**Title:**

**Why Do People Seek Anonymity on the Internet? Informing Policy and Design**

**What is the research problem?**

Internet models have no limit when it comes to anonymity while seeking online transaction and many users doesn’t have perspective and average users have vague notation how the internet works and potential threats. Lack of proper policies and advancements in internet architecture and applications is deterrent.

This paper is a research study on computer and society: social issue, dealt with how and why people seek anonymity. Existing studies have lack of information on tradeoffs between anonymity and identifiability. Tools designed to achieve anonymity is poorly understood by user and this study tries to find how user’s vague understanding helps to achieve anonymity and whether they confidently achieved or not. Experimentation conducted on people from all over the world and used mechanical turks to gather them and questioned in skype, cell for one hour.

**Overview/main points of the proposed approach/architecture**

* According to Gary Marx’s analysis, being anonymous person cannot be identified according to seven dimensions of identity knowledge.
  + User’s name, location, pseudonym name, group membership, patterns of behavior, information items and skills that indicate personal characters.
* Users use anonymity to reduce social risks for discussing taboo topics and express unpopular opinions.
* During the interview test subjects are identified in anonymous activities, behaviors and attitudes among them.
* About 53% used anonymity for malicious activities like downloading files illegally hacking, watching pornography, visiting illegal sites for violence and attacking.
* Test subjects are broadly categorized into two different sections Instrumental and Social anonymity.
* 61% of interviewees did instrumental activities like file sharing and browsing activities simply to avoid tailed search.
* 93% of interviewees did social anonymity activities like participating in groups, reviewing and recommending, buying and selling, discussing politics and sharing work.
* Out of many reasons going anonymous is because they reflect personal threat model and categories are five they are fear of online predators, organizations, known others, unknown users and other users in site.
* Threat model is followed by interviewees for protection and privacy from other groups or people.
* Interviewees followed technical and behavioral strategies to obtain anonymity, in technical wise subjects changed the IP address, and used proxies while browsing, VPN and anonymous systems.
* Behavioral methods followed by non-technical users are fictitious names, false photos and fake profiles.
* The Key factors that lead them to go anonymous are
  + The role of prior experience
  + Managing boundaries
* This program of studying interviewees from all over the world using mechanical turks helps to identify the tradeoff between being anonymous and identified.
* For the category social connections being anonymous have advantage of protecting others and avoid commitment but being identified have an edge to connect to real friends and have strong social connections.
* For the other category express opinion being anonymous feel free to express views and being identified avoids irresponsible behavior.
* Other categories like Image building, reputation trust, emotional benefit, privacy and ease of use has advantages for being anonymous and being identified.
* 86% of interviewees has both negative and positive attitude towards anonymity.

**Experimental Evaluation**

* Experiment shows that everyone at one point of time seek anonymity
* Discouraging anonymity discourages malicious behavior but it will also discourage people from being creative and helpful.
* Current architecture design allows anonymity at application level but geographically it is not possible for some users (in some countries).
* In this paper it explains the risks and benefits of individual rather than society as a whole.

**Conclusion**

This research contributed to provide rich understanding of various situations that user try to avoid being identified online and inform debates on internet to have the anonymity or not and also improvement for wellbeing and privacy of users.