

# **Systems Theory**

## **Individual Assignment**

Chris Drechsel | cpdkd3 | 16263134

**Ethical Quandary:** A retailer selling your personal information to others for profit.

<u>Ethical Quandary</u>	<u>Social Media Presence</u>	<u>Retailer Consumer Database</u>	<u>Retailer Financial System</u>	<u>Advertisements for the Consumer</u>	<u>Consumer Trust of Retailers</u>
Going Behind the Customer's Back	X	-	X	-	X
Other Retailers Purchasing Information	-	X	X	X	-
Using/Viewing Private Information	-	X	X	X	X
Selling Information that isn't yours	X	-	X	-	X

**Summary:**

This quandary is a matter of principle for most people. When you go shopping at a retail store, you expect to be able to go in, buy a product and leave. You are expecting the interaction between consumer and retailer to stop at the exchange of product for currency. However, that is not the case. The retailer stores information about you, including your name, age, date of birth, address and even the items you looked at and bought. That information is then bought and sold, allowing corporations to learn not only your buying preferences, but information about your personal life and socio-economic status.

I identified four distinct quandaries associated with this overarching problem. First, "going behind the customer's back" represents the issue of retailers doing this without permission from the consumer. These actions are being done behind the scenes, hoping to go unnoticed. That kind of reprehensible action can lead to outrage on the part of the consumer; resulting in increased social media backlash, dips in sales and over loss of trust.

“Other retailers purchasing information” relates to the ethical nature of even purchasing this information. Even if the offer is made, or the information is available to you, the company’s ethical responsibility is to respect the privacy of their customers. Purchasing personal information can result in consumer database growth, increased sales and tailored advertisements.

Retailers should avoid using, or even viewing the information they obtain. It is a necessary part of the transaction for a bit of information to be revealed about the customer. However, that does not mean that their information is yours to do with as you please. Impacts of using consumer information is the growth of the retailer’s customer database, potential changes in sales, tailored advertisements and the possibility of damaged trust.

Lastly, retailers should have an obligation to obtain licensing for customer information. Just as a normal person cannot utilize intellectual property without licensing, a retailer should do the same for personal information (looking at you, Zuck). Selling information that doesn’t belong to you is essentially theft and fraud, and can result in online backlash, changes in sales numbers and a loss of trust between the retailer and customer.