Public Opinion Trend Analysis from Online Data: American's Concern Over Privacy

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to develop a complete understanding of public opinion towards the privacy issue of digital technology. We would provide a systematic discussion about privacy issues over digital technology and how people concern about their personal data. Thus, we must explore the degree of concerns about the privacy issue of digital technology and find out why people's concern has arisen. The overall significance of this study is to study people's attitudes toward privacy under massive digital technology development. We currently live in an era when privacy and security are closely linked. The internet contains vital assets, but it leads to more security concerns from consumers. By this study, the businesses and government may realize that not only they should lock the data down and but also know how to correctly use the data because consumers are indeed worried about their privacy.

Keywords

Public opinion; Digital technology; Privacy.

1. Background

Many governments or institutions collect attitudes and beliefs about social issues and events from people, which is called the collection of public opinion. It is a critical method to expose the thoughts of the public. In 2019, the Pew Research Center collected American public opinion on American's knowledge and concerns about Digital Technology. The data set they gathered shows people's concerns about privacy and their knowledge about the Internet, digital technology, and face recognition. The reason why we want to do the study is that we understand the importance of privacy in our society, especially when digital technology is developing more dramatically than ever. And we also want to learn more about the process of collecting public opinion, which is not only simply collecting opinions from people but also a tool to analyze the social orientation of countries. Especially for democratic countries, they need public opinion to derive authority from the public. Moreover, we want to learn the specific effect and function of digital technology for people and the reason why people concern. Our target audience for the results of this study are the people who are interested in the negative influence of technology and who want to learn how and why privacy issue arises.

2. Problem Statement

The goals and research objectives of the study are to explore the American's concern about the privacy issue and digital knowledge of Americans. However, we still lack the understanding of American's level of concern over their privacy and how concerned are Americans about the use of facial recognition. More studies need to be conducted by identifying and analyzing privacy

issues. We need to learn more about how privacy issue changes the world in which way and what specific influence it creates. In summary, there is a need for us to better understand American's level of concern over their privacy and how to handle these issues in identifying the causes and influence of digital technology.

3. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to develop a complete understanding of public opinion towards the privacy issue of digital technology. We would provide a systematic discussion about privacy issues over digital technology and how people concern about their personal data. As we have known, digital technology is developing faster and faster, which enhances people's concern over privacy. Many people believe that their personal information is less secure now or is revealed by those social media companies and data collection poses more risks than benefits. They also believe it is not possible to go through daily life without being tracked. Thus, we must explore the degree of concerns about the privacy issue of digital technology and find out why people's concern has arisen. Additionally, how people are concerned about the relationship between privacy and digital technology, like facial recognition is also a critical question to explore and study.

4. Research Questions

4.1. What Is American's Level of Concern Over Their Privacy?

In light of massive data breaches, Americans have doubts about the safety of their privacy. Once they register the websites or apps, personal information such as photos and date of birth will be recorded and then have the potential risk of being revealing. Events like the Facebook Cambridge Analytica hack that affected 87 million Facebook profiles and the Marriott data breach that exposed data of up to 500 million guests are enough to get anyone guessing who they can trust with their sensitive information. Thus, it is commonly believed that people's personal data is monitored or used by government or companies. However, the level of concern is varied among them. The majority of Americans feel that they have little control over the data collected about them by the government or companies. The evidence shows that 81% of the public feel uncomfortable about the control over privacy and 50% of internet users feel anxious about the amount of information available about them on the internet. A report from the TRUSTe shows that more Americans are concerned about their data privacy than they are about losing their main source of income. In contrast, only 9% say they feel they have "a lot" of control over how much information is collected about them and how it is used? Moreover, Majorities of the public are not confident that corporations are good stewards of the data they collect and thus they worry about the way corporations use the data. The proportion of Americans who are not too or not at all confident that companies will confess their faults and take responsibility if they misuse personal information reaches 79%, and 69% of them think that firms will not use their personal information in ways they will be willing to. For instance, their data might be shared with third parties. Besides, the general trend is the young always have more concern to privacy than the elders because younger adults are more likely to realize that personal information about them is available online and to have encounter privacy issues and at the same time they are better in making their personal information limited for example they may be more familiar with how to delete unwanted comments on social media.

4.2. How Concerned Are Americans about the Use of Facial Recognition?

Facial recognition becomes increasingly popular around the world in the past several years and it is evident that the market for this technology grows exponentially in surveillance and marketing. But it becomes more likely to raise concerns for many people and lead to security

issues. Face recognition is a method of identifying or verifying the identity of an individual using their face. Face recognition systems can be used to identify people in photos, videos, or in real-time. Law enforcement may also use mobile devices to identify people during police stops.

The lack of federal regulations surrounding the use of facial recognition technology is the primary

reason for concerns among people. Most of the citizens concerned about the accuracy of the technology and the possible existence of biases and misinformation in these technologies. One issue, for example, is that the technology has been proven to be unable to accurately identify people of color, especially black women. Another major concern is the use of facial recognition for law enforcement purposes. Today, many police departments in the U.S., including New York City have begun utilizing the technology to monitor the public. Citizens may then feel that their basic civil rights and privacy issues have been challenged. Thus, it is essential that citizens' rights should be protected while ensuring the safety of the society.

5. Significance of the Study

The overall significance of this study is to study people's attitudes toward privacy under massive digital technology development. We currently live in an era when privacy and security are closely linked. The internet contains vital assets, but it leads to more security concerns from consumers. By this study, the businesses and government may realize that not only they should lock the data down and but also know how to correctly use the data because consumers are indeed worried about their privacy. Thus, it is very important for companies to protect consumers' data and then build trust among them. For consumers themselves, they are encouraged to pay more attention to the terms of privacy before asking companies to protect them. We should now have a culture of privacy across the whole internet ecosystem, by which, people might be empowered to make the right choice and feel more secure. To target audiences, we would provide new perspectives on digital technology issues and its negative impact on people's personal information.

6. Literature Review

The data collected by the Pew Research Center demonstrates people's concerns about personal data, American's knowledge about digital technology, and their doubt about a specific technology, like face recognition. Almost 60% of interviewees believe that it is not possible to go through daily life without companies collecting data about them, which most people think their personal information is collected by the government or companies in every daily life. They are losing control of personal data and how their data is used is also confused for people. Moreover, in the latest study, 78% of U.S adults know little or nothing about what the government does with the data it collects. Because people lack an understanding of digital technology, privacy conflicts show up, especially about race and ethnicity. However, Americans are more knowledgeable about certain digitally focused topics than others. Americans' knowledge of the business side of social media companies is also relatively low. They note that Americans with higher levels of educational attainment and younger adults are more likely to answer digital knowledge questions correctly. Additionally, most people trust law enforcement to use facial recognition responsibly, but they don't trust advertisers and technology companies. They believe facial recognition is an effective tool to identify individuals and classify people by gender and race. But it also brings up different privacy issues about personal identifiable images and bioethics information. All the studies show American's level of concern over their privacy and make us think about how Americans are concerned about the use of facial recognition. In summary, most people believe that facial recognition is a useful tool but the

information it collected needs to be more transparent and people have the right to know more about the data collection of government and companies.

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