Consumers will now trade app convenience for security: study

Consumers will now trade app convenience for security, according to a study commissioned by F5 Networks 'The Curve of Convenience – the trade-off between security and convenience'.

The regional survey, conducted in partnership with YouGov, shows secure experiences are of foremost importance for Asia Pacific's consumers, with 53 percent of them prioritizing security features over the functionality and convenience of an app. Further, Asia Pacific's consumers are unforgiving when it comes to security, with close to three in five respondents choosing to stop using an application altogether if data security is compromised.

Asia's digital generation is making waves in shaping the global economy—from driving consumer markets to delivering innovative business models. To gauge the perceptions and attitudes of Asia Pacific consumers toward application usage, F5, in partnership with YouGov, surveyed over 3,700 respondents across Australia, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Philippines and Singapore.

"Apps today are transforming the way consumers interact with products and services, as they provide a special, personalized environment for businesses to engage with users," said Adam Judd, Senior Vice President, Asia Pacific, China and Japan, F5 Networks. "The results from our survey are pretty clear. Despite the diversity of the region, one key factor rings true: security remains the top consideration for Asia Pacific's consumers. As apps continue to dominate Asia Pacific, it is critical that businesses understand where their customers stand on the Curve of Convenience to deliver the right user experiences, or risk losing them."

"Security and convenience are often at constant tension, and balancing both elements to find the right sweet spot is extremely hard. The more convenient a device or a program is, the less secure it is likely to be. This also makes it a tough choice; does one sacrifice security, or convenience? F5's Curve of Convenience reflects this, as we see users across the region having differing preferences based on where they are in their journey. However, it is important to note that even as app usage increases, users still have a limit to the number of apps that they will own. Businesses will have to recognize user priorities, and design their apps with those intentions in mind," said Dr. Debin Gao, Associate Professor, Information Systems, Singapore Management University.

Giving up security for convenience

Security remains the top consideration for consumers in the Asia Pacific across all digital activities—evidenced by the fact that 53 percent of our respondents prioritizing security over convenience. In fact, nearly half of them (46 percent) said that a more secured experience would be the biggest factor in enhancing their digital experience in the next five years.

However, despite the scrutiny over social networks' use of personal data and vulnerability to hacks—with the recent Facebook and Cambridge Analytica scandal coming to mind—social networks still remain as the most used app type, and perhaps more worryingly, the second most trusted app type in

the region. The functionality and convenience afforded by social networks—enabling users to effortlessly keep up with updates from friends and family, while providing users with a Single Sign-On (SSO) option for numerous other applications, from mobile games to eCommerce sites, are likely causes of this. This implies that users are prepared to give up their personal information in exchange for convenience and functionality, often without thinking twice about the security implications of their actions.

App expectations evolve across markets

While our research shows a preference for security over convenience, we still see varying attitudes across the region—in other words, there are many Asias within Asia. As mobile-first economies where the majority of users' first engagement with digital comes from mobile, emerging market enthusiasm and excitement translates into an experience first, security second mindset.

Consumers from emerging markets that are seeing rapid digital adoption, such as Indonesia, India and Philippines, prioritize convenience, while consumers from developed markets, such as Australia and Singapore, prioritize security. In fact, users in Indonesia, India and Philippines are 14 percent more likely to prioritize convenience over security, as compared to the countries with a more established digital presence such as Australia and Singapore, where 63 percent and 67 percent, respectively, emphasize security over convenience.

Millennials sacrifice security for convenience

By 2020, more than 60 percent of the world's Millennials (aged 18–34) will reside in Asia Pacific. They will ultimately become the demographic that influences the business of apps, setting expectations for businesses to cater to their preferences.

However, despite being born with technology, Millennials might prove to be the best exploit for attackers, as this digital generation takes security for granted. Less than half (44 percent) of Millennials surveyed prioritized security features, compared to 53 percent for Gen X (aged 35–54), and 69 percent for baby boomers (aged 55 and above).

While Millennials generally showed more awareness toward potential data security risks, they are less likely to be concerned about them. 32 percent of Millennials will continue to use an app even when data security is compromised, showing significantly higher tolerance for breaches. As future leaders, Millennials also need to understand the level of security risk they are under, as their nonchalance toward security could be detrimental and be the primary reason for security breaches.

With applications now the face of many businesses, the Curve of Convenience represents the user's journey to app enlightenment, as they better understand the tug and pull between app security and convenience—and how having one of them often means giving up the other. The challenge for businesses today is to strike a balance between convenience and security—and avoid the convenience chasm, where users are neither satisfied with the convenience, nor security of the app.