

POWERLESS BY DESIGN

It's getting political

HI, I'M CHETAN

- Software developer
- Mostly web dev
- Tinkerer
- Use open source
- Some open source contributions
- Occasionally experimenting with LLMs



Speaker notes

I build COGS

- Tom
- Guy

Who are here - (NEXT SLIDE)



I have used Apple and Google products for years



Speaker notes

Well integrated
reliable



Inbox
by Gmail

Speaker notes

big fan

<3 Inbox

- clean

- user friendly

- useful

sunset

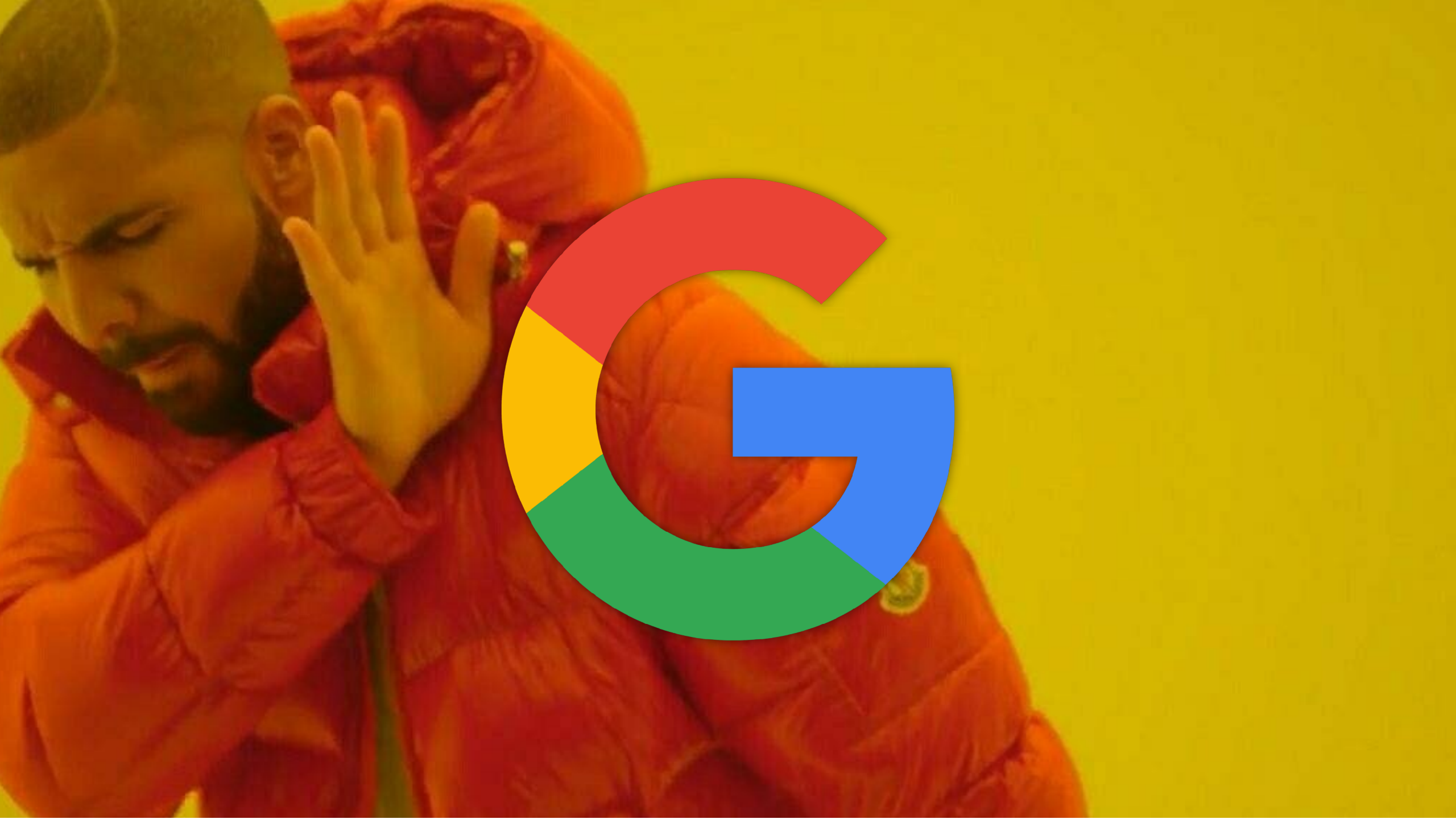
I felt powerless

Google powerful

...lots more things sunset

e.g. reader

made me think



Speaker notes

trying to use Google less

I looked at my search history & takeout:

- way too much info
- location
- profiling
- pictures
- every email

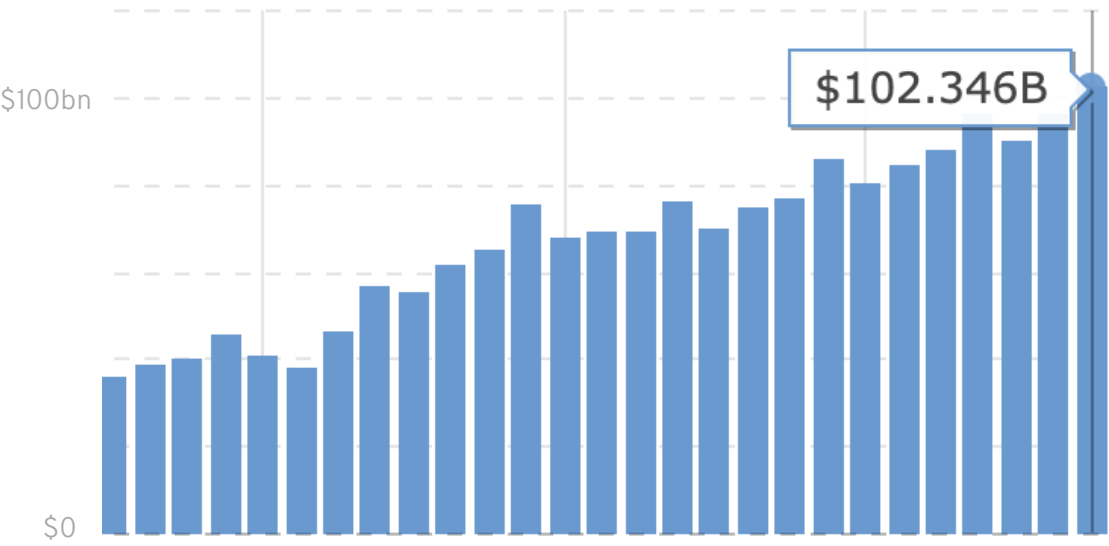
Way too much for one person to know about me

Sleepwalking -> building value for them

"let me tell you what doesn't feel right"

GOOGLE REVENUE

\$102,346,000,000
in the last 3 months



COST TO ME



Speaker notes

First time over \$100b in a quarter

Profit keeps going up

Hardly charge users

Everybody wins, right?

RIGHT?

Mostly... (shareholders)



SHAREHOLDERS

Speaker notes

How did Google get here? (NEXT)

Backrub!

Web [Images](#) [Groups](#) [News](#) [Froogle](#) [Local](#) [Logogle\(top\)](#) »

Google Search

Speaker notes

In 1996 Larry Page and Sergey Brin started BackRub
- links between web pages as a graph

1998: outgrew Stanford, started Google



Search bar with a magnifying glass icon on the left and three icons on the right: a microphone, a camera, and a star with the text "AI Mode".

Google Search

I'm Feeling Lucky

Speaker notes

PageRank (proprietary)
popular sites at the top

As "Page Rank" improves -> more traffic

Traffic -> monetise (usually ads)
~every site has ads

2014: Google IPO, valuation \$23bn

More ads -> slower sites

-> 2015: AMP launched (Accelerated Mobile Pages)

"Make the web great again" (Just before Trump...)

Spec for Google-accessible sites -> can index more easily

Hosted on Google domain (by default) - no traffic

Maintains monopoly

Sometimes sites were slower

Websites powerless

Google in control

VZW Wi-Fi

11:37 AM

94%

buffalo sabres



Google

buffalo sabres



ALL

NEWS

IMAGES

SHOPPING

VIDEOS

M

TOP STORIES

SBNATION



SBNATION



Speaker notes

Google pay Apple \$20b+

Default search on iOS

Must be worth more...

Google pays Mozilla

Default search on Firefox

Google funding community projects...?

85% income from Google search deal

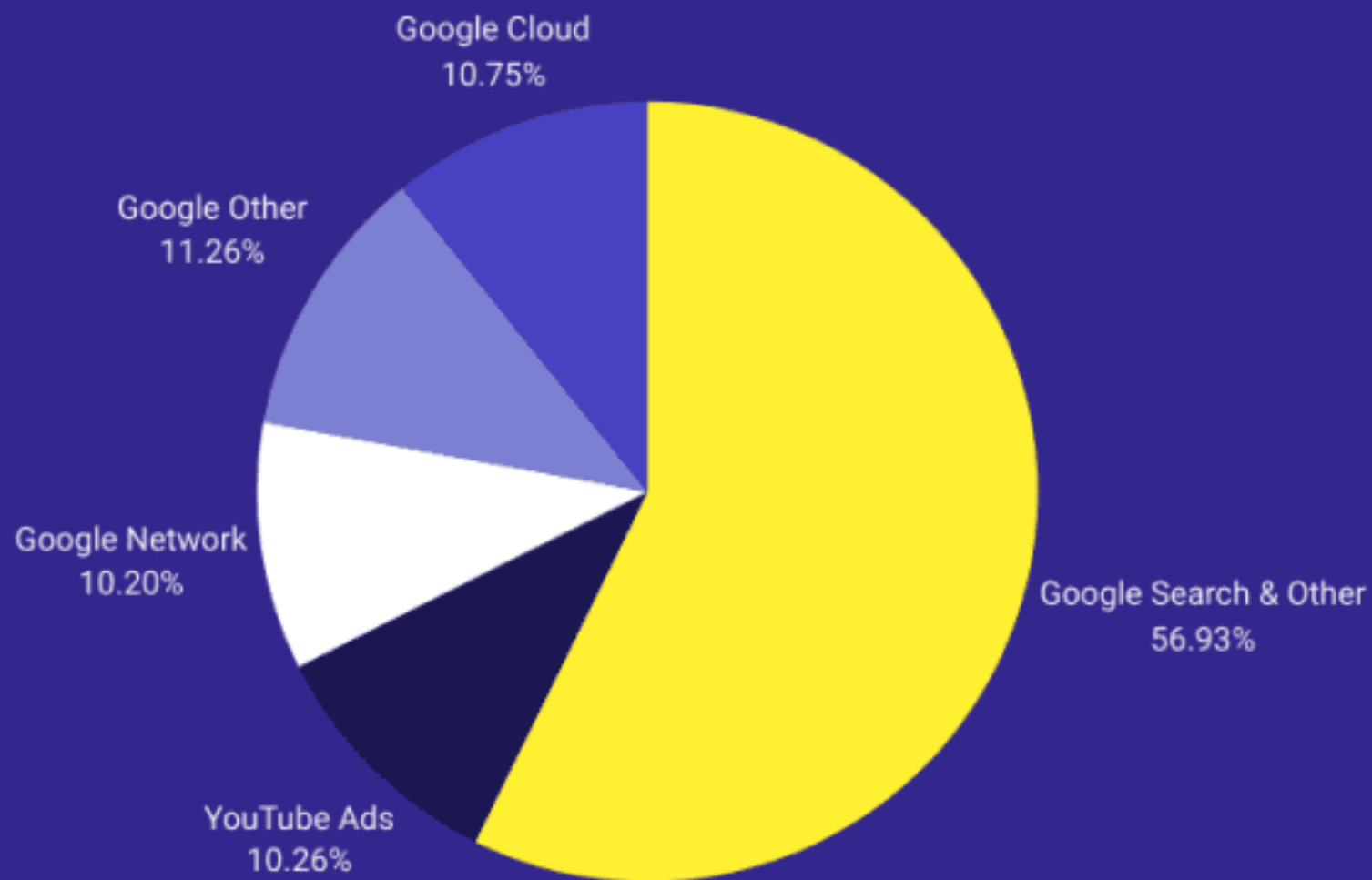
Must be worth more...

2025: US ruled "not a monopoly" because you can switch

Monopoly on default option

Most people won't change

GOOGLE REVENUE BREAKDOWN



Speaker notes

Today: lots of products

Search is 57% of revenue 2023, 2024

How does search make money?

GARY WANT TO SELL YOU RAZORS

Plan of action:

1. Place ads
2. ???
3. Profit!!!



Speaker notes

(How does search make money.)

(razors: the best way to make money on the internet atm??)

Naive: ads on every search

signals:

- search "buy"
- repeat visitor
- visited competitor

IP (machine address) can give location (e.g. we only sell in UK)

32 bit (IPv4), hierarchical

accurate to town/village level

want to target men, 18 - 30 (focus group says most likely)

Place bid: keywords, target audience

More specific -> more expensive

More bids -> more expensive



buy a razor



All

Shopping

Images

Short videos

Videos

Product sites

More ▾

Tools ▾

Results for **Brighton, Brighton and Hove** · [Choose area](#) ⋮

Sponsored products ⋮



Harry's Original
Handle Graphite

£10.00

Harry's UK
+£3.95 delivery

★★★★☆ (171)
By Google



Braun Series 9
PRO+ 9417s...

£199.99

Braun Shop UK
🚚 Free of charge

★★★★☆ (416)
By PG ONE



Gillette Fusion5
Men's Razor - ...

£13.00

Joybuy
+£3.99 delivery

30-day returns
By Google



King C. Gillette
Double Edge...

£10.00 ~~£20~~

Gillette
+£3.95 delivery

30-day returns
By PG ONE



Gillette Fusion5
Men's Razor...

£9.99

Amazon.co.uk
+£4.49 delivery
£9.99/1ct

By Kelkoo



Braun Series 9
PRO+ 9519s...

£199.99

Braun Shop UK
🚚 Free of charge

★★★★☆ (408)
By PG ONE



Braun All-In-One
Trimmer Style ...

£49.99 ~~£97~~

Braun Shop UK
🚚 Free of charge

★★★★★ (213)
By PG ONE



Harry's Original
Handle Bright...

£8.75

Harry's UK
+£3.95 delivery

★★★★☆ (296)
By Google



Speaker notes

2 pages of sponsored + affiliate links
before search results



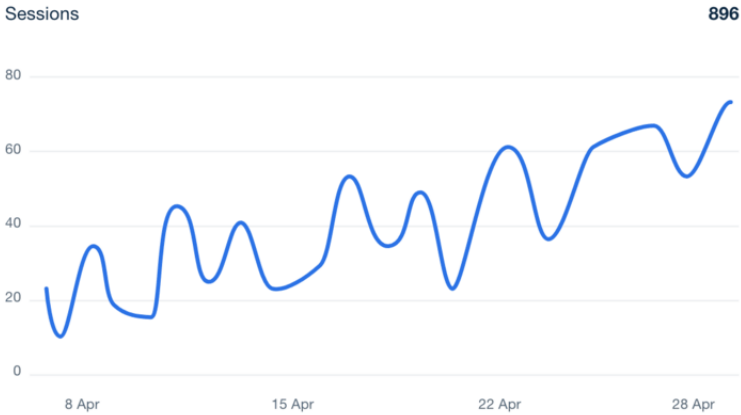
Speaker notes

Find advertisers yourself
or Google finds them
+ search ads



Speaker notes

(Web feel like this)
like the old days



Sessions

896

Total Users

614

User Engagement

22m 8s

Views

822

Conversions

849

Event Count

954

Showing 5 of 8 Rows

CHANNEL	SESSIONS	TOTAL USERS	USER ENGAGEMENT	VIEWS	CONVERSIONS	EVENT COUNT
Direct	68	12	57s	57	29	22
Social	67	26	46s	36	18	59
Paid Search	61	18	1m 12s	28	21	46
Email	55	31	51s	54	42	62
Referral	52	22	1m 14s	49	36	55

Speaker notes

How does Google know so much?

GA: Best-in-class web analytics

Add



Speaker notes

More free Google web products

Each leaves a tracker

Used a lot!

GMail:

- contents of every email
- who

Android



Speaker notes

Open source up to a point

Phones bundled with Google apps (except China)

- gmail
- chrome
- calendar

Requires Google Play Services

- lots of permissions
- can update itself



Speaker notes

DRM: controvertial when added to web standards

Support from Netflix, Google, MS

Widvine:

Implementation of DRM

Netflix, Disney+, Spotify, BBC iPlayer, HBO, Udemy, etc, etc, etc

Largest DRM provider

Google server allows decrypting and playing content

Very opaque

latest branding removes "Google"



chrome

Speaker notes

Chromium open source

Manifest v3: ad blockers less effective

Chrome closed source:

- Sign in to Google account (can auto sign in on sites)
- Widevine DRM
- Text to speech
- LLMs

Spec is open, implementation closed source

Google hosted stable builds

auto updates

Open source: have to build their own

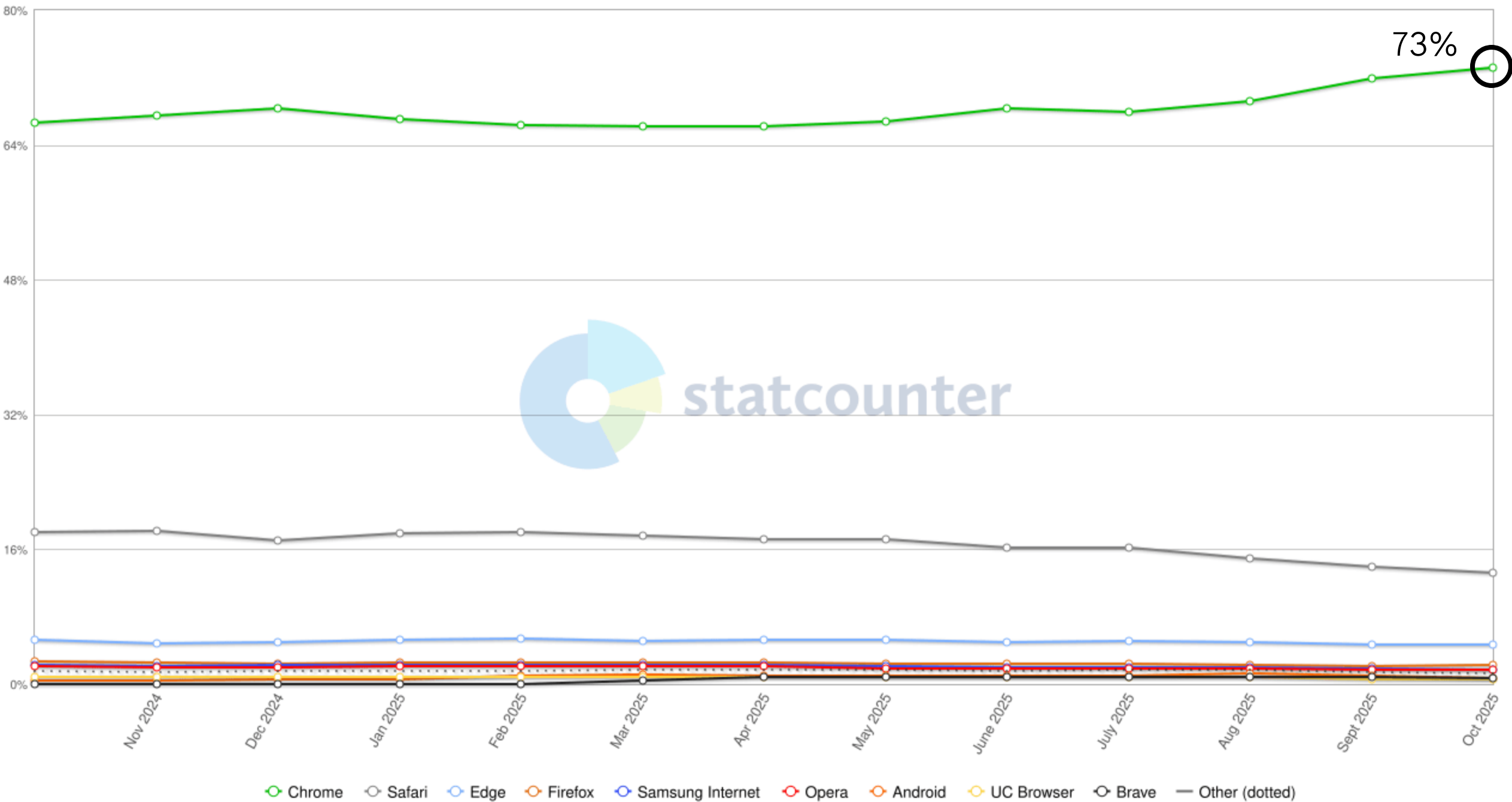
Canonical (Ubuntu), Raspberry Pi

Puppeteer: Uses Chrome testing

(not Chromium)

Default search engine: Google

StatCounter Global Stats
Browser Market Share Worldwide from Oct 2024 - Oct 2025



Speaker notes

73%

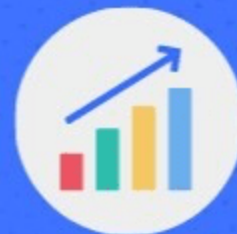
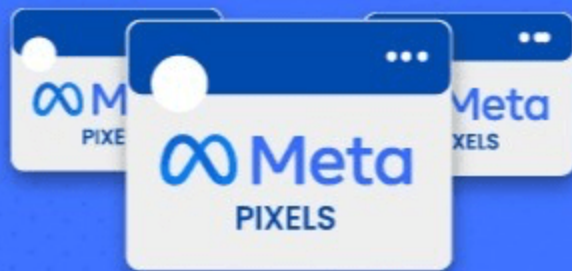
market share increasing

MUCH more than everyone combined

monopoly -> web standards at risk

Best standard we have

building apps that respect users



ADS

Speaker notes

Picking on Google.

Meta Pixel works the same way

origin: 1x1 pixel, in case JS turned off

-> collects data

2/3 ad revenue of Google

Growing 2x YoY (compounded!)

Data shared with Pixel across

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Threads
- Whatsapp

"Will go quite far to get data about you"

2024: Meta "localhost" tracking

- Android FB + Instagram app
- localhost WebRTC server
- Pixel tracker sends _fbp cookie to open port on localhost
- Same message sent to www.facebook.com/tr
- Can match them up

Tracking across sites, even in incognito mode

Could be sued for up to 32bn EUR (UK, EU combined)

Yandex did the same
since 2017!
3 million sites
(Russian, similar to Google)

Top 100,000 sites:
- Meta Pixel on ~78% of sites (even without consent)
- Yandex equiv on ~84% of sites

Both now stopped

Use limited data to select advertising

Advertising presented to you on this service can be based on limited data, such as the website or app you are using, your non-precise location, your device type o...

[View details](#)

Consent (74 vendors)



Legitimate interest (39 vendors) 



Speaker notes

-> cookies

-> popups (asks kindly)

GA, Meta Pixel, etc. leads to this

asking to track you across domains

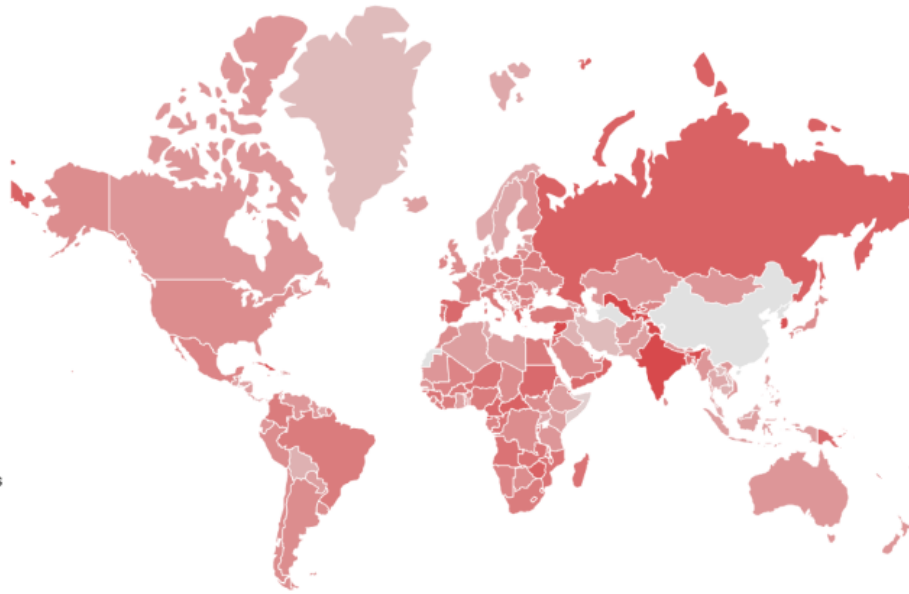
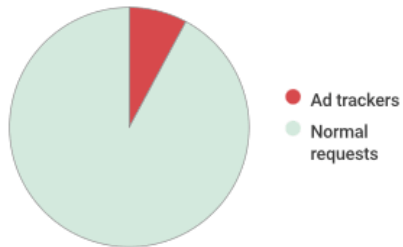
(what do these mean..? yes I did click "?")

Ad trackers around the world in 2024

Based on blocked requests statistics
from December 2024

Average share of ad tracking
requests in user traffic
compared to 2023:

7.40% → 7.84%



"in reality ad tracking requests
comprise about 19.6% of traffic"
"these requests are 'hidden,' i.e.
dependent on other ad domains
loading"

adguard.com

Speaker notes

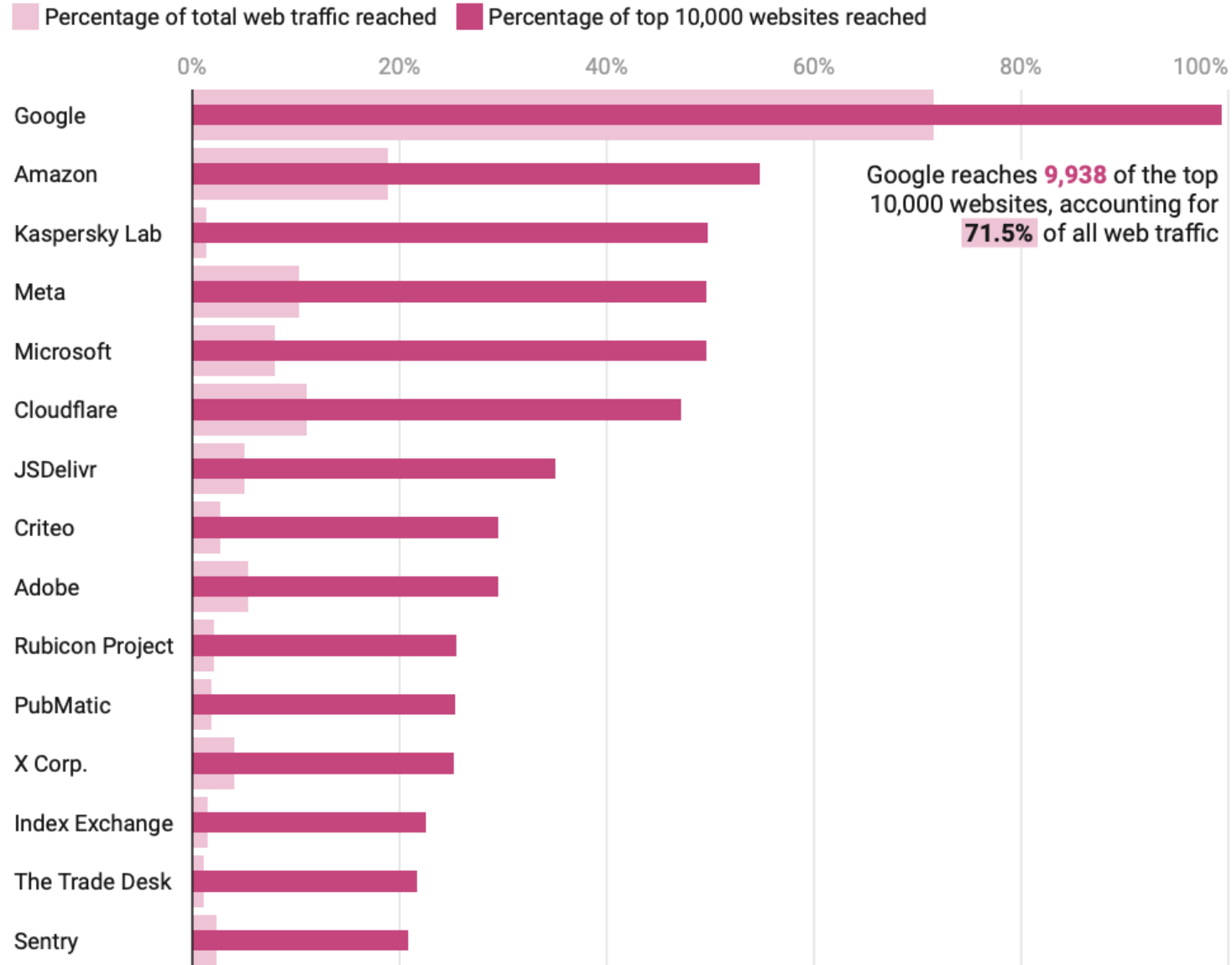
Increasing

trackers load other trackers -> almost 1/5th!

So much bandwidth, CPU

...energy!

Google dominates the web tracking industry



Data from whotracks.me is licensed under [CC-BY-4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Chart: Jona Pomerance • Source: [Ghostery](https://ghostery.com) / whotracks.me (Dec 2024)

Speaker notes

2024: 99% of top 10,000 websites have Google tracker
(e.g. Google Analytics)

but what if you don't use Google, or even Facebook, Meta products...

"I DON'T USE FACEBOOK"

"I check it occasionally"

"I just have an account"

"I don't stay signed in"

Speaker notes

I hear this a lot.

YOU ARE USING IT.

Tracked across sites

Creating value for these companies

RETAIL

Big data knows you're pregnant (and that's not all)

PUBLISHED WED, APR 9 2014 9:44 AM EDT

Herb Weisbaum

@THECONSUMERMAN

SHARE



VIDEO 02:49

Be afraid of these 'secret' consumer scores

Your life is an open book.

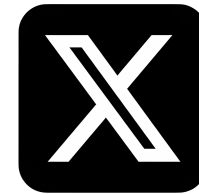
Speaker notes

they know a lot

over 10 years ago!

weirds me out

LET'S TALK ABOUT



Speaker notes

2022: Elon Musk


Fired lots of staff

Removed a lot of content moderation

Twitter bad enough...

Promised open source algorithm

Sort of...

[/ HomeTweetTypePredicates.scala](#)  7f90d0ca342b928b479b512ec51ac2c3821f5922

 This commit does not belong to any branch on this repository, and may belong to a fork outside of the repository.

```
224      (
225        "author_is_elon",
226        candidate =>
227          candidate
228            .getOrElse(AuthorIdFeature, None).contains(candidate.getOrElse(DDGStatsElonFeature, 0L))),
229      (
230        "author_is_power_user",
231        candidate =>
232          candidate
233            .getOrElse(AuthorIdFeature, None)
234            .exists(candidate.getOrElse(DDGStatsVitsFeature, Set.empty[Long]).contains)),
235      (
236        "author_is_democrat",
237        candidate =>
238          candidate
239            .getOrElse(AuthorIdFeature, None)
240            .exists(candidate.getOrElse(DDGStatsDemocratsFeature, Set.empty[Long]).contains)),
241      (
```


Speaker notes

**** more here ****

Since, created Grok

Free access to comment on X



[Home](#) / [Content](#) / [Shock marketing: How to Use Shocking and Controversial Content to Go Viral](#)

Shock marketing: How to Use Shocking and Controversial Content to Go Viral



 Updated: 03 Apr 2025  18 minutes

Table of Content

1. Captivating Your Audience
2. Shocking Content that Stands Out
3. Leveraging Controversy for Maximum Impact
4. Understanding the Emotional Response
5. Strategies to Amplify Shocking Content
6. Balancing Impact and Responsibility
7. Successful Shock Marketing Campaigns
8. Dealing with Negative Reactions
9. Sustaining Engagement Beyond the Shock Factor

Speaker notes

*you know this"

Most valuable content: Extreme

A cartoon illustration of a dog sitting at a table with a cup of coffee, surrounded by flames, with the text "TODAY'S INTERNET" overlaid. The dog is a light brown color with large, expressive eyes and is wearing a small brown hat. It is sitting on a wooden chair at a round wooden table. On the table is a white mug filled with a brown liquid, presumably coffee. The dog is looking towards the right side of the frame. The background is a light green wall with a dark green rectangular shape and a window with diagonal lines. The foreground and sides are filled with large, stylized yellow and orange flames. The text "TODAY'S INTERNET" is written in a bold, white, sans-serif font, with "TODAY'S" on the top line and "INTERNET" on the bottom line, centered over the dog and the table.

TODAY'S INTERNET

Speaker notes

Make me feel like this.

A NETFLIX ORIGINAL DOCUMENTARY

THE GREAT HACK

From the Academy Award
nominated filmmakers behind **THE SQUARE**



NOW STREAMING | NETFLIX

Speaker notes

Who watched this?

"THE GREAT HACK"

"Cambridge Analytica misused intimate personal Facebook data to micro-target and manipulate swing voters in the US election"

-- Amnesty International

Speaker notes

Ads system

Used for politics



● This article is more than 8 years old

The great British Brexit robbery: how our democracy was hijacked

By Carole Cadwalladr

Speaker notes

1 year earlier

author: Carole Cadwalladr

Carole was repeatedly sued, sent death threats.

Who was frightened by the film? (Not jump scares, but how the world is shifting.)

What did you learn?

THE IRISH TIMES

Investors who backed a rebranding of Cambridge Analytica are in a stand-off with former chief executive Alexander Nix after he allegedly withdrew more than \$8 million (€7.1 million) from the scandal-hit data firm shortly before it collapsed.

Speaker notes

2017: One year before original Observer article

Find and update company information

[Companies House does not verify the accuracy of the information filed](#)

[Sign in / Register](#)



[Advanced company search](#)

EMERDATA LIMITED

Company number **10911848**

Follow this company

File for this company

Nature of business (SIC)

63110 - Data processing, hosting and related activities

[NIX, Alexander James Ashburner](#)

Speaker notes

2017 (same year):
New company
approx the same



Analysis

Cambridge Analytica is dead – but its obscure network is alive and well

Wendy Siegelman

The company's executives have formed a web of linked companies, suggesting its work will continue



Speaker notes

7 years ago.

Who knows what influence they have now

Difficult to unpick

Anyway...

WHAT DO YOU DIFFERENTLY NOW?

Speaker notes

To those watched the film/read articles...

**WHAT DOES POLITICS DO DIFFERENTLY
NOW?**

Speaker notes

accepted

**HE STILL HASN'T
MENTIONED AI**



Speaker notes

there's a lot

it's all changing fast



what is ai

AI Mode All Images Videos Short videos Shopping News More Tools

AI Overview

AI, or Artificial Intelligence, is a branch of computer science focused on creating systems that can perform tasks that normally require human intelligence, such as decision-making. These systems learn from data, recognize patterns and can execute tasks, generate human-like text, create images, automate processes or include human-like features.

What will you design today?

Your designs Templates Canva AI

Describe what you want to create, and we'll help you design it!



Max



Design for me Create an image

Ideas to try

Design for me

celebrate world design day with a poster



Design for me

promote your launch with a poster



Slack AI is here

Assignees



No one - Assign yourself

Assign to Copilot

Speaker notes

Creeping into everything:

Search


Chat

Design

dev

LLMs:

Answers without visiting site

Web revenue from traffic 

FOMO / left behind:

- Users

- Companies

- Investors

LLMs -> Mansplainers

IT'S EVERYWHERE, BUT WHY?



SHAREHOLDERS

Speaker notes

Crazy money

piling in 🍷

Investor FOMO

race for AGI - aka control God

control the system that everyone uses to create their systems

control their actions

control their opinions

is that not god?



Speaker notes

I think there's more...

american tech billionaires

+ Trump

creating a feedback loop

Power -> wealth -> more power -> more wealth

We become powerless

Tesla tempting him:

- \$1tn (conditional)
- Already richest person (almost 2x next)
- Distracted by Grok - create Musk worldview
- More than GDP of Saudi Arabi (20th in the world, 2024)

Panorama doc last week

Peter Thiel

EXPLAINER

Donald Trump and his long history of lawsuits against the media

From legal battles with ABC, CNN, and CBS, Donald Trump has had a number of high-profile legal battles with media in the US - and has now lined up a fight with the BBC.

🕒 Tuesday 11 November 2025 14:56, UK



Speaker notes

especially...

day by day, more authoritarian

much more to say

still unfolding

do we want to allow it?

unchecked extreme capitalism

are we complicit?

using platforms that allow it to happen

-> giving data

-> usage = a vote for what they stand for

what services are you using? what do they stand for?

WHO IS HELPING?

Federal Trade Commission (USA)

Ofcom (UK)

Digital Markets Act (EU)

Speaker notes

FTC (US)

Amazon artificial price inflation (2015 - 2019)

Sued 2023

\$1b value

(focus shift: prevent monopolies -> freedom of expression)

Ofcom

- Right to portability (take mobile number with you) -
- First version: EU
- Ofcom made the requirement stricter

EU

- Cookies
 - GDPR - stop sharing data about you
 - Right to delete your data
 - €2.42 billion fine for Google favouring Google Shopping results
 - Whatsapp required to allow "third-party" messaging in app
(because monopoly!)
- coming soon

I ❤️



Speaker notes

doing more that most to protect us
prevent monopolies

helping us keep powerful



Speaker notes

New wave platffoms

Give directly

You: small amount

Creator: A career

Patreon: YouTube creators

Bandcamp: Bands

Substack: Email newsletters

Discord: Online community, subscriptions for perks

Fave substack: Fix The News

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Tuesday, Aug 20th 2024 3PM 22°C | 6PM 18°C | 5-Day Forecast

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Please note that if you choose Pay to Reject, it will not be linked to any accounts you may have with The Sun.

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Accept all cookies

Details can be found under "Privacy Policy" at the bottom of the page.
To change all cookie settings [click here](#)

Mirror

Enjoy without personalised advertising and tracking with Privacy Plus

Continue to access our site for £1.99 per month

✓ No sharing of your data with advertisers


✓ Avoid personalised advertising and only see basic, non targeted ads

Back to Consent

Pay for Privacy Plus

Thanks for choosing to support us.
Please select your package

Independent Premium
£1 for 6 months
Then £99/year




I'LL TRY PREMIUM

✓ All the benefits of Independent Ad-Free

✓ Full access to Premium news analysis

✓ The Independent Daily Edition newspaper on

Independent Ad-Free
£4/month



I'LL JUST GO AD-FREE

✓ Reject all cookies and similar technologies that enable personalised advertising

✓ Advertising-free reading across

EXPRESS

Enjoy without personalised advertising and tracking with Privacy Plus

Continue to access our site for £1.99 per month

✓ No sharing of your data with advertisers

✓ Avoid personalised advertising and only see basic, non targeted ads

✓ Express Premium Subscribers already benefit from an ad free experience.

Click below to log in.

Back to Consent

Pay for Privacy Plus

THE TIMES

Home

Culture

Puzzles

Mag

Regulatory changes to advertising cookies

Due to recent regulatory enforcement activities by data protection authorities in the UK and across Europe, you are required to select your cookie preferences regarding personalised adverts when reading The Times and Sunday Times.

Personalised adverts display brands and products based on your interests. These adverts are vital in supporting our award-winning journalism.

Instead of increasing the cost of the subscription for our

Accept personalised adverts

Reject and pay

Speaker notes

Users now understand

Choosing: privacy or payment

...or is media finding ways to survive?

IMO payment less convenient

WHAT CAN WE DO?

...AS COMPANIES

...AS MANAGERS

...AS DEVELOPERS

...AS CONSUMERS

...AS INFLUENCERS

PERMISSIONS

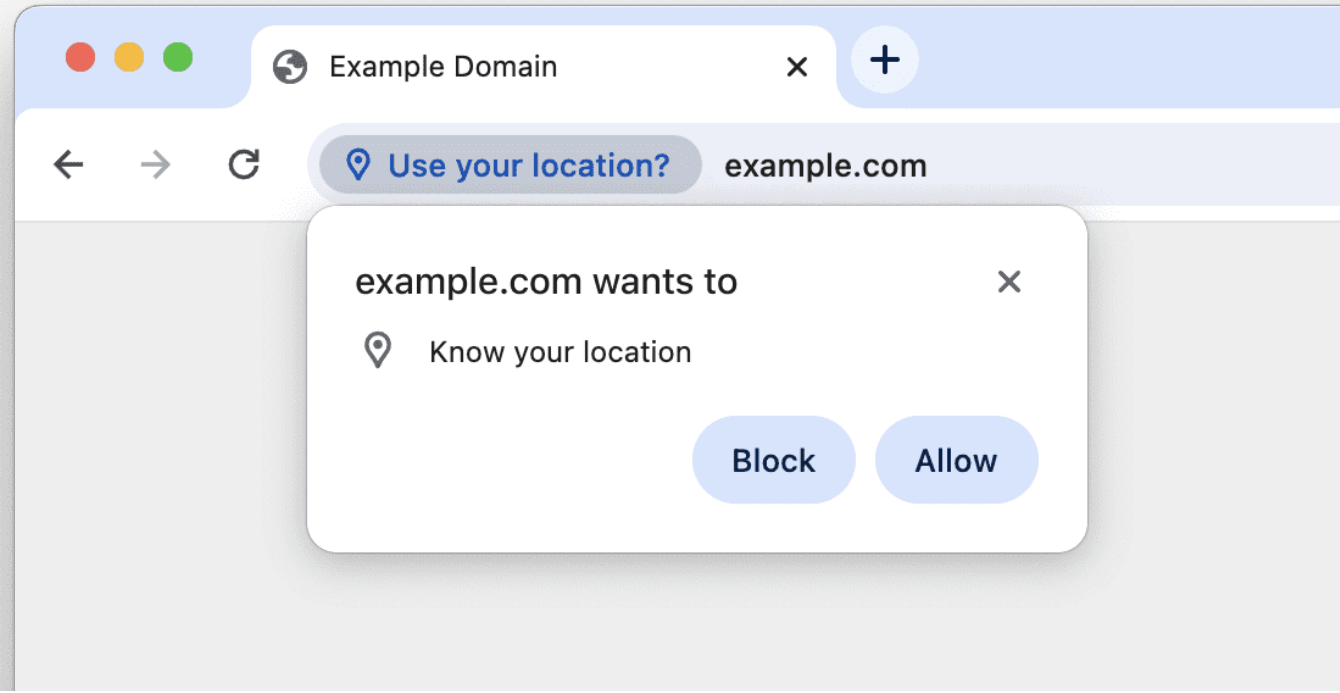
No thanks

"MyApp" Would Like To Send You Notifications

Notifications may include alerts, sounds, and icon badges. These can be configured in Settings.

Don't Allow

Allow



Speaker notes

Say no by default

No perpetual access (OS can help now)

Turn off email notifications!!!

Default: No notifications (opt-in, Thanks Apple)

Important ones: Make them silent (bliss!)

Contacts access

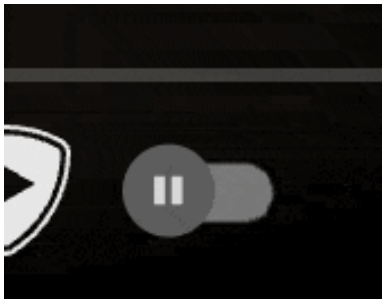
- at worst, spamming friends/family
- some apps require it, don't use

Developers:

Ask when needed

Not required to function

PULL > PUSH



TLDR

Pointer

Speaker notes

Disable autoplay (Netflix, YouTube)

Pay for no ads

Block ads

- Turn off suggested content
- Turn of javascript
- the web still works, right?

Companies: Don't rely on ads

Or minimal, relevant ones

I see almost no ads day-to-day

- Some sponsored content in emails

Infinite scroll - no! (addictive)

Try turning off Instagram for 1 week

- Longer
- After a while, you can delete it

Design for moderate usage

e.g. Email newsletters

TLDR, Pointer

Unsubscribe from emails you don't want

NEWS



Speaker notes

Ground News - shows bias

Kagi - aggregated

The Nerve - new. culture, politics tech from (former Guardian/Observer, independent)

The Citizens - Democracy, data rights

- Multiple sources

- e.g. abroad (Al Jazeera)

- Pay

Don't rely on socials

They feed you a bad content diet

(a bit like supermarkets)

"FOR THE PROFIT OF" - (PAUSE)



SHAREHOLDERS

Speaker notes

on these platforms where you are powerless

BROWSER



Speaker notes

Brave

Blocks tracking

Isolates domains

Chromium based - lots more forks!

Firefox (Mozilla)

Not Chromium!

A LOT of web stanards work

Best documentation

Tracker blocking built in

- can dial it up

Orion

Webkit!

Speed

Privacy in mind

(I used it for this. Just works.)

SEARCH



mojeek

Speaker notes

DuckDuckGo

privacy, non-targeted ads

Kagi

aggregator, paid, great!

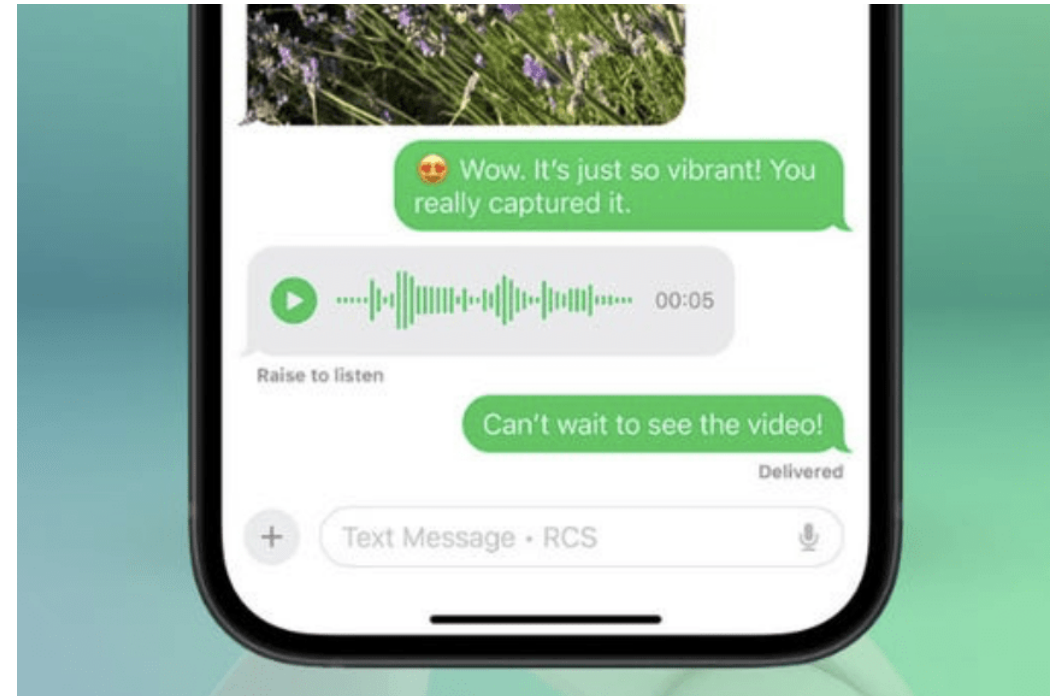
Mojeek

local

how do they make money? I asked!

(sell search service to businesses)

MESSAGING



Speaker notes

Signal: Similar UI to Whatsapp

- founder by Whatsapp co-founder

- privacy first

Fully encrypted by design

Open source

Non profit

Pay if you can

Telegram privacy first

Pay for premium features

With friends:

Slack, Discord (freemium)

RCS: Global messenger standard

You already have it

- Typing indicator

- Replies

- Reactions

- Groups

In theory: Replaces apps

iOS: Supported (on by default since iOS 18) - Thanks EU!

Green bubble shame

Android: Different phone, different app

EMAIL



Fastmail



Proton Mail

Speaker notes

I rely on email.

Privacy, security important

FastMail

I use it (w/ custom domain)

Proton Mail (includes VPN)

inc. "throwaway" email addresses

Super easy to migrate

IMAP allows this

inc. calendar, contacts, notes, files

VPN



NordVPN®



Surfshark



Proton VPN

Speaker notes

Protect your location from being tracked
(IP address)

loads!

PHOTOS



Speaker notes

long time Google Photos fan

same features

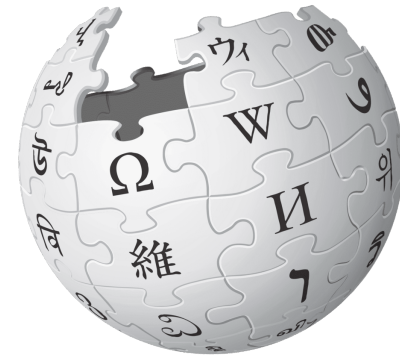
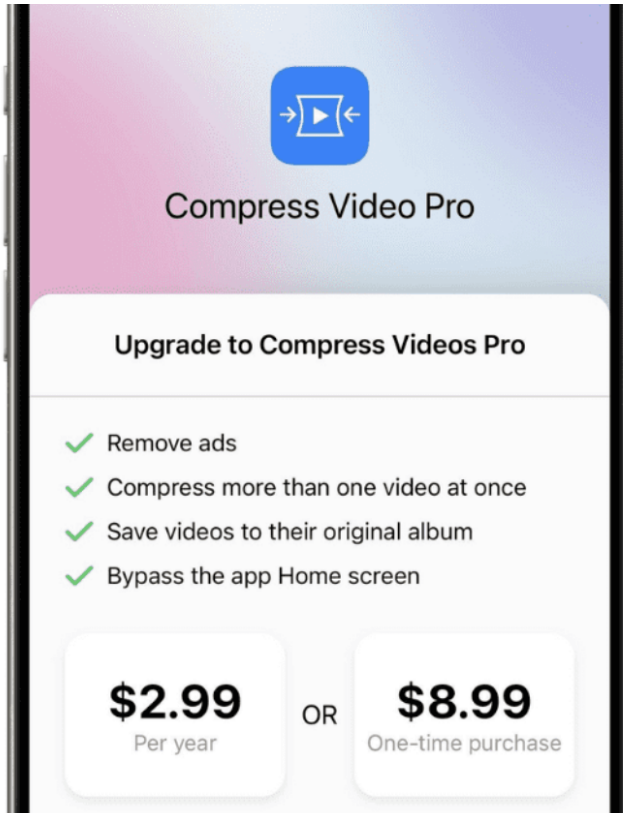
encrypted

on device:

- duplication
- search for faces

LOADS more alternatives out there
Just have to search (...not with ads?)

SHOW SUPPORT



WIKIPEDIA

Speaker notes

Open source - (although AI scraping...)

File issues, create PRs, contribute

Donate

Company: Set aside cash, give back

Pay for apps/services

Companies/indie: Charge for value

Independent businesses need your cash

Do you like their ethos?

Do they care about your interests?

Wikipedia - incredible resource for the world

Donate

Most cash goes to moderation

DISCUSS

Speaker notes

Find groups

Meet people IRL - e.g. here
groups/data can't be bought

Individual Action Signal group

****You have influence****

You are probably the "tech" person amongst friends/family

MY RULES OF THUMB

- Clear business model
- Privacy first
- Open standards
- Switch easily

Speaker notes

What's good for society?

Privacy - **Not profiting from you**

Switch in or out

This + attracting customers = good product

TRY SOMETHING NEW

More about me: chetbox.com

I'm not on socials. Let's chat IRL.

Speaker notes

My challenge to you

Service you want to try?

First step is easy

Few £ to try is not much

Be curios

Be brave

Try something new

Stick with it

What could you change?

Can you help?

happy to chat