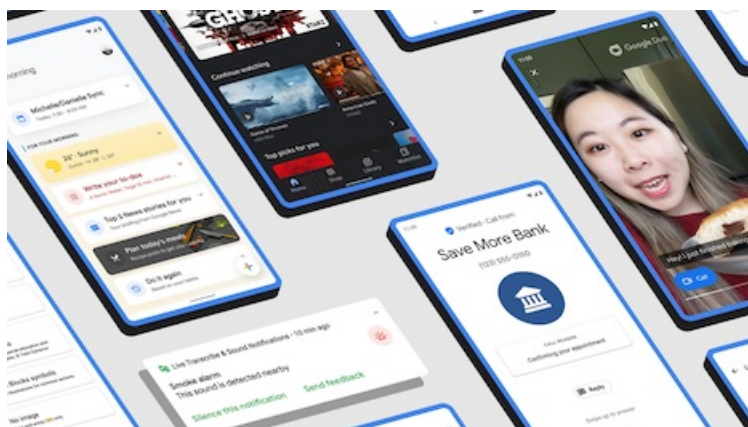


MARKETING

Google bringing more advertiser restrictions to Android

February 18, 2022



Android is the world's most popular smartphone operating system. Image credit: Google

By SARAH RAMIREZ

Technology giant Google is introducing more private advertising solutions to its Android devices, marking another shift in the digital marketing space.

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Google's decision is the latest indication that digital advertising is entering a "privacy enhancing" era that empowers consumers. The company is one of many that has moved away from third-party cookies and identifiers for advertisers (IDFA) in recent years.

"Privacy laws have been a discussion for a very long time, especially in the data driven world we are in," said Sarah DeGeorge, a Philadelphia-based freelance [digital marketing specialist](#).

"With data breaches, sometimes unknown data practices, and other large-scale litigation at the forefront of the online consumer experience, it makes sense that larger companies would begin the process of implementation to make a less-data driven consumer experience."

Privacy pushes

Google announced the decision to restrict advertisers' ability to track Android users in a [blog post](#) on Feb. 16. The change will not go into effect for at least two years, as the company develops and tests alternative advertising solutions.

"Specifically, these solutions will limit sharing of user data with third parties and operate without cross-app identifiers, including advertising ID," wrote Anthony Chavez, vice president of product management for Android security and privacy.



Most global consumers are Android users. Image credit: Burberry

While Google's changes will not be immediate, the impact will be widespread.

According to [StatCounter](#), as of January 2022, Apple's iOS accounts for nearly 60 percent of the mobile operating system market share in the U.S. compared to Android's share of almost 40 percent. However, globally, Android has almost a 70 percent share to iOS's 25 percent share, per [Statista](#).

Of particular relevance to luxury marketers, [Statista also reports](#) that Android has a wide margin over iOS as the lead smartphone operating system in China.

Last year, Apple's iOS 14.5 update gave users the ability to block IDFA and opt-out of targeting or tracking. Previously, users' IDFAs were available by default ([see story](#)).

In its announcement, however, Google criticized this strategy as "ineffective and lead[ing] to worse outcomes for user privacy and developer businesses."

Google argues that its future solutions will improve user privacy without reducing access to free content, such as mobile apps or social media platforms.

"At Snap, we've made privacy a priority and placed it at the center of how we design our products," Snap Inc. said in a statement. "We are excited to collaborate with Google to develop new privacy-preserving standards for Android."

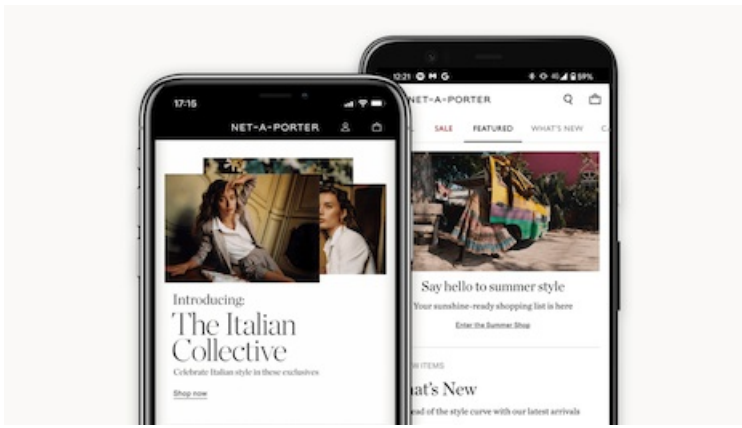
Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok heavily rely on advertising revenue to be able to provide their services to users for free. Advertisers themselves, however, rely on identifying and tracking consumers online.

"A lot of the data that is provided can help understand consumers and their pain-points, interests and more compelling data to take them from being just small pieces of data to almost an actual human," Ms. DeGoerge said.

"Buyer personas and consumer data on how they interact with a website if they tend to put an item in a cart and leave it, and other pieces of helpful information are ways in which brands and advertisers currently optimize their user experiences and target ads, if they have this data knowledge available to them."

This use of consumer data is increasingly becoming difficult for digital marketers, as Google and others make changes in response to consumer and regulatory expectations around user privacy.

In 2021, Google confirmed that it will not introduce alternate identifiers to track users online once it phases out third-party cookies ([see story](#)). The elimination of third-party cookies on the Google Chrome browser improves privacy and security for consumers but hampers the business models and targeting abilities of brands, retailers, marketers, publishers and ad-tech vendors ([see story](#)).



It is increasingly difficult to track online consumers. Image credit: Net-A-Porter

Late last year, Android users also gained the ability to opt out of internet-based advertising or ads personalization, meaning an IDFA would no longer be available. By April 2022, this update will apply to all apps on Android phones, tablets and Android TV devices that support Google Play.

"Without this information, there would be a less clear way to understand the target demographic of a specific brand or company without having all these aspects of their personality, demographics and online experiences in a database," Ms. DeGeorge said.

First-party first

In terms of ad budgets, cost-per-impression has already increased since measurable audiences have essentially diminished as more consumers opt out of tracking ([see story](#)).

In its [full-year 2021 results](#), social media company Meta noted a 24 percent year-over-year increase in the average price per ad. The parent company of Facebook and Instagram also expects to be negatively impacted by Apple's iOS changes.

Additionally, while marketers are diversifying their ad spend and investing in social commerce, brands still need to safeguard and own data about their consumers instead of ceding it to technology companies.

Google will still use first-party data on its own platforms, including YouTube. The company is also encouraging brands to build stronger relationships directly with consumers to improve their own first-party data.

Owning the data is one solution to these privacy-inspired changes, but this may not align with brands and marketers seeking to stay nimble and strategic. First-party data collection carries with it contractual obligations in meeting service level agreements and additional hurdles related to cost and quality ([see story](#)).

"This is a time to get an idea of how your target consumers interact with your company and figure out ways in which you can address your top clients without the bigger data pieces," Ms. DeGeorge said. "Surveys, reviews provided on different reviewing platforms and other given bits of information such as a blog review of your company that do not require data can also be great ways to understand your client as we move into a new age of data.

"Due to the fact that changes are unclear at this time, it is best to make sure to do an overview of what you have available now to best create your buyer personas and stay up to date as changes are implemented on these platforms and beyond."