



## **Anti-Virus Software Harvests 'Every Search, Every Click, Every Buy, On Every Site'**

Data is the new oil of the 21st century and Technocrats are the new roughnecks. In this case, the software is free but your data is priceless and wantonly harvested without your consent or knowledge. □ TN Editor

An antivirus program used by hundreds of millions of people around the world is selling highly sensitive web browsing data to many of the world's biggest companies, a joint investigation by Motherboard and PCMag has found. Our report relies on leaked user data, contracts, and other company documents that show the sale of this data is both highly sensitive and is in many cases supposed to remain confidential between the company selling the data and the clients purchasing it.

The documents, from a subsidiary of the antivirus giant Avast called Jumpshot, shine new light on the secretive sale and supply chain of peoples' internet browsing histories. They show that the Avast antivirus program installed on a person's computer collects data, and that Jumpshot repackages it into various different products that are then sold

to many of the largest companies in the world. Some past, present, and potential clients include Google, Yelp, Microsoft, McKinsey, Pepsi, Sephora, Home Depot, Condé Nast, Intuit, and many others. Some clients paid millions of dollars for products that include a so-called “All Clicks Feed,” which can track user behavior, clicks, and movement across websites in highly precise detail.

Avast claims to [have more than 435 million active users per month](#), and Jumpshot says it [has data from 100 million devices](#). Avast collects data from users that opt-in and then provides that to Jumpshot, but multiple Avast users told Motherboard they were not aware Avast sold browsing data, raising questions about how informed that consent is.

The data obtained by Motherboard [and PCMag](#) includes Google searches, lookups of locations and GPS coordinates on Google Maps, people visiting companies’ LinkedIn pages, particular YouTube videos, and people visiting porn websites. It is possible to determine from the collected data what date and time the anonymized user visited YouPorn and Pornhub, and in some cases what search term they entered into the porn site and which specific video they watched.

Although the data does not include personal information such as users’ names, it still contains a wealth of specific browsing data, and experts say it could be possible to deanonymize certain users.

In a [press release from July](#), Jumpshot claims to be “the only company that unlocks walled garden data” and seeks to “provide marketers with deeper visibility into the entire online customer journey.” Jumpshot has previously [discussed some of its clients publicly](#). But other companies mentioned in Jumpshot documents include Expedia, IBM, Intuit, which makes TurboTax, L’Oréal, and Home Depot. Employees are instructed not to talk publicly about Jumpshot’s relationships with these companies.

“It’s very granular, and it’s great data for these companies, because it’s down to the device level with a timestamp,” the source said, referring to the specificity and sensitivity of the data being sold. Motherboard granted the source anonymity to speak more candidly about Jumpshot’s processes.

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