

August 6, 2018

Federal Trade Commission  
Office of the Secretary  
600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Suite CC-5610 (Annex C)  
Washington, DC 20580

Re: Competition and Consumer Protection in the 21st Century Hearing, Project Number P181201

As a consumer, I feel it is an infringement on my privacy that nearly everything I do online is being tracked and sold. I don't believe I should be tracked at all, but at the very least, my informed permission should be needed, and by that I mean an understandable explanation of what will be collected and how it will be used. Some of the stories I've heard - like Google android phones tracking people even when the feature was turned off and the SIM card was removed, and Alexa sending out recordings of household conversations - are alarming. The problem is that when there are a limited number of companies dominating the online marketplace, consumers are left with few choices and the power is held by those companies. As you review the implications of these new technologies, remember the *people* behind the "data". We need more protections from the monopolistic and dangerous practices of these companies.

I use most of Google apps, but I've noticed that even if I do a Google search and then later hop on to Facebook, I now see ads relating to that previous search. It is very concerning that these ads continue to pop up over and over again. I feel like I have a spy in my home watching everything I do, and I do feel that they are trying to influence what I see and what I purchase. We know for sure that Google is trying to influence our purchases, and they were recently fined by the EU for altering search results to promote their products. And YouTube and Twitter were found to be removing posts with certain political voices, threatening the fabric of our democracy. There seems to be a lot of anti-competitive behavior, and lack of competition feeds this idea that these companies can do what they want.

I am a long-time Doberman breeder and reach a lot of my clients through the internet. So, I really can't remove myself from major platforms like Google or Facebook. But I was extremely disturbed to find all the information accessible by simply putting my phone number into a Google search. Details like where my house is located, how many acres I have, who has ever lived in this house and more!

Part of the problem is that the terms and conditions we are asked to agree to for using these apps, are not written for the average person to understand. My job requires me to drive to different locations, and my company vehicle is not GPS equipped. After using my phone to locate my destination, I then turn off the location feature. What I find, though, is that I am still asked if I want to "check in" to that place or "rate" the location. Even if I wanted to use a different map app, I would still need to agree to the same type of legalese terms and conditions.

I am disgusted by the data breaches at Equifax and Google and feel that because of Equifax's line of business, that they should be closed down. I feel a bit differently because Facebook is a social platform and you have the choice to use it or not, but Equifax should be held to a higher standard. I have had my credit card information stolen a couple of times, and it seems more likely to happen after I've made purchases on my computer, not my phone. Luckily my bank caught it and was able to return my money, but I felt violated.

We need the FTC to consider these situations and think about the real people behind them. Help protect our information and hold companies that misuse it accountable.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Crippen  


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