Dubai Launches 'Unleashing the Power of Data through Private Synthetic Data' Report to Boost Digital Economy

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Today, Digital Dubai has launched the first Synthetic Data Implementation Framework, making Dubai the first city in the world to do so. Designed to promote and facilitate the use of synthetic data, the framework is set to increase opportunities to share high-value data, whilst protecting the sensitive information it contains. Digital Dubai wants to use synthetic data to deliver on its mission of boosting data-led innovation and driving the digitisation of Dubai's economy.

Synthetic data uses artificial intelligence to create near-exact replicas of real-world data that can be shared. More effective in protecting sensitive data than existing privacy preserving techniques, synthetic data can also be used to increase data volume and quality, as well as correcting for biases.

Datasets that once remained under lock and key because of privacy concerns can now be used to meet the ever-growing appetite for larger, higher quality data needed to train machine learning algorithms or test software applications.

The use of synthetic data is already growing in areas such as financial services, testing new fraud detection methods or mimicking customer behaviour to research innovative financial products, and healthcare using patient record data in research to advance public health systems, while still maintaining patient confidentiality. Synthetic data can be used for a range of other potential uses, from creating training data for autonomous vehicles and robots, to powering digital twin technologies and eventually, metaverse applications.

Digital Dubai is releasing the Synthetic Data Implementation Framework in order to address critical questions – both ethical and practical – which need to be answered if data ecosystem actors from the public and private sector alike are to achieve the correct balance between innovative use and guaranteed privacy preservation.

The framework aims to create conditions in which those tasked with using data to power new products, insights and business strategy, can do so ethically and responsibly. It builds on a range of initiatives which combine to create advanced digital and data governance arrangements and a world class data ecosystem in the Emirate – including the Dubai Data Law of 2015 and the more recent Ethical AI Guidelines and Self-Assessment Toolkit which is now being scaled to national level.

The Synthetic Data Implementation Framework is supported by a research report, produced with UK AI Business, Faculty AI. As well as explaining the data science behind synthetic data, this report uses evidence from use cases to make the social and economic case for synthetic data, indicating that synthetic data can increase the value in data sharing exponentially.

Digital Dubai has been entrusted with four key tasks which are reflected in the Synthetic Data Implementation Framework – to accelerate the digital transformation of the city through strategic partnerships with governments and private sector entities; to increase the Emirate's digital economy contribution to the city's overall GDP; to build and develop digital competencies of national talent; and maintain and develop Dubai's digital wealth whilst accelerating Dubai's cybersecurity efforts.

Commenting on the launch of the white paper, His Excellency Hamad Obaid Al Mansoori, Director General of Digital Dubai, asserted: "Our interest in digital data stems from our awareness of its importance at this stage, where we are witnessing AI-powered technologies transforming every aspect of our lives. Our efforts to work with digital data are an integral part of our journey to lay the foundations of a comprehensive and integrated digital life, supported by smart solutions that are rooted in digital data analysis. They form part of our commitment to implement our wise leadership's directives to advance Dubai's position as a city that inspires the world in its quest to create a prosperous future for its citizens and residents."

"Our recent efforts in that regard aim to overcome one of the main challenges to data usage, which is preserving the privacy of individuals and entities, while maximizing benefit from available data," H.E. Al Mansoori added. "These efforts have been met with notable success, and today, we have developed an advanced practical guide that decision makers and experts can refer to. I thank the Dubai Data Establishment and all research and support teams for this accomplishment, and I urge our partners across government entities to explore the findings of this study, benefit from the instructions it provides,

and work to enrich it by implementing the guidelines in the data analysis field moving forward."

For his part, H.E. Younus Al Nasser, Assistant Director General of Digital Dubai, and CEO of Dubai Data Establishment, said: "This research is in line with the Dubai Data Establishment's mission to build an integrated and thriving system that supports innovation in the field of data to create value and spearhead the transition towards a comprehensive, fully integrated smart digital life. With this responsibility in mind, we understand the importance of data mined from various sectors across the Emirate of Dubai, but at the same time, we are highly aware of the need to preserve the security and privacy of individuals and organizations – both government and private entities. This pioneering project we are launching is one of many we are working on that are designed to develop policies, standards, and guidelines to facilitate the dissemination and exchange of data and ensure its proper use."

"This achievement is another major milestone, following the successful launch of the Ethical AI Toolkit and Data Sharing Toolkit, which achieved promising results that allowed us to demonstrate that it is possible to create special composite copies of sensitive data systems that simulate real data, but are more secure and in line with privacy laws," H.E. Al Nasser added. "And by processing this Synthetic Data, we can maintain confidentiality without compromising the valuable information contained in raw data. This, in turn, allows for advanced analysis, the creation of ever more advanced data-driven products and solutions."

H.E. Al Nasser applauded the partnership with Faculty – a world leader in AI – which supported Digital Dubai to complete the white paper. "This partnership is a great example of what the relationship between the public and private sectors should look like in the era of digital data and the Fourth Industrial Revolution. The tremendous transformations the world is witnessing call for concerted efforts to achieve results that benefit everyone."

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