

# Understanding ads serving and reporting on YouTube channels with made for kids content

## Background

Adalytics' recent report points to four campaigns that used Google's audience targeting solutions. They allege that based on the results and the reporting of impressions and views associated with demographics and affinity audience segments on made for kids (MFK) channels on YouTube, personalized ads were served in violation of COPPA.

**This is false.**

## Our Review

We reviewed Adalytics' report describing the setup and reporting of these campaigns in Google Ads. The following analysis shows where they fundamentally misunderstand key elements of how advertising on made for kids content works.

## Campaign Details Reported

Let's look at example "Campaign #2" highlighted in their report. Based on the report, this campaign had the following configuration:

"Campaign #2" targeted several dozen audience segments including Life Events and Affinities. Further, Adalytics set up an inclusion list that limits audience reach to viewers of several hundred YouTube channels designated by their creators as made for kids.

In reporting, Adalytics' screenshots show the campaign delivered impressions and views to channels in their inclusion list and against targeted audiences – both life events and affinities. **This is expected.**

Made for Kids' according to YouTube Data API	Placement	Placement uri	Views	Impr.	Cost	Percent of Views	Percent of Impr.	Percent of Cost
True	Miraculous Ladybug	http://youtube.com/channel/UCWjVZ3VnyUwBEOkuOlaU3g				38.7%	41.9%	43.0%
True	The Axel Show	http://youtube.com/channel/UC7L2_T-dBKRaAbdXgGd4q5w				14.5%	15.8%	17.2%
True	stacyplays	http://youtube.com/channel/UC2c6FqF4oIAZ7LodVEUueNQ				11.3%	3.9%	6.0%
True	Karim Juega	http://youtube.com/channel/UCj_pcmY3zBqzouJe9hpcmpQ						
True	RiChannel	http://youtube.com/channel/UCqHO4tXcEOqQdJoXuHbXdfw						
True	Las Aventuras de Dani y Evan	http://youtube.com/channel/UCMPQu4lx_wy5SHi6F2qgiZA						
True	CVS 3D Rhymes & Kids Songs	http://youtube.com/channel/UCsPF3cApzCohxPp5oKdoWSQ						
True	LUCAS NETO - LUCAS TOON	http://youtube.com/channel/UC_gV70G_Y51Lta3qhu8KIEA						

Audience segment	Type	Views	Impr.	Cost	Percent of Views	Percent of Impr.	Percent of Cost
High-End Computer Aficionados	Affinity segment				71.0%	76.5%	74.0%
Motorcycle Enthusiasts	Affinity segment				12.9%	11.8%	11.0%
Home Automation Enthusiasts	Affinity segment				3.2%	2.9%	2.6%
Avid Investors	Affinity segment				3.2%	1.5%	2.6%
Cloud Services Power Users	Affinity segment				3.2%	3.9%	3.9%
Renovating Home Soon	Life event				1.6%	0.5%	0.6%
Moving Soon	Life event				1.6%	0.5%	3.2%

Screenshots of the placement reporting and audience segment reporting of "Campaign #2"  
 These screenshots were taken directly from Adalytics' recent report as of August 30th, 2023.

As part of their [report](#), Adalytics’ analysis makes two significant errors:

It assumed from the placement report that 100% of the impressions and views generated by this campaign were served on made for kids content because they limited their targeting to made for kids channels.

It raised concerns that YouTube may have violated our prohibition on ads personalization for made for kids content because “the audience segment report showed that 100% of the YouTube video ad impressions were served to users based on various “life events” and “affinity segments”, such as “Business Travelers”.

Why is this wrong?



**Channels, even those designated by creators as made for kids, have a mix of content.**

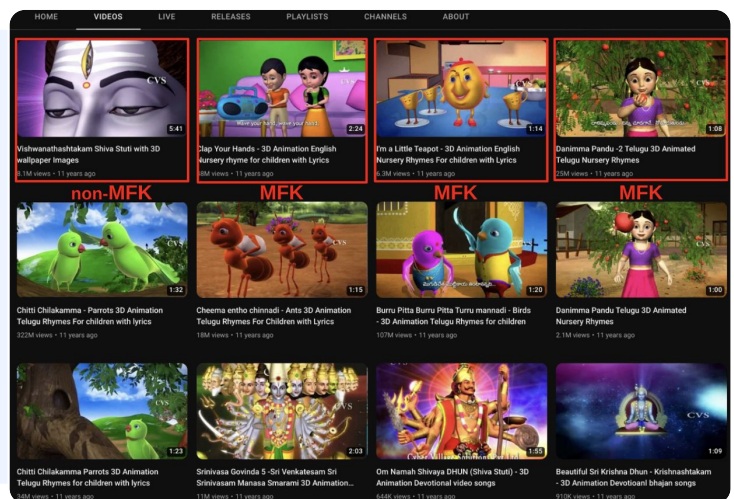
Creators can designate a channel as made for kids (MFK) - which makes made for kids the default audience setting for new video uploads - and still designate certain videos on that channel as “not made for kids” (non-MFK).

For example, the “CVS 3D Rhymes & Kids Songs” YouTube channel in the screenshot below is designated by the creator as MFK but includes videos that are designated as non-MFK as well. This is because creators can always update settings for individual videos. YouTube also uses machine learning to identify MFK content, and may override a creator’s choice in cases of error or abuse.

The channels that Adalytics targeted included videos designated by the creator as made for kids as well as videos designated by the creator as “not made for kids” (non-MFK videos). As a result, the campaign’s ads correctly served on both MFK and non-MFK videos within those channels.

**Screenshots of YouTube videos included in the “CVS 3D Rhymes & Kids Songs” YouTube Channel as of August 31, 2023.**

While this channel is designated MFK, it includes videos that are designated MFK (“I’m a Little Teapot - 3D Animation English Nursery Rhymes for Children with Lyrics”) and videos that are designated as non-MFK (“Vishwanathashtakan Shiva Stuti with 3D wallpaper Images”).



**Personalized advertising is allowed on videos that are not designated “made for kids”**

Ads can be placed on non-MFK videos using demographics or audience segments, such as “life events”, that are derived from a user’s activity.

**Example:**

If a user watches a non-MFK video about entrepreneurship, they might then receive ads on other non-MFK content based on this signal, such as ads targeting people starting a business.

On MFK videos, we do not permit personalized ads (such as demographics or audience segments) based on personalized data alone to be placed.

**Example:**

If a campaign were to run on only MFK videos with this type of targeting, no impressions would be served for “life events” and all demographic impressions would be reported as “unknown”.



## Affinity audience segments can be created either from a user's viewing data or from contextual signals only.

Campaign targeting affinity audiences can be placed on MFK content, but they employ a different method, staying true to our commitment not to personalize ads to anyone, regardless of their age, on MFK content. In such cases, affinity audience targeting is done via contextual signals alone. These signals are based on aggregated data and connections or trends we see with different types of content on our platform.

**As an example**, let's say certain MFK and non-MFK videos have an affinity label of "Boating Enthusiasts" assigned to them. For the MFK video, this label would be derived from aggregated signals from related videos that suggest the MFK video is contextually relevant to Boating Enthusiasts, but without using any of the viewer's data. If an advertiser selling boats wanted to reach "Boating Enthusiasts," they may reach someone watching an MFK or non-MFK video.

As a result, any viewer of an MFK video would have the same or similar ad experience as no individual information is used to serve these ads. Neither placement reporting nor audience segment reporting indicate the contrary.

When YouTube produces an audience segment report, the impressions attributed to an affinity audience may include a combination of those created from contextual signals from MFK content and those created from user signals from non-MFK content.

**For example**, an affinity label for "Motorcycle Enthusiasts" includes impressions from both contextual signals and users' signals depending on whether the ad ran on an MFK video or non-MFK video. For this reason, the placement and audience segment report shared by Adalytics is not indicative of ads personalization on MFK content.



## We are committed to being transparent about our policies and protections.

This is a complex topic and we recognize how important kids safety is to our advertisers and our partners. That's why we appreciate the opportunity to help address any misunderstandings around how our protections work.

We also welcome feedback and are actively exploring ways to improve the clarity of our policies and reporting tools to avoid confusion and help advertisers understand better where their ads ran. However, given recent reporting, we feel it's important to reiterate that we have strict protections in place for MFK content and these protections are working appropriately. That is not in doubt.

MFK channels include a mix of MFK and non-MFK videos, and ads can **only** be placed on MFK videos by audience segments built with contextual signals – not personalized data. Our placement and audience segment reports include both personalized and non-personalized impressions and the Adalytics' analysis does not indicate a violation of our policies. Details are important and we hope that this analysis has brought greater clarity to some key facts and misunderstandings that have been circulated in recent weeks.

As always, our door remains open to any partners or third party research groups who wish to discuss our findings and how our policies work.

# Verifying ads serving and reporting on YouTube channels with made for kids content

We ran a number of campaign tests to demonstrate ads serving and reporting behavior on YouTube channels with made for kids (MFK) content. Some campaigns targeted only MFK videos and others targeted a mix of MFK and non-MFK videos in these channels. We tested this using six different campaign configurations similar to those that were run by Adalytics. In no instance did personalized ads serve on MFK content.



**The tests we ran all confirmed our ads serving and reporting systems are working as intended.**

When campaigns that targeted audience segments that require the use of user activity data (e.g. “Life Events”) ran on MFK channels with only MFK videos, **no impressions were served**. This is working as intended, as ads personalization is disabled on these videos.

When the campaigns targeted audience segments that require the use of the user’s activity data on MFK channels with a mix of MFK and non-MFK videos, impressions served on non-MFK videos. This too is working as intended, as the non-MFK videos on those channels are eligible for personalized ads.

## Summary

Audience segment targeted	Videos targeted	Serving behavior	Reporting behavior	Working as intended?
<b>Life Events</b> <i>(built with personalized signals)</i>	MFK Videos	No impressions served	No impressions reported	<b>Yes</b>
	MFK & non-MFK Videos	Impressions served	Reported impressions on Life Events audiences due to non-MFK videos	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Affinity</b> <i>(built with personalized signals + contextual signals)</i>	MFK Videos	Impressions served absent personalization	Reported impressions on Affinity audiences built using contextual signals only.	<b>Yes</b>
	MFK & non-MFK Videos	Impressions served, absent personalization on MFK videos	Reported impressions on Affinity audiences built using contextual signals only due to MFK videos, and built using personalized user signals due to non-MFK videos	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Demographics</b> <i>(built with personalized signals for specific age groups or labeled “unknown” where we don’t have signals)</i>	MFK Videos	Impressions served absent personalization	Reported impressions do not reveal demographic information	<b>Yes</b>
	MFK & non-MFK Videos	Impressions served	Reported impressions on various age groups due to non-MFK videos	<b>Yes</b>