Unit 5 Case Study: Inappropriate Use of Surveys

Introduction

The Cambridge Analytica case shed light on how surveys on social media platforms can be used to collect the personal data of unwitting participants. The data collected by Cambridge Analytica was then used for political campaigns and targeted advertising (Confessore, 2018). This reflective activity will allow me to analyze the ethical, social and legal concerns about data privacy and consent when surveys are used in data collection.

How and Why the Cambridge Analytica Scandal Happened

Cambridge Analytica gained access to Facebook user data when some users participated in a personality quiz app called "This Is Your Digital Life," However the app collected private data from the participants as well as their Facebook friends(over 87 million users)without their knowledge or consent (Confessore, 2018).The data was then used to create psychological profiles of individuals .These profiles were employed to influence voting behaviour in political campaigns by targeting users with tailored political advertisements.

Here are two more cases where data collection tools were inappropriately used:

Google's Street View Wi-Fi Data Collection (2010): In 2010 it was revealed that Google Street View cars, had collected personal data (emails, browsing history etc) from unsecured Wi-Fi networks while mapping streets. Google claimed that the data collection was accidental; however the scandal raised concerns about how much information is collected without user awareness (Lee, 2013).

Target's Predictive Analytics (2012): Target, a retail corporation in the USA, used purchasing data in order to predict customer behaviour. In one case, Target sent advertisements for maternity products to a pregnant teenager, and predictive analytics was criticized for breaching privacy (Hill, 2012).

Ethical, Social, Legal, and Professional Implications

Ethical Implications:

- In both cases, data was collected without consent or transparency.
- Manipulating consumer or behaviour through psychological profiling or predictive analytics exploits their personal data for financial profit.
- Users were deprived of their right to decide how their private data would be used.

Social Implications:

- Misuse of surveys damages the public's trust in corporations.

- The use of data to influence elections and voters' personal choices undermines democratic processes.

- The Google Street View Car case emphasized the importance of limiting data collection to the stated purpose and ensuring transparency in these processes.

Legal Implications:

- The Cambridge Analytica case violated GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) in the EU and this led to increased awareness of data privacy issues and stricter enforcement of data privacy legal frameworks.

Professional Implications:

- Ethical guidelines for researchers and data analysts emphasize transparency, and respect for privacy, both of which were disregarded in these cases.

Conclusion

Inappropriate use of surveys and data collection methods poses significant risks to data privacy, public trust, and democratic processes, and as shown by these

cases, there is a need to enforce ethical practices and professional accountability in data collection processes to prevent future abuses of data.

<u>References</u>:

Confessore, N. (2018). Cambridge Analytica and Facebook: The Scandal and the Fallout So Far. *The New York Times*. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com [Accessed 27 December 2024].

Hill, K. (2012). How Target Figured Out a Teen Girl Was Pregnant Before Her Father Did. *Forbes*. Available at: https://www.forbes.com [Accessed 19 December 2024].

Lee, D. (2013). Google Fined for Street View Data Collection. *BBC News*. Available at: https://www.bbc.com [Accessed 20 December 2024].