

Walmart Yanks Universe Of Play From Roblox After Complaints About Deceptive Marketing

by **Steve Ellwanger** , Yesterday



Walmart has removed Universe of Play from metaverse platform Roblox after Truth In Advertising (TINA) and three other consumer groups labeled it an “advergame” that exposed young children to deceptive marketing.

Walmart launched Universe of Play last September along with another Roblox immersive experience called **Walmart Land**.

As previously **reported**, within Universe of Play, “Young kids are encouraged to ‘collect the hottest toys’ and make a ‘wish list’ of toys that can then be purchased at Walmart,” TINA said in a January letter to the Children’s Advertising Review Unit (CARU) of BBB National Programs.

“The lower end of the age range for several featured toys is three years old. As kids walk through the game, they are manipulated into unwrapping advertisements disguised as mystery gifts—with the gifts only revealed as ads after opening and even then, the disclosure appears in illegible fine print at the bottom of pop-up boxes.”

According to TINA and the consumer advocacy groups Fairplay, Center for Digital Democracy and the National Association of Consumer Advocates, Universe of Play bore a certification seal from CARU’s Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) Safe Harbor Program (see accompanying image).

In a statement last week, TINA said that Walmart had “quietly removed” Universe of Play from Roblox while expressing frustration that CARU hadn’t been more proactive.

“TINA is always pleased when deceptive marketing is removed or corrected, particularly when it impacts a vulnerable population such as young children,” said legal director Laura Smith.

“It is unfortunate, however, the deception ever existed in the first place and we urge CARU to do everything it can to prevent this type of wrongdoing from happening again in the future.”

Marketing Daily reached out to Walmart and CARU for comment, but had not heard back from Walmart by deadline. CARU declined to comment.



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Michael Scippa from **Alcohol Justice (formerly Marin Institute)**, April 4, 2023 at 12:21 p.m.
Kudos to TINA, Fairplay, Center for Digital Democracy and the National Association of Consumer Advocates for taking action to protect young children from rapacious marketing masquerading as harmless entertainment.