Location and brand affect people's trust in cloud services

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The researchers created product announcements that advertised 50 gigabytes of free space in the cloud as a special offer given in celebration of the opening of new cloud service data centers. Participants placed a high amount of trust in Google Drive data centers located in the United States. Credit: S. Shyam Sundar / Penn State

People's stereotypes regarding different locations around the world

influence whether they feel secure in storing their data in cloud service centers in those locations, according to researchers at Penn State, who also found that stereotypes regarding brand authority influence people's trust in cloud services.

"There's a big push in industry to move toward cloud computing, but many people are hesitant to save their information in the cloud because of a lack of control and trust," said S. Shyam Sundar, James P. Jimirro Professor of Media Effects. "Some people are uncomfortable not knowing where their data is physically located, even though cloud data exists among many different servers and not necessarily in one geographic location. Our study attempts to understand people's perceptions regarding the location and brand of cloud service centers."

The researchers recruited participants from the online workforce Amazon Mechanical Turk, all residing in the United States, to examine the effects of location and brand cues on users' trust in cloud services. The team created a product announcement that advertised 50 gigabytes of free space in the cloud as a special offer given in celebration of the opening of new cloud service data centers. Specifically, the team created 22 versions of the product announcement including various combinations of 11 locations and two companies.

The companies included Google Drive and a fictitious company called Titan Drive. The locations included U.S. urban and rural cities, and cities in Europe, Oceania, India, China, Japan, Korea, Russia, South America, the Middle East and Africa. The results will be presented today (May 8) at the ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems in Glasgow, Scotland.

The researchers found that when the cloud service announced new data center openings in Oceania, Europe, the rural U.S. or China, participants' perceived security was the highest. Participants also perceived the

service centers in these regions to be more usable, and they had more positive attitudes toward them and greater intentions to enroll in them. Perceived security and usability of the cloud service, as well as general attitudes toward the service, were the lowest for data centers located in Russia.

Provided by Pennsylvania State University

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