
Facebook unleashes controversy due to experiment with users

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World's largest social network, *Facebook*, is the subject of controversy after admitting in 2012 they used the profile of more than half a million users to test a scientific experiment on its influence on people's mood.

To answer the question, "How do *Facebook* contents influence users' emotions?" a group of researchers modified during a week, in January 2012, the type of content showed to 689,003 people in their accounts in the social networks.

Using an algorithm, the scientists omit contents having words with positive connotations to some users, while omitting contents having negative connotations to others.

Adam Kramer, one of the scientists involved in the research, posted in his *Facebook* account on Sunday that "the reason why we conducted this research is that we care about the emotional impact of *Facebook* and the people using our product".

Despite championing the purpose of the study, Kramer admitted the mistake of revealing the experiment in the article published in the journal ***Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*** (June 17th) where in his view "the goals of the research were not explained clearly".

Facebook study has drawn criticism in the social networks. The company is being accused of using its users as lab rats and there are some speculations on the damage caused by these contents to people with depressive tendencies.

However, *Facebook* private policy allows users' personal data to be used in these kinds of experiments every time we create an account for ourselves.

With the company consent, the study was conducted by the aforementioned Adam Kramer, *Facebook* data

scientist; Jamie Guillory, researcher at the University of California in San Francisco; and Jeffrey Hancock, professor at the University of Cornell.

The survey results show that moods expressed by other people in the social network make a contagious effect on users. The abundance of positive messages corresponded with the rising of users' positive posts and negative messages provoked negative posts.

According to researchers, social networks work as "contagious elements" of emotions to a "massive scale".

Translated by Sergio A. Paneque Díaz / Cubasi Translation Staff
