

ISP Assignment Report (A1.1)

Submitted by: Hari Kishan Reddy Abbasani

Companies and Data Request Method

I have requested my user data from the following 11 companies:

1. Apple: Used Apple's Data & Privacy portal: <https://privacy.apple.com/>.
2. Instagram: Accessed data through Instagram settings by navigating to "Settings" and selecting "Privacy."
3. Netflix: Requested data through Netflix's privacy settings on their official website.
4. WhatsApp (Meta Platforms, Inc.): Requested data through WhatsApp settings.
5. Google: I have got my data from <http://takeout.google.com/settings/takeout>.
6. Zomato: Sent a data request email by contacting Zomato's customer support or privacy team.
7. Twitter: Accessed Twitter's data by going to the "Settings and Privacy" section, then selecting "Your Twitter data."
8. LinkedIn: Requested data through settings by navigating to "Account & Privacy" > "Getting a copy of your data."
9. Amazon: I got my data from <https://www.amazon.com/hz/privacy-central/data-requests/preview.html>
10. Uber: Accessed Uber's data access in the "Privacy Settings" or "Account Settings" section on the Uber app or website.
11. AMC: Utilized data access features on AMC's official website, often located in the "Privacy" or "Data Access" section.

Findings

Upon reviewing the data provided by these companies, I made the following key observations:

- **Personal Information:** All companies had collected personal information such as my name, email address, and contact details.
- **Location Data:** Several companies, including Google, Uber, Netflix, Apple, AMC, and Amazon, had detailed location data, tracking my movements when using their services. This data included specific locations and timestamps.
- **Communication Records:** Companies like WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn went beyond my initial expectations by retaining extensive communication records. This encompassed messages, calls, and tweets, providing a comprehensive archive of my interactions.
- **Preferences:** My data archives unveiled my preferences for content, products, and services. This included a range of preferences, from music and food choices to movie preferences, all of which were frequently utilized for recommendation algorithms.
- **Engagement Data:** What was particularly surprising was that Instagram had shared my data with third-party companies for ads, some of which I hadn't even heard of. This revelation was concerning and raised questions about data privacy and security. This included ad clicks, content interactions, and engagement metrics. Instagram was particularly notable for its detailed engagement data.

Data Collection Variability

Data collection practices varied significantly among companies and appeared to align with their revenue models:

- **Advertising Revenue Models:** Companies such as Google, Instagram and Twitter collected more extensive data to personalize advertisements and content recommendations. This included tracking online behavior for targeted advertising.
- **Product Sales Models:** In contrast, companies like Apple, Amazon, and Netflix primarily collected data related to product usage and purchasing habits. The data collected was less focused on advertising and more on improving product experiences.

Planned Changes

Based on these findings, I plan to take the following key steps to enhance my data privacy:

- **Review Privacy Settings:** I intend to review and adjust privacy settings on certain platforms to limit data sharing, disable unnecessary tracking features, and enhance personal data protection.
- **Data Minimization:** I will adopt a data minimization approach by sharing only essential information when using online services and being mindful of granting permissions.

California Opt-Out

- **Opt-Out Availability:** Apple, Instagram, Netflix, WhatsApp, Google, Twitter, LinkedIn, Amazon, Uber, and AMC offer California opt-out options. Zomato is not applicable in USA as I used my Indian account.
- **Importance of Opt-Out:** These opt-out features help individuals in California to control over how their data is used for monetization and targeted advertising. It makes sure that the personal info is not used/sold for third party companies for ads.

Conclusion

This assignment helps me in understanding the extent of data collection by various companies and taking proactive measures to safeguard personal information. Also, it taught me reviewing and adjusting privacy settings regularly is essential for maintaining control over data sharing and ensuring a higher level of data privacy.