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DIGITAL INDIA PROGRAM – MAIN PILLARS AND OBJECTIVE

Rajesh Kumar Shukla [1], Dr. Amar Pal Singh [2]

[1] Research Scholar, Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences, Shri Ramswaroop Memorial University, Lucknow-Deva Road (U.P.), India
[2] Associate Professor, Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences, Shri Ramswaroop Memorial University, Lucknow-Deva Road (U.P.), India

ABSTRACT

This article is presented to understand the purpose of Digital India program and key pillars of Digital India program where governments are paying more focus toward transforming India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. This article also explains why digitalization matters and which way it is going to help the nation and what is the economic impact of digitalization in India.

Keywords: Digital India, Pillars of Digital India, Digitally Empowered, Digital Payments

Corresponding Author
Rajesh Kumar Shukla,
razeshshukla@gmail.com

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1. INTRODUCTION

An ambitious initiative that was launched by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi on July 1, 2015, Digital India took the shape of a revolution over the years and has today turned into a mass movement, touching lives of the majority of Indians. Connecting citizens with the government through e-services, cost-effective and transparent in nature; delivery of government services. Dream of m Governance – on Mobile phones; providing online services to all, an idea become a reality today. Initiatives like Aadhaar, UPI, and Digi locker are being implemented in order to make governance faceless, cashless, and paperless, thereby building strong foundations in the form of a strong, robust, and secure Digital India.

1.1. AIM AND OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The study is to know what all are the objectives of Digital India program and what all are the main pillars of Digital India program in detail. Here, we shall try to understand digitalization matters in India and which way. This paper is based on data collected from various sources like National Sample Survey data, newspapers, and mostly government websites.

The program aims to make a better connect between citizens and the government through the system of e-services and help the government to deliver services in an efficient, transparent, and cost-effective way.

It is a nine-pillar program, and here are some of the pillars that this program includes:

- Broadband highways
- Universal access to mobile connectivity
- Public internet access program
- E-governance: to reform the government via technology
- E-kranti
- Electronic manufacturing
- IT for jobs
- Early harvest programs
- Information for all

2. BROADBAND HIGHWAYS

The objectives under this pillar include increasing broadband connectivity for all segments of the country and in all directions, including even the remote and rural areas, through an increase in broadband infrastructure and National Optical Fiber Network, NOFN.

This includes three sub components that are: Broadband for All Rural, Broadband for All Urban and National Information Infrastructure.

Under Broadband for All Rural, 250 thousand village Panchayats would be covered by December, 2016. DoT will be the Nodal Department and the project cost is estimated to be about Rs. 32,000 Cr.

Under Broadband for All Urban, Virtual Network Operators would be used in new urban development and buildings to provide services and communications infrastructure.

The above-mentioned should be integrated with National Information Infrastructure along with cloud-enabled National and State Data Centre with providing for horizontal connectivity to 100, 50, 20 and 5 government offices/ service outlets at state, district, block, and panchayat level, respectively. DeitY would be the nodal department for this; project cost in approximate amount comes around Rs 15,686 Cr. The implementation will be done in 2 years and the maintenance and support will be given for 5 years.

2.1. UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO MOBILE CONNECTIVITY

The intention is to provide connectivity across the country through a mobile so that every citizen will have access to mobiles and widespread mobile phone usage and enable delivery of digital services. The initiative focuses on network penetration in order to fill gaps in connectivity. As a whole, 42,300 villages will be covered. DoT will be the nodal department and the project cost will be around Rs 16,000 Cr during FY 2014-18.

2.2. PUBLIC INTERNET ACCESS PROGRAM

This pillar identifies developing digital centers so as to provide internet access and other digital services in rural and remote areas through improvement of digital literacy and accessibility. The two sub components of Public Internet Access Program are Common Service Centers and Post Offices as multi-service centers.

Common Service Centers would be made more robust and their number would be enhanced from the present level of around 135,000 operational to 250,000, meaning one CSC in every Gram Panchayat. CSCs shall be made commercially viable, multi-functional end-points for delivering government and business services. DeitY shall be the nodal department to implement the scheme.

Total of 150,000 Post Offices would be converted into multi service centers. Department of Posts would be nodal department to implement this scheme.

2.3. E-GOVERNANCE: TO REFORM THE GOVERNMENT VIA TECHNOLOGY

One of the reforms is to make Indian government services electronic and available to the citizen for improving efficiency, transparency, and accessibility of public administration. Guiding principles for the reform of the government through technology listed below:

1) Simplify the form and gather fewer details on the field – All forms have to be simple and user-friendly, and the minimum and amount of details that have to be gathered in the field.
2) Online applications, tracking the status, and interface between departments should be offered.
3) All the above are online data storage repositories e.g. copy of school certificates, voter ID cards etc. should be put in so that citizens are not asked for submission of these documents in their physical form.

There should be mandatory integration of services and platforms, such as UIDAI, Payment Gateway, Mobile Platform, Electronic Data Interchange (EDI), so that integrated, interoperable services delivery is allowed by citizens as well as businesses.

2.4. E-KRANTI

E-Kranti is one of the flagship components of the Digital India program of the Government of India, which transforms India into a digital society and a knowledge economy and includes: e-government, technology-driven reform of government, and e-services through the National E-government Program.

2.5. ELECTRONIC MANUFACTURING

Promotes electronics and hardware manufacturing inside the country, boosting the economy through job opportunities and minimizing reliance on imported products.

By targeting a net-zero importation, electronics manufacturing can be encouraged through incentive taxation, economies of scale, and skill development.

FABS, fab-less design, set-top boxes, VSATs, mobiles, consumer & medical electronics, smart energy meters, and smart cards.

Developing new and existing programs that will help strengthen structures in achieving manufacturing goals.

3. IT FOR JOBS

The initiative would train and develop skill sets in the youth to make them employable for the IT and digital sectors. A period of five years would be devoted to training youth from the smaller towns and villages for jobs in the IT sector. DeitY would be the nodal department. BPOs would be set up in all north-eastern states to enable growth through ICT in these states. DeitY would act as the nodal department for this scheme. 3 lakh service delivery agents would be trained as part of skill development to run viable businesses delivering IT services. DeitY would be the nodal department for this scheme. 5 lakh rural workforce would be trained by the Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) to cater to their own needs. DoT Department would be the nodal department for this scheme.

4. EARLY HARVEST PROGRAM

It consists of focused projects that directly respond to the requirements of digital access, including internet, access to school certificates, digital attendance, and Wi-Fi in public spaces. This pillar puts much emphasis on an early pilot

implementation of programs in e- health, e-education, and e-agriculture sectors in order to demonstrate the opportunity for applying digital technologies and hence promote their greater use.

5. INFORMATION FOR ALL

This pillar focuses on how government documents and records will be digitized to have access to lots of information, thus keeping transparency in the activities of the country and ensuring minimal paperwork.

On the other hand, the open data platform and online hosting of information & documents would expose them to easy and open access information for the citizens.

Government shall pro-actively engage through social media and web-based platforms to inform citizens. MyGov.in has already been launched as a medium to exchange ideas/suggestions with the Government. This will be 2-way communication between the citizens and the government.

Message to citizens on special occasions or programs through online messaging using emails and SMSes. This would mainly leverage extant facilities and would require few more resources.

6. WHY DIGITALIZATION MATTERS

Digitalization is an enormous technological shift, and how the countries adapt to these technologies will form the basis of the next several decades. It will enhance economic efficiency and competitiveness, expand new businesses and products, and deal with the challenges related to growing financial inclusion, strengthening governance, and reducing disparities.

Digitalization assumes special importance for India too because the country has a large population with over 60% residing in rural areas. This way, a more significant number of citizens will have wider access to the fruits and opportunities of an advanced economy, bridging the economic divide by connecting the country together. Moreover, the induction of advanced technologies, such as AI, Machine learning, block chain, cloud computing, and so on, would elevate the efficiency of Indian businesses, enable them to become more competitive globally, make new inroads to explore markets, new business models, and better positioned for great growth for the next few decades..

India has been digitizing at an accelerating pace owing to a combination of factors, including growing broadband penetration, advancing technology, low data usage costs, and the government's thrust on building infrastructure. This impetus came just in time for the startup ecosystem and entrepreneurship among the relatively young population, which has been quick in adopting and using digital technologies.

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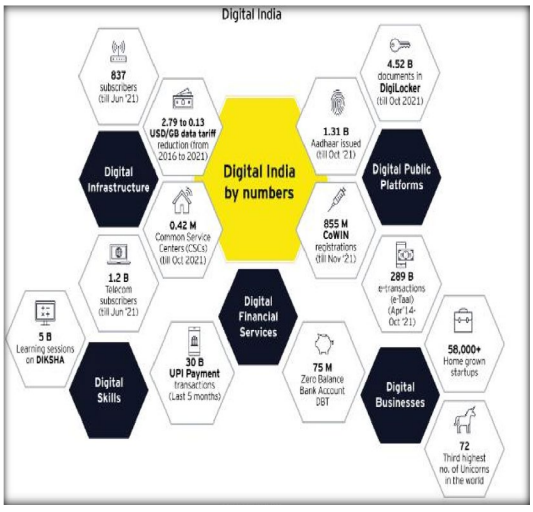


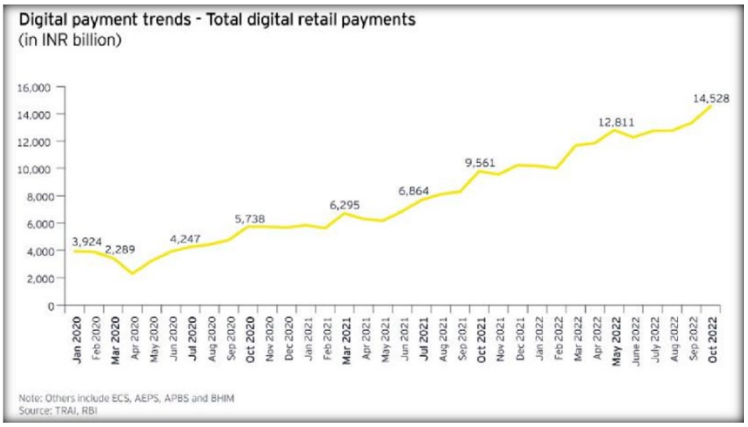
Digital Infrastructure built on India Stack. The overall strategy for the digitization of the economy in India has been different from that of other developed countries. India has an open internet, and there is no firewall between it and the rest of the world; however, this is different because India has well utilized the internet to create a myriad of digital public

goods and government services. This has allowed India to reach millions of citizens and build a much more democratic and an inclusive digital network and infrastructure. At the bottom of this infrastructure lies the "India Stack," a set of APIs that serve to unlock building blocks in the economy such as identity, digital payments, and data, creating a platform for facilitating transactions and providing goods and services.

The Aadhaar layer provides online bio-metric based digital identities to 1.35b individuals. Another layer of the Digital Indian Stack is the UPI. More than 350 banks are on the network with over 260m unique users and the network has grown to become India's largest digital payment network and world's fifth largest digital payment network by volume.

It has developed the UPI interface that has become widespread amongst Indians and changed their behaviour in a positive way for the long term towards:

- Digitization of the economy in India – cashless, paperless transactions.
- Financial Inclusion Increased: It brings into the mainstream economy a number of small businesses and unbanked individuals through the creation of a financial record and credit history. And it also opens up their access to credit.
- A potential retail payment alternative and reduced dependence on currently available card-based systems.
- Architecture for Private players to innovate and come out with new business models, for instance, fintech and e-commerce solutions. Due to this development of this stack, with the impact of the pandemic and the burgeoning e-commerce market, digital payments have exploded in India; UPI is leading the pack in India, which will turn out to confirm its bright future in India.



Economic Impact of Digitalization in India

Digitalization has implications across the Indian economy.

- "Core Digital Economy Share of GVA increased from 5.4% in 2014 to 8.5% in 2019, and the digitally dependent economy comes out to be about 22% of the GDP in 2019."
- India's digital economy grew at a rate of 15.6 percent in absolute US dollar terms from 2014-2019, doubling the pace of growth in the overall Indian economy.
- The output multiplier of digital has increased from 1.35 in 2014 to 1.52 in 2019, signifying that investments are important drivers of growth.
- 62.4 million people were employed in the digitally dependent economy in 2019.

7. DIGITALIZATION OF GOVERNMENT AND GOVERNANCE

Digitization of India's interface with citizens and thereby easier to get licenses, certificates, payment of taxes, and bringing efficiency in governance outcomes. Also, the digitalisation has been done in procurement of goods and services, through creating an e-central marketplace - Government eMarketplace (GeM), and now one of the largest procurement platforms with gross annual merchandise value of US$14.2b.

The social aspects of digitalization during the pandemic situation relieved several people. They were pushed on India's digital public infrastructure, COWIN36-the technology platform developed by the government of India to manage the rollout of the world's largest vaccination program.

8. BROADBAND USAGE HAS BEEN SURGING, DRIVING MARKETPLACES

Broadband usage in India is growing at uncharted levels. Over the last five years, MBB subscribers have grown from 345m to 765m. Data traffic per user has increased by 31% over the last five years and has reached 17 GB as of December 2021. This is expected to grow further, making India's data traffic usage from 2017 to 2021 one among the highest across the world with a CAGR of 53%. Eight hours are spent online every day by an average Indian Gen Z. The next wave of smartphone adoption is seen in rural India. It is now predicted that India will have the second largest universe of online shoppers by 2030, estimated at 500m to 600m.

Online marketplaces have been literally exploding across all sectors of the economy. Reflecting the behavioral change, it is but logical that these metrics will continue to explode. The size of the e-commerce market is expected to grow to US$350b by 2030.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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