FBPrivacyHelper: A Browser Extension That Simplifies Facebook Ad Privacy Settings

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Motivation

Facebook's interface for ad settings:
- is complex and lacks transparency
- does not provide full autonomy over how data is handled
- poses privacy and data misuse risks

Our FBPrivacyHelper tool:
- offers personalized setting recommendations
- simplifies Facebook ad preference management
- enhances the transparency of ad practices.

System Infrastructure

Preference Elicitation
For better understanding of user ad preferences, FBPrivacyHelper uses a brief, intuitive survey on Facebook ad practices.

Settings Retrieval
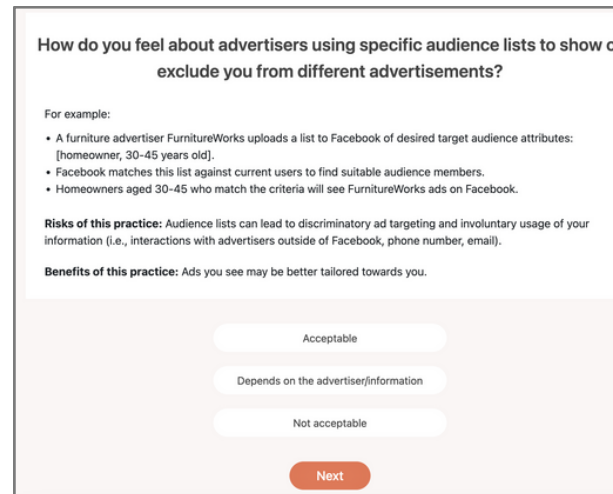Post-questionnaire, FBPrivacyHelper collects the user's existing Facebook ad settings.

Generated Recommendations
The results interface enables ad setting review and modification, with descriptive guides for decisions. It also suggests changes based on the user's survey responses.
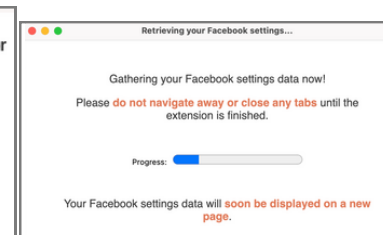
Settings Modification
Upon request, FBPrivacyHelper alters Facebook settings, providing a change summary and relevant review links afterwards.
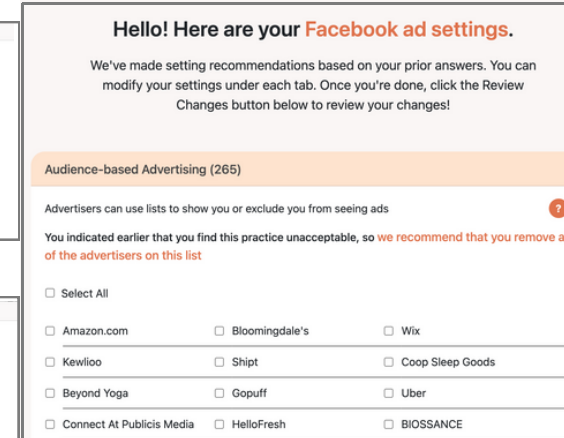
Pilot Tests

This extension was created as a part of a study that compared user's expectations versus their actual privacy settings. We have developed it for public release as FBPrivacyHelper.

In six pilot tests, we assessed FBPrivacyHelper's usage for ad setting decisions. Results reveal that participants:

- **Were Dissatisfied** with their current ad settings and preferred more conservative options
- **Were Open** to recommendation-based setting changes
- **Found FBPrivacyHelper's setting explanations helpful** for decision-making.

Browser Extension Design

Questionnaire: Provides intuitive examples of ad practices and risks/benefits of the practices

Gathering Ad Settings

Changing Ad Settings

Results Interface: Users can view/modify their settings while recommendations and setting explanations are provided

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