

Abstract

Over the last ten years the smartphone has moved from niche product to become an almost universally adopted device. Its success has been helped by the continual improvements in network connection speeds, the convergence of disparate devices into one and the vast range of services offered through mobile app software. Smartphones became the first technical device that was also personal resulting in societal changes in how people collaborate, consume content, capture events and build interpersonal networks. This has brought convenience in the completion of many daily tasks but it also introduces potential risks to information privacy.

The unique traits of a persistent connection to the internet and being constantly in the possession of the user has led to the creation, transmission and sharing of vast amounts of information that capture what individuals are doing while also tracking their location. The purpose of this research is to explore the attitudes of smartphone users towards their information privacy in the context of these unique abilities.

Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with a small sample of experienced smartphone users. A qualitative inductive method of analysis was used to interrogate the collected data and develop themes.

The findings revealed that users do have concerns about their information privacy that was in concert with the academic literature. While self-regulation against disclosure had been used as a means of protection, it had not been deemed a wholly successful approach by participants with some of them being unsure of what information they had shared and which entities it was shared with. There was divergence in the treatment of disclosure level on different social media platforms depending on the perception of control over the flow of information.

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