



# Online Behavioural Advertising:

## *What do I need to know, and why?*

This is a quick and simple guide to online behavioural advertising: the basics on how it works, what information is used, what it delivers and what control you have over it. As with a lot of technology its quite complex so we've tried to make this an easy-to-understand guide.

If you're interested in knowing more and going 'under the hood' visit [www.youronlinechoices.eu/uk](http://www.youronlinechoices.eu/uk) or further information.

### **What is online advertising?**

Just like every other medium such as television, radio, cinema and newspapers, the internet needs advertising on websites to fund content and services so that we can receive the majority of its content for free, rather than pay a subscription to visit and/or be a registered user. Brands pay for advertising online, because nowadays people spend so much time on the internet during their day, and this is a great way to reach them with news of new products, special offers or simply entertain them with branded games and applications on social networking websites.

Online advertising comes in many forms that are non-intrusive and can complement your web browsing session. Search engines such as Google or Bing have their own advertising model which works on a pay-per-click basis (i.e. an advertiser pays when someone clicks on their sponsored link.) There's also what we refer to as 'online display advertising' – static or moving banners which either go at the top, side or middle of a webpage.

There are also other forms of advertising on the internet such as via email, viral videos and classifieds (like the ones you see in newspapers), as well as advertising within games. These have all grown rapidly over the past few years. This trend will continue as advertising moves onto other internet-connected devices, such as mobiles and tablets. The Internet Advertising Bureau (IAB) – the industry body for internet and mobile advertising – has lots more information about all this on its website [www.iabuk.net](http://www.iabuk.net). One of the more recent forms of internet advertising is called 'online behavioural advertising' or 'interest-based advertising' – a form of display advertising that aimed at being more relevant to your interests. It's important for you to understand how online behavioural advertising works, why it's beneficial and how you can disable such advertising if you want to.

### **What is online behavioural or interest based advertising?**

Online behavioural or interest based advertising is a way of providing advertisements on the websites you visit and making them more relevant to your interests. This is done by grouping together shared interests based upon previous web browsing activity. Advertising is then displayed to you when you visit a website which matches these interests.

Most behavioural advertising is based upon your web browsing activity over a period of time - so it's different to contextual advertising you may see when you're looking for something online using a search engine (eg Google or Bing) or on the website you may be visiting at a particular time. Relevant ads can also be delivered based upon the website content you have just been viewing. This is known as 'retargeting'.

### Give me an example.

Imagine you are planning a holiday to Rome. You see a website's section on Rome and view a few articles about places to stay and visit. On a future visit online, while reading an article about your favourite football team, you see an advertisement for a 2-for-1 dinner in Rome or an offer for discounted car hire in Rome. You receive these specially tailored adverts because you, and other people like you, have recently shown an interest in Rome.



**1. A person visits a web page about Rome**

**Travel Website**

**Menu**  
London  
Paris  
Rome  
New York  
Berlin

**About Rome**  
By a recent tourist  
Rome is a beautiful city with excellent architecture, historic sites and ice cream!  
I went to Rome in the summer, so the weather was scorching hot (making ideal for those ice creams) which meant I had to keep going in doors to escape the sun. While there are lots of art galleries and historic buildings to view inside, I would recommend going when it is slightly less hot either in the spring or autumn.  
The hotel I stayed in was 4 stars, but slightly shabby around the edges. However, it was cheap. So make sure you do your home work before going and don't just rely on the ratings.

**2. Some time later they visit a football site and an offer for cheap hotels in Rome appears**

**Sports R' Us Website**

**Menu**  
Tennis  
Hockey  
Football  
Basketball  
Running

**Football news**  
**Football shocker on pitch!**  
Last night the world was shocked as the worst football team in the world, the Clapham Megetoria, suddenly won their tenth match in a row. This is the first time they've won anything, let alone an entire series.  
Team Captain Mick Shings said excitedly, "It was the best night of my life, I always knew the lads had it in 'em!"  
Stay tuned to Sports R' Us for even more coverage of the Clapham Megetoria's rise to fame and glory.

**Hotels in Rome**  
2 nights for the price of 1

### Is this not a breach of my privacy?

The information used for providing you with these adverts is not personal, in that it does not identify you – the internet user. So no names, addresses or email addresses are collected and used in this process. Brands want to know what collective groups are interested in not who individuals are.

Information about your web browsing activity is collected and analysed anonymously. If this analysis infers a particular interest (travel and Rome for example), a cookie (a small file used by most websites to store useful bits of information to make your use of the internet better – see below) is placed in your web browser (eg Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox) and this cookie (not your web browsing information) determines what advertising you receive. It is therefore very important to realise that behavioural advertising can operate anonymously without you being identified as an individual. However, we recognise that some people may be uncomfortable with this and have therefore developed a way for you to know when it is happening and how you can control it. See our top tips below for more information.



### **What exactly is a 'cookie' and how is it used?**

A cookie is a small file of letters and numbers downloaded on to your web browser when you access most websites. Cookies allow a website to recognise your preferences when you return to a site (language, shopping basket contents etc). A cookie itself does not contain or collect information. However, when it is read by a web server it can help a website deliver a more user-friendly service.

The website server which sends the cookie uses this number to recognise you when you return to a site or browse from page to page. Only the server that sent a cookie can read, and therefore use, that cookie. Cookies are important in order for the internet to provide a more customised experience. Online behavioural advertising usually works using cookies.

### **Can I disable or block the cookies I receive?**

Yes. Some browsers will let you block some or all cookies. For example you can block 'third party' cookies (a cookie placed on your web browser by a third party - for example, a company that sells advertising on a website's behalf - other than that particular website owner) or will allow the use of settings to block only cookies that do not meet your privacy preferences. You can choose to disable all cookies but this could significantly affect your web browsing experience if you use services that rely on cookies (eg remembering preferences, shopping baskets etc). Many web browsers also have a 'private browsing' mode that you can use.

### **What can I do if I don't want behavioural advertising?**

The company collecting and using information for behavioural advertising will have a way for you to disable it. To make this even simpler we've provided an easy-to-use central point for you do this: [www.youronlinechoices.eu/uk/your-ad-choices](http://www.youronlinechoices.eu/uk/your-ad-choices). This page is now available in 22 different EU languages. It is important to remember that this does not mean that you will no longer receive advertising when you are using the internet. It just means that the advertising you see displayed on websites will not be customised to your likely interests.

### **Am I right in thinking that if I disable behavioural advertising it will only apply to the web browser I'm using?**

Yes. If you choose to disable behavioural advertising from a specific company or via [www.youronlinechoices.eu/uk/your-ad-choices](http://www.youronlinechoices.eu/uk/your-ad-choices) it only applies to the web browser on the computer or device you are using. It will therefore affect other people who use that web browser as well. You will need to follow the same process on every computer you use or different web browser that you use to exercise the same choice. See our top tips for further information.

### **Doesn't the way I opt out use a cookie? If so, doesn't that mean if I choose to delete my cookies, I'll be opting back in?**

Some opt out cookies are already persistent. To be sure you are opted out we suggest that if you delete all your cookies you revisit [www.youronlinechoices.eu/uk/your-ad-choices](http://www.youronlinechoices.eu/uk/your-ad-choices) and opt out again. We're working on a way to make sure that when you opt out your choice is permanent and we are hoping this solution will be in place very soon.

### **What happens if the opt out doesn't work?**

There could be many reasons for this happening. Visit our help page on ways to resolve this: [www.youronlinechoices.com/uk/opt-out-help](http://www.youronlinechoices.com/uk/opt-out-help).



## Five top tips to help protect your privacy online ...

1

**Don't panic!** Online behavioural advertising is safe, transparent and anonymous. Advertisers do not know who you are. Visit [www.youronlinechoices.eu/uk](http://www.youronlinechoices.eu/uk) for more information.

2

**Look for the below icon in the advertisements on the websites you're visiting.** Many of the advertisements on the websites that you're visiting will have a symbol or icon within it. By clicking on this icon you can find out more details about the information collected and use for this purpose, as well as ways to control it.



3

**Make your choice about whether you want behavioural advertising or not.** You can also opt out at [www.youronlinechoices.eu/uk/your-ad-choices](http://www.youronlinechoices.eu/uk/your-ad-choices).

4

**Get a bit more familiar with the privacy settings on your computer.** These can be found in the 'options' menu of your web browser. Every web browser has slightly different privacy settings. However remember that cookies can make websites a bit more user-friendly to your web browser experience.

5

**Try and tailor these privacy settings to suit your household's needs.** In households where more than one person uses the same computer, we suggest that each user has its own 'user account'. This allows privacy settings to be tailored to the needs and requirements of each user.