

COLUMNS

3 misconceptions about location-based services

December 22, 2016



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The introduction of Pokmon Go and its viral location-based gameplay success is a prime example of how vital accurate and precise location is to application engagement.

By using real-world places and digital characters as an overlay, players enjoy a truly hyperlocal experience. This experience is enhanced even more with local shops and restaurants using in-app features to attract new customers off the street when using the game.

Even though 83 percent of app users say location is crucial to their app experiences, it is astounding that more than half of location-dependent app users have not turned their location services on even for things as basic as weather and navigation apps. This may be due to multiple outdated myths surrounding location services.

Below are three of the most common misconceptions about location services.

1. Location services are always on

One of the most persistent myths about location data is that smartphones are tracking location without the user's consent or knowledge and that Big Brother is somehow watching every move. This is not the case.

No matter which operating system a smartphones uses, whether it is iOS or Android, users are always prompted to determine whether or not they want an app or their device to use their location. Both systems also allow users to turn location services off completely.

2. Location data is unhelpful

Many users believe that sharing their location data does not result in any helpful notifications. This is where app publishers need to ensure that they are using location data in a way that provides real value.

App publishers must be better about developing location-based content and context to enhance app user interface. One way they can do this is by supplying relevant in-app modes to anticipate what users will need at a time and specific location.

For example, apps from brands such as Walmart, Gasbuddy and Snap Inc. all use location-based features to benefit their users.

In addition to bolstering user engagement, location services also inform user experience design.

Developers must understand what it is their users will be doing in specific use cases and locations in the real world.

To get that level of understanding, developers must rely on insights about where users go and why they go to those places.

Accurate location helps developers make experiences more relevant since they are able to analyze and categorize the frequency in which their user base goes to a store or types of venues.

3. Location data infringes on user privacy

Privacy is a top concern for many users when it comes to location services. They view sharing their location as a way for advertisers to get ahold of their personal data.

As a matter of fact, publishers do not need to give away user information to increase the value of their ad inventory and to deliver relevant content.

By using location data that has been volunteered by users, publishers are able to build contextual, anonymous segments or personas of their audiences. This is then combined with demographic data such as education, gender and age as well as behavior patterns based on where users go.

Publishers then leverage this information to provide relevant content to users based on their location without any uniquely identifiable information.

LOCATION SERVICES are essential to both consumers and app publishers to create the most relevant user experience. These now-defunct myths should not deter users from turning location services on.

By sharing this data, apps can be used to their full potential since they can tap location to send out reminders, share deals or pull up relevant app features.

Finally, app publishers must make the effort to share both relevant and targeted information to users based on location insights. The result: a continuous improvement to app experiences across any vertical.

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