Google, YouTube add user controls to limit alcohol, gambling ads

Google is adding new user controls for alcohol and gambling ads. The new feature, announced Thursday, will launch first on YouTube in the U.S. It will then roll out to Google ads and other countries next year, the company says.

“We’ve heard feedback that some people would prefer to limit ads in certain categories like alcohol, so today, we’re launching a new control in Ad Settings, enabling people to see fewer alcohol ads, with gambling as an additional option,” Elijah Lawal of Google global communications and public affairs in a blog post.

The control, available in users’ Google Ad Settings, will not affect countries that have legal restrictions on gambling and alcohol ads.

Google worked with the International Alliance for Responsible Drinking (IARD), who’s members include beer, wine and spirits producers, on the imitative.

“IARD’s engagement with Google means users of the platform, starting with YouTube, will have the option to see fewer alcohol ads.,” said IARD President and CEO Henry Ashworth. “Our members are determined to give people greater control over whether they see alcohol-related marketing online. Respecting these personal preferences and recognizing differences in culture requires sensitivity and action, that’s why we hope this partnership is the start of a bigger movement.”

Why we care. It’s unclear what the overall impact will be – users will need to know about and proactively seek out these

controls. But this is a good move for users, Google, and the alcohol and gambling industries. For marketers in these sectors, the business impact is likely to be minimal and may even improve performance by limiting exposure to users who expressly opt out.

Note that Google says users who enable the feature will see “fewer” of these ads rather than zero alcohol or gambling ads. In lieu of an ad ban, it would be nearly impossible to guarantee users won’t be exposed at all to ads in these categories. The new controls do not impact Google’s existing policies around alcohol and gambling advertising.

About The Author

Ginny Marvin is Third Door Media’s Editor-in-Chief, running the day to day editorial operations across all publications and overseeing paid media coverage. Ginny Marvin writes about paid digital advertising and analytics news and trends for Search Engine Land, Marketing Land and MarTech Today. With more than 15 years of marketing experience, Ginny has held both in-house and agency management positions. She can be found on Twitter as @ginnymarvin.
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