

Abhay Uppal : Nothing lasts forever... Right?

What is the most valuable thing in the world? Oil, diamond, gold? Guess what, it is your data. Maybe not financially. Every website you click on, every post you like and everything you buy is recorded. This is then sold to third party companies. What companies? Who knows? There are so many unknowns to this making this such a grey area, but at this point in time, the fact that your data is being taken should be common knowledge.

Some companies notorious for this are Google, Facebook and Instagram and I am pretty sure everyone here uses these. There have been multiple lawsuits filed against these companies for unethical practices not only with customer's data but with their treatment of employees. Now I am not here to say boycott these companies, as they hold monopolies in the social media industry. However, there are alternatives and different methods to ensure that these companies and many others are limited with the amount of data they can take from you.

One method is a Virtual Private Network, VPN for short. Again, I am assuming most of you know what it is, but here is a simplified explanation for those of you who do not. It creates a data tunnel from your device to the site you visit and the cookies from that site are unable to track you as that data tunnel is similar to a cloaking device, so the data tunnel can be located in Dusseldorf or Atlanta and it will not take your data from where you are. This is extremely effective, but even then, some snippets of data are still taken by the company providing the vpn, but not to your internet provider

Another method is using an entirely different search engine. Duck Duck Go is one which prides itself in not tracking its user's data and actively shows it blocking foreign data snatchers. I personally use this as when using Google before, looking at items on Amazon, Asos and literally any other website I have been on, it shows ads of those websites when I am searching for something else like research for my homework. If you want to take it to an extreme, you can download Tor Browser for complete anonymity but then again there are risks to this, so tread cautiously in that area. The downside of this is that what you search up is still shown on the router making your data available indirectly.

However, a completely different approach to this is seeing your data as a something worth selling. There are companies that exist which will actually pay for your data. These are commonly known as Survey sites. You enter information such as your name, birth date and maybe address and can get paid to the sum of 100s of pounds. While researching this, I found that a Facebook user sold his data for \$2733 on the website Kickstarter. And with this they included many keystrokes, mouse movements, and many screenshots of what they were doing to be able to accumulate this amount of money.

There is probably a way to completely block off anyone looking at your personal data, but it is a way which could only be understood by someone who is much more proficient in this area. There is nothing much we can do about this as in the future data will be much more publicly available to your future employers or future universities you apply to. My warning is to at least take something of this advice as the internet knows more about you than you do yourself.