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AdNauseam fights online ads by clicking on every one

The opposite type of browser plugin, ad blockers, are already very popular

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If you hate online ads, just use the age-old tactic of obfuscation

AUDIO

14:48

Internet browser extensions that block all pesky advertisements while users surf the web are quite popular, with Chrome's AdBlock boasting more than 40 million users. But, would anyone use a program that clicks on every advertisement a user comes across?

Daniel Howe created AdNauseam, an internet browser plugin, to subvert online tracking.

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"The real issue we're getting at here is tracking — the way that advertisers track users, most often without their knowledge and certainly not with their consent, from site to site to site, building up a profile," he says in an interview with CBC's Spark with Nora Young. In most cases, this data can be sold, traded or published.

The plugin works behind the scenes to click on every ad a user encounters. This confuses the system by creating the impression that someone is interested in everything.

"[AdNauseam] allows you to express your sort of dissatisfaction with the current model to the ad networks to whom you would normally have no voice," he says.

It also allows people to make a larger difference to the system than by just blocking ads. Even if someone isn't using AdNauseam, they may reap its benefits because the larger data collection statistics may be less accurate overall.

Howe says people are often unaware of data tracking.

"If people were told that when they visited a site and read some free content that they would then be tracked at every other site they visited ... until they bought a new computer," that would be a very different story, he says.

So far, the feedback Howe's received about the plugin has been positive.

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