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Privacy Inequality and IT Identities: The Impact of Different Privacy Laws Adoptions

TREO Talk Paper

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Abstract

Protecting consumers' personal information is no longer a by-product of business operations. Since 2018, adoption of General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Regulation EU 2016/679 has pushed countries to revamp their data privacy laws and regulations. However, many countries are still adopting or lack such privacy laws, leading to an inequality in handling users' data privacy as a fundamental right. As a result, customers from different countries are developing different IT identities and trust behaviors towards their companies' privacy practices. This paper aims to examine the reciprocal relationship between countries' privacy law status and organizations' privacy practices to better protect customers' data privacy while enhancing their trust. We aim to answer two research questions: Q1: How can organizations equally protect customers' Personal Information Privacy (PIP) under different privacy law requirements? Q2: How are users' self-development of online identities and trust impacted by the adoption of data protection laws?

To answer these questions, we attempt to operationalize the IT Identity theory developed by Carter and Grover (2015), built on structural symbolic interactionist identity theories, to conceptualize the notion of IT identity as "the extent to which a person views the use of a hardware device, software application, or software application environment as integral to his or her sense of self" (Carter et al 2020, p. 1315). Carter and Grover (2015) suggest the potential for individuals to develop one (or multiple) IT identities for different IT needs based on the location of their personal, social, and technology networks. Similarly, we argue that it is possible for users to develop different IT identities with different IT, based on their salient privacy expectations formed by the place where they are interacting with these IT. We plan to apply a mixed methodology for data collection and data analysis. First, we plan to utilize a data privacy barometer called "Didomi"[1] to map multiple privacy regulations and data protection laws applied in different countries, from the introduction of the GDPR in 2018 till April 2022. Didomi helps organizations' to be transparent about how privacy is managed on their domains, which allows them to promote trust with their users. This tool will help us determine the geographical locations where customers experience less trust in their organization's privacy practices than others. Second, we aim to collect data using online surveys to examine users' trust towards companies' individual data privacy practices and policy initiatives.

This research will contribute to the current IS literature in a variety of ways by examining how organizations' compliance and non-compliance to GDPR, as well as better understanding how countries' adoption and non-adoption of data protection regulations and privacy laws can generate inequality in organizations' privacy practices. In addition, the study will extend the established IT Identity theory by examining the impact of the data protection regulations in shaping users' different IT identities and trust.

References

Carter, M., & Grover, V. 2015. "Me, my self, and I(T): Conceptualizing information technology identity and its implications," *MIS Quarterly*, 39(4), 931-957.

Carter, M., Petter, S., Grover, V., & Thatcher, J. B. 2020. "IT identity: a measure and empirical investigation of its utility to IS research," *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, 21(5), 2.

[1] Data Privacy Barometer