

# Data Journal: 2nd Week

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## 1 Introduction

One of the main objectives of a website myshadow.org has been to educate people about digital privacy. The objective comes from a realization that companies have too much control over the personal data that people are sharing with them in an exchange for their services. Most of these services have one in common: they claim to be free. The main objective of this journal is to examine what "free" really means for an average consumer. Moreover, if free means giving up a personal privacy, is it still worth for a consumer to continue using a particular service? Examination will be done on an example of email services and its usage, yet the findings and conclusions are applicable on almost any free online service from social media sites to news portals.

## 2 Personal convenience over privacy

### 2.1 Does Gmail rule to the space of email services?

Although, there are many email providers, just a few of them hold majority of market share. According to Techjury.net, Gmail (developed by Google) currently owns 43 % of the email service market share as of 2020. (1) Gmail is one of the services that claims to be free (at least to a certain degree of usage). Yet, the free service comes at a cost of giving up sometimes very personal information to a corporation whose main objective is to run growing business. In other words, free translates into giving up on person's privacy used for business purposes in exchange for convenience and reliable service.

### 2.2 Why do people favor convenience over privacy?

As the number of Gmail users indicates, many people value convenience over privacy which raises a question: "Why do people behave in a such way?" There are two possible explanations. First, an average user is not aware of all possible consequences due to a lack of technical knowledge. Second, possible alternatives are not good enough to replace current market leaders. In addition, many services are just a part of an environment which then seamlessly connect one

with another. For instance, new Gmail user has an access not only to Gmail but to the range of many more personalized services such as cloud storage, online calendar or maps. Thus, making it hard for a user to leave the platform.

### **2.3 Is there a possible solution?**

In a scenario, where there is no law enforcing corporations to change their behavior regards to data privacy, the key question is whether consumers are for example willing to start paying a service fee in order to gain back control over privacy of their data. In a contrast, consumers themselves with the help of law have a possibility to force corporation to change its behaviour. Second solution is highly dependent on the legislative of a given country or group of countries. A great example of such legislative is an European law enabling all EU citizens to request information about themselves from any company residing in EU.

## **3 Conclusion**

In a conclusion, the importance of a question, whether convenience is worth of giving up on personal privacy, will grow with the introduction of new more personalized services. One of the key arguments for sticking to such services is that there are not good enough alternatives. Moreover, certain services are becoming market standards which is in particular due to their market share, thus individuals are in consequence socially pressured to pick a given service. In order to sustain convenience for consumers as well as enforce companies to change the way how they handle personal data , there are two major areas where the focus could be put on. First, a legislative framework which ensures consumers have proper control over their data. Second, a new business model which would allow companies to gain profit from other sources than advertisement or selling personal data to third parties.

## **4 Sources**

1. PETROV, Christo. 50 Gmail Statistics To Show How Big It Is In 2020. Techjury [online]. 2020, June 30 [cit. 2020-09-02]. Avalaible from: <https://techjury.net/blog/gmail-statistics/#gref>