



Data Mining/Data Privacy and the Collection/Misuse of Our Private Data

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Abstract

As the amount of data being shared and stored on the internet increases, so does the collection of data. There are many more organisations collecting data every year, and there is becoming an ever increasing need to protect our private data. There are many breaches of trust and security by some of these organisations, and there needs to be higher standards in place to protect the people.

OAIC (Office of the Australian Information Commissioner), “Personal information includes a broad range of information, or an opinion, that could identify an individual”(OAIC, 2021). This includes information like a person’s name, address, political opinions, religious beliefs and much more.

As stated above, if the only data that constitutes private data, is information that can identify oneself, then does that make all other information fair game?

1 Introduction

There is much discussion around data mining/data privacy and the collection/misuse of our private data in the world today. There are many people and organisations that mine data in our society, there are those that do it for good purposes, but also, there are those that do it for reasons that are not in the interest of the majority. This includes data that is classified public and available to everyone, but also data that is classified as private and sensitive.

On the topic of private data, there are times when we give consent to it being shared, but also times when the data is shared without consent, or even hidden in the fine print of terms and conditions which are generally briefly glossed over or not even read at all by most people.

2 Data Privacy

Data privacy is becoming a big topic in our day to day lives over recent years. It’s making news headlines around the world, with big tech companies such as Facebook, syphoning our personal information and selling it off to other companies such as Cambridge Analytica(Isaak and Hanna, 2018).

To learn more about data privacy, we must learn what constitutes private data. As stated by the

2.1 Consent

Another topic for discussion is consent. Many people believe that they own their data, that everything they type on social media platforms is theirs, and if anyone wants to use it, they must give consent. But is that really the case?

As seen in Facebook’s Data Policy(Facebook, 2021), they collect information about almost every interaction we make with their program. They also share most of this information, except that information which, as stated above, is classified as personal information. They do this to increase their profit margins, without any care for the information they have collected and from those that the information has come from.

3 Data Mining

Data mining is the concept of finding useful patterns and relationships in large amounts of data(Clifton, 2019). There are those that partake in data mining for research, and those that do it for profit. There are many advantages for organisations from the use of data mining, for example, retail companies can predict, from purchases you have made, what other potential products might interest you. This is done by a process of pattern matching(Hand, 2007). Data

mining is also used by governments around the world to track terrorist activities, they do this by analysing bank transfers, communication records, travel records, and much more(Seifert, 2004).

With the current amount of data mining taking place, how can we trust that this data is not being misused, and that our privacy is being acknowledged.

4 Misuse of our Data

The concern for the misuse of our data is growing in recent history, with cases of fraudulent activity of personal information becoming a common occurrence. As in a case in the United States, where a data broker, sold hundreds of thousands of consumers bank account details and social security numbers to an organisation whom had no need for the information(Federal Trade Commission, 2014).

The misuse of personal data is a significant issue in the world today, it can affect the livelihoods of innocent people, who trust organisations to do the right thing with their information, as in the case above, millions of dollars was debited from consumers bank accounts in the way of unauthorized transactions.

There are many other examples including Apple, keeping recordings of consumers location without consent(Arthur, 2011). As well as the Cambridge Analytica case mentioned previously.

5 Data Security

Data security cannot be left unmentioned when data mining and data privacy are spoken about. The collection of data, especially that of people's private data, brings a difficult aspect of securing that data into play.

In a report by Netwrix, they found that 24% of organisations they surveyed, had discovered secure data outside of the location in which it had been secured(Netwrix, 2020). This is concerning not just for the organisations and their reputation, but for all the individuals and their data in general. If organisations are going to continue to collect data to use for their research, or to increase profits for themselves and their shareholders, then they must have a higher standard of data security to protect the data that they are storing.

6 Conclusion

As has been discussed, there are many reasons for collecting data, many of those are good reasons, like improving the quality of research and potential outcomes of said research in all fields of study, which can benefit everyone.

There are also many other reasons, one of those being solely for making profits, another reason like that in the case of Cambridge Analytica, was to influence the way people think on a large enough scale as to affect the outcome of an election(Isaak and Hanna, 2018).

Because of cases like Cambridge Analytica, there are more people talking about data privacy than ever before, with that comes a new age of laws and regulations to help protect the people from those that might not have society's best wishes in mind. One of those being the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) in Europe, which was implemented in May 2018(OAIC, 2018).

Hopefully the GDPR will set a path, for many other nations around the world to follow suit.

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