

The Coffee Connection

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We have another indication now that the Internet of Things can be a mixed blessing. Perhaps not every gadget in our homes should be linked to the Worldwide Everything?

The great thing about a coffee maker with a Wi-Fi or Bluetooth connection is that you can set things up with a few taps on your smartphone. Brewing times, strength, temperature, etc., can all be arranged without ever having to trudge from bedroom to kitchen.

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The horrible thing, though — in addition to the slim possibility that a hacker will take your coffee machine hostage — is that a Wi-Fi-capable coffee maker made in China may be spying on you on behalf of the Chinazi government.

This is the conclusion of Christopher Balding, a researcher who finds evidence that coffee machines manufactured by Kalerm in Jiangsu, China, collect a diverse array of data.



About their users.

Stuff like the users’ names and general locations as well as usage patterns.

Balding doesn’t know for sure that the company simply turns over such data to the government. But Chinese companies must cooperate with any government demands, and Balding notes that China often gathers as much data as possible and figures out what to do with it later.

The data-scavenging of the Chinese government is not exactly *unique*. Think Ed Snowden and the program he revealed, for example. But “the breadth and depth of their data-collection efforts” are in a class by themselves, Balding says.

It seems that my lack of a connected coffee machine, coupled with my chronic dependence on Starbucks, is proving very wise indeed.

This is Common Sense. I’m Paul Jacob.