

## Live streaming

### Introduction

Assume that you have been appointed to a task force of 5 or 6 computing professionals within your organization. You have been asked to examine the current issue outlined in the article below. Your team has not been asked to make specific recommendations to solve the problem. Rather, you have been asked to make recommendations that will help the Government decide what next steps they should take.

### Prompts

1. What is/are the problem/problems here? Is there an underlying fundamental problem?
2. Who are the major stakeholders and what are their perspectives?
3. What are the major ethical, legal, and security aspects associated with the problem?
4. What are the intended and unintended consequences of existing computing solutions? Consider the consequences on individuals, organizations and society within local and global contexts.
5. What recommendations do you propose that may lead to potential solutions?

On December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2017, close to midnight, thousands of UAE residents gathered outside Dubai Mall, eager to watch the New Year's Eve fireworks shooting off from Burj Khalifa. Millions more in the UAE and around the world were able to watch the event live as it was streamed on Twitter. This was the first live streaming partnership Twitter had established in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region. Ahmad Al Matrooshi, the Director of Emaar Properties, said that the live streaming of the fireworks would help to create emotional connections with people around the world and define Dubai as a place of global entertainment.

A more recent Facebook live stream has also appealed to emotions around the world, but for completely different reasons. On March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019, Brenton Tarrant, a 28-year-old Australian man live streamed his attack on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, killing 50 men, women and children attending Friday prayers. This attack is recorded as the deadliest shooting in New Zealand history. Tarrant's attack isn't the only violent act that has been streamed to the world. In January 2017, a gang rape in Sweden was live streamed on Facebook; in August 2018 a mass shooting was live streamed on Twitch. Numerous rapes, shootings, suicides, beheadings, physical attacks and other acts of violence and crime have been shown to the world as they unfold.

When Facebook first launched its live stream feature, Mark Zuckerberg, its co-founder and CEO, described live streaming as a way of creating meaningful interactions with others. He said that "when you interact live, you feel connected in a more personal way. This is ... going

to create new opportunities for people to come together” (Cohen, 2016, para. 4). Live streaming has, in fact, helped to create informal communities where individuals connect, socialise and share experiences. For example, Pope Francis’ visit to Abu Dhabi in February 2019 was live streamed, making the event accessible to the Catholic community within and beyond the UAE (Leon, 2019). The event was part of the UAE’s Year of Tolerance efforts to promote religious harmony and peace across the world.

Live streaming has enabled an innovative and fast way of keeping the public informed of local and global events. In 2019, Nabd, the Middle East’s most popular personalized news app launched its live streaming platform, enabling Arabic speakers in the MENA region instant access to news, sports, entertainment, and business and economy broadcasts. The added live stream feature increased Nabd followers, placing it in competition with social media giants like YouTube, Instagram and Snapchat.

Mary Aiken (2019), advisor to Europol Cyber Crime Centre, warns that criminals will continue to broadcast their crimes and violence to the world. She explains that the anonymity that social media provides and desensitisation as a result of exposure to violent and extreme content on the Internet are the reasons why criminals turn to live stream.

Kurt Wagner (2017), a journalist for the online business and technology newspaper *Recode* suggested that it was time to close down Facebook due to its dissemination of self-harm and violence. In 2017, Facebook announced that it would add 3000 employees to its workforce to monitor and delete videos of violent content (Tsukayama, 2017). The same year it also started using artificial intelligence (AI) to identify posts, videos and live streams that included references to suicide or self-harm (Larson, 2017). Through visual recognition software, Facebook’s AI system analyses words and phrases and alerts Facebook when a post or stream is flagged. However, despite human and machine induced monitoring, the recent Christchurch attack was not detected or flagged. Moreover, the success of AI monitoring is based on a country’s data privacy laws. While it may work in the US, it would not be able to provide necessary data in European Union countries where strict measures are in place to protect personal data.

Kelly Malone (2017), a Canadian journalist, argues that consumers of social media are responsible for monitoring the content of live streams. She suggests that anyone watching a stream with criminal content is obliged to report this to the police and that failure to do so should be a punishable offence. Another way of reducing the streaming of violence would be

for consumers to boycott social media platforms on which the live stream is made. This would force social media to police what goes on more closely. But these actions are reactive and rely on individuals' sense of civic duty, which may or may not be at desirable levels.

## References

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