Chinese face-swapping app goes viral

FB face recognition feature to replace tag suggestions

SAN FRANCISCO, Sept 4, (Agencies): Facebook says it is ending its practice of using face recognition software to identify users' friends in uploaded photos and automatically suggesting they "tag" them.

Instead, it is replacing the feature, called "tag suggestions", with its broader face recognition setting, which identifies people's faces in photos for various uses, not just tagging. Beginning Tuesday, people who are new to Facebook, or previously had the tag suggestions setting available, will instead get the face recognition setting, which they can turn on. It will be off by default.

People who had the tag suggestions setting turned off will see a notice about face recognition and a button to turn it on or keep it off.

Facebook was sued in Illinois over the tag suggestion feature and a federal appeals court has ruled the lawsuit can proceed.

Facebook Inc is opening up its face recognition technology to all users with an option to opt out, the social media company said on Tuesday, as it discontinued a related feature called "Tag Suggestions."

The old feature enabled users to choose whether Facebook could suggest that their friends tag them in photos, without giving them control over other uses of the technology.

The face recognition setting, available to some Facebook users since December 2017, has additional functions such as notifying account holders if their profile photo is used by someone else.

People who opt in to the new setting will still have face tag suggestions automatically generated about them.

Facebook's face recognition technology has been at the center of a privacy related lawsuit since 2015.

The lawsuit by Illinois users accused the company of violating the state's Biometric Information Privacy Act, claiming it illegally collected and stored biometric data of millions of users without their consent.

Last month, a federal appeals court rejected Facebook's effort to undo the class action status of the lawsuit.

"We have always disclosed our use of face recognition technology and that people can turn it on or off at any time," Facebook said last month.

The company said it continues to engage with privacy experts, academ-ics, regulators and its users on face recognition and its control options.

Also:

SHANGHAI: ZAO – a new Chinese app that lets users swap their faces with celebrities, sports stars or anyone else in a video clip – racked up millions of downloads on the weekend but swiftly drew fire over privacy issues.

The app's surge in popularity and sudden backlash from some users highlights how artificial intelligence (AI) technologies bring about new concerns surrounding identity verification.

ZAO was uploaded to China's iOS App Store on Friday and immediately went viral. According to a post from the app makers on China's Twitter-like Weibo, ZAO's servers nearly crashed due to the surge in traffic.

According to App Annie, a firm that tracks app downloads all over the world, ZAO was the most-downloaded free app in China's iOS App Store as of Sept 1.

Consumers sign-up for ZAO with their phone number and upload images of their face, using photographs taken with their smartphone.

They can then choose from a range of videos of celebrities on which to superimpose their face, and share the videos with their friends.

In addition to Chinese celebrities, other famous faces on the app include **Leonardo DiCaprio** and **Marilyn Monroe**.

Gu Shi, a 21-year-old student in Shanghai, downloaded ZAO after seeing her friends post clips on their WeChat feeds.

"I've never tried using Japanese makeup and hairstyles because it's too complicated to do all by myself," she told Reuters. "This app gave me a chance to try a totally different style from my normal life."

As the app went viral, some users complained that its privacy policy could endanger them.

One section of the user agreement stated that consumers who upload their images to ZAO agree to surrender the intellectual property rights to their face, and permit ZAO to use their images for marketing purposes.

Zao said on Weibo that it would address those concerns.

"We thoroughly understand the anxiety people have towards privacy concerns," the company said.

Culture

The Tunisian band 'Lovers of Tarab' performs during a special musical evening on Tuesday evening at Abdul Hussein Abdul Redha Theatre as part of Summer Cultural Festival in Kuwait.

Technology

Intelligent video helps identify people, suspicious behavior and guns

AI-powered cameras: Tool against mass shootings

By Ivan Moreno

Paul Hildreth peered at a display of dozens of images from security cameras surveying his Atlanta school district and settled on one showing a woman in a bright yellow shirt walking a hallway.

A mouse click instructed the artificial intelligence-equipped system to find other images of the woman, and it immediately stitched them into a video narrative of where she was currently, where she had been and where she was going.

There was no threat, but Hildreth's demonstration showed what's possible with AI-powered cameras. If a gunman were in one of his schools, the cameras could quickly identify the shooter's location and movements, allowing police to end the threat as soon as possible, said Hildreth, emergency operations coordinator for the Fulton County School District.

AI is transforming surveillance cameras from passive sentries into active observers that can identify people, suspicious behavior and guns, amassing large amounts of data that help them learn over time to recognize mannerisms, gait and dress. If the cameras have a previously captured image of someone who is banned from a building, the system can immediately alert officials if the person returns.

At a time when the threat of a mass shooting is ever-present, schools are among the most enthusiastic adopters of the technology, known as real-time video analytics or intelligent video, even as civil liberties groups warn about a threat to privacy. Police, retailers, stadiums and Fortune 500 companies are also using intelligent video.

"What we're really looking for are those things that help us to identify things either before they occur or maybe right as they occur so that we can react a little faster," Hildreth said.

A year after an expelled student killed 17 people at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, Broward County installed cameras from Canada-based Avigilon throughout the district in February. Hildreth's Atlanta district will spend $16.5 million to put the cameras in its roughly 100 buildings in coming years.

In Greeley, Colorado, the school district has used Avigilon cameras for about five years, and the technology has advanced rapidly, said John Tait, security manager for Weld County School District 6.

Upcoming upgrades include the ability to identify guns and read people's expressions, a capability not currently part of Avigilon's systems.

Expressions

"It's almost kind of scary," Tait said. "It will look at the expressions on people's faces and their mannerisms and be able to tell if they look violent."

Retailers can spot shoplifters in real time and alert security or warn of a potential shoplifter. One company, Athena-Security, has cameras that spot when someone has a weapon. And in a bid to help retailers, it recently expanded its capabilities to help identify big spenders when they visit a store.

It's unknown how many schools have AI-equipped cameras because it's not being tracked. But Michael Dorn, executive director of Safe Havens International , a nonprofit that advises schools on security, said "quite a few" use Avigilon and Sweden-based Axis Communications equipment "and the feedback has been very good."

Schools are the largest market for video surveillance systems in the US, estimated at $450 million in 2018, according to London-based IHS Markit, a data and information services company. The overall market for real-time video analytics was estimated at $3.2 billion worldwide in 2018 - and it's anticipated to grow to more than $9 billion by 2023, according to one estimate .

AI cameras have already been tested by some companies to evaluate consumers' facial expressions to determine if they're having a pleasant or unpleasant shopping experience and improve customer service, according to the Center for Democracy and Technology, a Washington nonprofit that advocates for privacy protections. Policy counsel Joseph Jerome said companies may someday use the cameras to estimate someone's age, which might be useful for liquor stores, or facial-expression analysis to aid in job interviews .

Police in New York, New Orleans and Atlanta all use cameras with AI. In Hartford, Connecticut, the police network of 500 cameras includes some AI-equipped units that can, for example, search hours of video to find people wearing certain clothes or search for places where a suspicious vehicle was seen.

The power of the systems has sparked privacy concerns.

"The issue is personal autonomy and whether you'll be able to go around walking in the public square or a shopping mall without tens, hundreds, thousands of people, companies and entities learning things about you," Jerome said.

"People haven't really caught up to how broad and deep the technology can now go," said Jay Stanley, a senior policy analyst at the American Civil Liberties Union who published a research paper in June about how the cameras are being used. "When I explain it, people are pretty amazed and spooked."

When it comes to the potential for stemming violence that may be less of an issue. Shannon Flounnory, executive director for safety and security for the Fulton County School District, said no privacy concerns have been heard there.

"The events of Parkland kind of changed the game," he said. "We have not had any arguments or any pushback right now."

ZeroEyes, a Philadelphia-based company, began testing gun-detection software last winter at Rancocas Valley Regional High School in New Jersey, which became a client. Since the company began selling their product this month, it said it's signed up another four schools - in Pennsylvania, Georgia, Tennessee and Florida.

The company also brought on a government agency in New York that it says it can't name. Co-founder Rob Huberty said ZeroEyes will be marketing the product to "stadiums, shopping malls – anywhere with a potential for a mass shooting."

Even supporters of these systems acknowledge the technology is not going to prevent all mass shootings – especially considering how quickly damage is done. But supporters argue they can at least help reduce the number of casualties by giving people more time to seek shelter and providing first responders with information sooner.

"This is just one thing that's going to help everybody do their job better," Huberty said.

Detect

Both ZeroEyes and Austin-based Athena-Security claim their systems can detect weapons with more than 90 percent accuracy but acknowledge their products haven't been tested in a real-life scenario. And both systems are unable to detect weapons if they're covered – a limitation the companies say they are working to overcome.

Stanley, with the ACLU, said there's reason to be skeptical about their capabilities because AI is still "pretty unreliable at recognizing the complexities of human life."

Facial recognition is not infallible, and a study last year from Wake Forest University found that some facial-recognition software interprets black faces as appearing angrier than white faces.

But the seemingly endless cycle of mass shootings is compelling consumers to see technology – untested though it may be – as a possible solution to an intractable problem.

After a gunman killed 51 people in attacks at two mosques in New Zealand in March, Athena-Security installed gun-detection cameras at one of the mosques in June. Fahad A. B. Al-Ameri, a Qatari businessman with no affiliation to the mosque, paid for them because "all people should be secure going to their houses of worship," he said.

Of the 50 clients Athena-Security has, about a fourth are schools, said company co-founder Chris Ciabarra.

"It's a matter of saving lives," he said. (AP)

In this July 30, 2019 photo, Paul Hildreth, emergency operations coordinator for the Fulton County School District, works in the emergency operations center at the Fulton County School District Administration Center in Atlanta. (AP)

Latest

India KIP Logo Contest: Since 2004, the Government of India has been organizing "Know India Programmes" (KIPs) for the Indian youth diaspora in the age group of 18-30, with an objective to connect them with their motherland and to give them an exposure to various aspects of contemporary India's Art, Culture and heritage.

To promote greater awareness among the PIO youth about KIP (https://kip.gov.in/), Government of India has decided to hold a world-wide global KIP LOGO Contest. The contest is open to all PIOs irrespective of their age, nationality, gender. The winner of the contest will be awarded with a prize of 25-day fully sponsored tour to India as a KIP participant.

The contest started on Sept 1, 2019, and the entries will be accepted till Oct 15, 2019. Interested candidates may please go through guidelines and may submit their entries directly to PIC wing of Embassy of India, Kuwait at pic.kuwait@mea.gov.in.

Guidelines for the Logo Design Contest for Know India Programme:
Logo Requirements
■ **Professional:** This logo will be featured on Ministry's website, social media platforms and other mediums (stationery, pamphlets, T-shirts etc). As a result, the logo should be eye-catching and legible.
■ **Theme:** Logo must promote the Know India Programme scheme of the Government of India which aims – "To reconnect the Indian diaspora youth of the age group 18 to 30 years with their Indian roots".
■ **Color:** There are no limitations and any colors may be used. However, logo must look good in color (if any) or black and white. The logo may be created using pencils, crayons, markers and paint. Also, the logo may be created with a computer drawing program.
■ **Integrity:** Logos cannot contain copyrighted material. There should be no watermarks on design entries.

Logos must have been created and edited by the contestant(s). Logos may not include images or licensed images that have been previously published. Logos must be easily reproducible and scalable for large and small formatting. The logo should be simple, not be complicated or confusing, and all elements must be discernible when reproduced in smaller sizes

Participation Eligibility Cri-teria
The competition is open to all People of Indian Origin (PIO only)
Contest Details
■ Winners will be selected by the Ministry of External Affairs. Con-testants agree that the Ministry may publish their logo and name(s) and may use both for advertising campaigns and/or marketing materials in the future. Contestants assign all ownership rights, including all intellectual property rights of the logo, to Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. Additionally, the Ministry may alter, modify or revise the Logo 'The Ministry also reserves the right to not select a winner if, in its sole discretion, no suitable entries are received.