**4.2 Systems Theory Individual Assignment**

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Spreadsheet:

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| A retailer selling your personal information to others for profit | Systems Affected: |  |  |  |
| Ethical Quandry: | Retailer software | Advertiser software | Trust in software | US Legal system |
| Invasion of privacy |  |  | ✓ | ✓ |
| Selling information that does not belong to the retailer | ✓ | ✓ |  | ✓ |
| Consent of information collected and sold | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Should our data be worth money/otherwise incentivized |  |  | ✓ | ✓ |

Paragraphs summarizing:

Many sites and applications, often with our unknowing consent, (that is, we agree to it but don’t understand the implications) track our information and metadata and sell it to others (advertisers) to make profit. Among many systems, this raises an ethical issue about concerns of invasion of individual privacy, but perhaps it may have the largest impact in the sociotechnical system for trust in software systems. Once they realize their information is being sold off, they may justifiably become wary not just of that retailers’ site, but the entire internet. If one retailer is benefiting from this practice, how many others are doing the same? At least in this current moment, it does not seem like a priority to the average user. However, as more news breaks about leaks of our data and how the information is being used, this mistrust will grow, and legal challenges will come forward, in which the US Legal system will be tasked with determining which of these practices go against federal and local law. For example, who is the real owner of the metadata you create, the user or the system it is gathered from? Should users even have the choice to allow this information to be sold? and if they do, should this data require compensation from the software system? All these questions and more impact much of the future of how systems operate in our online world.

This mistrust and subsequent legal decisions may result in drastic changes in the retailer and advertiser/other software systems. I think the most immediate change would be to have the software systems offer more clear methods of consent that consist of more than just a checkbox when opening a webpage. This may include things such as a personalized system for what information you would like to share with advertisers, as well as a storage of all the information currently being sold or what has been sold already. This again bring up legal and ethical conundrums, such as what counts as consent and the limits of what users can consent to ethically. (i.e. should we allow users to consent to completely compromise their privacy in favor of these incentives?) In turn for the use and profit from their data, the user may receive compensation, such as coupons for the retailer, or just a credit to the account. This drastic shift sets the stage for data to almost be a form of currency, which may become a precedent that all future software systems will follow.