James Everett Tourtellotte IV
ITN 267 - Case Study 1
5/29/2023

Net Neutrality

What Questions Should One Ask:

What questions should one ask in regards to making an informed decision on a topic at hand? The following are some of the questions with their reasoning behind why they could play a part into the decision made on this topic. First Question: What is the demographic makeup of the total population of Americans without broadband internet access? One would ask this to consider the intent of the Telecommunications companies. For example, hypothetical data that could suggest "malintent" would be "the existence of said population in technologically viable areas, with low income demographics". On the opposite side, hypothetical data that would be "neutral" would be "the existence of said population in technically non-viable areas". If we want to make an informed decision on the perceived path a corporation would take upon repealing regulations, we should consider if something is viable and/or how it affects their bottom dollar. Then furthermore, how it affects the population(s) at hand. If we consider that these companies need profit to expand in, for instance - a geographically difficult region in the middle of nowhere, then it is reasonable to argue that we should entertain allowing them to generate as much revenue as possible to help them innovate themselves into those parts of the country. However, if the data suggests that the Americans who lack internet access are simply "low value customers" (Poor populations = Risk not worth reward) then we should reconsider the intra-corporate relationships we have with those Companies.

Identification of Key Relevant Issues:

As of 2019 Arkansas, Mississippi, and New Mexico were the top three states when measuring homes without internet access. Furthermore, the US Census Bureau deemed Mississippi to be the state with the highest number of residents living in poverty. Just behind Mississippi, is New Mexico. How does this outline the aforementioned points? We are trying to determine whether or not removing an industry regulation will allow companies to engage in active avoidance on populations that we believe should have internet access. We must ask if the infrastructure is currently viable to implement, with ease, in the areas with least access. Given that the sample of

reference is three highly rural, highly geographically isolated, areas - the variable of poverty cannot be a keystone to the argument that these companies will take advantage of our citizens and line their pockets. Information Technology Infrastructure is already, at a baseline, complex. When implementing resources across such a vast landscape, we have to consider the hard concrete evidence - which is that the geographical constrictions might trump the current technology we have that sets up infrastructure. This consideration backs the idea that these corporations might actually care about advancing to every part of our country, but they need to innovate and make profit to do that first. When we combine the statistical evidence of those two variables, we become less bias in nature. It is imperative to get as much of the picture when handling these types of concepts as they are issues that impact millions of americans.

Justifying (in this case not justifying) Net Neutrality

To illustrate the non-issue behind the doom-and-gloom of squashing "net-neutrality" one should consider the fear mongering that occurred, and is outlined, in the article written by Keith Collins. First and foremost point, the bundling fears. The article outlines that people were fearing that they would have their hobbies monetized, like social media. We can see now, today, that this did not occur to the extent it was argued in the article. Most of the features on apps that are paid, are voluntary, and the largest applications are free to use and generate revenue through ads. Furthermore, the argument is based on an irrational fear that could be squashed with basic consideration of economics. With an increased demand, there becomes an increase in supply, if those two do not meet at the right spot - then companies could risk a supply side crisis. In other words, Telecommunications companies have no reason to run awry with heinous revenue models that would scare their customers. However, it is important we look at the data. Another large concern was the pay-to-play deals. The concern of fast lane, pay to win, revenue models is a valid concern up until you look at the data. The article written by Keith Collins was dropped in 2015. Between the years of 2008 and 2018, we saw a 98% decrease in Price Per Megabit for the average american household. Given that the article revolves around fear, uncertainty, and doubt - it is very hard to back the preservation of net neutrality in the face of the data. It is not necessarily that the data shows good intentions, or honest intentions, or the Telecommunications companies - it is moreso that it shows an incorrect judgment of those who deem them to have malintent. Between the years of 2008 and 2018, times of net neutrality, the price of internet access has gone down. Furthermore, if we adjust the statistic to 2011-2021 we can see the cost of broadband has risen only 3% over the last decade. https://www.allconnect.com/blog/the-cost-of-broadband-has-risen-just-3-over-the-last-de cade

Even when adjusting for more relevant timelines, we do not see a statistical difference that implies the fear mongering was ever valid. Given this data, and Keith Collins' article, I cannot justify the preservation of Net Neutrality. The data suggests that these companies do not benefit nor suffer from the implementation or lack thereof - of net neutrality.

Conclusion:

Given the data, I could re-hash over and over again - the numbers do not lie. However, that is Survivorship Bias. We should not focus on what disproves the prompted concerns, especially with Keith Collins' article, but moreso focus on how the initial concerns were addressed. Logical Fallacies, Intellectual Dishonesties, these are arguments that may sound convincing or true but are actually flawed. The data I have provided can only go so far, especially in the face of intellectual dishonesty. We start with bundling fears, that is the logical fallacy of a Straw Man. People put words in the mouths of corporations, and began to raise concerns without logic or reasoning. When you look at the data, you despise the presence of argumentation derived from such little thought. The danger that presents itself during the process of peddling Logical Fallacies on a grand scale is evident. Honest intentions raise honest questions and honest questions raise honest discourse. When one prompts arguments such as these, they might end up missing actually valid points - that could suggest the importance of net neutrality. However, when one prompts arguments that are baseless and careless - the facts become threatened in a dishonest manner. When doing so, this can yield consequences that might negatively impact the country as it was a topic of such large scale. It is not that I am for the extinction of Net Neutrality, my stance is merely that the current data does not yield an argument to maintain Net Neutrality.

Works Cited:

https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2015/06/26/americans-internet-access-2000-2015/

https://www.lendingtree.com/home/mortgage/internet-access-study/#:~:text=Mississippi%2C%20New%20Mexico%20and%20Arkansas,compared%20to%20more%20urban%20states

https://www.ncta.com/industry-data/98-decrease-in-price-per-megabit#:~:text=In%202020,08%20consumers%20paid%20about,is%20a%2092%20percent%20decrease.&text=Th

[e%20price%20per%20megabit%20per%20second%20of%20cable%20broadband%20service,2000%20to%20%240.64%20in%202020](#).