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Outcry greets Facebook's emotion test

By **VINDU GOEL** | Orange County Register

June 29, 2014 at 7:02 pm

To Facebook, we are all lab rats.

Facebook routinely adjusts its users' news feeds – testing out the number of ads they see or the size of photos that appear – often without their knowledge. It is all for the purpose, the company says, of creating a more alluring and useful product.

But last week, Facebook revealed that it had manipulated the news feeds of more than a half-million randomly selected users to change the number of positive and negative posts they saw. It was part of a psychological study to examine how emotions can be spread on social media.

The company says users consent to this kind of manipulation when they agree to its terms of service. But in the quick judgment of the Internet, that argument was not universally accepted.

"I wonder if Facebook KILLED anyone with their emotion manipulation stunt. At their scale and with depressed people out there, it's possible," privacy activist Lauren Weinstein wrote in a Twitter post.

On Sunday afternoon, the Facebook researcher who led the study, Adam D.I. Kramer, posted a public apology on his Facebook page.

"I can understand why some people have concerns about it, and my co-authors and I are very sorry for the way the paper described the research and any anxiety it caused," he wrote.

Facebook is hardly the only Internet company that manipulates and analyzes consumer data. Google and Yahoo also watch how users interact with search results or news articles to adjust what is shown; they say this improves the user experience. But Facebook's most

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