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Understanding Profiling

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Abstract

Through this article we aim to emphasize that profiling occupies an important place in contemporary society. It is essential that it be understood by the general public so that it can be used in all areas where it would bring benefits. Areas such as marketing and recruitment need to identify the profile of those targeted, and this is accelerated by the changes brought by 2020. The pandemic has forced the use of the online environment in many areas to compensate for the physical distance imposed by the authorities to limit the virus

spread, which required a reconfiguration of many activities. Profiling is not a penetration of a person's privacy because only public data is used to create the profile. Regarding the data obtained through social networks, their users must be aware that what they publish can be accessed by any other user. In this article we aim to identify a definition that emphasizes as clearly and simply as possible what profiling is.

Keywords: profiling, definition, typology, personality

Introduction

In a society where labeling is commonplace, it is important to be able to read between the lines so as to distinguish the truth from the lies. This is how the profiling should be viewed. This process can be used by anyone who wants to identify a specific thing. For this reason, we want to determine what would be the most appropriate definition of this concept.

Most often, the word profiling brings to mind the identification of criminals through certain traits. In fact, profiling covers a much larger area. The definition of profiling has been in the attention of many researchers. We will analyze some of the definitions of this concept and synthesize them, so as to cover as much as possible of what is the practice of profiling in various fields.

The association of this process with the identification of criminal activities makes the process seem difficult and perhaps even illegal. This is not the case at all. As long as the profiling is done for a legal purpose and the right means are used, everything is in accordance with the law. The information used in creating the profiles must be public and obtained from social networks or by interviewing people. Respecting these requirements, the profiling will be correct and will be able to meet the needs of the one who performs it.

In making this article, we will put more emphasis on how profiling is done and less on the purpose for which it can be used. The purposes for which profiling can be used are many because in every area where it is necessary to identify the public or identify a product or anything else, profiling can be used to streamline activities.

Definitions of profiling

Although profiling is most often associated with criminology, it serves many purposes. Due to the fact that profiling can be done for different purposes, research in different fields was necessary so that a definition of this concept can be reached. The purpose of profiling is to give positive or negative connotations to this process.

In order to establish a clearer definition of this process, we will analyze the definitions that have been stated by other researchers and we will extract both the common elements and the different elements, so that we have a more complex definition. The complexity of the definition will also underline the complexity of the profiling process itself.

In 2013, an approach was made whose purpose was to establish a definition of the concept of profiling that would include as much of what it represents. Following the research, they concluded that "Profiling is an automatic technique for processing personal and non-personal data aimed at developing predictive knowledge from data in the form of building profiles that can later be used as a basis for decision making." (Ferraris, Bosco, Cafiero, D'Angelo, & Suloyeva, 2013) ^[2]. So the result of the profiling process is the profile.

What is noteworthy from this definition is that the authors introduced the word automatic. This means that profiling is a fast process and provides a large number of results. This is also the reason why many fields have come to use this way of identifying things. A concrete example of this can be consumer profiling. Companies want to attract as many consumers as possible, but for this they need to know the audience they are addressing, and profiling helps them to know it.

To understand profiling, it is necessary to determine what the profile is. We could say that the profile represents a series of characteristics that define a person. A more detailed definition of the profile is as follows: A profile is a set of related data that represents a subject (human or non-human, individual or group). Profile building is the process of organized correlation of data obtained through different means. Profile profiling is the process of identifying and representing a specific subject or identifying a subject as a member of a particular group or category and making a decision form based on that identification and representation. (Ferraris, Bosco, Cafiero, D'Angelo, & Suloyeva, 2013) ^[2]. The definition of profiling has been stated by many researchers. Hildebrandt (2008) ^[3] said that profiling is the process by which correlations are discovered between the contents of databases in order to identify and represent a subject. Also, by profiling, certain existing profiles can be applied in order to individualize and represent another subject or to identify it as belonging to a certain category. Summarizing this definition, profiling is both the identification and correlation of certain data to create a specific profile, but also based on some profiles can identify certain people. But profiling is not just about identifying people. This can be done on objects or activities.

Types of profiling

Profiling it does not refer only to the profiles of the persons, the profiling being able to be realized on any subject, human or material; real or imaginary; tangible or intangible. Ferraris and others (2013) ^[2] mentions in their paper that Hildebrandt brought to attention the difference between the types of profiling.

According to him, there are 3 types of profiling: organic, human and mechanical. This classification is based on human intervention in achieving the profile. If the organic one refers to the profiling performed by certain organisms, in order to survive, the human one refers to the direct involvement of man in data collection and in the realization of the profile. Mechanical profiling falls between the other two types. It does not involve intentional or conscious action, but it does require an initial man-made software structure to be able to (Ferraris, Bosco, Cafiero, D'Angelo, & Suloyeva, 2013) ^[2]. Profiling is done both to identify a particular type in a set and to determine whether a particular type is part of the category established as a benchmark. The central idea of profiling is to identify those characteristics that distinguish one thing from the other

Personality and profiling

In order to establish the possibility of creating a person's profile based on his personality traits, it is necessary to define the personality. This concept has been defined many times and from several perspectives, which is why we will have to stop at the definition related to our approach. Given the fact that we aim to achieve the psychological profile of a person,

we will identify the definition of personality from a psychological perspective. Dafinoiu explained the difference between person and personality, given the fact that these two terms are often used in everyday speech. According to him, the person represents the "concrete human individual" (Dafinoiu, 2007) ^[1], while the personality is a "theoretical construction elaborated by psychology in order to understand and explain the way of being and functioning of the human person" (Dafinoiu, 2007) ^[1].

Therefore, by differentiating these two terms, the definition of the concept also emerged personality. Personality is "the set of organized systems that determine conduct" (Dafinoiu, 2007) ^[1] Analyzing from this definition, what we propose in this paper is to start from the way a person acts to determine the personality type of an individual.

Starting from one of the personality traits described by (Dafinoiu, 2007) ^[1] namely the globality that refers to the fact that an individual's personality is formed by those characteristics that offer the possibility for a person to be described and identified, we consider that in establishing a person's profile we will be able to establish the main personality traits. This is necessary due to the second characteristic of personality, coherence. This characteristic refers to the fact that all the elements that are part of the personality are organized and are interdependent. Dafinoiu (2007) ^[1] also listed the third characteristic of personality, temporal permanence. This last characteristic refers to the fact that the individual is aware of his existence and that, regardless of all the changes that take place throughout life, the individual is aware of the past and present elements of his life and also that there will be others elements that would influence his life trajectory.

Social networks have led researchers to identify ways to detect an individual's personality based on the information they share online. The research focused on many aspects that can be found on social networks, among which we list: the way users communicate in the online environment, the images they share, the list of friends and the appreciations they make in the online environment.

A relevant research for identifying the personality based on information on social networks was conducted in 2014 (Park, și alții, 2014). The researchers looked at the language that users of social networks use and showed that based on this language, the personality of individuals can be determined to some extent. They claim that this method of assessing personality traits is fast, cheap and can be applied to a very large number of individuals.

In a study (Kosinski, Stillwell, & Graepel, 2012) made on the largest social network, Facebook, it was shown that certain personality traits can be determined taking into account elements such as: the list of friends, the number of photos uploaded and the number of photos in which they are tagged. The research findings showed that there is a relationship between the personality traits of individuals and how they use Facebook. Therefore, based on the information identified on social networks, the profile of an individual can be made. The research results showed that extroverts can be identified most easily, based on the activity they carry out in the online environment.

Characteristics, such as sexual orientation and level of intelligence, can be identified through the analysis of appreciations on Facebook. Also, these characteristics can be determined by analyzing the search history that someone performs online or by their online clicks. In short, the activity

carried out in the online environment can help to outline a person's profile.

In the study (Kosinski, Stillwell, & Graepel, 2012) in which the link between the appreciations of individuals on Facebook and their personality traits was analyzed, it was emphasized that this link has both positive and negative implications. Knowing an individual's personality helps to personalize the content they view on social media, but information can also be used by those with illegal intentions. Among the most relevant personality traits that can be identified through social networks are: extraversion, empathy and autism. In addition, other characteristics that could be identified are: socio-economic status, smoking / drinking, depression or schizophrenia (Mori & Haruno, 2020).

Conclusions

The approach we took helped us to observe the complexity of the profiling process and the vast areas in which it can be applied.

All definitions have in common that profiling is done by correlating data so that it results in a description of a person, object or anything else that can be identified in a set. The biggest difference between the types of profiling is represented by the purpose for which it is performed. Regardless of the type of profiling, it makes both time and quality more efficient for any company. In a society where information is one click away, it is necessary to be able to filter it so that we get what we need. We consider this to be the purpose of profiling.

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