**e-Portfolio Activity: Reflective Activity 2**

**Case Study: Inappropriate Use of Surveys**

**In 2018, Cambridge Analytica was in the news in the United Kingdom and the USA (Confessore, 2018) for obtaining and sharing data from millions of Facebook users. They acquired this data through seemingly harmless surveys on Facebook (you may have encountered or participated in such surveys). This case represents one of the highest-profile instances of surveys being used for alternative purposes, potentially for financial gain. However, similar practices occur frequently across various media.**

**Consider how this misuse happened and why it was employed. Find one or two additional examples of inappropriate use of surveys and analyse the impact of these examples from ethical, social, legal, and professional perspectives.**

The Cambridge Analytica scandal of 2018 revealed how personal data collected from online surveys can be exploited. Cambridge Analytica, a political consulting firm, gathered data from millions of Facebook users through a personality quiz. By participating in this quiz, users unwittingly granted the app access to their own data as well as their friends' data. This large-scale data collection was conducted without proper consent and was used to build detailed voter profiles to target individuals with political advertisements in the UK and the USA (Confessore, 2018).

Another notable example occurred in 2012 with Target, which faced controversy for predicting a teenage customer's pregnancy before her family was aware. Target used data analysis to identify pregnant customers based on shifts in their purchasing behaviours, such as buying unscented lotion and dietary supplements. The company then sent targeted advertisements and coupons for baby products to these identified customers.

This situation became publicly known when the teen’s father discovered that Target was sending his daughter baby-related coupons, not knowing she was pregnant. This case raised significant ethical and privacy concerns. Ethically, it underscored the risks of data analytics intruding into personal privacy and revealing sensitive information without consent. Socially, it illustrated how predictive analytics can lead to unintended and potentially harmful consequences.

Legally, while Target's actions did not necessarily breach privacy laws at the time, the incident highlighted the need for more robust data protection regulations and clearer data usage policies. It demonstrated that companies have a responsibility to protect their customers' privacy and personal information.

**References:**

* Hill, K. (2012). How Target figured out a teen girl was pregnant before her father did. *Forbes*, Inc, 7, pp. 4-1.
* Hinds, J., Williams, E.J., & Joinson, A.N. (2020). “It wouldn't happen to me”: Privacy concerns and perspectives following the Cambridge Analytica scandal. *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies*, 143, p. 102498.