Net Neutrality

For the past 15 years, the internet has been part of our everyday life and it has been spreading to many parts of the world since then. The internet has changed the way we live our lives. We do not need to travel to meet other people. The internet made the sharing of information and collaboration easier than we have ever experience. It has contributed to the development of other sectors such as education, economic and health sector. It has become part of our daily life. It is a tool that without, the world would not be the same. Thus, Internet Service Providers (ISPs) have so much power over the world, and the way they choose to offer their services can be either fair or not. Hence, the government should intervene and regulate internet traffic to ensure fairness and Net Neutrality.

In “What Net Neutrality is”, Mark Buell mentions one of net neutrality principles. “All traffic should be treated neutrally by ISPs”. I would agree with such definition, if we lived in a utopian world but sadly we do not. Many people come from different social and economic classes. They might not afford or need the same quality of service from ISPs. Even though, the internet started as part of military an educational research it has become commercial. In the business, world maximizing benefit is the priority. Considering the implementation of the network layers and protocols, ISPs have the addresses of both the sender and receiver. So, if for different customers, different payments are made then packets will be treated differently as well. In addition, in a business model, better quality of services is usually given to the customer or group of customers that give the business the most profit. For instance, standard and premium subscriptions for video streaming will not be treated in the same way since premium usually entails better video quality, speed and more. In a business model, priority will be given to customers with premium to ensure that they get a smooth experience due to how demanding the requested service is. I believe that net neutrality should be understood as network traffic being treated according to the agreement between customer, ISPs and the government.

Furthermore, it is so hard for society to know when such situations occur since they do not have enough data about it, and most ISPs will not inform them about such situations. Also, when most people are not familiar with the technology or the information that ISPs will provide
at the time of purchase, which gives the advantage to the ISPs. Considering all the economic potential that lies within providing internet services, I believe that ISPs will never treat the traffic neutrally. Therefore, the government need to intervene and help regulate treatment of internet traffic by ISPs.

For a long time, the government has failed to maintain internet traffic regulation for a long period. Many of the regulations are discarded and some expire. Which give power to the ISPs. Even though the reason why such regulations do not hold for while is not clear, I believe that there are some features, if implemented by the government, could lead to better outcome and fairness. First, rather than establishing regulations that ISPs should follow, the government should assign teams of engineers to install software that would record data from customer’s traffic history. Such data would help to detect anomalies and report them. Secondly, the government should ensure that the quality of service promised by ISPs is fulfilled. This would be accomplished given that traffic data has been recorded, as mentioned above. In addition, the government, should regulate the price of services provided by ISPs as to maintain balance between price and quality of service.

All in all, I consider that treating all traffic equally or neutrally is impossible given the circumstances of different social and economic backgrounds of customers, flawed protocol designs, and the business model of the current internet. However, I believe that the government can intervene and ensure that there is fairness in the service provided by ISPs.