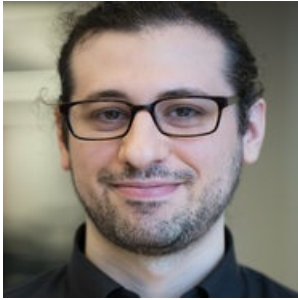


COLUMNS

Fragmented and fleeting, mobile User IDs are ripe for overhaul

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In the mobile world, User IDs are often the key to a customized user experience. They are designed to enable an application to recognize a device and generate a personalized interaction. Simple, right?

Unfortunately, in creating their User ID standards, many manufacturers are not that concerned with the needs of app developers, advertisers and data vendors.

Device makers create multiple standards and types of User IDs and issue them in multiple iterations that are here today and gone tomorrow.

Identifying issues

For Google it is Advertiser ID and for Apple it is IFA (or IDFA), for example.

Some device identifiers such as IDFV work only for users in the same app and do not carry across sovereign apps.

This can put data pools or attribution strategies at risk one reason why many measurement companies ask app developers to supply multiple IDs for the same user on a given app as a failsafe against the future termination of a standard.

Another issue of concern is privacy.

There is little governance over how consumer data is used that does not come from the device manufacturer.

Mobile data identifiers overlap general privacy legislation, but the nuances of how that data is treated by advertisers, behavioral entities, or even apps has not yet been addressed.

Industry bodies such as the Mobile Marketing Association and OBA have issued statements around how data should be retained and processed.

There have also been attempts at creating sovereign ID standards, but so far no practical, adoptable solution has emerged.

Case for standardization

If the volatility and lack of policy around User IDs can be resolved, marketers will have a significant opportunity to create more efficient sharing, segmentation and general understanding of their audiences.

Knowing that a standard will be in effect for at least five years will enable better planning to build on the data pools generated.

In this new environment, User IDs will rarely change, as the average mobile user erases the IDFA on a phone far less frequently than cookies on a desktop.

As a result, the development of segmentation and even retargeting programs will be more effective.

Custom user experiences, A/B testing and the like will become more precise across longer periods of time, benefiting both consumer and company in terms of finding the right flow for the app.

In addition, once a data pool is built, it can be very easily shared across the company to help springboard omnichannel solutions.

For example, if you are measuring and optimizing user behavior by IDFA, that information can be seamlessly translated to your media buying team to inform behavioral targeting programs.

Synching up

The fact is, User IDs will only become more important to the mobile experience, because future apps across multiple devices will need to share the same User ID.

For instance, when Google Glass was released, it had to be tethered to a mobile device to take advantage of a data connection.

This dependency speaks to the need for apps to share data between devices.

Even if the Apple Watch has full connectivity, its size and functional limitations may require a third-party device to be in constant communication, requiring data alignment under a given ID.

Apple may be storing all your devices under your Apple ID, but if the User ID standard more closely resembled internal IDs across dependent devices, advertisers could capture a far better user profile.

WHEN THE INDUSTRY rallies behind a more uniform and consistent approach to User IDs, anyone who relies on audience data will benefit.

But consumers, too, will win, as opportunities will arise for more personalized and engaging apps, relevant advertising and innovative cross-device capabilities.

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