Meta wins monopoly trial, convinces judge that social networking is dead

Other factors stemmed from social changes, the judge suggested, describing the fourth factor as a trend where Meta app users started feeling “increasingly bored by their friends’ posts.”

“Longtime users’ friend lists” start fresh, but over time, they “become an often-outdated archive of people they once knew: a casual friend from college, a long-ago friend from summer camp, some guy they met at a party once,” Boasberg wrote. “Posts from friends have therefore grown less interesting.”

Then came TikTok, the fifth factor, Boasberg said, which forced Meta to “evolve” Facebook and Instagram by adding Reels.

And finally, “those five changes both caused and were reinforced by a change in social norms, which evolved to discourage public posting,” Boasberg wrote. “People have increasingly become less interested in blasting out public posts that hundreds of others can see.”

As a result of these tech advancements and social trends, Boasberg said, “Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have thus evolved to have nearly identical main features.” That reality undermined the FTC’s claims that users preferred Facebook and Instagram before Meta shifted its focus away from friends-and-family content.

“The Court simply does not find it credible that users would prefer the Facebook and Instagram apps that existed ten years ago to the versions that exist today,” Boasberg wrote.

Meta apps have not deteriorated, judge ruled

Boasberg repeatedly emphasized that the FTC failed to prove that Meta has a monopoly “now,” either actively or imminently causing harms.

The FTC tried to win by claiming that “Meta has degraded its apps’ quality by increasing their ad load, that falling user sentiment shows that the apps have deteriorated and that Meta has sabotaged its apps by underinvesting in friend sharing,” Boasberg noted.

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