

TEXT MESSAGES

GEOPRIVACY VIDEO SERIES

[HTTPS://VIMEO.COM/469619017](https://vimeo.com/469619017)

SUMMARY

This video features mock interviews with two adults who separately endured a barrage of overly personal marketing text messages. Both discovered that when they swiped their credit cards at different cafes, they were signed up for a rewards program linking their credit card swipes to their cell phone data and social media accounts, including their locations. These data links enabled the marketing company to calculate how long one of them lingered by a shop window, where they currently were, and whether they were alone, offering discounts for preferred characteristics. The interviewees discuss their reactions to finding out the extent of the data being collected about them.

ACTIVITIES

In small groups, make a list of pros and cons for location-tailored marketing. Are there cases in which you want to receive ads based on where you've been?

Have students call out potential inferences that could be made about individuals using real-time phone data. Could location be used to infer whether someone is on a date, their physical activity levels, or other sensitive information?

RELEVANT ARTICLES

Even Brick-and-Mortar Stores Are Tracking You While You Shop. Neal, M. 2013. Vice.
<https://www.vice.com/en/article/9aapga/even-brick-and-mortar-stores-are-tracking-you-while-you-shop>

Private Intel Firm Buys Location Data to Track People to their 'Doorstep.' Cox, J. 2020. Vice.
<https://www.vice.com/en/article/qj454d/private-intelligence-location-data-xmode-hyas>

How Target Figured Out a Teen Girl was Pregnant Before her Father Did. Hill, K. 2012. Forbes.
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/kashmirhill/2012/02/16/how-target-figured-out-a-teen-girl-was-pregnant-before-her-father-did/>

DISCUSSION POINTS

- How likely do you think it is that companies have teamed up to link credit card information with cell phone location data?
- Is it plausible that companies are collecting data on how long you stand in front of a display or whether you're alone?
- Which is more intrusive, the frequency of the messages these interviewees received, or their personal nature?
- Have you ever inadvertently signed up for marketing communications you didn't want to receive? What did you do?