

GOOGLE TO ELIMINATE THIRD-PARTY COOKIES



Internet users often face a request to allow cookies. They are small data sets stored on the user's computer or smartphone, helping with personalized online advertising. However, due to government regulations and increasing user awareness about data security, many believe a "cookieless future" is coming.

Apple and Mozilla have already taken steps to restrict third-party cookies, and now Google plans to do the same on its Chrome browser this year.

Google has taken the first step by restricting access to third-party cookies for around 1% of Chrome users since January 4th. The participants in this test were randomly selected. In the second half of the year, Google plans to abolish these cookies altogether, pending the British competition authority's resolution of any remaining concerns. For now, cookie banners will still appear when users open a page.

Changes at Google

Cookies are small files stored in a browser on a user's device when they visit a website. These files often contain unique identifiers that allow websites to recognize their visitors. For instance, a browser can remember a user's login details or the items they added to their shopping cart. Cookies also enable personalized advertising. However, third-party cookies are contentious because embedded content from other websites sets them rather than the website the user is visiting. These cookies allow advertising service providers to track users across multiple pages and create profiles for advertising purposes.

According to Google experts, third-party cookies can track users precisely across multiple websites. Still, the company plans to limit this practice in the future by introducing a Privacy Sandbox. This will ensure that advertising providers only receive limited information about users' interests, preventing their identification or recognition. Different applications have been developed in collaboration with the industry for this purpose. From the end of this year, third-party providers will no longer be able to track users' web browsing behavior across different sites.

Instead, the websites that a user visits will be marked with higher-level advertising topics, such as "sports," "travel," or "pets." The browser will record a user's frequently visited topics, store them locally on the device, and share a maximum of three advertising topics for the last three weeks with advertising providers, as required. The goal is to display relevant advertising to the user without revealing which specific websites they have visited. Users can view the advertising themes assigned to them in Chrome settings and make changes if necessary.

Sharp Criticism from the Advertising Industry

The advertising industry experts criticize the planned abolition of third-party cookies. According to them, this move will not enhance data protection but will only strengthen Google's dominance in the advertising media market. It is argued that this could put consumers at a disadvantage in the long

run. It was also pointed out that the plan does not mean that Google will track less or collect less data. This is because Google's wealth of data mainly comes from first-party data, which the company collects through user login, browser cookies, or search queries.

If cookies were to be abolished, users would have minimally limited advertising access based on their interests outside of Google services and a few other major platforms. Returning to spam, pop-ups, and banner ads that do not interest users would not be a solution.

Experts suggest that market-dominant platforms should not limit the advertising industry's scope. The legislature should make decisions regarding this matter, which has already passed laws to prevent platforms from setting up rules that harm competition. Therefore, competition authorities are more crucial than ever.

Consumer Advocates Are Skeptical

Consumer organizations have raised concerns about tracking and profiling practices used for advertising purposes. This issue is not limited to a single technology, such as third-party cookies. **Advertisements are sometimes designed to exploit consumers' vulnerabilities, threatening personal data protection and privacy and leading to manipulative practices and discrimination.**

Furthermore, consumers need help understanding the scope and ramifications of their consent. The online advertising market and its underlying technologies, including the Google Privacy Sandbox, are complex, opaque, and difficult to monitor.

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