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Ethics Paper: Important Notification or Disruptive Distraction?

Notifications have become the first thing people check on their phone when they wake up, get it after a long time, and even when they're working on other things. Their attention is stolen by that little sound of a ringtone from their phone, often stealing their attention from their work and even risking their well-being. We can take the large number of car accidents caused by drivers and passengers getting distracted by their phones. This distraction has caused a problem for app designers, creating difficulty balancing engagement and distraction. So how can we balance these two things?

The problem is how mobile app designers create an application that respects both the user's time and helps the user focus. Phone brands like Apple have developed features like "Do Not Disturb," "Focus," and even "Sleep Time" to help reduce these problems, but even these are not enough to solve this big problem that causes issues, including death. As a Christian, I believe that the apps we create should help our users be productive rather than distracted.

A user's focus while trying to do homework, send an important email, or meditate is easily broken by the small sound from their phone. Each interruption might cause people to put more mental effort into focusing on their original task. On the other hand, those small sounds create engagement, reduce loneliness, and even help keep the user safe in case of emergency.

We can address this issue by using AI to analyze user behavior patterns, by creating a completely silent mode, and by categorizing notifications in different levels of importance

based on the user's preference. These options offer the user a choice over how and when they are interrupted. In case they forget to set their phone in whatever mode they want, this application will read and analyze their body language and words, then automatically set the phone in a focus mode, or even business mode, depending on how the phone interprets the language used and their body language.

The complete silent mode option will also make sure that the user will not get any kind of notifications unless they manually check the app. Silent mode gives the user a break from their phone and a space to enjoy and focus on other parts of their life without getting distracted. This feature can be really useful when people want to get away from media for a while or spend quality time with people without getting distracted. If the user, let's say, wants to get notifications only from their significant other or a specific application instead of complete silent mode, we also have the categorizing notification feature.

The categorizing notification feature, unlike the complete silent mode, is a priority-based notification. This means that users will manually rank different apps based on their level of importance. We can make security updates and emergency updates an already set feature, then let the user pick the rest of the applications based on their personal choice. Since the user might not have a consistent preference, the app can ask the user every morning if they're okay with the setup when they open their phone first thing in the morning. For example, let's say on Friday, Jeremy's first three important notifications are from Gmail, Messages, and WhatsApp, but on Saturday, since he's off work, his phone will automatically ask Jeremy if he wants to change his categorizing notification rank.

In conclusion, making sure engagement and distraction from notifications in mobile app design is a challenge for mobile app designers. By using these three different features that allow users to prioritize and customize their notification system, we can create apps that will engage and respect users. Furthermore, as Jesus teaches in Matthew 22:39, "Love your

neighbor as yourself,” this application feature impacts our users by showing respect for their time and encourages us to create products that enhance instead of distract from their lives.