

Group project

Apple Inc. Analysis



December 2, 2022

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ISEC3050 ETHICS AND LAW IN DATA ANALYTICS

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# Introduction

This report is for analyzing the case of apple Inc regarding the ethics policy and issues, treatment of employees, data breach issues and how they protect the data to prevent the breach. Our analysis is based on the report from the publications and compares with the company’s values.

# Treatment of employees from an ethical perspective

The treatment of employees is a very important part of legislation and ethical conduct. Apple as a famous company also has great attention to that aspect. Apple has over 100000 employees around the world

Based on apple, “speak freely about your wages, hours, and working conditions, including information about harassment, discrimination, or any other conduct you have reason to believe is unlawful, and nothing in this Policy, or any Apple policy, should be interpreted as being restrictive of your right to do so” (Apple, 2022).

The basic treatment of a company is based on the freedom of speech. In history, many companies do not like their employee to tell the story of the dark or grey side of the company to the public. As in the past, because of the development of the legislation, more and more company have the policy to fair treatment to their employee especially the freedom of speech.

The treatment of employees at apple is not only related to the freedom of speech, but also including on human rights, no retaliation, harassment, and discrimination (Apple, 2022). No matter how strictly the policies of ethics are, it could have many issues happen inside the company. The famous in recent years is the issue of potential harassment and discrimination reveal by apple employee Gjøvik (Hamilton, 2022).

We should still consider another point of what happened inside apple’s name that relates to ethics. The entire of the apple products are not made by apple, it is actually having a long supply chain which is the biggest in the world. Does apple need to consider its treatment of an employee on their supply chain?

In the law aspect, we can say no to that. Because in the supply chain, the owner of the factory is not an apple, and the employee is not actually hired by apple. But in the ethical aspect, we can say yes to that. Because most of the factory is only doing the apple products in their products line and apple has to take responsibility that all their products are producing under human right. No matter the business aspect or the customer aspect, they cannot accept a product are produced by low human right factory or broke the ethic.

Foxconn, the biggest supplier which assemble the apple products, have many issues in this decade relate to the ethic on treatment of employee Most of the criticism has point to apple who fail the audit his suppliers especially those fail has potential guess that apple do this on purpose (Business News Daily, 2022).

In overall, we can see apple has their policies to treat fair to their employee, and they also consider well to their policy on his suppliers. In real world, scandal always happened. The policy should develop under the pressure of ethic by the public.

# Apple Data Breaches and how the company responded

                     The Pegasus spyware attack is one of the recent data breaches that occurred in September 2021. An NSO group from Israel exploited apple’s security vulnerability to break into Apple device and installs their software without the user’s interaction. This allows them to read the SMS and record the calls and, they can use the microphone and camera without the user noticing it.  But Apple servers are not exposed to this attack. The citizen lab, a research group from the University of Toronto found this exploit and reported it to Apple. Apple responded to this issue quickly and released a new version with security updates. Apple notified its users who might be exploited by this attack, also in the future if they notice any activity related to this, notify the affected customers with best industry practices. Apple sued the NSO group for targeting their users and making them accountable for their monitoring.

                       In 2019, google reported that there is a security vulnerability in Apple’s software. This bug targeted a few websites, when users visit these websites, their information is susceptible to breach and possibly affected a lot of users. Visiting these websites allows hackers to gain a lot of information, including messages through WhatsApp, and iMessage and tracking the movement through the GPS apps ‌(Ingersoll, 2019).  After the report from google, Apple updated their operating system in less than a week with new security updates. Also, Apple responded to the report that this data breach is narrowly focused, and this attack affected fewer websites that are related to the Uighur community, they also said that these attacks were only operational for a period of two months (A Message about IOS Security, 2019).

                     There is also a Data breach that happened in 2013 in Apple’s dev app center, but it didn’t affect its users.  The hacker group exposed the names, IDs and Email addresses of the developers. Apple sent an email to all the developers notifying them about the possible Data breach and asking them to change their login passwords. Also, interestingly, the hacker doesn’t have any bad intentions and just wanted to show their vulnerabilities in the Dev app center.

                          Overall, Apple considering the history of data breaches that occurred and is very quick to respond and protect its users from security breaches.

# Ethical practices or protection, treatment or sharing of data

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                    According to apple when it comes to ethical values they follow four principles Honesty, integrity, respect and confidentiality. Apple states that they believe strongly in protecting the fundamental privacy rights of its users when sharing their data. Apple had a business policy on how they wanted to conduct protecting their user’s information. It also mentioned that they don’t sell the data to third parties, but apple privacy doesn’t apply to how third parties use or control personal data. Apple doesn’t share personal data with third parties for their purposes but shares data with their affiliated companies at the user’s direction.

                    Although apple claims to be more secure when handling the sharing of information. Consumer tracking is a controversial issue, apple experienced criticism back in 2011, as certain apps often utilized internal GPS devices to collect the data.  They continued to collect information even after the user disabled the location feature, later apple solved this issue with an update to their operating system. The security is updated, and the user has the option to enable the location feature if they desire. But many government officials expressed their concerns about whether these tracking techniques are ethical. (An Apple a Day: Ethics at Apple Inc, n.d.,p9).

                           Apple pay allows the user to perform transactions online and in person through their iPhones. The issue with this mobile payment system is banks do not ask enough security questions making it easier for the consumers to add to their accounts, but it will create a chance for fraud to happen. Later in 2019, apple released its credit card 2019 with advanced security features. (An Apple a Day: Ethics at Apple Inc, n.d.,p9)

                   Another incident which explains apple’s ethics with privacy issues, in 2016 a couple opened fire in an office in California, killing 14 people. Apple faced a privacy issue with the FBI because the FBI believed that the husband’s encrypted iPhone might contain relevant information about the attack. The FBI asked apple to decrypt the iPhone but apple denied stating that by passing their own security measures would affect millions of customers. FBI even issued a court order, but apple refused to help and later FBI later dropped the case after they were able to hack into the iPhone without apple’s help (An Apple a Day: Ethics at Apple Inc, n.d.,p9).

               Apple received criticism as they speak big on privacy but their action toward data-driven companies speaks differently. As Bogost mentioned in his article, there’s nothing requiring Apple to distribute apps from data-hungry companies such as Google and Facebook at all. A truly aggressive flex would see Apple ban companies whose data-collection and usage practices are incompatible with its supposedly progressive position on the matter. A privacy-oriented product might even defend against any antitrust concerns about services where Apple competes with its competitors, such as digital maps. Instead of allowing their parties using google map , Apple can also invest more in their maps to be competitive( (Bogost, 2019).

# Summary

Overall, Apple has better ethical practices in terms of treating their employees and although they have great policies and ethical values when protecting sharing of user data, they talk big in terms of privacy and should do better in terms of allowing data-driven companies like Google and Facebook to gather the data from their users.

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