

Privacy issues in ecommerce persuasive essay



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The adaptation of commercial activities on the Internet is among one of the most interesting development of the technological age. E-commerce has revolutionized the business world by providing a wide range of cost effective opportunities for conducting business in different global markets from the convenience of homes and offices. However, consumer concerns regarding privacy greatly hinders the progression of E-commerce.

Weston (1967) defined privacy as the power of an individual to control the terms under which their personal information is accessed and used Different laws and legislations eave established privacy as a fundamental human right.

For example, Article 8 of Human Rights Acts (1998) states that “ Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence”. This therefore makes privacy a serious issue in E-commerce.

The sharing of vital data through daily transactions implemented online not only affects individual’s privacy but raises security concerns as well. As a part of the Information security framework, E-commerce security affects a wide range of components including Data security and Computer security (Importunately ND Chart, 2013). There are two categories of computer threats namely; insiders and outsiders (Stateless, 2007).

Inside threats originate from factors or person Nell within the organization.

Outside threats on the other hand generally consist of malefactors like hackers, cyber criminals or individuals who have no direct connection with

the company. They not only pose threats to businesses and consumers but also introduce new security challenges to other sectors like the banking industry through the integration of online electronic payment systems. Another factor that also plays a role is nonuser ignorance.

Most buyers have obscure ideas about the risks involved in conducting transactions on the web and as a result not all necessary precautions are taken.

This article will focus on the B2C (Business- to-consumer) branch of Commerce where businesses sell commodities to buyers through the internet. The major ethical, social, professional and legal issues involved will be examined from the viewpoint of different stakeholders which include consumers, IT professionals and business owners. Ethics as an aspect of moral philosophy is a grey area and as such we need ethical principles and theories to guide our decisions (Duquesne, Jones, Rash and Diaper, 2005).

The issues mentioned here will be examined from the viewpoints of two influential ethical theories namely; Kantian which embodies the idea that moral rule is either ' good' or ' bad' with no conditions attached to it and Consequentiality which morally deals with the consequences Of actions rather than the action itself (Duquesne, et al.

2005). Privacy violation is a dominant ethical issue in E-commerce. Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights(n. D) states that " No one shall be objected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honor and reputation.

.. , Therefore from the Kantian point of view it would be deemed as unethical when websites analyze an extensive amount of consumer's personal data with the possible inclusion of third parties because the customers privacy was breached by sharing their personal data without consent. Conversely, from the viewpoint of business owners Consequentiality would be in favor because the study of consumer behavior aids companies in developing deter marketing strategies and trends such as behavioral marketing which is not only crucial to business success but also improve overall online shopping experience for users.

Although ethical from this viewpoint, it does have legal implications which we will later examine. Another ethical issue to consider in online shopping is Price discrimination.

This is where the seller charges different prices from different customers for the same product. For example, Amazon tested dynamic pricing in 2000 where they offered different values to buyers for the same product based on their purchase history.

In light of Article 2 Of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which States " Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. It could be viewed as unethical albeit " technically" not illegal while opposing perspectives conclude that it is acceptable if the price differences is based on reasonable business practices

and not discrimination against race, sex, gender or other impermissible disgorge (Weiss and Mahatma, 2001).

Technology is an ever changing field. New developments emerge almost on a daily basis. As a result, it is the professional responsibility of employees to stay abreast of such changes. The British Computer Society code of conduct (2001) Section 2(c) states that " You shall develop your professional knowledge, skills and competence on a continuing basis, maintaining awareness of technological developments, procedures, and standards that are relevant to your field". The failure of employees to uphold the aforementioned code of conduct could potentially lead to security breaches.

Section 3(d) of the BCC code of conduct also states that " You shall NOT disclose or authorities to be disclosed, or use for personal gain or to benefit a third party, confidential information except with the permission of your Relevant Authority, or as required by Legislation". Hence, it is considered to be a serious breach of professional conduct in cases where employees use customer's data for personal gain or aid outside threats in gaining access to it. A legal issue comes into existence when a law is violated.

A large percentage of Legal violations in E-commerce that originate from within the company is accounted to the fact that most websites are unclear about their privacy policies. Chapter 29 section 7 of the UK Data protection Act 1998 (ADAPT) states that " an individual is entitled to be informed by any data controller whether personal data of which that individual is the data subject are being processed by or on behalf of that data controller",

therefore disclosing a customer's personal information without their knowledge nor consent is a legal violation on the part of business owners.

A study conducted by LLC Berkeley School of Information reported that most websites share inferential user data with third parties and affiliates that users may have no relationship with such as analytics and ad serving companies (Gomez, et al. 2009).

Section 2 of Computer Misuse Act (1990) states that a person is guilty of an offence if he gains " Unauthorized access with intent to commit or facilitate commission of further offences", is breached through the actions of outsider threats which constitutes of hackers and cyber criminals who use different methods to gain unauthorized access to the content of system databases for malicious purposes such as blackmail, exploitation and uncial fraud to name a few. Overall, one of the most significant legal issue in online business involves jurisdiction.

For instance, if a Company X in China sells a commodity to a Mr..

A in England and a dispute arises, there will be contradictions over which country's law applies. From the social point of view, E-commerce has made both positive and negative impacts on the society. On the upside, it has created new job employment opportunity in the IT sector. Shopping has been made more convenient and time saving especially for the disabled of the society.

It has also significantly reduced the start-up costs for businesses. On the downside however, E-commerce has negative impacts on the supply chain management as it slowly phases out retailers.

Small enterprises have been put out of business because of this and as a result unemployment has increased. Due to the increase in crime cases like financial fraud and identity theft, People are afraid to engage in online transactions for fear of their personal data. Another interesting find is majority of online buyers also reported that the privacy policies in most websites are camouflaged in legal jargon which makes it tedious to understand and as such most users are misinformed on whether these policies protect them and their privacy.

Cultural and religious barriers also create challenges for online businesses. For instance, selling alcohol in Muslim nations is frowned upon because the consumption of alcohol is prohibited by religious laws. This poses as an issue when deciding which products to target towards a specific market. Despite the advancement of E-commerce, privacy and security risks continually surface. Tackling privacy is a huge issue as different stakeholders have different views of data. From viewpoint of the customer, having control over their personal data is a fundamental right.

Business owners and companies on the other hand view personal data as a treatable commodity. Some issues can be addressed by adopting appropriate courses of actions. Organizations should arrange ethic training programs to enlighten employees and also create chains of responsibilities and duties to avoid incompetence hereby decreasing the rate of unnecessary

intrusions from outside threats. Privacy policies should be more transactions and provide buyers with more control over their personal ATA.

It is vital for organizations to have security measures integrated into the architecture, design and implementation of their system. E-commerce will progress a huge step forward if all the necessary actions are implemented to make it a safer environment for online shopping.