App Tracking Transparency opt in could be much higher than expected

Article

Apple's upcoming iOS 14.5 update and its accompanying AppTrackingTransparency (ATT) prompt may not be as bad for cross-app tracking as mobile marketers have feared. Most estimates predict that users would opt in to being tracked at very low rates—anything from 2% to 20%—making Apple's Identifier for Advertisers (IDFA) as good as obsolete.

But a March 2021 study from mobile attribution platform AppsFlyer suggests that tracking opt-in rates could be more than double that. Of the 300 apps and more than 13 million ATT prompts that AppsFlyer measured, opt-in rates were as high as 45% in some categories. While that data may be skewed to early adopters with a more tracking-friendly audience, it's enough to call the industry's pessimistic assumptions into question.

Below is a more detailed breakdown of AppFlyer's findings:

- **On average, 41% of users across all apps opted in.** But that shrank to 28% on a per-app basis, suggesting that a small number of larger and more popular apps that can readily convince users to opt in are bumping up the average. (It's important to note that for cross-app tracking to be allowed, the advertising app and the app selling the ad will need a user's opt-in permission.)

- **Certain categories were also more likely to get permission from users.** Utilities topped the list, on a per-user and per-app basis (45% and 39%, respectively). Shopping apps were the second-likeliest category, with 39% and 37% respective opt-in rates, followed by social apps at 33% and 36%.

- **Gaming apps saw the least opt-ins.** Overall, nongaming apps had a per-user opt-in rate of 42%, while gaming apps saw a rate of 30%. Of gaming apps, the hardcore gaming category was the lowest-performing, with a per-user opt-in rate of 19%. However, many gaming apps will be less reliant on the ATT opt-in to track users, since they are owned by large publishers that have access to a wealth of first-party data from their libraries of hundreds or thousands of games.

These numbers could make it worthwhile to pursue strategies to improve opt-in rates—but marketers don't have much time. Facebook, for example, will show users an "educational" screen before the official ATT prompt detailing how it plans to use the IDFA to improve a user's experience—all in an attempt to nudge that user to press "allow." AppsFlyer didn't specify which (if any) apps it measured used similar pre-ATT screens, but given the industry's pessimism around the IDFA, it's likely that most developers didn't give it their all. Some major apps like LinkedIn even chose to stop cross-app tracking altogether. This new data could be a good incentive to at least try—but with iOS 14.5 coming in "just a few weeks," according to CEO Tim Cook, marketers and app developers will need to move quickly.