

## Activity 4: Pros and Cons of Tracking

Look at the resources below that give different points of view regarding web tracking and behavioural advertising.

How do you feel about web tracking?

Is it worth it in order to receive free services?

Would you rather pay for services using money?

Is it right to use tools such as Ad Blockers that block adverts and tracking?

Yes, advertisements can be an annoyance, but they're the only way sites can provide content without charging for it. Some argue that advertising is an outdated business model, but so far, the replacement for it remains a unicorn – a creature that's kinda cool to think about, but ultimately mythical.

### Suffer The Consequences

Suggestions that ad blockers are ethically sound remain dubious. It's obvious that without revenue to support quality content, that content will disappear, and the world will be worse off because of it.

**Matt Smith, makeuseof.com**

<http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/ad-blocking-browser-extensions-killing-internet/>

Here is my message to the advertising "giants" and publishers. If you want people to stop using ad-blockers, respect their choices – do not track people without consent. If you want to show adverts do so without tracking and profiling – serve contextual advertising instead of behavioural. You see, people understand that web sites might need to include advertising to fund their free content but what they don't like is being tracked and profiled with absolutely zero control. The problem was created by the very people who are trying to fight it – if you want to fix it, stop tracking.

**Alexander Hanff**

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/20141208143510-26662417-the-war-against-ad-blockers>

If you read a site and care about its well being, then you should not block ads (or you **subscribe** to sites like Ars that offer ads-free versions of the site). If a site has advertising you don't agree with, don't go there. I think it is far better to vote with page views than to show up and consume resources without giving anything in return. I think in some ways the Internet and its vast anonymity feeds into a culture where many people do not think about the people, the families, the careers that go into producing a website. People talk about how annoying advertisements are, but I'll tell you what: it's a lot more annoying and frustrating to have to cut staff and cut benefits because a huge portion of readers block ads. Yet I've seen that happen at dozens of great sites over the last few years, Ars included.

**Ken Fisher, Ars Technica**

<http://arstechnica.com/business/2010/03/why-ad-blocking-is-devastating-to-the-sites-you-love/>

Behavioural tracking is inherently invasive. The NSA revelations show that building an infrastructure that supports surveillance is dangerous even if it's done for purely commercial purposes. The profiles constructed out of these masses of data may contain highly sensitive information: everything you read, watch, listen to, and search for on the Net. Advertisers claim that such data lacks identifiers such as name and address, and therefore is not legally personal data, which means that citizens cannot file subject access requests to find out what information these companies hold about them - if they even are aware which companies to ask. Advertising networks have no relationship with consumers; their customers are advertisers and websites. A further degree of separation applies to third-party brokers, which trade and cross-match such information to create detailed profiles they can resell. In addition, as usage of behavioural tracking grows, it enables fine-grained discrimination, varying per customer which services are offered at what price. At the end of 2013, the state of California led the way by passing amendments to the California Online Privacy Protection Act that require greater transparency about how companies respond to Do Not Track signals

**Open Rights Group**

<https://www.openrightsgroup.org/issues/behavioural-tracking>

Of course you can opt out of some of this data collection, such as loyalty cards, but Google and the internet are now part of our everyday lives and opting out of them is impossible. Besides, preventing companies from sharing data is difficult in that those that permit you to do so usually make it hard for the user to do so, or even impossible, in the case of Facebook and Google.

"If you're not paying for something, you're not the customer; you're the product being sold," - a quote about the internet and marketing from Andrew Lewis. Worse, now we are the customer (we are spending the money) and the product too.

It is hard to escape the conclusion that surrendering our privacy is too high a price to pay for the potential benefits of receiving more relevant marketing and saving some cash.

**Steve Davies, Advertising Producers Association**

[http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/steve-davies/targeted-advertising-v-pr\\_b\\_1827936.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/steve-davies/targeted-advertising-v-pr_b_1827936.html)