UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Federal Trade Commission v. Meta Platforms, Inc.

Meta · No. Civil Action No. 20-3590 (JEB) · Decided December 2, 2025

SUMMARY

The opinion resolves the Federal Trade Commission's antitrust action alleging that Meta Platforms, Inc. unlawfully maintained a monopoly in a market for personal social networking services through acquisitions of Instagram and WhatsApp. After a bench trial, the court concluded that the FTC failed to establish the relevant market or show that Meta possessed monopoly power, and entered judgment for Meta. The court emphasized the convergence of Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube and the resulting difficulty of defining a separate personal-social-networking market.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of Columbia
WRITING FOR THE COURT	James E. Boasberg
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of Columbia
DECIDED	December 2, 2025
DOCKET	Civil Action No. 20-3590 (JEB)
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Following a bench trial on the FTC's claim that Meta violated Section 2 of the Sherman Act by monopolizing personal social networking services and maintaining that monopoly through anticompetitive acquisitions, the district court entered judgment in Meta's favor.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The FTC bore the burden of proving the relevant product market and Meta's current or imminent violation. Market definition and monopoly power were treated primarily as factual questions, with findings based on the bench-trial record and credibility determinations.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published district-court memorandum opinion; persuasive authority within the District of Columbia and elsewhere, but not binding appellate precedent.

TOPICS

commercial litigation · commercial · consumer protection · corporate law

PRACTICE AREAS

antitrust · commercial litigation · competition law · corporate law

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Section 13(b) of the FTC Act requires the FTC, in seeking a permanent injunction, to prove a current or imminent violation rather than only past unlawful conduct with continuing effects.
2. Whether Meta currently possesses monopoly power under Section 2 of the Sherman Act.
3. Whether Facebook and Instagram compete in a distinct personal-social-networking product market excluding TikTok and YouTube.
4. Whether the evidence of direct effects, including high profits, quality-adjusted price, and price discrimination, established monopoly power.
5. Whether indirect evidence established that Meta possessed a dominant share of a relevant market protected by barriers to entry.

HOLDINGS

1. To obtain a permanent injunction under Section 13(b) of the FTC Act, the FTC must prove that the challenged conduct currently violates the law or imminently will do so; proof of only a past violation and lingering competitive harm is insufficient.
2. Monopolization requires both monopoly power in a relevant market and acquisition or maintenance of that power through anticompetitive conduct rather than competition on the merits.
3. The FTC failed to prove that Facebook and Instagram constitute a distinct personal-social-networking product market excluding TikTok and YouTube; the evidence showed that TikTok and YouTube are economically meaningful substitutes and belong in the relevant market.
4. The FTC's evidence of Meta's high profits, alleged degradation of product quality, and price discrimination did not establish monopoly power.

KEY QUOTATIONS

> *"The Court ultimately concludes that the agency has not carried its burden: Meta holds no monopoly in the relevant market. Judgment must therefore be entered in its favor."* (2)

> *"To win the permanent injunction that it seeks here, the FTC must prove a current or imminent legal violation."* (23)

> *"When consumers cannot use Facebook and Instagram, they turn first to TikTok and YouTube. When they cannot use TikTok or YouTube, they turn to Facebook and Instagram."* (52)

> *"When the evidence implies that consumers are reallocating massive amounts of time from Meta's apps to these rivals and that the amount of substitution has forced Meta to invest gobs of cash to keep up, the answer is clear: Meta is not a monopolist insulated from competition."* (55)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Meta operates Facebook and Instagram, which historically emphasized connections among friends but had increasingly shifted toward algorithmically recommended short-form video, including Reels. TikTok and YouTube likewise offered algorithmically recommended video and social-sharing features, and the evidence showed substantial shifts in users' time among these platforms during outages, bans, experiments, and changes in availability. The FTC alleged that Meta maintained monopoly power in a distinct personal-social-networking market through, among other conduct, its acquisitions of Instagram and WhatsApp. The court concluded that the evidence did not establish a separate market excluding TikTok and YouTube or current monopoly power.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The FTC filed suit in late 2020, alleging that Meta monopolized a personal-social-networking market and maintained its monopoly through the acquisitions of Instagram and WhatsApp. The court dismissed the initial complaint for failure to plausibly allege monopoly power, then allowed an amended complaint to proceed. After discovery, the parties cross-moved for summary judgment; the court largely denied both motions. Following a bench trial lasting more than six weeks, the court issued this memorandum opinion incorporating its findings of fact and conclusions of law.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- FTC v. Meta Platforms, Inc., 775 F. Supp. 3d 16, 30 (D.D.C. 2024)
- FTC v. Facebook, Inc., 560 F. Supp. 3d 1, 32 (D.D.C. 2021)
- FTC v. Facebook, Inc., 581 F. Supp. 3d 34, 40 (D.D.C. 2022)
- Verizon Commc'ns Inc. v. Law Offs. of Curtis V. Trinko, LLP, 540 U.S. 398, 407 (2004)
- United States v. Grinnell Corp., 384 U.S. 563, 570-71 (1966)
- United States v. Microsoft Corp., 253 F.3d 34, 51-58 (D.C. Cir. 2001) (en banc)
- United States v. E. I. du Pont de Nemours & Co., 351 U.S. 377, 394-95, 404 (1956)
- Brown Shoe Co. v. United States, 370 U.S. 294, 325-28 (1962)
- Rothery Storage & Van Co. v. Atlas Van Lines, Inc., 792 F.2d 210, 218 (D.C. Cir. 1986)
- FTC v. Penn State Hershey Med. Ctr., 838 F.3d 327, 338 (3d Cir. 2016)
- FTC v. Credit Bureau Ctr., LLC, 937 F.3d 764, 774 (7th Cir. 2019)
- AMG Cap. Mgmt., LLC v. FTC, 593 U.S. 67, 76 (2021)
- FTC v. Evans Prods. Co., 775 F.2d 1084, 1087 (9th Cir. 1985)
- FTC v. Surescripts, LLC, 665 F. Supp. 3d 14, 38-39 (D.D.C. 2023)
- Ohio v. American Express Co., 585 U.S. 529, 544-47 (2018)
- Illinois Tool Works Inc. v. Independent Ink, Inc., 547 U.S. 28, 44-45 (2006)
- Matsushita Electric Industrial Co. v. Zenith Radio Corp., 475 U.S. 574, 587, 594 n.19, 595 (1986)
- Epic Games, Inc. v. Apple, Inc., 67 F.4th 946, 975 n.7 (9th Cir. 2023)

- FTC v. Whole Foods Market, Inc., 548 F.3d 1028, 1038-39 (D.C. Cir. 2008)
- Times-Picayune Publishing Co. v. United States, 345 U.S. 594, 612 n.31 (1953)

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