Senators want YouTube investigated over showing targeted ads to kids, again



A report from ad quality transparency platform Adalytics suggests that YouTube served adult-focused ads on almost 100 videos considered “made for kids.” Some of these ads reportedly involved content inappropriate for children, such as car wrecks, medical injuries, and clips from TV-MA shows. Adalytics found that the websites linked in the ads transmitted cookies to their devices that could serve targeted ads to kids, too.

As pointed out by Adalytics, Google’s own policies say ads on content made for kids must not use third-party trackers or collect personal information without getting permission from a parent. Dan Taylor, Google’s vice president of global ads, reiterates this policy in a response on Google’s website, where he calls Adalytics’ report “deeply flawed.”

“We do not allow the use of third-party trackers in advertisements served on made for kids content on YouTube,”

Taylor writes. “This report falsely claims that the presence of cookies indicates a privacy breakdown. The opposite is true, and the report fails to show otherwise.”

Adalytics’ research has already drawn the attention of Senator Ed Markey (D-MA) and Marsha Blackburn (R-TN). In a letter to FTC Chair Lina Khan, the two lawmakers urge the agency to look into Adalytics’ claims, noting “YouTube and Google may have violated COPPA – as well as its 2019 FTC consent decree – in an egregious manner.” The Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) requires online platforms to receive parental permission to collect data from users under the age of 13.

The report is having an impact on advertisers as well, with some major companies, including IPG Mediabrands, advising clients to pause ads on YouTube, according to *Insider*.

Google is already facing scrutiny over a previous Adalytics report that suggests the company misled advertisers over where it placed video ads. Google called that research flawed as well, despite a report by *Ad Age* saying at least one ad agency exec told the outlet that Google refunded some clients over discrepancies, a move Google representatives said was “not uncommon” and that issuing credits is part of normal relationship building with advertisers.

https://www.theverge.com/2023/8/18/23837530/youtube-ads-child-safety-tracking-coppa-senator-investigation