

**whitebullet**



**ADVERTISING STANDARDS AUTHORITY**

**Ad Supply Pathway:  
Ads that Harmfully  
Objectify Women and Girls**

**METHODOLOGY**

## **Ad Supply Pathway: Ads that harmfully objectify women and girls**

The ASA identified the following objectives for this project:

- To collect data to facilitate the ASA's ability to identify ads that objectify or sexualise people (often women or girls) served in mobile game or quiz apps.
- To identify the intermediaries that have facilitated the distribution of those ads.

The methodologies applied in this project were selected to facilitate ASA's goal to identify instances of breaches of the Advertising Code, for further discussion with the advertiser, intermediary/intermediaries and the publisher involved.

The ASA provided a list of candidate apps to be used for the project, and the data was collected for three months. Resulting data was shared with the ASA team via Excel spreadsheets.

### Selection of Apps

ASA provided a candidate list of 20 game or quiz apps. The White Bullet team reviewed APKs<sup>1</sup> for the 20 apps and found 14 apps suitable for the project in February 2024.<sup>2</sup> Data was captured from the 14 apps from 27 February to 31 May 2024, from the UK, using a White Bullet proprietary technology-facilitated app monitoring system.

### Data Collection

White Bullet developed a new technology for this project to facilitate human researchers using individual phones to navigate mobile game and quiz apps running on individual devices and, guided by the White Bullet team, to identify and capture video advertising along with related data required to classify the intermediaries involved in the placement of the advertising. For each ad identified, the system:

- Captures the video of the ad in context of the game
- Captures information relating to the ad capture event, including timestamp, APK of capture, and device used
- Captures HTML at the time of the ad capture which contains information used to extract intermediary data
- Captures XML data about the app that may be useful in discussions with intermediaries and publishers
- Identifies the advertiser in the captured video ad, where possible

### User Profiles

White Bullet created multiple Google IDs for research purposes, with Google's knowledge, and then created user profiles for each of the Google IDs as outlined below. Each profile was associated with a specific phone device used by a human researcher. Advertising data was collected from each app once a day for 5-10 minutes from each of the phones/profiles.

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<sup>1</sup> Android Application Package

<sup>2</sup> The selected apps were active with advertising and also allowed capture of HTML data needed to identify intermediaries.

- *Female youth user profile*: Google ID female profile created with a specific date of birth in 2009, used to visit YouTube channels appropriate for the age, along with Snapchat, Instagram and TikTok videos.
- *Female adult user profile*: Google ID female profile created with a specific date of birth in 1982, used to visit YouTube channels with recipes, music and humour videos; email and auction websites; as well as home and hobby interest apps and Pinterest.
- *Male youth user profile*: Google ID male profile created with a specific date of birth in 2010, used to visit some YouTube channels appropriate for the age along with Snapchat, Instagram and TikTok videos.
- *Male adult user profile*: Google ID male profile created with a specific date of birth in 1983, used to visit YouTube channels with football, music and humour videos; news and streaming video websites; as well as sports and other television streaming apps.

## Ad Classification

The White Bullet team manually classified the advertisers into sectors – three tiers identifying the industry sector of the advertiser. In addition, where the automated system was unable to identify an advertiser, the White Bullet team reviewed the video ads to identify the brand identified in the ad and then classified the brand by sector.

## Data Collected

App data was delivered to the ASA in Excel spreadsheet format, along with supplemental video, HTML and XML files with details on the ads. The Excel file included the following columns to facilitate ASA with their analysis:

- Datetime – date and time that the ad was collected
- APK – name of the APK package where the ad was captured
- App name – name of the app where the ad was captured as it appears in app stores
- Profile – the profile active when the ad was captured
- Advertiser – name of the brand identified for the ad
- Sector classification – three tiers of sectors identifying the industry sector where the brand operates
- Ad intermediary – name of the intermediary identified by the system as involved in placement of the ad
- Video file name – unique filename for the video capture of the ad
- Direct URL to video file – link to video of the ad creative captured during the visit
- HTML/XML folder name – unique filename for a folder containing the HTML and XML files relating to the ad capture

Note that the focus of this project was on capturing video ads, although the apps also generated other types of advertising such as display ads.

A total of 5,923 ads were captured from apps in the project during the three months. The ASA team used the Excel spreadsheet to narrow their focus to ads that might be of interest for review for this project by filtering on the sector classification. They were then able to review the video ad file to evaluate whether the ad objectified or sexualised people, including whether such ads were delivered to an under-18 user profile. Upon request, White Bullet also assisted the ASA team in interpretation of intermediary data analysis.

**APPS MONITORED:**

<b>App Name</b>	<b>APK</b>
Airline Commander: Flight Game	it.rortos.realflight
Animal Shelter Simulator	com.dmg.animalshelter
Block Blast!	com.block.juggle
Lamar – Idle Vlogger	com.advant.streamer
My Cat – Pet Games: Tamagotchi	cat.game.liftapp
My Hospital Town Doctor Games	com.iz.my.doctor.hospital.kids.world.life.town.pretend.play.games
My Perfect Hotel	com.master.hotelmaster
My Talking Tom 2	com.outfit7.mytalkingtom2
Paper.io 2	io.voodoo.paper2
Scrabble GO-Classic Word Game	com.pieyel.scrabble
Screw Puzzle: Nuts and Bolts	com.tangle.nuts.bolts
Subway Surfers	com.kiloo.subwaysurf
Tizi Town: My Princess Games	com.iz.tizi.royal.princess.dollhouse.life.games.home.design.world.my.wonder.town
Traffic Escape!	com.bonnie.trafficescape