

Digital, Communications and privacy



For five years, technology has disrupted the status quo in communications. The 33 Digital and Hotwire report for 2014 report highlighted concepts, applications and mindsets that have radically shifted the landscape for good. These reports have always been focused on the new. Social media, mobile apps, content marketing, data analytics, and measurement: these are not words that occurred in most marketer's daily vocabulary half a decade ago. Now, they are commonplace.

But now is a time for maturity with these technologies. Networks will become smaller, more targeted and niche. The access and use of data will speed up as insights and creativity come together. Retail online will not mean simply shopping using your favourite shops. Companies will strive to regain our trust with privacy.



Our phones will start to provide information for us based on previous paths. Schools will begin to embrace social media rather than shun it. Brands will reflect the artisan hipster trends and show off authenticity and behind-the-scenes looks. Community management and customer services will finally merge. We will all become big media as the old media fights different models to remain profitable in a digital age. Measurement will shift from being an extra to a core focus of work that communications professionals undertake.

This is the year when technologies become second nature - and the winners will be the consumers.

Marketing will become faster, and less bloated; more targeted and less stab in the dark; more trusted and less cloak and dagger.

Recently however YouTube dropped anonymity in favour of integration with Google+ and its 500 million more or less identifiable users. Facebook, Amazon and Twitter have all created systems that would, with widespread adoption, allow them to become a de facto online passport. Irish startup Trustev wants to capitalise on this potential by using this identifiability to prevent fraud.

However, there is an inverse correlation between anonymity and online activity. The very fact that people can share opinions without risk to their personal reputation or career has in part fuelled the

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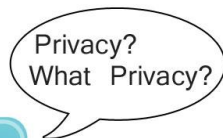
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activity that many companies and brands have benefited from, such as the stimulation of conversation online through comment sections, or social media.

A report by Pew Internet on Anonymity, Privacy and Security Online found that the majority of Americans have attempted to use the internet in such a way as to reduce their “digital footprint”, such as deleting or disabling cookies. A clear majority in the survey also believe it is important that information such as people they email, information they download or apps they use should not be publicly available.

This awareness of how information can flow online means companies, governments and brands are going to have to work harder to maintain trust. William Eccleshare, the CEO of Clearchannel, suggested that any company whose business depends on using consumer data needs to beware the regulator in 2014. Companies will offer to become more transparent about when and how information will be made public. Expectations of privacy will be codified in branded products and services. The Australian government was among the first to advocate privacy by design for mobile services, a principle that has been widely recognised around the world as a fundamental best practice approach that will increase trust in products and services.

Trust in online services is crucial if companies are to benefit fully from the data available online about use of and attitudes towards their products. The authors of the report advocate using social media, crowdsourcing techniques and active community management as ways for companies of any type to benefit commercially from the free flow of information. But this value is a fragile resource.



The current privacy storm will no doubt have a detrimental impact on the free flow of consumer information that has driven much innovation in recent years, but they expect companies to respond positively. What’s your view?

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Source: 33 Digital + Hotwire »2014 report.

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