

Geolocation Grows Despite Privacy Concerns

Contributed by eMarketer
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Two in five mobile owners use location-aware services

As some marketers wonder about the possible audience for check-in services like foursquare, which reached 2 million users and 100 million check-ins in July 2010, mobile owners are getting used to sharing their location in many ways regardless of their privacy worries.

According to a survey by security software company Webroot, 39% of social network users who own a mobile internet device use geolocation.

But there was widespread concern over the loss of privacy, the possibility of being hacked on an unsecured network and other safety issues.

Women tended to be more worried than men, and younger users less concerned than their older peers.

Still, many smartphone owners are taking advantage of the features location-aware services can offer. The most popular activity was letting friends know where they were, done by 19.2% of respondents at least daily.

More than 15% of respondents reported checking in at locations at least daily.

Among younger adults ages 18 to 29, those percentages were higher: 24.5% and 17%, respectively.

In that age group, men were about twice as likely to participate in the activity daily than women.

The most popular geolocation apps included Google Latitude, used by about three in 10 respondents. Flickr, which geotags photos, and Google Buzz were each used by about two in 10.

Twitter, which geolocates tweets, was popular with fewer than 15% of respondents, while about half as many used foursquare.

Forrester Research also found men and younger adults dominated the location-based landscape.

That study, of the wider group of US internet users, found that only 4% had used check-in apps like foursquare, Gowalla and Loopt, and only 1% checked in at least weekly.

Smartphone users who are already interested in social activities are at the leading edge in geolocation, and despite concerns of their own may pave the way for a larger audience to feel comfortable sharing where they are.

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