Chapter 46

Generation Y and Internet Privacy:
Implication for Commercialization of Social Networking Services

Zdenek Smutny
University of Economics, Czech Republic

Vaclav Janoscik
Academy of Fine Arts in Prague, Czech Republic

Radim Cermak
University of Economics, Czech Republic

ABSTRACT

This chapter addresses the issue of privacy settings with a focus on Generation Y from a technological, social, generational, cultural and philosophical point of view. After introducing the issue of Internet privacy and other relevant areas—generational and cultural differences, the philosophical framework, the postinternet condition, the possibilities of processing and (mis)using personal data, and privacy policy—the authors present their perspective on the issue, drawing implications for individuals and organizations based on their own research and other relevant studies. The authors discuss the possible implications in terms of a prospective use of personal data by companies (e.g. for marketing and management) and possibility of processing user data. Such perspective will allow them to formulate a critical basis for further assessment of social networking and Generation Y's attitudes to privacy. The chapter concludes by outlining several recommendations concerning the commercialization of social networking services with respect to the constantly changing conception of privacy.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an interdisciplinary perspective on the attitude of today's young people from Generation Y towards self-disclosure and on the impact of such behaviour on the individual, as well as on the challenges for commercial exploitation of social networking services. A definition of Generation Y is given in the part *Cultural and generational difference*s. From a firm's perspective, there are two reasons why it is important to focus on Generation Y:

- Generation Y has a positive attitude to information and communication technologies (ICT) (Valentine & Powers, 2013), which are already a common element in their lives (Benckendorff, Moscardo & Pendergast, 2010, p. 20; Lahtinen, 2012). This part of their life is reflected in social networking services and thus shared with other people. These (personal) data from various Internet-based services can be used in commercial and professional activity.
- Members of Generation Y are economically active. From a firm's perspective, this means that they can act as customers or as employees.

Internet privacy is viewed as the right of a subject (human) for the protection of their personal data and the way they are handled (Puddephatt et al., 2012) – i.e. stored, processed, used (including changes in their use), provided to third parties and displayed on the Internet. The information collected during an individual's interaction in a particular social networking service can be divided into personally identifying information (e.g. information that relates to a particular person or identifies them) and non-personally identifying information (e.g. anonymous information about an individual's behaviour on a web portal). (Cermak, Smutny & Janoscik, 2014)

A long-term trend in companies' activity is the collection of such data and its subsequent evaluation for various purposes of the companies (e.g. marketing). The sources of these data are the information and front-end systems of an organization (e.g. the collection of consumer data) (Roberts & Zahay, 2012, pp. 101-105), as well as freely accessible data on the Internet (e.g. the discussion of people on a particular web) (Sperkova & Skola, 2015). This also affects common users, who interact within various Internet-based services and thus create a large amount of personal data – this concerns mainly social networking services. The reason for such behaviour is today's information society, which unobtrusively prompts users to share their personal information on the Internet (e.g. people are positively motivated to share their personal information). This can also be described by the term self-disclosure (Benson, Saridakis & Tennakoon, 2015). Personal information accessible on the Internet can thus, on the one hand, help companies and their customers, from whom they can receive feedback or achieve personalisation to their customers based on individual data processing. On the other hand, it is a temptation for third parties to exploit these data.

A dual perspective (individual and firm) will be considered in this chapter. Companies should be aware of the challenges connected with individuals' Internet privacy, because those individuals may comprise customers and also their employees. Their personal information could be used for bullying or manipulating them to reveal a company secret or to become a serious security risk (Benson et al., 2015). This chapter focuses on the use of individual information disclosed on social networking services, primarily for marketing and management. Such systemic view on Internet privacy may be beneficial for organizations.

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