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Ethics paper: Ad blocking

Ad revenue, for the most part, is one of the main reasons you can surf the web and find what you're looking for without coming across any charges. Adblocking, on the other hand, lets users remove these advertisements completely from any website desired. However, most people don't understand that ad blocking stops revenue and stopping revenue is a potential loss of free online content. Adblocking may seem understandable when ads are malicious, inappropriate, but not all websites work in this manner. Most websites now a day provide safe ads that do not get in the way and are related to what the user needs. Therefore, Adblocking and advertisements are both ethical to a certain degree in their own manners.

There are many conditions when Ad blocking can be ethical. Tim Challies states, "I hate visiting a website and having to deal with flashing, flickering, or inappropriate banner ads ... that interrupt and annoy." For this reason, ad blocking is justifiable as the safety and privacy of a user are important. Apart from these concerns, there is also an annoyance with non-stop malicious ads and users may find it impossible to find what they are looking for. New ad-blocking guidelines, however, provide a way to support ad revenue too. Rick Broida states, "Acceptable Ads defines strict guidelines to identify non-annoying ads, which Adblock now shows by default. This way, you can help support your favorite websites." Therefore through new strict guidelines ad blocking has found a way to be ethical in supporting ad revenue for the computing professional.

Advertising is acceptable when it achieves its purpose of promoting user-related products. In order for ads to be ethical, they must be customer appropriate and follow an algorithm. For example, Rick Broida summarizes that an ad can be ethical when they aren't taking up the entire screen but instead placed around the article or in the margins. There are also good algorithms that find user-related ads for example UWIRE explains, "I can just type in "Thai food." ..., Google knows I like Thai food. Pretty soon I'm going to see advertisements for Thai food every time I'm on the Internet." This is great in not showing inappropriate ads to the wrong audience. In other ethical issues, ads should also not be misleading, fake, nor should they be distracting.

Looking at this situation from a Christian worldview there are some things that should be accounted for. In Luke 6:31 it says, "Do to others as you would have them do to you." In today's time if one were to switch spots with the computing professional and if the user were to block your ads (safe ads) and view your content for free how would you feel? Most would say that this situation is unfair and it is due to the significant gain in one party while the other party has nothing to gain. This verse helps us understand that one must be fair to others as one would wish others to be fair to them. If the computing professional is to provide advertisements to a customer for revenue, he/she should only provide ads in a way that is useful and does not harm the viewer but benefit them. This example is similar to that in Ephesians 4:29 in which one must speak only to be beneficial or else one should not speak at all.

For this reason, Adblocking shouldn't be done, viewing content on the web should be seen as a mutual relationship. The computing professional provides content for free while the viewer obtains content they need and support the hard-working computing professional by letting ads be shown. But if one must have adblockers to stop malicious ads, the least one could do is play user-friendly ads to support the computing professionals who display safe acceptable ads.

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