

Abstract (of the Thesis Titled '*From e-business to social tool for the poor – a study on Internet applications, drivers and impact*')

As a massive disruptive technology and as a General Purpose Technology, Internet offered tremendous opportunities in various applications to redefine human society. In order to identify critical impact of Internet on society, this thesis categorized Internet applications into four major groups of use, namely (1) business use (2) government use, (3) use as a social tool for the underprivileged and (4) individual use. It also identified two salient drivers of these applications: (1) digital convergence, and (2) search engines. Following a modular structure, the thesis studied two of the above four applications - business use and use as a social tool, along with the above two drivers.

On the business use of Internet, adaptation of e-business practices from stakeholders' perspectives in the old-economy sector with fifteen firms from five different sectors and three different sizes was studied in one part whereas the second part focused on impact of local factors in the evolution of B2B business models by studying four leading B2B players in India. In the form of two descriptive cases, the thesis answered the research question '*what is happening*' with both the drivers on an ex-ante basis. On digital convergence, the focus was on VoIP applications impacting telecom and Internet players by studying the event of acquisition of VoIP leader Skype by eBay in 2005. For search engine - the gatekeeper of Internet, the subject was the business model and product offerings of Google. On social usage of Internet, in two parts, the thesis examined universal access of age-old infrastructures, found trends of bridging of digital divide that failed explaining increasing income divide, and cited examples of isolated cases on how digital access improved quality of lives and impacted society. The second part focused on importance of online content as a mass-media for the underprivileged, and highlighted the drastic relative lack of online content in local languages of South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. The thesis concluded by reconfirming that Internet still happened to be a '*work-in-progress*' with its evolving applications, drivers and impact, which can potentially transform the global society in a way unanticipated by most.

Keywords

Internet applications and drivers, impact of Internet on society, stakeholders' perspective of e-business, B2B and BPO business model, digital convergence, search engines, Internet as a social tool for poor, infrastutural divide, universal access, online content divide in local languages, Internet as work-in-progress.