

IT 145 Ethics and Emerging Trends Sample Response

Summary

Modern vehicles are outfitted with global positioning systems (GPS) and smartphones have access to GPS software. This makes navigation much easier than it was in the past when we had to use paper maps for directions. The emerging trend I selected is using GPS and software such as Google Maps.

Alibaba is using this technology along with a series of video cameras to record an entire city's traffic patterns (Beall, 2018). This massive effort has been coined the Tianchi project. The related ethical consideration is individual privacy. The video surveillance includes footage of drivers that can document their locations with specific date and time stamps. This data can be sold and used for purposes other than what individuals might want.

What interested you about the technology mentioned in this article?

I use Google Maps on my iPhone to navigate on long trips, and I take a lot of them. My wife and I travel in a Class B RV between Tennessee and Florida at least once a month, and in our Class A motorhome between Tennessee and New York three to four times a year.

What impacts might this technology have on society? Think about both positive and negative impacts.

The positive impact is that, with free access to this software, using it makes traveling safe and convenient.

The possible negative impact is that this data could be used for tracking. Beall reported that the use of AI, such as in project Tianchi, will result in increased instances of personal data collection and surveillance (2018). This is likely to be a contentious issue.

What impact would this technology have on you personally as a consumer, potential future user, or software developer?

Project Tianchi is currently focused on China and will soon include Malaysia. This would only impact me if similar efforts were made in the United States.

Does this technology adhere to the ethical principle of contributing to "human well-being," as outlined in the ACM Code of Ethics? Why or why not?

From a holistic standpoint, the technology should contribute to society. The intention is to use the data collected to improve traffic patterns and, therefore, traffic safety.

Does this technology adhere to the ethical principle of avoiding harm, as outlined in the ACM Code of Ethics? Why or why not?

This is difficult to determine. If those being surveilled are informed, then I assess that the technology does adhere to this principle.

Reference

Beall, A. (2018, May 30). In China, Alibaba's data-hungry AI is controlling (and watching) cities. *Wired*.

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