



Read privacy policies before downloading apps, Green warns

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Jamaicans are being warned to read privacy policies when downloading apps in order to avoid making their personal data readily available to software developers.

According to Cordel Green, executive director of the Broadcasting Commission, apps are outfitted with software which track and record users' Internet habits and personal information. The information that is gathered is then used by corporations to build profiles on individuals.

"There is something we have to wake up to, which is that all the apps on our smartphones serve the purpose of tracking us," Green said at Global Advertising Lawyers Alliance and Foga Daley's Caribbean Advertising and Marketing Law Seminar last Thursday at the Jamaica Pegasus hotel in New Kingston.

"Bruce Schneier, who is one of the world's most well-known [computer] security experts, has written a very insightful book, *Data and Goliath*, and he tells us, your cellphone providers, they know your location; vendors record your purchasing patterns; your e-mail, texts, social network activities, are stored indefinitely," Green said.

This happens, he said, because users neglect to read user agreement policies prior to downloading an application on their smart device. The policies, he pointed out, are approximately 2,500 words in length, which takes about 10 minutes to read.

"The technology companies — *Google, YouTube, Netflix*, et cetera — are becoming the dominant providers of content. They now dwarf most of the traditional media companies. They control

places on the Internet where we gather and connect. They do so without having any local presence in Jamaica,” Green told his audience.

“They are not subject to the same or any regulation as traditional media. They are being dominant in an era of mass surveillance. The digital society and economy is about free expression and the sharing of information. This increasingly involves the disclosure, collection, storage, and monetisation of personal data,” Green added.

He said that, although traditional media collect demographic information, the difference with the digital world is that people are tracked in real time and the data is being used to build personal profiles of everyone who uses the Internet. “We have gutted the traditional media advertising model and replaced it with a personal and intrusive advertising model,” he said.

“This is something that has been proven by Stanford University scientists, who have revealed just how easy it is now to identify private and personal information using metadata.”

The scientists' analysis revealed that, without knowing the details of a conversation, corporations can study an individual's phone call pattern to decipher what the conversation was about, then use that information to push certain advertisements to their phones.

“Person C placed a long early morning call to her sister. Two days later she made several calls to an abortion clinic. She made brief calls to the abortion clinic two weeks later. Then a month later she made a final call to the abortion clinic. That would be valuable information for anyone who is advertising nutraceutical products, home care service, healing service, palm reading service, or if you're running a foster care and adoption service,” Green explained.

He added that the way technology works allows users to be identified through cookies, IP addresses, browsers, and even fonts. He also said that the font cache can identify 90 per cent of computers in the world.