

5.9 Management and information systems (HL)

The big picture

You may have heard the phrase, ‘If you are getting something for free, you are the product’. This may not always be the case, but your personal data is certainly a valuable resource for businesses. When you use a business’s product for free, the business is likely using your data to earn money for itself.

Businesses are able to gather, monitor, analyse and make decisions using huge amounts of information that customers provide when using technology. Businesses use the information they gather to understand consumers’ needs, wants and expectations in order to improve marketing and sales to their target markets. Often people do not even know that they are providing this data to businesses. The strategy of gathering and using personal data, with or without consumers’ knowledge, has been called ‘surveillance capitalism’.

There are serious concerns about the ethical and legal consequences of businesses gathering and analysing large amounts of data from people’s use of technology. Businesses need to be aware of these consequences for different stakeholders when using management information systems and digital technologies.

What is Surveillance Capitalism?



Video 1. What is surveillance capitalism?

This subtopic will explore various management information systems (MIS). These are designed to aid decision-making by collecting, collating, coordinating, controlling and

channelling information within an organisation. Management information systems can be thought of as the brain of a modern business, processing information which leads to effective decision-making. You will explore the many uses of these systems and also the problems and risks associated with these new technologies.

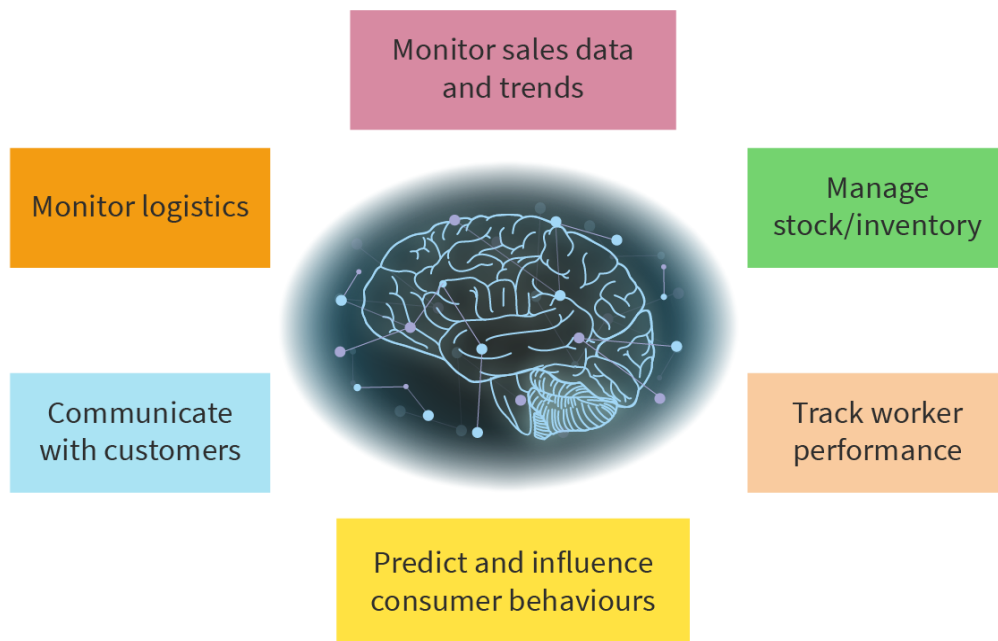


Figure 1. Management information systems (MIS) are the 'brains' of many modern-day organisations.

Making connections

The Center for Humane Technology (<https://www.humanetech.com>) is a great resource for understanding the impact of surveillance capitalism on society. The organisation made a documentary entitled *The Social Dilemma*, which you may have seen. If you are curious about the impact of the digital technologies discussed in this subtopic, the Center for Humane Technology is a great place to start.