Apple's IDFA Kill-Move is a Frontal Assault on Rogue Advertising Industry

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Apple's identifier for advertisers, the IDFA, is a number tied to each device that enables advertisers to track users' activities across different apps within the iOS operating system. The primary function is very similar to cookies in that it helps ad companies store data profiles and preferences for personalized messaging, regardless of which device you are logged into. In addition to targeting, the IDFA also helps with attribution and measurement.

In iOS 14, Apple is changing the IDFA from a default-on to an opt-in-only setting. While the implementation has been delayed until early-2021 to give mobile advertisers and mobile app publishers more time to prepare, it is a landmark event nonetheless in Apple's ongoing efforts to differentiate itself from Google, Facebook, and other global tech companies with a manic focus on privacy. App publishers and mobile advertisers are the two groups most affected. Without the IDFA, publishers may find it difficult to demonstrate the success of their ads, and advertisers may have a difficult time understanding the ROI of their mobile advertising strategies.

Importantly, however, the change will also improve the device owner's control over data by making it harder for shady "tech companies" lurking in various ad exchanges to flagrantly violate individual privacy by unauthorized identification, tracking, and surveillance of individuals under the cover of "providing better ad targeting". Such operators have been operating with impunity, enabled by their almost totally un-regulated participation in ad-exchanges and Real Time Bidding (RTB) auctions for online advertising. Not having access to the IDFA by default makes it that much harder for them to maintain their detailed dossiers profiling individuals, and deprives them of a key handle required for real-time surveillance.

Source : Forbes, Jun 2020, Forbes, Sep 2020,