

Internet Privacy

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In the age of rapid technological and communication development, privacy has become one of the most significant matters for debate. While some people claim that personal information of Internet users can be used for the sake of national security and economic development, others argue that any attempt of acquiring private data without a user's consent is a violation of an individuals' rights. In such a context, it is crucial to explore various factors that constitute the issue of Internet privacy, and to illustrate how people fear being under surveillance as well as portray the role of data breaches. Going further, one should show that when it comes to Internet privacy, users play as significant role as authorities. Specifically, to minimize the risk of private data breaches as well as to ensure that a person is not under surveillance without one's consent, every individual using the Internet should understand the dangers of disclosing information publicly, as well as use particular means to keep one's data private.

Methodology and Relevance

Considering the immense number of Internet users and the massive amounts of private data circulating the web, one should say that keeping sensitive and personal information secret is of paramount importance. Otherwise, private data, stolen from users, can be used for criminal and unlawful deeds, thus having an adverse impact on both users and society. In a broader context, authorities can use the information to control populations, thus suppressing the freedom of speech and expression granted to every American citizen by the Constitution of the United States of America. In the context of methodological elements employed to explore the subject matter of this research paper, it is crucial to apply comparative analysis and inductive reasoning. The author intends to examine various credible sources and synthesize the information presenting particular evidence and conclusions concerning the case of Internet privacy.

Background

When it comes to the problem of Internet privacy, one should offer the evidence suggesting that 90 percent of people participating in a poll conducted by the PewResearch center considered Internet privacy a crucial issue (Byer, 2018). Speaking about the term's definition, the notion of privacy can be defined as a user's ability to disclose private data consensually, with particular expectations regarding the context and scope of sharing ("Internet Society," 2017). Without a doubt, more and more Internet users understand the necessity of having proper tools for keeping one's information private. Moreover, because modern technological trends lead to the fact that a user's digital footprints grow exponentially, people are the ones having the most significant effect in the case of online freedoms (Gorodynsky, 2013). While it is evident that the majority of Internet users are concerned about their privileges in the digital world, it seems counterintuitive when one explores the evidence suggesting that 60 percent of Internet users download software without reading any terms and conditions coming with applications (Byer, 2018). Strikingly, 17 percent of respondents indicate they are willing to keep such software even if there is a considerable chance of a user's private data being breached (Byer, 2018). As a result, one can see that the essence of the problem is in the way people handle their data, making it either secure or susceptible to being breached.

Results

After exploring various academic and web-based sources, the author indicated results suggesting that even though people fear being under surveillance as well as understand the possibility of a private data breach, Internet users do not secure their information enough to satisfy the need of online freedoms. More specifically, according to the article titled "Internet privacy concerns and beliefs about government surveillance – An empirical investigation," after

the events of September 11, 2001, there were many government initiatives directed toward improving national security on all fronts. As a result, some of the measures and policies enhanced the ability of the government to obtain personal information about individuals from private sector sources. In other words, "Internet technology provides an almost unprecedented opportunity for the unobtrusive surveillance of information related to personal interests" (Dinev, Hart, & Mullen, 2008, p. 227). Thus, one should understand that there is a culture of government surveillance as well as people themselves who share information publicly and, therefore, give authorities grounds for such surveillance. Another crucial factor in the case of Internet privacy is a growing trend of cyber attacks. According to the study offered by Verizon, since 2009, the number of private data breaches has more than doubled. Cyber fraud cases against individuals are growing at about 20 percent annually (Gorodynsky, 2013). In such a context, while both authorities and criminals can obtain one's data, it is up to a user to decide whether the private information is secure or not. There are various measures one can take, for instance deleting cookies, encrypting email, protecting IP addresses using a VPN, which help a person to protect sensitive data.

Conclusions

Considering everything above, it is apparent that the case of Internet privacy requires close attention. While there are numerous shareholders that have their incentives when it comes to breaching a person's privacy, users are the ones setting up barriers to secure personal information. As a result, people should both understand the threats existing in the context of Internet privacy as well as appeal to measures that will protect one's endeavors on the web.

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