

Digital Marketing is watching you!

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I've been at a number of London technology events this week, getting a handle on the latest trends related to Big Data, the most exciting of which is Digital Marketing. This scene has exploded over the last 10 years. Nowadays, the marketers are capturing, amongst other things:-

Where you're physically located - anybody with a smartphone can be tracked via triangulation of mobile network masts or wifi routers within cities. Your ip address can be reverse looked up to provide your actual address information.

Which device you're using - tablet, PC, mobile phone etc.

Which language you communicate in

Which items you've liked on facebook

Who your connections are, and what they like.

How long a user has stayed on a particular web page and which part of the web page they spent longest on.

What you've posted on social media like twitter

Which advertisements you clicked on. What style of ads appeal to you. What keywords, what colours, what content.

Where you go for your fitness runs - anybody whose got a fitbit or similar device often broadcasts this information to the world.

What search engine you use.

Where you shop, what you bought and what payment method you use.

These kinds of data are now being accumulated on data management platforms, allowing the marketers to provide fine-grained personalised content to you. This has benefits to the advertisers in that better targeted ads will result in more sales, but also better targeted ads will be less expensive, since keywords which attract a broad audience are priced much higher than those that a few people would respond to. For example, "Hotel London" currently costs £7 per click on Google Adwords.....It's been commented that it would be cheaper to offer to buy somebody a meal at McDonalds than it is to have them click on such an Ad at these kind of rates.

With so much information to hand, it is becoming physically impossible for marketers to actually be able to analyse the data manually within a short enough timescale, so increasingly data scientists are writing algorithms (code to fulfil a particular use case) to crunch the numbers and either recommend or sometimes deliver changes to ad campaigns in order to find the sweet spot that maximises clickthroughs. Data scientists are encouraged to compete with each other to discover insights in to data on sites like kaggle.com

In future even more data will be collected from you. With the Internet of things, information about what you actually ate at home can be collected, for example, as your fridge will know what's been put in and what has been taken out.

In recent years, Digital Marketing has progressed from Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), through Pay Per Click (PPC) to now looking at things such as Social Media Optimisation (SMO) and Conversion Rate Optimisation and will continue to fragment in to specialist areas providing deep insights in to consumer behaviour.

The latest ideas are to avoid going for quick sales but to spend time raising brand awareness by leveraging influencers to promote the brand. Bloggers, Youtube content providers, top tweeters etc. are invited to free events by advertisers in anticipation that a certain percentage of them might promote the brand indirectly.

Although, this may all seem very 'Big brother', there are many positive things from this. Ads which actually provide something that you want will be less annoying. Everybody has the ability to become an influencer in their area of interest, so this should make it easier to earn a living doing something that you actually enjoy. In future, you could be advised that you're running low on certain food supplies

and a re-ordering facility could be set up. Your health could also be monitored, your genomes sequenced and appropriate medicines specific to your unique characteristics produced. These kinds of things will free up your time to do more interesting things, and improve your wellbeing.

Is there much that you can do to stay 'under the radar'? If you wanted to, yes, you could refuse to allow tracking cookies or supply any of your details if they were to be passed on to a 3rd party. You could decide not to use a smartphone. You could not 'like' any product on facebook or communicate on social media. Effectively, you could live as people did quite happily in the 20th century. The problem is that the world in the 21st century will be geared up to you supplying this information. Much as you would find it hard to obtain credit without a credit history, without supplying information, you would be outside all of the networks which could be used to find work, hobbies, events, contacts, friends, health services etc. For all the negatives that a lack of privacy entails, there will be many more positives which should make your life easier.

FURTHER INFORMATION

To understand how digital marketers go about tracking users, why not take a look at the [How to run an online advertising campaign](#) article.