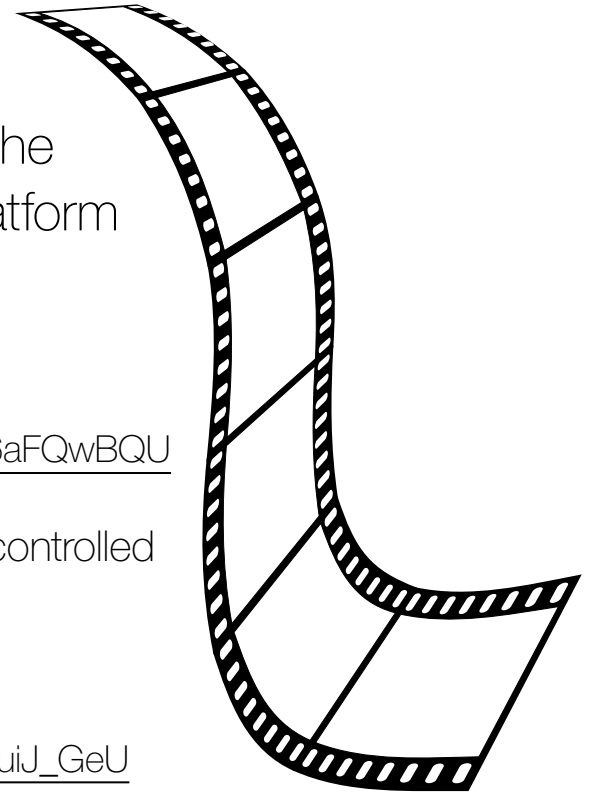




video case



chapter 3 E-commerce Infrastructure: The Internet, Web, and Mobile Platform

case 3.4 Amazon Echo

watch the video at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FQn6aFQwBQU>

summary Amazon introduces Echo, its voice-controlled digital assistant. L: 2.53

watch the video at

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ha0zuiJ_GeU

summary Amazon introduces the Amazon Echo Plus, a second generation Echo with smart home functionality. L: 2.23

case Voice-controlled devices and utilities are growing more popular as smartphone and cloud technology become more robust. Apple's Siri, Android's Google Now, and Windows' Cortana digital assistants are all powered by voice recognition. Amazon initially entered the fray with voice controls for its Amazon Fire TV technology. Amazon's Echo voice-controlled speaker and digital assistant (Alexa) raises the stakes even further. Echo was first released in 2015 to mixed but mostly positive reviews, which emphasized the future potential of the device. By 2017, the Amazon Echo had become the dominant voice-controlled device, with

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a 70% market share. In September 2017, Amazon introduced the Echo Plus, a version of the Echo that also has smart home functionality.

Echo is always on, and you can ask its digital assistant, Alexa, questions, have it play music, create a to-do list, or get the weather. Echo can also play a digest of the biggest news stories or play reports of specific issues that users ask to hear. The Alexa companion app allows you to customize settings, keep a record of your queries and the answers to those queries, and view the shopping and to-do list items that you've previously dictated to Echo. A developer's kit allows developers to create Alexa apps (called Alexa Skills), which are likely to make it even more multi-functional in the future.

Echo was a move by Amazon to enter the voice-controlled technology space, but the Echo Plus also operates as a "smart home" appliance, which is another growing market. The Echo Plus functions as a "hub" that enables you to manage and connect with all of the smart appliances in your home in one centralized location.

It's not currently clear how Amazon uses the information it gleans from users' questions and commands, or whether there's any capacity for storing things you say that aren't directed at Echo itself. From Amazon's perspective, the Echo could be an invaluable new tool for learning more about its customers, with an ability to generate heaps of granular data about the routines and preferences of each individual user. On the other hand, privacy advocates have ample reason to be concerned about a device that can quickly transmit your every word to the cloud, where it can be stored along with the rest of Amazon's trove of your personal information and used to make product recommendations and generate marketing materials. However, Amazon notes that any users uncomfortable with the collection of their data can simply go into their "History" using their Alexa app, and delete queries either individually or in bulk, which will also delete the information from Amazon's servers.

At this point, there's no telling what the Amazon Echo of the future will look like. It could become even more of a staple in homes across the country than it already is. Amazon seems poised to commit the necessary resources to ensure that it maintains its dominant position in what is likely to become an even-more important market than it already is today.

continued

video case questions

1. What functionality does the first-generation Amazon Echo display during the video that introduced it?
2. What kind of technology does Amazon Echo use?
3. What might be some privacy concerns involving Echo? Are these well founded? Why or why not?
4. Why was releasing a developers' kit for Echo important for Amazon to keep pace with services offered by Apple, Google, and Microsoft?
5. What are some of the smart home devices that Echo Plus can control?