

What's Next for Facebook?

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eMarketer Editors

In a wide-ranging [new report](#), eMarketer released its initial guidance on how much Facebook is likely to feel the impact of an unfolding data privacy scandal.

The [report](#) addresses questions that have arisen in the wake of the Cambridge Analytica revelations and subsequent congressional hearings.

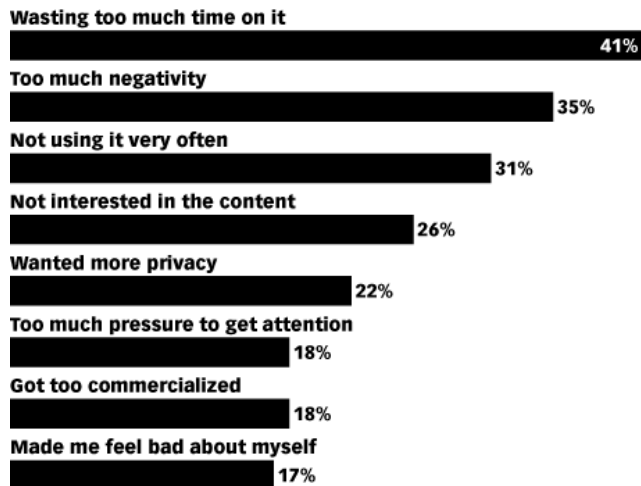
A key takeaway from the the report, by principal analyst Debra Aho Williamson, is that the revelations of the scandal are unlikely to trigger a mass departure of Facebook users.

"Facebook is so large that it would take a lot of user defections to make a difference," Williamson said. "We forecast that it had 167.9 million monthly users in the US in 2017, representing 61.1% of internet users and 86.5% of social network users."

But even if #DeleteFacebook doesn't happen, that doesn't mean other things won't cause some users to change their behavior. There is definite weakness in Facebook usage that is becoming more noticeable, both in survey results and in Facebook's own statements. That weakness stems from a variety of factors, including social media fatigue, concerns over fake news and declining usage among young people.

Reasons that US Young Adult* Social Media Users Consider Quitting Social Media, Dec 2017

% of respondents



Note: *ages 18-24
Source: Hill Holliday, "Meet Gen Z: The Social Generation" conducted by Origin, March 5, 2018

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Key metrics of daily active users (DAUs) and time spent had started to show weakness even before the news broke, and anecdotal evidence of lowered engagement is gaining data support.

Williamson noted that Facebook has taken steps to address these problems, such as redesigning its algorithm earlier this year to favor content from friends and family over content from publishers and brands, and making it harder for fake news to spread.

But, she said, "Facebook has already essentially maxed out its penetration in the US."

In addition to an analysis of Facebook's usage, the report also addresses:

- The potential revenue fallout of the scandal
- Questions around Facebook's ad targeting practices
- Issues of data privacy, at Facebook and elsewhere

eMarketer PRO subscribers can access [the full report here](#).

Nonsubscribers can [learn more here](#).

And listen to more on Williamson's insights on Facebook and the Cambridge Analytica revelations in the latest episode of "Behind the Numbers."