**Net Neutrality**

“Over the course of last decade, the world has seen an incredible increase in computer technology and Internet capabilities. Technology itself is giving the network, ability to manage the traffic”. (Walkenhorst, 2006) With the growth of the internet, ‘net neutrality’ has all of a sudden turned into the most disputable issue. The underlying idea behind net neutrality is that the Internet Service Providers (ISPs) should provide access to all of the internet at the same speed: no matter what content it is, no one gets any preference. Here, the question is: is that a good idea?

Considering the perspective of an internet service provider, a simple example would be: why should they be providing Game of thrones via BitTorrent at the same speed, as they provide it through HBO? Network providers use powerful techniques to decide what to favor in order to improve the quality of service. “One obvious use of this discrimination is security. A network operator may determine whether a packet stream is carrying a virus or a dangerous piece of spyware. A network neutrality policy that prohibits networks from dropping dangerous traffic of this kind would damage network security.” (Peha, 2007) Blocking specific areas of internet might guarantee more privacy and more freedom.

But if we compare the pros and cons, as an individual user I would want to access the website or the content I want, instead of letting the broadband provider decide it for me. And so, I strictly oppose the idea of repealing net neutrality. Here’s an analogy:

Let’s say FedEx wants Amazon to give them money because amazon packages take up a large portion of their shipments, and FedEx thinks that they should ship-in for their truck repairs. To pressure Amazon, FedEx slows down their delivery time. But, here the consumer’s the one who paid for the two-day shipping in the first place. And the consumer is the one hurt by having the packages delayed.

In the same way, I pay for the cable internet through a service provider. So, when I go online, I expect to watch all the videos I want. Or, when I go on Netflix, I expect to watch House of Cards without any interruption in the service. But without net neutrality, there’s nothing stopping my service provider from simply blocking websites or slowing down the streaming speeds of websites like Netflix.

And it has already happened. In 2007, Verizon blocked text messages of their customers. Verizon said they have the right to prevent consumer’s access to any groups that the company might deem controversial or unsavory. And just last year, Comcast slowed Netflix’s streaming speed, until Netflix paid for smoother streaming. Netflix accounts for more than 30% of the bandwidth or the internet streaming, and Comcast believes that they should be accountable for some of the infrastructure upgrade cost. In February, when Netflix paid up, speeds went back up.

FCC wants to establish clear rules to make sure that broadband providers cannot do this. They plan to define the internet providers as ‘Common Carriers’ under Title II of the Communication document. Companies regulated under Title II cannot discriminate what services they are providing to the consumer. Democrats strongly support this regulation. While many Republicans in the broadband industries see it as more unnecessary government oversight. They worry that the regulations will prevent innovation and growth. They think “If AT&T and Comcast are required to let anyone use their line for free, why would they spend billions of dollars to build them in the first place. They also see free-market as a solution: if you don’t want Comcast slowing down your network, switch to Verizon or any other provider.” (WSJ, 2015) The sticky point here is that the majority of American consumers only have one provider of internet service to choose from.

Every day, more and more citizens learn about the issue of ‘Net Neutrality’. They realize that the internet as they know it is very much at risk. Many politicians, artists and millions of users like us, petition Congress to protect net neutrality. We as citizens are most likely to get affected by these policy changes. We should support the cause of net neutrality. “Use the Internet, to save the Internet. Our purpose is to build a faster, open and an accessible Internet to every individual.” (Save the Internet!, 2006)

# Bibliography

* Peha, J. M. (2007). The Benefits and Risks of Mandating Network Neutrality, and the Quest for a Balanced Policy. *International Journal of Communication* .
* *Save the Internet!* (2006). Retrieved from www.youtube.com: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cWt0XUocViE
* Walkenhorst, K. (2006, April). *The Invasive Nature of “Net Neutrality".*
* WSJ. (2015). *Net Neutrality Explained*. Retrieved from www.youtube.com: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p90McT24Z6w