



DIGITAL INDIA: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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Abstract:

Digital India is a campaign launched by the Government of India in order to ensure that Government's services are made available to citizens electronically by improved online infrastructure and by increasing Internet connectivity or making the country digitally empowered in the field of technology. The initiative includes plans to connect rural areas with high-speed internet networks. Digital India consists of three core components: the development of secure and stable digital infrastructure, delivering government services digitally, and universal digital literacy. Launched by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 1 July 2015, it is a beneficiary of other key Government of India schemes, such as Make in India, Bharat Net, Startup India and Standup India, Bharatmala, industrial corridors, Sagarmala. The objective of digital India is connecting rural areas with high-speed Internet networks and improving digital literacy. The vision of Digital India programme is inclusive growth in areas of electronic services, products, manufacturing and job opportunities. This paper attempts to highlight the different challenges faced by the Digital India Programmed. It describes the different opportunities of the programmer for the people of the country. Digital Technologies which include Cloud Computing and Mobile Applications have emerged as catalysts for rapid economic growth and citizen empowerment across the globe. Digital technologies are being increasingly used by us in everyday lives from retail stores to government offices. They help us to share information on issues and concerns faced by us and also to connect with each other. In some cases, they also enable resolution of those issues in near real time. For this research paper, secondary data analysis is usually conducted and it is based on the information from the internet via journals, research papers on the same subject.

Keywords: *Digital India, Challenges, Opportunities, digital infrastructure, digital literacy.*



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Introduction:

The Government of India launched the Digital India campaign on 1st July 2015 in order to ensure the Government's services are made available to citizens electronically by improved online infrastructure and by increasing Internet connectivity or making the country digitally empowered in the field of technology. The initiative includes plans to connect rural areas with high-speed internet networks. Digital India consists of three core components: the development of secure and stable digital infrastructure, delivering government services digitally, and universal digital literacy. Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched this as a beneficiary to other government schemes including Make in India, Bharatmala, Sagarmala, Startup India, BharatNet, and Standup India.



The following areas are the prime focus of the Digital India Mission:

1. Create digital infrastructure as a source of utility for every citizen.
2. Empower every citizen of India digitally.
3. Provide governance and services on demand.
4. Establish growth in areas of electronic services, products, manufacturing, and job opportunities.

Need and Importance of Digital India

The aim of Digital India programme is to transform the country into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. It would ensure that Government services are available to citizens of India electronically. The following are the Nine pillars of Digital India

- ❖ Public Internet Access Programme
- ❖ Information for All
- ❖ Early Harvest Programmes
- ❖ Electronics Manufacturing
- ❖ Universal Access to Mobile Connectivity
- ❖ Broadband Highways
- ❖ e-Governance: Reforming Government through Technology
- ❖ e-Kranti - Electronic Delivery of Services
- ❖ IT for Jobs

Objectives of Digital India

The aim of the Digital India Mission is 'Power to Empower'. The three core components are digital infrastructure creation, digital delivery of services, and digital literacy.

The following are the objectives of this initiative:

1. Arranging Common Service Centre (CSC) in all the localities.
2. Combining a large number of ideas and thoughts into a single, comprehensive vision so that each of them is seen as part of a larger goal.
3. Providing high-speed internet in all gram panchayats.
4. Restructuring many existing schemes that can be implemented in a synchronized manner.

Methods and Procedures

For this research paper, secondary data analysis is usually collected from the internet via journals, research papers on the same subject. The National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (NMEICT) leverages the potential of ICT to make teaching and learning process happen more easily for the benefit of all the learners in Higher Education Institutions in anytime anywhere mode. It has been crucial in increasing the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher Education.

Challenges of Digital India

The government of India has taken an initiative through the Digital India Mission to connect the rural areas of the country with high-speed internet networks. There are several challenges faced by it apart from the various initiatives taken by Digital India.

1. After years of broadband and nationwide fibre-optic infrastructure targets, India remains stuck at a total of 15



million wire line broadband users. Yet mobile broadband use has exploded, currently standing at 85 million users, driven by apps like Facebook and WhatsApp, and the sharing of images and videos.

2. For decades, hundreds of e-governance projects have been piloted across India. Many were quick successes that however died out once the chief promoter, often a bureaucrat on a two-year posting, moved on.
3. Digital India aims to have broadband networks that will span India's cities, towns and villages by end-2016, along with a system of networks and data centres called the National Information Infrastructure. If successful, it could transform citizen access to multimedia information, content and services. The government gets access to a great deal of information. However, laying cables doesn't ensure they will be used.
4. If we were to take a single organization like the Election Commission of India with a single objective of conducting elections; then technology becomes much easier to implement. But the implementation is difficult if we are dealing hundreds of government organizations with each having a different objective and diverse kind of citizen problems.
5. True value of digital means that work flow becomes automated. Efficiency has to be brought in the processes, and it needs to be much faster and transparent. Only then it makes sense to be called digital.
6. The challenge is around change management as the government has been working in a particular way and suddenly, we want them to work in a completely different environment. We are now asking them to put information online, respond to grievances and criticism. All this is difficult for people who are not used to function in this manner. Another aspect is to make them understand and educate on the advantages that digital will bring in running the government.
7. These are the low-hanging fruit, and the projects already under way. For instance, a new messaging platform for government employees has over 13 million mobiles and 2 million emails in the database; biometric attendance for all central government offices in Delhi, wi-fi in universities and in public locations, eBooks in schools, SMS-based weather information, disaster alerts. The challenge remains usage.
8. Experience shows that it is communications and content, not empty pipes, that drive network usage. And manufacturing content is not a government strength. This project needs content and service partnerships with telecom companies and other firms, with new entrepreneurs.
9. Even in its major cities, India's mobile network is so stressed that many say it's broken, with call failures and drops a common complaint. An intense shortage of spectrum has driven up costs and driven down service quality for India's telecom industry. But the problem is much bigger than dropped calls. As many as 85% of India's 100 million broadband users are mobile. As users ramp up multimedia use, and the next 100 million mobile broadband users come on board, networks will not be able to keep up. Digital India needs more spectrum.
10. IT for Jobs-This is a project to train 10 million students from smaller towns and villages for IT sector jobs over five years. Among the plans: Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) locations in every north-eastern state, 300,000 service delivery agents to be trained for IT services, and 500,000 rural workers to be trained by telecom operators for their own needs. The challenge here is not just the numbers, but quality. The technology sector increasingly finds that the dwindling manpower resources available for its jobs are under-trained and mismatched to its needs. Most firms are forced to invest a great deal into their own training for "fresher" recruits.

Opportunities of Digital India

1. The main vision of this program is focused on providing every citizen the digital infrastructure as a core utility, services and e- governance, and digital empowerment of citizens.



2. It increases the level of interaction between different departments through Information and Communication Technology and increases the speed of work and processes them instantly ensuring no stagnation in the work.
3. With two-thirds of rural population and only 30 percent reach of internet, the penetration of Internet into rural India would help farmers in accessing information regarding cropping techniques, seeds and various government schemes and hence can enlighten their lives.
4. With e- governance coming in and with the introduction of Digital locker where one can store their documents safely in the cloud and could be accessed from any time at any place with a click. This reduces the paper work which in fact eliminates various illegal happenings in the government.
5. With e-healthcare, e-commerce, e-ticketing etc., coming handy benefits people of every age, gender and region to easily communicate with each other and make their lives comfortable bringing everything to one's door step.
6. Once the change is brought it could change the Indian education system, with all the Gram Panchayats having access to internet will provide access to different teaching aids and materials and empowers everyone and increases the literacy levels in the country.
7. Red tapism hinders the progress of any project for that matter, this program in fact is to eliminate the red tapism, bureaucracy and improve the transparency.
8. It is an ambitious project of laying 7 lakh kilometers of cable providing broadband to 2.5 lakh villages by 2017, which can completely change the fate of India and drive India towards a developed country from a developing country.
9. India, with a humongous demand for telecommunication services is a huge opportunity for domestic as well as financial investors hence the digital India is also beneficial to businesses.
10. It also aims at eliminating imports of electronic goods into India and manufacture them in India (Make in India) thereby providing huge potential for employment in not only IT sector but also in the electronics sectors and benefiting the jobless.

Digital India Initiatives

Many initiatives have been taken up by the Government of India under the Digital India campaign. Few of such important initiatives are:

1. BHIM (Bharat Interface for Money)

It is an app that makes transactions easy, simple and quick using Unified Payments Interface (UPI).

2. E-Hospitals

It is a Hospital Management Information System (HMIS) which is a one-stop solution in connecting patients, hospitals and doctors through a single digital platform. Around 420 e-Hospitals had been established by February 2021 under the Digital India campaign.

3. E-Pathshala

It is developed by NCERT, e-Pathshala showcases and disseminates all educational e-resources including textbooks, audio, video, periodicals and a variety of other print and non-print materials through the website and mobile app.

4. Digi Lockers

This flagship initiative aims at 'Digital Empowerment' of the citizen by providing access to authentic digital documents to citizen's digital document wallet.



Impact of Digital India Campaign

Since its launch in 2015, the Digital India campaign has left its impact in various fields:

- ❖ Healthcare and education sector has also seen a boost.
- ❖ Digital India plan could boost GDP up to \$1 trillion by 2025.
- ❖ The Make in India initiative has improved the electronic manufacturing sector in India.
- ❖ Around 12000 post office branches in the rural areas have been linked electronically.
- ❖ Improvement in online infrastructure will enhance the economy of the country.

Result and Discussion

Digital India Mission is an initiative that encompasses plans to connect the rural areas of the country with high-speed internet networks.

- ❖ There is an increase in electronic transactions related to e-governance.
- ❖ A Common Service Center (CSC) is created under the National e-Governance Project of the Indian government which provides access for information and communication technology (ICT). Through computer and Internet access, the CSCs provide multimedia content related to e-governance, education, health, telemedicine, entertainment, and other government and private services.
- ❖ An optical fiber network of 2, 74,246 km has connected over 1.15 lakh Gram Panchayats under the Bharat Net programme.
- ❖ Internet data is used as a major tool for the delivery of the services and the urban internet penetration has reached 64%.
- ❖ Establishment of digital villages along with well-equipped facilities such as solar lighting, LED assembly unit, sanitary napkin production unit, and Wi-Fi choupal.

Conclusion

A digitally connected India can be useful in improving the social and economic condition of the citizens through development of non-agricultural economic activities other than providing access to education, health and financial services. However, ICT alone cannot directly lead to overall development of the nation. The overall growth and development can be realized through supporting and enhancing elements such as literacy, basic infrastructure, overall business environment, regulatory environment, etc.

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