

Strategic, value-based ICT investment as key factor in Reducing Digital Divide

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Abstract

The ever-evolving and increasingly powerful Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has fundamentally changed the nature of global relationships, sources of competitive advantage and opportunities for economic and social development. Technologies such as the Internet, personal computers and wireless telephony have turned the globe into an increasingly interconnected network of individuals, firms, schools and governments communicating and interacting with one another through a variety of channels. However, the benefits of the digital world are not yet evenly felt. While the “digitalization of society” is a much heralded event in developed countries, developing nations are often left wondering how they can participate in the rapid global changes going on around them (CID, 2002).

The reality of the digital divide—the gap between those who have access to and control of technology and those who do not—means that the introduction and use of ICT at different levels of human endeavour would be a challenging undertaking. And failure to meet the challenge would mean a further widening of the knowledge gap and the deepening of existing economic and social inequalities (Tinio, 2003). ICT are a powerful yet neutral tool that can be used to address a host of issues in every community. However, their effective integration to bridge digital divide is a complex, multifaceted process that involves not just technology.

This paper presents a multi-directional, value-based ICT investment conceptual model that is aimed at assisting developing countries in realizing goal-oriented benefits on their investment on ICT. The model identifies adequate ICT planning at the strategic level, targeted at supporting developmental objectives as a prerequisite for realizing the objective of investment on ICT.

Keywords: Developing nation, Digital divide, Electronic readiness, ICT Investment.