

A Report About:
Cambridge Analytica's role in Trump's
election campaign and its implications for
Facebook

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Abstract

Purpose

Explain how Cambridge Analytica (CA) played a role in the recent US presidential election and the UK Brexit referendum. What could have been done better before the 2017 scandal? What could have been done after the scandal broke in 2018? The Cambridge Analytica campaign for Donald Trump, the lack of ethical and social responsibility, and the relationship between technology companies and goodwill. Facebook's ethical and legal challenges since the scandal and its future after the Cambridge Analytica case.

Methodology

For this report, ProQuest literature, online magazines, press articles, YouTube, and e-journals were used to gather pertinent information.

Findings

In its efforts to strengthen its corporate social responsibility before the scandal, (1) Cambridge Analytica may have added a new clause to its terms and conditions for its app Global Science Research (GSR), informing users their registration will allow CA access to their friend data profile. (2) CA could also establish a strong brand image, similar to that of Facebook, Google, and Twitter, which built brand awareness to minimize the impact of unexpected scandals. After the scandal, (3) CA could counteract these campaigns with a defensive marketing strategy. (4) The company could apologize to the public for inadvertently using the data after the scandal, and they will adhere to the Data Protection Act's terms and conditions related to users' data. (5) In addition, the closing of the company enabled the media to take CA from a case that could solve a scandal. (6) The CA tactics of Trump campaigns were based upon a digital methodology that supported and scaled up to human insights. (7) CA's unethical behavior impacts the entire society in a negative way. It is right to run a marketing campaign, but not to spread fake news to win elections and gain money. (8) Facebook Inc.'s shareholders have faced unprecedented outages of the company's sites and a declining stock value since 2018. (9) Users' confidence in Facebook has dropped. (10) TikTok and other short-form video platforms threaten Facebook and YouTube.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Data Science, Marketing Communication Strategy and messages, Marketing content and communication Channels, corporate social responsibility, corporate reputation, brand awareness and brand Image, micro-targeting, Big Data Analysis, defensive marketing strategy.

Type of Writing: Report

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I. Introduction

Understanding Cambridge Analytica

According to Gilbert and Ma (2019), Cambridge Analytica is a consulting firm that specializes in using data science methodologies, such as big data analysis and digital marketing, in support of political campaigns. As a result of CA's adoption of digital marketing techniques, the company can reach a large volume of audiences in a cost-effective, scalable, and measurable manner (Digital Marketing Institute, 2021). Founded in 2013, its parent company is SCL Group (Formerly Strategic Communication Laboratories). It was also set up as a US subsidiary of SCL. However, due to a lack of corporate social responsibility, the company declared bankruptcy in 2018, following legal and political fallout.

Report Objective:

1. Analyze Cambridge Analytica's role in the latest presidential election in the US and Brexit in the UK.
2. Before the 2017 scandal, what could have been done better? After the scandal broke, what could have been done better?
3. Cambridge Analytica conducted Trump's election campaign, the lack of ethical and social responsibility, the interrelation of goodwill/licensee operation, and the data-driven technology companies.
4. The ethical and legal challenges Facebook has faced since the scandal, the implications of these challenges, and Facebook's future.

Methodology

Throughout this report, ProQuest literature, online magazines, press articles, YouTube, and e-journals have gathered pertinent information about the latest news and statistics.

Structure

The main body structure includes the introduction, conclusion, and list of references, as well as the following sections:

1. Section 1: Illustrates the role Cambridge Analytica played in the latest American election presidential and the Brexit referendum in the UK.
2. Section 2: What Could have been done better before the scandal in 2017? And what could have been done after the scandal broke (2018)?
3. Section 3: Trump's election campaign process did by Cambridge Analytica, the lack of ethical and social work responsibility, and the interrelation of goodwill/ license operation, and data-driven technology companies.
4. Section 4: The ethical and legal challenges Facebook has since the scandal, the implications of these challenges, and Facebook's future after the Cambridge Analytica Case.

II. Section 1: Cambridge Analytica History

A lack of corporate social responsibility led the company to declare bankruptcy in 2018 after harvested personal data from roughly 87 million Facebook users through an external market research app in 2015. Data comes from a confidential survey created by Russian psychology professor Alexander Kogan at Cambridge. Over 270,000 were paid to take it. The survey - "This Is Your Digital Life" - scraped data from friends' profiles. It helped build psychological profiles that analyzed personality traits later in digital marketing campaigns and political campaigns. When signing in, apps request permission to register through communication channels (Facebook, Google, or a new account). Cambridge Analytica (CA) used collected data to create models that were used to build psychological profiles of various users, including their political affinities, whether extroverts or introverts. With these profile-based models, the company ran different campaigns or marketing content suitable for different users, which allegedly influenced election choices (Confessor, 2018); (Fernando, 2021).

Therefore, CA's unethical practice hurts society. This weakened public trust in government, disfigured public opinion and could turn the media war into a street war. CA's poor operational performance management was also demonstrated by two whistleblowers appearing in the media. Guardian News (2018, 2:13) reported that CA's whistleblower, Christopher Wylie, told a command committee that votes leave 'cheating' and may have swung the EU referendum results. After the revelations in March 2018, Nix, CEO of Cambridge Analytica (CA), was suspended. SCL's Facebook accounts were suspended after it failed to delete the critical data collected from social media platforms. However, several of its key personnel have now founded and moved to other companies that provide political consulting using data science. Several SCL executives founded Emerdata Limited to acquire CA and SCL Group, Siegelman (2018) writes in the Guardian. Emerdata's balance sheets (see figures 1, 2, and 3) and financial performance from (2018-to 2020) indicate the company is at risk since its stock price has declined significantly in the last decade

EMERDATA LIMITED
REGISTERED NUMBER: 10911848

BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 31 AUGUST 2019

	Note	2019 £	2018 £
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	5	(7,800)	(7,800)
Net current liabilities		(7,800)	(7,800)
Total assets less current liabilities		(7,800)	(7,800)
Net liabilities		(7,800)	(7,800)
Capital and reserves			
Called up share capital	6	2,717,907	2,717,907
Share premium account		15,590,028	15,590,028
Profit and loss account		(18,315,735)	(18,315,735)
		(7,800)	(7,800)

Figure1: Emerdata Balance Sheet (2018-2019) Companies house (n.d.).

EMERDATA LIMITED

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2019

4. Fixed asset investments

	Investments in subsidiary companies £
Cost or valuation	
At 1 September 2018	11,090,723
At 31 August 2019	11,090,723
Impairment	
At 1 September 2018	11,090,723
At 31 August 2019	11,090,723
Net book value	
At 31 August 2019	-
At 31 August 2018	-

Figure2. Emerdata Financial Performance (2018-2019) (Companies house (n.d.).

EMERDATA LIMITED

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31 AUGUST 2020

4. Fixed asset investments

	Investments in subsidiary companies £
Cost or valuation	
At 1 September 2019	11,090,723
At 31 August 2020	<u>11,090,723</u>
Impairment	
At 1 September 2019	11,090,723
At 31 August 2020	<u>11,090,723</u>
Net book value	
At 31 August 2020	<u><u>-</u></u>

Figure 3: Emerdata financial performance (2020), Companies House (n.d.).

2.1 What Could have been done better before the scandal in 2017? And what could have been done after the scandal broke (2018)?

Campaigns linked to CA include the leave campaign in the 2016 Brexit referendum debate and Donald Trump's presidential campaign in 2016. Alexander Nix was caught on camera by a reporter claiming his firm did all marketing communication tools, including data search, mining, and analytics for Donald Tramp's campaign. In addition, he allegedly touted the company's unethical practices to expose corrupt politicians in foreign elections. Alexander Nix said CA's contribution to Trump's victory is expected for all companies that are interested in marketing themselves as political contenders. In his interview with BBC News (2018) and his testimony to UK lawmakers (Bloomberg Quicktake: Now, 2018), he outlined that he worked with Dr Kogan. Dr Kogan had legal permission as the SGR project terms and conditions stated that the data may be transferred or sold. Although the primary app (SGR) user has technically consented to using their data, the law doesn't allow a friend to consent on their behalf.

Further, the data received from derivatives (processed or transferred) from the prime source (Facebook) and the latter term and condition inclusive of derivatives in its definition of Facebook data. Therefore, SGR could add a clause to the project terms and conditions saying, (Your data will allow us to access your friends' profiles). This clause can alleviate CA's bottleneck by showing CA's corporate social responsibility strategy (CSR)

and how they care about social issues, fair trade, and sustainability. Hence, CSR will maintain a great corporate reputation even if issues arise. It is also a mistake that CA focused more on political campaigns than creating a solid brand identity in opposition to Facebook, Google, and Twitter. As a result, these platforms implemented strong brand awareness, which reduced the impact of any scandal.

Moreover, Nix spoke at the Concordia (2016) annual summit on transparency, big data, and psychographics. This summit enhances CA's social responsibility to educate the world about digital marketing. Cambridge Analytica posted fake news, something Nix denied during his testimony, and as a result, they deserved penalties. Plus, the anti-Trump democracy campaigns ignited the attack on anyone supporting him. CA could absorb these ads with a defensive marketing strategy to stay relevant alongside Facebook, Google, and other social media. CA could make a campaign and use social media to explain what happened and how whistleblowers and misinformation violated their privacy. In addition, closed CA helps social media embrace and treat CA as a scandal rather than a case. Instead, CA must apologize to the public for the unintentional use of data and work to improve their performance by adhering to the Data Protection Act's terms and conditions regarding users' data.

III. Section 3: Trump's election campaign process done by Cambridge Analytica and the lack of ethical and social work responsibility.

As noted by The Guardian (2018) and Ted (2019), Cambridge Analytica's tactics for Trump campaigns were well-planned digitally (see figure 4). It scaled up to human insights, and decision-making based on the human agency could have been achieved with relatively few resources.

Persuasion Digital Marketing: Process

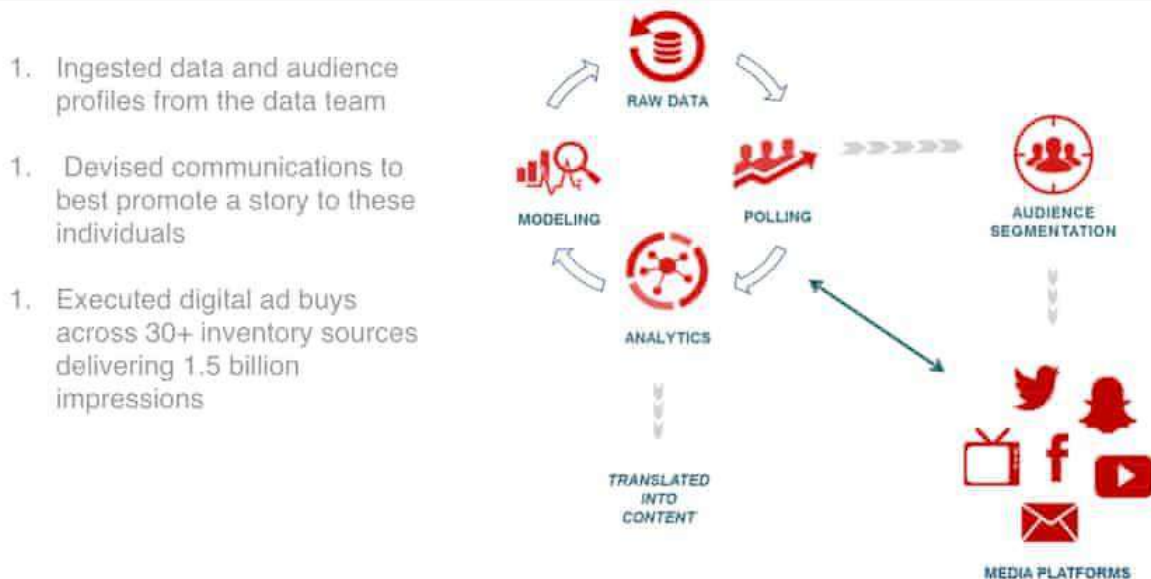



Figure 4: Persuasion Digital Marketing: Process (The Guardian, 2018).

Massive data were collected on the US population, mainly from Facebook and other social media platforms like Google, Snapchat, Twitter, and YouTube. Computer models based on Facebook "likes" were better than family, friends, and coworkers assessing a person's personality. Cambridge Analytica developed campaign messages based on the assumption that such statements could change the target's voting behavior (Resnick, 2018); (Channel 4 News, 2018). Cambridge Analytica also targeted US voters based on their traits to send tailored messages to the ambivalent group between Trump and Hillary Clinton. For example, send a fear-driven message to the user who supports peace and stability, saying, "Electing Hillary destroys our nations."

Similarly, a message to Miami Dolphins fans says, "If Hillary is elected, will exclude Miami Dolphins from Super Bowl competition for unknowing reasons.". Also, Republican voters received "get out the vote" messages to encourage them to vote. Cambridge Analytica could continuously monitor the effectiveness of its messages on different types of voters, giving the company and the constant campaign feedback about the level of engagement on social media. For example, Donald Trump's campaign utilized a prime piece of marketing real estate on election day by showing different ads depending on the specific location of visitors to the YouTube home page (see figure 5). In areas where Trump supporters were likely to turn out, voters were shown a triumphant-looking image of the nominee and helped find their nearest polling place. If the voters were swinging voters, rather than fervent Trump supporters, CA showed them photos of high-profile supporters, including Trump's daughter Ivanka, a reality TV star and president of the Ultimate Fighting Championship, Dana White.

Big Ticket Items




YouTube Mastheads

Displayed different versions of the masthead depending on location of the site visitor

Today, Nov. 8th
Everything Changes

Get to know Donald Trump from some of his closest supporters.

[Learn More >](#)



Today, Nov. 8th
Everything Changes

Today is one of the most important and historic elections in our nation's history. Today is your chance to be heard. Your chance to make a better America - a brighter America - for everyone. Get up. Get out. **VOTE.**

Find Your Local Polling Place:

eg. 390 Valencia St. San Francisco, CA 94103

[Search & Expand](#)




Figure 5: YouTube Mastheads during Trump's election by Cambridge Analytica (The Guardian, 2018).

Native advertising on the political news website Politico was also highly effective. For several weeks, visitors from a list of wing states saw the interactive graphic listing "10 inconvenient truths about the Clinton Foundation." Eventually, Politico sponsored it. The figure (6) below illustrates how the company ensured that voters searching for words like "Trump Iraq War" found paid-for results in Trump's favour. The slide says, "Control The First Impression", and the arrow points to search results that say, "Hillary voted for the Iraq war-Donald Trump oppressed it".

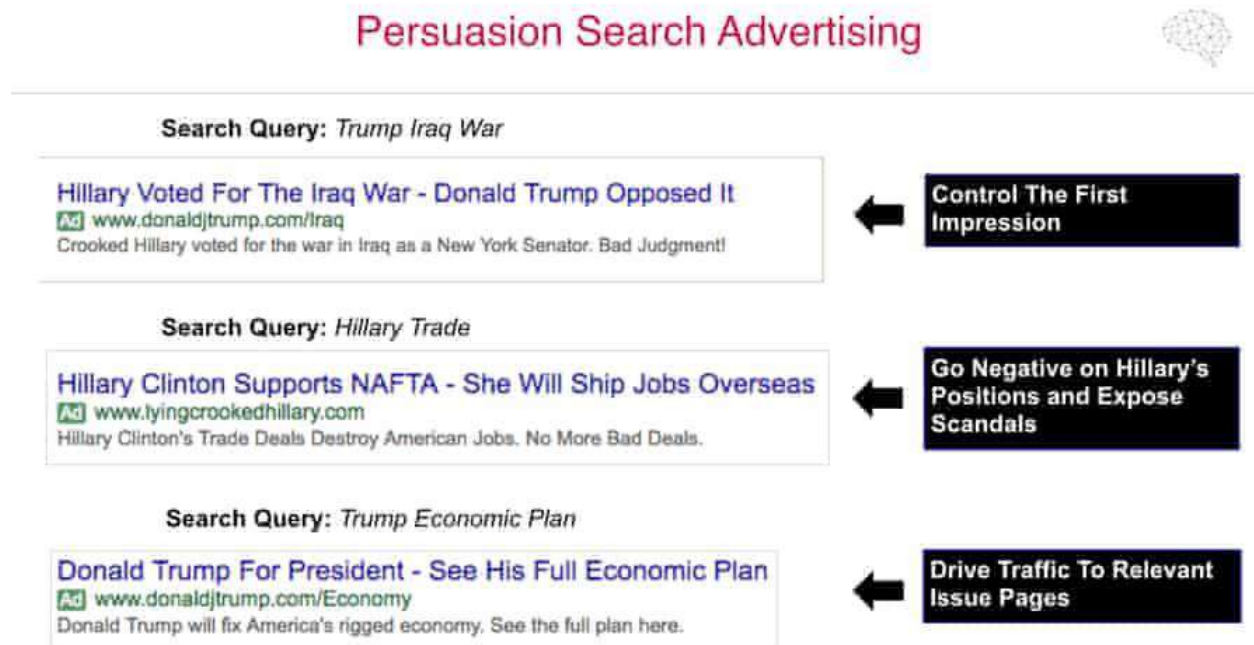


Figure 6 Persuasion Search Advertising during Trump's election (The Guardian, 2018)

Ad campaigns on Facebook and Google search were most successful. Sometimes, the colour of a button in political Facebook ads can determine clickthrough rates (the number of times users click on ads). In addition, ad experiments with live data allow the online campaign team to make quick and continuous adjustments to improve the ads (Calia, 2018).

Artificial intelligence and big data analysis are excellent tools for analyzing and addressing personal traits when handled correctly. In addition, scientific research can use these tools to study human psychological behaviour when exposed to external factors, such as advertisements and how we respond. However, CA's efforts to advance standard technologies of contemporary digital capitalism, such as audience segmentation and microtargeting in election campaigns, were closely related to the relentless rendering of human experience into data for modifying and scrutinizing the potential of all aspects of humanity.

- **The interrelation of goodwill/ license operation and data-driven technology companies.**

Social media companies are at the forefront of corporate valuation due to Big Data's undeniable impact on goodwill and reputation. Companies' use, misuse, and govern big data can impact their goodwill and valuation. Aside from goodwill, other factors affecting valuation include the number of users, revenue (including advertising), and ability to capture market share. According to Appraisal Economics Inc., the value of a social media website user derives from the value of virtual goods and services. A company's average revenue per user (ARPU) is directly related to how much data it collects and maintains about its users, such as their location, credit information, relationships, and personal preferences. Facebook's initial public offering (IPO) is a prime example of big data's value to modern enterprises since it was the most significant opening valuation for a tech company. This huge valuation is owed to how valuable its users are to advertisers, particularly in terms of how they "like", "share", and respond to various sources of data (Selby, 2015). In addition, search engine optimization efforts (SEO) can be boosted by social signals; the more people share, like, and recommend political campaigns, the higher the rank of these pages in the search engine results (Bowden, 2014).

Thus, marketing's psychological impact on human behavior, quoted by Huxley (1932), is that dictatorships seem democratic but are prisons without walls, from which there is no escape. Enslaved people would love their servitudes through consumption and entertainment.

IV. From the scandal to the present, Facebook's moral and legal challenges, and the future of Facebook following the Cambridge Analytica scandal

Criddle (2020); (The New York Times, 2019) report that Facebook was being sued for failing to protect user data in the Cambridge Analytica breach. Almost one million users in England and Wales launched legal action against Facebook for misusing their data. The UK's data protection watchdog fined Facebook £500,000 in October 2018. It was deemed a severe breach of the law done by Facebook's Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). King and Wagner (2021) report that the Federal Trade Commission investigated Facebook's privacy practices and issued a \$5 million fine a year later.

Earing Disaster

In figure (7) below, CBS News illustrates the immediate impact on Facebook's stock share during the scandal. The report caused Facebook to lose \$119 billion in market value, making it the most significant one-day loss in US market history (Picchi, 2018).

Rough year for Facebook shares

FB stock price, January 2018-present

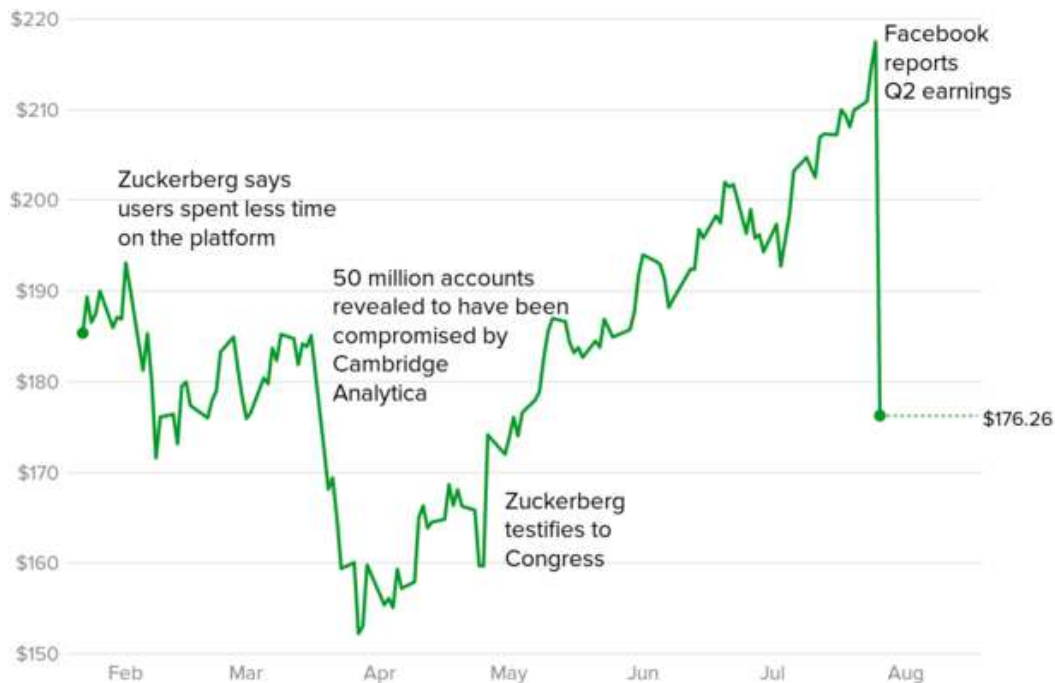


Figure 7: Facebook stock suffers the most significant one-day drop in history (Picchi, 2018).

During the past year, Facebook Inc.'s shareholders have faced an unprecedented outage of the company's sites, and a damaging report by a former insider turned whistleblower that sent the stock down nearly 5% on Monday, October 16, 2021, which was considered recovering from the stock fell 18% on March 18, 2018. In addition, investors are concerned that inflation and rising bond yields could erode the value of future earnings at Facebook and a general pullback among tech stocks. However, Facebook's shares will likely not remain under the cloud (King and Wagner, 2021).

The Growing cycles of scandal on Facebook

The Wall Street Journal and regulators received thousands of company documents from Frances Haugen as a whistleblower. In the documents, Facebook complained about its difficulty moderating content and the impact of Instagram on mental health.

Trust Facebook

In the Ponemon Institute survey, NBC News found that Facebook's confidence had dropped by 66% (from 79% to 27%) after one week of the Cambridge Analytica scandal (see figure 8). In the next week, it reached 33%. However, after Zuckerberg's testimony, Founder of

Facebook, it dropped to 28% as he believed the company was committed to privacy (Weisbaum, 2018).

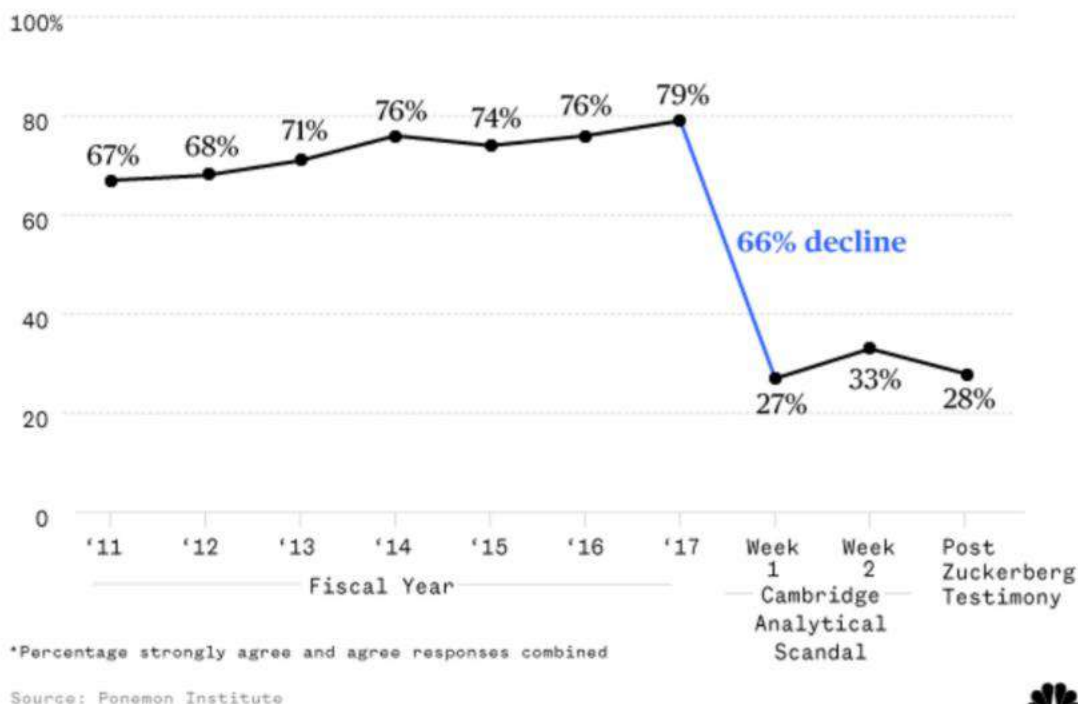


Figure 8: Percentage of respondents who agree that Facebook is committed to protecting the privacy of their personal information (Weisbaum, 2018).

Facebook active users after the scandal

Figure (9) from Statista (2022) shows the number of monthly active users increasing worldwide. However, the growth percentage declined after the scandal.

Percentage Growth	(2016-2017)	(2018-2019)	(2020-2021)
	28.72%	13.75	11.87

Table 1 shows the growth percentage of Facebook active users between (2017-and 2021).

After the scandal, users looked for other secure and trusted platforms. Forbes says that despite slowing growth rates in the US and Europe, it has continued to grow by adding young users who do not care about elections. Zuckerberg stated that Facebook faces a threat from short-form video platforms such as TikTok and YouTube, attracting younger audiences. Even though ad-tacking changes by Apple and inflation might eat into Facebook's revenue, the majority of its revenue comes from ads. In addition, in an attempt to appear with a new face and fold the scandals that have followed Facebook for years, the company rebranded to Meta in October 2020 (Hart, 2022). The company's name change has shifted from a mobile and desktop social network to a metaverse concept accessible through augmented and virtual reality to secure new young audiences. Soon, Meta will rely on its core advertising business. Most of its fourth-quarter revenue (2021) came from advertising, some \$32,6 billion (Brown, 2022).

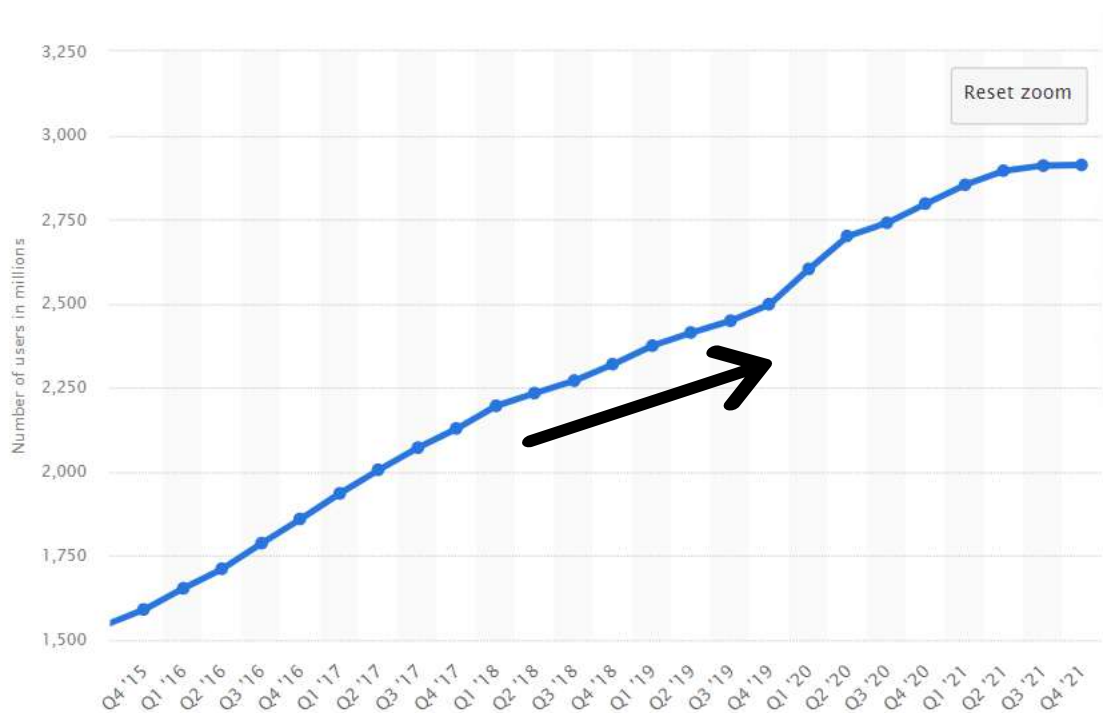


Figure 9: Number of monthly active Facebook users worldwide as of 4th quarter of 2021 (in a million) (Statista, 2022).

Meta's names change and targeting young audiences are promising steps for the future. Since the social media competition is so aggressive, Facebook should pursue other revenue sources besides Ads. Today, cyber security solutions are a trend in this field, following the Russia and Ukraine issues. Furthermore, it can restore its reputation by providing charitable contributions; It can also follow the example of Elon Musk of SpaceX, whose reputation rose after giving free internet to Ukrainians through space satellites.

V. Conclusion

This report discusses (1) how Cambridge Analytica (CA) played a role in the recent United States presidential election and the UK Brexit referendum. (2) Was anything possible to avoid the scandal? (3) And what about after it broke? (4) How Cambridge Analytica's role in Trump's election campaign intersects with goodwill/license operations and data-driven technology firms. (5) From the scandal to the present, Facebook's moral and legal challenges, and the future of Facebook following the Cambridge Analytica scandal. This report consulted ProQuest literature, online magazines, press articles, YouTube, and e-journals to gather the latest news and statistics.

According to the report, (1) CA strengthened its Corporate Social Responsibility before the scandal by informing users that CA could access their friend data when they registered for the research app (SGR). In addition, (2) the CA could also build its brand identity by reducing any unexpected scandal impact.

After the scandal, (3) CA would be better off publicly apologizing and adhering to the Data Protection Act's terms regarding customer data use. (4) As Facebook, Google, and other social media networks did in the past, CA could absorb these campaigns by defensive advertising. In addition, closing the company let the social media embrace and treat CA as a scandal.

(5) CA tactics for Trump campaigns were designed digital methodologies that supported and accelerated human insight and decision-making. Still, unfortunately, these unethical practices harm society because they are spreading false news to win the election. (6) Social media companies' average revenue per user depends on how much data they collect. SEO efforts can be significantly boosted by social signals like 'likes' and 'shares'. A web page associated with these campaigns is more likely to rank highly in search engine results pages the more people share, like, and recommend them in social media communities. (7) A decline in stock shares and unexpected global outages of Facebook Inc.'s sites have weighed on Facebook Inc.'s shareholders. (8) Whistle-blower Frances Haugen has created a growing scandal on Facebook. (9) This has lowered Facebook's popularity. (10) Platforms such as TikTok and YouTube threaten Facebook's existence.

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