

Google Fined Over YouTube Premium ‘Free Trial’ by Turkish Advertising Board

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Have you ever subscribed to a platform offering a one-month free trial and ended up being charged because you forgot to cancel it in time? Most of us have experienced this. Some of us even set reminders in our calendars to avoid it happening again...

These types of practices have been on the radar of the Advertising Board for a while now. In the last year’s [September bulletin](#), the Advertising Board had already decided to suspend advertisements for many platforms where such practices were identified.

In this year’s [May bulletin](#), YouTube Premium membership advertisements were reviewed again and that the Advertising Board imposed an administrative fine of **TRY 863,580 (approximately USD 21,200)** on Google in addition to suspending the advertisements. We have reviewed the details of this decision and other similar decisions covered in the September bulletin for you.

1. The Advertising Board’s Assessments

In its decisions, the Board examines three key commercial practices related to the YouTube Premium subscription process:

a) Requiring Credit/Debit Card Information Despite the Promise of a “Free Trial” and Automatically Starting the Subscription After the Trial Period:

YouTube Premium promotes its free trial with phrases like “Try it free for 1 month” and “Try it for 1 month by paying ₺0.” However, to benefit from this trial, consumers are required to enter their credit or debit card information. Moreover, if users do not actively cancel before the trial period ends, a paid subscription is automatically initiated.

The Advertising Board rightly makes the following criticisms: the expressions “free trial” or “try it for ₺0” create the expectation, for the average consumer, that the service can be used for a limited time without any payment or the need to provide payment information. Consumers who will use a free trial period have not yet decided whether they want to use this service. If they do not actively opt-in to continue the services after the trial period, it should be interpreted that they do not wish to proceed. Therefore, the service should automatically terminate at the end of the trial without requiring any additional action.

According to the Advertising Board, the obligation to provide payment information and the initiation of an automatically renewing subscription do not meet this consumer expectation.

b) The Option to Decline the Trial Offer Is Placed Differently and Styled Differently:

In YouTube's mobile app, users who wish to decline the free YouTube Premium trial offer are not presented with this option in the same location or with the same visual prominence as the acceptance option. The only way to decline is by tapping a small "X" icon in the top right corner of the screen.

The Advertising Board considers this to be a "dark commercial pattern" because it negatively affects consumers' freedom of choice by making it difficult for them to reject the offer.

c) Pre-Selection of One of the Three Subscription Options:

On the YouTube Premium website, among the three available subscription types - "Individual," "Family," and "Student" - the "Individual" option comes pre-selected on the relevant screen. The Advertising Board evaluates this as a practice that guides and manipulates the consumer's choice.

The Advertising Board classifies all of these practices as "dark commercial patterns" and finds them in violation of the law on the grounds that they constitute unfair commercial practices.

2. What Changed Between the September and May Bulletin Decisions?

In its September bulletin last year, the Advertising Board had already decided to suspend the relevant advertisements on the same grounds. In its most recent review, it references that previous decision and emphasizes that these practices are still ongoing.

In its defense, Google states that it has made efforts to comply with the decision to suspend advertising and has prioritized this process. However, as a company that provides services globally, it points out that the decision-making process took a long time and required intensive engineering and localization work.

Nevertheless, the Advertising Board found these explanations insufficient. As a result, in its second review, it imposed not only another ad suspension penalty but also an administrative fine of **TRY 863,580 (approximately USD 21,200)** applying the maximum limit.

3. Other Platforms Reviewed by the Advertising Board and the "Fizy" Exception

In its September bulletin last year, the Advertising Board also **decided to suspend the advertisements** of platforms such as Amazon Prime, MUBI, Spotify Premium, Storytel, Disney Plus, BluTV, and Netflix, citing similar concerns regarding their subscription practices.

In fact, in its September bulletin, the Advertising Board also offered a hint of a possible solution for these platforms. This was because, after reviewing a similar campaign on the Fizy app, the Board concluded that the campaign did not violate the regulations.

In the Fizy campaign, promoted under the slogan “*First month free,*” the following clarification was provided:

"After subscribing to any of the packages, you can benefit from the first month free campaign. After the campaign, your membership will continue at the standard rates of the package you selected. This campaign can only be used once."

According to the Advertising Board, this promotion clearly informs consumers that the membership begins immediately upon subscribing, but that no fee will be charged for the first month as part of the campaign. Moreover, unlike other platforms, there is no misleading use of the term “free trial”. Therefore, the consumer is provided with accurate and sufficient information before the subscription contract is concluded.

4. Conclusion

Based on the published decisions, it appears that the Advertising Board has, for the time being, only reassessed the commercial practices related to YouTube Premium, which had previously been subject to suspension orders in September.

Will the re-examination of practices on other platforms await consumer complaints in the coming months, or will the Advertising Board launch investigations on its own initiative? This is difficult to predict. However, in light of the recent YouTube Premium decision, it seems highly likely that the Board may, in future reassessments, impose not only advertisement suspension penalties but also administrative fines. Accordingly, it would be prudent for platforms to review their free usage campaigns and explore compliant alternatives, as illustrated by the Fizy example.

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