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EXPLORING THE VALUE OF MEDIA USERS' PERSONAL INFORMATION (PI) DISCLOSURE TO MEDIA COMPANIES IN FLANDERS, BELGIUM

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the value of media users' personal information (PI) disclosure to media companies, from the perspective of media organizations in Flanders, Belgium. The central research questions are: 1) How do media organizations define the value of personalised products/services for media users? 2) How is value operationalized, communicated, and delivered to media users? 3) To what extent is the 'value proposition' *(Osterwalder et al, 2014) linked to PI-collection/processing?*

Applying the e-Delphi method, we surveyed twenty Flemish media professionals, advertisers and marketers. From the media companies' perspective, personalisation primarily offers functional value to media users. Offering ease of use is more important than time-efficiency or exclusivity. Personalisation 'benefits' are predominantly improved service quality and user experience. 19 of 20 respondents collect PI for developing a personalised offering. Most respondents collect more PI than necessary for personalisation and the connection between PI-collection/processing is often unclear.

Keywords: media and communication studies ▪ media user and producer relationship ▪ e-Delphi ▪ personal data collection ▪ data protection ▪ privacy ▪ personalisation ▪ personal data commodification ▪ value proposition ▪ USP ▪ value-based marketing

1. INTRODUCTION

Big data holds vast opportunities for media companies – consumer data collection is crucial and will become the cornerstone of business models (Evens & Van Damme, 2018; Stone, 2014). Big data are "huge amounts (volume) of frequently updated data (velocity) in various formats, such as numeric, textual, or images/videos (variety)" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2019, p. 17). Media companies are aware that big data is an 'information asset' and transforming data into 'value' requires specific technology and analytical methods (De Mauro, Greco & Grimaldi, 2016). "Utilizing big data analytics, media organizations can engage with their audience more deeply by suggesting personalized content recommendations" (Evens & Van Damme, 2016, p. 25).

Media companies set to 'unlock the value of personal data' increasingly transform audiences into commodities, treating people as objects of "economic value", "intended for exchange" (WEF, 2013; Malgieri & Custers, 2018; Appadurai, 2005, p. 35). In our data-driven economy, PI represents monetary value, it can be expressed in a 'currency' like dollars or euros, and it is considered an exchange for free or discounted online products and services (Malgieri & Custers, 2018). Transforming PI into value is yet not without risk for media users. The combination of their individual data points can lead to new insightful information and new opportunities for audience commodification from the perspective of the media companies (WEF, 2013, p. 3; Khajeheian, 2016, p. 41).

Users lack awareness about the value of disclosing PI to media companies. They often do not realize PI holds monetary value, underestimate their economic power in the data-driven economy, and "passively succumb to the propertization of their digital identity" (Malgieri & Custers, 2018, p. 301). Media users often do not understand the consequences arising from disclosing versus not disclosing PI, i.e., a reduced level of service offering, while media companies struggle to explain the advantages of personalisation to users (Robinson, 2017; Van Zeeland, Van Buggenhout & Pierson, 2019). Personalised products and services are promoted towards consumers as useful or valuable, while it is often unclear to users that they are paying for the personalised offering with their PI (Kuneva, 2009). The lingering issue is "selling personalisation" (Van Zeeland, Van Buggenhout & Pierson, 2019, p. 8). In order to increase consumers' trust, companies need to focus on better communicating the purpose and relevance of PI-collection, such as targeted advertising and personalised news experiences (see Figure 1) (Van Zeeland, Van Buggenhout & Pierson, 2019; Evens & Van Damme, 2016).

EXAMPLE: NEWS PERSONALIZATION	The European Horizon 2020 research project Content Personalisation Network (CPN) developed a personalised news application that is "a new, trustworthy approach to personalise digital content, delivering the right information, at the right time". CPN puts users in control of their personal data with the personal data receipt (PDR). Every new user who signs up to CPN receives a structured email containing a record of the permissions they gave the CPN platform to hold and process their data (CPN Consortium, 2019). https://www.projectcpn.eu/

Figure 1: News personalisation

Media organizations insufficiently develop solutions to enhance trust because media users are no longer the primary revenue source; the balance has shifted from consumer interests to business-to-business markets (Van Zeeland, Van Buggenhout & Pierson, 2019). The business model of most news media companies is Business-to-business (B2B), focused on advertisers and advertising money, and based on *'click'* – the total number of website visitors and pages visited by users (Brcković, 2019). Consequently, "there is a temptation to manipulate consumers into handing over more personal data than is in their best interest or in accordance with their wishes ('dark patterns')" (Ibid., p. 9).

The abovementioned insights originate from a roundtable on PI protection challenges in the Belgian media sector (Ibid.). This article reports on a follow-up study. We investigate the value of disclosing personal information (PI) to media companies, from media organizations' perspective in Flanders, Belgium. The central **research questions** are:

1. How do Flemish media organizations define the value of personalised media products and services for media users?
2. How is this value operationalized, communicated, and delivered to media users?
3. To what extent is the value proposition, the personalised offer of media organizations in terms of value for (potential) customers, linked to collection and processing of media users' PI?

The findings discussed in this article are the results of an online survey of twenty experts, which is the first round of a triple-phased e-Delphi method (Slocum, 2003; Cole, Donohoe & Stellefson, 2013) that we applied for this study. In this first phase, twenty media professionals developed *'value propositions'* (Osterwalder, Pigneur, Bernarda, & Smith, 2014) for a fictional bundle of personalised media products/services and reflected on the necessity of PI-collection.

Based on the findings, we develop **recommendations** for media companies to communicate the value of a personalised offering to media users and explain the

benefits and potential risks of PI-disclosure. This study takes the initiative to provide a baseline in formulating solutions for media organizations' struggles with "selling personalisation" (Van Zeeland, Van Buggenhout & Pierson, 2019). By developing guidelines to explain PI-collection purposes to users in a compelling way, we motivate Flemish media organizations to create codes of conduct for enhancing user trust that will make people "more amenable to consent to sharing their data" (Ibid., p. 9). If media companies inform data subjects about the value of PI, this "may increase their awareness of their own personal information and about their power in the digital market and thus effectively empower them for the protection of their information privacy" (Malgieri & Custers, 2018, p. 301).

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Media Markets, Users, and Usage

Media markets are multisided markets where commercial and public service media companies and platforms such as broadcasters, publishers, and internet companies interact with two relevant sides, the advertising industry and audience (Lindstädt, 2010). The audience consists of TV viewers, newspaper readers, radio listeners, and internet users (Lindstädt, 2010). We refer to audience(s), consumers, customers and people who use – users of Flemish media companies' products and services in this study as "media users" (Picone, 2017). We use the term media users to reflect audiences' agency in this discussion and "address 'people in relation to (new) media' in a more encompassing way than audience ever could" (Picone, 2017, p. 382). This study does not result in knowledge about the actual media user's position (Litt, 2012). We survey media experts to investigate the value of media users' PI-disclosure to media companies, from a media companies' perspective. Experts' positioning of media users departs from the idea of the imagined audience, "the mental conceptualization of the people with whom we are communicating, our audience" (Litt, 2012, p. 331). In today's media ecosystem the knowledge about media users is however more extensive than in the mass media era, media companies have a fairly good idea of their audiences main characteristics based on the PI users share with them and based on the behavioural data media companies collect from their audiences (e.g., viewing patterns), but this doesn't mean they have a complete view of their audience yet.

2.2. PI and Media User Commodification

Conceptualizing media users' PI, we adhere to defining personal data as stated in the EU-legislation, General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) art. 4 (1):

> 'personal data' means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person ('data subject'); an identifiable natural person is one

> who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person (European Commission, 2018).

One decade ago, PI was declared the new oil and currency of the digital world as consumers pay for online services with ad exposure and with their PI (Kuneva, 2009, pp. 2-3). From a political economy of communication perspective, it is since then undeniable "the commodification of digital identities is an emerging reality in the data-driven economy" (Malgieri & Custers, 2018, p. 301). For example, in early 2019, the European Council and Parliament endorsed the Digital Content Directive (DCD) (EUR-Lex, s.d.). Thereby, acknowledging PI can be used like money to pay for digital content in the digital economy (Council of the EU, 2019).

Media user commodification is defined as "a concept that highlights how the audience and its members are exploited by the media industry through their usage of digital and connected technologies" (Jennes, Pierson, & Van den Broeck, 2014, p.71). It was introduced by Dallas Smythe in 1977 and regained relevance in the debate on internet providers and media companies' exploitation of media user and media usage data (Fuchs, 2015). 'Audience commodification' is opposed to user empowerment, referring to the idea that with the advent of digitization, users are increasingly able to exert agency and control over their media usage, content, and production (Jennes, Pierson, & Van den Broeck, 2014). We acknowledge the aforementioned theoretical dichotomy oversimplifies the dynamics of actual audiences/users' engagement with media. Not all the actors in media audiences are able to exercise the same level of power or can equally participate in PI-disclosure decision-making processes (Carpentier, 2006). We recognize media users perform different actions and have different relations with their material positions, identities and roles when being asked to share PI with media organisations (Carpentier, 2006).

Previous critical studies indicate user empowerment can be used by the media industry to facilitate innovation in commodification practices (see Jennes, Pierson, & Van den Broeck, 2014; Khajeheian, 2016). Considering users as tradeable assets is the basis of some innovative business models in which users are persuaded to provide certain information or conduct certain actions for the service provider while still maintaining their user autonomy and choice (Khajeheian, 2016, p. 40; Jennes, Pierson, & Van den Broeck, 2014, p. 84). This is also referred to as "self-commodification" in which consumers "offer themselves as a commodity to receive value from businesses", for example watch advertisements and share certain PI in return for a value offerd by the organisation (e.g. unlocking premium profiles in a dating app (Khajeheian, 2016, p. 44).

2.3. The Value of Exchanging PI

We conceptualize the value of PI created by media organizations and offered to media users in this study in the economic sense (Graeber, 2001), focusing on the use of information and consumer insights to create economic value (De Mauro, Greco & Grimaldi, 2016, p.131). We explore the degree to which media companies think media users desire a personalised offering and how personalised media products and services deliver customer value to users who are "willing to give up" PI getting them (Graeber, 2001, p. 1; Van Leeuwen, s.d.). The value a company offers to its customers can refer to a combination of functional, emotional, economic, symbolic, and end value (Van Leeuwen, s.d.). From a media users' perspective "customized services are the heads of a coin whose tails show the necessary use of personal data. [...] the trade-off between anonymity and personalized, more useful, services" (Gómez-Barroso, 2018, p. 1482). Correspondingly, we incorporate the notion of personalization-privacy paradox to describe contradictions between media users' privacy concerns and media use –PI trade-offs people undergo (Wang, Duong & Chen, 2016). For example the use of personalised media services while risking personal information loss (Wang, Duong & Chen, 2016, p. 532). We also include the privacy calculus model (Laufer & Wolfe, 1977), referring to the idea that people weigh the benefits of the service they receive against the risk they take in disclosing personal information (Gimpel, Kleindienst & Waldmann, 2018, p. 478). This model allows us to delineate personalisation vs privacy trade-offs media users consider when media companies ask them to disclose PI in exchange for access to personalised products/services, defined from a media companies' perspective.

It is, however, a misrepresentation to only put forward the trade-off argument, claiming media users make conscious 'cost-benefit calculations' when providing PI to companies (Turow, Hennessy & Draper, 2015). Media users do not always have the necessary knowledge and skills to make informed choices about ways media companies and marketers use PI (Ibid.). For example, only one in five Flemish users read the general and privacy conditions before registering online (Vanhaelewyn & De Marez, 2018). Media users also think phrasing PI-collection as trade-offs is unfair (Turow, Hennessy & Draper, 2015). Acknowledging the tradeoff fallacy, media companies and marketers can prevent giving "false justifications (to policymakers) for allowing the collection and use of all kinds of consumer data often in ways that the public find objectionable" (Ibid., 2015, p. 3).

2.4. Value-based Communication and Customer Value Propositions

Demonstrating the value of products and services to customers is important for companies (Doyle, 2008). Yet, most organizations "sell product features rather than demonstrating the value of their product to the customer" (Doyle, 2008, p. 294). It is not sufficient media companies have a good personalised offering, its value needs

to be communicated to media users "to create awareness", "build an understanding of its benefits", and "develop positive attitudes towards it" (Doyle, 2008, p. 323). Companies should, therefore, develop a value-based communications and marketing strategy (Doyle, 2008).

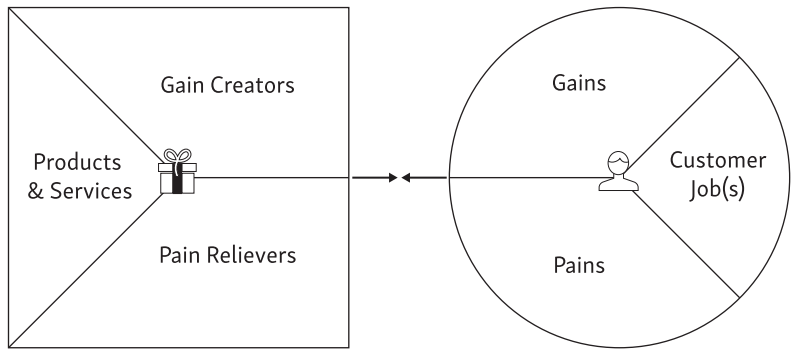
We adopt the concept and terminology of the customer value proposition (CVP) in this study, to conceptualize how media companies communicate how they aim to provide value to customers (Payne, Frow & Eggert, 2017). Accordingly, the theoretical framework includes the Value Proposition Canvas (VPC) (Osterwalder, Pigneur, Bernarda, & Smith, 2014). The value proposition of an organization "describes the benefits customers can expect from [its] products and services" (Osterwalder et al, 2014, p. 6).

VALUE-BASED COMMUNICATION AND CUSTOMER VALUE PROPOSITIONS

Value-based marketing strategy: "the firm's approach to the market (...) The decisions concern the choice of customers the business will seek to serve, how it will meet their needs, how it will create a sustainable competitive advantage, and the resources it will commit to these markets" (Doyle, 2008:189).

Customer value proposition (CVP): "(...) a strategic tool facilitating communication of an organization's ability to share resources and offer a superior value package to targeted customers (...) CVP's critical role as a communication device [...] emphasizes the role of resources and resource sharing (...) stresses the need for an appropriate "package" of value that is differentiated from and superior to competitive offerings" (Payne, Frow & Eggert, 2017:472).

Value Proposition Canvas (Osterwalder, 2012):



"With the '**Customer Profile**' you clarify your customer understanding. With the '**Value Map**' you describe how you intend to create value for that customer. (...) You achieve '**Fit**' when your value map meets your customer profile — when your products and services produce **pain relievers** and **gain creators** that match one or more of the **jobs, pains, and gains** that are important to your customer" (Osterwalder et al, 2014:2-8).

Figure 2: Value-based communication and customer value propositions

By adopting the value proposition ontology (Figure 2), we support the idea "modelling and mapping value propositions helps better understanding the value a company wants to offer its customers and makes it communicable between various stakeholders" (Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2003, p. 1). Value propositions positively impact customers' value perceptions and resultant attitudes and behaviours (Payne, Frow & Eggert, 2017). In our empirical research, we start from the VPC to explore the value of PI-disclosure for media users, from Flemish media organizations' perspective.

3. METHODS

We apply a qualitative research strategy to answer our research questions related to the benefits of PI-disclosure from media companies' perspective. It is above all media companies' responsibility to explain the benefits and potential risks of PI-disclosure to media users:

> The most important source of unclarity for consumers has to do with what 'data controllers' tell them, or rather, do not tell them about the data processing. Media companies are often the touch points with data subjects so the responsibility to explain rests with them. (Van Zeeland, Van Buggenhout & Pierson, 2019, p. 7).

3.1. Research design

We conducted an online survey of twenty experts, which is the first round of an e-Delphi method (Slocum, 2003; Cole, Donohoe & Stellefson, 2013) that we apply for this study. The full study will consist of three consecutive rounds to elicit opinions and attitudes from an expert panel representing Flemish media companies, consumer organizations, lawyers, policymakers, independent media regulators, and academics. Participants were recruited from within the researchers' networks. Purposive sampling ensures we include representatives of all the quadruple helix actors, a framework of interactions between media industry, university, government, and representatives of civil society that drives innovation within the knowledge economy (Carayannis & Campbell, 2009). Thereby meeting the recommendation of encouraging closer collaboration between different stakeholders and taking different levels of action to address PI-protection challenges in the media sector (Van Zeeland, Van Buggenhout & Pierson, 2019).

Figure 3 provides a graphic overview of the full methodological circle in this study. Data collection and analysis for this first round took place from September to November 2019. The second Delphi round took place January-March 2020, and the third Delphi-round will take place later this year. This article reports on the results of the online survey with 20 media experts.

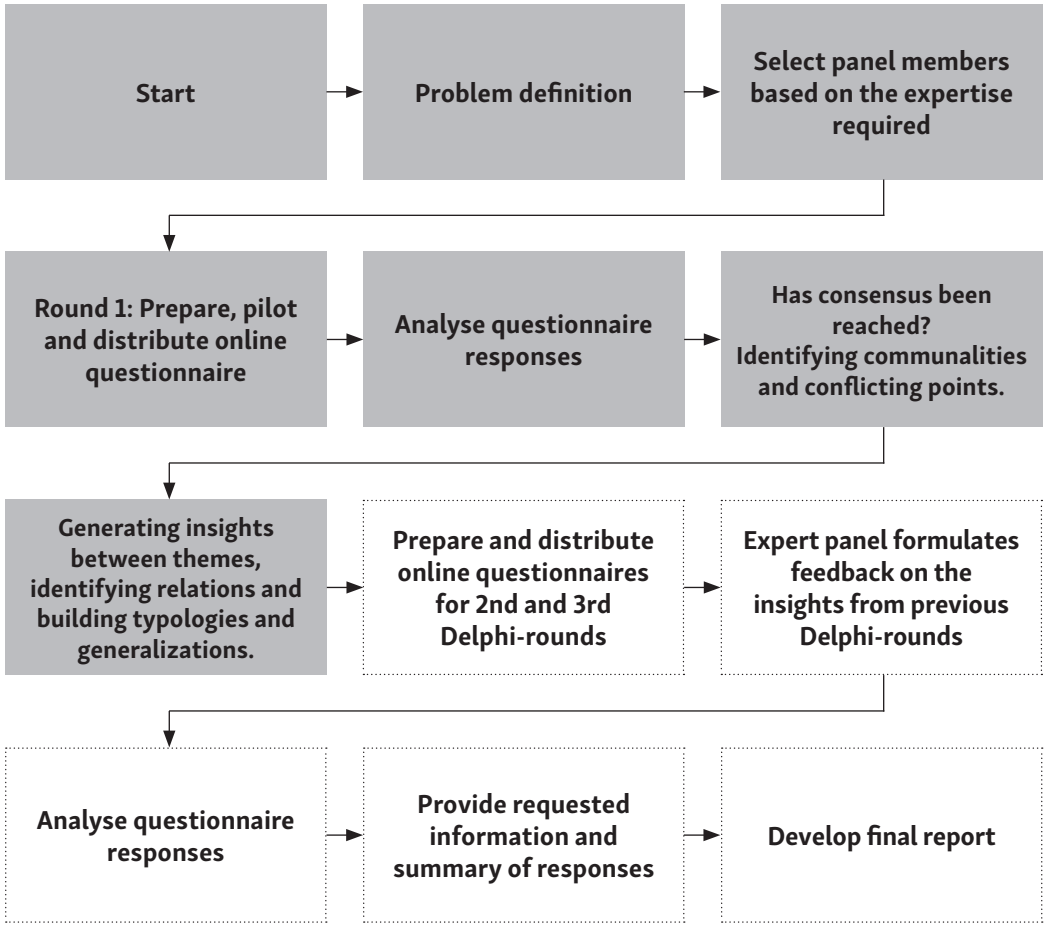


Figure 3: Delphi Method Flowchart

3.2. Questionnaire

We developed a qualitative questionnaire in Qualtrics (est. 20 minutes completion time). This allowed respondents to participate online, via a web browser application on their personal computer, laptop or mobile. We piloted the questionnaire before distributing it to optimise the question formulation and operationalization with user researchers from imec-SMIT who are external to this study.

3.3. Participants and procedure

We identified experts based on knowledge, experience and position in the Flemish media industry (Van Audenhove & Donders, 2019). We invited 86 experts as panel members for the first Delphi-round. 31 people confirmed their willingness to participate. We recorded 25 responses: 20 completed and five blank surveys. 11 people dropped out. The final survey response rate was 23,26%.

4. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Our analysis was two-fold:

1. *Thematical level*: identifying communalities, divergences, and conflicting points;
2. *Cross-theme level*: generating insights between themes, identifying relations, building typologies and generalizations (Van Audenhove, 2007).

We constructed a value proposition-template (in PowerPoint) to analyse the survey answers (Figure 4), inspired by Osterwalder's (2012) VPC. We exported the questionnaire answers from Qualtrics to pdf-documents and copy-pasted respondents' answers into value proposition-templates. We constructed a value proposition-template for each respondent (twenty value propositions=twenty slides). We printed the slides in A4-dimension (two slides per page=ten pages) and divided each page in half (one value proposition per page=20 pages in A5-dimension). This provided an easy overview while manually clustering, sorting and analysing the (different elements of) respondents' value propositions.

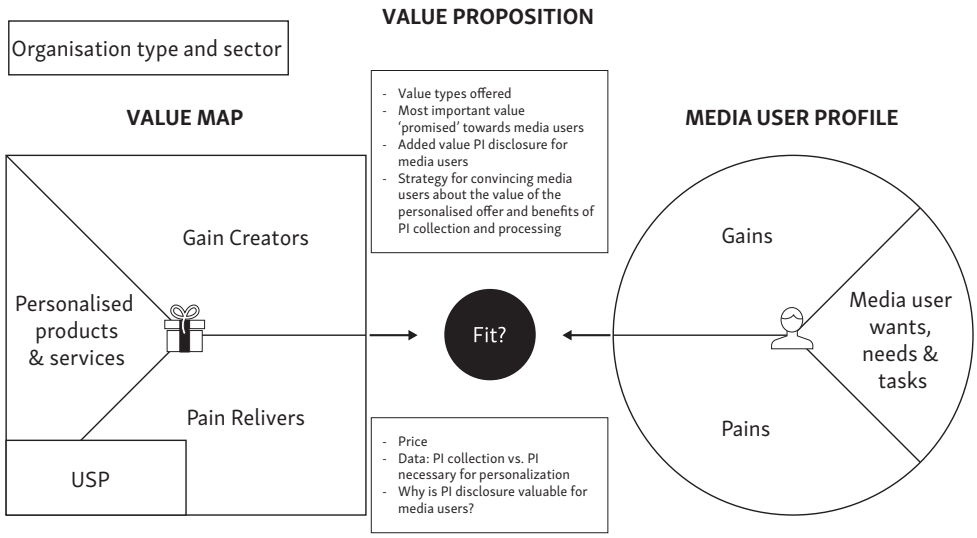


Figure 4: Value proposition template

4.1. Media organisation characterization

Respondents freely pictured their media organisation type and industry sector. From the results, one respondent positioned itself as a public media company working in television, while 19 of 20 respondents selected a commercial media company's perspective. Eight respondents identified their commercial media organisation as working in one media industry sector, whereas 11 respondents stated their organisation is active in two or more media industry sectors. We sorted respondents' imagined media organization characterizations in five media industry sector clusters. Respondents

positioning themselves as commercial media organizations were working either exclusively or primarily in press (nine respondents) followed by commercial television broadcasters (five respondents). Online discussion forums and news websites and media companies working in telecommunication and distribution share third place (both two respondents). One respondent positioned itself as working in marketing and advertising.

4.2. Media user profiles

We summarize customer profiles respondents composed per media industry sector below, delineating customer segments, target audiences for the personalised offering and describing jobs – why media users need personalised products/services defined from media companies' perspective (Osterwalder et al, 2014). We clustered respondents' answers in three themes: media practices, user needs, and socio-demographic characteristics (Figure 5).

4.3. The value of a personalised offering

We outline below how respondents constructed value propositions (Osterwalder et al, 2014) and defined the value of personalised products/services for media users, from media companies' perspective.

We list the fictional personalised products and services (Osterwalder et al, 2014) respondents develop and offer to users in Figure 6. We notice a diverse set of products and services, ranging from broader (e.g., applications and websites) to more specific services (e.g., online mobile urban news). Respondents thought mainly about existing services as we find no real innovations in this overview.

Of the participants, 19 of 20 collect and process PI for the development and optimization of a personalised media offering. There is a discrepancy when comparing respondents' answers pertaining to which PI-types they collect, and PI-types essential for personalisation according to the media experts (Figure 6). Most respondents collect more PI than is necessary for personalisation. The connection between PI-collection/processing purposes is often unclear. For example, respondents collect PI such as age, gender, location, and social media use, while also indicating these PI-types are not necessary for the development and optimization of personalised products/services. One respondent even states no PI is necessary for personalisation, but collects "(stated) preferences, reading history, and location data". There may be several explanations for this, for example, processing purposes other than developing personalised media products and services like marketing or selling to third parties. It is also possible user research is still done in more traditional ways via demographic market segmentation.

Only eight respondents develop a personalised offering with a fit (Osterwalder et al, 2014) between media user PI-collection and PI-types essential for personalisation.

CUSTOMER PROFILES AND USER JOBS

MEDIA PRACTICES

Television
- Cord cutters
- Streamers
- TV and video consumers

Press
- Digital media users of all ages
- Existing media users
- Frequent visitors of the website and apps

Telecommunication and distribution
- Companies who deliver the media content and want to improve advertising efficiency
- People who are very demanding about the technology they use and want to use new technologies

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Television: all age categories

Press
- Young adults
- Working population, families and retired people
- High profiles and investors
- Women

Online discussion forums and news websites
- Urban media users ages 18 to 35

Telecommunication and distribution
- Adults, B2B and B2C

USER NEEDS

Television
- Need for a new way of media consumption
- Need for unique or new content
- Information overload/(un)willingness to pay for content
- Need for relevant and personalised media content and platform (focus on social value)

Press
- Need for information
- Need for entertainment
- Need for specific news (e.g., local or investor-specific news)
- Information overload
- Need for relevant and personalised news
- Advertising fatigue/need for personalised advertising

Online discussion forums and news websites
- Need to process information quickly
- Need for local information and experiences

Telecommunication and distribution
- Need for relevant advertising
- Need for personalised experiences

Figure 5: Customer profiles

PERSONALISED PRODUCTS & SERVICES	MORE PI-TYPES COLLECTED THAN NECESSARY FOR PERSONALISATION	
	PI necessary for personalisation	**PI collection**
Information and entertainment (mainly fiction)	Sociological data about the time of day and method of viewing	Receptive study viewing behaviour and duration, **sociological composition of the audience and relevant differences between different target groups**
News application without advertising	Not specified which types	**Yes**, but not specified which types
News in all formats	Interests	Interests, **age**, **gender**
Qualitative news	Reading history	Reading history, **device type, geographic region, socio-demographic data (on request)**
Website or application with personalised content based on stated preferences and additional recommendations from Machine Learning	Socio-demographic data, interests	Socio-demographic data, **behaviour**
Personalised advertisements with opt-in	Opt-in data, viewing behaviour (advertisements)	Data offered by media users when they opt-in, **browsing behaviour**, viewing behaviour
Lifestyle application offering content tailored to the media user	Age, gender, interests	Explicitly ask for media user interests and complement this data with **consumption behaviour (reading behaviour and purchases)**. Raw data for acquisition.
Quick and short news messages	None	**(Stated) Preferences, reading history, location data**
Online, mobile urban news on a local level with local news and events	Location	Location, **age, gender, social media data**
Advertising tailored to media users, interactive health products, speech technology	Mainly consumption data of current products	**Identification data**, media usage data, **location data, purchasing data**
PERSONALISED PRODUCTS & SERVICES	**PI COLLECTION = PI NECESSARY FOR PERSONALISATION**	
TV on demand	Viewing behaviour	
Relevant content for viewers and advertisers	Postal code, gender, age, email	
Paying video on-demand service	Viewing behaviour	
Platform providing access to a maximum of content through curation and aggregation	Viewing behaviour, socio-demographic data	
Personalised news application	Socio-demographic data, behavioural data (reading behaviour), explicit and implicit preferences and interests	
Applications and websites	Socio-demographic data, online behaviour, preferences	
Print and online	Postal address, email, social class, age, interests	
Personalised TV advertising, replacing traditional commercial blocks	Non-sensitive demographic data, derived interests and characteristics	

Figure 6: Personalised media products/services with discrepancy versus 'fit' between PI-types essential for personalisation and PI-types collected

4.3.1. The 'value' of personalisation for media users defined from media companies' perspective

Respondents indicate personalised products/services offer the following types of *customer value* (Van Leeuwen, s.d.) to media users, ranked in descending order of response count:

1. Functional value (16 mentions): A more comfortable, easier to use, problem-solving, extensive or faster media experience in comparison to non-personalised media products/services;
2. Emotional value (14 mentions): Personalised media products and services promise to be more fun, attractive, surprising and relaxing, or stress-reducing in comparison to non-personalised media products/services;
3. End value (10 mentions): By offering a personalised experience media companies promise media users excellent service quality;
4. Economic value (9 mentions): Personalised media products/services promise financial benefits, save time or energy, or are innovative;
5. Symbolic value (6 mentions): Personalised media products/services promise status and prestige for example, aiming at social responsibility as well as the feeling of wanting to be part of a certain media brand;
6. Other value (2 mentions): *Geographic value* by relevant reporting (local news) and *Content value* through quick processing of relevant news.

Functional value, mostly described as ease of use, was considered the most important value of a personalised experience for media users. This relates to media user-profiles and needs (see 4.2). For example, respondents described users suffering from advertising fatigue and information overload, users in need of more relevant advertising and users looking for innovative ways to find unique and tailor-made media content.

We summarize respondents' descriptions of the most important value personalised media products and services promise media users below, sorted per media industry sector (Figure 7). Although this was an open-ended question, respondents do not mention the notion of public value (choices for the public interest) (Benington & Moore, 2011, p. 4), even not the one respondent that positioned him/herself as a public broadcaster.

THE MOST IMPORTANT 'VALUE PROMISE' FOR MEDIA USERS	**Television** ▪ Public broadcasters: quality ▪ Commercial broadcasters: emotional value (move consumers to watch content and advertising), economic value (innovation) and functional value (helping with finding something to watch)
	Press ▪ Functional value: informative, ease of use, and trust ▪ Economic value: Return on Investment (ROI), relevance, meaningful and pleasant time-spending ▪ End value: everything needs to be presented in the right way ▪ Emotional value: become a "love brand" that knows the viewer
	Online discussion forums and news websites ▪ Functional value: ease of use, relevance, and accessible style ▪ Symbolic value: integrity
	Telecommunication and distribution ▪ Economic value: clearly demonstrable and least subjected to subjectivity ▪ Symbolic value: being a company which media users expect it will lead the way and want to be part of

Figure 7: The most important value promise of personalised media products/services for media users, defined from media companies' perspective (categorized per industry sector)

4.3.2. Do personalised media products/services offer Return on PI (RoPI) to media users?

Why is PI-disclosure valuable or worth the effort for media users, what is the added value when sharing PI to media companies in exchange for a personalised experience? These questions inquired most explicitly personalisation vs. privacy trade-offs users need to consider when media companies ask people to disclose PI in exchange for access to personalised products/services, defined from media companies' perspective. It is striking how most respondents in our sample do not take on media users' viewpoint when describing the benefits of PI-collection/processing for the purpose of personalisation of media products and services. A few respondents mention media users' perspective and emphasize comfort, time efficiency, or price benefits for users. Yet, most respondents contribute reasons why it is necessary users share more PI for development and optimization of personalised products/services or operation of the media company itself. From the media companies' perspective, respondents relate the importance of users disclosing PI mostly to the optimization of the quality of personalised products/services provision.

Some respondents substantiate why it is valuable to share PI for media users by stating generalities for example, "better service provision" or "free, relevant content and advertising in return for PI". However, respondents do not clearly define

'relevance', and therefore, its meaning remains vague. One respondent explains why there is no risk for users disclosing PI: "Media users only share PI during the moment that they are using the service".

Respondents often define personalisation not as the means to enhance customer satisfaction, but as the goal in itself. For example, nobody explains why personalisation is desirable for media users. The same is true for relevance. Furthermore, respondents mention the ease of use, quality, not missing out on the news, and more effective advertising multiple times when considering the added value of PI-disclosure and personalisation for media users.

4.4. "Selling" personalisation

In this section we focus on the importance of a clear communication of the benefis of PI-disclosure to media users and transparency on how the data is being used. We start from the specific risks or pains as well as the pain relievers that were identified by our respondents. Next, we focus on the gains and specific gain creators of personalised media product and services. We look into the distinguishing USPs of personalised media products/services for Flemish media companies. Finally, we discuss strategies that media companies can apply to communicate towards and convince media users about the value of a personalised offering.

4.4.1. PI-disclosure pains vs pain relievers and personalisation gains vs gain creators

Figure 8 illustrates the potential risks and barriers for media users, pains (Osterwalder et al, 2014), when disclosing PI to media companies, as well as the what PI-protection solutions or pain relievers (Osterwalder et al, 2014) that media companies can implement or apply, to prevent or mitigate potential risks of PI-disclosure for media users. PI-protection pain relievers considerably 'fit' PI-disclosure pains (Osterwalder et al, 2014). Measures such as adhering to the principle of purpose limitation (GDPR art 5.1 b) prevent the misuse of personal data or sharing data with third parties without user consent. Additionally, the experts emphasize the need for transparent communication towards media users about the means and purposes of data collection and processing.

PI DISCLOSURE PAINS FOR MEDIA USERS	**Data collection and processing** ▪ User profiling ▪ Aggressive customer acquisition ▪ Misuse of personal data ▪ Share data with third parties without user consent
	Personal data breaches ▪ Data leaks ▪ Data "falling into the wrong hands"
	User experience ▪ Filter bubbles ▪ Insufficient relevant or irrelevant advertisements ▪ Pushy and invasive advertising
	Communication ▪ Purposes of data processing not mentioned to users
	Data literacy ▪ Insufficient knowledge about how data is used
PI DISCLOSURE PAIN RELIEVERS	**Internal media company data protection policies** ▪ Estimation of benefits and risks and built-in data protection ▪ Enhanced IT security
	Data collection and processing ▪ Adhere to principle of purpose limitation ▪ Process data only when users are using the service ▪ Pseudonymization ▪ Disconnection of user profiles and source data ▪ Create sub-profiles per media user
	Data storage ▪ Local data storage ▪ Short retention periods for behavioural data
	User consent and control ▪ Explicitly ask user consent ▪ Give media users control over their data and user profile: allow insight, adjustment and deletion of data ▪ Allow opt-out for advertisements
	Communication ▪ Transparent communication about means and purposes of data collection and processing ▪ Provide information on media user privacy rights according to GDPR

Figure 8: Comparing PI-disclosure risks and barriers (pains) for media users with PI-protection measures (pain relievers) to prevent or remedy risks of PI-disclosure, defined from media companies' perspective

Two themes stand out when questioning what benefits or gains (Osterwalder et al, 2014) media users expect from personalised media products and services (Figure 9):

1. Personalisation benefits linked to improved content quality, creativity and recognisability;

2. Personalisation benefits linked to improved user experience for example, flexibility, ease of use, time-efficiency, relevance, and reduced information overload.

Noteworthy, along with describing the benefits personalised media products and services provide for media users, one respondent emphasized the gains (Osterwalder et al, 2014) of creating a personalised offering for media companies. For example, "better spending of marketing budget and higher return on investment".

Investigating personalisation gain creators (Osterwalder et al, 2014), some respondents differently understood the question of how personalised media products and services create benefits for media users. Some respondents provided a technical answer and focused on the how-part of the question. For example, they were describing how media companies apply personalisation techniques. Other respondents answered what they perceived as gains of a personalised media experience for media users. This question does not seem well operationalized; we inquired both how personalised media products and services create benefits for media users (gain creators) as well as media user expectations (gains). Yet, respondents' answers still allowed us to discern from a media companies' perspective, additional benefits and reasons why it is valuable for media users to share PI in return for a personalised media experience (Figure 9).

4.4.2. Unique selling proposition of personalisation

To explain the advantages of personalisation to data subjects and support Flemish media companies in developing codes of conduct for trustworthy practices in "selling personalisation" (Van Zeeland, Van Buggenhout & Pierson, 2019, p. 8), we inquired respondents to which extent their personalised offering is unique. By constructing a unique selling proposition (USP), respondents explicitly described at least "one compelling benefit not offered by competitors" (Payne, Frow & Eggert, 2017, p. 471). For example, how to distinguish their offering from personalised products/services offered by other Flemish media organisations or international players like Facebook, Amazon, Netflix and Google (FANGs).

Respondents mostly relate the USP of personalised products/services developed by television broadcasters to a balanced offer of Flemish and international content. USPs of personalised press products and services are primarily linked to the promise of quick, reliable and trustworthy news delivery followed by user experience and control i.e., "a tailored offer but not determined by algorithms". A personalised online discussion forums and news websites experience is unique when it is new or does not yet exist in the Flemish market. The USP of personalised products/services developed by telecommunication and distribution organizations is mostly associated with a competitive advantage in knowledge about audience composition and viewing behaviour.

How can Flemish media companies communicate the advantages of personalisation in a compelling way which will help media users see the relevance and benefits

GAINS OF PERSONALISED MEDIA PRODUCTS AND SERVICES FOR MEDIA USERS	**Content** ▪ Information quality ▪ Reliability and trustworthiness ▪ Creativity ▪ Local recognisability ▪ Tailored content and advertisements ▪ Fair deal between free content and advertising ▪ Broad content catalogue ▪ Up-to-date and local information
	User experience ▪ Flexibility, comfort and ease of use (UI) ▪ Time efficiency: quick access to and delivery of content ▪ Less information overload ▪ More relevant information and advertising relating to media user interests ▪ Improved media user experience
GAIN CREATORS OF PERSONALISED PRODUCTS AND SERVICES	**Technical descriptions of how personalisation creates benefits for media users** ▪ Profiling and automation ▪ Digital technology ▪ Good editorial team with expertise in different fields ▪ Make recommendations ▪ The product type depends on and is adapted to the target group ▪ Opt-in lists with products, sectors and brands combined with advertising management system which only shows opt-in advertisements ▪ Analyse existing viewing behaviour and link this to the people behind this viewing behaviour
	Personalisation benefits for media users ▪ Quality of information ▪ Recognisability ▪ Relevance based on media user interests ▪ Local news and information based on location ▪ Free content ▪ Effective advertising ▪ Possibility to follow topics, themes and authors ▪ User-friendly platform ▪ Increase frequency and depth of media use ▪ Enhanced feeling of value-for-money ▪ Media brand fills in a 'purpose' for media users ▪ Presence across all platforms (smart TV, Android, iOS, PlayStation, online)

Figure 9: Comparing expected benefits (gains) of personalised media products/services for media users with personalisation gain creators, defined from media companies' perspective

of PI-collection (Van Zeeland, Van Buggenhout & Pierson, 2019)? We inquired from respondents which strategies and practices media companies can apply to convince media users personalised media products and services deliver on the promise of offering value to media users. We distinguish three themes in respondent's answers:

1. Focusing on content, quality and innovation, by quickly providing the right information, fact-checking, personalisation and relevance combined with societal value, unique and locally anchored content;
2. Demonstrating user experience, exclusivity and control with (free) trials, easy user experience, not selling a product but time/experiences, personalised and exclusive offers for media users;
3. Marketing and communication practices: i.e., creating media user interest, making the product available and accessible, explaining the benefits of personalisation, and linking a personalised media experience to the media brand image.

Finally, respondents' answers notably provide more insight into the underlying meaning of relevance of a personalised media experience for media users, defined from media companies' perspective. For example, "meaningful and pleasant use of time", "Return on Investment (ROI)", "content is key", "not selling a product but rather time and experiences", "ease of use linked to a media user's location and social media activity".

5. DISCUSSION

Concluding our exploration of the value of PI-disclosure from Flemish media organizations' perspective, we discuss the practical study implications and integrate the main findings with literature and theory.

RQ1: How do media organizations define the value of personalised products/services for media users?

The expert panel defined the *'value'* of a personalised offering mostly in terms of functional, emotional and end value. Respondents think ease of use for media users is the most important value promise of personalised media products and services. We join value-based marketing theory in recommending media companies "invest in communications to make people aware" of the value of personalised products/services, to "persuade" users of "advantages over competitive products, and to reassure customers once they have bought it", or exchanged their PI (Doyle, 2008, p. 300). Communication efforts towards media users should focus on functional and emotional attributes (Doyle, 2008, p. 300), such as ease of use and comfort, but also highlight improved level of service offering - end value in exchange for disclosing PI.

Addressing the question of why disclosing PI in exchange for a personalised offering is valuable for media users, respondents link added value of PI trade-offs mainly to relevance. However, descriptions remain vague throughout the first Delphi-round. The only insight we found in the underlying meaning of relevance is "meaningful

and pleasant use of time", "return on Investment", "time and experiences", and "ease of use" in relation to media users' location and social media activity. Most respondents only describe why it is necessary from media companies' perspective that users share (more) PI. For example, to improve the quality of the personalised service offering. It is important that media companies create sustainable business models by offering added value to media users, this permits premium pricing and consistent revenues in the long-term (Doyle, 2008). We recommend Flemish media companies apply added-value strategies (Figure 18) when developing and optimizing personalised products/services (Doyle, 2008).

RQ2: How is value operationalized, communicated, and delivered to media users?

Respondents constructed value propositions to communicate how the personalised offering aims to deliver value to media users (Osterwalder et al, 2014). The gains of personalised products and services for users (Osterwalder et al, 2014) are mainly described in regard to improved content quality, creativity, and recognisability and user experience. For example, more relevance and less information overload. The benefits of personalisation for media companies are "better spending of marketing budget and a higher return on investment". Correspondingly, we explored how a personalised offering creates benefits for media users - gain creators (Osterwalder et al, 2014). Media companies apply personalisation techniques like "profiling and automation" to create gains for media users, for example "relevance based on media user interests" and "enhanced feeling of value for money". The literature on audience commodification and business model innovation recommends "a clear trade-off between the requested action and value delivery" for media users (Khajeheian, 2016, p. 45). If media companies request PI-disclosure in exchange for personalised products/services, users should receive value. This could be for example the ability to unlock premium content or pay with attention rather than money (Khajeheian, 2016).

To communicate the benefits of personalisation and help media users see the relevance of PI-collection (Van Zeeland, Van Buggenhout & Pierson, 2019), respondents suggest media companies apply the following strategies to demonstrate a personalised media experience delivers on its *'value promise'*:

1. Content, quality and innovation;
2. User experience, exclusivity and control;
3. Marketing and communication practices to create consumer interest.

The expert panel recognizes the importance of experiential and commercial information sources as factors influencing buying behavior (Doyle, 2008), in this case, media users' PI-disclosure decisions (Doyle, 2008). Respondents advocate it is useful if media companies effectively demonstrate economic value to media users (Doyle, 2008).

Inquiring how the personalised offering is unique in comparison to competitors, respondents distinguish oneself focusing on Flemish and international content; reliable, trustworthy information; improved user experience and control, new,

innovative media products and services; and exclusive insights in media user viewing behaviour. Respondents support the idea that encouraging media users' trust in media companies, their personalised offering, and PI-policies positively influences users' attitude towards disclosing PI online (Robinson, 2018). Constructing a USP is vital for media companies aiming to "sell" the benefits of personalisation to media users (Van Zeeland, Van Buggenhout & Pierson, 2019, p. 8), considering this is often the only benefit explicitly communicated and advertised toward consumers (Payne, Frow & Eggert, 2017). Even if the value proposition contains more than one benefit overall, it is an implicit promise and not necessarily communicated to consumers (Payne, Frow & Eggert, 2017).

RQ3: To what extent is the value proposition linked to PI-collection/processing?

The study found 19 of 20 respondents collect PI for development and optimization of personalised media products and services. Most respondents collect more PI-types than necessary for personalisation. The question still remains if Flemish media organizations are able to responsibly utilize the collected data and for what. The connection between PI-collection/processing purposes is often unclear. Businesses today often "cast a wide net" to collect more PI than they need or analyse (Gemalto, 2018). Considering literature insights on self-commodification, this is problematic since "users should be presented with a clear value proposition for doing something that will benefit the deliverer of that value" (Khajeheian, 2016, p. 44) such as disclosing PI. Collecting irrelevant data lessens consumer trust and sets the company for even greater fall-out if they are hacked, breached, or the data is fraudulently obtained – anyone caught with more data than truly needed will suffer great losses. Identifying potential PI-protection risks – PI-disclosure pains for media users, respondents mainly describe privacy concerns pertaining to PI-collection/processing, personal data breaches, user experience, communication, and data literacy. Respondents are aware that Flemish media users have a negative attitude and perception towards how media companies use PI (Vanhaelewyn & De Marez, 2018). PI-protection risks such as, identity fraud, discrimination, or disclosure of sensitive information are not mentioned in this study (GDPR recital 75).

PI-protection *pain* relievers considerably *'fit'* PI-disclosure pains (Osterwalder et al, 2014). We discern five categories of PI-protection solutions media companies can implement to prevent and mitigate potential risks of PI-disclosure for media users internal media company PI-protection policies; PI-collection/processing measures; data storage solutions; user control and consent; and communication strategies. Respondents highlight the importance of transparent communication about the means and purposes of PI-collection and processing. The ability of effectively being able to communicate the benefits of PI-disclosure is however not mentioned. This is the most opportune communication strategy media companies can apply to enhance consumer trust (Vanhaelewyn & De Marez, 2018) - especially considering trust in a better level of service is the decisive factor when media users decide to disclose

PI or not, rather than frustration in the lack of transparency in media companies' PI-policy (Vanhaelewyn & De Marez, 2018).

To recapitulate the first Delpi-round recommendations for media organizations, we created a hands-on-scheme (Figure 10) to indicate how media companies can communicate the value of PI-collection/processing in a more transparent way.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MEDIA COMPANIES	
1. Invest in value-based communications (Doyle, 2008) to make people aware of the value of personalised products/services and persuade media users of the benefits of PI disclosure.	Highlight ease of use, comfort and improved level of service offering in communication efforts towards media users.
2. Offer added value to media users by applying added-value strategies (Doyle, 2008) when developing personalised products and services.	Improve operational excellence, "increasing the perceived efficiency of the current offering to media users"; customer intimacy i.e., by offering "a tailored solution made and delivered to meet individual needs"; develop new products, "products that meet unmet needs or meet current needs in a superior way"; and create new marketing concepts, "changing the way existing products are presented or distributed" (Doyle, 2008:295-296).
3. Define a clear trade-off between asking media users to disclose PI and the value of the personalised products and services that media users will receive in exchange.	The benefits of personalization-for-PI exchanges for media companies, advertisers and service providers are "engaged customer attention", "audience interaction" and "the ability to provide users with value (without paying them)" (Khajeheian, 2016:45).
4. Construct an USP to "sell" the benefits of personalisation to media users.	This is often the only benefit explicitly communicated and advertised toward media users (Payne, Frow & Eggert, 2017).
5. Collect only the data you truly need. This increases consumer trust and a sense of transparency.	In the threat of fraud or hacking, you only lose that data – not the potentially, great unnecessary data you might have collected.

Figure 10: Recommendations for media companies

Limitations of the study and future research

This qualitative study is a theoretical exploration, aimed at discovering and describing new knowledge, exposing previously unknown insights or unmentioned viewpoints about the value of PI-disclosure, from media companies' perspective (Baarda et al, 2013). We applied theoretical, purposeful sampling (Baarda et al, 2013). The

expert panel in this study imagined themselves in a hypothetical situation in which they work for a media organization, selling personalised media products/services. The respondents characterised their organisation type and sector, regardless of their actual organizational affiliations. To guarantee anonymity, readers cannot discern how many participants in this study are actually working in a public or commercial media organization (sample composition). The findings are not to be generalized towards the Flemish media industry. The results of this online survey are not yet validated and refined through an iterative process (Slocum, 2003). The expert panel will provide feedback on the findings during the second and third Delphi-round.

The questionnaire was purposively designed for media professionals, advertisers and marketers. We will include all quadruple helix actors (Carayannis & Campbell, 2009) in the sample of the next Delphi-rounds. Since the research is based on expert opinions, we do not discuss actual Flemish media users' positioning (Litt, 2012). To meet this lack of representation, we will include consumer organizations in the next Delphi-rounds' expert panels. Furthermore, we will follow-up the Delphi-study with user research to explore if actual users perceive the benefits of personalisation described in this study as value in return for their PI.

Finally, we identified **new research directions** for the next Delphi-rounds based on the abovementioned findings:

- We further delineate the meaning of relevance;
- We go more in-depth into why media companies collect more PI than is necessary for personalisation and in which specific cases (investigating links with media, communication and advertising practices/activities). Correspondingly, we explore which ethical issues arise when media companies collect unnecessary data and how that affects media users' trust and brand/industry perceptions;
- In addition to Delphi-surveying our expert panel;
- We apply other research methods such as face-to-face expert interviews to collect in-depth, additional research data;
- We investigate actual communication strategies concerning the value of PI for Flemish media companies by performing a content/text analysis of these organizations' statements.
- We include the audience perspective to complement the experts' view.

The current and future results of this mixed-methods study will allow us to provide in-depth insights into the positioning of the different stakeholders involved in the ongoing debate on the value of PI.

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