

The Cambridge Analytica scandal in 2018 was a prominent case involving the unauthorized acquisition and sharing of data from millions of Facebook users. This data was obtained through seemingly innocuous surveys on the social media platform. Such incidents shed light on the misuse of surveys for alternative motives, often driven by monetary gains. While this is a high-profile case, similar incidents occur through various channels.

How it Happened:

Data Collection: Users were enticed to participate in surveys or quizzes on Facebook, which collected not only their responses but also access to their friends' data.

Third-party App: Cambridge Analytica used data from a third-party app, "thisisyourdigitallife," which mined around 50 million Facebook profiles. Through the data, they gained access to not only the participants' data but also the data of their entire friend network (Meredith, S., 2018).

Improper Use of Data: This data was then used for targeted political advertising during the 2016 US Presidential Election (Confessore, 2018).

Further Examples:

Online Contests and Sweepstakes: Some companies use surveys and contests as a way to obtain personal information for marketing purposes. This can lead to spam emails, unsolicited calls, and privacy concerns for participants (*LakelandBank, N.D.*).

Fake Market Research: Scammers might conduct fake surveys under the guise of market research to extract personal information or even financial details (*LakelandBank, N.D.*).

Impact from Ethical, Social, Legal, and Professional Standpoints:

Ethical Standpoint (ACM, 2018; BCS, 2022):

Privacy Violation: Such actions infringe upon individuals' privacy rights by collecting and using their data without proper consent.

Deceptive Practices: Misleading participants into thinking their information will be used for one purpose while actually being utilized for another is highly unethical.

Social Standpoint (ACM, 2018; BCS, 2022):

Trust Erosion: Incidents like these erode public trust in online platforms, leading to skepticism about sharing personal information online.

Psychological Impact: Users may feel violated or manipulated upon learning that their data was misused.

Legal Standpoint (ACM, 2018; BCS, 2022):

Regulatory Violations: Companies involved in such practices may face legal consequences for violating data protection and privacy laws.

Fines and Penalties: In the case of Cambridge Analytica, Facebook faced substantial fines and legal repercussions.

Professional Standpoint (ACM, 2018; BCS, 2022):

Reputation Damage: Such incidents can severely damage the reputation of the companies involved, as well as the broader field of data analytics and research.

Lack of Integrity: It undermines the integrity of ethical data collection and research practices, affecting the professional standing of researchers and data analysts.

In conclusion, the Cambridge Analytica scandal and similar incidents underscore the critical need for ethical data collection and usage practices. They highlight the far-reaching impacts on privacy, trust, legality, and professional integrity. These examples serve as cautionary tales for both individuals and organizations about the importance of safeguarding personal data and upholding ethical standards in data-related activities.

Reference

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(ACM, 2018; BCS, 2022)