

Chapter 2

Internet Users and Internet Regulation: Enemies or Allies?

ABSTRACT

In this chapter, the authors examine if internet users are against any kind of internet regulation policy or not. In their endeavour, they begin with a literature review of older related surveys, and then proceed by presenting their UK-related survey that was conducted in 2007-2008, focusing on the UK's IRS (i.e., BT's CleanFeed). The United Kingdom CleanFeed is an ideal case study as it was the first time that an internet regulation system had been implemented to such an extent in a Western democracy. The authors' UK survey managed to collect initial valuable data that formed their further survey-based research in Greece, Germany, Russia, India, Kosovo, and Cyprus. Last, the authors discuss the need for regularly measuring internet users' opinions about the subject.

INTRODUCTION

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Last, the authors discuss the need for regularly measuring Internet user's opinion about the subject.

Previous Related Surveys

Taking into account that the implementation of IRSs is necessary for specific reasons (such as to decrease the child-porn material circulated online), there is a need for the right conditions to be found under which such a content blocking system can be accepted in democratic societies. An option for gathering related data is to conduct surveys at a national level.

In this section, the authors discuss the results of the few related surveys already conducted around the world in order to show that Internet users in many countries are willing to accept, under conditions, the implementation of an IRS.

It is worth mentioning that the oldest related survey the authors managed to find was conducted in 1998 at GVV Center at the Georgia Institute of Technology's College of Computing (Depken, 2006). Survey's scope was to measure the demographic characteristics of the online population, but there was a question stating "I believe that certain information should not be published on the Internet". Among the US-based 4,247 respondents, 24.84 percent answered "Agree strongly" and 22.30 percent "Agree somewhat." On the other hand, the answer "Disagree somewhat" scored 15.26 percent and "Disagree strongly" 28.37 percent. Summarising, the respondents who agreed ("strongly" or "somewhat") with the non-publication of certain information online were little more (47.14 percent) than those who disagreed ("strongly" or "somewhat") (43.63 percent).

In 2007, the *Australian Broadband Survey* with 17,881 participants showed that 74.3 percent disagreed/strongly disagreed and only 13.4 percent agreed/strongly agreed with the statement "Do you support the government's policy for mandatory ISP-level content filtering (opt-out)?" (Whirlpool, 2010a). In a similar survey in 2008 (Whirlpool, 2010b), among the 19,763 participants, a staggering 88.9 percent answered "Yes" to the question "The federal Labor government plans to require ISPs to filter adult material from the Internet.

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