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Information Explosion, Ai, and Privacy

New information is constantly being obtained on the internet and at an increasing rate. The increase in information does cause concern when it comes to privacy online, especially as artificial intelligence becomes more developed. Although artificial intelligence and algorithms help make using the internet more convenient, it also can be used to gather personal info. Today we discuss the issues of ethics, acceptable ways of obtaining user information, and if limits should be placed on what info gets gathered.

The amount of personal information that companies can obtain from people does concern many people and also questions the ethics of gathering said information as well. An article from TechCrunch talks about how Facebook paid teens to install a VPN app that allowed the company to gather information about a user's phone and web activity. According to TechCrunch, after they had written about the app, Facebook stated that they would shut down the app, however received confirmation from an Apple spokesperson that the Facebook Research app had violated policy taking the app down. This wasn't the first time Facebook did something similar. There was a VPN app Facebook acquired in October 2013 called Onavo that had also breached Apple policy. Both apps could be seen as spyware due to them both gathering personal information from the users in a way seen as unethical. These two apps raise major concerns about the ways information is gathered on consumers as companies are willing to use spyware if it means they can gather more user data.

Although the two examples of FaceBook using VPN apps to gather information on users, mostly teenagers using spyware, isn't an acceptable way of gathering information on people. An example of an acceptable way of gathering information on users is the Youtube surveys.

YouTube has a system where it will occasionally give you a survey to fill out in replacement of an ad. This would be an acceptable way of gathering information as the YouTube surveys are completely optional for the user but do provide some incentive to fill them out as they make the video you are watching start up faster.

Despite there being acceptable ways to gather information from users. That doesn't mean that there shouldn't be some limits on what kind of information is gathered on users. Luke 6:31 says, "Do to others as you would have them do to you." This can be interpreted in many ways but in this case, companies should learn what information should and shouldn't be gathered from users as companies also have information that they try to keep protected while simultaneously disrespecting the privacy of users' personal information. Going back to Facebook's VPN apps, companies should not be permitted to gather all device activity from a user as this could potentially mean unwillingly giving potentially confidential information like account info to companies that could easily sell or use said data. Another limitation that should be done is preventing companies the ability to gain root access to users in any way similar to the previous claim, it could cause info that shouldn't be collected by anyone to be potentially obtained.

Information will always be gathered by big corporations even if the ways they gather user info are not the most ethical or legal. Some limits should be placed on what info can be obtained and the practice of using more acceptable ways of gathering information similar to Youtube surveys. This should be taken into even more consideration than before mainly due to the rise of artificial intelligence usage and training.

Works Cited

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