Subject: ITE302x

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Answer to Assignment 3

***1 / Aiming at personal interests is a powerful tool that influences people and forces them to make decisions at the discretion of the operator. Cambridge Analytica is based on Michael Kosinski's research, saying that a certain number of "likes" on facebook can help understand people, rather than what their relatives or friends or even themselves can understand, thereby affecting their choices, such as in elections. Do you think that companies like CA can actually affect elections? Do you have any personal experience about evaluating another person only through their behaviors on social networks?***

Personally, I think that Cambridge Analytica, or CA for short, could affect elections to some extent by making use of their dataset about demographics and personal interests. I have myself had some assumptions about my friends regarding their social network behaviors.

Speaking of CA, whether they manipulated the results of the elections or not, the fact that they collected users’ personal data and used them for political purposes is unethical. Facebook is also responsible for the leaking of information and doing nothing to prevent CA from making bad use of that information. These two companies heavily violate user’s right of privacy for political and commercial purposes. It is obvious that CA earned a lot from each campaign it supported. However, more importantly, it affects the future of a nation directly through the election results. Through reading the materials and watching the movie Great Hack, which was made based on this scandal, I believe CA has an important role to play in those elections.

According to personal experience, the likes and activities on social networks speak volumes about one’s personal interests and personality. A simple search can tell the reason why. I googled “what your Facebook likes say about you” and there were about 1,320,000,000 results, even from big newspapers.

I personally do not like someone who is always active on Facebook with tens of moody statuses every day. That seems to be a time-consuming habit to me, unless that is what their job requires. If someone is hardly active but answers your message instantly, perhaps you are somehow important to them. If someone usually gives “hearts” and comments on your status, they want to build or maintain a good relationship with you. The list goes on.

***2 / In your opinion, what can be done to limit the impact of spreading news on social networks like Facebook on each individual's decisions. Give an example.***

We can always apply the 5 steps of ethical decision making process to decide whether to share or not to share information on a social network.

The first step in making an ethical decision is to gather the facts. In the case of social network, you can collect information from several sources to make sure you have a clear and full picture of the situation. Look for contrasting ideas or evidence to seek out the truth.

Step two is to make a prediction, a guess about the future. Answer this question “What would others react if I share this”.

Step three is to identify your feelings. As one famous saying goes “Don’t make decisions when you are angry, don’t promise when you are happy”. Feelings can be misleading and a reassessment can alter your decisions significantly.

In step four, ask whether you could live with yourself if you made that particular choice. How would you feel after making that decision? Would you be happy if others know about that decision of yours?

In the final step, you should be able to explain your reasons to other people and be willing to engage with others in a moral conversation about your choice. This is perhaps the most important step because you directly interact with other people who may agree or disagree with you. Either way, that is valuable insight into the ethicality of your decision.

Personally, I have to make ethical decisions when someone asks me whether to apply to FPT university or not. It is not a hard question to me if I can just lure them into the same road I take and help my school get a new student. However, deep down, I think because they trust me, I should be nice to them. I usually ask them more specifically about their personal preferences, personality and their pursuing major first. I talk about what most students talk about FPT university’s aspects such as teaching quality, teacher’s attitudes, facilities, campus environment and social activities before diving into my own personal opinion about the school. If there is any question I do not know or I am not sure, I will check the internet or ask my friend to give an unbiased answer. I always end with a close “That is just my personal opinion and it varies according to people, you should search the internet for more as well as asking more FPT students before making your final decision.”