

Samsung Ad Injections Perfectly Illustrate Why I Want My 'Smart' TV To Be As Dumb As Possible

Samsung has been doing a great job this week illustrating why consumers should want their televisions to be as dumb as technologically possible. The company took heat for much of the week after its privacy policy revealed Samsung smart TVs have been collecting and analyzing user living room conversations in order to improve voice recognition technology. While that's fairly common for voice recognition tech, the idea of living room gear that spies on you has been something cable operators have been patenting for years. And while Samsung has [changed its privacy policy language](#) to more clearly illustrate what it's doing, the fact that smart TV security is [relatively awful](#) has many people quite justly concerned about smart TVs becoming another poorly-guarded repository for consumer data.

But it's something else stupid that Samsung did this week that got less press attention, but that I actually find far more troubling. Numerous Samsung smart TV users around the world this week stated that the company has [started injecting ads into content being watched on third-party devices and services](#). For example, some users found that when streaming video content from PC to the living room using Plex, they suddenly were faced with a large ad for Pepsi that actually originated from their Samsung TV:

"Reports for the unwelcome ad interruption [first surfaced on a Subreddit dedicated to Plex](#), the media center app that is available on a variety of connected devices, including

Samsung smart TVs. Plex users typically use the app to stream local content from their computer or a network-attached storage drive to their TV, which is why many were very surprised to see an online video ad being inserted into their videos. A Plex spokesperson assured me that the company has nothing to do with the ad in question.”

Now Samsung hasn't responded yet to this particular issue, and you'd have to think that the company accidentally enabled some kind of trial ad injection technology, since anything else would be idiotic brand seppuku (in fact it does appear like it has been [working with Yahoo](#) on just this kind of technology). Still, users say the ads have them rushing to disable the smart portion of Samsung TVs, whether that's by [using a third party solution](#) or [digging into the bowels of the TV's settings to refuse Samsung's end user agreement](#). And that raises an important point: many consumers (myself included) want their TV to be as slack-jawed, glassy-eyed, dumb and dim-witted as possible.

Like broadband ISPs and net neutrality, Samsung clearly just can't help itself, and is eager to use its position as a television maker to ham-fistedly inject itself into a multi-billion dollar emerging Internet video market. But that runs in stark contrast to the fact that most people just want their television (whether it's 720p or 4K) to **simply be a dumb monitor** they *hook smart devices of their choice up to*. Just like people want their broadband ISPs to get out of the way and provide a quality dumb pipe, many people just want a traditional, dumb television to do a great job displaying the signals sent to it and nothing more.

Dumb TVs just make more sense for most users: many people own televisions for ten years, and the streaming hardware embedded in these sets quickly becomes irrelevant even with updated firmware. Dumb TVs, with less sophisticated internals, should also be cheaper to buy. And if you're any kind of respectable

audiophile, you've got game consoles and devices like Roku hooked into a receiver and a decent 5.1 (or above) system, making the set's internals redundant. Swapping out a crop of the latest and greatest (not to mention relatively cheap) Rokus or Chromecasts every few years just makes more sense for most of us.

Last I saw, [around 50%](#) of people who buy connected TVs aren't using the connected portion of the set. Yet if you [peruse the latest sets](#) (especially the ongoing standards minefield that is 4K or UHD) you'll find that buying a dumb television is getting increasingly more difficult. I won't even get into the problems with HDCP 2.2 DRM stifling 4K growth and confusing the hell out of consumers on the bleeding edge, as that's [another article entirely](#).

Bottom line: I want my pipes dumb, my TVs dumber, and **my choice** of a full variety of intelligent devices and services without bull-headed companies stumbling drunkenly into my line of sight. Samsung's clumsy week simply couldn't have illustrated the growing need for dim-witted television sets any better.