



ARE YOU **CHASING** THE RAINBOW?

LGBTQ+ audience
targeting capabilities on
Facebook and Instagram
JUST VANISHED.

Where did they go,
And what should
you do now?

RunWithCOMMANDO.com



Social media platforms are dynamic by nature, continually evolving to improve user experience, comply with regulations, or address ethical concerns. Though these changes may be made with good intentions, they can upset your well-laid marketing plans. Just when you think you've mastered the art of digital advertising, the introduction of new policies or the removal of certain features can throw a wrench in your marketing machine.

One of the most recent changes sending agitated ripples across the advertising community is Facebook's and Instagram's removal of specific targeting options. Having gone into effect in 2022, these changes have had an enormous impact on businesses that target specialized groups, such as the LGBTQ+ community.

These changes are not insignificant.

You are now tasked with the dual challenges of understanding the nuances of these policy shifts and quickly finding effective alternatives. This white paper aims to serve as a guiding light in this murky landscape, offering both a deep dive into the recent policy changes and actionable solutions.

"SENSITIVE" AD TARGETING OPTIONS REMOVED

Meta, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram, has taken a definitive stride toward redefining the boundaries of advertising on its platforms. It no longer lets advertisers target people based on topics that the company deems as "sensitive." According to Meta, this change in advertising guidelines reflects a broader industry shift toward more ethical advertising practices.

The detailed targeting options that have been removed involve referencing causes, organizations, or public figures related to health, race or ethnicity, political affiliation, religion, or sexual orientation. Here are a few illustrative examples:

Health-Related Causes: Topics like "lung cancer awareness," "World Diabetes Day," or "chemotherapy" fall within this category.

META'S CHANGES HAVE HAD AN ENORMOUS IMPACT ON BUSINESSES THAT TARGET SPECIALIZED GROUPS, SUCH AS THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY.

Political Beliefs, Social Issues, Causes, Organizations, and Figures: This broad category encompasses a wide array of political and social issues.

Religious Practices and Groups: References like "Catholic Church" and "Jewish holidays" are encapsulated within this category.

Sexual Orientation: Terms such as "same-sex marriage" and "LGBT culture" are included here

The removed targeting options did not hinge on a user's demographics or personal traits. Instead, they related to a user's engagement

with content associated with particular topics on Meta's social media platforms.

This change was implemented across Meta's suite of applications, encompassing Facebook, Instagram, and Messenger. Additionally, the change extends to Meta's audience network. This robust ecosystem facilitates the placement of ads on other smartphone apps, thereby expanding the reach of advertisements beyond the confines of Meta's own platforms.

WHY THE CHANGE?

Meta, which generated \$113 billion in revenue from advertising in 2022, initiated the removal of "sensitive" ad targeting options to both streamline the advertising process and address concerns relating to sensitivity and discrimination.

In a blog post announcing the changes, Meta said it's making this "difficult decision" to prevent advertisers from using ad targeting to discriminate against or otherwise harm users of its platforms. "We've heard concerns from experts that targeting options like these could be used in ways that lead to negative experiences for people in underrepresented groups," Meta official Graham Mudd wrote.

Here is a detailed breakdown of the reasons behind the changes.

SIMPLIFICATION & EXPANSION
Meta consolidated Ad Topics and Interest Categories controls into a single Ad Topics control. Now, a single control sets preferences across ad topics reflecting the interest targeting categories advertisers might use .

INDUSTRY PRESSURE RESPONSE

The modifications were partly a response to industry pressure. Apple introduced changes in its privacy policy to grant users more control over their data. A key change was in the Identifier for Advertisers (IDFA) policy that disrupted advertisers' ability to easily access user data for targeted advertisements. Additionally, since the European Union implemented the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and huge data leaks have been reported, data privacy and safety is a big topic for all the tech giants

LEGAL SETTLEMENTS

Meta's decision to remove sensitive ad topics and interest categories has been significantly influenced by legal settlements aimed at addressing discriminatory advertising practices. For instance, in a settlement with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Meta agreed to change its practices that enabled advertisers to exclude people of certain genders, ages, and "multicultural affinities" from seeing housing, jobs, and financial services ads. Additionally, after being sued by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) for targeted advertising practices that allegedly violated the Fair Housing Act (FHA), Meta reached a settlement agreement. This settlement led to Meta changing its ad delivery system to address concerns of discrimination against users, specifically in housing ads.



LOSING THE SPECIFIC TARGETING

of the LGBTQ+ Community on Facebook &

Instagram **CAN AFFECT** your organization

in different ways, depending on your

business and advertising goals.

PERSONALIZATION VERSUS SENSITIVITY

While highly personalized advertising creates relevant and valuable user interactions, there's increasing sensitivity when individuals are identified based on affiliation to social causes, health conditions, or demographic characteristics. Meta aimed to strike a balance by limiting advertising options that could potentially lead to negative experiences for underrepresented groups, especially with topics PERCEIVED AS SENSITIVE.

PREVENTING POTENTIAL ABUSE

The changes were made to prevent advertisers from possibly using ad

targeting features to discriminate against or harm users.

For instance, removing detailed targeting options related to sensitive topics like health, political affiliation, and sexual orientation was seen as a measure to curb potential misuse of the platform for discriminatory practices.

The changes and the reasons behind the changes reflect a broader movement in digital advertising towards protecting user privacy and avoiding misuse. According to Meta, it's attempting to balance offering personalized ads while respecting users' preferences and industry norms.



TRADITIONAL PATHWAYS

of reaching the LGBTQ+ audience have become narrower, but alternative ways of reaching your audience exist.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Losing the specific targeting of the LGBTQ+ community on Facebook and Instagram can affect your organization in different ways, depending on your business and advertising goals. Here are a few areas that are impacted and are worthy of consideration.

REACH AND RELEVANCE

Without the ability to specifically target the LGBTQ+ community, your ads will reach a broader, less specific audience. This dilutes the relevance and impact of your message.

COST EFFICIENCY

The lack of segmentation means that you will experience higher costs per conversion or engagement due to the broader audience reach.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

It may become more challenging to foster a similar level of connection with your audience without specific targeting.

CAMPAIGN EFFECTIVENESS

The loss of this targeting feature requires a reevaluation of your campaign strategy and tactics to maintain effectiveness.

DATA-DRIVEN INSIGHTS

The lack of granular targeting and analysis capabilities may impact the depth of insights gained from campaign data.

As an advertiser, understanding these impacts and adapting your strategies accordingly is crucial to continue reaching your desired audiences effectively on Facebook and Instagram.

WHAT ARE YOUR OPTIONS NOW?

Meta's alterations to its ad targeting features present challenges for advertisers. Advertisers like you are at a crossroads where the traditional pathways of reaching the LGBTQ+ audience have become narrower. You are not headed towards a dead-end, however. Alternative ways of reaching your audience still exist. Here is what you now have at your disposal.

BROAD TARGETING

This includes gender, age, and location. Targeting broadly essentially means that you're primarily relying on Facebook's and Instagram's delivery systems to find the desired audience for your ad. According to Facebook and Instagram, this approach can lead to finding potential customers you never would've known about otherwise.

FIRST-PARTY DATA STRATEGY

First-party data is any information that you collect from either your customers, your website visitors, or your social following. You have unique relationships with your users, and you can tap into these relationships to amplify and optimize your campaigns. Custom audiences let you find your existing audiences among people who are on Instagram and Facebook. You can use sources like customer lists, website or app traffic, or engagement on Facebook and Instagram to create custom audiences of people who already know your business. Lookalike audiences are created from an existing audience and can help optimize audience reach.

META ADVANTAGE LOOKALIKE

Facebook and Instagram may deliver ads beyond the selected 1 percent to 10 percent lookalike range. They do this if their systems predict it's likely to improve performance. You control the audience used to create the lookalike audience. Meta Advantage lookalike will be automatically applied for some objectives.

META ADVANTAGE DETAILED TARGETING

Facebook and Instagram may deliver ads beyond your detailed targeting selections if their systems predict it's likely to improve performance. You will be automatically opted into Meta's Advantage detailed targeting when using some objectives.

A WELL-CONNECTED MARKETING AGENCY

Engaging a marketing agency can significantly limit the negative impacts of Meta's altered ad targeting features. However, that agency must be well-connected. Such an agency possesses a wealth of experience and a network of relationships within the advertising ecosystem that can be leveraged to your advantage.

Moreover, a seasoned agency can provide access to advanced tools and technologies for audience identification, segmentation, and engagement. It may also already have alternative mechanisms for reaching the LGBTQ+ community.

Each of these strategies is currently available to you. The one you select may make the difference between efficiently reaching your audience or missing the mark completely.

**IT'S TIME TO GO
COMMANDO.**

Considering your options, a journey through Meta's updated ad targeting framework will be easier to navigate with a well-connected marketing agency. The alternative strategies, though usable, pale in comparison to the robust solutions a seasoned marketing agency can provide. It's time to face reality. Without Meta's Ad Topics and Interest Categories, targeting the LGBTQ+ community is extremely difficult. With the tools you have at your disposal, it can take a long time and a lot of money to build an LGBTQ+ audience.

Even if you are able to build an audience, you can never be completely sure of the quality of the audience you've built.

While assisting clients over the years, COMMANDO has spent the time it takes to truly understand this unique audience. The savvy, dedicated COMMANDO team are experts at optimizing campaigns, designing creatives, and dealing with the technical nuances and roadblocks associated with advertising on Facebook and Instagram.

The COMMANDO team knows what messages convert and how to get those messages in front of the LGBTQ+ community. Additionally, COMMANDO provides robust analytics support, so you'll always know exactly how your campaign is performing.

Stop spinning your wheels and contact COMMANDO today for a free thirty-minute conversation that will start you down a proven path that delivers results.

END NOTES

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