

Apple's Sign In Feature May Hurt Facebook and Google More Than It Helps Apple's Business

Article

Apple continues its push toward its anti-tracking branding, and while its latest “Sign In with Apple” feature may not hugely benefit its hardware business immediately, it may

help solidify the company's pro-privacy image.

The new feature will allow Apple users to log on to apps and websites through an Apple ID instead of a Facebook or Google account, if the developer already allows third-party sign-ins. For users who opt in to the feature, Apple will help limit the amount of private information that apps can get from people who use the iOS devices.

Users can also get a randomly-generated email address to share with apps instead of their real one, which forwards messages from those services to the user's main inbox without allowing a real email address to be used as a cross-channel ID.

Apple says that it won't use this feature to track a user's activity, which has the biggest implications for marketers: It may be harder for advertisers to use people's email as a universal identifier.

"Apple has already made it difficult for advertisers to identify iOS device users when they're browsing the web, with Intelligent Tracking Prevention," said eMarketer principal analyst Nicole Perrin. "'Sign In with Apple' threatens many of the same effects in the app space as well by potentially removing email addresses as a way for advertisers to triangulate identities across devices and channels."

Users will likely adopt this feature, with some caveats. For apps in certain categories—like gaming, for example—people may be presented with three sign-in options, Facebook, Google or Apple, and they're likely to go with the latter to sign in. But for news or retail apps, where users may have profiles with meaningful information (addresses and payment information) saved, adoption may be harder.

"There is often no benefit at all to the user for signing in with a Google or Facebook account, but there is a cost—sharing of personal data—that many of these users are now tuned in to," said Perrin.

"I expect a significant number of people will stop connecting these apps to their Facebook accounts. There has been so much news about this over the past 18 months, including specific instances of how much app data is shared with Facebook. iOS users are more likely to care about this than Android users because privacy is a selling point for Apple, which is also more geared toward an affluent market," she said.

Apple has been ramping up its efforts to protect users' privacies, positioning itself as a Silicon Valley company that's taking its users' concerns seriously. Apple launched its Intelligent

Tracking Prevention feature two years ago, which limits first-party cookie tracking on its Safari browser to 24 hours, making it harder for marketers to track metrics like **influencer attribution**, for example.

Even though Apple's business is not very reliant on advertising, it sees an obvious business benefit in prioritizing data privacy. The company has released several ads touting its privacy features, including a billboard in Las Vegas for the Consumer Electronics Showcase in January that said, "What happens on your iPhone stays on your iPhone." In May, it released a **1-minute spot** highlighting the company's text message encryption that keeps conversations between its users private.

"It's unclear how much this particular feature will drive additional sales of iPhones, but I do think the feature is an important and impressive addition to Apple's current pro-privacy push that will generally benefit their business," Perrin said.

The tech giants are under the spotlight for their outsized influence, and as the slowing global economy **takes its toll on Apple**, this move toward privacy could be a way for the company to generate positive buzz and drive sales.