Thomas O’Brien

CMSI 401

11/09/18

Engineering Ethics Analysis

The article picked, *Targeted Political Ads Swamp Facebook Feeds*, revolves around a controversial subject that has only recently come to light in software engineering ethics. Essentially, the article discusses how political campaigns are using Facebook for targeted ads. Within their databases, Facebook keeps track of all things their users do within the site itself. Whether it’s looking at a daily news update from BBC or visiting a celebrity’s home page, Facebook keeps track of all of these habits. With all of the data, Facebook has developed complex algorithms that determine what kind of person their individuals are and can even make an educated guess of what their political views are. Political campaigns are paying Facebook to display ads towards users that are either likely to vote or donate for them or are a swing voter who could be convinced to their side.

The major ethical issue here is all of the data Facebook is storing on its users. The average user on the platform is unaware of how Facebook is keeping track of their habits and analyzing it as well. This is a lack of transparency that needs to be addressed in all major tech companies. Lack of openness like this is a major ethical dilemma. Facebook is not being honest with their users of how they are using their data. This is dangerous towards the health of welfare of the public for many reasons. Facebook could sell their big data analysis to users or companies that have malicious intents. These dangerous companies could then use this data to try to manipulate targeted audiences into thinking a specific way. The worst part about this problem is that the common person would not even be aware of how they are being manipulated.

Overall, big data analysis is a burning moral issue that needs to be handled. In my opinion, companies need to be much more open about what kind of data they are storing and what they are doing with it. Having users “read” through large terms of service agreement forms does not suffice due to the difficulty of understanding these documents. Companies should develop simple, easy to digest documents so that users can decide whether or not they are okay with how their information is used. With changes like this, the everyday person will understand how their data is being stored and used, allowing them to make a more educated decision about what sites to visit and trust.

Word count: 408

Article: U.S. News: Targeted Political Ads Swamp Facebook Feeds

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