

## **Do we avoid Facebook in the midst of uncertainty?**

Facebook is one of the world's biggest Social Networking Sites who over the years has seen rapid development in terms of the introduction of new services and features to users. Through all the development, users risk losing control over their privacy if protective measures are not taken into consideration and therefore an element of uncertainty starts to arise. Despite users being concerned about their privacy and their level of uncertainty rising, users were found to openly share detailed personal information as well as engage and communicate on Facebook.

A research study was conducted by Megan Capitani, a [Master's](#) student at the [Department of Marketing Management](#), to investigate the relationship between uncertainty avoidance (specifically ambiguity intolerance and risk aversion) and privacy concerns and engagement on Facebook. The Regulatory Engagement Theory was used to support the argument behind the relationship between ambiguity intolerance, risk aversion and engagement on Facebook. This study also aims to investigate the relationship between privacy concerns and engagement on Facebook. Furthermore, this study investigates whether there are any differences in gender with regards to their privacy concerns and engagement on Facebook. A secondary database was obtained from the Department of Marketing Management at the University of Pretoria where a total of 814 valid responses were identified.

Findings revealed that as a user's ambiguity and risk avoidance levels surrounding their privacy concerns on Facebook increased - so would their level of privacy concerns. Findings further revealed a positive relationship between ambiguity intolerance and users' engagement on Facebook. The positive relationship could be explained by the user anticipating a positive outcome. The positive outcome can further be explained by drawing in on the Regulatory Engagement Theory which states that as users experience something of a positive value, a source of attraction will be created, and the user would move towards the positive scenario anticipated.

Since control over personal information is central to privacy concerns, more control over personal information on Facebook should be granted in an attempt to lower privacy concerns as uncertainty exists with regards to personal information being

accessed by third parties. It is therefore recommended that businesses allow users to control what happens to their information. Businesses should thus make efforts to increase users' internet literacy by educating them on how to protect themselves, and where to go should they feel the need to alter their profile settings. Furthermore, it is recommended that in order for businesses to increase engagement levels on Facebook, businesses need to communicate the benefits associated to engaging in that particular activity. If businesses anticipate an unclear scenario, users need to be made aware or feel comfortable that the engagement activity would result in a positive outcome.

*This research was conducted as part of the fulfilment of the [Master's degree](#) in Marketing Management in 2018 with the [Department of Marketing Management](#) by Megan Capitani under the supervision of [Prof Y Jordaan](#).*