Reflective activity 2 – Inappropriate Use of Surveys

BuzzFeed an US American internet media now having local spin offs in various countries is a company that started with quizzes in 2006 and added articles on current news, DIY, pets etc. They are known to collect personal data via surveys and use the results for example to focus market campaigns better so more user can be target more efficiently. (Smith, 2014)

Ethically this is wrongdoing, since the consent given by the participants is hidden well in lengthy terms and conditions no one reads. If people would be aware that their participation is not only to give them a fun time, but also to direct advertisement better at them, some would likely not conduct the survey.

Social impact from this BuzzFeed example is limited compared to the Facebook and Oxford Analytica scandal, in which Oxford Analytica influenced US presidential votes in 2016. How successful the influence was is however not truly known. (Böhm, 2019) In the BuzzFeed example the social impact however could be that companies will successfully advertise e.g. products having too high sugar levels, that are known to harm the society at a whole. (Havard, 2022)

Legal consequences to BuzzFeed are likely to be none since the terms and conditions likely tell you about the intend of data collection. BuzzFeed also likely collects the consent of everybody prior participation. If this is however not the case, they would be in violation of GDPR, which can result in hefty fines for BuzzFeed.

If a scandal is leaked that data collected is used for things people did not think they have consented and does have negative effects to someone, it can be assumed that BuzzFeed will face professional consequences such as subscribers drawing back from their engagement.

In conclusion it can be stated that misuse of survey data is not only ethical incorrect it can also have a social impact or legal and professional consequences to a company.

References

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