Stores are Tracking Your Every Move

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When you walk into a store, you basically expect that you're going to be recorded on a security video and surreptitiously watched by sales associates lest you decide to steal anything. But did you ever stop to think what information the store is gleaning from your cell?

Nomi, a small startup company, is providing stores with a piece of code that can be installed to allow wireless routers to pull "non-invasive information" from shopper's cell phones. The information is supposed to be non-personal and anonymous, but it still seems a tad shady.

From a business perspective, the data could be pretty useful. The code will pull information about your window displays and tell you the percentage of your customers who walked in off the street, how long a particular customer is in the store, how often that customer comes back, what type of phones everyone is using, and the bounce percentage (if a customer leaves immediately or lingers). Basically, this is a way to assess how your store is doing and pinpoint the good, the bad, and the reason no one is buying. The data is presented in an easy-to-interpret format that utilizes real-time data so you can make changes on the go.

Obviously, Nomi knows privacy will be a concern, so created a privacy pledge for whatever that's worth:

1. Keep each client's data secure and private.
2. Never tie any personally identifiable consumer data to a specific device or behavior.
3. Always allow consumers to opt out of Nomi's service on its website as well as at any retailer using Nomi's technology.

But, if you're the suspicious type, they also offer up a way to unsubscribe from the service. Of course, you'll have to be aware that it exists before you can unsubscribe.

This idea seems potentially hack-prone, but since this way of life seems fairly inevitable, I can't seem to get too upset about it. I'm not going to dump my iPhone or leave it in the car because they're going to collect data. The best I can do right now is unsubscribe and hope that pledge actually means something.

Should companies be allowed to take information from your phone without asking? Leave your comments below or send them to kasey.panetta@advantagemedia.com [1].

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