reporting. Interviewees 1 and 4 also point out that integrating the Google ads advertising platform with Google Analytics allows audience creation based on Google Analytics data and retargeting users through Google ads.

"... I can run a type of ad that has a special offer for a new customer, but through retargeting also to a user who added items to the cart but did not complete the purchase - I can send them a discount code or other offers to make sure we get the conversion." (Interview 1).

When asked a direct question such as what is the advantage of online marketing? many interviewees were convinced of a broader purpose, such as reaching the entire world and an opportunity to do business globally. Also, compared to traditional marketing, online marketing delivers instant results, and therefore online marketers can react and change campaigns instantly based on real-time performance results (Kiang et al., 2000).

"So many! That you can reach audiences even in areas where you do not have physical offices, you can display and advertise your brand in many different ways and react instantly." (Interview 10).

Online marketers also confirmed directly that precise targeting and tracking are advantages of online marketing. Being able to present ads to users who are in search of a particular service or product or based on the user's previous web activity was mentioned.

The answers show that the perceptibly most important metrics mentioned by online advertisers are directly related to tracking. Clicks and reach form an exception, being considered on-platform data and are not affected by privacy policies. Website traffic, on the other hand, requires user tracking across multiple touchpoints. The heavily mentioned and used

Google Analytics tools are directly linked to tracking and, therefore, one of the most affected tools by privacy policy changes. Since the GDPR introduction, tracking user behaviour became impossible on Google Analytics when people decline cookies. The same goes with iOS14/15; if the user opts out from platform tracking, tracking the conversions or return on the ad spend gets more complex - it is either not available or is estimated based on historical data.

Additionally, the planned changes on Google's third party cookies will dominantly affect the retargeting campaigns mentioned by the interviewees. Already Safari's third-party cookie ban in 2017 led to businesses' struggle to run effective retargeting ads (Marotta et al., 2019). Without third-party tracking, advertisers can not advertise customised offers as the visibility of who is a potential customer and who is an existing one, will not be available.

When it comes to email marketing, the email open rates and click-through rates are directly affected by the iOS15 feature called Mail Privacy Protection. Depending on the ratio of email subscribers having iOS15 devices, advertisers using email marketing will have fewer data to work with and need to change their KPIs accordingly. Analysing the best time to send emails and A/B testing the best headlines according to open rates will have skewed results.

3.2. Relationship between privacy policies and online marketing

Online marketing has become very customer-centric (Sharma and Sheth, 2004). Before deciding what to advertise, how to set up the campaign and which creative to choose - online marketers often first look up their target audiences according to their age, gender, interests and locations. On specific platforms such as LinkedIn, they can choose to target people according to their job title, employee company or skills (LinkedIn, n.d.). Based on this, the ads can be customised - offering users precisely what they are looking for.

All 11 respondents were certain that data and access to user information are essential in their job. It is strongly considered as the essence of online marketing. Six interviewees stated that without tracking, the online advertisement is as good as tv or radio commercials - very generic and expensive.

“Very important. There could be little or no iteration to campaigns and appeals without access to this. It helps us to shape our campaigns. It helps us to target the people we want to target. For example, we can find and target women the age of 35-65 who are interested in Nike shoes - it helps us to personalise our campaigns accordingly. Without this, everything would be determined by guesswork” (Interview 7).

However, it is not all about the new users; the retargeting lists are considered extremely valuable too. Tracking allows online advertisers to re-connect with people who showed interest in their brand. Interviewees find retargeting campaigns sometimes to be the most successful ones - the audience already knows the brand, therefore, the sale/lead capture is easier, but sometimes also cheaper.

“I can build lists of people who visited my website or engaged with the campaign video. I could even have very specific lists like people who only engaged with content A or people who, in eCommerce, added products to the cart but did not complete the purchase. I also use retargeting lists to find new audiences. I use my most valuable list to create a lookalike audience - to find similar people who converted before...” (Interview 3)

This statement is supported by findings that suggest that companies use data to win customers over by offering excellent customer journeys and personalised ads (Martin and Murphy, 2016).

Another tracking benefit mentioned is the data itself. Online marketing practitioners are able to understand the user journeys and whether there is a challenge that might prevent the conversions or overall engagement rate, or there is certain content that is more interesting to users. Having this knowledge, the campaigns can be improved by making changes on the landing pages or improving the overall user journeys.

“... it is not only the on-platform performance if the campaign is not performing, but we also need to look into how long the users stayed on the page and what content they engaged with - to ensure every step for the user is relevant for them.” (Interview 11).

As confirmed above, accurate tracking helps online marketers determine the success of the campaign. It is considered beneficial to see exactly where the advertisement spend went and measure the return on investment as several interviewees mentioned measuring either the number of leads or sales, but also just the engagement.

Tracking users precisely based on their interest or sending them additional offers as they showed interest in a specific brand is what delivers excellent results. Moreover, looking from the user perspective, perfectly adjusted user journeys and offers that match the desired products are a norm now but will soon be challenging. Similar to the findings in the previous research and now supported by the practitioners themselves, data and user information is the number one function in online marketing. However, this also supports the claim that tightening privacy policies could pose a threat to the advertising industry. Previous research and interview above bring multiple examples of how online marketing's main advantage is affected and what consequences it already poses on advertisements and user journeys.

3.3. Privacy policies and online marketing in the current situation

Privacy policies have changed significantly in the past few years, and practitioners have been affected by the change. The interviewees brought out several examples, however, the most commonly mentioned was the impact of the GDPR. Most apparent is that website where users are being sent now need to state clearly on the cookie banner where and how user data is tracked and offer an easy option to decline from tracking. The option of not allowing tracking is something many users are now choosing, which directly affects the campaigns.

“Yes, GDPR and cookie consent have made it difficult to collect as much user data within Google Analytics. For example, say a client of mine received 100 clicks on LinkedIn, on some occasions we would only be able to track data for 50-60 of them depending whether they accepted the cookie or not.” (Interview 5).

The on-platform data reporting is still available, but the ability to track users past the click is up to whether they accept the tracking on the website or not. Although, some mentioned that on-platform tracking got more difficult too. If it was possible to track almost everything with Facebook pixel some years ago, then now many practitioners find themselves with only half the data they are used to.

“Currently, the impact from the rollout of iOS 14.5 is having a big change on the success of the ad campaigns that we can run on Facebook. This has impacted the number of people we can reach and successfully retarget. It has also limited the variety of campaigns we can run.” (Interview 9).

The same goes with email marketing - many interviewees said they need to be cautious about whom they send the emails to and make sure every email includes an unsubscribe button.

Interviewees 5 and 9 also claimed that it was necessary to re-evaluate the subscription lists to make sure all the users on the email list had agreed to be there. However, the whole process is often very time-consuming, and advertisers might find many people in the list whom they would need to delete, diminishing the valuable subscribers' lists.

“...GDPR roll out also impacted our mailing lists, and we saw these significantly decrease in volume.” (Interview 3).

As a new aspect of online advertisers' day-to-day work, close cooperation with legal departments evolved. As wrongful data usage or advertisement can bring along huge fines, the practitioners need to make sure the campaign landing pages are GDPR compliant, and the data collection on platforms or the email marketing campaign is according to the new data policy

laws (Wolford, 2018a). Many interviewees are restrained to strict approval processes before launching anything new.

The iOS14 roll-out gave more control to the users and less to the advertisers. It was mentioned that different advertisement platforms suggest using a broader audience setting, but this leaves practitioners with a dilemma whether to still run personalised ads or more generic ones. Therefore, 3 interviewees also firmly believe that even though people have more control, they should not take the current excellent user experience for granted.

"They (ads) will not be tailored to my interests and will be based on what a typical person for my age/gender would be interested in, which for me makes ads and user platform less attractive." (Interview 4).

However, this does not agree with multiple other researchers that believe personalised ads are the future. The reason could lie in the previous outdated information and predictions as the privacy policy changes are a very recent development. Before that, internet marketing was headed towards personalisation and being as customised as possible, offering the best user experiences (Sharma & Sheth, 2004). However, customisation and precise tracking go hand-in-hand.

As a result of tracking issues, online marketing practitioners have been forced to expand the target audiences to keep up with the previous performance. After iOS14, especially the retargeting audiences got smaller. Interviewee 4 explained that when, before, online advertisers could segment people who engaged with page X and people who engaged with page Y into different lists, then now, as many people have opted out, the individual lists got too small to use in the campaign. Segmented targeting lists are often the basis of personalised ads. These segmented lists were also effectively being used to find new potential clients. According to the most valuable retargeting list, advertising platforms can find similar people based on interests and/or recent activity. However, this has been affected by several privacy policies changes too.

"We also have to now go broader with the lookalike audience in order for Facebook to find similar people, mainly because iOS14." (Interview 5)

The broader the lookalike audience setting, the least similarities the new users have to the users in the current retargeting list. Therefore, this change indicates that online marketing is going more towards generic targeting.

Fortunately for lead generation, some options are not affected by privacy policies. Four interviewees said that instead of collecting users' contact information on the website, they use forms directly on the advertisement platforms. It is more convenient for the users to fill out the

form, which is often automatically filled out based on the user profile, on the platform to download or sign up for something than go on the website, accept the cookies and fill out the form manually.

"It is the easiest way for me to capture leads - people are more willing to leave their details to download something, and at the same time, it is GDPR compliant." (interview 4).

If a user also opts in on their iOS device, the advertisers can use first-party data for retargeting.

Since online advertising is used to give detailed insights about the performance and evidence that the marketing activities are generating revenue, the businesses' expectations are still high. But unfortunately, online marketers are having a hard time educating their clients on how the advertising world has changed and why they can not keep up with the historical performance.

"I was running the same ads for a client for several years. At some point, a lot of my top interest-based targeting was just gone, and obviously, the performance drop was significant." (Interview 5).

The recent developments have left many interviewees guessing what will happen next and what decision they should take. As the changes are already affecting the current campaigns, online advertisers are trying to comply with new laws and adjust the campaigns for better performance as fast and well as possible.

3.4. Online marketing future outlook from a privacy policy perspective

Tightening privacy policies and access to fewer user data - what might look like a fundamental threat for online marketing is surprisingly perceived with a certain degree of serenity by some of the interview participants.

Looking into future implications for online marketing, some practitioners claim vehemently that the stricter rules are a threat, mainly because the current tools available will not be there anymore - especially tracking related ones. Others criticise a very user-focused perspective on privacy policy, leaving online marketers out of the general debate and with less information in general on how to cope with changes. Alternative targeting methods for online marketing are not widely discussed, and the importance of marketing is neglected.

"Personally, I think it is a threat. With no other alternative being discussed or information given on how we should continue and run our campaigns, I fear that things will continue to get worse." (Interview 1).

"Nobody talks about how it affects online marketing or businesses generally. All information is about protecting the users." (Interview 8).

Four interviewees see privacy policy changes as something that is inevitable and feel like going with the flow is the stance to take. Many of the interviewees with more than five years of experience state that their work is entirely different today than it was when they first started. They perceive online marketing as one of few industries that undergoes constant rapid far-reaching transitions. As advertising platforms frequently change, marketers need to regularly adjust to new software updates, new features or changed user behaviour. This primes them to cope with changing privacy regulations that directly affect their work.

"But there are no big worries because advertisement platforms change so much all the time, and we as a marketers always need to adapt. So we never know what is coming, but we are primed to jump in and adopt the changes and try something new that might work." (Interview 5).

As some of the best practices and well-known tools become obsolete, evolving change can also be an opportunity to explore new and better options and break out of past dependencies.

A positive effect of the privacy policy changes is that users who opt-in on tracking are valorized, making them very important for businesses. Interviewees 2 and 5 claim that their email lists are now more valuable as people who are subscribed to a newsletter are very interested in the content, and therefore, the performance of an email marketing campaign has increased.

"It gave more autonomy, more power to the user, and now when people do subscribe, they are telling us that yes they are interested." (Interview 2).

This could consequently lead to businesses further focusing on the quality of content they provide to keep users engaged with the company, which would lead to better offers for the individual user.

Regardless of whether online marketers see the privacy policy changes as a threat or an opportunity, all interviewees agree that the change is occurring and affecting their work, asking for new online marketing methods to be developed and adopted.

With online marketers' world constantly changing, asking for a future outlook can only describe the tendencies and feelings of interview participants. Assumptions on towards what the industry is heading are predicting that online marketing to become even more automated. Without precise tracking and an overview of user behaviour, there are not many optimization options for online advertisers. Some believe it comes down to just overlooking the campaigns and leaving the main work for artificial intelligence prediction. Online advertisers interviewed

also agreed that too detailed targeting is actually not necessary. Most successful campaigns rely on overall user behaviour, not a detailed targeting overview.

"I would love to see the data is collected anonymously. I only need to know how many times a lead was captured, I do not need their personal data. This would be a perfect solution for me in five years and hopefully something we will see. " (Interview 10).

At the same time, many are confident that as greater control has been given to the users, it will be hard to introduce changes that loosen the privacy policies, e.g. have the opportunity to categorise everyone based on their interests again.

Two online advertising practitioners believe that online marketing will be community-based. Businesses might have a very close customer base that is being nurtured through campaigns and special offers. To be part of it, people need to give their consent and sign up. As a result, businesses and advertisers will be more focused on small, specific audiences rather than everyone who is online. This would benefit businesses greatly as they have a rather small amount but very loyal customers. This won't only help them to create better advertisements but also improve the product/service.

"It is going more towards organic/user-generated marketing. The ads will look/feel more natural and not like ads. Very personal and natural content." (Interview 8).

These thoughts indicate that online advertising could become more organic, giving its audience the feeling of rather natural content and looking at engaged users as brand followers ready for engagement instead of targeted advertising customers. This could lead to a longer nurturing and sales cycle requiring a different and more engaging marketing approach than what we can observe at the moment.

Conclusion

Tracking user data on the internet is crucial for online advertisers, and their ability to do so is under attack due to tightening privacy policies restricting access to data. Without user data-based decision-making and targeting, online advertising is threatened to lose its major advantage to more traditional forms of marketing, becoming less transparent and less personalised and diminishing its effectiveness.

Online marketers are addressing the changing regulations with alterations and adaptations to their marketing strategies and setup of advertising campaigns. Different coping mechanisms to bypass or comply with privacy regulations can be seen, but overall, marketers now have to get by with less user data and brace for changes to come in the future.

While the privacy policy changes aim to protect the individual privacy of internet users, the overall debate seems to neglect the importance of the online marketers' role in matching online demand with the fitting supply. Excellent user journeys are entirely built on behavioural user data, and the restricted access to user data is not only changing the online marketing industry but possibly the internet as a whole. By blindfolding marketers, future innovations and progress in user experience can be harmed.

However, the online marketing industry is used to a dynamic, fast-changing environment and is therefore primed to quickly adapt to new regulations. Solutions will likely be developed for marketers that ensure a sufficient enough targeting of audiences that might be interested in advertised products and services.

After all, users have a vested interest in being supplied with what they are searching for. It is likely that the online marketing industry will transition into a state that takes user privacy more seriously than beforehand. At the same time, policymakers and the general public must keep in mind that marketing fulfils an important market function that ultimately leads to increased efficiency.

Finding the right balance between vital and inherent user privacy rights and the ability to fulfil the marketing market function will be a challenge for society. Research can further address this area. After studying the relationship between privacy policies and online marketing from a customer/user perspective, as well as after looking into the advertising performance implications of different regulatory environments, future research should also address how the online marketing industry is affected by its functionality and how finding and maintaining a middle ground between the privacy policy and online marketing can be ensured.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Cookie banner example

This site uses cookies, but not the kind you eat

We use cookies to remember log in details, provide secure log in, improve site functionality, and deliver personalized content. By continuing to browse the site, you accept cookies.

Change cookie settings Agree

Source: Starbucks, 2022

Appendix 2 Cookie banner example

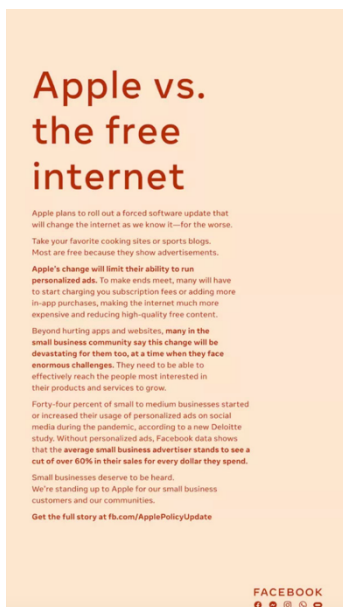
Samsung and Cookies

This site uses cookies to personalise your experience, analyse site traffic and keep track of items stored in your shopping basket. By Clicking ACCEPT or continuing to browse the site you are agreeing to our use of cookies. [See our Privacy Policy here.](#)

Accept ×

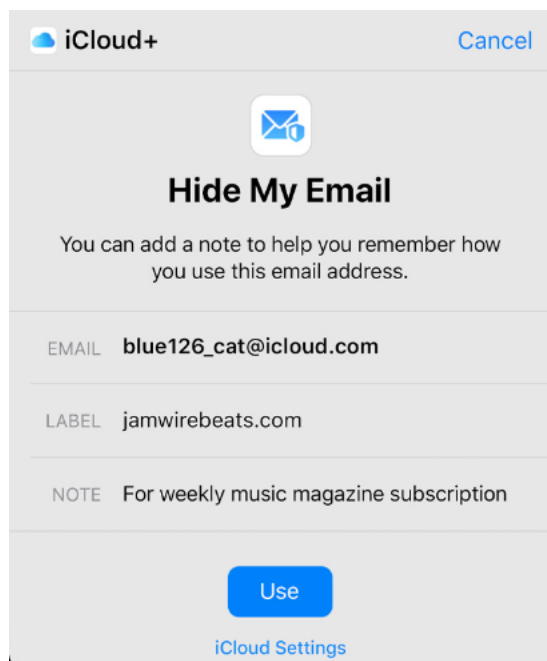
Source: Samsung, 2022

Appendix 3 Facebook’s advertisement on Wall Street Journal



Source: AppsFlyer, 2021

Appendix 4
iOS15 email hiding feature



Source: Apple, 2022

Appendix 5
Interview plan

Theme	Example of Interview Questions	Goal/aim of the question
Understand interviewees' expertise	Could you briefly describe your occupation and your work experience?(e.g. field of activity, years of experience)	The goal of this question is to give an overview who were the experts interviewed
Understand interviewees' expertise	What marketing channels / advertising platforms do you use in your daily routine?	To see patterns if one or other platforms are more affected by privacy changes.
Advantages of online marketing	What are the most important tools / metrics in your job - why?	To see patterns of whether popular tools/metrics are affected by privacy policies or not.
Advantages of online marketing	Based on what factors do you determine the success of a campaign/project?	To see patterns on how many success factors are/will be affected by privacy policies.
Advantages of online marketing	What do you think is the main advantage of online marketing?	To understand the advantages of online marketing and see if the

		importance of tracking/targeting is high or low
Advantages of online marketing	How important are data and access to user (behaviour) information for your job?	To understand specifically the importance of data
Privacy policy & Online marketing - current situation	Has your work been affected by changing privacy policies and if yes, how?	To find out if and how much the marketers have felt the change
Privacy policy & Online marketing - current situation	What new strategies/changes have you adapted to cope with the changing regulative data privacy environment?	To understand if marketers know what next steps should be taken and what would be their recommendations on how to go ahead
Privacy policy & Online marketing - Future outlook	Do you see the changing privacy policies as a threat or an opportunity for marketers?	There has been a lot of negative feedback on privacy policies - how experts themselves see the changes.
Privacy policy & Online marketing - Future outlook	What do you think online marketing will look like in the future (5 years)?	To understand the general future outlook among marketers.

Source: Author, 2022

Appendix 6
List of interviewees

Interviewee	Experiense / current position	Years of experience
1	Digital Marketing Manager	5 years
2	Google Ads consultant	7+ years
3	Self-employed digital comms consultant + email marketing and SEO	4 years
4	B2B Digital Marketing Executive	3 years
5	Digital Marketing consultant	9 years
6	Social media marketing / Paid social advertising	4-5 years
7	Digital Marketing Manager (freelance, agency and in-house)	11 years
8	Freelance PPC Consultant	9 years

9	Freelance Senior Marketer Strategist	9 years
10	Digital marketing	5 years
11	Digital Marketing Manager	6.5 years

Source: Author, 2022

Appendix 7 Email proposal for interviewees

Hi X

I hope you are doing great!

I'm reaching out as I'm currently writing my MBA Master Thesis about Online Marketing and how current/upcoming privacy policy changes affect the industry. I want to ask you if you would have 30 min of your time to answer some of my questions as the expert in field?

I would like to have a one-on-one 30-minute call with you and go through my questions in a short interview. We would cover your professional experience on this topic and have a chat about how online marketing and changes in regards to the privacy policy in general.

All data will be handled strictly confidentially and your name will not be associated with the results of this project or your participation in this interview if wished so.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out and contact me in advance.

Please find a suitable time via calendly link -

<https://calendly.com/ketly-juursalu/30min>

Thank you!

Ketly

Source: Author, 2022

Appendix 8
Thematic coding table

Theme	Codes	Examples
Advantages of online marketing	Tools	<i>“Google Analytics is the most important tool for PPC” ; “Real time performance results”</i>
	Performance metric	<i>“CPA, ROAS, leads, sign ups” ; “qualified/hot leads” “Leads, reach, awareness”</i>
	Tracking	<i>“Web traffic, leads coming through the website, qualified/hot leads” ; “Data”</i>
	Targeting	<i>“Being able to present ads to users who are in search of a particular service or product”</i>
Relationship between privacy policies and online marketing	High importance	<i>“Extremely important.” ; “It's SO important, it helps us to shape our campaigns.”</i>
	Low importance	<i>“I'm trying to move away from relying too much on those sort of metrics.”</i>
	Benefits	<i>“Without access to this there could be little or no iteration to campaigns and appeals.” ; “Retargeting”</i>
Privacy policies and online marketing in the current situation	Affected overall performance	<i>“...the impact from the roll out of ios 14.5 is having a big impact on the success of the ad campaigns”</i>
	Affected targeting	<i>“Definitely has affected. For example a lot of the my top interest based targeting is now gone”</i>
	Not affected	<i>“Not really so far” ; “I focus on on-platform lead generation which is don't need tracking”</i>
	New measures taken	<i>“...make sure everything was GDPR compliance took lots of effort” ; “to switch to automated strategies” ; “go broader with the lookalike audience”</i>
	General	<i>“But even as a consumer, I actually believe it offers a worse experience as advertisers have less access to useful information.”</i>
	Threat	<i>“Definitely a threat. But there's no big worries because advertisement platforms</i>

Online marketing future outlook from privacy policies perspective		<i>change so much all the time” ; “Threat because you lose control over tracking.”</i>
	Opportunity	<i>“..but it's also an opportunity to explore new and better options” ; “now when people do subscribe, they are telling us that yes they are interested.”</i>
	Content	<i>“It going more towrds organic/user generated marketing” ; “natural content”</i>
	Targeting	<i>“Highly automated” ; “more focused on small, specific audiences “</i>
	Tracking	<i>“more barriers from a privacy point of view will be put in place “ ; “less data”</i>

Source: Author, 2022

Summary

INTERNETITURUNDUS JA MUUTUV PRIVAATSUSPOLIITIKA – KAS INTERNETITURUNDUS KAOTAB OMA PEAMISE EELISE?

Ketly Juursalu

Selles magistritöös uuriti muutuvate privaatsuspoliitikate mõju veebireklaamitööstusele. Lõputöö juhatab sisse eesmärkide tutvustus ning sellele järgneb kirjanduse ülevaade, mis esitleb seoseid andmete ja veebiturunduse vahel. Lisaks, tutvustati praeguseid ning ka tulevase privaatsuspoliitika muudatusi ning nende hinnangulist mõju veebiturundusele. Seda toetas autori uurimus praktikute seisukohalt, kuidas on digiturundus kui tööstusharu muutunud privaatsuspoliitika muutumise tõttu ja kuidas see on mõjutanud veebiturundajate igapäevatööd.

Uurimustöö eesmärgi täitmiseks andis käesolev lõputöö esmalt ülevaate, kuidas andmete läbipaistvus on kasulik veebiturundusele. Internet ja andmete jagamine on alati käinud käsikäes. Vajadus rohkemate andmete järgi kasvas, kui internetiturundus keskendus rohkem reklaamide isikupärastamisele. Suurepärase kasutajakogemuse või kohaldatud pakkumiste jaoks oli vaja andmeid, mille järgi sai vastavaid muudatusi teha. Varasemad uuringud keskendusid pigem sellele, kuidas andmeid paremate reklaamide ja lojaalsete klientide leidmiseks ära kasutada. Sama järelduse sai teha ka pärast internetireklaamijatega tehtud intervjuusid – juurdepääs kasutajateabele on nende igapäeva töö üks olulisemaid osi. Intervjuud kinnitasid samuti, et veebiturunduse eeliseks on sihtimine – olla õigel ajal õigete inimeste ees nähtav on iga reklaamija eesmärk. Kuid andmed pole ainult olulised sihtimiseks, vaid andmete alusel saab ka analüüsida reklaami edu.

Kuigi varasemad uuringud näitavad, et kasutajate privaatsus ei olnud ilmtingimata murettekitav teema, paljastab käesolev magistritöö, kuidas hiljutised avalikkuse mured privaatsuse pärast ja seetõttu rakendatud poliitikad on hakanud mõjutama veebiturundust kui tööstust. Lisaks uurib see ka seda, kuidas veebireklaamijad on mõjutatud ja kuidas nad on praeguste muudatustega toime tulnud. Kasutajate peamised murekohad ilmnesisid siis, kui andmete väärkasutuse juhtumid ja teadlikkus võrguandmete kasutamisest levis laiema avalikkuseni. Seetõttu seati avalikkuse survele enamik privaatsusreeglitest paika, et kaitsta kasutajaid, kellel on nüüd õigus oma andmetele juurde pääseda, neid muuta ja eemaldada.

Teisest küljest pidid veebiturundajad võtma trahvide vältimiseks vajalikke meetmeid, et järgida privaatsuspoliitikat. Kuna kasutajatel oli õigus jälgimisest loobuda, oli veebiturundajatel töötamiseks vähem andmeid, mis vähendas oluliselt reklaamide toimivust, aga ka kasutajakogemuse endi tõhusust. Intervjueeritavatel, kes tuginesid suuresti veebisaidi

toimivuse põhjal kampaaniates muudatuste tegemisele, puudus nüüd eelnev nähtavus kasutajate tegevusest. Reklaamispetsialistid kinnitasid, et ka sihtimise mitmekesisus on vähenenud ja seetõttu ei saa reklaame kasutajate huvidele vastavaks kohandada. Kuna muutuvate privaatsus reeglite põhirõhk on kasutajate privaatsusel, on veebireklaamijatel raske arvata, mis järgmiseks tuleb ja milliseid strateegiaid nad peaksid rakendama.

Kuna privaatsuspoliitika muudatused on üsna värske areng, hakkasid paljud suurettevõtted selle liikumisest osa võtma. Seetõttu on tulemas muudatusi, mis on teadaolevalt üsna mõjukad, nagu näiteks Google'i otsus kaotada 2023. aastal kolmandate osapoolte küpsised. Internetiturunduse üldised tulevikuväljavaated on ebakindlad ja on palju spekulatsioone selle kohta, kuidas see tööstust edaspidi mõjutab. Paljud intervjuueeritavad peavad privaatsuspoliitika muutmist suureks ohuks. Kuna aga tööstus on pidevas muutumises, on ka nemad valmis muudatusi vastu võtma ja mõned loodavad, et tekivad uued veebiturunduse viisid.

Veebireklaamijad kinnitasid, et edukaks reklaamimiseks pole täpseid andmeid tegelikult vaja – oluliseks peetakse pigem kasutajate huve ja käitumisandmed. Sellest lähtuvalt võiks veebiturunduses siiski edasi areneda personaliseeritud reklaamide suunas, mis lõpuks ka kasutajakogemust parandab. Seega praegused ja planeeritud kasutajaandmete jagamise piirangud ei ole täielikult vajalikud.

See töö kinnitab, et praegused ja tulevased privaatsuspoliitika muutused mõjutavad veebiturunduse peamist eelist ning seetõttu on praegune veebiturunduse tööstus on pidevas muutumises. Seega on ka tulevikuväljavaade mõnevõrra ebaselge. Samas Internet uueneb pidevalt, ning seega tekib tõenäoliselt uusi ja paremaid viise veebiturunduseks.

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