Amazon tried to coerce Ecobee into collecting private user data, the WSJ reports

Amazon tried to use its power to coerce Ecobee into using its smart home products to collect user data by threatening Ecobee's ability to sell its products on Amazon, according to a report from *The Wall Street Journal*.

As of now, Ecobee's products can still be purchased on Amazon, but the *WSJ* claims that negotiations between Ecobee and Amazon are ongoing. According to the *WSJ,* the online retail giant asked Ecobee to share data from its Alexa-enabled smart thermostats, even when the customer wasn't actively using the voice assistant. Ecobee reportedly refused to have its devices constantly report back to Amazon about the state of the user's home, including data on which doors were locked or unlocked and the set temperature. The reasoning being that enabling its devices to report this data to Amazon would be a violation of its customer's trust.

Ecobee may have also been concerned that Amazon wanted the data to build competing products. The retail giant has a reputation for taking non-public sales data and using it to develop products — something that's come up in antitrust investigations in the US and EU. Amazon has also been accused of using this sales data to directly copy and compete with other companies using its Amazon Basics brand.

It's not hard to look at the web of products and services it offers and see the potential abuses: the same report also outlines how Amazon uses its position in web hosting services and TV streaming boxes (sold under the Fire TV brand) to

negotiate with content providers like HBO.

The full report is well worth a read if you want an idea of all the different markets Amazon operates in that it can use to get its way when dealing with other companies. For an in-depth look into Amazon’s specific dealings with its Marketplace system, we have an explainer, and we have also covered the news as it happened. Eventually, as reports like this pile up, regulators may have no choice but to step in.

Amazon declined to comment, stating that it doesn’t talk about agreements with partners.

https://www.theverge.com/2021/4/15/22386086/amazon-strong-arm-power-ecobee-antitrust-tech