

More Data, Less Responsibility

Local RDR 2022 South Korea :
Analysis of Korean telecommunication companies -
SK Telecom and Korea Telecom

Opennet Korea



Summary of Findings

- Analyzed 2 major telecommunication companies - SK Telecom, Korea Telecom
 - On market share of their broadband services
 - Korea Telecom : 41.2%
 - SK Telecom : 28.7%
- KT And SKT both have been **expanding their business scope** from telecommunication to **whole internet ecosystem** including its own content providing platforms, marketplace, AI speakers, etc.
- While, these companies enjoy abundance of data from various level of service in the whole internet ecosystem, the **responsibility** shown around it is **drastically lower** than platform companies with transparency report, and stays as if business scope is still limited as telecom providers.

Targeted Advertising

- The companies are collecting user information from their services reaching diverse level of internet ecosystem - broadband traffic, cookie on IPTV services, audio recordings from AI speakers, location data from navigation assistance applications, etc.
- Both telecom companies (SK, KT) also promote their own targeted advertising services
 - **However**, there's no transparency on the scope of user information usage, nor advertising policy published

More services, less responsibility

- Except for the ambiguous mentionings that both companies comply and respect human rights, no direct effort has been made from both KT and SKT on freedom of expression or information issues.
- On privacy issues, focus is solely on user information protection by internal employee training and cybersecurity measures.
- On content moderation, in the name of traffic management guideline written by local government authority, and with its ambiguous definition of exception “**Reasonable management**”, SK and KT both have right to block certain contents based on government’s decision or its own decision. However, there’s no request or appeal process offered to users.

More services, less responsibility - cont.

- Handling of user information to authorities
 - companies are providing user information (call logs, SMS messages, etc) to various government authorities without requiring warrant
 - No deliberate transparency on how many requests companies are fulfilling and whom they are requested from
 - No notification to user (user have to request to the telecom to check data)

Net Neutrality

- Companies are vaguely saying they are following net neutrality guideline written by local government entity.
 - However, there's no legal binding force on guideline, hence companies can always change their rule without penalty
 - Companies have been already exploiting its ambiguous definitions inside the guideline
 - Blockage of P2P traffic for the sake of congestion control
 - Limiting number of devices user can use on each connection
 - Limiting re-sharing of bandwidth to others through restriction statement on their Terms of Service
- Transparency is solely on its number of DDOS protection through traffic blockage

Actions

- Legalize Net Neutrality
- Illegalize user information hand over to authority without warrant
- Transparency pressure on
 - Content moderation policy
 - Advertising policy
 - Information hand over
 - Detailing its commitment to Digital Rights

Q&A