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Invisible Data: The Hidden Information Big Tech Collects Without Explicit Input

The vast majority of the population thinks that they can provide data only when they type, click, or post something online- but the truth is that every pause, scroll and movement contributes to a large invisible data ecosystem which makes judgments about their lives.

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Introduction

In the present day digital environment, data ceases to be one that users have to consciously give, but rather, it is continually mined. Each tap of every smartphone, each app interruption and even a pause before clicking a button all constitute a hidden set of data called an invisible data.

In the case of such countries, as in Pakistan, where digital usage is quickly growing, comprehending the invisible information is crucial to safeguarding user privacy and developing responsible technology infrastructure

""The most powerful data is not what you tell the system it is what the system learns about you when you say nothing at all.""

Technology Overview

Invisible data is an example of behavioral and passive data that is not gathered with the express intent of the user. This data is automatically recorded by sensors, applications and tracking algorithms unlike forms or surveys.

Examples include:

A typing sequence and error patterns ,GPS location movements , Mobile devices switching frequency

Key Findings & Impact

Recent research indicates that we can only passively input up to 80-90% of the available digital behavioural information. This implies that, most of the insights are based on actions that users are not aware of. Key impacts include:

Social engineering attacks: Hackers can use behavioural patterns to attack social systems.

This is both a possibility and a worry in the expanding digital economy in Pakistan. Invisible data can enable smarter services to be offered by startups, however, the absence of strong laws to protect data privacy can put users at a risk of privacy invasion.



Figure 1: Invisible data is the silent shadow of every digital action we make. Credit: Author / Canva

What's Next?

Even more integration with artificial intelligence and predictive systems is the direction the future of invisible data is heading. In the near future, systems can predict needs even before the user has even engaged with the equipment- they can propose what to do depending on the emotional conditions, surroundings, and behavioral patterns.

About the Author

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