

Blog 1

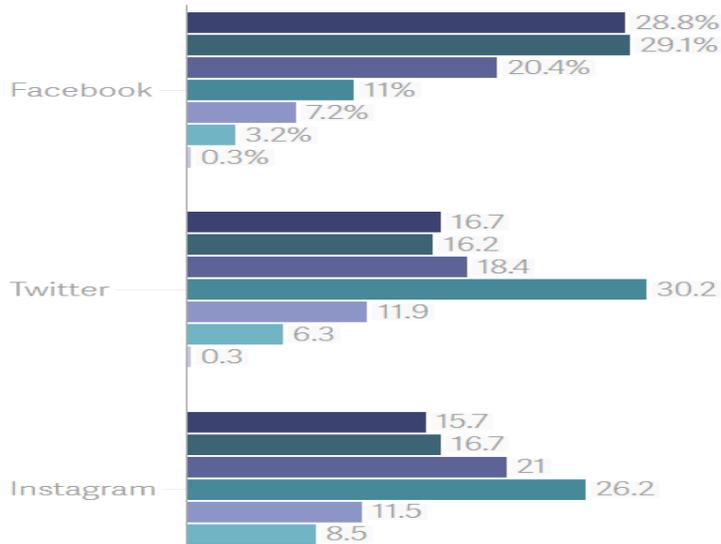
## **The implications of a breach of data privacy by Facebook on consumers trust on Facebook**

Six months ago Facebook was implicated in compromise of users' data by sharing user's data with third parties that were not authorized by the users. Cambridge Analytica Company managed to obtain data not only from the members who signed up to the fake news websites but also from the friends of those who had signed up. The data was used by the Cambridge Analytica to manipulate the perceptions of users and to distribute fake news to the users based on their profiles, likes and political leaning information which could be obtained from the users' profiles. Their action served to attain political ends such as influencing US election outcomes. However, users of Facebook felt duped and considered Cambridge Analytica and Facebook activities as a breach of social contract between them and the company. This blog explores the implications of Facebook activities that compromised users trust on the consumers, stakeholders, government, and shareholders of the company.

Facebook breach of users' privacy by sharing their personal data with third parties without asking for users consent has made users to distrust the company. Most of the privacy-oriented customers have since signed out Facebook to avoid occurrence of such incidences and to hide their personal details from the consumers. Based on social contract theory Facebook breached their contract with users. As a platform that was meant for people to interact with friends and therefore self disclose since friends and connection are about self disclosure, sharing of data with third parties breaches this trust. This impacted users by making the users to self censure their information since they are aware that what they are sharing and disclosing on the platform can be shared with others who are not friends. This self censorship has limited what people do on the platform. People are placing fake profiles and misleading information since they no longer want to disclose their true selves to avoid manipulation. Self censoring implies that users no longer share information they would have shared were they sure that the information will not go to third parties. This negates the purpose and mission of connecting friends since people no longer share intimate information with friends on Facebook. According to Atlantic survey, participants indicated that Facebook was the least trusted social media platform by users since Cambridge Analytica harvested users data without their consent.

### Trust in Social Media Platforms

■ No trust ■ Mostly distrust ■ Somewhat distrust ■ Neutral/Unsure  
■ Somewhat trust ■ Mostly trust ■ Completely trust



The other stakeholder affected by a Facebook breach of users' privacy is the marketers who use the Facebook platform. Marketers advertise on Facebook because they are certain to hyper-target their products to the actual target market of customers who need their products. This is based on the understanding that Facebook will share personal data of users that allows marketers to access customer demographic that suit the advertising company target market characteristics. However, the act of sharing consumer data with the marketers is a breach of user's privacy. Also, the self-censorship of users which prohibits them from disclosing much about themselves and their behaviour makes it difficult for the marketers to hyper-target their adverts to the customers due to the absence of accurate customer behaviour data. Marketers are therefore complaining that they are less likely to obtain value from the Facebook platform as a result of users distrusting the platform and not sharing information about their likes, dislikes, and behaviour. The other implication that the breach of the users privacy by Facebook had on the marketers is that the marketers have to make more effort to make consumers trust their information especially when the information shared on Facebook platform. With the users wary of about fake news emanating from Facebook, users no longer fall for click baits and are quick to verify information on Facebook from other sources. This implies that marketers on the Facebook platform have to spend more money and resources to acquire information about user data.

The other implication that Facebook breach of contract had was on the shareholders of the company. The disappointed shareholders of the company sold much of the stock when it was confirmed that Facebook had breached of user privacy. This indicated that the shareholders were no longer confident about the financial future of the company if stringent user privacy measures were not put in place to prevent user data from being harvested by third parties. The sell-off signified that the platform would lose more users which would imply reduced returns for the investors. The fall in Facebook share price implied that even the investors did not take the issues of breach of contract lightly and sold off the share as a protest for breaking the contract with the consumers. According to the social contract theory, each party to a contract is expected to uphold its duties and obligations to make the contract binding. When a party to the contract fails to uphold the terms of the contract it leads to mistrust which affect not only the two parties but also other parties who rely on the reputation of one of the parties such as shareholders who rely on the good reputation of a company.

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## Blog 2

### **Is sponsored content fair or ethical?**

One of the concerns of the advertising industry is whether to use sponsored content. As a blogger one of the major sources of income is the sponsored content. Sponsored content mostly entails receiving payment from a company, business, or individual to drive a narrative or to write a story whose content is provided by the advertisers or sponsors of the content. The sponsored content is usually framed differently from adverts in that it is meant not to make readers of the content feel as if the product is being advertised or as if they are being compelled to purchase the product. Countries such as Australia have put in place guidelines that indicate that sponsored content should be labeled as sponsored and should indicate who the sponsor is. However, at the moment the guidelines are mostly voluntary and have not been embraced by all bloggers and internet content producers.

Sponsored content is considered to be unethical mostly from a journalistic point of view because it presents a conflict of interest between the information provider and the audience. The conflict of interest emanates from the blogger's interest in writing accurate information and the bloggers interest in obtaining financial revenues. The sponsored content overrides the interest of providing true and accurate information and gives way to the need for financial resources. The audiences expect that the blogger and other information providers would provide true and accurate information to the followers and subscribers of their blog. Sponsored content interferes with this aspect of news and content reporting by compromising the quality, accuracy, and fairness of the information provided. In the sponsored content, most of the content providers provide positive content and information about the entity or companies they are writing about. They do this while eliminating contrary facts and information which makes the content not to be fair. The compromise in accuracy and fairness of the news provided through sponsored content makes the practice unethical.

Sponsored content is also unethical because it predates on the trust that the audiences have on the bloggers. Readers and audiences are not much interested in sponsored content and mostly look for facts and accurate information. When bloggers provide sponsored content without informing the audiences that it is sponsored they usually take advantage of the trust that audiences have on them for financial gain.

The other way in which sponsored content is unethical is because most of the content provided by the advertisers are mostly false or incorrect. Advertisers are mostly interested in making sales which make them provide some misleading content and information which can be considered as fake news and publishing such fake news on the blog unethical. The realisation by audiences that the information is fake news creates mistrust and violates the journalistic code of ethics expected from blogs and online news outlets. Much of the sponsored articles and content are fabrications, fictional and do not have substantive sources of information that can be relied on. Additionally, the information is mostly from the unverified sources which cannot be corroborated thus compromising the quality of information provided to the internet audiences by the bloggers and providers of sponsored content. Such content also comes with exaggerated claims inaccuracy and controversies which dent the credibility of the blogger and the media providing the sponsored content. This deception in the form of sponsored content is always a sure way of losing readers and audiences especially when the sponsored content is a scam or makes wild allegations and empty promises that go unfulfilled.

However, since the blogs highly rely on the sponsored content to earn revenue, they still need to publish sponsored articles that follow some ethical content guidelines. This would ensure that bloggers have revenue and that the content provided has not breached the audience's trust. The first guideline is to ensure that sponsored content has been labeled as sponsored so that the readers can differentiate it from the other investigative and media articles. This creates credibility as it informs the reader that only some content on the website is sponsored. The other way in which the sponsored articles can be made ethical is by ensuring that they have met journalistic standards. The articles have to be accurate. They have to reveal their sources and should have fair comments or should present both sides of the story instead of one-sided story. This implies that the story has to present both the good and bad sides to differentiate the information from public relations. Ensuring that the article has met the journalistic standards enhances the credibility of the blog and makes the sponsored content ethical.