

Media ethical challenges in the age of the internet

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Stanisha Johnson Media Ethical Challenges in the Age of the Internet CMM-330 Ethical Issues in Mass Media Spring 2010 Research Paper Over the years the internet has literally revolutionized the mass media industry and, in the process one of the most affected areas by the internet is in the area of compliance with media ethical standards. These ethical problems are invasion of privacy, inaccuracy, and copy right infringement. One of the biggest ethical problems is privacy rights over the internet.

Internet privacy is defined as the desire of personal privacy with respect to transactions or transmission of data via the internet. It involves the exercise of control over the type or amount of information that persons reveal about themselves on the internet and who may access such information. Internet privacy forms a subset of computer privacy. A number of experts within the field of internet security and privacy believe that privacy doesn't exist; "Privacy is dead - get over it according to Steve Rambam, private investigator specializing in Internet privacy cases (wikipedia. com).

The extraordinary growth of the Internet has created a number of privacy issues that society has never encountered before and therefore has been slow to address (e-bussinessethics. com). For example peoplesearch. com allows anyone to do background searches, asset verification checks and criminal background checks on any individual for a \$39 to \$125 fee. Also, whowhere. com allows users to order a background check on any individual in the database for only \$39. 95. This public record report includes property ownership, civil judgments, driver's license physical description and summary of assets.

Privacy issues on the Internet relate to two major concerns. The first concern is, users' ability to control the rate, type, and sequence of the information they view. Spam, or unsolicited commercial e-mail, is a control concern because it violates privacy, steals resources, and compares to receiving a piece of direct mail with postage due (Maginnis pg. 43). A second concern relates to the ability of users to address and understand how organizations collect and use personal information on the Internet. Many Web sites require visitors to identify themselves and provide information about their wants and needs.

Some Web sites track visitors' " footsteps" through the site by storing a cookie, or identifying string of text, on their computers. The use of cookies can be an ethical issue, especially because many users have no idea that this transfer of information is even occurring (e-bussinesethics. com, 2010). Internet privacy is an important ethical issue because most organizations engaging in e-commerce have not yet developed policies and codes of conduct to encourage responsible behavior. In today's technological world, millions of individuals are subject to privacy threats.

Companies are hired not only to watch what you visit online, but to infiltrate the information and send advertising based on your browsing history (Wikipedia. com). People set up accounts for Facebook, entering bank and credit card information to various websites. Those concerned about Internet privacy often cite a number of privacy risks, such as events that can compromise privacy which may be encountered through Internet use. These methods of compromise can range from the gathering of statistics on users,

to more malicious acts such as the spreading of spyware and various forms of bugs (software errors) exploitation.

Privacy measures are provided on several social networking sites to try to provide their users with protection for their personal information. On Facebook for example, privacy settings are available for all registered users. The settings available on Facebook include the ability to block certain individuals from seeing your profile, the ability to choose you're " friends," and the ability to limit who has access to your pictures and videos (facebook). The internet has the problem worse because lurkers on the internet are able to utilize privacy settings to disguise themselves to bring harm upon internet users.

It is the user's prerogative to apply such settings when providing personal information on the internet (Pfaffenberger pg. 66) The process of profiling (also known as " tracking") assembles and analyzes several events, each attributable to a single originating entity, in order to gain information (especially patterns of activity) relating to the originating entity (wikipedia.com). Some organizations engage in the profiling of people's web browsing, collecting the URLs of sites visited.

The resulting profiles can potentially link with information that personally identifies the individual who did the browsing. Some web-oriented marketing-research organizations may use this practice legitimately, for example: in order to construct profiles of 'typical Internet users'. Such profiles, which describe average trends of large groups of Internet users rather than of actual individuals, can then prove useful for market analysis.

Although the aggregate data does not constitute a privacy violation, some people believe that the initial profiling does.

Profiling becomes a more contentious privacy issue when data-matching associates the profile of an individual with personally-identifiable information of the individual (Wikipedia. com). Governments and organizations may set up honeypot websites -featuring controversial topics - with the purpose of attracting and tracking unwary people (wikipedia. com). This constitutes a potential danger for individuals. While the government utilizes the honeypot websites, this allows them to track internet lurkers using the site for negativity.

The government is very much aware of the internet privacy issue, and has received legal threats. Studies have stated that the government agencies use an array of technologies designed to track and gather Internet users' information are the topic of much debate between privacy advocates, civil libertarians and those who believe such measures are necessary for law enforcement to keep pace with rapidly changing communications technology. It has been stated that internet users should be allowed a certain level of privacy to protect themselves over the internet (Peterson 24).

As a result, if this ethical issue of privacy rights over the internet isn't addressed internet users will continue to be lurked upon such as identity theft, child pedifiers and other harmful internet issues upon the internet harming internet users. Works cited Protect Your Privacy on the Internet, B. Pfaffenberger, John Wiley and Sons, 1997. I Love the Internet, but I Want My

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