

## For the Better or Big Brother

DUE Monday, September 18<sup>th</sup> @ 11:59 PM

### The Assignment

1. First read the attached article by consulting firm, McKinsey on how digital marketing operations can transform business for the better.
  2. Next read the following excerpt from Bob Hoffman's book.\*
  3. From your perspective, weigh the pros and cons of digital data collection and marketing. How might marketers go about respecting privacy while helping companies (and marketers succeed).
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From Bob Hoffman's [101 Contrarian Ideas About Advertising](#) (p. 220-221)

### Big Brother Has Arrived and He's Us

One of the frightening things about human behavior is that horrific social practices are often only recognized as such from a distance.

Practices like slavery, binding of feet and infanticide—which seem perfectly monstrous to us—seemed normal to most of the people in the societies that practiced them. It took time and distance for societies to recognize the cruelty and hideousness of these practices.

The same is true of less outrageous, but still odious social customs like segregation, disenfranchisement—even smoking on airplanes. It's often only with the perspective of time that we realize how wrong social behaviors can be. We're living through such a period now.

The essence of freedom and democracy is being undermined. We can't see it, but it's all around us. It's that "fish can't see the ocean" thing. What's threatening our freedom is tracking on the Internet. The Internet now knows everything about us. It knows where we go, who we talk to, what we talk about, what and who we like and don't like. It knows what we buy and why we buy it. It knows what we sell and who we sell it to. It knows our names, our addresses, our phone numbers, our credit card numbers, our bank and brokerage accounts. It knows how much money we have, where we keep it and what we do with it. It knows our locations at any moment and whom we are with.

It knows our political beliefs and our sexual habits. It knows what we eat and whether we drink too much. It knows what we think of our bosses and what our bosses think of us. It knows our salaries and our payment histories. It knows what airlines we fly, what cars we buy and what hotels we stay at. It knows what our ailments are, what drugs we use, what doctors we see and what our psychological profiles are.

It relentlessly collects this information 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. It keeps this information in flimsy warehouses where anyone with time or ingenuity can find anything they want to know about us.

It pretends the information is secure, but only a blind fool believes this. It tells us that privacy is an old-fashioned, out-of-date concept. It is reassuring in its pervasiveness.

Then it sells the information to the highest bidder. And sometimes to any bidder at all.

And why does it do all this? For us. For the marketing and advertising industries.

There's no reasonable way that this is a good development for a free society. There is no realistic vision of the future in which this will not lead to appalling mischief. It's time for us to say no. It's time to put aside our petty self-interest, take a step back and see where this is leading. We need to stop tracking people and their behavior now. Big Brother has arrived, and he's us.

Hoffman, R. (2012) *101 Contrarian Ideas About Advertising*, United States, Hoffman/Lewis, p. 220-221.

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\* Bob Hoffman is former ceo of MOJO USA and ex-president and creative director of Allen & Dorward. He has served as president of the San Francisco Advertising Club and been on the board of the Advertising and Marketing International Network. Bob was also a middle school science teacher. Bob has created advertising for McDonald's, Toyota, Shell, Nestle, Blue Cross, Chevrolet, Pepsico, Bank of America, Seagrams, and more companies than he cares to remember.