



GEOBLOCKING: PREVENTING ACCESS TO DIGITAL CONTENT



Increasingly, consumers are using the internet to access videos and music, especially through streaming services. In some cases, however, users are prevented from accessing digital content from some locations because licencing rights are limited to national territories. Limiting access from certain territories is referred to as “geoblocking”.

In an investigation into **geoblocking in music and video streaming**, the team of Market Watch Digital World at the Consumer Association of Rhineland-Palatinate (Verbraucherzentrale Rheinland-Pfalz) analysed consumers’ experiences of this practice until now and looked at their expectations with regard to being able to use digital content across borders. The team worked on the basis of a representative online survey of 2,207 internet users.

... ❖ GEOBLOCKING AND PORTABILITY OF DIGITAL CONTENT

Consumers in Germany are unable to access digital audio-visual content if the provider has not acquired – or was unable to acquire – the corresponding licencing rights for Germany. This is one case of geoblocking that many internet users in Germany have come to know as the “This video is not available in your country” notification.

So far, when consumers from Germany are travelling elsewhere in the EU, they can no longer access streaming services of which they are paying subscribers (“portability of digital content”). Once the EU Portability Regulation enters into force in 2018 this is set to change and subscribers who pay for a streaming service in Germany or have bought access to digital content will be able to access it from other EU countries on a temporary basis. Nevertheless, access to on-demand services of German TV-broadcasters or free streaming services operating on licencing rights limited to Germany will remain either wholly or largely unavailable elsewhere in the EU unless they voluntarily subject themselves to the provisions of the Portability Regulation.

Survey results

... ❖ FOUR OUT OF FIVE CONSUMERS USE STREAMING SERVICES

77 percent of the internet users surveyed said that they use “free” streaming services (financed by advertising) to access videos online; 75 percent use on-demand services provided by German television broadcasters. 43 percent of those surveyed subscribe to paid video streaming services.

In music, 80 percent of the internet users surveyed said they use “free” streaming services (financed by advertising); 27 percent pay to stream music.

... ❖ TWO THIRDS OF CONSUMERS ARE AFFECTED BY GEOBLOCKING

As part of the survey, consumers were asked about the meaning of the word “geoblocking”: 66 percent replied that they had never heard the term or did not understand what it means. By explaining geoblocking to respondents using the typical notification (“This video is not available in your country”) and asking them whether they had encountered it, the survey ascertained that 67 percent had already been denied access to digital contents at least once. So while the word “geoblocking” might not be readily understood, the phenomenon behind it certainly is.

... ❖ USING STREAMING WHEN LOCATED IN OTHER EU COUNTRIES

When asked whether subscriptions should be usable from all over the EU, 64 percent of respondents who use paid streaming services agreed. 41 percent of users of German broadcasters’ on-demand services said that it was important to them to be able to use these services when in other EU countries.

... ❖ ACCESSING CONTENT FROM OTHER EU COUNTRIES

93 percent of users of online audio-visual content who have already tried to access content made accessible to other EU countries reported that they had encountered problems in so doing. Among users of paid video streaming services, 39 percent would like to be able to access content which is already available in other countries before it reaches Germany.

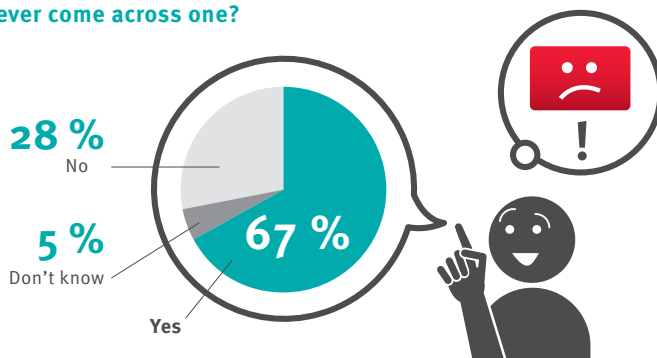
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A MAJORITY OF CONSUMERS ARE AFFECTED BY GEOBLOCKING



Geoblocking is the term for what happens when you are unable to access specific items of content on the internet because they are not available in your country. By way of example, when you try to watch a video, you might see this notification: "This video is not available in your country".

This is also known as a digital or virtual border. Have you ever come across one?



Source: "Geoblocking: preventing access to digital content" – A survey by German Consumer Associations as part of the Market Watch Digital World project.

Method: Results on the basis of an online survey of 2,207 internet users aged 16-65.

Date of survey: 07/09 – 16/09/2016

Survey institute: forsa main Marktinformationssysteme GmbH

Margin of error of whole sample: max. +/-2 percent.

CONSUMERS WANT TO BE ABLE TO USE STREAMING SERVICES FROM OTHER EU COUNTRIES



64 %

of users of paid streaming services agreed that **subscriptions should be accessible from all EU countries.***

41 %

of users of German TV broadcasters' on-demand services said that it was (very) important to them **to be able to access these services from any EU country.****

* 1,098 users of paid music and/or video streaming services; includes all answers in agreement ("strongly agree" and "agree")

** 1,366 users of TV on-demand services who had been abroad within the last three years; includes "very important" and "important"



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