



《2019 年个人数据保护法》如何反应中国短信 APP 的隐私政策分析

ANALYSIS OF HOW PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION ACT B.E. 2562 (2019) REFLECT ON CHINESE MESSAGING APPLICATION'S PRIVACY POLICY

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Received: 23 March 2020 / Revised: 21 April 2020 / Accepted: 24 April 2020

摘要

在数字世纪中，可以说技术引领消费者行为，市场，产品创新等。因此，大多数通信和交易发生在电子设备上。本研究的目的和贡献是了解《2019 年个人数据保护法》如何使用于中国短信 APP 的隐私政策向个人数据保护，并就如何使这些隐私政策符合个人数据保护法的所有意图和目的提出建议。本文将主要关注中文消息应用程序（微信），这些应用程序严重依赖用户的个人数据，该法旨在保护个人数据的所有者免损害。因此，本研究将通过微信的隐私保护政策彻底分析主体（应用用户）的权利。个人数据保护法的法律规定和微信隐私保护摘要的内容是分析的关键资源。从研究来看，大多数微信的隐私保护政策符合个人数据保护法，但公司应该调整其政策，以符合欧盟 2016/679 通用数据保护条例（GDPR）的一般数据保护法规，也符合个人数据保护法。建议是 1 提供应用程序用户的权利给所有当前的应用程序用户国际，而不是仅仅限于居民在欧盟 2 通过使用简单和直接的句子、简单和可读的格式，并自由访问童工台语隐私侦测 3 考虑和审查自己的隐私政策与其他规定、即数据控制着、数据处理器和数据保护管的责任和职责。

关键词：个人数据保护法 中国短信 APP 隐私政策 微信

ABSTRACT

In the digital century, it can be said that technology leads the way of consumer behaviour, markets, and product innovation. Consequently, most communication and trading happen on the electronic devices. The objectives and contributions of this study are to understand how the Personal Data Protection Act (“PDPA”) B.E. 2562 (2019) apply on the personal data protection of Chinese messaging application’s privacy policy and to recommend how to make such privacy policy comply with the PDPA for all intents and purposes. This article will focus mainly on Chinese messaging application (WeChat), who relies heavily on personal data of users and the PDPA, which is enacted to protect the owner of personal data from damages. Therefore, the rights of data subject (App users) will be thoroughly analysed with WeChat Privacy Protection Policy. The prescription of the PDPA and the content of WeChat Privacy Protection Summary are key resources for the analysis. From the study, most WeChat Privacy Protection Policy complies with the PDPA, but the company should adjust its policy to comply with not only General Data Protection Regulation EU 2016/679 (GDPR) but also the PDPA as well. Recommendations are 1 to provide the rights of App users to all current App users internationally instead of limited only to the residents in the European Union, 2 to provide Privacy Policy in Thai language by using simple and straightforward sentences, easy and readable format, and freely accessible, 3 to consider and review own Privacy Policy with other prescription in the PDPA i.e. responsibilities and duties of data controller, data processor, data protection officer.

Key words: Personal Data Protection Act, Chinese messaging application, Privacy Policy, WeChat



Introduction

Digital disruption happens in every market and the development of technology shapes consumer behaviour, market strategy, innovative products, etc. With the speed of the internet, people communicate easier, faster, and especially cheaper through electronic devices. According to the statistic, there are one million new internet users from January 2019 to January 2020, which increases about 2% of the total population in Thailand and 97% of people using social networking applications (Muangtum, Nattapon., [online], 2020). Therefore, consumers and sellers switch buying and selling products from the actual shops to online stores. Google Play and Apple Store are giant markets for consumers to download as many applications as they want into their electronic devices. There are various kind of applications such as game, chat, online banking, and social applications. Messaging application, which becomes a part of people's life, is the most popular application. Statistic data demonstrates that there is widely used messaging applications in Thailand. As of January 2020, people using Line 94%, Facebook Messenger 76%, Instagram 65%, WeChat 27%, and Whatsapp 27% respectively (Ad Addict TH., [online], 2020). In order to use the application, users must provide their personal data. Some personal data is considered sensitive and can be stolen by cybercriminals. Hence, Thai government has emerged with the PDPA to protect personal data of all individual involved in the online transaction. The objectives and contributions of this study is to comprehend how the PDPA reflect on Chinese messaging application and to suggest the feasibility of making its privacy policy to comply with the PDPA as much as possible. This article will focus mainly on the rights of App users, so it is divided into four main parts, which are 1. the brief overview of the PDPA and Chinese messaging application, 2. the requirement of personal data of Chinese Messaging Application, 3. lawful rights of users, and 4. the existing challenges of WeChat Privacy Policy to the PDPA.

The brief overview of the PDPA and Chinese messaging application

PDPA was published in the Government Gazette on 27 May 2019 and will fully enforce from 28 May 2020 onwards. The main objective of the PDPA is to protect a person from misusing personal data by others to cause emotionally and physically damages to him or her. Therefore, a person or a company who collects, uses or discloses personal data must primary have lawful base to do so or at least receiving consent from him or her. The law confines a company to collect, use, and disclose personal data that can directly or indirectly specify an alive person. (ETDA., [online], 2019)

Personal data refers to any data that identify a person and are categorised into general data, and sensitive data. Personal identifiable information (“PII”) is categorised into linked and linkable data. Examples of linked data include name, surname, ID number, credit card numbers, email address, passport number, date of birth, mobile phone number, driving license number, and log in details. Examples of linkable data consist of gender, race, non-specific age, job position, workplace, device ID, health data, biometric data, political opinions, religious or philosophical belief, genetic data, and sexual preference. Linkable data are counted as personal data because the combination of both data can reach to person’s identification. *Data subject* refers to the owner of personal data. *Personal data controller* (“Data controller”) refers to a person or a company who has power to make decisions or to have duties to collect, use, or disclose personal data. *Personal data processor* (“Data processor”) refers to a person or a company who collect, use, or disclose personal data under the instructions of Data controller. *Personal data protection officer* (“DPO”) refers to a person who is responsible for all activities relevant to personal data management.

Messaging application (“Messaging Apps”) is a software that allows users to send and receive information, pictures, video clips, or files through their electronic devices by using an internet (Messaging Apps., [online], 2017). Some Messaging Apps platforms provide tools and functions that allow users to not only send and receive information but also to broadcast oneself, share news or video, and do financial transactions such as buying



daily life goods. Well-known Messaging Apps in Thailand, who provide communication and e-payment service, are Line (Japanese application) and WeChat (Chinese application). Line and WeChat are widely used in Thailand. Line target users are general Thai people, but WeChat users are Thai people who mainly communicate with Chinese people.

With respect to the PDPA, WeChat App users regard as Data subject. Name, user ID, profile picture of App user can be considered as Personal Data. According to WeChat management style, the company structure is centralisation (Thomas Graziani, [online], 2019). In the simple view, WeChat is the Data controller and services providers of WeChat are Data processor such as hosting servers' companies.

Regards to WeChat Privacy Protection Summary ("WeChat Privacy Policy"), Sensitive Personal Information section at Appendix I, it includes App user's race or ethnic origin, religious or philosophical views and personal health. App users are automatically consenting to such information by posting own sensitive data. WeChat does not need a written consent from the App users as it is prescribed by the PDPA, Section 26 (3).

According to the PDPA, Section 23 (5), Data controller must affirm the place of contact and the method of contact for Data subject to communicate and make a request. Hence, WeChat provides such information in the WeChat Privacy Policy, Location of Your Personal Information Section. The location of App users' personal data also clearly states that all personal data will be transferred, stored and processed at Ontario, Canada and Hong Kong. App users can have WeChat supported services from WeChat offices around the world.

The requirement of personal data of Chinese Messaging Application

To use WeChat, Thai App users are required to download the App and register to create an account. They need to provide their names, user alias, mobile phone number, password, gender, and IP address or Facebook account to register and log in. After having an account, they will be able to send and receive messages, pictures, files, location, voice messages, and even electronic money. This whole information is considered as linked and

linkable personal data, which can lead to Thai App users (Data subject) directly or indirectly. For instance, profile picture together with voice messages can specify the identity of Data subject.

“According to the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), around 583 million people made mobile payments in China in 2018 compared to 526.6 million people in 2017 – an increase of 10.7% from 2017 to 2018.” (Ravi Rathi & Nagendra R., [online], 2019). Therefore, WeChat creates platform that offers App users to have a digital wallet, which is called WeChat Pay. App users can transfer money, pay utilities fee, donate to Tencent Charity, buy rail or flight or movie tickets, get rides, book a hotel, and shopping via this platform. App users must connect their bank account or credit cards to WeChat Pay. Then they need to set six-digit numbers to be their password. Currently, WeChat Pay only operates in four areas, which are China Mainland Wallet, Hong Kong Wallet, South Africa Wallet, and Malaysia Wallet. Therefore, Thai App users must have Chinese bank account and use their passport number and mobile phone number to register with the WeChat Pay. However, WeChat has a plan to partner with Thai commercial banks to facilitate Thai App users to use the WeChat Pay in the near future (Dumrongkiat Mala., [online], 2018).

Consequently, Thai App users must give their names, user alias, mobile phone number, password, gender, IP address, passport number, Chinese bank account number to register and log in the WeChat in order to spend electronic money on the WeChat Pay. In this case, their personal data is collected, used, and disclosed by the WeChat operator.

Lawful rights of App users

According to THE PDPA, App users have lawful rights to access, request, refuse, erase, and suspend collection, use, or disclosure of their personal data.

1. Right to access and rectify personal data

App users should be able to access and receive a copy of their own personal data freely. Regarding the WeChat Privacy Policy (WeChat., [online], 2018), YOUR RIGHTS section at Appendix I, paragraph three states that “...You also have the right to access personal information we hold about you, how we use it, and how we share it with. You also have the right to rectify that information.” This statement demonstrates that App users have rights to freely access to own personal data containing by WeChat with well-defined purposes of storing, operational process of using personal data, and procedures of sharing personal data.

In accordance with WeChat Privacy Policy (WeChat., [online], 2018), Portability section in Appendix I, App users have the rights to receive a copy of personal data that WeChat obtains it from their consent. In this circumstance, personal data consists of “...profile data, social media content posted to Moments, content selected to store to Favorites...”. This data will provide to App users in an organised, simple, and machine-readable format, which complies with the PDPA, Section 31. Furthermore, App users have the right to request WeChat to transfer personal data to a third party if it can be done technically. In case that it cannot be proceeded technically and WeChat refuses to the request, it will not offend against the law due to the limitation of technical feasibility as prescribed in the PDPA, Section 31 (2). WeChat can also refuse the request on a condition that the request of App users to transfer or disclosure of personal data to the third party may intrude another or other’s persons information or intellectual property. This action is allowed under the PDPA, Section 31, paragraph 5.

On WeChat platform, App users can go to My Profile to view or edit own profile photo, name, WeChat ID, own QR code, gender, region or deactivate location sharing with WeChat at any time. If they want to access to their digital wallet information and to add or remove the debit or credit card, they can go to the WeChat Pay and Wallet function to view, add or delete the existing debit or credit card numbers and check balance in the Wallet. All these activities can be done by themselves through their own electronic devices.

Hence, WeChat as a Data controller complies with the PDPA under Section 31, paragraph 1 with this circumstance. App users can request WeChat to rectify their personal data as well and they can access from their accounts by filing a request form. App users can easily find the request form from WeChat Privacy Policy online or request through customer service. The request form helps WeChat to ensure that App user's personal data are up-to-date, accurate, complete, and not misleading as prescribed by the PDPA, Section 35.

2. Right to erase personal data

Under WeChat Privacy Policy, Erasure section, App users have rights to request WeChat to erase personal data that WeChat restrains in the following conditions. (Please see Appendix I for more information)

- a. App users believe that their personal data is no longer needed. This clause complies with the PDPA, Section 33 (1).
- b. WeChat received App users consent to process the personal data, then App users withdraw that consent, and WeChat has no other grounds to continue processing such personal data. This clause complies with the PDPA, Section 33 (2).
- c. App users believe that WeChat processes their personal data illegally. This clause complies with the PDPA, Section 33 (4).
- d. App users are or below 13 years old when WeChat collected the personal data and WeChat can prove their age. Their accounts must be deleted as children are or under the age of 13 could not consent by themselves. They need their guardians or parents to provide consent. This clause complies with the PDPA, Section 20 (1).

App users can easily erase some of their personal data or all data and cancel WeChat account permanently by themselves as well. By going to WeChat Security Center, they can submit the request cancellation to erase own account. After the submission is



complete, all personal data will be deleted in WeChat server within 60 days of receiving account deletion request and the authorised access of third parties will be revoked.

However, WeChat Privacy Policy states that it has the rights to reject App users' request to delete their personal data if there are other grounds under the law to allow WeChat to keep such data. The PDPA, Section 32, paragraph 2 prescription proves that WeChat can proceed rejection without offending against the law.

3. Right to restrict personal data

According to WeChat Privacy Policy, Restriction of Processing to Storage Only in Appendix I, App users have the right to request WeChat to stop processing their personal data but to store such data instead. App users can ask for such request under following circumstances.

- a. App users' personal data is not accurate, and it takes time for WeChat to verify and rectify such personal data.
- b. WeChat wishes to erase the personal data due to unlawful processing, but App users wants WeChat to store it instead. This clause complies with the PDPA, Section 34 (2).
- c. WeChat wishes to delete personal data because it is no longer needed for its purposes, but App users request WeChat to store instead of deleting their personal data. This clause complies with the PDPA, Section 34 (3).

Regards to the process for App users to suspend their personal data, WeChat provides two functions, which are freeze account and unfreeze account. This function is applied whenever App users' account is at risk of hackers or lost phone. WeChat platform allows App users to approach own personal data and to completely exercise their own personal data.

4. Right to object the use of personal data

In relation to WeChat Privacy Policy, Objection section in Appendix I, WeChat allows App users to object using personal data, which is processed based on the legitimate interests, such as to prevent malicious log-ins. Legitimate interests means a legal ground for personal data processing in order to prevent fraud, secure personal data from a malware, report criminal acts or threats to public security (Carmel Mushin., [online], 2018). Therefore, if App users object WeChat not to process personal data based on the legitimate interest, by reading this section, App users are informed of the consequences of this objection, which is prescribed in the PDPA, Section 19, paragraph 6.

Existing challenges of WeChat to the PDPA

The significant challenge of WeChat Privacy Policy is that YOUR RIGHTS section applies only to residents in the European Union. It means that Thai residents could not exercise their rights of personal data protection under this Privacy Policy, which means that it doesn't fully comply with the PDPA.

On the other hand, Thai App users, who are limited to English proficiency, face difficulty of language boundary to fully exercise own personal data because WeChat Help function only provides in English and Chinese languages. In consistent with the PDPA, Section 19, paragraph 3, Data controller must specify the objectives of collecting, using and disclosing personal data, separate the request of consent from other statements, and make the request simple, and easy to understandable and accessible. Nevertheless, even though WeChat Privacy Policy is reachable and uncomplicated, it is hard for Thai App user as a Data Subject to understand.

Conclusion

WeChat is a Chinese giant messaging application; whose business heavily relies on personal data. From the research, the majority of WeChat Privacy Policy complies with the PDPA as shown in the table below.



No.	Subject	PDPA	WeChat Privacy Policy	Awareness of compliance under WeChat Privacy Policy
1	Data controller's accurate statement of the purposes of collection, use and disclosure of personal data and simple and accessible format with easy to understand	Section 19 paragraph 3	WeChat provides clear statement of the purposes of collection, use, and disclose but not in Thai language, so it's not easy to understand for Thai App users.	X
2	Data controller's notification of the consequences of Data subject's withdrawal consent	Section 19 paragraph 6	WeChat allows App users to object WeChat to process personal data on the basis of legitimate interests and inform the consequences of such objection.	√
3	In case of giving a consent on the matters that children could not done by themselves, guardian or parents must give consent on their behalf	Section 20 (1)	WeChat deletes account of users who is proved to be under 13 and lack of guardian or parents' consent.	√
4	Data controller must affirm the place of contact and the method of contact for Data subject to communicate and make a request	Section 23 (5)	WeChat clearly states that personal data is transferred, stored and processed at Ontario, Canada and Hong Kong	√



No.	Subject	PDPA	WeChat Privacy Policy	Awareness of compliance under WeChat Privacy Policy
5	If Data subject discloses own personal data to public, Data controller does not require to obtain explicit consent from Data subject.	Section 26 (3)	WeChat Privacy Policy states that by posting your own information about race or ethnic origin, religious or philosophical views and personal health means you are consenting to such information.	√
6	Data subject has right to request for personal data relating to her/his own from Data controller.	Section 31	WeChat platforms can provide App users' personal data in an organised, simple, and machine-readable format.	√
7	Data subject has right to request personal data that can be read or used generally by a device.	Section 31 paragraph 1	On WeChat platform, App users can go to My Profile to view or edit own personal data or deactivate location sharing with WeChat at any time	√
8	Data controller shall not transfer personal data if it might violate the rights or freedom of other persons.	Section 31 paragraph 5	WeChat refuses the request on condition that the request of App users to transfer or disclosure of personal data to the third	√



No.	Subject	PDPA	WeChat Privacy Policy	Awareness of compliance under WeChat Privacy Policy
			party may intrude another or other's persons information or intellectual property.	
9	Data controller shall transfer personal data to the third party except it cannot be done technically.	Section 31 (2)	WeChat refuses to the request of transferring personal data if it could not be done technically.	√
10	Data subject has rights to request Data controller to delete their personal data when such data is no longer needed.	Section 33 (1)	App users can request WeChat to erase their personal data if they believe that their personal data is no longer needed.	√
11	Data subject has rights to request Data controller to delete their personal data when Data subject withdraw his/her consent and Data controller has no legal ground to refuse the request.	Section 33 (2)	WeChat received App users consent to process the personal data, then App users withdraw that consent, and WeChat has no other grounds to continue processing such personal data.	√
12	Data subject has rights to request Data controller to delete their personal data when such data has	Section 33 (4)	App users believe that WeChat processes their personal data illegally.	√



No.	Subject	PDPA	WeChat Privacy Policy	Awareness of compliance under WeChat Privacy Policy
	been collected, used, or disclosed illegitimately.			
13	Data subject has rights to request Data controller to suspend their personal data when such data must be deleted under Section 33 (4), but Data subject requests to suspend instead.	Section 34 (2)	WeChat wishes to erase the personal data due to unlawful processing, but App users wants WeChat to store it instead.	√
14	Data subject has rights to request Data controller to suspend their personal data when such data is no longer necessary to store for the original purposes, but Data subject requests to keep such data for a right of claim or the compliance or exercising a right of claim or defending against a right of claim under a law.	Section 34 (3)	WeChat wishes to delete personal data because it is no longer needed for its purposes, but App users request WeChat to store instead of deleting their personal data.	√
15	Data controller must ensure that personal data is accurate, up-to-date, complete and not misleading.	Section 35	App users also can request WeChat to rectify their personal data that they can get access from their accounts.	√



Overall, WeChat Privacy Policy covers most requirements as prescribed in the PDPA. App users' personal data are kept well and secured under the competent procedures. Besides, App users have absolute rights to access, request, edit and delete their own personal data, to freely give or to withdraw consent, and to request WeChat to transfer, to rectify, and to erase their personal data under the limitation allowed by the PDPA and GDPR. Nevertheless, due to the fact that App users' rights apply to only residents in European Union and the language of the policy provides only in English and Chinese languages, WeChat might not be fully complied with the PDPA.

Since the PDPA will be fully enforced in May 2020, WeChat Privacy Policy will be directly affected by it. Regarding the aforementioned 27% (Ad Addict TH., [online], 2020) of Thai people using WeChat, it is about one fourth of the total messaging applications. Moreover, the statistic number is expected to rise up constantly. Hence, the initial step at this stage for WeChat is to translate its Privacy Policy to Thai language, which is easy to understand for Thai people by using simple and precise words, readable format, and lastly uncomplicated access to the Privacy Policy information. The scope of this study significantly comprises of App users' rights; however, WeChat is required to review and consider other aspects i.e. responsibilities and duties of data controller, data processor, data protection officer. Not only WeChat will be influenced by the PDPA but also other messaging applications such as Line, Facebook, Instagram, and etc. These messaging applications have been used worldwide. As a result, their work operations and procedures could not only focus on where the head quarter is located, but also concentrate on where the subsidiaries are located as well.

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Appendix I



WeChat Privacy Protection Summary

YOUR RIGHTS

The following section applies only to persons that are resident in the European Union.

You have certain rights in relation to the Personal Information we hold about you. Some of these only apply in certain circumstances as set out in more detail below.

We set out how to exercise those rights. Please note that we will require you to verify your identity before responding to any requests to exercise your rights. We must respond to a request by you to exercise those rights without undue delay and at least within one month (although this may be extended by a further two months in certain circumstances, such as where the request involves substantial volumes of information or is otherwise complex). To exercise any of your rights, please complete the [request form](#) and follow the steps for submission.

Access & Correction

Upon request WeChat will provide you with information about whether we hold any of your personal information. You also have the right to access personal information we hold about you, how we use it, and who we share it with. You also have the right to correct that information.

You can access and correct your personal information by logging into your **WeChat account** at any time. For example, you can delete certain Location Data that you have provided us via your device settings or the "Clear Location" option within WeChat.

If you believe we hold any other personal information, or you want to correct information that you are unable to correct using your account, please complete the request form [here](#). We may not be able to provide you with certain Personal Information if providing it would

interfere with another's rights (e.g. where providing the Personal Information we hold about you would reveal information about another person).

With respect to correction requests, where we agree that the Personal Information is inaccurate or incomplete, we will try to tell any third party to whom we have disclosed the relevant Personal Information so that they can rectify the Personal Information too.

Erasure

You can delete your account, or remove certain personal information, by logging into your WeChat account and following the account deletion instructions [here](#). If there is any other personal information you believe we process that you would like us to erase, please complete the request form [here](#).

You may request that we erase the Personal Information we hold about you in the following circumstances:

- you believe that it is no longer necessary for us to have your Personal Information;
- we obtained your consent to process the Personal Information and you withdraw that consent (and we have no other grounds for processing the Personal Information);
- you believe we are unlawfully processing your Personal Information; or
- you are or were under the age of 13 when we collected the Personal Information and we can verify your age.

Also note that you may exercise your right to restrict our processing your Personal Information (as described below) whilst we consider a request to erase your data.

Please note, however, that we may retain the Personal Information if there are valid grounds under law for us to do so (e.g., for the defence of legal claims, freedom of expression or some other legal obligation) but we will let you know if that is the case.

Where you have requested that we erase your Personal Information that we have made public and there are grounds for erasure, we will use reasonable steps try to tell others that are displaying the Personal Information or providing links to the Personal Information to erase it too.



Restriction of Processing to Storage Only

You have a right to require us to stop processing the Personal Information we hold about you other than for storage purposes in certain circumstances. Please note, however, that if we stop processing the Personal Information, we may use it again if there are valid grounds under data protection law for us to do so (e.g. for the defence of legal claims or for another's protection).

Where we agree to stop processing the Personal Information, we will try to tell any third party to whom we have disclosed the relevant Personal Information so that they can stop processing it too.

You may request we stop processing and just store the Personal Information we hold about you where:

- you believe the Personal Information is not accurate (for the period it takes for us to verify whether it is accurate);
- we wish to erase the Personal Information as the processing we are doing is unlawful (but you want us to retain the Personal Information and just store it instead); or
- we wish to erase the Personal Information as it is no longer necessary for our purposes (but you require it to be stored for the establishment, exercise or defence of legal claims).

Portability

You have the right to receive a copy of certain Personal Information we collect from you. This comprises any personal information we process on the basis of your consent (e.g., voluntarily-provided profile data, social media content posted to Moments, content selected to store to Favorites) or pursuant to our contract with you (e.g., profile data), as described in the section "**How we process your information**". You have the right to receive this information in a structured, commonly used and machine-readable format. You also have the right to request that we transfer that personal information to another party. You can exercise your right to export your data by following the instructions [here](#).

If you wish for us to transfer the Personal Information to a third party, please ensure you detail that party. Note that we can only do so where it is technically feasible. We are not responsible for the security of the Personal Information or its processing once received by the third party. We also may not provide you with certain Personal Information if providing it would interfere with another's rights (e.g. where providing the Personal Information we hold about you would reveal information about another person or our trade secrets or intellectual property).

Objection

You may object to our use of your Personal Information if we use your information on the basis of our legitimate interests (such as when we use your personal information for your account security, such as to prevent malicious log-ins). If you object to such processing, please review and submit the form [here](#), providing detailed reasons.

To the extent provided by applicable laws and regulations, you may withdraw any consent you previously provided to us by following the instructions set out [here](#).

Last modified: 2018-05-10

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