
MEDIA & ICT CONSUMPTION TRENDS

“FACEBOOK: WHY WE IGNORE THE PRIVACY ALARM”

Paradoxical Facebook User Attitude

The fact that Facebook is selling personal data has been subject of intense debate for quite a while now. Yet despite the increasing concern about these practices, there is no corresponding exodus of people on Facebook. In May and June 2014, we held a large-scale survey for EMSOC, an IWT SBO research project on User Empowerment in a Social Media Culture. It showed that only one in ten Flemish Facebook users realizes that their surfing behavior information and personal data could be sold. But besides that lack of knowledge, there is a reason to stay faithful to the social network: namely the time and energy users invested in creating and maintaining their online profile. It certainly seems that users attach more importance to the contacts, pictures, movies and other things they manage through Facebook, than to the threat the platform poses for their own personal privacy.

The free lunch illusion

There is no need to overdramatize the debate - held primarily in academic and political circles - on the commodification of Facebook user data. True, these practices possibly constitute a breach of our privacy; yet the majority of users is not losing sleep over it - judging by the 65% of Flemings using Facebook every month. It is, moreover, Facebook - and not Google or Apple - which keeps getting targeted. While it is true that Facebook saves and sells customer data, how does that differ from supermarkets, phone directories or even governments? And did anyone perhaps notice that Facebook is still a free service? Quid pro quo...

Making Terms of Use Easier to Understand

It is still useful to think about alternatives, since media consumers are asking for more transparency, placing more and more responsibility with media services. They should handle personal data in an ethical way and give users access and control of which data is processed in which way and for what reasons.

Instead of guiding users through long, unreadable terms of use, the media and technology sector should aim for greater intelligibility. Why not consider a Social Media Guide - following the success of food labels or the 'Kijkwijzer' viewer guide. By means of a number of icons, terms of use could be identified quickly and easily, which would in turn lead to more user confidence in these types of services. Talking about self-regulation...

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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MEDIA & ICT CONSUMPTION TRENDS

Media & ICT Consumption Trends is a partnership between iMinds Research Center Media & ICT (iMinds-MICT) and digital research institute iMinds. The project seeks to provide an overview of academic research in Flemish media and internet consumption, and links insights into transforming audiences to the current challenges for the Flemish media industries. It therefore combines results from original user-driven innovation research with conclusions from international studies and technology trends reports.

Series Editors: Tom Evens, Bart Vanhaelewyn and Lieven De Marez

Hungry for more insights? Check out the other issues in this series at <http://www.mict.be>

(2015-1) **Local content no must-have for Netflix users**

(2015-2) **Twitter activity not related with higher TV viewing rates**

(2015-3) **Facebook: Why we ignore the privacy alarm**

Research Center **Media & ICT (iMinds-MICT)** is affiliated to Ghent University, part of the Flemish digital research center and business incubator iMinds, and forms, together with SMIT and CUO, the research department iMinds-Digital Society. The context and focus of MICT's research is today's digital society and innovation economy, and more specifically the changes and challenges that are imposed by that environment for each of its stakeholders: industry, policy makers and, not the least, end-users.

iMinds is Flanders' digital research center and business incubator, established by the Flemish government in 2004. Building on the expertise of our 850+ top researchers located at 5 Flemish universities, it introduces digital innovation in 6 key markets including Media, ICT and Smart Cities. iMinds collaborates with research partners to convert digital knowhow into real-life products and services that change people's lives for the better. Key asset is an agile, open research mind set and proven methodology.
