Study Plan - Changing People's Attitudes Towards Facebook's Privacy Settings

Overview

In this experiment, we are testing whether people will choose more restrictive privacy settings while setting up their Facebook accounts if the privacy settings are displayed with messaging that aims to showcase the impact of choosing specific privacy settings. The following is the hypothesis for our experiment:

- People who are shown examples of how their online footprints would would be accessible to different user groups would choose the more restrictive privacy settings while setting up their Facebook accounts, compared to people who are not shown examples of their online footprints.

The Subjects

100 subjects will be recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turks(MTurk) for conducting the study. The subjects will be pre-screened in order to only select subjects who are Facebook account holders, are over 18 years of age and reside in the United States. The subjects will be equally divided into a control group and an experimental group, and will be randomly assigned to a control group and an experimental group. This random assignment will ensure that the two groups are equivalent with respect to pre-existing subject variables. The survey will be administered via Qualtrics.

Experimental Setup

Subjects in both groups will be told to imagine that they were creating a new Facebook account for themselves, and to choose their preferred account settings from a list of options presented to them. For subjects in the control group, the privacy settings shown will be exactly similar to how Facebook currently displays them. For subjects in the experimental group, each privacy setting will be accompanied with a short description of what type of user data will be be accessible to different users online. The privacy settings selected by subjects in both groups will be recorded. Following the activity, subjects will be asked some questions to ascertain how likely they are to trust Facebook in terms of protecting their personal data.

Dependent and Independent Variables

The independent variable for the experiment is the information on privacy settings shown to subjects in both the control and experimental group. The dependent variables are the privacy settings selected, and the response of the subjects to questions on how likely they are to trust Facebook in terms of protecting their personal data.

Pre-Screening of Subjects

The subjects will be pre-screened on MTruk so that only subjects who fulfil the following criteria will be selected:
- Subjects own a Facebook account
- Subjects are over 18 years
- Subjects reside in the United States

Data Management Mechanisms

The data collected from the subjects will be anonymised. No personally identifiable information will be collected from the subjects. We will store a copy of the responses on a password-protected external hard drive. No data will be stored on the cloud.

Incentivising the Subjects

We will be incentivising the subjects by paying each subject $0.50 on MTurk for taking part in the study.

Initial Message Shown to Subjects

The following message would be displayed to respondents before the survey starts:

Imagine that you are creating a new Facebook profile for yourself. You will choose your preferred account settings and then answer questions about the experience.
There will be a few questions in the survey to check whether you are filling out the options thoughtfully. You will only be paid for filling out this survey if you answer those questions correctly

Questions For Subjects in Control Group

The options for all these questions will be in the form of a drop-down menu, unless otherwise stated before the question

Subjects in the control group will be asked to choose their preferred privacy settings for the following options:

1. Who can see your future posts?
   - Public
   - Friends
   - Friends Except[name of friends]
   - Only Me
   - Specific Friends[name of friends]

2. Who can send you friend requests?
   - Everyone
   - Friends of Friends

3. Who can see your friends list?
   - Public
   - Friends
   - Only Me
   - Custom[enter names]

4. Who can look you up using the email address you provided?
   - Everyone
   - Friends of Friends
   - Friends

5. Who can look you up using the phone number you provided?
   - Everyone
   - Friends of Friends
   - Friends

6. Do you want search engines outside of Facebook to link to your profile? When this setting is on, search engines may link to your profile in their results.
   When this setting is off, search engines will stop linking to your profile, but this may take some time. Your profile can still be found on Facebook if people search for your name.

   ❏ Allow search engines outside of Facebook to link to your profile

7. Who can post on your timeline?
    - Friends
    - Only Me

8. Who can see what others post on your timeline?
    - Everyone
    - Friends of Friends
    - Friends
    - Only Me
    - Custom

9. Who can see posts you're tagged in on your timeline?
    - Everyone
    - Friends of Friends
    - Friends
    - Only Me
    - Custom[Enter Name]

10. Use two-factor authentication
    - On
    - Off

11. Face Recognition: Do you want Facebook to be able to recognize you in photos and videos?
    - Yes
    - No

Questions For Subjects in Experimental Group

The options for all these questions will be in the form of a drop-down menu, unless otherwise stated before the question

1. Who can see your future posts? Think about what personal information your posts could reveal about you. *[There would also be a few examples, around 2-3, of simple mockups that show specific information that is available to the different user groups highlighted in the options]*

- Public
- Friends
- Friends Except[name of friends]
- Only Me
- Specific Friends[name of friends]

2. Who can send you friend requests?
    - Everyone
    - Friends of Friends

3. Who can see your friends list? Think about what personal information your friends list could reveal about you.
    - Public
    - Friends
    - Only Me
    - Custom

4. Who can look you up using the email address you provided? This allows someone to find your account if they know an email address associated with your account. Think about who knows your email address and how this information could be used.
    - Everyone Friends of Friends
    - Friends

5. Who can look you up using the phone number you provided? This allows someone to find your account if they know a phone number associated with your account. Think about who knows your phone number and how this information could be used.
    - Everyone
    - Friends of Friends
    - Friends

6. Do you want search engines outside of Facebook to link to your profile? When this setting is on, search engines may link to your profile in their results. When this setting is off, search engines will stop linking to your profile, but this may take some time. Your profile can still be found on Facebook if people search for your name.
    - ❏ Allow search engines outside of Facebook to link to your profile

7. Who can post on your timeline? Think about what personal information these posts could reveal about you.
    - Friends
    - Only Me

8. Who can see what others post on your timeline? Think about what personal information these posts could reveal about you.*[There would be an example of a mockup for each of these options that shows how the different users can see information on a person's profile]*
   - Everyone
   - Friends of Friends
   - Friends
   - Only Me
   - Custom[blank option]

9. Who can see posts you're tagged in on your timeline? Think about what personal information these posts could reveal about you. *[There would be an example of a mockup for each of these options that shows how the different users can see information on a person's profile]*
   - Everyone
   - Friends of Friends
   - Friends
   - Only Me
   - Custom

10. Use two-factor authentication. Two-factor authentication makes it harder for other people to log into your account.
    - On
    - Off

11. Face Recognition: Do you want Facebook to be able to recognize you in photos and videos, even if you aren't tagged in them?
    - Yes No

Questions Unrelated to Privacy (Shown to All Subjects)

1. Temperature: Choose scale
   - Fahrenheit
   - Celsius
2. Facebook language [Language drop-down menu]

Check Question to Ensure that the Subjects Filled out the Survey Attentively

1. What company is mentioned in this survey?

- Facebook
- Dropbox
- Twitter
- Instagram
- Amazon

Questions related to measuring How Much Subjects Trust Facebook to Protect their Privacy(Administered to all Participants)

[The questions will be administered on a 7 point Likert scale]

Please answer the following questions relating to the survey experience and your own beliefs

1. I trust Facebook
   - Strongly disagree
   - Disagree
   - Slightly disagree
   - Neutral
   - Slightly agree
   - agree
   - strongly agree
2. Privacy is important to me
   - Strongly disagree
   - Disagree
   - Slightly disagree
   - Neutral
   - Slightly agree
   - agree
   - strongly agree

3. I understood the account settings.
   - Strongly disagree
   - Disagree
   - Slightly disagree
   - Neutral
   - Slightly agree
   - agree
   - strongly agree

4. I like Facebook
   - Strongly disagree
   - Disagree
   - Slightly disagree
   - Neutral
   - Slightly agree
   - agree
   - strongly agree

5. Setting up the account settings was a pleasant experience
   - Strongly disagree
   - Disagree
   - Slightly disagree
   - Neutral
   - Slightly agree
   - agree
   - strongly agree

Questions on Demographics of Subjects(Administered to All Participants)

1. What is the year you were born? [drop down menu with years]
2. Gender?
   - Male
   - Female
   - Nonbinary
   - Other
   - Prefer Not to Say
3. How often do you use Facebook?

- Multiple times a day
- once a day
- multiple times a week
- once a week
- less than once a week

4. How often do you post on Facebook?
   - Multiple times a day
   - once a day
   - multiple times a week
   - once a week
   - less than once a week

5. What level of education have you received?
   - Some high school
   - completed high school
   - some college
   - completed college
   - some graduate school
   - completed graduate school

Miscellaneous Questions(Administered to All Participants)

1. What do you think this survey was about? [open ended, optional]
2. Questions or comments? [open ended, optional]