IMPACT OF DIGITAL INDIA ON RURAL POPULATION OF INDIA

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Abstract
This paper gives a brief analysis of digital India programme and its impact on rural habitations of India. A good percentage of population is residing in the rural areas hence the benefits should also be there for them. Attempts have been made in this paper to differentiate the level of benefits and usage of digital India schemes in rural areas of India.

There are still many areas of India which are so backward in the sense where digital India is a dream. This paper gives an overview in sustainable manner that how the living standard of the rural people will be changed through the different schemes of digital India.

The Government's ambitious "Digital India" plan aims to digitally connect all of India's villages and gram panchayats by broadband internet, promote e-governance and transform India into a connected global economy. By the year 2019, the 'Digital India' program of the Government of India (GOI), envisages that 250,000 Indian villages will enjoy broadband connectivity, and universal phone connectivity. This is a truly visionary and commendable initiative. However, to implement this vision in a country where most of the population resides in rural areas is very challenging.

Key Words: Digital India, Make in India, Rural Habitations, Digital Literacy, E-Governance.

Objectives of the Study
- To analyze that will India be able to overcome the limitations of digital infrastructure access and digital literacy and more ahead in comparison with other countries.
- To get the solid and perfect understanding of impact of digital India on rural areas through the present technological scenario.
- To analyze weather the schemes under digital India are beneficial for the people of rural areas, that too in the period when they lack basic facilities of their livelihood.
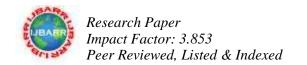
Introduction
The Digital India programme can help in bridging the rural-urban digital divide through rural focused initiatives. However, its success will depend upon the speedy implementation and proper attention to the coverage of rural population.

The Digital India programme is a laudable initiative of the Government of India. Its mission is to "transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy" and one of its main aims is "to bridge the connectivity gap between rural and urban areas" of the country. Digital India programme is a forward looking initiative of the Government of India. It can help in bridging the gap of rural-urban digital divide. However, its success on both fronts will depend upon the speedy implementation to the coverage of rural population. What is encouraging is the fact that in order for digital revolution to take off in rural India, the supportive pillars namely the processes, the banking system, digital literacy and the willingness of people to accept the change in view of the benefit accruing to them—all of which are time consuming to conceptualize and implement, have already been thought through diligently and are being addressed in parallel. In order to realize the full potential of the digital vision articulated, investments envisaged will have to take place within the timeframes outlined, further reforms in the interface between the government and citizens need to be implemented expeditiously, better alignment between various agencies would have to be ensured and digital literacy would have to gain further momentum.

The Digital India programme is a flagship programme of the Government of India with a vision to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy.

E-governance initiatives in India took a broader dimension in the mid 1990s for wider sectoral applications with emphasis on citizen-centric services. The major initiatives of the Government included, inter alia, some major projects such as railway computerization, land record computerization, etc. which focused mainly on the development of information systems. Later on, many states started ambitious individual e-governance projects aimed at providing electronic services to citizens.

Though these e-governance projects were citizen-centric, they could make less than the desired impact due to their limited features. They clearly pointed towards the need for a more comprehensive planning and implementation for the infrastructure required to be put in place, interoperability issues to be addressed, etc. to establish a more connected government.

Rural and Economic Development through Digital India

The Digital India vision aims to transform India into a digital economy with participation of citizens, businesses and promises to make India an important investment destination. Sectors like financial, education, healthcare, automobiles and many more all over the world is ready to contribute in this mega project. New potentials will arise to change this development model. Villages will turn into smart economic centers that connect farmers directly to e-markets to know the price and make them less vulnerable to the whims of weather. During the Prime Minister recent visit to United States and meeting with Sundar Pichai, CEO Google, he has shown interest in providing free public Wi-Fi in hundreds of Indian railroad stations, which are major transit and social hubs for their communities. This rebellion will open affordability of products and services in better ways. We Indians and others, have worked together to shape the knowledge economy. Our contribution to sustainable development of one-sixth of humanity will be a foremost force of noble for our world and our planet.

Broadband Penetration for Digital Villages

For the concept of Broadband Penetration for Digital Villages to be successfully implemented, certain conditions need to be met:

- First the telecom infrastructure for broadband facilities have to be made available for critical mass of consumers – a few islands of connectivity will not add significant economic value.
- A wide range of applications and content relevant for rural consumers must be accessible on mobile devices and the operators must provide service packages affordable to the target user. Broad based availability of broadband services, through handheld devices, is a pre-requisite for the achievement of the goals of 'Digital India'.
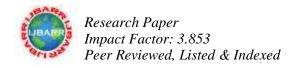
The greatest challenge in providing such affordable broadband coverage is the wireless "last-mile" link. Typically, carriers will extend data coverage to rural areas after a well-developed network of telecom towers is established, with optic fiber/microwave back haul.

In most countries, towers are built in rural areas with government subsidy and support. These Governments make land, rights of way and infrastructure available for rural mobile networks at low or no cost.In this context, rural telecom towers are, and will remain, a key component in taking broadband down to the village level.

Strengthening Digital Infrastructure in Rural Area

Among the various schemes launched under Digital India, the Bharat Net Program aimed at establishing a high-speed digital highway to connect all 2,50,000 gram panchayats will clearly be a major step forward in strengthening the digital infrastructure of the country, especially in the rural areas. Additionally, the Next Generation Network project of BSNL can be expected to contribute to the modernization of the telecom infrastructure in rural areas. The plan to set up Wi-Fi hotspots all over the country would be extremely helpful to accelerate provision of broadband connectivity in India. It can be hoped, however, that the locations of such Wi-Fi hotspots would be decided keeping in mind the need of the rural population of the country.With regard to usage and access, the Global IT Report 2015 highlights major weaknesses in the Indian situation. With mobile phone subscriptions of 70.8 over 100 populations, India had a rank of 123 on this indicator. Also, with only 15.1 percent individuals using the Internet, India had a rank of 115 on this indicator. Only 11.9 percent of Indian households had a PC and only 13 percent had Internet access, dragging India to 109th and 102nd position respectively on these indicators. A good sign is that mobile Internet access is growing faster than Internet access through PCs. India's mobile broadband Internet subscription of 3.2 per 100 persons, compared to fixed broadband 1.2 per 100 in the report also point towards this. However, India's rank of 113 and 104 respectively on these two indicators shows many other countries in a much better light than India. Unfortunately, the highly unfavorable values and ranks on these indicators of access are greatly contributed by the rural areas. This is the combined effect of lower incomes, low digital literacy and lack of infrastructure in the rural areas.

There are several other schemes under Digital India which probably don't have a rural focus, but can benefit all sections of the society including the rural population. However, the rural population may have the limitation of inadequate computer and Internet literacy in reaping benefits out of these schemes. For example, the DIG Locker scheme to provide digital storage facility to all citizens for preserving their important documentation would be indeed valuable but whether the rural population will be sufficiently Internet savvy to take advantage of this, is a moot question. Similarly, eSign providing the service of digital signature through Aaadhar authentication would be an excellent provision for digital security and prevention of digital fraud. But will the rural population be able to make use of this scheme without an external help? Similar questions can be raised against the scheme of National Scholarship Portal, which may not have a strong rural connect.

Bridging Rural-Urban Digital Divide
The Digital India programe is a forward looking initiative of the Government of India. It can help in bridging the rural-urban digital divide through rural focused initiatives.

Digital India Vision for Rural Development
The vision for Digital India is path breaking and has the potential to create a transformational change in various sections of the society with rural India poised for being the biggest beneficiary of this change. The plan to provide universal phone connectivity and access to broadband in 2.5 lakh villages by 2019 is the clarion call for entrepreneurs and policy planners to take advantage of the opportunity to build new solutions for rural markets.

The unlocking of the potential for rural transformation on the strength of digital platform calls for innovation and pragmatic approach along with diligent implementation. Setting up manufacturing facility in India to produce large scale low cost devices, the proposal of shared use of mobile devices by families in rural markets, sharing of infrastructure cost by mobile service providers and government offering to subsidies the roll out cost of mobile services are examples of fast forwarding the reach for those in villages.

What is encouraging is the fact that in order for digital revolution to take off in rural India, the supportive pillars namely the processes, the banking system, digital literacy and the willingness of people to accept the change in view of the benefit accruing to them—all of which are time consuming to conceptualize and implement, have already been thought through diligently and are being addressed in parallel. In order to realize the full potential of the digital vision articulated, investments envisaged will have to take place within the timeframes outlined, further reforms in the interface between the government and citizens need to be implemented expeditiously, better alignment between various agencies would have to be ensured and digital literacy would have to gain further momentum.

Rural India is the Future of Digital India
The Digital India agenda has created opportunities for many ministries and departments of the government to come together and develop integrated solutions. But many technology providers, and indeed even some policy planners, have begun to consider Digital India opportunity as synonymous to the development of smart cities and the "Internet of Everything". In reality, the benefits of a truly Digital India for rural areas are even more significant than the more trendy applications that urban planners can envisage.

Software-as-a-service deployment and the engagement of all eco-system players through the cloud platform will make transactions between companies, as well as government transparent and friction free. This will substantially improve productivity and help reduce cost. This is an example of Digital India creating an inclusive culture rather than just catering to the urban elite. The rural populations should be given the digital literacy so that the digital India initiative will be more beneficial and the impact hence will be of positive trend.
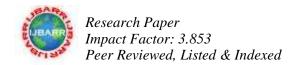
Impact on Agriculture in India
By 2019, the two way platform will be created between Farmers and Buyers. This will be done through the broadband connectivity across the rural India.
Let us look at some of the important points which will impact Farmers in big way through this initiative.
- Farmers now have many available options to sell their products.
- They will have the options to sell and buy fruits and vegetables and other products across India through online platform.
- Currently Farmers have to sell their products to few mandis and market committees and they charge high amount of tax from them.
- Farmers can sell their products to mandis or to the online platform.
- The direct link between seller and buyer will erase out the mediators which will increase the profit margin of farmers and it will also benefit the end product customer also.
- This online trade will be free of cost, so it is a service with no cost again it will boost producer's income.
- An agency would be setup to monitor the smooth functioning in online trading; it will also look after the transportation facilities after the online purchase/sell.

As per the current scenario it is a good initiative; but government of India has to face some challenges to make this plan successful. A proper training program, uninterrupted services, electricity, availability of smart phones, tablets and computers to almost every farmer can be big challenge.

Impact on Rural Indian Students

Digital India is a promising opportunity to use technology to revitalize our education system and address the huge learning crisis that our country faces. Although technology, on its own, is not a silver bullet solution to India's education challenges, it does tend to have a positive impact on the given situation.

Digital India can only succeed in impacting education if it's technology can be integrated into our vast and complex school/college system. Investment also needs to be put into the tools that are used for student learning like digitized textbooks, animations and videos.

We need to build learning tools to address the diversity of languages. Such content could either be developed locally or high quality global content could be localized. Further, we also face a huge challenge of teachers lacking adequate training. While those in government schools have access to professional development and academic support, only 20-30 of them actually received in-service training. Teachers in private schools, who now educate 43% of our students, also lack access to training.

Technology allows for reinventing models of teacher education by creating competency-linked training programmes, and enables teachers to connect with peers, and receive coaching from experts remotely. Government teachers in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Uttarakhand are using Whats App groups to exchange knowledge and ideas with each other. The Karnataka Open Educational Resources platform is enabling teachers to create digital content.

Digital India is a huge opportunity for us as the government pushes for the use of technology. Let us not duplicate the mistakes of the past by assuming that providing hardware and connectivity to schools will result in the uptake of technology. Instead, let us approach the opportunity with a vision and commitment to adopting a comprehensive approach to using technology to improve the education of our children.

Conclusion

In this digital age, every civilian has a bright prospect to transform the lives in many ways that were hard to envision just a couple of years ago. With the imminent of "Digital India" campaign, India will have powerful digital infrastructure. All educational institutions and government services will soon be able to provide I-ways round the clock. Tech giants from all over the world are willing to actively participate in this dream campaign. More employment prospects will open for the youth that will boost the nation's economy. Let us all look forward for the successful implementation for this project for the brighter and prosperous India and hope India will again called a Golden Sparrow.

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