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**ACCAN Launches Research into Australians’ Use of Apps**

The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN), the peak body for consumers in the communications industry, has today launched leading research into Australians’ use of mobile applications. The report, *Mobile app consumer attitudes and experiences,* explores user sentiment towards paying for features and services and data privacy in the app ecosystem.

Speaking at the [CommsDay Melbourne Congress](http://www.commsday.com/commsday-australasia/the-full-programme-for-commsday-melbourne-congress-2014) today, ACCAN CEO Teresa Corbin delivered a presentation on the findings of the research conducted by [TNS](http://www.tnsaustralia.com/). This is the first study to give these insights on Australian consumers, exploring how end-users can be customers, purchasing apps or paying for features within apps and how at the same time they can also be products in that they are an audience for advertising in apps, or represent valuable personal data for advertisers and marketers.

“The study aims to illustrate how Australians are negotiating the tension between being customers and being products,” said ACCAN CEO Teresa Corbin. “Along with all of the amazing things apps can do, most developers want to design ways of obtaining either money, information or both from users.”

The research showed that the idea of getting apps for free is well embedded, with 65 per cent of people saying they download paid apps either never or less often than every few months. It’s not clear as to whether consumers make the connection that if the app is free that they are often the “product” in the equation.

“Essentially consumers are not particularly keen to pay up front for an app’s capabilities apart from the occasional one that they know they will find exceptionally useful,” said Ms. Corbin. “The preference is to treat apps more to try out and if it turns out to offer extra features they want, people may pay at that point.”

On average, users have spent just under $20 in the past 12 months for app downloads, content unlocking, accelerating game play, or removing ads. Forty-two per cent of those spending money felt that they did not receive what they were expecting. The research also found that 18 per cent had spent money unintentionally by incurring automatic credit card charges or taking an action without expectation of charges being levied.

“The most problematic app category for spending is games, accounting for 40 per cent of unintended spend,” added Ms. Corbin. “The greatest risk for unintentional spend is when the device is used by the device owner – 56 per cent overall; children accounted for 29 per cent of occasions and other adults for 16 per cent.”

In terms of permissions given to apps and the information they may have access to, the greatest concern is that apps may access financial details with 85 per cent of people worried about apps having access to their credit card or other account details. Sixty-eight per cent are concerned about access to their contacts and their phone number while 63 per cent were worried about their photos being compromised.

According to the study, iOS users are more careful than Android users when it comes to granting permissions to apps. Twenty-eight per cent of iOS users said they reviewed these permissions in detail, compared to only 21 per cent of Android users.

While people are willing to spend money on games and some other categories, the research found a lack of enthusiasm for paying to access a version of an app that respects privacy. The average price respondents were willing to pay for a version of an app that does not access personal data is $6.80, with amounts varying for wealthier households and across age groups.

These prices make it seem as though Australians value their privacy, however the research revealed that 66 per cent said they would in fact pay nothing to download a version of an app that wouldn’t access their personal information.

The sample for the survey was just over 1,000 and was representative of the Australian online, smartphone and tablet using population. Some of the questions were borrowed from questions asked of American consumers by the respected Pew Research Center. It also builds on some ACMA research done in 2012 which looked at levels of concern around apps and location services.

To download a full version of the report, please visit the ACCAN website [link to media release on ACCAN website].

**Ends**

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