

# IT & TELECOM

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## Facebook's billion: Are you being served?

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Facebook has reached an almost unimaginable milestone: 1 billion people are active users. It is hard to get your head around that number, which represents one-seventh of the world's population (and not every one of us even has Internet access). It's almost half the total number of people estimated to be on the Web at the beginning of this year.

Even CEO Mark Zuckerberg can't quite seem to comprehend it: "It's really humbling to get a billion people to do anything."

But despite gangbuster growth, Facebook is based on a tricky business model: The more they use members' shared information to target them for advertisers and marketers, the less members are likely to go along, and the more they'll realize the bargain they've struck. Just as Facebook effectively redefined "Friend," it is pushing the boundaries of the public-private divide.

So it's a fine line they have to walk, promising granular, voluminous, robust member data that has real value in the marketplace, while reassuring members there's nothing to worry about.

Facebook does the latter primarily by not drawing attention to the issue at all. It has over the years changed things in ways that consistently favor increased sharing, putting the onus on members to opt out. Tech writers scream bloody murder, and yet (shockingly!) membership still rises.

But what would happen if Facebook actually offered a clear-cut choice to all of its 1 billion members?

Suppose the next time every member signed on, he or she were faced with a simple white page offering two clear choices. One choice would be: "I want to share my information only with people I designate as friends." The other would be: "Facebook can give my information to whomever it wants, subject only to law."

You wouldn't be able to access your account until you chose. Facebook would be bound to honor each individual choice the majority wouldn't rule.

How would you answer? What do you think the final tally would be?

Even if a minority of Facebook's members chose the "friends only" option, that number would still be

vast enough to wreak havoc on Facebook's business plan. Clearly Facebook's current revenues don't exactly support its current valuation, but everyone who bought in was making a bet on the future. It is the future that remains in doubt, since there isn't even a plan to execute. But one recent estimate says that if social advertising succeeds, Facebook could quintuple ad revenue to \$21 billion in five years. That analysis, based on research by Carlos Kirjner, would value Facebook at \$141 billion in a few years. That number drops if Facebook can't share all of its users' data with advertisers.

Facebook won't put this to the test, of course, because it would be suicide. Even raising the question of whether users want to trust Facebook could sow seeds of doubt in users' minds. Facebook would have nothing to gain and everything to lose. It already offers a range of privacy controls, and if you have the stomach to wade through dozens of choices, you can lead a very private Facebook existence.

Most people don't bother, of course, but it's probably not because they have given the matter



a whole lot of thought. The median member age when that billionth person signed up was 22; the average person still signing up for Facebook knows little outside the Era of Sharing. She hasn't been stung yet by a privacy breach, and is still naive about how innocent shares can go in unanticipated directions.

But that's the thing about privacy:

Most of us don't really think about it until it has been invaded. And then it matters more than almost anything. And the more Facebook pushes the envelope, the greater the risk that members will push back.

Facebook's challenge is to hold two conversations in parallel emphasizing the rich data potentially available to the business folks, while reminding members how

much better their lives are when they share. When these lines cross, Facebook has to scale back, as it did recently with its reversal on "frictionless sharing," one of the key advancements unveiled by CEO Mark Zuckerberg at last year's F8 developers conference.

The backlash led to what Wired's Ryan Tate called "Facebook Whiplash": "Apps ... get a big surge of traffic as Facebook opens its platform to a new category, only to fall back to Earth after Facebook users complain and Facebook cuts activity from that category out of users' news feeds."

Facebook's members are its product: That is a well-worn truism. And Facebook may be able to soothe or distract members long enough to get over the hump. If they start printing money, and nobody feels abused, that will mean Facebook has figured it out.

But the only way that happens is if Facebook doesn't have "The Talk" with its members. Public or private is a question Facebook won't ask. Which pretty much tells you what the answer would be.

The author writes for Reuters blog.

### BSRM selects Oracle E-Business Suite 12.1.3

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BSRM Group, a leading manufacturer of steel in Bangladesh, has selected Oracle E-Business suite 12.1 to optimise its business processes across various business functions, while providing senior management with accurate real-time information enabling quicker and smarter decision making.

BSRM Group decided to replace its legacy in-house standalone applications, which were slowing down rapid decision-making, with a state of the art integrated systems. The Oracle E-Business Suite 12.1 will facilitate BSRM Group to automate its procurement, sales and distribution, management information system and their financial and accounting functions.

### Huawei wins InfoVision award 2012

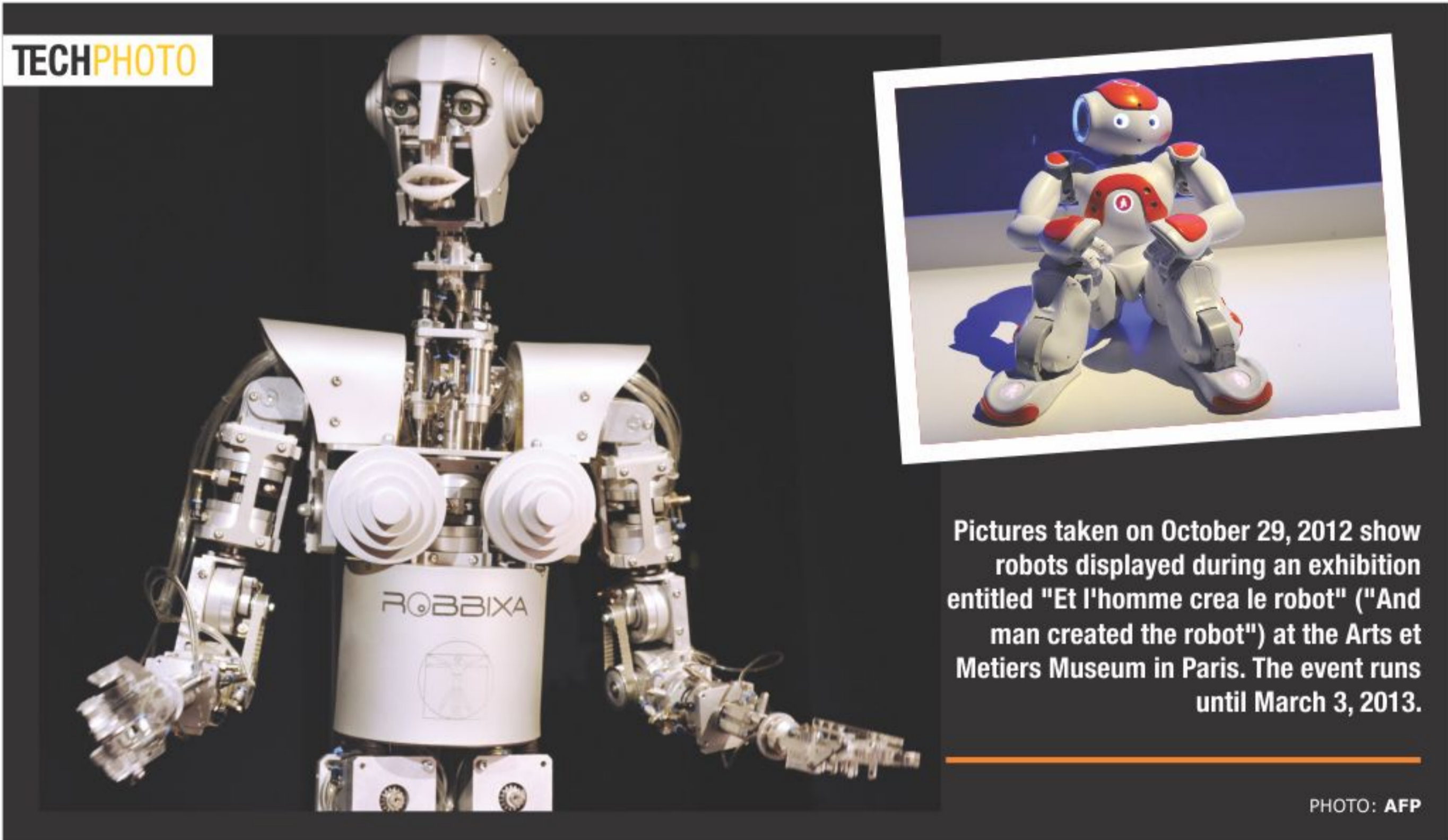
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Huawei, a leading global information and communications technology (ICT) solutions provider, has won the InfoVision award for Best Broadband Access - Fixed at the Broadband World Forum 2012 with its Largest Capacity Vectoring System.

The InfoVision awards are designed to acknowledge innovative breakthroughs in fixed access networks field, and the technologies and solutions that contribute significantly to the industry by helping increase profits, reduce costs, and improve network quality as well as the user experience.

Vectoring is one of the latest advances in digital subscriber line (DSL) technologies and can help carriers increase the bandwidth from 820 Mbit/s to more than 100 Mbit/s on copper line networks.

TECHPHOTO



Pictures taken on October 29, 2012 show robots displayed during an exhibition entitled "Et l'homme crea le robot" ("And man created the robot") at the Arts et Metiers Museum in Paris. The event runs until March 3, 2013.

PHOTO: AFP

## BIKROY.COM Country's first bilingual classified website

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Bikroy.com, a Sweden-based website for buying and selling second-hand products, was formally launched last month though it started its journey in June this year.

Nils Hammar, CEO of Bikroy.com in an interview via email said Bangladesh is a promising market with more than 150 Million people. The boom in internet users in Bangladesh, steady economical growth made them interested to come to Bangladesh.

Their research also showed that classified site is amongst the most successful websites in the developed market. "We believe that Bangladesh is also heading towards the same direction."

He said Bikroy offers the seller a 100% free platform for posting ads and it ensures best offer for selling their second-hand items. On the other hand, for the buyer it ensures wide range of deals on popular second-hand items (like mobile phones, computers, cars, houses etc.).

Bikroy.com is an online market place, so if you are a buyer then you can just visit our web page bikroy.com and search by category, area or even brand you are looking for. For posting ad, you just need a valid email ID and need to fill up the product information. You do not need to become a member.

Hammer said Bikroy has two mobile sites - one for regular handset and another touch site for smartphones. Both the sites are the adapted version of main site.

Bikroy currently has more than 50,000 ads in the site

posted by different users, he said.

At the moment Bikroy does not earn, however, eventually Bikroy will introduce premiere ad posting, where customers can make his/her ad at the top and they will be charged for those special ads.

About its unique selling point, Hammer said Bikroy.com is the only classified website available both in Bangla and English in Bangladesh which provides a user friendly interface.

He said it



also has a robust customer service that ensures the accuracy and content of the posted ads. This also assures that the ads are posted in the right category thus make it easier for the potential buyers to find it.

"Since our main objective is to provide the users with a platform for buying and selling, ensuring quality service would be our key challenge," Hammer said.

Bangladesh does not provide any special challenge unique from other countries, rather the growing number of internet users provide an opportunity to build the customer base quickly.

"We look forward towards the 3G launching in Bangladesh, which we believe will generate more traffic to our site", he said.

About Bikroy's competitors in the local market he said they really appreciate their work in Bangladesh.

"They have introduced the concept here, but we believe for a populated country like Bangladesh, there is room for more similar companies in the market and this sector will grow even bigger with the growth of internet."

## Apple's iPad mini packs full-sized punch but screen inferior: reviews

REUTERS, San Francisco

Apple Inc's entry in the accelerating mobile tablet race squeezes about 35 percent more viewing space onto a lighter package than rival devices from Google or Amazon.com Inc, but it sports inferior resolution and a lofty price tag, two influential reviewers wrote on Tuesday.

The iPad mini, which starts at \$329 versus the \$199 for Google's Nexus 7 and Amazon's Kindle Fire HD, is easy to hold with one hand, eliminating a drawback of the 10-inch iPad, Wall Street Journal columnist Walt Mossberg wrote in one of the first major reviews of a gadget introduced last week.

Both Mossberg and New York Times columnist David Pogue offered kudos for cramming most of its full-sized cousin's functions onto a smaller device, as advertised.

But the iPad mini's 1024 x 768 resolution was a big step backwards from the iPad's much-touted Retina display, and underperformed the rival Kindle and Nexus, the two reviewers agreed.

Mossberg said Apple chose to go with a lower-quality display because the existing 250,000-plus iPad applications could only run unmodified in two resolutions - and the higher level would have sapped too much power.

"The lack of true HD gives the Nexus and Fire HD an advantage for video fans. In my tests, video looked just fine, but not as good as on the regular iPad," Mossberg wrote.

The original iPad was launched in 2010 and went on to upend the personal computer industry, spawning a raft of similar devices. The iPad mini marks Apple's first foray into a smaller 7-inch segment that Amazon's Kindle Fire now dominates, demonstrating demand exists for such a device.

Apple, making its boldest consumer hardware move since Tim Cook took the helm from late co-founder Steve Jobs, hopes the smaller tablet can beat back incursions onto its home turf of consumer electronics.

"In shrinking the iconic iPad, Apple has pulled off an impressive feat," Mossberg wrote. "It has managed to create a tablet that's notably thinner and lighter than the leading small competitors with 7-inch screens, while squeezing in a significantly roomier 7.9-inch display."

"And it has shunned the plastic construction used in its smaller rivals to retain the iPad's sturdier aluminum and glass body."

He noted, however, that the device was too large to fit easily into pockets. It exhibited battery life of about 10 hours and 27 minutes, an hour more than the Kindle Fire at the same settings, but about 17 minutes less than the Nexus 7.

"By pricing the Mini so high, Apple allows the \$200 class of seven-inch Android tablets and readers to live," Pogue wrote.

"But the iPad Mini is a far classier, more attractive, thinner machine. It has two cameras instead of one. Its fit and finish are far more refined. And above all, it offers that colossal app catalog, which Android tablet owners can only dream about."



PHOTO: REUTERS