

Assignment 05

1. A 200-word summary of the events outlined in the article.

The Article covers about Facebook's experiment which was conducted back in January 2012, where about 700,000 Facebook users were made a part of research conducted to detect the secret mood manipulation experiment without their knowledge for a week. The experiment was to see that if the user's mood gets changed according to the tweak in the main feed page. It was seen that around 1/10th of the users did get affected by it. Some of the users were shown some negative feeds and some were shown positive feeds. After which the results were seen that the people shown positive feeds were more likely to post positive feeds and users who were subjected to negative feeds reacted more negative or didn't post anything after that. This created a lot of fuzz among media that what this experiment ethical and was this something the users agreed to before signing up. This study was even published on "Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences". A lot of people came forward on twitter against it and were suggesting others to get off Facebook and beware of it. However, the research was completely legal and was mentioned in the Terms and Conditions when the users did sign up. It was stated that the data collected of the people on Facebook can legally be used for research purposes. Later the author of the experiment (Adam D.I Kramer and Jamie Guillory) themselves posted a comment saying that it was just for research purpose was not meant to be hurt anyone's feelings and the effect of this experiment was very minimal. Following these events various researchers came forward with their opinion, John Gorhol founder of Psych Central saying that Facebooks puts too much faith tools without understanding it completely. Another professor at Cornell University Jeffery Hancock an author of the study began working on the Facebook's experiments result and that there was no need of the Cornell University's Intuitional Review Board approval since the experiment was already conducted and Jeffery was working on the results. Another professor at Princeton University Susan Fiske who edited the publication said that it was already been approved by IRB and Facebooks internal review practices. Fiske even gave a statement to The Atlantic saying he was concerned about this whole thing. It also raised other few questions that was it in any way sponsored by the US government. Later Forbes writer Kashmir Hill said that prior to this experiment factbooks terms and conditions never stated "research" and that it was later added to it post experiment. James Grimmelman says that the experiment did not secure informed consent.

2. A 300-word essay on ethics in online social networks.

I personally do not think that this experiment/ research was ethical in any way, even though the users agreed to provide their data to Facebook to do research purposes this does not mean they can do social experiments without them knowing about it. In the recent years Facebook has been breached a lot of time and the user's data was stolen without them knowing about it. In recent news Facebook lost over 700,000 active users most of them being younger generation, reason being cause many of the people do not trust Facebook, because of its past behaviors. As the article even mentions that the work "research" was later added to the Terms and Conditions, this in a way is misleading the users. Another such incident that happened was with users on OkCupid an online social dating app, they wanted to test if the users would fall for the trap of the algorithm, and it tried to match a few people who did not have any common interests. The experiment was to test if humans will fall in love with what the algorithm choose for them, or would humans come to know the differences between them. I believe that if they are conducting such experiments, they should at least inform its users prior to the experiment to be conducted, they reason they do not do such accountments before the experiment is because most the users will either back out or they will not be okay with such use of their data,

and this would cause them to leave that platform and losing people means losing money. According to me a company can use its data to analyse the behavior and patterns for the data they already have of its users, this can help to show the users what they like and provide ads accordingly. I think if this has happened before it can surely happen again, it might have already happened and we are not told about it.

1. What data does TikTok gather?

The app collects a lot of information without the user knowing about it, it collects data such as a person's age, gender, location, phone number, email address, IP address, mac address, friends' networks and even the phone's information of where the app was used. And it used an encryption to protect this data from the hackers.

I personally have never used TikTok because of all these issues and I think the data which is gathered by them are not put into good use and since most of the data is sent back to China, I do not trust the app much, I believe that the data which TikTok collects is way too much, as it even takes the messages and location of the person, such sensitive information should not be collected in the first place or if collected should be stored and encrypted very well with the users knowing about it.

2. Does the TikTok app do anything shady?

The app collected that data outside for the app itself, it collected information from the clipboard of the iPhone, tracking it every second, the app used to run in the background and take all the sensitive information. The app even had bugs which let the attackers have access to the user's personal information, with this TikTok had to pay about \$5.7 million to Federal Trade Commission for violating the privacy of American children.

I think that tracking a person's clipboard every second is absurd, I personally copy/paste a lot of stuff and tracking such information in the background is really something to worry about, being on social media is like having your personal information available on the web to everyone.

3. What is the U.S government's concerns about TikTok?

After censoring the content of some video just to satisfy the Chinese government TikTok has been under the radar of CFIUS since this order came directly from the Chinese government. The more concerning part of the US government is that the app can be collecting data of millions of American users.

I think that the concerns that the US government have is completely valid and that more strict regulations should be put in place regarding the app collecting users' information.

4. Does TikTok data get stored in China?

Geoffrey and Jackson saw that the user's data was only sent to AWS servers in US and Singapore, however they even noticed that there were some internet addresses which were linked back to some servers in China. They also noticed that some of the source code was from the internet giant Baidu and Igenix. Nash-Hahn rejected this saying that no code is used from them and no data is sent back to China.

I believe that if they do not send the data now there is a possibility of it being sent in the future since the terms and conditions says that the data can be sent to its parent, subsidiaries, or any other affiliated associations.

5. Can the Chinese government force TikTok to hand over your data?

The Chinese government has never asked TikTok for its data directly to handed over, however there is a crack in the terms and condition saying that they have to hand over the data if there is a court order and that they cannot deny it. Every day American people put their data at risk with trusting over other companies and that TikTok is not the only way of source for them to access users data.

I would say that having your data on the internet means anyone can access that data and can be easily hacked, there should be really strict rules for all the companies and giant tech companies about securing the users data.

6. Is it better or worse than Facebook?

When compared to Facebook, TikTok does not collect as much information as Facebook does, Facebooks trackers user information every second even the user is not using the app or even when the phone is turned off, like TikTok even Facebook had to pay a settlement of \$5 million to the FTC for privacy issues.

I think that Facebook collects users' information on a bigger level and uses that data to conduct experiments, not sure it sends its data outside of the country, there have been instances of the data getting breached and being taken by hackers.

7. Is there anything you can do to reduce your privacy risk and keep using TikTok?

Geoffrey mentions ways to eliminate TikTok from gathering a users data, he suggest that creating a face account if anyone just wants to sirf TikTok, by just adding a throw away email address, not providing any phone number. But this still even after not creating an account, it still gathers information about the phone and its geolocation.

I believe that using a VPN can still protect your IP address and if anyone wants to surf such apps like TikTok, Facebook or Instagram, have a separate phone from your everyday device this way you protect yourself form them gathering your data.

A 100-word minimum paragraph describing your feelings on the TikTok privacy/security.

I personally feel that TikTok has been known for having a lot of privacy issues in the past and now as well, there are many countries banning TikTok for several reasons, India and many other, the app collects data such as the location, IP address and even the screen resolution, and even after gathering such data, they can export this data to China. India had banned the app back in 2020 when there were many users who just violated the app and used it for violent or explicit content, apart for the privacy concern the app had lead to issue of the content. The Terms and Conditions of the app does not even mention what the data is being used for and that is something I am not comfortable sharing with. I have never used the app anytime and do not even intend to use it anytime in the future.