Twitter Thread by Eric Seufert



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Facebook -- having taken out full-page ads in the NYT, Washington Post, and WSJ -- is generally seen as the primary victim of the new app privacy controls coming in iOS14. But Google is perhaps even more vulnerable to ATT. Why has Google remained silent? (1/X)

2/ First, background: here's a high-level overview of how ATT / IDFA deprecation impacts advertisers and ad networks, and why this whole ordeal has put advertisers and ad networks into a state of panic: https://t.co/vfGafKzKt2

3/ Google is equally as susceptible to harm from ATT as Facebook. Google's UAC product -- esp its tROAS and tCPA campaign objectives -- relies as much on IDFA-indexed monetization and engagement data as FB's mobile product does. But Google has one big weakness wrt ATT: YouTube

4/ Broadly, view-through attribution accounts for a disproportionate % of conversions from YouTube app install impressions. This means: user sees the YT ad, doesnt click, downloads app later, & Google is able to claim it by reconciling IDFA seen at impression to IDFA seen in app

5/ View-through attribution is nonexistent in the ATT paradigm as it relies on the IDFA; some significant portion of YT's attributed conversions will evaporate. So why isnt Google vocally opposing ATT? Two reasons: consumer optics and its duality as ad network / mobile platform

6/ Firstly, Google might do more harm than good by joining FB's PR campaign: of course Google, the ad network, wants to track ads. Consumers would think: if both Google & FB oppose a privacy feature, it must be good for me. Google likely stands to gain by *not* joining the fray

7/ Let FB and Apple battle it out in public over consumer goodwill and quietly relay guidance to advertisers (as it has minimally done: telling advertisers to shift away from tROAS campaigns on iOS). If FB fails to change Apple's mind, Google is no worse off

8/ Second: Google operates a mobile platform, Android, in addition to its ad network. Google cant come out too fervently against platform privacy because it'd advantage Apple as the "privacy friendly" platform relative to Android. Google must delicately thread a privacy needle

9/ Which is what it has done on the browser: Google agreed in principle to a shift away from 3rd party cookies but is taking MUCH longer to achieve that (2022 timeline versus Apple's ITP update blocking 3PC in March) https://t.co/7y8c1WqPzs

10/ Google is exploring clever measurement workarounds to 3PC with its privacy sandbox, eg. on-browser auction, TURTLEDOVE / FLoC, privacy budgets, etc. Google must moderate the impact of Chrome / GooglePlay privacy proposals against ad network performance https://t.co/iWaO8m9TSi

11/ My sense is that Google finds a way to militate against GAID deprecation -- while still appearing to be in privacy lockstep with Apple -- by using existing Firebase functionality to emulate SKAdNetwork differential privacy whille preserving its MAID https://t.co/Cuwmnvl493

12/ This approach strikes a convenient and satisfactory balance between privacy & ad effectiveness as well as between its two core interests: content distribution, ad network. But it's an abstruse compromise that Google would not want to necessarily champion loudly to consumers

13/ Also, the subdued comms strategy doesnt stoke red-hot regulatory embers. I disapprove of FBs PR narrative: I think itd be easier to make the case that reduced ads personalization robs consumers of the free products they love https://t.co/HdiGRIDsMk

14/ But even thats an abstract argument. FB *must* fight back because so much is at stake. And so Google can wait to see what happens: low probability that Apple changes course, high prob that ATT is roled out as-is, neither of which changes in Google's favor by an intervention

15/ And ultimately, Google can announce its own platform privacy solution that doesnt impair its ad network's efficiency for Android campaigns while remaining, theoretically, in privacy lockstep with Apple