

Mike Fitzgerald

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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

It bothers me to know that what we do online is generating data that a few big companies are collecting and selling. But, who *wouldn't* that bother? A lot of people like privacy, just as I do. All these big companies are seeing my data and sharing it, and keeping details of what I get online. Without a doubt, I should have a say in what data of mine is collected and how it's used.

I use Google Maps quite a bit, among other sites and services, but I probably did not read all the terms and conditions when I signed up for them. It was a bit like putting something together and then reading the directions. The average person probably cannot understand all that legal language, to begin with. By clicking "I Accept" on pages of terms to use the phone or buy something, we unknowingly agree to give away our data. That's not fair. There ought to be a much clearer disclosure of what data an app or service is going to use, and the consumer should have more control over it.

I heard about the Facebook scandal on Fox News. I heard that he sells our information and we don't know what he's selling. I have also seen for myself that strange things having to do with my data happen online: I have been looking at something at walmart.com, and then I'll see a related Walmart ad on a completely different website. It will just pop up out of nowhere, and it's annoying. I think, *How do you know what I'm doing?* Similarly, it makes you feel terrible that your phone is tracking you. We are in the United States, and we are meant to have a thing called freedom, but with all of our electronic devices tracking us without our given consent, it is worrisome.

Further, YouTube is removing videos with conservative viewpoints and flagging the accounts of people expressing them. I worry about them doing this to people with conservative positions. I watch Fox News, and if you're conservative, media companies, like YouTube, don't want to hear it. It is also going on at college campuses, as well. Now we are becoming one-sided, and only the liberals are being listened to. Not being able to have an honest and open debate will have a harmful effect on our democracy.

Google has also been using its dominance among online search engines to keep out competitors by altering search results so that only information is shown. That is a way for them to manipulate us. When there is only one company providing a service, they can do whatever they want. It would be like having one car dealership--whatever they ask, you'd have to pay. But the more options you have, the better deals you can get. If there were more choices in the marketplace, then companies would be more concerned about treating their customers better to keep their business!

It's not a fair exchange for these companies to use our information for profit without our express consent in return for using their services. It's kind of like making a deal with the devil. They say, *We'll let you have this for free, but I'm going to take this and that--your birthday, your address, where you live, your friends.* It's just not the right thing to do. Even if they charge for it, you would need to particularly say, "Okay, you can use all my data, where I live, my phone number, my birthday," and the whole nine yards. But I sure wouldn't do that!

The bottom line is that sharing people's data and information is wrong. The fact that these companies are making money off of me, invading my privacy, and taking my information without me knowing is **wrong**.

Regards,

Mike Fitzgerald