

Sheryl Cason



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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

When I use Google, I must first agree to their terms of use, which includes how they will use the personal information I give them. When they share it with others, this means there is the opportunity for this data to be stolen for inappropriate uses. This needs to change. I have two problems with how things work now. First, the disclosure I must agree to on sites like Google or Facebook is not clear. I do glance at it first, but it is lengthy and complex. These disclosures on how personal information is shared must be presented in a way that the ordinary person can understand. The language should be simple and brief with a clear "yes" or "no" choice. It is not fair to expect people to agree to something they do not understand.

Second, these media companies are treating us like *things*, like products to sell and not as people. When they sell our personal information to other companies, they are actually selling us. They say this is fair because we use their sites and search engines for free. Actually, we pay a very large price for this—the loss of control of personal information about who we are and what we do in our lives. They use this for their own profit with no concern how it will later impact us and our families.

I don't want to be tracked by my Android smart phone as Google has done in the past. I don't want to look up something using their search engine only to learn they have manipulated the information so the choices that benefit them always rise to the top. I don't want ads from places I don't know about or have never visited to pop up on my computer screen when I turn it on.

Because they have monopolized the market, companies like Google or Facebook can pretty much do what they want. They are such big entities that they have all the control. If consumers had more options, it would give companies more incentive to treat us differently. They would value our business, not just exploit us. I could probably figure out a way to conduct my online life without Google, but it would be very hard. They know this. Until the rules for how the media giants collect our personal data and what they can do with it are changed, consumers will not have the power they deserve.

I have chosen to write to you and give you my perspective on this urgent issue to help point up just how big the problem is. As an individual, there is not much I can do to fix it. The Federal Trade Commission can.

Sincerely,

Sheryl Cason