MEDIA & ICT CONSUMPTION TRENDS

"PROVIDE FLEXIBLE IDENTITY MANAGEMENT IN POPULAR APPS"

Social, Local and Mobile applications, or simply SoLoMo, are still on the rise. Not in the least because of the interaction between the mobile Web, social networks and location services on our smartphones. Today, popular apps like Swarm, Foursquare, and Facebook are based on SoLoMo data to personalize and enhance their mobile offerings, or are linked to advertising platforms providing similar information. But even though the use of SoLoMo data and apps may be popular, the concern for privacy breaches increases as well. Our study with over 5,800 mobile Internet users yields new insights into the considerations users make about SoLoMo services.

Privacy as Dynamic Currency in SoLoMo Apps

Essentially, SoLoMo services take the form of barter trade: users constantly weigh the pros and cons. Unlike money, the value of personal data is not fixed, but depends on the expected added value. Even though 55% of the users have indicated physical and practical rewards (like discounts or tips about nearby shops) as the biggest motivators to use SoLoMo services, practice shows that the social aspects (staying informed on what friends are doing) trigger over five times more use.

This weighing of value is constantly shifting during the use of a SoLoMo application, making it extremely difficult to comprehensively describe in which way users are prepared to release their data. The popular apps only offer very limited customization options; often just a simple yet drastic On/Off switch with no way in between.

This gap causes users to constantly switch between the options offered within the app and a series of improvised methods, like using false data, deactivating the data connection or (in extreme cases) ceasing use. In doing so, they succeed in maximizing the app functionalities while minimizing the privacy risks. The research further shows that about one third of the SoLoMo users feel they have very little control over their data and therefore use these apps very little.

Identity Management for More Trust and Use

One reaction to the privacy issue would be to limit the allowed use of personal data. But a better solution seems to lie with smart SoLoMo identity management solutions, which allow media users to manage their digital profiles in a more transparent way.

Providing such additional options (a temporary incognito mode for example) could close the gap between functionality and user improvisation, and restore or strengthen the trust users have in SoLoMo applications. The path of least resistance may in this case be beneficial for all parties, keeping everybody happy…

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> **Users attach more importance to the social benefits of SoLoMo than physical rewards**

> **More user control will increase trust and use of SoLoMo services**

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Media & ICT Consumption Trends is a partnership between iMinds Research Center Media & ICT (iMinds-MICT) and digital research institute iMinds. The project seeks to provide an overview of academic research in Flemish media and internet consumption, and links insights into transforming audiences to the current challenges for the Flemish media industries. It therefore combines results from original user-driven innovation research with conclusions from international studies and technology trends reports.

Series Editors: Tom Evens, Bart Vanhaelewyn and Lieven De Marez

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Research Center **Media & ICT (iMinds-MICT**) is affiliated to Ghent University, part of the Flemish digital research center and business incubator iMinds, and forms, together with SMIT and CUO, the research department iMinds-Digital Society. The context and focus of MICT's research is today's digital society and innovation economy, and more specifically the changes and challenges that are imposed by that environment for each of its stakeholders: industry, policy makers and, not the least, end-users.

iMinds is Flanders' digital research center and business incubator, established by the Flemish government in 2004. Building on the expertise of our 850+ top researchers located at 5 Flemish universities, it introduces digital innovation in 6 key markets including Media, ICT and Smart Cities. iMinds collaborates with research partners to convert digital knowhow into real-life products and services that change people's lives for the better. Key asset is an agile, open research mind set and proven methodology.