

Exercise 4.1 Summary

The public case where ethical boundaries were crossed that I chose for this assignment was the issue of a retailer selling a user's personal information to others for profit. The ethical quandaries that I thought of relating to this issue are: how the user's information was acquired, if the user knew that their information was being / going to be tracked and sold, who their information was sold to, and what their sold information would be used for.

How information was acquired relates to the interconnectedness of the program in that because the retailer can see all the different searches, purchases, and interests of a customer, they are better able to acquire their information. It relates to stock and flow relationships because the more data it can gather on a specific person, the more it can sell. Information acquisition also relates to the system being the cause of its behavior because the retail system tracks user data, saves it, and sells it all in the same system.

If the user knew their data was being taken and sold relates to stock and flow relationships in that it is possible that the more they are aware of their information being taken and sold, the more likely they are to not shop at that retailer, or block that retailer's method of tracking. This same principle is also why it relates to feedback loops. Delays in this field can be caused by the user blocking the data tracking for a time, then no longer blocking it (whether due to neglect, wanting personalized ads, reverting cookie settings, etc).

Who the user's information is sold to relates to interconnections / relationships in that the information will be sold to another company that sells similar products. It relates to stock and flow relationships because the more data the retailer has collected, the more it has to sell. It relates to feedback loops because the more a retailer sells information to a buyer, the more trust and rapport is built with that buyer, meaning the more likely it is they will sell to that buyer in the future. This relates to delays in that

some buyers may have a more extensive buying process than others, making it slower to sell to them.

Finally, what the sold information will be used for relates to interconnections / relationships because that information will most likely be used to advertise products that relate to the tracked information to that user who was tracked. It relates to delays in that it may take awhile for the sold information to be used, or the user may have an ad-blocker, which delays how long it will take for the information to be effectively used.