

# '10-Year Challenge' Meme Could Improve Social Algorithms For Facial Recognition

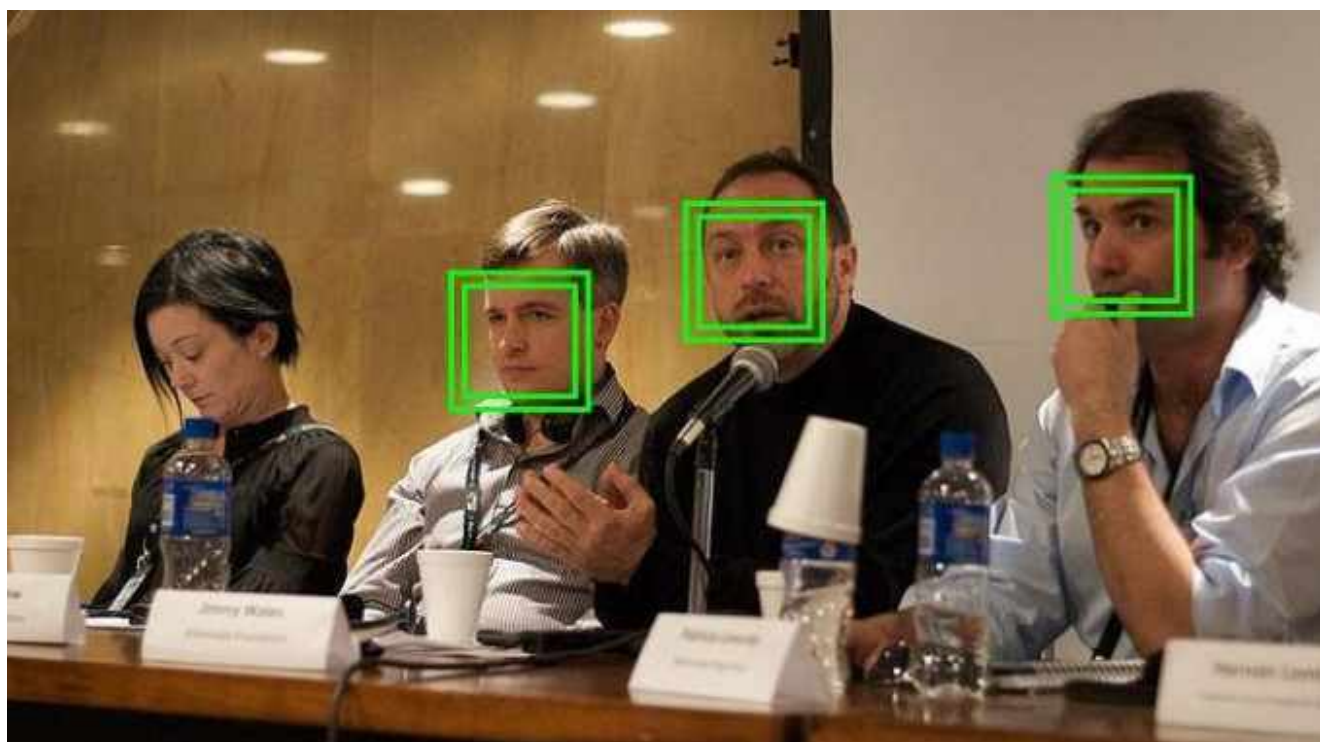


Image Credit: The Mind Unleashed

By Elias Marat | [The Mind Unleashed](#)

While the “10-Year Challenge” spreading across social media may appear to be the latest innocuous viral phenomenon, sweeping upwards of 5 million users and multiple celebrities into the challenge, privacy experts and technology analysts are sounding the alarm about the social engineering motives behind the trend.

According to the theory, the meme – which calls for Facebook and Instagram (which is owned by Facebook) users to upload a photo of themselves a decade ago alongside their latest photo

– was deliberately crafted by Facebook as a means to harvest photos for the sake of improving the social media giant’s facial recognition software and AI machine-learning capabilities, or for Facebook to sell in batches to third-party companies.

The first writer to lay out the theory in detail was *Wired Magazine* writer Kate O’Neill, whose sarcastic tweet questioning “*how all this data could be mined to train facial recognition algorithms on age progression and age recognition*” spread like wildfire after it was posted over the weekend.

In a subsequent [opinion piece](#) for *Wired*, O’Neill argued:

*“Thanks to this meme, there’s now a very large dataset of carefully curated photos of people from roughly 10 years ago and now.*

*... But even if this particular meme isn’t a case of social engineering, the past few years have been rife with examples of social games and memes designed to extract and collect data. Just think of the mass data extraction of more than 70 million US Facebook users performed by [Cambridge Analytica](#).”*

*O’Neil added that “we need to approach our interactions with technology mindful of the data we generate and how it can be used at scale.”*

The author isn’t alone in her speculation that the meme’s spread could potentially mask the tech giant’s potentially nefarious motives.

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