Mobile users prefer privacy to apps

Lack of trust is growing in the mobile world, as the latest information from MEF's Global Consumer Trust Report 2015 indicates and it is the largest single obstacle to growth in the mobile economy.

The report, supported by AVG Technologies, analyses data from 15,000 mobile media users in 15 countries across five continents. It explores the key areas of trust, privacy, transparency and security to identify their impact on mobile consumers globally from purchasing a new device to downloading apps or paying for goods and services.

Impact of trust

Trust remains the largest single obstacle to growth in the mobile content and commerce industry, with 40% of respondents indicating that a lack of trust is the number one factor that prevents them from downloading items more often.

- 49% say a lack of trust limits the amount of apps they download, compared to 37% in 2013
- 72% of mobile consumers are not happy sharing personal data such as location or contact details when using an app
- 34% say trust prevents them from buying more goods and services using their mobile device

The US experienced the largest increase in a lack of trust of the markets studied, at 35% (up 9% year-on-year) and Africa indicated:

- South Africa From 31% in 2014 to 35% in 2015 (up 4%)
- Kenya From 24% in 2014 to 28% in 2015 (up 4%)
- Nigeria From 27% in 2014 to 29% in 2015 (up 2%)

App privacy expectations

Alongside this growing mistrust, the study also revealed an increase in resistance to sharing personal information such as location, address book details or health records, with apps. Seventy-two percent of mobile users said that they are not happy sharing such information and 39% claimed never to do so.

African countries show the most lack of trust when using apps

- South Africa: 58% (9% above average)
- Kenya: 60% (11% above average)
- Nigeria: 53% (4% above average)

Linked to this unease, is the need to improve the way apps communicate about the data they collect. Many consumers feel that app stores and device manufacturers should take greater responsibility for protecting their personal information - 30% of respondents said this would foster greater trust in the mobile platforms and 63% said that they considered transparency important or extremely important (compared to 49% last year).

Transparency in what an app does with personal data and linked to things like clear, short-form privacy policies is especially important to South African's - 80% say it important or very important

Methods of self-protection have also decreased across the board - with less people taking the time to read app store descriptions, long privacy documents or ask friends and family for advice. The most popular method for self-protection was 'downloading a privacy protection app', at 31%.

Need to protect devices

While the results showed that the threat of malware is rising in consumers' consciousness, with most people acknowledging that it is likely to affect them, caution around malware has decreased. Only 48% of respondents said malware would make them think twice when downloading apps compared with 74% last year.

Andrew Bud, MEF Global Chair, said, "Trust is the most important asset of any business and consumer confidence must underpin the mobile ecosystem. The sustainability of the mobile industry depends on it. As mobile devices and services evolve, consumers will hold business ever more accountable.

"The report highlights how trust issues are impacting consumer behaviours in different markets. It is clear that the mobile industry must create equitable, informed partnerships with consumers, putting trust at the centre of the relationship. Consumer trust must be earned by consistently applying high levels of transparency, security and privacy to every mobile interaction."

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