

Digital App Infrastructures, Data Flows, and Platform Power

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Introduction

The importance and prevalence of digital media have augmented in recent years. The developers have presented various computer and mobile applications to enhance convenience and improve the experience of the end-users. It has raised many issues for developers, users, and regulators regarding security, regulation, and cultural and social acceptability. The literature review of five recent research articles helps the readers to dig deep into interrelated issues and concepts.

“Apps and Infrastructures – a Research Agenda”

The article “Apps and Infrastructures – a Research Agenda” was published in Computational Culture on 21st October 2019. The authors shed light on the hypothetical perception of the infrastructural states of the applications to focus on how the apps are always interactive and social (Gerlitz et al., 2019a). According to the authors, people around the world download billions of applications each year, which denotes the widespread use of such tools. These applications offer services in wide areas, including communication, journalism, media, finance, and dating. The significant increase in the usage of such applications has boosted mobile advertising, which recently accounted for 65 per cent of all digital advertising. The research in this realm is highly interdisciplinary and has its own intricacies. It involves infrastructure studies, media and communication studies, social media and platform studies, software studies, business and management studies, information research and computer systems. This field has social and technical dimensions apart from other aspects. The credit goes to the authors for their inclusion of social and commercial aspects of app development.

“Infrastructures of Intimate Data: Mapping the Inbound and Outbound Data Flows of Dating Apps”

The article “Infrastructures of Intimate Data: Mapping the Inbound and Outbound Data Flows of Dating Apps” was published in Computational Culture on 21st October 2019. The authors shed light on numerous dimensions of dating apps. Due to the famous scandal of Cambridge Analytica, Facebook restricted third-party app access to its application programming interfaces (APIs). Tinder users faced many issues due to a sudden change in Facebook’s policy regarding third-party app access. Dating applications can afford and construct intimate activities with the help of impressive affordances

(Weltevrede and Jansen, 2019). Researchers and investigators might access data of such apps through software libraries and APIs. Forty-two Android dating apps were analyzed to find systematic interactions between various players in the context of dating apps. Researchers get location data from users' devices; moreover, this geolocate information is indeed critical. Usually, the device software asks permission from users before allowing access to third-party APIs. Similarly, the interaction of social media and APIs is critical to understanding the complete architecture. The other important factors are network connection and graphical user interface (GUI). Numerous geospatial app developers represent neighbourhoods in different ways.

“Regramming the Platform: Infrastructural Relations between Apps and Social Media”

The article “Regramming the Platform: Infrastructural Relations between Apps and Social Media” was published in Computational Culture on 21st October 2019. The authors shed light on numerous dimensions of apps and social media. Sometimes, third-party developers take advantage of deficiencies in main social media platforms. This fact was evident from Regram, which initiated services to re-share Instagram stories (Gerlitz et al., 2019b). Later on, Instagram introduced this feature on its own platform. It has been observed that third-party app developers always remain in talks with various social media platforms to develop various services. Users also get many benefits from this relationship. Developers use apps as platforms to offer their technical skills. Instagram and Facebook invite third-party professional developers to use their platform resources to develop different unique services for users. Such services enhance the value of main apps through enhanced functionality. Google Play and the App Store also play a critical role in this deployment of apps. Multidisciplinary skills are required to study the interaction of developers and social media platforms.

“Welcome to the Polygon: Contested Digital Neighborhoods and Spatialized Segregation on Nextdoor”

The article “Welcome to the Polygon: Contested Digital Neighborhoods and Spatialized Segregation on Nextdoor” was published in Computational Culture on 28th November 2017. The authors shed light on numerous dimensions of location-based apps and social media. The paper-based maps have limited usability, given the expanding size of cities. Apps developers have been using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for a long time to offer various services. Users who have the right devices and apps can move around the cities with ease with the help of GPS-supported apps. Another advantage of such apps is the provision of data about urban life (Payne, 2017). Various other organizations use such apps to provide location-based services.

“The Patterning of Finance/Security: A Designerly Walkthrough of Challenger Banking Apps”

The article “The Patterning of Finance/Security: A Designerly Walkthrough of Challenger Banking Apps” was published in *Computational Culture* on 20th January 2020. The authors shed light on numerous dimensions of financial apps and users’ experiences. Many financial apps have revolutionized the lives of users; however, there are security concerns. The users use such banking apps because they think that such tools are free or low-cost. Moreover, they might use the time saved for other productive activities. This might be the reason that in the UK, many banking apps are called “challengers” (Dieter and Tkacz, 2020). Some analysts think that banking apps might be considered as a separate delivery channel of banking services. The researchers reviewed eight banking apps to explore usability and security dimensions. In the EU region, banking and finance apps have emerged as “dominant channels for retail banking” (Dieter and Tkacz, 2020). The users can open bank accounts and send and receive money with a few clicks from the comforts of their homes. Developers and banks are careful to keep the system secure; therefore, experts have to meet the requirements of “neoliberal regulatory governance” (Dieter and Tkacz, 2020). In recent years, there have been some security lapses where hackers have been able to steal critical information about users in the country. The industry is developing, and security features might be improved in the future. The collaboration of banks and developers might bring more useful apps for money transfer, which might be safer as well.

Reference List

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