

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

The internet was intended to help people get needed information, shop more quickly, and make things easier. Now, when you go online you get punished. Websites you visit sell your information and then you get bombarded with emails. You may even miss the important emails you need to see because they are mixed in with so much junk mail. When I purchase something online and a site requires my email to proceed, I used to think it was just so they could email me back a confirmation of my order and shipping information. Actually, they turn around and sell my data to someone else and I get solicited for things I don't want. Even if you try to unsubscribe from these lists, the stuff just keeps coming. I am glad to see that the Federal Trade Commission agrees with me that this is a serious problem that needs to be addressed now.

We like to travel, especially on cruises. When I go onto a travel site, I should be able to just get the information I need from *them only*. Instead, I get information about other sites and cruises I didn't ask for. You should not be harassed with 10,000 additional advertisements when you visit one site. The other problem is that many of these sites are hooked to viruses. The other day, I clicked on something on my screen just out of curiosity. I got a warning from Microsoft that it contained a virus that was about to download and launch.

I shop online using Amazon. I use Google search because I have a son in school and he needs it for some of his homework. I don't want where he searches to be tracked. I don't use Facebook because I think it is a dangerous thing. It lets people into your home even if they are not your immediate family or friends. There is too much info on there; some things we need to keep private. I have a smartphone because I need one in my profession as a nurse. I use it only for essentials and I don't like that it can track my locations. I am concerned that they can monitor my conversations and go behind my back and use it to get information to sell.

Companies like Google that sell our data are using us like products. That data is valuable and they are taking it without my clear understanding. Google has even been caught altering the results of their search engine information to favor their own products. They are making billions of dollars off of us. They should give some of those billions back to us. It should be one of my bonuses at the end of the year, like when I get my tax refund. They should say, "Thank you for playing nice on the computer. Now, we are going to send you a bonus check for using your information and making money off of it."

These corporate giants say that "free" access to their sites is a fair tradeoff for using my personal data as they choose. If their sites were free, they should not be making money off of them that way. What they say is free has become a nuisance. We are being bombarded. We are busy people. We don't have time to come home from work and look at 10,000 advertisements. It is even more concerning that sites that have our personal data are not keeping it secure. I have heard about the problems on Facebook. I have not been a victim of identity theft or an online scam personally. However, Duke Hospital where I work has. The hospital's computer was hacked and the hackers were trying to lock up the computers until they received a "ransom." This is really bad when it affects the medical field. People we care for are sick and we need to access their information to help them.

The bottom line is, if I want to go to Starbucks, I'll look up where they are. I don't want it to pop up on my phone without prompting. I have no control over this now. That needs to change. The terms I agree to when I visit a site need to be clearer. They need to put down in simple black and white that by clicking "I Agree," my information is going to other advertisers of their choosing. I need the opportunity to opt out of this and the confidence that the data they do keep is protected.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Welsh

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