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Mozilla Foundation Engages Thoughtworks to Study the Effectiveness of User Control on YouTube

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A new study by Mozilla, completed in collaboration with Thoughtworks, raises questions on the role of users and the tech industry in the co-construction of emerging technology and its challenges

[Thoughtworks](#) (NASDAQ: TWKS), a global technology consultancy that integrates strategy, design and engineering, has recently collaborated with the [Mozilla Foundation](#), a global non-profit, in ["Does This Button Work? Investigating YouTube's ineffective user controls](#) " study. The study involved analysis of quantitative YouTube data and qualitative user experiences using sophisticated research methods, including a randomized controlled experiment powered by a machine learning model, conducted by Mozilla and Thoughtworks Finland. This study follows [past research](#) which revealed the tensions and challenges when trying to give users the possibilities of control and co-construction of their experience using a platform as widely spread in society as YouTube.

"For two decades, Mozilla Foundation has delivered on its mission to create a healthier internet that is open and transparent, and importantly, gives users choice and control online," said Kevin Zawacki, head of communications, The Mozilla Foundation. "Thoughtworks' expertise in data science, analytics and machine-learning was important in aiding in this unique engagement."

The study involved more than 22,000 volunteer participants, who used Mozilla's RegretsReporter extension to contribute data on their YouTube experience. Thoughtworks contributed to the quantitative aspects of the study including planning the scalable research architecture, coordinating development of the RegretsReporter extension used in data gathering, specifying the data to be collected, as well as the analysis and reporting of the study findings.

"Thoughtworks shares Mozilla Foundation's deep commitment to championing the responsible and transparent use of emerging technologies, such as machine learning and AI, and addressing the historic inequities and biases that are reflected in data and data-driven technology. There is a great need for independent studies like this, as they help to keep platforms accountable to the public interest and can inform evolving legislation. We're proud to cooperate with Mozilla Foundation to use our 29+ years of experience in strategy, design and technology as levers for positive social change," said [Jesse McCrosky](#), head of sustainability and social change, Thoughtworks Finland.

The release of this report brings to the table crucial discussions including the tension between the possibility of users controlling the content they want to see and the risk of creating echo chambers. The debate around this type of question shows that these are not just technical choices, but rather social decisions that can have a wide and structural social impact. How to incorporate user's voices in these decisions becomes therefore a central matter and a challenge for the tech industry in general.

These issues are systemic. The discussion that has emerged since the release of the report shows the need to incorporate the perspectives of civic organizations into a wider debate on the co-construction of technologies that have high use and impact in our modern society. Furthermore, the tech industry needs a more ambitious roadmap to the co-design and co-construction of technologies that are shaping the social fabric of our society.

"We are in front of a debate that cannot be solved by technologists defining the best technological solutions, but by finding innovative ways of opening the black box of technology, which may be one of the biggest challenges for our industry in the upcoming years," said [Eduardo Meneses](#), global head of social change, Thoughtworks. "This implies developing new tools, frameworks, regulations and principles of transparency, accountability and civil society's participation."

Thoughtworks is collaborating on numerous initiatives to advance social change and sustainability matters. Our latest [Social impact report](#) details many of these collaborations and long-term partnerships from around the world.

More information about the study

The study was carried out between December 2021 and June 2022. Participants from all over the world participated in the study. The study consisted of both quantitative and qualitative data: YouTube user experience data and a survey.

The study included more than 22,000 YouTube users who had installed Mozilla's open-source RegretsReporter browser extension and opted-in to participation in the study and data donation. Thoughtworks' Finnish team analyzed more than half a billion recommendations made by YouTube's algorithm, which were given after users clicked on one of YouTube's negative feedback tools, such as the "Dislike" or "Don't recommend channel" buttons. In addition, more than 2,700 of those who participated in the study related their experiences in a user survey.

Supporting resources:

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About Mozilla Foundation

Founded as a community open source project in 1998, Mozilla currently consists of two organizations: the 501(c)3 Mozilla Foundation, which leads our movement building work; and its wholly owned subsidiary, the Mozilla Corporation, which leads our market-based work. The two organizations work in

close concert with each other and a global community of tens of thousands of volunteers under the single banner: Mozilla. Mozilla's work is guided by the [Mozilla Manifesto](#).

About [Thoughtworks](#)

Thoughtworks is a global technology consultancy that integrates strategy, design and engineering to drive digital innovation. We are 12,000+ people strong across 50 offices in 18 countries. Over the last 25+ years, we've delivered extraordinary impact together with our clients by helping them solve complex business problems with technology as the differentiator.

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