Case 2.7 Veil of Censorship Presentation 1 Powerpoint/Answer draft

Jessica Hoffman and Felisha Stanley collaboration 1/22/16

Slide 1. Q1

Websense specializes in an internet filter software that restricts access to unauthorized websites. The Saudi Arabian government is a potential customer, who wanted use this software nationwide in order to limit what their citizens can see, do, and say. Their goal is to restrict access to pornography, or anything that criticizes the Saudi regime or Islamic religion. Saudi Arabia already has a contract with Websense’s competitor (Secure Computing) whose contract is expiring. Is it unethical for Websense to profit at the expense of a foreign country’s freedom of speech and expression? Should Websense concern themselves with the way Saudi Arabia governs their people based on different moral values and cultural norms than the US?

Slide 2. Q2

In the Veil of Censorship Case, the main IT component is the filtering software produced by Websense. It works across many networks to censor Internet content available to users. These users generally have no way of overriding the program (depending on the quality of the software).

**Slide 3. Q3**

**\*Saudi Arabian government** – Saudi Arabia has the right to practice their culture and make decisions based on the nation’s moral values; they do not have to coincide with the US’s moral values. The Saudi Arabian government is not based on democracy. Islam is the only religion legal to be practiced, and the Islamic religion greatly impacts their laws and way of life. Any form of expression that disagrees with the government or religion is prohibited.

**\*Websense** – Websense has a legal right to profit from sales of their product to any customer. Use of the software is ultimately up to the customer; Websense is not responsible for immoral use of their product. Websense has a right to achieve competitive advantage by expanding their customer base and exceeding their past accomplishments – they have never before implemented their software on such a large scale.

**\*Saudi Arabian citizens** – From a US standpoint, citizens of Saudi Arabia have a right to freedom of speech and expression. In Saudi Arabia, however, their cultural norms prohibit alcohol and movie theaters, and there is high censorship of television and media. The citizens have limited legal rights when it involves access to news and information.

**\*Secure Computing –** The company competing with Websense for Saudi Arabia’s business has a right to sell their product to any customer and allow them to use the software as they please. If Websense chooses to back down and let their competitor take that customer, Secure Computing has a right to expand their business without feeling guilty about the implications of their software usage.

**US government** – Right to regulate products/services sold by US companies, regulate Websense

**Websense employees –** right to boycott/strike

**Slides 4 and 5. Q4**

**\*Do nothing** – Let Websense keep selling their product which they have a right to sell and profit from, and let Saudi Arabia govern their people as they wish. If Websense was to get the contract with the Saudi Arabian government, they have the choice to allow the Saudi government to censor out any material they deem necessary. From a US perspective, Websense would be violating the Saudi Arabian’s basic human and civil rights. This will result in less-informed, under-mobilized citizens who are oppressed by their government, but this is not Websense’s concern. Saudi Arabia’s laws are based off of their Islamic religion. These strict codes of behavior and ethics are embedded in their culture. It is also important to point out that Saudi Arabia is not the only country to censor the internet from their citizens. Even if Websense does not feel guilty for helping censor Saudi Arabian citizens, they should consider the downside that they may develop a bad reputation and lose business from other customers who believe they are acting immorally.

**\*Websense could end business with Saudi Arabia, and only offer their software on small scales** – If they let a different company provide this type of software to Saudi Arabia, they could avoid controversy and keep their reputation. Websense may decide to uphold the American cultural beliefs that our country’s norms are based on: freedom of speech and expression. This will result in a better reputation for Websense, but they will lose the money they would have made and risk going out of business. They will also lose the experience they would’ve gained by implementing their product on a much larger scale – a step that may have resulted in Websense becoming the leader of their industry. Secure Computing, their competitor, will most likely renew their contract with Saudi Arabia.

**\*Offer alternative version of software, Saudi Arabia Complies** – Websense may decide that the opportunity costs of either selling their full software to Saudi Arabia or not selling it are both too high. In this case, the opportunity costs would be to highly censor citizens and lose their reputation, or lose revenue. Websense may try to reach a compromise with their morals, revenue goals, and Saudi Arabia. They could offer the government an altered version of the software and make exceptions to the websites Saudi Arabia wants censored. If Saudi Arabia agrees to use the altered software, Websense can justify their sale to them and keep their reputation while still maintaining their biggest customer.

**\*Offer alternative version of software, Saudi Arabian Government refuses** – If Websense offers an altered version of their software to Saudi Arabia, it is likely that they will not turn their back on their country’s moral values and cultural norms that have been in place for a very long time just because an American company disagrees with the way they govern their country. They will probably refuse to sign a contract with Websense, and renew the contract with Secure Computing or another company that offers the same censoring software. If this happens, Websense still avoids controversy, while the rights of citizens continue to be violated.

**Saudi Arabia could change their view about content censorship** – If Saudi Arabia decides to encourage their citizens to be informed and criticize their government, citizen rights will accumulate and conditions will improve. This would result in loss of business for these software companies, but ultimately the citizens would benefit.

**The US Government could regulate Websense’s products** – The US may deem these types of products “unconstitutional” since they inhibit free speech, free expression, etc. This would result in the regulation of all companies trying to market this product to Saudi Arabia. This way, there would be no unfairness since no company would profit from being unethical.

Slide 6. Q5

From a deontological standpoint, either websense should step down and refuse to provide this service on such a large scale Ultimately, the rights of the Saudi Arabian citizens should come first, which should result in one of the above entities changing their mind about subjecting the Saudi Arabian population to this censorship. Next, from a capitalist point of view, Websense has a right to sell their product, and the Saudi Arabian gov’t has a right to govern their people since they are not subject to US laws.

Slide 7. Q6

From a Teleological standpoint, “the end justifies the means,” which could mean that the huge profit Websense would receive from the Saudi Arabian gov’t (the end) justifies the bad treatment of Saudi Arabian civilians (the means). In this view, Websense’s right to sell and profit from their product trumps the rights of the citizens and the right of the US to regulate the product. Saudi Arabia would prefer that Websense continue to sell their product. Even though there are a lot more citizens in Saudi Arabia being affect by this, Websense may not view cost/benefit as a 1:1 ratio; the value of each Websense employee that benefits from the sale of their software may outweigh the value of each Saudi Arabian citizen’s freedom. Plus, we cannot deny them their ethics and ideas of moral value or force our views on their culture.

Slide 8 and 9 (we will add to this next week) Q7

Websense should sell a modified version of their software and leave it up to the Saudi Arabian government to accept their business or choose their competitor.