![CR Consumer Reports logo]

Platform Perceptions:

A Nationally Representative Online Survey

July 2020 Results

Overview of Methodology

Consumer Reports fielded a nationally representative online survey of Americans to explore Americans' experiences and opinions about online platforms. The results are based on interviews conducted from July 7-22, 2020.

The survey was administered by NORC at the University of Chicago through its AmeriSpeak® Panel to a nationally representative sample. Interviews were conducted online in English and in Spanish. In total NORC collected 3,219 interviews, 3,105 in English and 114 in Spanish. Final data are weighted by age, gender, race/Hispanic ethnicity, housing tenure, telephone status, education, and Census Division to be proportionally representative of the US adult population.

The margin of error for results based on the total sample is +/-2.17 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Smaller subgroups will have larger error margins, and only those subgroups for which there are at least 100 unweighted cases are included.

TOPLINE RESULTS

The questions presented below were shown to respondents in this order unless otherwise noted. Where appropriate, question verbiage, response answer choices, or direction of scales were randomized or rotated and those instances are noted below.

Prepared by CR Survey Research Department, March 2021

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PLATFORM PERCEPTIONS INTRO.

> **For this survey we are interested in your experiences and behaviors using online platforms.   An online platform is a technology-driven internet business model that allows people to produce or sell content, goods, and services online and at the same time people can come to consume those goods, services, or content via the internet. Some examples include Google (internet search content and advertising platform), Facebook/Instagram, Twitter (social platforms), Amazon (commerce platform), etc.**

Q1. *[SHOWED WITH ADDITIONAL INFO TEXT: 'SEARCH ENGINES FIND THE INFORMATION ON THE WEB AND DISPLAY THE RESULTS IN ONE PLACE.' SELECT ALL THAT APPLY. RANDOMIZE ITEMS WITH 'OTHER' ANCHORED AT THE END AND TEXT CAPTURED.]*

Which, if any, of the following search engines have you used in the past 12 months?	
	Total
	%
Google	98
Yahoo!	38
Bing	33
DuckDuckgo	9
Ask.com	5
Yandex	1
Baidu	1
Other	5
Base: All respondents	3,219

Q2.

When using an online platform (such as Google, Amazon, etc.) to shop or search for information, how often do you click past the first page of search results to see other choices that might appear after the first page?	
	Total
	%
Always	24
Sometimes	55
Rarely	18
Never	4
Base: All respondents	3,215

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Q3.

Please tell us if you think the following statement is true or false. "Online platforms collect data about what you do even away from their services, including when you visit other companies' websites or apps, so that they can build a more comprehensive profile on you."	
	Total
	%
True	96
False	4
Base: All respondents	3,215

Q4. *[IF Q3 = 'TRUE', SHOWED ADDITIONAL TEXT: 'MANY ONLINE PLATFORMS COLLECT DATA ABOUT WHAT YOU DO EVEN AWAY FROM THEIR SERVICES, INCLUDING WHEN YOU VISIT OTHER COMPANIES' WEBSITES OR APPS, SO THAT THEY CAN BUILD A MORE COMPREHENSIVE PROFILE OF YOU.' IF Q3 = 'FALSE' OR 'SKIPPED', SHOWED ADDITIONAL TEXT: 'IN FACT, MANY ONLY PLATORMS DO COLLECT DATA ABOUT WHAT YOU DO EVEN AWAY FROM THEIR SERVICES, INCLUDING WHEN YOU VISIT OTHER COMPANIES' WEBSITES OR APPS, SO THAT THEY CAN BUILD A MORE COMPREHENSIVE PROFILE ON YOU.' BACK BUTTON REMOVED FROM THIS PAGE SO RESPONDENT COULD NOT CHANGE THEIR RESPONSE TO Q3.]*

How concerned or not concerned are you about this practice?	
	Total
	%
Very concerned	28
Somewhat concerned	53
Not too concerned	17
Not at all concerned	2
Base: All respondents	3,217

Q5.

When thinking about the data online platforms (such as Google, Amazon, etc.) can collect about you, including your personal information, shopping and purchasing history, and other online activities, how concerned or not concerned are you about the amount of data they store about you?	
	Total
	%
Very concerned	38
Somewhat concerned	47
Not too concerned	14
Not at all concerned	1
Base: All respondents	3,215

Q6.

When using an online platform (such as Amazon or Google) to shop or search for information, how confident or not confident are you that online platforms show you search results in an objective and unbiased way ?	
	Total
	%
Very confident	6
Somewhat confident	37
Not too confident	42
Not at all confident	15
Base: All respondents	3,199

[Q7 AND Q8 WERE DISPLAYED ON THE SAME PAGE]
Q7. *[BACK BUTTON WAS REMOVED FOR THIS QUESTION]*

Some companies and sellers pay online platforms to have their products and services displayed higher on the results page, which allows for more visibility and a greater likelihood of clicks/traffic to their site. Were you familiar with this practice before today?	
	Total
	%
Yes	79
No	21
Base: All respondents	3,209

Q8.

Do you think this practice is fair or unfair?	
	Total
	%
Fair, even if it is <u>not labeled</u> as a paid ad	5
Fair, but only if it <u>is labeled</u> as a paid ad	58
Unfair	25
No opinion	12
Base: All respondents	3,215

Q9.

	Total
When using an online platform (such as Google or Amazon) to shop or search for information, how easy or difficult is it for you to determine if the search results are being shown in an objective, unbiased way, versus because the platform was paid to show them to you in that order or way?	
	%
Very easy	9
Somewhat easy	45
Somewhat difficult	36
Very difficult	10
Skipped	1
Base: All respondents	3,219

[Q10 AND Q11 WERE DISPLAYED ON THE SAME PAGE]

Q10.

	Total
Some online platforms have their <u>own</u> branded products and services (such as Amazon Kindle or Google Nest), and they will often display these products or services higher on a results page than products or services produced or sold by others. This allows for more visibility and a greater likelihood of clicks or traffic to their site or product. **Were you familiar with this practice before today?**	
	%
Yes	74
No	26
Base: All respondents	3,205

Q11.

	Total
Do you think this practice is fair or unfair?	
	%
Fair, even if this preferred placement is <u>not openly disclosed</u>	10
Fair, but only if this preferred placement <u>is openly disclosed</u>	52
Unfair	23
No opinion	14
Base: All respondents	3,208

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Q12. *[RANDOMIZE ITEMS. ROTATE SCALE WITH 'I DON'T KNOW' ANCHORED AT THE END.]*

When using an online platform <u>to shop or search for information,</u> how much of a problem, if at all, are the following practices?	
	Total
	%
Personalized pricing where a retailer uses personal data collected on individual customers to tailor prices by setting a different price or offering discounts to some people but not others. This practice is often referred to as Dynamic Pricing.	
A major problem	43
A moderate problem	31
A minor problem	12
Not a problem at all	5
I don't know	9
Large online platforms (such as Google and Amazon) collecting information about emerging and existing products and services, including the price people are willing to pay for them, so they can make and sell those products themselves. This sets the platform up as a direct competitor with the often smaller company.	
A major problem	35
A moderate problem	38
A minor problem	13
Not a problem at all	6
I don't know	7
Online platforms becoming so large and powerful that it is difficult for smaller sellers and new sellers to enter and compete in the marketplace. This can result in fewer choices for consumers.	
A major problem	47
A moderate problem	34
A minor problem	10
Not a problem at all	3
I don't know	6
Online search platforms and social networking platforms controlling what you see when you use their platforms.	
A major problem	44
A moderate problem	33
A minor problem	14
Not a problem at all	3
I don't know	6
Base: All respondents	3,203

Q13. *[ROTATE ITEMS.]*

Big tech mergers and acquisitions (e.g., Facebook/Instagram and Google/YouTube) have been criticized for blocking current and future competition for these companies.

Which of the following statements comes closest to your view, even if neither is exactly right?

	Total
	%
It is unfair because they are undermining competition and consumer choice in America	79
It is fair because this is just how business works in America	20
Skipped	1
Base: All respondents	3,219

Q14. *[ROTATE ITEMS.]*

Some online platforms serve as a connection between third party businesses and consumers. In this role, platforms serve as a "middleman" to connect sellers and buyers, and they take a percentage of the sale as their "cut" or fee for executing the sale.

For example, restaurant delivery platforms like Seamless, Uber Eats, and GrubHub offer food delivery services from restaurants to consumers. As more and more restaurants use these delivery platforms and as the platforms increase their "cut," it creates a disadvantage for the ones who cannot afford to pay these fees since they lose out on the exposure that these platforms provide. On the other hand, it offers tremendous convenience for customers and expands participating restaurants' exposure, helping to increase their business.

Which of the following statements comes closest to your view, even if neither is exactly right?

	Total
	%
It is unfair because they are undermining competition and consumer choice in America	57
It is fair because this is just how business works in America	43
Skipped	1
Base: All respondents	3,219

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Total
	%
Online platforms should not be allowed to accept money from sellers or users in exchange for giving them preferred placement in the search results page.	
Strongly agree	14
Agree	27
Neither agree nor disagree	42
Disagree	14
Strongly disagree	3
Online platforms should be required to have standard pricing guidelines that are equally applied to all sellers/users (that is, charging all sellers/users the same percentage of the revenue they get from using the platform, regardless of size and potential as a competitor).	
Strongly agree	25
Agree	42
Neither agree nor disagree	26
Disagree	6
Strongly disagree	1
Online platforms should be required to use objective and impartial evaluations when showing results and be clear about how those evaluations are made.	
Strongly agree	27
Agree	47
Neither agree nor disagree	23
Disagree	2
Strongly disagree	1
Online platforms should not be allowed to manipulate their search algorithm to exclude competing sites or interfere with a seller's or user's own website (for example, online platforms should not be allowed to tinker with their method for displaying search results in order to hide a competing website or product).	
Strongly agree	34
Agree	41
Neither agree nor disagree	18
Disagree	5
Strongly disagree	2
Online platforms should not be permitted to sell their own products and services in competition with other sellers who use the platform to reach customers (e.g., Amazon would not be able to sell AmazonBasics to compete with lower priced products sold on its platform).	
Strongly agree	7
Agree	19
Neither agree nor disagree	40
Disagree	29
Strongly disagree	5
Base: All respondents	3,208

Q16. *[SPLIT ITEMS ACROSS TWO SCREENS WITH THREE ITEMS ON EACH SCREEN.]*

As a reminder, online platforms provide the interface between the consumers/users and those who create and produce the content users seek.

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Total
	%
Online platforms should be required to take more responsibility to evaluate information before sharing it on their platform, like screening out manipulative and clearly inaccurate content, or dangerous content that includes violence or expressing extreme views	
Strongly agree	33
Agree	41
Neither agree nor disagree	20
Disagree	4
Strongly disagree	2
Online platforms should alert users who view false information that the information is suspect	
Strongly agree	40
Agree	41
Neither agree nor disagree	14
Disagree	3
Strongly disagree	2
Online platforms should be required to respect privacy laws that protect the users' personal information so that the user cannot be manipulated or exploited by that information (for example, being sent a targeted political ad based on the personal data collected about the user	
Strongly agree	50
Agree	34
Neither agree nor disagree	14
Disagree	2
Strongly disagree	0
Online platforms should be held accountable for the products and services sold on the platform (e.g., the platform should be liable for defective or counterfeit goods third-party vendors sell on its site)	
Strongly agree	29
Agree	35
Neither agree nor disagree	22
Disagree	11
Strongly disagree	2
Online platforms should be required to hold the third-party seller of a product or service accountable if something goes wrong with a product they sell	
Strongly agree	36
Agree	41
Neither agree nor disagree	17
Disagree	5
Strongly disagree	1
Online platforms should be required to hold the content provider accountable if that content results in harming the user	
Strongly agree	37
Agree	37
Neither agree nor disagree	19
Disagree	4
Strongly disagree	1
Base: All respondents	3,201

Q17. *[RANDOMIZE ITEMS.]*

There is an ongoing debate about what is the best way to deal with the growing power of large online platforms that may be hurting competition and consumers. **How much do you favor or oppose each proposal?**	
	Total
	%
Stronger government action to discipline and mitigate potentially harmful conduct of large online platforms. Actions could include new laws, regulations, or enforcement actions (e.g, fines, barring a merger, etc.).	
Strongly favor	21
Favor	39
Neither favor nor oppose	31
Oppose	7
Strongly oppose	2
Breaking up large online platforms like Google, Amazon, and Facebook into smaller platforms to create new competitors in the marketplace.	
Strongly favor	13
Favor	22
Neither favor nor oppose	46
Oppose	15
Strongly oppose	4
Creation of a new government agency tasked with regulating online platforms like Google, Amazon, and Facebook to better ensure their activities and conduct do not harm consumers and competition.	
Strongly favor	19
Favor	32
Neither favor nor oppose	33
Oppose	11
Strongly oppose	5
Requiring online platforms to make it easier for users to switch from one platform to another without losing important data or connections -- such as iTunes songs or Facebook friends.	
Strongly favor	21
Favor	39
Neither favor nor oppose	34
Oppose	4
Strongly oppose	1
Base: All respondents	3,197

Q18.

What percentage of total online sales would you guess Amazon accounts for in the U.S. each year?	
	Total
	%
25% or less	5
26% to 50%	26
51% to 75%	46
76% to 100%	18
Unsure	6
Base: All respondents	3,211

Q19.

What percentage of online searches in the U.S. would you guess are done using Google each year?	
	Total
	%
25% or less	5
26% to 50%	18
51% to 75%	35
76% to 100%	36
Unsure	6
Base: All respondents	3,173

Q20.

What percentage of the U.S. population would you guess are Facebook users?	
	Total
	%
25% or less	5
26% to 50%	21
51% to 75%	46
76% to 100%	22
Unsure	6
Base: All respondents	3,198

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