



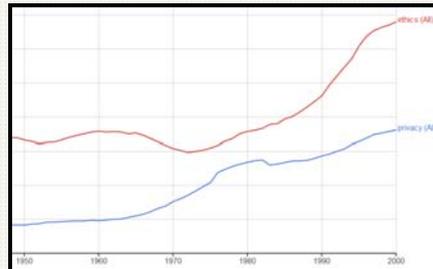
Ethics in Social Media: Privacy and Content Generation

James Leonhardt, Ph.D.

Daniels Ethics Fellow & Assistant Professor of Marketing
New Mexico State University

Overview

- The public's interest in ethics and privacy has increased over the last several decades (chart below). Social media has recently fueled this interest. To better understand this phenomena, here, we'll consider how the currency of social media, "user-generated content", results in a necessary trade-off between privacy and sociability. There are four sections:
 1. Trends
 2. What is social media?
 3. User-generated content
 4. Privacy

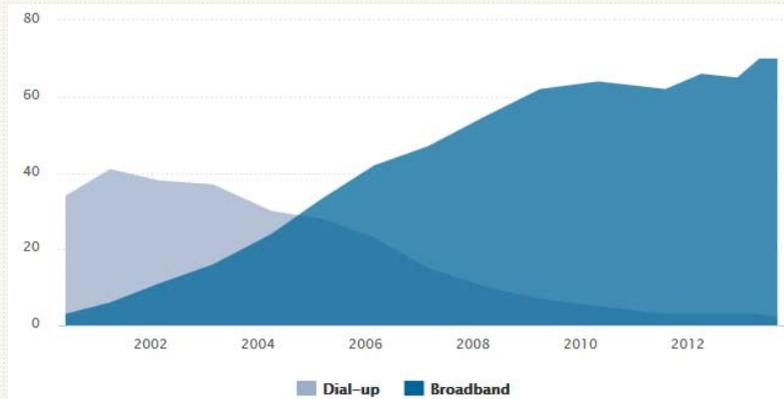


Source: Google Ngram (2015)

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Trends

- Internet access in US homes (%) over time

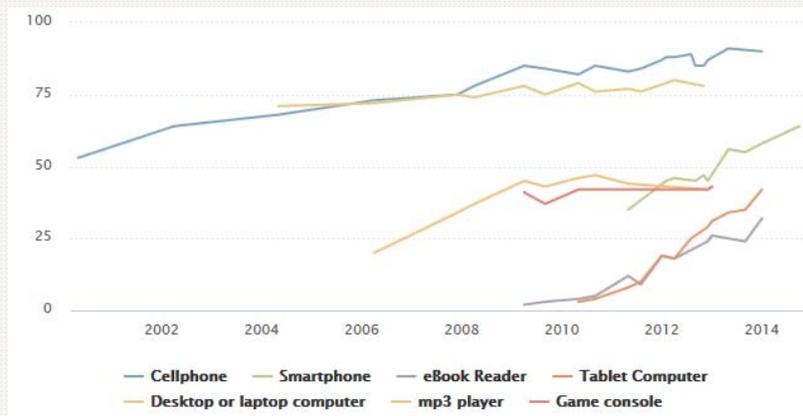


Source: Pew Research Center, 2015

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Trends

- US mobile device ownership (%) over time

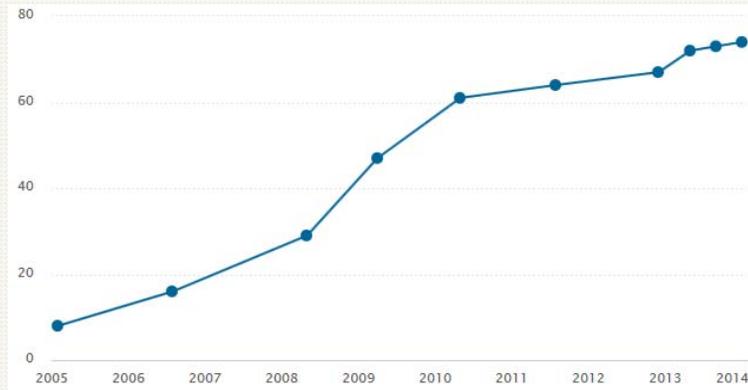


Source: Pew Research Center, 2015

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Trends

- US social media use (%) over time



Source: Pew Research Center, 2015

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What is Social Media?

- Social media is the online means of consuming *and creating* information among nodes and networks of people, communities, and organizations
 - Traditional media (e.g. Television, Radio)
 - Information is communicated *vertically*—from creators to consumers
 - Examples
 - » A radio broadcast
 - » A magazine advertisement
 - Social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter)
 - Information is communicated *horizontally*—from consumer/creators to consumer/creators
 - Examples
 - » A post on Facebook
 - » A product review on Amazon

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What is Social Media?

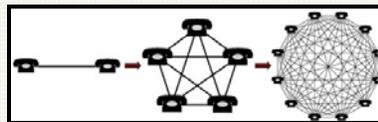
Horizontal communication takes place in each of social media's four zones:

- Social Entertainment
 - Gaming platforms (e.g. Farmville)
- Social Commerce
 - Ratings, reviews, help features (e.g. Amazon ratings)
- Social Publishing
 - Blogs, news forums (e.g. Harvard Health Blog)
- Social Community
 - Social networking platforms (e.g. Facebook)



What is Social Media?

- In each social media zone, horizontal communication results in a network effect
 - Each additional user adds value for other users
 - Example
 - More users of Yelp = more ratings and more businesses rated = the easier and more likely it is that you'll maximize your utility (find something you like)



What is Social Media?

- Network effects in social media are dependent on the *creation* and sharing of content by each additional user
 - User-generated content
 - Users are co-creators in content and value creation
 - Example
 - » Wikipedia replaced traditional vertical communication in the encyclopedia market through “crowdsourcing” knowledge from many individuals, some of whom supply information while others serve as editors, checking to ensure validity

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User-generated Content

- User-generated content was Time’s “Person” of the Year for 2006



Source: Time Inc. (2007)

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User-generated Content

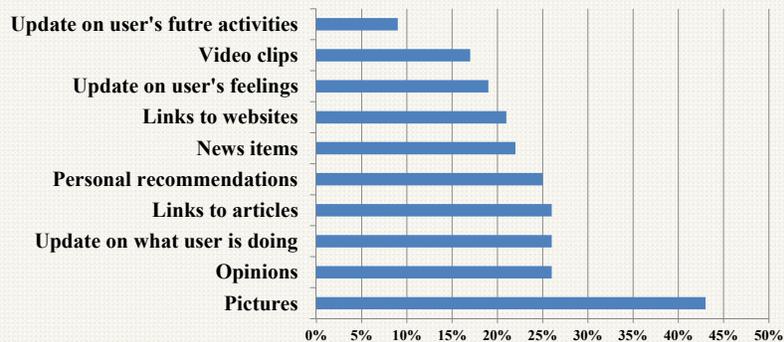
- User-generated content is the “currency” of social media and takes on many forms:
 - Social network feeds
 - Blogs
 - Surveys
 - Podcasts
 - Mobile uploads
 - Games
 - Chats
 - Contests
 - Reviews and ratings



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User-generated Content

- Across social media platforms (Facebook, Google+, Pinterest, and Twitter) content is generated by users' (%) sharing:

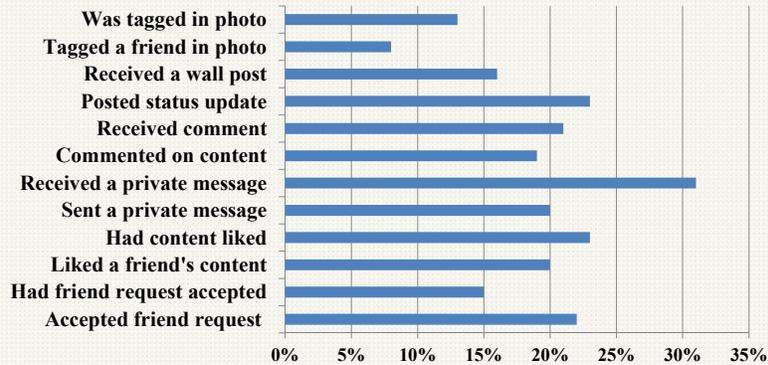


Source: Go-Gulf (2014)

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User-generated Content

- Example of content generated by Facebook users (%) during one week of activity



Source: Pew Research Center, 2015

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User-generated Content

- Social media users generate content to increase their “sociability”
 - For example, popular reasons that users share in social media are to:

Express who they are and what they care about	68%
Change opinion and encourage action	49%
Connect with others who share their interests	73%
Stay connected with close others	78%
Feel more involved in the world	69%
Support causes or issues they care about	84%

Source: Go-Gulf (2014)

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Privacy

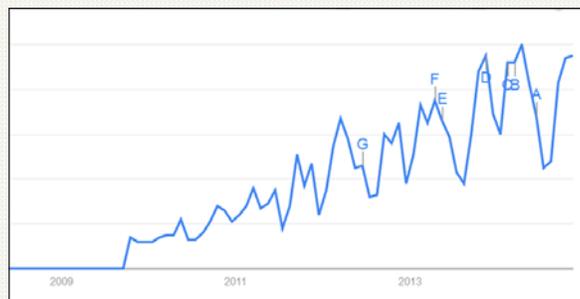
- However, there is a natural trade-off between sociability and privacy
 - A cost of sociability is privacy and, conversely, a cost of privacy is sociability
 - “In order to ‘exist’ online, you have to publish things to be shared, and that has to be done in open, public spaces.” –Stowe Boyd (2014)
 - “I would like to eat all I want and lose weight, but that trick does not work either.” –Principal Engineer, Cisco (2015)



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Privacy

- Likewise, as social media expands, so has privacy concerns
 - Google search queries related to “privacy”



Source: Google Trends (2015)

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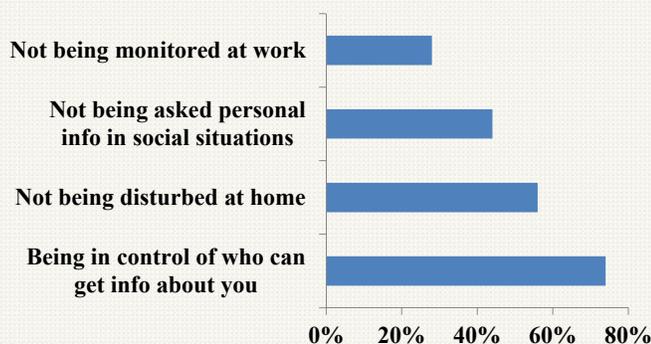
Privacy

- Privacy concerns are grounded in our ethical and cultural norms
 - “In a democracy, privacy is a basic political right that cannot be sold out in the marketplace.” (Reidenberg, 2000)
 - “Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence.” (European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, 1950)
 - “All that may come to my knowledge in the exercise of my profession...I will keep secret and will never reveal” (Hippocratic Oath; Miles, 2005)

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Privacy

- Importance of privacy in everyday life
 - US adults (%) that feel this is “Very Important” ($N = 461$)



Source: Pew Research Center (2015)

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Privacy

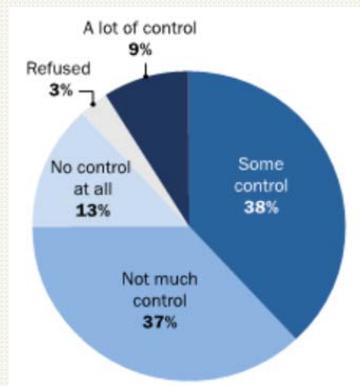
- Similarly, scholars note three types of privacy:
 - Accessibility privacy
 - Having the right to be left alone
 - Decisional privacy
 - Freedom from others' intrusion in our personal choices
 - Informational privacy
 - Having the ability to control information about us the we deem personal
- Users of social media are most concerned with the latter

Source: Ess (2014)

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Privacy

- Perceived lack of control over personal information
 - US adults (%) perceived control over their personal information ($N = 498$)

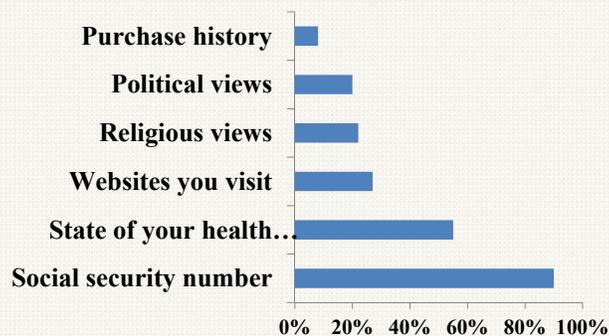


Source: Pew Research Center (2014)

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Privacy

- Not all information is equally personal/private
 - % US adults indicating information was “very sensitive” ($N = 607$)

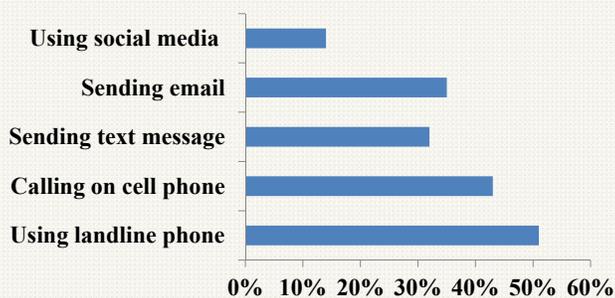


Source: Pew Research Center (2014)

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Privacy

- Not all information channels are equally private
 - % US adults indicating channel is “somewhat secure” ($N = 607$)

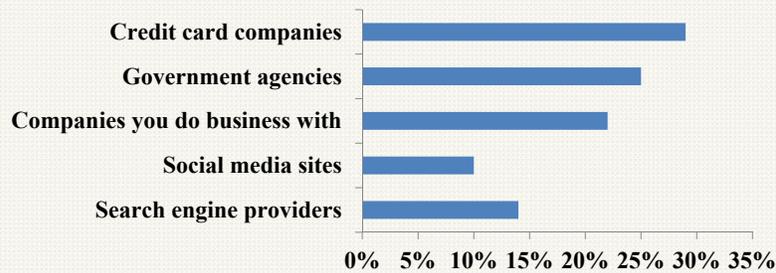


Source: Pew Research Center (2014)

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Privacy

- Low confidence in the security of personal info
 - % US adults who are “somewhat confident” their records will stay secure ($N = 461$)



Source: Pew Research Center (2015)

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Privacy

- Experts agree: Our privacy will lessen over time
 - “There is no putting the genie back in the bottle...Everyone will expect to be tracked and monitored, since the advantages, in terms of convenience, safety, and services, will be so great...continuous monitoring will be the norm.”
 - Hal Varian, Chief Economist for Google
 - “Big data equals big business. Those special interests will continue to block any effective public policy to ensure...privacy online.”
 - Anonymous, Executive at top-level domain name operator
 - “The citizens will divide between those who prefer convenience and those who prefer privacy.”
 - Niels Finnemann, Director of Netlab
 - “Living a public life is the new default. It is not possible to live modern life without revealing personal information.”
 - Lee Rainie, Director, Internet, Science and Technology, Pew Research Center

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Privacy

- Perhaps, it's not all bad: There can be benefits to less privacy
 - Safeguard public health, economy
 - Patient records to track diseases/prevent outbreaks (e.g. vaccine histories)
 - Monitor patterns of violence (e.g. child abuse, domestic violence)
 - Facilitate research
 - Large-scale longitudinal studies (e.g. The Minnesota Study)
 - Improve service quality and accessibility
 - Online social support groups (e.g. tobacco cessation)
 - Cross-checking information (e.g. medications, treatments)
 - Tailored service reminders (e.g. appointments)
 - Lessen costs
 - Identify product/service alternatives (e.g. generic medicines)
 - Facilitate knowledge sharing (e.g. open-access digital records)

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Final Thoughts

- An ongoing ethical dilemma
 - Trade-off at the individual level
 - When should privacy concerns give way to the need for public expression and identity?
 - Trade-off at the public level
 - When should individual privacy concerns give way to protect and preserve the public's security, health, and economy?



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Thank You

James M. Leonhardt
jleonhar@nmsu.edu

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