

CS 4320 Exercise 4.1 Summary

Ethics Case: A retailer selling your personal information to others for profit

In the case of a retailer selling a customer's data for profit, there are numerous ethical quandaries that can be used to measure the case's general ethicality. The systems involved in this case are the retailer, the customer, the personal data of the customer, and the third party who is purchasing the data.

The first ethical quandary is whether or not the data being sold is anonymized. If it is anonymized, it is a lot more ethical than if it wasn't, because the third party could analyze the data without targeting a specific customer. Regardless, the case would be unethical without the customer consenting to the selling of their information. Moreover, who is buying the data is a significant ethical quandary. If the data is being consensually sold to another retail store it is less of a big deal than if it were to be sold to an insurance company. Many social media platforms and other websites ask the user to accept "cookies" which analyses data to create personalized ads. This use is similar to the case at hand, and is widely accepted as ethical. This goes along with the ethical quandary of what type of data is being sold. It would be unethical to sell a third party a customer's payment information or email address even if they technically "agreed" to terms of service that allowed for this. Overall, the ethicality of this case is dependent on whether the data is anonymized, whether the customer agreed to selling the data, who is buying is, and what type of data it is.