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Assignment 4

The two platforms I will be discussing are Netflix and Amazon Shopping. I chose these platforms because they both exhibit implementations of crowd wisdom that are core to their main activities. Netflix’s main activity is browsing and streaming movies or TV shows. Amazon’s main activity is browsing for, selling and purchasing online products.

Netflix encompasses the 4 characteristics of smart crowds. This platform uses the wisdom of crowds in its rating and reviews feature to suggest content for users. Amazon employs a similar system where wisdom of crowds is used to suggest products for users to purchase. Diversity of opinion exists through each user’s ability to create an account with private information. Independence exists in this system because the rating system does not display what other users have rated specific titles. It is decentralized because users must draw on their own knowledge to rate content. Finally, Netflix aggregates user ratings in order to display similar content to other users.

Amazon also encompasses the 4 characteristics of smart crowds. Diversity of opinion is achieved because each user can create an account with private information that makes the account uniquely theirs. Independence is afforded because users can rate a product without looking at other reviews. It is decentralized because users can specialize and sell unique products. They can draw on local knowledge to craft product descriptions and information to help sell the product. Lastly, reviews are aggregated to provide an average rating for each product based on all user ratings.

Both of these platforms are quite similar. However, Amazon seeks to sell products where Netflix seeks to provide a media experience. Yet, when we look at the characteristics of smart crowds, the two platforms appear to be quite similar in that diversity of opinion, and aggregation are achieved in similar if not the same fashion. The differences between the smart crowd characteristics and these platforms are thus: Amazon achieves independence only when a user disregards other user’s reviews, whereas Netflix does not display other user’s ratings; Netflix is decentralized because users need to rely on their own opinions to rate content, whereas Amazon largely achieves decentralization by affording users a variety of options when it comes to selling items on the platform.

I believe Netflix does a better job of using the wisdom of crowds because it achieves the 4 characteristics less subjectively than Amazon. I would argue that Amazon does not fulfill the Independence requirement because user’s opinions can be influenced by other user’s ratings that are always on display.