

CS4545/6545 Course Project, Winter 2019

Project Title: Unveiling and Quantifying Facebook Exploitation of Sensitive Personal Data for Advertising Purposes

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Motivation/problem statement

Facebook assigns sensitive ad preferences to its users for advertisement purposes. This assignment of potentially sensitive-information-based preferences is a violation of GDPR since Facebook doesn't acquire explicit consent from users. Such activities attracted a fine of 1.2 million euros from the Spanish Data Protection Agency (DPA). More than 73% of EU-based Facebook users are labelled with at least one of the most popular sensitive ad preferences, this makes up 40% of EU citizens. An estimation suggests that unveiling the identity of FB users labeled with potentially sensitive ad preferences cost as low as 0.015 euro per user. Examples of such sensitive information is Homosexuality, imagine a country like Iran where people are killed for being homosexual. This poses a risk to users data and private information.

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Proposal

The authors created a web browser extension (FDVT) that provides users with real time data about how much revenue they have generated for Facebook due to their profile, the number of ads they click and see. These leaves me with some questions:

- What are the statistics of other countries? Are they similar?
- Who watches the watchmen (FDVT), are they really using it for what they say they will?
- Can we trust other social media platforms/ websites?
- The sensitive data assigned by Facebook, how accurate are they?

Milestones and timeline:

- Proposal:
- Project (progress) presentation:
- Demo:
- Final report: