DIGITAL INDIA EMPOWERING TO RURAL ECONOMY

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Abstract
Digital economy is the new platform to harness the power of digital technologies totransform India into a digitally empowered society and a knowledge economy. Digital technologies are increasingly used in our daily lives. The concept of DigitalEconomy is very positive in preparing India for knowledge Future. To support digital economy, our Union Government has implemented a program named 'DigitalIndia' which aims to transform the entire nation by 2019. This program is structuredbased on the three key vision areas. The current paper "Digital Empowerment of Rural People" discusses the initiatives, measures and challenges taken by the Government to empower the rural India in availing digital services. Thus, this papertries to throw some light on the Digital Revolution in India specially focusing on "Digital empowerment of citizens". The study is carried out through descriptive statistics. For the purpose of data collection secondary sources are being used.

Key Words: Digital India, Digital Economy, Digital Revolution, Digital Empowerment.

Introduction

India is a land of villages with 68% population living in 6,49,481 villages. Without prospering our villages India cannot progress. Since independence, various scehemes to improve Indian villages have been launched and failed. Indian villageslook far behind in comparison to urban India. The next era is the knowledge economy. With increasing use of smart phone, it is possible now to provide different services with one click. To bridge the digital divide between rural and urban India.

Indian government has launched a program "Digital India" on July 1, 2015 with well-defined objective of connecting rural areas with high speed internet network and promoting digital literacy. Digital India is a dream project of Indian government to ensure that government services are made available to all citizens electronically and digitally anywhere, anytime, on any easy-to-use device. It is to transform Indiainto a knowledge economy and digitally empowered society with good governancefor all citizens. The program provides digital solutions in all sectors like education,health, agriculture, administration, financial inclusion etc. This article is a small attempt to understand the impact of Digital India in empowering rural India, its challenges and what other initiatives can be taken in it to make it more effective so that urban-rural digital divide may be filled and our villages may also develop and reap the benefits of digital revolution that is taking place around the world.

Objectives of the study

The study has been carried out with the following objectives:
- To understand the concept of digital economy.
- To identify the issues and challenges of digital empowerment of rural people.

Research Methodology

Research design for the study is considered as descriptive research. This paper focused on secondary data and totally based on various views of different authors, magazines, journals, books, websites and research articles.

Literature Review

Some researchers view regarding digital India.

Gupta and Arora in their study trace the impact of Digital India project on the ruralsector in India. They found that several schemes have been launched in Digital India to boost agriculture sector and entrepreneurship development in rural areas, leadingto a phase of empowerment of rural women. **Rani** concluded that the Digital India programme offers a huge opportunity to use the latest technology to redefine India but many projects require some transformation process, reengineering, refinements to achieve the desired service level objectives.**Jamshed Alam Ansari** in his study dreamt a rural India 2019 where villages are transformed into a knowledge economy and all services are available to villagers either on mobile or tablet or common service centre of the village.**Himakshi Goswami** said that the aim of government is ensuring the government services made available to citizen electronically by reducing paper work. **Uma Narang** said that digital technologies including the concept of cloud computing and mobile applications have emerged as the catalysts for transparent economic growth and citizen empowerment.

Digital India programme

Digital India "A program to transform into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy". The digital India initiative aims to help digitizing all different individual projects of all central government and ministries like education, health services, e-governance, etc. that can be delivered to all citizens using ICT by joiningall the areas of India through broadband connectivity.

The vision of Digital India as

1. Digital infrastructure as a utility to every citizen
2. Governance and services on demand
3. Digital empowerment of citizens.

The PM Narender Modi says that information technology plays important role to make India a digital county "India Today + IT = INDIA TOMORROW".

Rural India and Digital Economy

About 70% of the country's population lives in rural areas i.e. out of 130+crore Indians, 83.3crore live in rural areas while 47.7crore are in urban areas (India stats).India is on its way to the path of global IT leadership. But the adoption or progress of digital economy is consistently slow in rural India. The major reason is that rural India has not been able to take fuller advantage of ICT (information and communication technology). The key services such as government services, banking, education and health can be faster, better, cheaper and more flexible with the help of digital economies in rural India. To avail these services without any constraints one has to be digitally literate. In order to empower the digital literacy in rural population, the government had announced National Digital Literacy Mission (NDLM) in 2012 itself. It had a target to train four million citizens. As per the statistics released by NDLM, already 82,74,834 candidates have been trained and 1,00,06,961 candidates have enrolled for training and 53,67,092 are certified candidates.

Challenges to digital India

1. The slow and delayed infrastructure is the biggest challenge before digital India. Another problem is providing high speed internet connection and broadband facilities to rural and remote areas. Though after JIO, speed and connectivity both have increased but still rural areas are far behind as they don't have proper electricity. Digital India programme cannot run successfully without electricity.

2. Second problem is of digital literacy. Though India has achieved target of Sarv Shiksha Abhiyaan but adult literacy rate is very poor. According to World Economic Forum (WEF) 2016 report, nearly 33% of Indian population is functionally, one- third of youth do not attend secondary education then how to achieve target of digital India with such functionally illiterate adult population.

3. Third problem is that maximum information or internet is either in English or Hindi and very less content is available in regional languages while rural people maximum use their local or regional language that is very difficult to understand by internet. India being a very vast and diversified country in terms of language, culture and laws which vary from states to states. Complete integration in terms of technology and language is a herculean task.

4. Digital India means work flow becomes automated and administrative system becomes more efficient, faster and transparent means reduced scope for corruption. Thus, a section of official who are used of corruption try to disrupt the system in various ways as happened in case of DBT and also happening in case of linking AADHAAR with all government benefits.

5. Another problem is of cyber hackers. As India is growing economy and digital transactions are increasing. This has caught attention of cyber hackers. Cyber-attacks and frauds are increasing day by day badly impacting the dream of digital India.

Conclusion

In a developing economy like India, all groups of people should be involved in the development of the country. Especially the rural people should not be left out because the development of the country is completely dependent on the growth of the rural Indian citizens. Rural people should be empowered on various basis to encourage them to grow. Digital empowerment of rural people is the urgent need of the hour for economic development. The current study specifically finds that the current scenario of the Indian environment is very favorable for the digital empowerment of the rural population through various government initiatives such as Digital India. In future every rural citizen can be digitally literate. Through digital literacy rural people will acquire new skills and ways to participate and express themselves in a networked society. This will pave the way for inclusive growth in the economy. Finally, we can conclude this study by saying that digital empowerment of rural people can act as a catalyst for economic growth by promoting a cashless and paperless environment.

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