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The Great Hack Documentary Paper

Introduction

The main focus of “The Great Hack Documentary” is about data manipulation. It talks about how technology advances such as the internet has allowed the world to be connected. With the benefits it brings, we rely on it for fact-checking, match-making, entertainment and even therapy. However in the process, this connected world has allowed people to manipulate data and use it unethically.

The documentary starts off by informing the audience that in every online activity that we participate in, data is being produced. This includes simple tasks such as taking transport or paying for a cup of coffee digitally. Additionally, these loose forms of data entry are used to make connections and eventually profile people through data points. These data points that define people are the foundation of target advertising, which can accurately predict our behaviours. Through these data and profiles, technological companies are able to create personalized data and send out personalized messages.

The bulk of the documentary talks about how our data manipulation could affect the outcomes of the elections. This could be seen from how Cambridge Analytica managed to turn the tide for Donald Trump and Ted Cruz during the U.S 2016 Presidential Election. Additionally, the documentary presents protagonist Carole Cadwalladr and David Carroll's journey to topple down Cambridge Analytica by exposing their unethical acts of data manipulation with the help of Brittany Kaiser.

The aim of the documentary is to inform the public about technology companies collecting their personal data through digital activities. This documentary also educates the public on how they could be influenced by companies that are using these data. In addition, it questions whether such usage of data manipulation should be considered as unethical acts or even weapons of war instead of strategy. Lastly, it also warns the public that such occurrences may continue to surface even after the Cambridge Analytica has been dealt with, because there is currently a lack of measures to protect our data.

Recap

(A) Cambridge Analytica (Unethical Data Manipulation and Deceit)

Alexander Nix was accused of leading the case of Cambridge Analytica using data obtained from people unethically. The documentary showed how he was involved in using the data to affect the choices of the "persuadables" in the 2016 Presidential Election. Through unethical data manipulation, they were able to use target advertising to help Ted Cruz rise from the last place to the 2nd man standing. Similarly, Cambridge Analytica played a monumental role in helping Donald Trump defeat Hillary Clinton in the 2016 Presidential Election. One of the methods used by Cambridge Analytica to achieve this was "Defeat Crooked Hilary". Furthermore, Cambridge

Analytica was also involved in deceptions. In the documentary, Cambridge Analytica claimed that they have deleted the voters data when confronted by Facebook. However, later on in the documentary, it showed that they still had the voters data and were still using it.

(A) Brexit Campaign (Leave.EU)

Alexander Nix claimed that Cambridge Analytica was working with the Brexit group. However, this was a blatant lie. In the documentary, it was shown on footage that Brittany Kaiser, who represented Cambridge Analytica, attended the Leave.EU campaign under the Brexit group press conference as one of their partners. Furthermore in the documentary, more evidence surfaced in the court such as emails that proved Cambridge Analytica was working with the Brexit group on the Leave.EU campaign.

(B) Alexander Nix, Cambridge Analytica and Strategic Communication Laboratory

Alexander Nix is the CEO of Cambridge Analytica and the director of the Strategic Communication Laboratory (SCL) Group. The Cambridge Analytica is a politics consulting company and the SCL is a strategic communication company that makes use of human behavior research. Alexander Nix and Cambridge Analytica used unethical data manipulation in order to gain advantage in political campaigns. For example, they used voters' data to "strategically" manipulate voters to vote for Ted Cruz and Donald Trump in the U.S 2016 Presidential Election. Another example would be their involvement with Leave.EU, where they provided the campaign with data that they have collected. In the whole case, Alexander Nix and Cambridge Analytica were the main antagonists that exploited the voters' data in order to gain political campaigning advantages.

(B) Mark Zuckerberg and Facebook

Mark Zuckerberg is the co-founder, chairman and CEO of Facebook. In the documentary, Facebook was accused of unethical data manipulation by partnering with Cambridge Analytica. Facebook however declares that they were not involved in the unethical data manipulation and removed Cambridge Analytica from its system. Later, it was uncovered that Facebook knew about Cambridge Analytica's data collection and unethical manipulation of data. In the whole case, Facebook as a social media service provider did not have enough safety measures to keep their users safe, which in-turn allowed their users to be exploited by Cambridge Analytica.

(B) Carole Cadwalladr

Carole Cadwalladr was the journalist who wrote the article which changed how people saw Brittany Kaiser. Additionally, in the documentary she was seen going through the evidence of Cambridge Analytica's unethical data manipulation. She was a key player in helping the public understand how unethical data manipulation is involved in helping both Brexit campaigns and Donald Trump campaigns achieve their aims.

(B) Paul Hilder

In the documentary, Paul Hilder was the interviewer following Brittany Kaiser around and forming the narratives of the story. Additionally, he questions how ethical it was to manipulate data and be involved. In the documentary he even questioned whether it was the voters' free choice after being victims of targeted advertisements.

(B) David Carroll

David Carroll was the professor who was informing the public how corporations are mining their data through online activities. In the documentary, his fight to retrieve back his data from Cambridge Analytica was significant. In the documentary, he was even going through the terms and conditions of the different technology applications to make sure his daughter would be “safe” while using them.

(B) Brittany Kaiser

Brittany Kaiser was formerly one of Cambridge Analytica directors. In the past she was motivated to join Alexander Nix’s Cambridge Analytica because her family was in financial trouble. In the documentary, she was an important “whistleblower” and key testimonial in exposing Cambridge Analytica’s unethical data manipulation.

Responsibility

We think that Cambridge Analytica should be held responsible for this data breach. Having access to data can be a double edged sword. While companies are responsible for maintaining it, Cambridge Analytica had outrightly manipulated the data to gain political advantage through target advertising, which greatly affected the voters’ democratic choice.

Although there are arguments that Facebook is solely responsible for the data breach due to the lack of preventive measures, they are not largely responsible for it. This is because social media

is a new concept that has recently become more prevalent in the 20th Century. Developers and gatekeepers are still trying to figure out what is appropriate and inappropriate.

On the other hand, there have been arguments that people are responsible for their own personal data since they are the ones who put the information data out there. However, it can be also argued that people trust the developers and technologists who hold their data. It may not be illegal to use these data against their will, but it certainly is unethical to do so. Hence, we think that it is the technology companies that manipulate the data should be held responsible, rather than the people.

Data Rights

Data rights should be considered fundamental human rights. Human rights refer to the moral norms or moral standards which are understood as fundamental rights of every human person. It does not limit to only the right to free speech, but also the protection of data. In this digital day and age that we currently live in, it is so easy for data to be lost to the internet and inappropriately spread without one's knowledge.

Digital platforms and technologies are widely available such that it is so prevalent in our everyday lives till the point that we hardly go through a single day without any interaction with any technology. At the basis of this highly digitized economy is the pervasiveness of digital data. Data is enormously valuable as it helps us to store data and gain new insights about our economy. However, the storage and use of personal information should be at the service of

people, not the other way round. Hence, there is a need for data protection laws to step in and ensure people have their rights to a private life.

We should have a say in who has access to this information and how they use it. As users of these technological platforms, we should be able to control the dissemination of these personal information. By retaining control, it will allow us to grant and deny access to our personal data only with trusted parties. Technology companies should also respect users' need for privacy as we all have privacy boundaries where we desire control over our own private information. Even though social media platforms are designed for us to share our lives online, companies and businesses should not take advantage of this to tailor advertisements to users based on the information that they provide. Ultimately, we still have the rights to control what information is used by technology companies.

Ethics

Big data collection is unethical to a large extent. This is dependent on the context in which it is used. For example, big data collection is useful when used in consumerism. However, it is unethical when it comes to politics.

Big data collection can be beneficial in helping consumers figure out what kind of products they need. It is akin to walking into a shop and having a sales person suggest types of product which may be suitable for you. This can help increase a sense of convenience as well since the process

of choosing products has become instantaneous with the usage of the consumers' data to identify their preferences.

Social media data mining should not be allowed in politics because it influences the democracy of voting. This is because these data can be used to influence voters without their own free will. Through social media data mining, political parties are able to identify the individuals who do not currently possess a stance and are neutral about the political situation. These people are known as the persuadables, as they are the ones that are most easily persuaded. The voters did not have a choice in the type of messages they were exposed to which played a monumental role in affecting their voting choice. To influence the stance of the persuadables, they were specifically bombarded with advertisements that were leaning towards a certain stance. For example, in the movie "The Great Hack", the persuadables were constantly exposed to fake news about Hillary Clinton. As a result, they did not vote for Clinton and this swung the result of the election in favour of Donald Trump. Hence, data mining in politics is unethical as it affected the democracy of voting.

Furthermore, there should be restrictions/regulations on collecting user data. Tech companies should always ask for the users' consent to use their data before they proceed to use it in any situation. One example of a restriction of data collection would be the new iOS, where it can now limit how apps collect user's data. Apple device users can sign in to third-party apps and online services using their Apple ID in the new iOS 13 operating system. When users choose to log in to third-party apps using this system, the apps will only receive their names and a random generated email if they want to conceal their actual email addresses. Furthermore, the iOS 13

also blocks apps from using Wi-Fi and Bluetooth to obtain information about the user's location. Apps would need to ask for permission each time they need to access a user's location. Hence, these restrictions ensure that users consent to the collection of their data.

Conclusion

The team believes that data collection done by tech companies should garner more scrutinization to confirm that the process does not breach individuals' privacy. Users of these social media websites should be able to use them freely without having to fear that there is a chance that their privacy will be breached at any moment. As we have seen, when individuals' personal data is leaked, it can be used as ammunition in situations such as politics where they can be swayed to vote for a party. This affects the honesty of the whole voting process as there is no way to ascertain whether voters vote because they truly believe in the political candidate or if it was merely a result of swayed opinions because of social media data mining.

In conclusion, the team believes that like with everything else, data collection is a double-edged sword. If it is used to help consumers and potential consumers it should then be allowed. However if it is used in situations like politics where it affects the democratic choice of the voters, it should not be allowed or in the least restricted.