

Consumer Convenience and the Invasion of Privacy

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In today's modern age of technology, there is an increasing use of online websites for everyday shopping needs by average consumers. In the midst of this online shopping, many consumers have begun to notice advertisements for recently browsed electronics or clothing items. This is no coincidence; rather, these personalized ads are a part of a larger internet practice actively used by online businesses called "[internet-based advertising](#)." This form of advertising is beginning to be used by larger companies, such as Amazon, and has become an additional pillar of its business, worth a total of \$125 billion.

Many of Amazon's internet-based advertising features are similar to those of Google and Facebook and has largely become successful by offering ways to target users based on their interests, searches and demographics. This targeting is done by directly working with Amazon's staff, who placed the orders themselves. Additionally, Amazon provides advertisers and their agencies access to the self-serve system to run their own campaigns on and off Amazon's websites. The advertising is useful to consumers given that the service consolidates advertisements based upon one's interest and may provide additional information to a shopper regarding a product they would not normally have access to. For advertisers, the service allows for larger access to their products and the ability to target consumers that have an interest in their product. This interrelationship has proven to be successful as businesses have seen an [increase](#) in "clicks" on their websites and a reciprocal increase in the amount of orders for their products.

Although internet-based advertising represents a mutual relationship between consumers and businesses by delivering both convenience and a broader customer base, to what extent is there a boundary for the sake of consumer privacy? The tracking of customers' online activities is typically invisible to consumers. Therefore, the average consumer does not know that due to their shopping on Amazon, an additional business knows where they live simply because they provided a delivery address. They likely do not know that Amazon knows how old their children are from access to their baby registries and even knows who has a cold, from cough syrup ordered with two-hour delivery. Although Amazon does not provide advertisers the name of the customers, it does provide additional information that the average consumer may not want others to have access to. Therefore, there must be additional regulations in place to ensure that there is opportunity for the protection of privacy while also allowing for business advertisements. Many websites have already taken these additional steps by providing real time warnings on webpages that notify visitors that "you are giving implied consent to the use of tracking cookies on this website." These types of "[warnings](#)" allow consumers to know their behavior is being tracked and allows the opportunity to gauge their future use of the respective website accordingly. This



initiative, along with further regulations regarding businesses' use of consumer information, could allow for an effective relationship between shoppers and corporations such as Amazon.