Facebook is Wrong 27% of the Time When Detecting Users' Interests [STUDY] by @MattGSouthern

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According to a recent study, 27% of US adult Facebook users say the platform's classification of their interests is inaccurate.

Further, 74% of users didn't know that Facebook maintained a list of their interests.

Only slightly more than half of users (51%) say they're comfortable with Facebook compiling this information.

These statistics are based on a study from Pew Research Center, who asked a representative sample of users to reflect on the data that had been collected about them.

The survey of Facebook users was conducted between September and October of 2018.

Although Facebook makes it easy for people to find out how its algorithm has categorized their interests in the "Your ad preferences" page, it's not well communicated.

That's why nearly three-quarters of users surveyed didn't know about the list of interest and traits.

When directed to the "ad preferences" page, 88% of users found that the site had generated some material for them.

Only 59% of users said Facebook's categorizations reflect their real-life interests.

What Does This Mean for Marketers?

The findings of this study are particularly relevant to Facebook marketers who target ads to users based on their interests.

Based on these statistics, it's reasonable to expect that at least some percentage of ads will be shown to the "wrong" users.

By that, I mean ads may be shown to users who aren't actually interested in the product being advertised, even though Facebook believes they are.

However, with 59% of people saying Facebook's categorizations are accurate, it's reasonable to expect that a majority of ads will be shown to the "right" users.

As Pew Research Center concludes, there is a lot of guesswork involved when determining users' interests:

> *"Typically, the precise workings of the proprietary algorithms that perform these analyses are unknowable outside the companies who use them. At the same time, it is clear the process of algorithmically assessing users and their interests involves a lot of informed guesswork about the meaning of a user's activities and how those activities add up to elements of a user's identity."*

For more information, read the full study here.

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