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Localization Story

MSU Professionals Weigh in on Google's Ongoing Antitrust Trial

East Lansing, MI – It's no surprise to many that Google is in [yet another legal battle](#) with the government as a result of their underhanded monopolization tactics. Beginning in 2020, The US Department of Justice filed a claim that Google paid big tech companies, primarily Apple, billions of dollars over the course of two decades to remain the default browser downloaded on a new device, thus stifling competition from smaller companies and dominating the online advertising market.

This 2020 claim has become the ongoing landmark trial: *US vs. Google* that began in late September of this year, and it's the biggest tech antitrust trial since [US vs. Microsoft](#) in the late 1990's that tanked Internet Explorer. The outcome of this case could be pivotal, and Michigan State University professors can feel this tension in the tech atmosphere.

MSU professor of law Justin Simard thinks that, although this case will likely sway in the direction of the DOJ, Google won't take a hit as a leading search engine, but will instead feel loss in the form of stricter advertising regulations.

“I don’t think Google will suffer as a search engine. I think the big change will be on the side of the advertisers, maybe not having to pay the premium that they do.” He said, “But, you know, whether or not that will actually make a difference on online advertising rates is dependent on people actually breaking free from Google and using other search engines, which I can’t say with confidence would happen.”

Google’s [main argument](#) against these allegations of anti-competitive behavior is that users can easily uninstall Google and download a new browser for search queries if they choose. However, lawyers for the DOJ argue otherwise, saying that it takes 10 steps to switch from Google to Bing on an Android, calling it “[choice friction](#),” obstacles that increase the amount of effort for individuals to make a decision.

Interestingly, this very concept of choice friction, is the exact reason why MSU professor of computer science Louise Hemond-Wilson thinks Google will remain untouched by this trial.

Google has huge amounts of data on individual users, targeted specifically towards personal needs as discovered by the algorithm. Pushing the use of alternate search engines not only makes the search engine experience less personal, but it also spreads the amount of companies that have access to an individual’s information.

“If we have multiple search engines then there’s going to be more fragmentation about my movements and my information,” Wilson said. “While I might feel like I have some semblance

of privacy there, in reality I'm just allowing more companies access to my private information, because let's be real here; If something is free, I'm the product."

Essentially, not only is it too much work to switch browsers, it's also less beneficial for search optimization and less private in general. High risk, low reward.

The DOJ knows this, which is why they argued that the idea of switching browsers is a moot point. People don't switch, which is why being a default browser is such a coveted position.

MSU computer science alum Stanley Duru agrees with this point. "If I'm being honest, it has never even crossed my mind to use anything but Google." He said " It's already compatible with everything and even though it's not always the most secure or user friendly, too many people use it to make it worthwhile to switch to anything else. It's just easier to not mess with a good thing."

The bottom line is that Google is so ingrained in mainstream culture that the thought of using another search browser is unheard of to most people. For others, it's not even an option.

Michigan State University made a deal with Google in 2009 that allows students free educational access to the entire Google suite such as Google Drive, Google Calendar, and Google Classroom ingrained with their netID.

Access to tools such as these, especially for free, are invaluable to many students, and are likely not going anywhere anytime soon – and if there's one thing most figures in the trial can agree on,

it's Google's ability to make themselves invaluable. By securing this lucrative deal with Apple two decades ago, they've effectively crowned themselves the gold standard of search in America's collective consciousness, and it's going to be hard to dethrone them.

The outcome of this trial, no matter which direction it swings, will certainly change the landscape of big tech and determine once and for all just how much power these platforms will be allowed to have over the masses – and more importantly, how much they can wield it.

This trial is ongoing and is set to finish in mid-November. More information and recent updates on the trial can be found [here](#).