

Social Media Risks: User Awareness and Concerns

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Abstract

Social media refers to any of a number of Internet-based applications by which parties interactively collaborate, interrelate, and/or disseminate content (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010, Kietzmann et al. 2011). Social media users are primarily focused on communicative convenience (e.g., accessibility, ease of use, outlet utility) not privacy or security (Ngambeket 2012, Srinivasan 2012). Social media users have few reservations about posting data online and will willingly share personally identifiable data with individuals designated as “friends” (Fox 2012, Srinivasan 2012, Kietzmann et al 2011). The ubiquity of social media, the nature of the technology platforms utilized (Internet, mobile, social networks, and web technology), and the sensitivity of the personally identifiable information shared online makes social media outlets attractive targets for exploitation and as such, exposes social media users to a myriad of online privacy and security risks (Ngambeket 2012, Srinivasan 2012; also see Sood & Enbody 2011). This begs the questions: What types of personally identifiable data do social media users generally share? Are social media users concerned about privacy and security? Are social media users aware of the potential risks resulting from social media use? Do social media users really understand how to protect themselves? This paper presents the results of a survey study exploring social media use across different user demographics and reveals some thought-provoking insights into user perceptions regarding social media sharing, privacy, and security.

Keywords: social media, awareness, personally identifiable data, privacy, security

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