The Effects of Online Information Possession

Social and Third World Development

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***Abstract*—This electronic document briefly analyzes the effects that the internet has on developing countries in terms of healthcare, education, and economics, with a focus on education and economics. Afterwards, it will analyze the ways that the internet affects social and political aspects of the world in social mobility and international opinion formation..**

***Index Terms*—Third world country, internet, education, economics, social mobility, telemedicine**

# Introduction

The internet is the greatest equalizer of the generation. While the internet does not dispose of the centuries of developmental progress that first world countries have over some third world countries, an unprecedented wealth of information has become available to the less developed parts of the world. Essential aspects of countries, such as healthcare, education, and economics, are progressed significantly in third world countries through access to a wealth of previously discovered and researched information.

Globally, social atmospheres are transformed because of the level of social mobility that the internet provides. Previously, poor or impoverished people had little to no access to proper educational material; however, with the internet so widely available, even the homeless can begin independent learning. With enough time and effort, it has become more possible than ever to break one’s bonds educationally and, by proxy, socially. Another way that the internet affects the world as a whole is in international opinions and movements. With the situation in Hong Kong as an example, many supporters have come to decry the situation that the people of Hong Kong face against their government. Without the internet, little to no information would escape the country, and the chance of outside aid due to international outcry would be unfeasible.

The internet is an essential tool for third world countries to continue developing in healthcare, education, and economics, and the internet helps the world develop socially by affecting social mobility and international opinion formation.

# Third World Healthcare

While the internet may not create highly skilled and competent doctors overnight, it does come with significant advantages that may lead to medical systems in the future that can compete with the ones utilized by the first world countries of today. Examples of these advantages are access to medical professionals with more expertise, access to up to date research and information, telemedicine, long distance training, and international networking among hospitals and healthcare professionals [1].

With regards to access to both greater expertise and up to date information, medical complications that are too advanced or out of the area of expertise of local doctors can be treated by contacting more knowledgeable or specialized individuals relatively quickly or by calling upon relevant research and observations recorded online by other professionals.

With regards to telemedicine, long distance training, and international networking, healthcare of developing countries can progress at a far more efficient rate due to the convenience of the internet. Using telemedicine, doctors can treat patients quickly and efficiently by removing travel time and giving diagnoses through the internet. With long distance training, more knowledgeable experts from other parts of the world could begin to instruct doctors and bring up the standards of third world country healthcare. Through international networking, developing country healthcare can passively begin to become up to date on current medical research by interacting with international peers.

# Third World Education

Fundamentally, the internet is a tool for information exchange and communication. The nature of the internet itself is aligned with many of the ways that learning takes place, including creating, sharing, collaborating, and critiquing [2].

Not only is the internet fundamentally a tool for learning, it is also both free of physical limitations and extremely personal. Regardless of the local circumstances of a person or community, with access to the internet, people can access effective learning options and educational material. Also, the internet makes learning individually a far more feasible option. People can choose to learn about a topic or idea on a whim without the requirement of locating a text or professional that may not be readily available in their environment [2]. These factors are all ideal for an individual in a developing country to better themselves where the environment may be less than efficient to study a particular idea. This is further proven when among 32 surveyed developing countries, a majority agreed that the internet was a good influence on education [3].

On the other side of the equation, the internet can be rather limited for education in truly developing regions because of access. Cost factors for widespread internet usage for people in developing countries can prove to be too much for the ones who would benefit most to access the internet. Outside of public institutions with proper, free equipment, which do not exist in many third world countries, personal computers and mobile devices are the primary methods to access the internet; however, the computers, phones, or even electricity to power them are unaffordable and inaccessible, causing the internet’s effects on the region to be greatly diminished [4].

# Third World Economics

In today’s world, the internet is more than just a place to have a website to sell products from. The internet is more of a marketplace for businesses to sell both locally and globally, increasing productivity and allowing competition between businesses all over the world, regardless of the country of origin. Countries with strong domestic markets, while greatly advantaged, are no longer the be all, end all, of whether or not a business can succeed and potentially benefit the economy of the area. Businesses in developing countries can become a part of the international marketplace and affect the economy both globally and locally [5]. Because the internet transforms the entire world into a marketplace, regardless of geography, the economy of a third world country can be heavily affected positively by competing economically with businesses from more developed parts of the world.

An important way that the internet is important for developing countries economically is that it promotes innovation. A young man from Malawi was able to create a windmill to help power his village from parts collected from a local scrap yard and additions to the local school with laptops. He states that the internet had all of the knowledge required for him to create his inventions, dramatically affecting the livelihoods of people within his village. On a larger scale, increased innovation leads to economically relevant key factors like more efficient manufacturing and agriculture [6]. New inventions and products can be created from inspiration found on the internet and sold using the global marketplace that is the internet, and more efficient agriculture, which is the main economy of many third world countries, would include being able to check the weather and well documented information about protecting crops from specific threats, meaning a more stable and consistent way for countries to enter the global market as a whole would be available.

Another way that the internet helps third world country economies is through helping businesses develop. As stated before, the internet helps businesses reach customers globally, increasing the demand for their products; however, it was not stated how the internet helps businesses develop initially. The internet helps businesses build infrastructure, train employees, and reach out to third parties [7]. Without the internet, all of these tasks would be mountainous for a third world country business starting out. The internet is the impetus for small businesses to start without major help from another party.

Once again, the internet’s effects are greatly limited by accessibility. Internet gives people the chance to benefit themselves and their country; however, there are billions of people in the world without internet access, and many third world countries without widespread internet access at all [7]. Among the countries that do have internet access, it is unlikely that there is enough for the maximum benefit to be felt by the economy, similarly to the diminished effects of the internet on education mentioned previously.

# Fixing Third World Accessibility

According to The World Bank, there is a direct corresponding relationship between a country’s gross domestic product and the amount of high speed internet connections available in the country. The United States began the Global Connect Initiative, planning to convey high speed internet access to nearly two billion people by 2020, and the plan has only continued to gain more support internationally over time [7].

# Social Mobility

Globally, technology, and particularly the internet, disrupt the social values we hold as a community. Social power once acquired through information exclusive to a particular group is no longer unattainable for the lower class. The balance has shifted to those who are able to use the internet and new technology most effectively, whether it be through dedication or talent [8]. Knowledge nearly inaccessible by the lower class is now available at the click of a button, meaning that anybody can train themselves to be socially powerful individuals through skill alone. While still rare for someone to train themselves to be skilled enough to earn a scholarship and earn a degree, per say, the possibility of the process is unprecedented in and of itself.

# International Opinion Formation

One of the biggest differences in opinions formed today and opinions formed in the past are global connectivity. People from anywhere in the world with access to the internet are able to form opinions on topic taking place on the opposite sides of the globe and speak out for or against events to an audience of anywhere from nobody to millions of people in an instant.

With that being said, the internet has both great positives and negatives when used as a source of information to form opinions from.

An example of a positive result that transpired because of the support of the internet, the internet played a beneficial role in the “Arab Spring”, which was a series of revolutions in Arab countries from 2010-2011 that were fueled by using social media like Facebook and Twitter. Outside of being used to organize events like protests and the like during revolutions, an essential effect of the internet’s involvement in the “Arab Spring” was international pressure. Around the world, the internet broadcast information about the violent response to peaceful protest and as a response to the general public’s anger, the autocracy was forced to act more reasonably to the protests [9].

An example of a negative result of the internet’s involvement in opinion formation is that online news gathering tends to form either heavily biased opinions or create echo chambers for uninformed opinions to feed off of. Information can be presented from a purely factual standpoint and help create strong and informed opinions, or it can be presented in a heavily biased and opinionated manner which could create the aforementioned echo chambers.

Overall, the internet can be a positive tool in opinion generation because it brings global attention to important issues around the world; however, it can be a negative tool because of the logically unsound manner in which it can be engaged with.

# Conclusion

For third world countries, the internet is a tool that accelerates their growth and helps them bring themselves up to par with the rest of the world in many aspects. Most notably, the internet brings stimulated development to healthcare, education, and economies. Both healthcare and education are benefited primarily by the plethora of high quality information most third world countries would not have access to at the click of a button. While networking internationally benefits all three aspects of development, it is foremost an economic benefit. Smaller businesses can now also reach towards the global marketplace, gaining customers and bringing wealth to the country of origin. On the other hand, billions of people in the world do not have access to the internet, or it is too expensive to feasibly use for them. The effects of the internet in accelerating the growth of the third world are greatly limited by the inaccessible nature of it, though there are steps being taken globally to bring the internet to more third world countries as a widely available resource.

Globally, there are several reasons that the internet changes the social landscape. One key change discussed in this paper is social mobility because of the unprecedented access to high quality information and research given to the lower class. With this level of information present at all times, untrained workers can train themselves to become skilled in their own right, giving them more social and financial power. The second change discussed in the paper is international opinion formation due to global connectivity, though the internet’s aid in forming logically sound opinions can be either very positive or very negative.

In conclusion, the internet is a widely effective way to bring developing countries forward in the world that is limited heavily by the inaccessibility of it. Globally, it plays a large role in increasing the viability of social mobility by making information accessible, and using the same characteristic, the internet creates a more globally connected atmosphere for opinions to be formed that can affect the world both positively and negatively. The internet should be viewed as a tool that serves to help equalize the playing field and build connections between communities around the globe.

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