

# We're Not Targeting You...

CONNECTIONS DATA OPINION

RUSSELL WANCK, GROUP M EMEA 30 JUL 2013

In January 2012, the European Commission announced a comprehensive reform of EU data protection rules, intended to strengthen online privacy rights and boost Europe's digital economy. When the discussions around data began, lawmakers tended to view the data debate in black-and white terms: data was either personal (e.g., an individual's medical history or political beliefs) or it wasn't.

Unfortunately, this type of reasoning leaves a huge grey area, particularly as it pertains to most of the aggregated data used to deliver targeted advertising. As the European Parliament prepares to decide if and how rules on data should be updated, we are hopeful that legislators will adopt a more nuanced approach to this critical topic.

Data is necessary

Having access to accurate data is more important than ever in today's complex and divergent media world. Even the fiercest advocates of traditional media would agree that data thrown off by digital transactions have changed the role they play in the communication value chain. Consumers travel across a variety of online destinations, and information gleaned from digital media offers us the ability to reach audiences in nearly every channel in a more effective, specific manner. If this evolution is to continue, we need a clear set of rules that reassures consumers while allowing for marketing innovation.

### Private data should remain private

Contrary to what some privacy advocates would argue, we believe that private data should remain private, and we need to do a better job at explaining that the data used for brand campaigns does not include personally-identifiable information.

The truth is that personal data is not all that relevant to an advertiser or its agency. Our business model is based on our ability to create large groupings of consumers that share certain interests, and then deliver relevant advertising to this target in a way that produces the maximum ROI.

It's extremely unlikely that an advertiser would want to target at the individual level, and maintaining that level of data (and the additional privacy measures that would be required) would be cost prohibitive.

### Pseudonymous vs . personal data

A key element in the current debate is the recognition of a new class of data that is neither private nor nonpersonal. It's called pseudonymous data: information that has been processed so that, on its own, it can't be specifically attributed to a specific individual. Marketers use this data to reach the right audiences in the right place and at the right time. For example, the use of pseudonymous data can help find people who have visited a used-car website and, therefore, are more likely to be interested in purchasing a pre-owned car.

The current EU proposals not only exclude any allowance for pseudonymous data: they actually expand the definition of personal data. As a matter of fact, the draft proposals define “personal data” as almost every piece of data that could be collected and used in a digital environment. This includes information that identifies a single person. It’s vital that this be changed as the legislative process rolls forward.

### Marketers need to lean in

Until now, the advertising industry has not really engaged with legislators. This is the wrong approach. As the new Data Protection Act moves through the European Parliament, it’s in our best interests to ensure that regulators understand how the advertising industry works.

Numerous collectives have been actively working with these officials to explain how marketers treat data, and how European consumers can be given effective tools to control their personal data without negatively impacting the digital economy. In the meantime, more than 3,000 amendments have been filed to the legislation. Legislators around the world are waiting and watching to see what happens in the EU. With PII (personally identifiable information) a hot topic in the US, it’s likely that any new rules adopted in Europe would be swiftly considered. A clear set of rules defining three classes of data – personal, general and pseudonymous – will help marketers and agencies explain to consumers what information is used and why. It will also give consumers the much needed confidence that their needs and wishes are respected, with the additional bonus of advertisers funding the free content they love on the web.

Source: IAB UK

[CONNECTIONS](#) [DATA](#) [OPINION](#)