

Apple patent application shows ideas for capturing info to identify device thieves

28 August 2016, by Nancy Owano



(Tech Xplore)—Some consumers as we know are brand-crazy, or in more polite terms, brand-conscious. Apple has done a magnificent job over the years to build its name as a coveted brand. Small wonder that many people scream for iPhones.

In 2014, The *Daily Mail* reported thieves were pocketing 2,000 smartphones a day and iPhones were the most likely to be stolen. The Apple devices made up the bulk of the 742,000 phones pinched across England and [Wales](#) over the past two years, according to a study.

Unauthorized users, beware. Now Apple has been thinking along the lines of taking thief-catching to a newer level, at least according to a [patent](#) filed by Apple.

Mikey Campbell, *AppleInsider*, said the idea involves using an iPhone or iPad's Touch ID module, camera and other sensors to capture and store information about a potential thief.

The title of the patent filing is "Biometric Capture for Unauthorized User Identification" and it was filed in April. The three inventors named are Byron Han, Craig Marciniak and John Wright. The idea is described in the patent as a system for capturing [biometric information](#) for identifying unauthorized users.

Why has *AppleInsider* described the idea as brilliant but "legally fuzzy?" They wrote, "today's invention moves away from [industry](#) standard countermeasures and into the gray area of proactive digital forensics. As such, it is unlikely that Apple will introduce the technology in a consumer product anytime soon."

Paul Lilly in *Hot Hardware* said, "This is really a means of taking biometric security to the next level." Yes, biometric security measures help to verify a person's identity in place of (or in addition to) inputting a user password, he said, but the patent discussion involves "[biometric technologies](#) built into Apple's mobile devices" which would be used "to collect identifying information about the person in possession of a stolen [gadget](#)."

Engadget's Steve Dent pointed out that the biometric information could be stored or sent to a server, where police could use it to ascertain who stole the [device](#).

Ubergizmo's editor, Hubert Nguyen, said that "the patent describes how an unrecognized user's biometric information (fingerprint) could be stored locally, or on the cloud, to be utilized at a later time for [identification](#)."

According to one of the patent descriptions, "The computing device may store the fingerprint and picture and may transmit the fingerprint and picture to a central server that tracks potential unauthorized usage of the computing device."

As for now, Apple has Touch ID, and *AppleInsider*

noted the fingerprint sensor delivers "quick, accurate and consistent results" and "in some respects cut down on the scourge that is smartphone theft."

More information: [Biometric Capture For Unauthorized User Identification](#), United States Patent Application, 2016.

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