Immediate release

NYU Tandon data scientists launch tool to analyze

Facebook political advertising in Canada

New website provides an interactive resource to explore election spending

BROOKLYN, New York, Wednesday, October 2, 2019 – Computer scientists at New York University Tandon School of Engineering today launched a new website that analyzes all Canadian Facebook political advertising in the leadup to the October 21 elections. The interactive, user-friendly website lets users easily explore the data and break down the advertising spend based on party, target demographic, region, and other factors. The full data is available at: https://onlinepoliticaltransparencyproject.org.

The data was compiled using cutting-edge machine learning and data scraping tools, and expands on the team's 2018 political advertising analysis, called the Online Transparency Project, which has already reviewed more than 1 million ads identified by Google, Twitter, and Facebook to determine how much political organizations were spending to target U.S. voters.

To help journalists utilize the tool established for the Canadian elections, the data scientists are hosting a webinar on Friday morning, October 4, 2019, to fully explain its applications. Journalists and representatives of organizations involved in election monitoring may request credentials at Kathleen.Hamilton@nyu.edu.

"While the largest advertising platforms have made significant strides to allow the public to access information on political advertisements, much of the data is difficult to mine and analyze," said Damon McCoy, assistant professor of computer science and engineering. "We hope our website will help the media better understand political ad spend and targeting, and we plan to continue to build this platform with data from additional countries and platforms."

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The project was funded by the Digital Ecosystem Research Challenge, a collaborative effort between Elizabeth Dubois, an assistant professor in the Department of Communication and a Centre for Law, Technology and Society at the University of Ottawa (français), and Taylor Owen, an associate professor in the Max Bell School of Public Policy at McGill University. The Digital Ecosystem Research Challenge supports academic research into the impacts and uses of digital media during the 2019 Federal Election in Canada.

About the New York University Tandon School of Engineering
The NYU Tandon School of Engineering dates to 1854, the founding date for both the New York University School of Civil Engineering and Architecture and the Brooklyn Collegiate and Polytechnic Institute (widely known as Brooklyn Poly). A January 2014 merger created a comprehensive school of education and research in engineering and applied sciences, rooted in a tradition of invention and entrepreneurship and dedicated to furthering technology in service to society. In addition to its main location in Brooklyn, NYU Tandon collaborates with other schools within NYU, one of the country's foremost private research universities, and is closely connected to engineering programs at NYU Abu Dhabi and NYU Shanghai. It operates Future Labs focused on start-up businesses in downtown Manhattan and Brooklyn and an award-winning online graduate program. For more information, visit http://engineering.nyu.edu.

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