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Understanding the diffusion of the internet: redesigning the global diffusion of the internet framework

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ABSTRACT

Since 2001, the Wolcott et al. (2001) framework has been used to measure worldwide diffusion of the Internet. However, the framework is obsolete, and there is a gap in accessible frameworks that allow a better understanding of the Internet's proliferation, especially in this period of extensive digital transformation. The literature review for this study shows advances in Internet diffusion, and in digital technologies and applications over the past two decades. The 2001 framework uses outdated measurements for its six dimensions and does not allow measurement of diffusion relevant to digital evolution in 2020.

The objective is to create a suitable GDI framework for the current stage of the digital economic revolution. The researcher chose to adopt the same qualitative methodological approach as Wolcott et al. (2001), in order to update the existing framework by incorporating more recent determinants related to Internet diffusion, but improved the 2001 methodology by conducting extensive coding using ATLAS.ti.

The key finding of the study was the need for retaining some of the Wolcott et al. (2001) dimensions and levels, while adding one new dimension and revising the levels for each of the seven dimensions. The results of this exercise are presented as the GDI 2020 framework. The lessons learnt from this study can contribute to existing knowledge and enhance the understanding of how the Internet spreads and evolves. Policymakers, regulators and industry decision-makers can use the GDI studies to develop intervention strategies for addressing the digital divide.

Keywords : Digital, Adoption, Transformation, Revolution, Internet, Diffusion