

Neutrality: Network, Search, Platform

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Topic

- Net neutrality
- Search neutrality
- Platform neutrality

- Net neutrality does not equal search “neutrality” or platform “neutrality”

What is Net Neutrality

- Applies to Internet Service Providers (ISPs)
- No blocking
- No technical discrimination
- No access fees (or paid fast lanes)

Net Neutrality—Key Points

- Considerable academic thinking
- Common carriage history for communications networks
- Economic arguments
 - Huge barriers to entry
 - No multi-homing and high switching costs
 - Terminating access monopoly

Net Neutrality—Key Points 2

- Policy judgment about interconnected networks
- Solution to a real problem
- Advocates are small businesses and nonprofits

Search Neutrality

- Organic search favoritism?
- Thematic search duty?

Search Neutrality Comparison

- Much less research and academic consensus
- No common carriage history
- Economic arguments
 - Lesser barriers to entry
 - Rampant multi-homing and low switching costs
 - No terminating access monopoly

Search Neutrality Comparison 2

- Policy judgment should be against “neutral” search
- Not a problem for consumers (according to FTC and others)
- Advocates are competitors not consumers

Platform Neutrality

- “Neutrality” for “platforms”
- Both highly unclear

Platform Neutrality Comparison

- Very little academic thinking
- No history of category or remedy
- Seems more a political reaction in EU than an economic one

Appstores

- Economic arguments
 - Lesser barriers to entry
 - Some multi-homing and lower switching costs
 - No terminating access monopoly
- Policy judgment about app stores
- No real problems
- Advocates are competitors

Summary

- Do not rely on semantics and analogy alone
- Net neutrality addresses a particular market in a particular, targeted way
- Search and (especially) platform neutrality are
 - poorly defined
 - cannot be justified on same grounds