Apple's new privacy features could be a boon for users—but a challenge for marketers

Article

The news: Beginning with iOS 17, iPadOS 17, and macOS Sonoma, **Apple** will **automatically remove tracking parameters from URLs** in private browsing mode in a move to expand

privacy protections.

- While the links will remain functional, **they will not contain unique identifiers that can be used to track users**.

- This feature, Advanced Tracking and Fingerprinting Protection, extends to links shared through the Messages and Mail apps. Users will be able to turn off this feature if they don't want it, whether in regular or private browsing mode.

Why it matters: These parameters enable websites to accumulate valuable data on users' interaction with content. Though the new feature will block URL parameters that are personal to an individual user, other trackers should be left intact.

- While this move could bolster user privacy, **marketers are understandably apprehensive** that removing URL tracking parameters may undermine the reliability of campaign analytics.

- These changes may inadvertently affect URL trackers related to ad measurements, embedded media, social widgets, fraud prevention, bot detection, audience measurements, and the financing of websites dependent on targeted or personalized ads.

Winners and losers: The update has significant implications for large-scale marketing and social media companies that share personally identifiable information (PII) through link tracking. The removal of tracking parameters shouldn't affect click tracking by email service providers (ESPs) or email marketers, as Nieman Lab pointed out.

- At the individual level, click data may be disrupted, which could be bad for email marketers' personalization and list filtration efforts.

- How Apple executes against its vision is still a work in progress. During the current beta testing, it appears Apple is focusing on parameters used by a few major players, including **Meta**, **Google**, and **MailChimp**. That means custom and niche tags may not be affected across the board—but parameters like **fbclid** (Facebook Click Identifier) and **gclid** (Google Click Identifier) could be in for a very rocky period.

Our take: Apple's changes highlight the importance of not overreliance on any one platform. "This might further incentivize the diversification of media budgets," said senior analyst **Evelyn Mitchell-Wolf**. "Advertisers with the means to work with more partners may be more likely to avoid putting all their eggs into just one Big Tech."

- These changes may not be as substantive as the "Ask App Not to Track" feature, but they represent another step in Apple's efforts to balance user privacy with the needs of advertisers and publishers. Both users and advertisers need to adapt to this evolving landscape.