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Article

Explicating Net Diversity in Trend Assessment

Yong Jin Park[1]

Abstract

This study tracks the increasing supply of Internet access and the diversity of Internet use by analyzing data from the three waves of a survey conducted in the United Kingdom in 2005, 2007, and 2009. Data on Internet access and three dimensions of online use (civic-government, economic-commerce, and generic information and news) reveal that the Internet not only offers an emergent promise of diversity but also presents a systematic divide in which the increase in benefits (of Internet capacities and actual consumed) does not uniformly occur, while the impacts of social disparities remain constant over time. Our discussion addresses how characteristics of social backgrounds are salient in harnessing types of Internet use that may be a critical tipping point for information diversity. We argue that policymakers will be better served by understanding the constraint of actual use that is to be in par with the continuous explosion of technological supply.

Keywords

information diversity, Internet use, communication policy, social disparity

[1]Howard University, Washington, DC, USA