What is an innocuous survey?

The design of a survey is a very intrinsic process that can gain insights into current thinking or to subconsciously guide a participant into performing a desired outcome. Smith et al (2006) states that "seemingly innocuous aspects of a survey's design, such as the order of questions, can produce biased results". The importance of these surveys can be observed in a paper by Confessore (2018)

How exactly could this have happened?

According to Confessore (2018), a palantir employee and cambridge analytica worked together in a so-called "Personal capacity" to discover how to obtain data for psychographic profiles from an estimated 87 Million personal profiles. The Cambridge analytica app would carry out psychological questionnaires which would obtain access to participants profiles, scrape the participants data, and then move on to scrape their friends profile data (Confessore, 2018).

Why it was used

It appears from the report written by Confessore (2018), that the idea had been for a particular set of individuals/Companies to gain intelligence on the psychological status of citizens, what they are thinking, what is causing friction and how best to carry out the most productive form of cognitive hacking to guide opinions and thoughts. It has also been suggested that foreign funds could have potentially found a way to support the approach to swing opinion (Confessore, 2018).

Example one: The EU Referendum

Although the questions were simple, they could also be described by many as being slightly ambiguous due to the complexity behind the questions.

According to UKICE (2020), The referendum question had been:

> *Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?*

The responses available were:

1. Remain a member of the European Union

2. Leave the European Union

The impact

Depending on which angle you want to observe Brexit from, the impact can be measured in many ways. There is still an argument about which decision would be the right decision and it is highly likely that these opposing opinions will not align anytime soon.

Ethical impact.

Ethically, according to Fabbrini (2020), immigration and citizens rights have been a sticking point in the negotiations and will be extremely complicated moving forward.

Social impact

The social impact of this survey has highlighted that family and friendships can be separated and/strained via political opinion. The social impact has been evidently destructive for many as a result of both sides unwilling to give ground on the "why" Brexit happened.

Legal impact

The legal implications are vast, therefore, this case study will look at the legal frameworks which will affect UK and EU citizens who are applying for residency and work permits. The author called Fabbrini, who wrote a book titled "The law and politics of Brexit" has gone in-depth to explain the stages of citizens rights and the corresponding laws. To conclude the section within that book, Fabbrini (2020) states "the future immigration regime in the UK is like a multi-dimensional puzzle". And that sums up the legal, social and ethical impact of an innocuous survey, built on the back of psychographic profiling of users' social media data.

Professional impact

The professional impact from an outsider's observance may try to understand why such a big decision was rushed and carried out without a clear explanation of all the aspects from both sides, those sides being to remain and leave.

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