

The Human Factor – Lay Summary – Michael Geiger

Due to the wide range of possible uses in today's world, the smartphone represents a central connection point of the Internet with the user. This results in cyber threats, which can lead to risks for users if the security behaviour is insufficient. The study empirically examines the behaviour of smartphone users in China with regard to information security. The quantitative analysis of user preferences is based on a survey with 338 participants from China and examines whether smartphone users avoid malicious behaviour in specific applications, protection mechanisms are actively used, preparations are made by users in relation to disaster recovery and to what extent the information security behaviours of smartphone users differ.

On the one hand, the study shows that the majority of smartphone users carelessly deal with harmful behaviours in the context of smartphone use and that there is a lack of disaster recovery precautions. On the other hand, more than half of the users surveyed are aware of the security aspects of smartphone settings and anti-virus software.

Furthermore, demographic tendencies can be determined on the basis of the study. The results show that men tend to have a more risky smartphone usage behaviour, allow applications more access rights and use the device lock mechanism less often than women. On the other hand, women tend to log out of applications less frequently and erase all data from old devices before disposal.

Other significant differences were noticed among those in employment. Respondents with a job are less likely to have updated their smartphone's operating system, are more likely to switch smartphones, and tend to discard old devices without first deleting the information.

The results of the study show that the user groups examined have different behaviours with regard to security aspects of smartphone use and that there are serious concerns about information security when using smartphones in China. The identified threats include ignorance of security information when downloading and using applications, poor handling of application permissions, incorrect phone settings, and insufficient security measures of disaster recovery and disposal of old devices.

It can therefore be concluded that the competencies of smartphone users in the context of information security must be further trained in order to minimise the risks.

The lay summary is based on the information provided by the following reference:

Zhang, X. J., Li, Z. & Deng, H. (2017) Information security behaviors of smartphone users in China: an empirical analysis. *The Electronic Library*. 35(6): 1177-1190. Available from: <https://0-www-emerald-com.serlib0.essex.ac.uk/insight/content/doi/10.1108/EL-09-2016-0183/full/html> [Accessed 16 June 2022].