

U.S. judge rules Google has illegal monopoly over internet search

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New York, August 6 (RHC)-- A judge in the United States has ruled that Google spent billions of dollars to create an illegal monopoly for its search engine, exploiting its dominance to squash competition and stifle innovation.

Monday's landmark decision that Google broke antitrust law marks the first major success for U.S. authorities taking on the dominance of Big Tech, which has come under fire from across the political spectrum.

"The court reaches the following conclusion: Google is a monopolist, and it has acted as one to maintain its monopoly," U.S. District Judge Amit Mehta wrote in his 277-page ruling.

Google's dominance in the search market was evidence of its monopoly, the ruling found. Google "enjoys an 89.2% share of the market for general search services, which increases to 94.9% on mobile devices", the ruling said.

U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland called the decision "a historic win for the American people," adding that "no company – no matter how large or influential – is above the law."

The decision represents a major setback for Google and its parent company, Alphabet, which had argued that its popularity stemmed from consumers' overwhelming desire to use a search engine that has become synonymous with looking things up online.

Google's search engine processes an estimated 8.5 billion queries every day worldwide, nearly double its daily volume from 12 years ago, according to a recent study by investment firm BOND.

Google's global affairs president, Kent Walker, said the company would appeal the ruling, noting that Mehta had characterised Google as the industry's best search engine. "Given this, and that people are increasingly looking for information in more and more ways, we plan to appeal," Walker said.

The ruling paves the way for a second trial to determine potential remedies, possibly including a breakup of Alphabet, which would change the landscape of the online advertising world that Google has dominated for years.

The ruling is the first major decision in a series of cases taking on alleged monopolies in Big Tech including Meta, which owns Facebook and Instagram, Amazon and Apple. The Google case, filed by the administration of former President Donald Trump, went before a judge from September to November of last year.

Senator Amy Klobuchar, a Democrat who chairs the Senate Judiciary Committee's antitrust subcommittee, said the fact that the case continued across administrations showed strong bipartisan support for antitrust enforcement. "It's a huge victory for the American people that antitrust enforcement is alive and well when it comes to competition," she said. "Google is a rampant monopolist."

The case depicted Google as a technological bully that methodically thwarted competition to protect a search engine that has become the centrepiece of a digital advertising machine that generated nearly \$240 billion in revenue last year.

Justice Department lawyers argued that Google's monopoly enabled it to charge advertisers artificially high prices while also enjoying the luxury of not having to invest more time and money into improving the quality of its search engine – a lax approach which hurt users.

Mehta's ruling highlighted the billions of dollars Google spends every year to install its search engine as the default option on new mobile phones and electronic gadgets. In 2021 alone, Google spent more than \$26 billion to lock in those default agreements, the judge said.

Experts said the appeal process was likely to take years, however, and that was likely to delay any immediate impact on users and advertisers.

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