COVID19
VACCINE PASSPORTS

A FUTURISTS PRESPECTIVE

SPECIAL REPORT

FUTURACY

TORONTO NEW YORK DUBAI

A few countries have started issuing COVID-19 vaccination certificates to track your vaccination status. The validity of these certificates will possibly give travelers the ability to travel through their countries, and possibly internationally, subject to the validity of these certificates internationally. What would these certificates mean for entrepreneurs and how can you get one?

The idea of a COVID19 vaccination document or certificate is needed for the freedom of travel, one of the main restrictions across the world at present. Some of the options are having a printed and certified document, similar to a passport, that can potentially maintain a vaccination history, or track vaccinations in general. Other possible options could include a printed certificate, issued by a certifying authority within a government, and lastly, digital technologies such as apps and Blockchain-based systems may also hold the solution.

Challenges with paper certificates

With paper-based documents, unless the certifying authority is widely recognized globally, and a protocol of having a standard template that is used by governments across the world is enabled, the validity of these certificates could be questionable. Today it is very easy to forge documents and while I am not arguing that everyone will or can get a forged vaccination proof, however, given the severity of what the implications could be, it is possible that desperate travelers, could be tempted.

Verification of paper-based documents

Unless a highly secure form of authentication is used on printed papers, something like what is used in passports today, it's going to be very hard to keep an accurate track of the authenticity of such a tracking certificate. Imagine if every country in the world started using their design, layout, size, and format for a passport, how inefficient and challenging things would become.

Digital Tracking options

A digital solution through a blockchain-based digital passport or proof of vaccination and vaccination history is very much possible. In my opinion, the best way to do this would be to have an app, that runs on a blockchain network. What this means is that users will be able to see the history of their vaccinations, which has been put into their medical history by an authority that has the credentials, and permission to update the individuals' records, which again the individual can control. In the last few weeks, Denmark has started traction by launching a new app that tracks vaccinations.
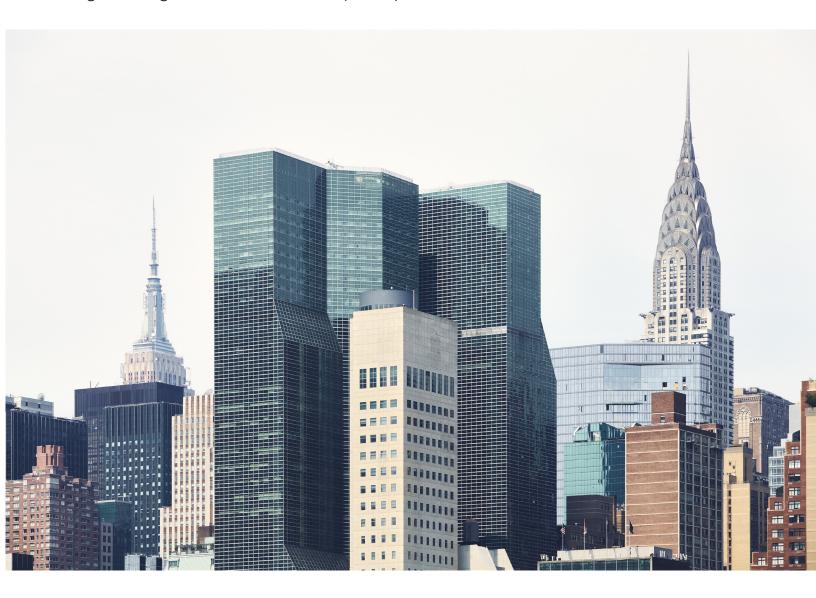
What about Big Tech?

Companies like Google, Microsoft, Apple, Amazon, Alibaba, that have access to user data for Billions of users across the world. Imagine Apple being able to provide such technology that would benefit Apple customers?

In terms of scale yes it's very much possible, but will they do it and find the right reason to do it, That is the main question. Public companies are answerable to shareholders and unless the initiatives do not meet their financial and shareholder objectives, no tech giant will take this as a task.

There may be a regional play where a provider may choose to do this in Asia or other regions to which they belong. Governments may work with big tech companies regionally to enable such systems, given that big tech has the infrastructure and scale to make this possible.

The big challenge is Trust, and how the privacy of data will be handled.

Which Country is Offering COVID19 Vaccine Passports ?

Depending on where you reside, you could o could not have access to a covid passport. Here is a quick summary of who is doing what

Europe

- Europe is moving fast on this and the European Commission is already working on a "Digital Green Certificate". Estonia, UK, Denmark, Greece are all working on a solution. If implemented the certificate would potentially be rolled out across the European Union, which has 27 nation-state members.

USA

- No official push yet from the government. Biden administration has suggested that the private sector and nonprofits should find a way to do this for Americans.

Canada

- No official push yet from the Government. Initial talks have led to criticism from independent groups citing that COVID19 passports may discriminate between people, and violate their constitutional rights.
- Canada is reportedly in discussions with G7 Nation to develop a vaccine passport

China

- China has already created a cross-border covid19 passport. This is a digital certificate showing a person's vaccination status and virus test results. The virus passport is available for Chinese citizens through WeChat.

Middle East

- Bahrain has created a paper-based certificate.
- The UAE has launched the Al Hosn app that tracks vaccination & COVID19 data plus advises on pre-eligibility travel requirements for multiple destinations
- The Gulf Countries Cooperation is working on a unified certificate system to track vaccinations

Private Sector

- The International Air Transportation Association (IATA) is working on something called the Travel pass. Singapore has started a first full deployment of the IATA Travel pass App.
- IBM is working on something called Health Pass
- JetBlue – The airline has started testing the CommonPass platform on certain flights.

Future Outlook

Governments, legislators, and industry by large are presently drinking from a firehose. Currently, the implementation and rollout of vaccinations are severely lacking in most parts of the world. Some estimates suggest that at the current rate of the rollout, it may take more than five years for the whole world to be vaccinated against COVID-19. As manufacturing capacity is pushed, some countries such as Canada are planning to set up local manufacturing facilities for COVID-19 vaccines, due to the unstable shipments from vaccine vendors with less focus on track.

I realistically see the next 6 to 12 months as a period for a whole lot of confusion and subsequently 12 to 24 months a time when the foundation of a standard COVID-19 passport can be laid down. I foresee the rollout of a standard vaccine passport, digital or physical that is accepted globally and has a regulated and standardized issuing and tracking process, unlikely before 2023.

This report has been compiled by Ian Khan for Futuracy Research.
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