Brian Mueller

Netflix and Hulu are two major services for streaming video content, and they have similar yet distinct privacy policies ([Netflix](#) | [Hulu](#)). They both collect personal identifying information and other information that is manually supplied by the user. They both also collect preferences and other similar data automatically by way of which shows/movies the user watches. Finally, they collect metadata around the user, such as interactions with advertisements, network characteristics, cookies, and third-party services. Similarly, both services use data for the purposes of targeted ads, provisions to promotional partners, and offering aggregate data to business partners. In many ways, the services are identical.

However, there are a few traits that make each service's policies unique. Netflix can unique collect olfactory data of California users, an interesting tidbit under the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) Privacy Notice. Netflix also allows a user to request the deletion of their data. Conversely, Hulu states that it is within their legal rights to retain a user's data "for various legal, operational, accounting, and auditing purposes." Also, Hulu collects "features such as volume/mute settings for the Video Player" which Netflix does not monitor. None of the distinct aspects of the policies are red flags; rather, they are minor yellow flags.

In short, the privacy policies are virtually identical, using user data with the intention of making the user experience richer based on the user's data. However, a closer look reveals interesting caveats such as network traits: "device IDs or other unique identifiers, including for your network devices" (Netflix). While most of the policies are transparent, it seems as though the explicit usage of network characteristics is lacking explanation.