

Yelp agrees to pay fine for child privacy violations

WASHINGTON, USA: Online ratings operator Yelp agreed to pay \$450,000 to settle US charges that it illegally collected data on children, in violation of privacy laws, officials have said.



Yelp has been fined \$450,000 by the FTC for allowing under-age children to register on its site and for not protecting their privacy. Image: [AutMont](#)

The US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) said that Yelp, between 2009 and 2013, collected personal information from children through the Yelp app without first notifying parents and obtaining their consent.

According to the FTC, several thousand children provided a date of birth showing they were under 13 years old, but that Yelp nevertheless collected information from them, including names, e-mail addresses and locations, as well as other information that they posted.

The investigation found that Yelp's mobile app failed to follow guidelines under the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, or COPPA. The agency said Yelp did not adequately test its apps to ensure that users under the age of 13 were prohibited from registering.

Yelp said in a blog post it reached the agreement on the penalty. "The violations came from a bug in our mobile registration process that failed to flag registrations from children under 13," Yelp said.

"The good news is that only about 0.02% of users who actually completed Yelp's registration process during this time provided an underage birth date and we have good reason to believe that many of them were actually adults," Yelp said.

"Regardless, we don't want any ambiguity when it comes to our users. When this problem was brought to our attention, we fixed it immediately and closed the affected users' accounts," the company said.

Yelp added that it doesn't promote itself as a place for children, and we certainly don't expect or encourage them to write

reviews about their plumbers, dentists, or latest gastronomic discoveries.

The FTC said the mobile gaming company TinyCo., which produces games for children, agreed to pay a \$300,000 penalty for similar violations.

Source: AFP via I-Net Bridge

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