Sessional-2 Examination – Fall 2020

Course Title:	Professional Practices of IT			Course Code:	CSC110	Credit Hours:	3
Course Instructor/s:	Amaid Zia			Programme Name:	BS Software Engineering		
Semester:	6th	Batch:	SP18-BSE	Section:	C	Date:	
Time Allowed:	1.5 hour			Maximum Marks:		15	
Student Name:				Reg. No.			

Important Instructions / Guidelines:

-

The following is an excerpt from a case study involving Cambridge Analytica scandal. Please read the following and answer the questions below

In this article, we consider the case with Cambridge Analytica as it is one of the remarkable examples of using personal data to fulfill political strategy in a voting campaign.

The official site of Cambridge Analytica promotes its activity as a combination of predictive analytics, behavioral science and advertising technologies based on data collection. The aim of this combination is to form a target audience and to use the data to persuade and motivate the voters (The CA advantage, 2018).

Cambridge Analytica was mentioned in press in the beginning of 2015 for the first time. The company was used during the campaign of Ted Cruz. Later on, in December 2015 the world learned about the use of personal data of Facebook users (Davies, 2015). According to different media sources, Strategic Communications Laboratories, which is the parent company of Cambridge Analytica, was working with Global Science Research (GSR). They design Facebook database. GSR founder Kogan A. was at the head of

data collection processes. He used Amazon Mechanical Turk, or MTurk, through which the users were presented with an opportunity to do routine and minimum paid job – Kogan offered the users to do online survey in exchange for the payment of 1-2$. In order to complete the survey, the users were asked to connect their Facebook accounts to the website. This automatically led to unintentionally connecting Facebook "friends" of a user – the information of these "friends" became available for data collectors as well. This "seeding" technique proved to be very effective. Through one user only it was possible to get the information about a huge group of people. One user brought around 340 "friends" on average according to the information based on 2014 statistics. The information about the location and interests of available users was gathered and analyzed with the five-factor model – dispositional model of personality (Positive Psychology Program, 2017). The analysis could unravel such traits of a person as extraversion, benevolence, conscientiousness, emotional stability and openness to experience, as well as their opposites.

Amazon has blocked GSR access to MTurk after numerous complaints.

At that time, two candidates associated with Cambridge Analytica were Ted Cruz and Ben Carson.

Federal Election Commission documents showed that Cruise's campaign paid Cambridge Analytica at least $ 750 000, and Carson's campaign paid about $ 220 000 (Davies, 2015). Consequently, Facebook became very concerned about this information. It announced a thorough investigation and asked Cambridge Analytica to remove any information that was received via Facebook. Later on Facebook representative reported that "their investigation did not trace any illegal activity" (Schwartz, 2017). In 2017, GSR was reported to have data of around 30 million Facebook users received through different data sources (Schwartz, 2017). In March 16, 2018 Facebook gave commentary on the situation with Cambridge Analytica. The representatives unraveled the fact that despite the promises of Cambridge Analytica to destroy all data it did not happen. Wylie, a CA employee, provided all information about Cambridge Analytica to press. He, together with Kogan, were suspended from the company pending further investigation (Grewal, 2018).

New York Times published an article in March 18, 2018 with the overwhelming picture and scale of CA data collection (Rosenberg & Frenkel, 2018). The investigation revealed that CA had collected the personal information of at least 50 million users. Probably, it could be the biggest "leak" of data in the history of Facebook, although the legitimacy of

using the term "data leakage" is a subject of wide speculations. Therewith, it became evident that Cambridge Analytica still had access to all the data previously collected. Facebook reacted with another statement stating that "the data breach" is not a true vision of a situation, since all users have provided their information voluntarily. No company gained any personal data illegally (Grewal, 2018).

It is worth to mention that CA is operating not only in the US. Currently, the investigation is conducted on the involvement of the CA in Brexit, as well as in the situation in Russia and Ukraine (Farias, 2018).

Edward Snowden comments "businesses that make money by collecting and selling detailed records of private lives were once described as "surveillance companies" rebranded into "social media" (Snowden, 2018). Events with Cambridge Analytica led to an unprecedented fall of Facebook stocks (Facebook interactive stock chart, 2018) and a massive negative reaction from not only users of this social network, but the entire world community.

The situation became much worse when Channel 4 News broadcasted hidden camera footage with negotiations and phone calls of Cambridge Analytica chief executive Alexander Nix and other employees of the company ("Cambridge Analytica: Warrant sought to inspect company", 20 March 2018). It is crucially important to understand that we can't fully rely on these hidden camera records. On the other hand they create an overview of the influence of CA and other analytical companies on the political situation, and especially on online politics.

The representatives of Cambridge Analytica pointed out that first, CA operates not only in the US, but also in Africa, Mexico, and Malaysia and in the nearest future in Brazil, China and Australia.

Second, the target audience is formed by psychological practices, which may include such issues as information perception and the manipulation of human hopes and fears. It is very worth to mention that election campaigns should be based not on facts, but on emotions, which are considered as a more effective incentive in decision-making process.

Third, CA was mentioned to participate in the 2017 elections in Kenya. The company designed the electoral campaign, as well as took part in its rebranding and research on more than 50 thousand respondents.

Forth, Nix in one of his phone calls names CA "the largest and most influential political consulting company in the world, with the most impressive results".

After Channel 4 News published these records, CA released a statement that "Cambridge Analytica is not in the business of fake news, we're not in the business of lying, making stuff up, and we're not in the business of entrapment…" ("Cambridge Analytica responds to use of entrapment and mischaracterization by Channel 4 News", 19 march 2018). While analyzing such public materials it is crucial to understand that the information that unmasked to the audience is not full. It may lead to a massive discrimination and prepossession which may be easily directed by the media and bring serious consequences as it happened with Alexander Nix, the executive director of CA (A Statement from the Board of Directors, 2018).

Although the reaction of the Congress and the US Parliament to the situation with Cambridge Analytica and Facebook was rather neutral, the Federal Trade Commission decided to conduct its own investigation (Statement by the Acting Director of FTC's Bureau of Consumer Protection Regarding Reported Concerns about Facebook Privacy Practices, 2018). The reaction of the British government was negative. Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook chief executive refused the request of the UK parliament to speak about data abuse (Griffin, 2018). British lawmakers have long referred to Facebook as an "intelligence operation" where the company and its users are having the "abusive relations" (Kozlowska, 2018). According to British law, foreign actors have no right to pay for political advertising. According to I. Lucas,

Labor Party representative, Facebook gets payments for advertising and thus "promotes an illegal act". He believes that the problem is with Facebook that refuses to provide any specific information about its operations and the scale of the personal data collection.

The investigation with Cambridge Analytica and Facebook caused Facebook loss of more than 100 billion dollars in the first weeks after the scandal (Kramer, 2018). As for now the economy of the worldfamous social network remains very unstable. Zuckerberg is trying to keep the situation under control. He publicly apologized (Wiener-Bronner, 2018), and also explained the situation to the US Congress (Watson, 2018). The reaction of the public to this was rather ambiguous.

Although the precedent with Cambridge Analytica is dying down a bit, many articles still appear in different sources about Facebook data abuse. For example, about data collection and storage of phone calls and messages in Android (Warren, 2018). It is not very clear now how much information about Cambridge Analityca operations will be brought to light in future but for now the scandal around Cambridge Analytica is obviously huge.

In April 18, Facebook responds to new EU regulations and announces new rules related to the protection of personal data (Ong, 2018).

The report of May 2, 2018 at the official site of CA says that SCL Elections Ltd and affiliated company Cambridge Analytica filed application to commence bankruptcy proceedings. The report states that "over the past several months, Cambridge Analytica has been the subject of numerous unfounded accusations and, despite the Company's efforts to correct the record, has been vilified for activities that are not only legal, but also widely accepted as a standard component of online advertising in both the political and commercial arenas" ("Cambridge Analytica and SCL Elections Commence Insolvency Proceedings and Release Results of Independent Investigation into Recent Allegations", 2018). The company shows confidence that it has operated ethically and lawfully. However, because of the siege of media coverage the company lost virtually all its customers and clients. Thus, CA considers that it has no viability to operate this business longer.

The situation with Cambridge Analytica (Horwitz, 2018) made the lawmakers find the ways how to protect personal data of users. As a result, the new General Data Protection Regulation (2016) was ratified in May 25, 2018. GDPR controls all the companies working with personal data of the EU citizens. GDPR is applicable to all the companies when they collect and analyze personal data intentionally and consistently to create user's profile, as well as decides for the user, analyze and forecast user preferences while using this data.

In June 15, 2018 the former employees of Cambridge Analytica organized the new consulting company under the name of Data Propria. Associated Press says that Data Propria is planning to participate actively in presidential campaign of Donald Trump in 2020. Data Propria gives practically the same service as Cambridge Analytica does and it includes the design of the electorate psychological profile based on data from social networks.

Question 1:   [6]

Suppose you are hired as a part of a team working directly under the CPO of Facebook. The CPO wants to revise the privacy policy of the company to avoid such future scandals. Suggest three ways you'll change Facebook's privacy practices in order to better gain the trust of the company's user base. For each suggestion , explain how you think the suggestion will help the company avoid similar future scandals.

Question 2: [3]

Keeping in mind the law of Pakistan detailed in PECA 2016 , what sections can you enforce on companies similar to Facebook and Cambridge Analytica to safeguard people of Pakistan from manipulation and / or profiling . (Provide at least 3 sections with their number and statement)

Question 3: [6]

In your opinion , in what other ways BIG DATA and other similar techniques , may pose a threat to the privacy of users of social media and other information sharing sites.(Provide a brief explanation of at least 3 such schemes).