Chapter 100
Understanding Cyber Behavior in Europe

Petter Bae Brandtzæg
SINTEF ICT, Norway

ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to understand cyber behavior in terms of Internet usage patterns in Europe. It presents both an historical introduction to the term and insight into the different approaches to understanding cyber behavior, such as the user typology approach, by which European citizens are classified according to their Internet usage patterns. It also provides insight into cross-country differences in Europe, with a focus on the North/South European divide in Internet access and use. Further, this chapter presents several important factors affecting the European digital divide, such as economy, gender equality, press freedom and political openness, education, and culture. Finally, some important future research directions related to cyber behavior in Europe are suggested.

INTRODUCTION

We are in the midst of the evolution of cyber behavior in Europe. However, research on cyber behavior, understood as online usage patterns, has been overshadowed by the fact that most of the empirical studies and theories on the use of new communication technologies have a US-centric focus. This is not surprising, considering the pervasiveness and dominance of US media and technologies, recently illustrated by popular online services such as Google, Wikipedia, YouTube, and Facebook, as well as new mobile technology such as iPhone and iPad. There are, nevertheless, great regional variations in Internet access and use across cultures and societies that should be taken into account (Castells, 1996). European users might draw on existing culturally specific belief, lifestyle and value systems when they use, interpret, and co-create different online services

and applications. An understanding of specific characteristics with European cyber behavior is therefore necessary.

In order to provide researchers with a better understanding of how and why individuals adopt certain types of cyber behaviors, particularly in Europe, in this chapter, we introduce the meaning of the term "cyber behavior" and the current research and research challenges related to this topic. We will discuss the digital divide and participation inequality in cyber behavior and its consequences and future prospects in digital literacy and technology development. This chapter provides an overview of what is known about the determinants of the cross-country diffusion and adoption of the Internet in Europe to highlight the differences between the use of new communication technologies in Europe, the US, and other parts of the world. Finally, we will also examine several important factors affecting different countries' experiences with the new media, focusing on cultural influences on perceptions, adoption, and use.

What is Cyber Behavior?

The term cyber behavior refers to the pattern of behavior that users display when employing different communication technologies for various purposes. Hence, in this chapter, cyber behavior is understood as the pattern of use of new media technologies, focusing on the Internet usage. It includes the study of what people use the Internet for, how they use it, how often they use it, and its various applications (Brandtzæg, 2010). The answers to these questions can be determined using various research methods, such as surveys, interviews, observations, time diaries, and logging.

The field of cyber behavior and research on it are relatively recent. Cyber behavior has its roots in the more well-known field of audience research. Even though cyber behavior is not synonymous with audience research, the two disciplines have several similarities. Audience research is designed to reveal the characteristic of a particular audience.

This research began in the 1970s with television ratings, which were meant to reflect individuals' television viewing habits and preferences. As advertising became increasingly important to the media industry, consumer research (marketing research) and audience research converged. Although both of these domains focus on specific users, they differ from cyber behavior as they are more focused on consumer preferences and target groups rather than on the specific behavior that users display. Cyber behavior involves research on Internet usage, in particular, and how the Internet affects human behavior; it is based on how we can enhance our understanding of the user and how specific users interact with new online technologies. In this regard, cyber behavior is clearly related to human–computer interaction (HCI), which is the design and study of the interaction between people (users) and computers.

The need for empirical data on cyber behavior has grown considerably in the last decade due to a number of factors (see Kent, 1994; Brandtzæg, 2010):

- Changing technology
- Deregulations
- New sources of demand
- Increasing user opportunities
- User fragmentation
- Increased industry competition

According to Kent (1994), these key developments have complicated the methods by which differences in how users (formerly known as audiences) behave online should be measured and interpreted; cyber behavior fuels a desire for more detailed and accurate user data due to the complexity of the web. Ideally, detailed understanding of users and their cyber behavior should anticipate user preferences and enable more effective strategic decision-making among developers and designers of services that interact with online users (Anand & Peterson, 2000). However, Napoli (2010) argues that there has been a great deal of

Related Content

Prevalence and Psychosocial Predictors of Cyberchondria in Nigeria During the COVID-19 Pandemic
Gboyega Emmanuel Abikoyeand Abiodun Musibau Lawal (2023). *International Journal of Cyber Behavior, Psychology and Learning (pp. 1-12).*
www.irma-international.org/article/prevalence-and-psychosocial-predictors-of-cyberchondria-in-nigeria-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/324088

A Pilot Study of Comparing Social Network Behaviors between Onlies and Others
Dong Nie, Zheng Yan, Nan Zhaoand Tingshao Zhu (2015). *International Journal of Cyber Behavior, Psychology and Learning (pp. 56-66).*
www.irma-international.org/article/a-pilot-study-of-comparing-social-network-behaviors-between-onlies-and-others/134390

MobileSens: A Ubiquitous Psychological Laboratory based on Mobile Device
Ang Li, He Li, Rui Guoand Tingshao Zhu (2013). *International Journal of Cyber Behavior, Psychology and Learning (pp. 47-55).*
www.irma-international.org/article/mobilesens-ubiquitous-psychological-laboratory-based/78281

Exploring Instructor and Student use of an American Sign Language E-Assessment System
Simon Hooper, Charles Miller, Susan Roseand Michael M. Rook (2013). *International Journal of Cyber Behavior, Psychology and Learning (pp. 19-28).*
www.irma-international.org/article/exploring-instructor-student-use-american/76274

The Community Manager and Social Media Networks: The Case of Local Governments in Spain
Manuel Pedro Rodríguez Bolívar, Carmen Caba Pérezand Antonio Manuel López Hernández (2014). *Cyber Behavior: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications (pp. 1565-1582).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/the-community-manager-and-social-media-networks/107803