

Always take the weather with you

July 31 2017, by David Bradley

The advent of mobile communications devices and in particular the internet-connected smart phone and tablet means that users can have access to almost any information they desire with the tap or swipe of a screen. That evergreen conversational topic, the weather forecast, is perhaps one of the most universally accessed pieces of information that people access. Now, writing in the *International Journal of Social and Humanistic Computing*, a research team from Southern Cross University, Gold Coast Campus, Australia, explain how they have developed a predictive model of user acceptance and the value of weather software applications, so-called "apps." Their research could help future research into this burgeoning area of human activity as well as offering the developers of such apps insights into user needs and other information.

Until the advent of the Internet and more specifically the public World Wide Web, most people got their [weather forecast](#) from their daily print newspaper, the broadcast media (radio and television) or simply by looking out of their window. Information and communications technology have advanced considerably in the last two decades and even more so in the last ten years. Now, almost everyone has in their pocket a networked computer more powerful than the room-sized machines of the mid -twentieth century that took astronauts to the Moon and ran the earliest incarnation of the internet itself.

These devices are ubiquitous and provide near instantaneous access to almost any information a user might want via inbuilt web browsers, email clients and the aforementioned apps. Almost every media

organization offers a [weather](#) app tied to its broadcast channels, website and in increasingly rare instances, its printed output. For a weather app to be accepted it has to be trusted, it has to work seamlessly and it has to be easy to use.

Bryant, Wilde and Smart have carried out quantitative social research via survey to find out how users engage with such weather apps and what they perceive as the pros and cons, and the essential qualities of a weather app. They have correlated the data with specific apps. Primarily, users are only interested in using simple, easy to install weather apps. But, they must also trust the app, an app that forecasts sunny days when it's raining will be quickly uninstalled and replaced by a more trustworthy app. The data suggests that females are more likely to use an Apple iPhone and its preinstalled weather app than to use another brand of phone, such as an Android phone, and seek out a third-party app. Trustworthiness also applies in the context of personal data and privacy in that an app needs to know the user's location to offer a useful forecast for that place. Moreover, as with many other apps, users must trust that a specific piece of software with access to one's phone data and accounts does not compromise one's privacy.

More information: Michael J. Bryant et al. Taking the weather with you: user acceptance, trust and value of weather apps on smartphones, *International Journal of Social and Humanistic Computing* (2017). [DOI: 10.1504/IJSHC.2017.084758](https://doi.org/10.1504/IJSHC.2017.084758)

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