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Cyber attacks and hacking are amongst the world’s most powerful, prevalent forms of breaches of security that occur everywhere to everyone in our day to day lives. Whether it comes from social hacking, piracy, or information leakage, it is taking place throughout the world, and thus brings us to the importance of security. From the hack on Sony Pictures Entertainment in 2014 that caused a huge leak of confidential information to piracy in the film industry, this report will explore various instances in which security was exploited. As a student studying Theatre and Economics at USC, I hope to connect this report, in differing aspects, with hacking/security breach circumstances surrounding the film industry and the economics of some of it. From the hack on Sony Pictures Entertainment in 2014 that caused a huge leak of confidential information to piracy in the film industry, this report will explore various instances in which security was exploited.

Social engineering is “the art of manipulating people into performing actions and/or divulging confidential information” (DuPaul), and includes instances such as phishing, scam advertisements, fraudulent emails, shoulder surfing, etc. where anyone and everyone is a target. Social engineers fall into various categories such as hackers, identity thieves, scam artists, and overall, everyday people too. Social hackers use the “human weakness factor” (Chi So, “Social Engineering” USC) to exploit, identity thieves use another person’s “personal information such as their name, social security number, license number, etc. without the individual’s knowledge” (Chi So, “Social Engineering” USC), scam artists manipulate incentives and trick people, and everyday people use “social engineering methods on a regular basis often done without direct intention, and simply used just because it is so effective” (Chi So, “Social Engineering” USC). Social engineering, referred to as the “hack that requires no knowledge of code” (DuPaul), is a dangerous, tricky form of hacking that we’re vulnerable to on a regular basis. In particular, social hacking, which can be perpetrated by something as simple as one fooling another for their personal gain through a simple lie or an elaborate hoax. This form of hacking draws up a connection to theatre, and the different tasks/identities an actor is required to take up for each individual role. Each role requires a dynamic personality, often a total, polar opposite from one’s own personality, causing the actor to have to completely put on another mask to fulfill the task. In a scam artist’s situation, such as a Ponzi scheme, one is lying to some in order to offset their own gains, and continues to do so accumulating a larger and larger loss/debt. This situation requires the hacker to lie, and continue to lie just for personal incentive, by exploiting the victim’s wants/needs. Drawing back to acting, it is a fascinating tool to learn how to get one’s way without even realizing it as a form of hacking. Furthermore, in security, social hacking brings upon a large concern as to how to secure personal, confidential information form being released. Ads in the form of email, text messages, and other communication outlets, that contain things such as “You’ve just won a new iPhone, click the link to Claim your prize” or “We have detected a virus in your computer, click here to speak to a professional” usually pop out of nowhere, and are suspicious looking. Overall, social hacking is a con’s way of gathering information through misleading purposes, so the average user just needs to keep themselves alert and aware of such security alerts in order to best stay out of harm’s way, by not being ignorant or senseless and falling for these scams.

In retrospect, piracy is a major threat that just won’t go away, pretty much dissuading people from going to the theatres or buying a DVD, thus eating up a massive amount of a film’s profits. It occurs in all industries, from the film industry to the music industry to even the print/book industry, causing great harm to those particular markets. Piracy in the form of torrent downloads, cheap DVD’s, and free video streaming sites, destroys the point of services like Netflix, Hulu, going to a cinema hall, and other such businesses, and is a huge threat to these industries. “A report in 2005 for the Motion Picture Association estimated studio losses at roughly $6.1 billion a year, and that the entire industry lost roughly $18.2 billion” (Burbidge). The main incentive in using these measures is the simple fact that it’s free, a person can have a similar if not the same experience through the comfort of their home, saving any and all expenses one would spend going to a movie theatre. Another cause is when major Hollywood releases end up having delayed/later cinema releases in the rest of the world, resulting in people wanting to watch the movie sooner, thus using pirated methods.

Specifically, the Indian Film Industry, the “world’s largest industry, produces roughly 1,000 movies a year generating roughly $2 billion, but also losing $2.7 billion to piracy, costing over 60,000 jobs every year” (The News Minute), evidently showing precisely why the numbers aren’t able to match up to other major film industries. Although the film industry in India is booming, at a projected annual growth rate of 10.5% percent till 2020, piracy stands to be a growing threat to this economy. One can simply walk into a cinema hall and record the film with their own form of a camera, and upload it to streaming sites as well as torrent sites, causing people to simply follow the path of piracy to view the film rather than going out and spending money to watch it.

In the past year itself, multiple films have been leaked before the release date, causing a huge decline in box office collections for the movies, raising the issue of piracy once again, and its long term detrimental effect. This is an ongoing issue, in which a solution needs to be brought under light and highlighted in order to prevent it from causing further damage to the concerned industries.

In 2014, a group of hacks identifying themselves as the “Guardians of Peace” leaked a numerous amount of confidential information belonging to Sony Pictures. Information such as employee personal information, salary cards, film copies, other crucial information was amongst the leak. The hackers threatened Sony Pictures to revoke *The Interview* from cinema halls, scaring many movie theatre chains from screening the film in fear of an attack, as a precautionary measure. This particular hack stood to be a huge learning lesson to the United States, as a whole as well as to the film industry. A simple hack was able to cause so much harm, and spin their way into achieving their ultimate goal. In fear of a worse hack and in fear of the safety of people, Sony Pictures accepted defeat to the attacks, and suffered a massive loss in revenue. The fact that a group of international hackers could gain access and cause so much havoc to such a large multinational film studio, shows the dire need for better security, and stronger measures to prevent hacks.

The effects of such security breaches goes a long way in negatively affecting many industries and their particular markets, specifically the Film industry. It is important to know how to combat and take action against certain measures, as well as to be aware of hacks and attacks that one can be a target of without even knowing. Information Security is a broad, comprehensive topic, which can be explored endlessly, and can be applicable in various other areas of interest too.

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