

Pioneering tool to manage media industry's digital carbon footprint

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The online tool will help media industry manage its digital carbon footprint.
Credit: Pixabay/ University of Bristol

A collaboration between computer scientists at the University of Bristol and nine major media companies, including ITV and BBC, will help the media industry understand and manage the significant carbon impacts of digital content.

The 12-month collaboration, facilitated by sustainability experts,

Carnstone, will see University of Bristol researchers working with sustainability and technology teams at the BBC, Dentsu Aegis Network, Informa, ITV, Pearson, RELX, Schibsted, Sky and TalkTalk, to map the [carbon](#) hotspots of digital media content and services.

The aim is to create an online carbon calculator, DIMPACT, available to any [company](#) offering digital products and services.

This is the first serious collaborative attempt to create a tool that takes the complexity out of calculating digital carbon emissions, backed by some of the world's most innovative media companies and the world-class researchers at the University of Bristol. The eventual tool will help the industry understand and manage the carbon impact of digital media.

Mapping the carbon footprint of digital services like advertising, publishing and broadcasting is difficult because the underlying technological systems are hugely complex and constantly shifting. Media content passes through content delivery networks, data centres, web infrastructure and user devices, to name just a few, with each element of the delivery chain having different owners.

With climate change high on the agenda, DIMPACT will allow participating companies to understand their 'downstream' carbon impacts, right through to the end-user. This, in turn, will enable more informed decision-making to reduce the overall carbon footprint of digital services.

"We know that more and more of our interactions happen online, and screens play an ever more important role in our lives. We can say with absolute certainty that the digital economy will continue to grow. What we don't know is how those modes of digital consumption translate into carbon impacts and where the 'hotspots' reside. DIMPACT will change that," said Christian Toennesen, Senior Partner at Carnstone and

DIMPACT's initiator and product manager.

"Given the overall size of the carbon footprint of the digital [media](#) sector, it is important that companies assess and report their impacts. By doing so, they can identify the carbon savings that can be made by alternative design decisions, and hopefully find ways to reduce their overall footprint.

"This is a great opportunity to leverage our existing research strengths to help create a ground-breaking tool with real world applications," said Dr. Dan Schien from Bristol's Department of Computer Science.

Following a successful kick-off meeting in 2019, the DIMPACT project partners have started developing the underlying model and initiated user experience research.

Provided by University of Bristol

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