

The Case of Coopetition: Facebook and Decentralized Alternatives

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ABSTRACT

Recently, Facebook crossing 1 billion number of users mark has interestingly coincided with an increasing number of proposals for decentralized online social networks (OSNs) as privacy preserving alternatives for social networking [2, 3]. The former employs privacy-by-policy approach compared to more privacy-friendly privacy-by-design approach employed by the latter. Decentralized OSNs, where users host their content themselves, offer privacy protection from the service providers and restore the full control and ownership of content back to the users. However, because of the network effect, the adaptability of a new social network platform will be limited. At the same time, privacy-conscious users are opting out of today's OSNs [1].

A more viable trade-off for the decentralized alternatives would be to cooperate and simultaneously compete with Facebook. They can run as 3rd party apps on Facebook and allow the users to share sensitive content through them. They can exploit Facebook's user base and overcome the network effect. However, it must be ensured that content is not accessible to Facebook. This may involve an identity provider independent from Facebook, in order to ensure faithful access control enforcement. In turn, they enable Facebook to gain on privacy reputation and attract more privacy conscious users. Facebook can serve content-agnostic advertisements while users consume the content hosted inside these apps. A number of challenges such as seamless interfaces between both ecosystems, availability of the decentralized OSNs, need to be addressed before such a hybrid infrastructure can replace an existing online social network platform.

BODY

A new way of social networking: decentralized alternatives can plug into Facebook as 3rd party apps to overcome the network effect.

REFERENCES

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