



DIGITAL INDIA – TRANSFORMING INDIA INTO A KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

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Abstract

The journey towards a digitally connected began in early 1990's and 2000's with the introduction of a wide range of e-governance programmes. However, its impact and influence was limited. Digital India stands for transforming India into a digitally empowered knowledge economy. Besides it is also an initiative of government of India to integrate various government departments and people of India. It also aims at ensuring that government services are made available to every citizen electronically by reducing paper work. With a clear vision, present government is pushing ahead the concept of digital India initiative to transform the country into a digitally empowered society. With the launch of this initiative, government aims to reach out to citizens in the remotest of locations and also make them a part of India's growth story. As it is believed that technology is a key driver in causing disruptive change, digital tools will certainly empower citizens and prove to be a game-changer. Digital India also provided the much needed thrust to the nine pillars of growth areas namely Broadband highways, Universal access to mobile connectivity and Public internet access programme among others. Digital India would also bring in public accountability through mandated delivery of government's service electronically; Unique ID and e-Praamaan based on authentic and standard based interoperable and integrated government applications and data basis. Besides the source of funding for most of the e-governance projects at present is through budgetary provisions of respective ministries/departments in central or state governments of funds for individual projects

for digital India will be worked out by respective nodal ministries/departments. Of late introductions of various schemes by major telecom players such as cutting down cost of data packs have certainly resulted in significant rise in internet users in rural segments. Also in-situ, launching of cheap and affordable range smart phones has contributed to the cause. In a way untapped potential in rural markets can also be targeted through digital means. The paper focuses on what digital mediums of marketing can be use these digital mediums to expand their consumer base to the less emerged segment of consumers.

Keywords: Digital India, e-governance, public accountability, digitally empowered knowledge Disruptive change, digital medium

Introduction:

Certainly India is on the cusp of an information technology revolution. In order to transform the entire ecosystem of public services through the use of information technology, Government of India has also undertaken the digital India program with a major vision to transform India into a digitally empowered society as well as knowledge economy. Besides digital India also covers several developmental aspects such as promoting investments, improving ease of doing business, creating IT jobs, providing financial inclusion, encouraging entrepreneurship, promoting literacy, catalyzing growth across all sectors and also encouraging women's participation in professional, economic and social arena. Rural marketing means to develop promote and also create awareness about goods and distribute the same to rural customers. This is generally done to identify and also meet the needs, wants and demands of rural customers and

also to extend the outreach of the company to complete the objectives of organization.

Digital India as such is an ambitious project which is the outcome of changes brought by information and communication technology. Digital India is an innovative thought of Mr. Narendra Modi government which is also an initiative of GOI to integrate government departments and people of India. It basically aims at ensuring that government services are made available to citizens electronically by reducing paperwork. The programme weaves together large number of ideas and thought into a single, comprehensive vision so that each of them is seen a part of larger goal. It is co-ordinated by deity and implemented by the entire government both at centre and state. E-commerce is transforming our lives and it is the use of electronic communications and digital information processing technology in business transactions to create, transform and also redefine relationships for value creation between organizations and individuals. The cost of Digital India project is estimated to be Rs.1, 13,000 crore and for digital India initiative, original design and programme content of the e-governance project has been distinctly improved upon. Many strategies have been developed for rural areas as rural market has been an important part of Indian economy. Mindset of people is not same as 20 years before and today in rural areas people are not being seduced by low price strategies and they are also aware of the brand value of a product. In the past 20 years or so rural lifestyle and consumption has also changed a lot and its becoming closer to urban lifestyle in terms of facilities, habits, exposure and consumption.

Vision of Digital India:

The vision of digital India is necessarily centered on three major key areas. They are as follows:

- Digital infrastructure as a major utility which seeks to provide each and every citizen with high speed internet facility, a cradle to grave internet identity, mobile phone and bank account, basic access to common service centre, sharable private space on a public cloud as well as safe and secure cyberspace
- Empower citizens, especially rural citizens by making them digitally literate. This can be done through collaborative digital platforms and also by making available digital

- resources in their native language with a view to make their participation a true reality. It will also help tap data that which will be freely available on cloud computing platform- independent of an intervention.
- Governance and other services on demand which will be readily available in real time for online as well as mobile platforms seamlessly integrated across various departments and jurisdictions. Besides all citizen documents to be made available on cloud platform, by which as a result citizens will not be asked to produce such documents for availing services. In addition to this, provision of cashless electronic transactions will also help generate business. Geographical information systems (GIS) will also be integrated with development schemes.

Major Objectives of the present study:

1. To give an overview of digital India
2. To study the major opportunities of Digital India programme for people of the country
3. To know various challenges faced by Digital India programme in its implementation
4. To understand the key pillars of Digital India programme
5. To analyze the successes of digital India program till date

Overview of Digital India Programme

Essentially a good governing body requires a good communication platform to communicate with stakeholders efficiently and effectively. Communicating as such has become a big challenge for GOI with widespread geography, enormous linguistic and cultural diversity as well as massive population. The way of communication has transformed a lot from postal and telegraph era to print and broadcasting media to the era of digital communication. However the efficient and effective way to communicate with the citizen's of the world's largest democracy with population of 1.2 billion is only possible through connecting with everyone on a digital platform. Though India is considered as IT hub and powerhouse of the world, there is huge digital divide. Digital India is an umbrella mission covering many departments as it weaves together large number of ideas and thoughts into

a single, comprehensive vision so that each of them is seen as part of a larger goal. Weaving together makes the mission transformative in totality. Digital identity infrastructure works on creating provision to a robust, reusable ID to those who do not have any formal ID document, improving targeting and delivery of services, clean up existing databases from ghosts and duplicates and also reduce cost of delivery of services. Aadhaar is a platform for financial inclusion is an ambitious program of digital India to open bank accounts using Aadhaar wherein linking of Aadhaar to existing bank accounts through Aadhaar payment bridge (APB) which simplifies disbursement of funds and uses only one account for all disbursements. Transactions are done through Aadhaar enabled payment system (AEPS) which is inter-operable, portable anytime and anywhere.

Today, world has transformed from a knowledge savvy to tech knowledge savvy. If we think of something then it is available in one click. In this regard, digital India is a step by the government to inspire and connect Indian economy to such a knowledge savvy world. The program targets to make government services available to people digitally and also enjoy the benefit of newest information and other such technological innovations. It also brings out various schemes like e-health, digital locker, e-education, e-sign etc as well as nationwide scholarship portal. Besides the program strives to provide equal benefit to the user and service provider and the consumers will be benefitted by way of saving time, money, physical and cognitive energy spent in lengthy government processes. Digital India would also ensure to bring in public accountability through mandated delivery of government's services electronically; Unique ID and e-Pramaan based on authentic and standard based interoperable as well as integrated government applications and data basis. Digital India however aims to remove digital gap between rural and urban India.

Major opportunities of Digital India programme for people of the country

Some of the major opportunities of digital India programme for people of the country besides facing many challenges in its implementation are as follows:

1. Digital India has brought in public accountability through mandated delivery of government services electronically
2. The program also tries to put an end to corruption system which has already become a main feature of the country
3. Digital India programme aims to reduce paper work which will certainly help to save trees and protect environment
4. National Scholarship portal, an ambitious project under digital India will put have end to scholarship process right from submission of student's application, verification, sanction and disbursement of money to end beneficiary for all scholarships provided by government of India
5. Digital India certainly benefits citizens of India residing in rural areas in terms of improving their knowledge using internet facilities in day to day life
6. Each person will be having a bank account of his own
7. Government to enable devices, applications, systems, infrastructure and data that is smart (optimal and effective), secure and cost-sensitive (flexible to change for any new technology migration)
8. Enable availability of government data and service; hence facilitate innovation by bringing several opportunities to general public. Example: Farming, education, Health care etc
9. Empower citizens of India with data and information which is available with government across all departments. Information to be digitalized with various government services that which are accessible online anywhere, anytime on any device.

Various challenges faced by Digital India programme in its implementation

As a new initiative it is quite obvious that the programme will face many challenges. Some of the major challenges which might create problem in its implementation are as follows:

1. In terms of culture, tradition, aesthetics India certainly is a diversified country. Each state as such has its own specific language, custom, food habits, laws and tradition. Digital India program thus aims

- to integrate the entire country digitally. Complete integration of technology and language is probably one of the main challenges the mission would rather face in its implementation
- Also in different states internet protocol depends on what kind of hardware and software they do implement and chances are also that it might lead to connectivity glitches. Hence there must be some sort of directive to standardize all types of software protocols
 - The main aim of digital India is to transform the country into a digitally empowered knowledge economy and it's not an easy task. It certainly needs co-ordination and co-operation from all government departments. However departments without smooth teamwork between themselves, the mission would never be able to be implemented to its full strength
 - Public internet access is one of the major pillars of Digital India programme. But in India, poverty and illiteracy both stand as major obstacles in internet access. High illiteracy rate however acts as a major road block in expanding the reach of internet
 - Today we dwell in a world where cyber-crime and internet are inseparable entities. The entire architecture should necessarily be designed in such a way that there is proper authentication done w.r.t all documents put online by citizens and it is also available to right users at any point of time they are in need of it with right authentication. In order to ensure cyber security country should have privacy norms
 - National optical fiber network certainly ensures that broadband reaches in every accessible areas of the country. However to reach broadband connection country wide is not an easy task to execute

Key Pillars of Digital India Programme

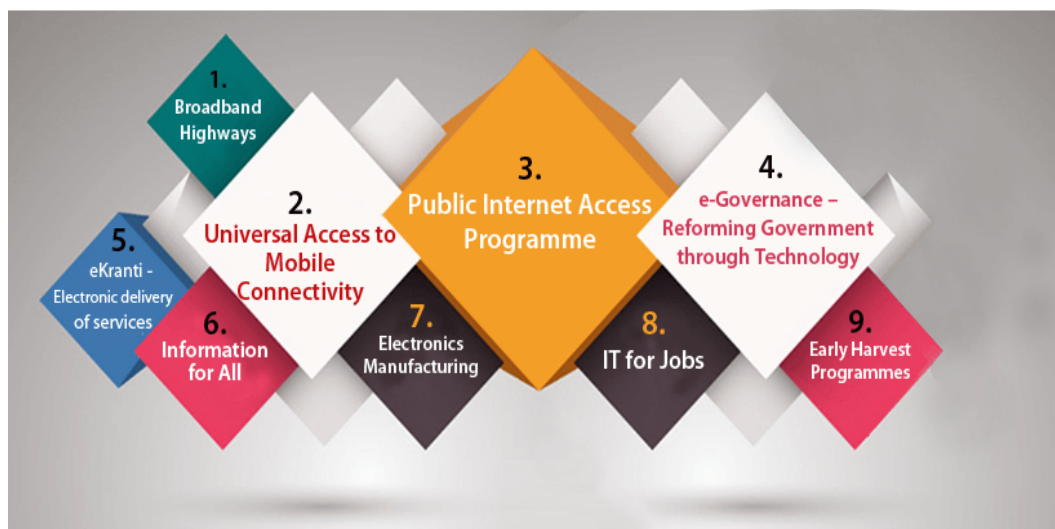


Figure showing Nine Pillars of Digital India Programme

Detailed descriptions of all the key pillars of digital India programme are as follows:

- Broadband highways:** In rural areas, broadband highways would be implemented through department of telecommunications (DoT) with capital expenditure of Rs. 32,000 crores. The rural broadband highways intends to cover 2, 50,000 gram panchayats of which 50,000 would be covered in the first year which remaining 1,00,00 each would be covered in the upcoming years. Focus in urban areas would be on changing rules towards efficient development of respective broadband highways. By developing virtual network operations for service delivery along with mandating communication infrastructure in new urban development and buildings.
- Universal access to mobile connectivity:** The major initiative of this program is to focus on network penetration and also fill the gaps in connectivity across the country.

- Universal access to mobile connectivity would be implemented through Department of telecommunications(DoT)with capital expenditure of Rs. 16,000 crores and also coverage of about 42,300 villages uncovered across the country so far
3. **Public Internet Access Programme – National rural Internet mission:** Two sub components of public internet access programme are common service centres and post offices as multi service centres. In the long run Post Offices would be converted into Multi-Service Centers. Implemented through department of posts (D/o Posts), it intends to cover 150,000 post offices within a span of two years.
 4. **eGovernance: Reforming Government through Technology:** Government would take up Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) using IT to improve transactions including form simplification and reduction, online applications and tracking, developing interface between departments, use of online repositories like school certificates and voter identity cards, integration of services and platforms like UIDAI, payment gateway, mobile platform and EDI. Furthermore all databases and information would be made through electronic medium going away from the existing manual mode. Focus would also be on workflow automation inside government systems. Public Grievance Redressal would be automated using IT so as to analyse data to identify and resolve persistent problems, largely process improvements. These measures which are critical for transformation would be implemented across government
 5. **eKranti: Electronic Delivery of Services:** The present ongoing programme (NeGP) would be revamped to cover various elements to bring eKranti. This would include fostering technology in the areas of planning, agriculture, education, health, financial inclusion, justice and security. The technology for planning would include GIS based decision making and National GIS Mission Mode Project.
In the domain of agriculture, development of technology for farmers would result into real-time price information, online ordering of inputs (e.g. fertilizers) and online cash, loans, relief-payments along with development of mobile banking. In the domain of education, some of the measures that would be taken include connecting all schools with broadband, free Wi-Fi in about 250,000 schools, digital literacy program and development of pilot massive online open courses.
 6. **Information for All:** The pillar of ‘information to all’ would encompass making information online and hosting websites and documents. This would result into an easy and open access to information by the public in general along with development of open data platforms. As usual, the Government would pro-actively engage through social media and web based platforms to inform citizens. The platform ‘MyGov.in’ would foster 2-way communication between citizens and government. Also, it would enable sending online messages to citizens on special occasions/programs.
 7. **Electronics Manufacturing: Target NET ZERO IMPORTS by 2020:** In India, the existing structure needs strengthening in order to boost electronic manufacturing; the target being ‘NET ZERO Imports’ in this domain in the days to come. This would be an ambitious goal which would require coordinated action on many fronts like taxation, incentives, economies of scale, and eliminate cost disadvantages. The areas under focus would include items like FABS, Fab-less design, Set top boxes, VSATs, Mobiles, Consumer & Medical Electronics, Smart Energy meters, Smart cards and micro-ATMs. At present, there are many ongoing programs in the domain of electronic manufacturing which will be fine-tuned with measures such as development of incubators, clusters, and focus on skill development along with measures such as Government procurement.
 8. **IT for Jobs:** The objectives of this pillar is to train people in smaller towns and villages for IT sector jobs, setting up of BPO in each of the North-East State in order to foster ICT enabled growth, train service delivery agents to run viable businesses delivering IT services, and to train rural workforce to cater to their own needs and hence create a telecom ready workforce. These initiatives

would be implemented mainly through DoT and DeitY.

9. **Early Harvest Programmes:** Some of the immediate measures which can be realised soon are covered in this pillar of 'early harvest programmes'. These would be the measures such as creating IT platform targeted to elected representatives along with all the Government employees covering 1.36 Crore mobiles and 22 Lakh emails through development of a mass messaging application.

Other measures would primarily include technological improvements such as Government greetings would now be e-Greetings, implementation of biometric attendance in all government offices, Wi-Fi in all universities, secured emails within government, standardized government email design, public Wi-Fi hotspots, school Books to be eBooks, SMS based weather information, SMS based disaster alerts and a national portal for lost-&-found children.

Success of digital India program till date

Some of the major success of digital India program is as follows:

➤ **E-Pathshala: Transforming Learning through Technology**

The Ministry of Human Resource Development introduced the e-Pathshala programme to promote 'learning on the go' among students, teachers and parents. Through this initiative, free access to NCERT books is available to students of classes 1 to 12. These books are available in both Hindi and English.

➤ **eBiz platform**

The initiative, driven by the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), seeks to provide comprehensive Government-to-Business (G2B) services to business entities with transparency, speed, and certainty. The aim is to reduce several levels of points of contact between business entities and government agencies, establish single-window services and reduce the burden of compliances.

➤ **My Gov platform**

This is a platform for citizens to exchange ideas and suggestions with the government. Through this initiative, the

government receives feedback, inputs and ideas from people regarding policy decisions and new initiatives like Digital India, Swachh Bharat, Make in India, among others.

➤ **Jeevan Praman**

The Jeevan Praman programme enables pensioners to conveniently submit their life certificates online through this portal. The certificates are stored in the Life Certificate Repository and available to pensioners and Pension Disbursing agencies.¹⁷

➤ **Digital Locker System**

DigiLocker is a key initiative under Digital India. This programme is targeted at paperless governance and is a platform for issuance and verification of documents and certificates digitally. A dedicated cloud storage space is given to all those who register for the Digital Locker account. To make it an easy process, this storage is linked to their Aadhaar (UIDAI) number. Organisations that are registered with Digital Locker can push electronic copies of documents and certificates (e.g. driving license, Voter ID, School certificates) directly into the citizens' lockers. As per the official website, there are 39, 64, 008 registered users and 50, 47,204 uploaded documents.

Conclusion:

To ensure smooth implementation of e-governance in the country and also to transform the entire ecosystem of public services through efficient use of information technology digital India has been introduced. There is no better way to promote inclusive growth other than through empowering citizens of the country. A digitally connected India can help in improving social and economic condition of people through development of non-agricultural economic activities apart from providing access to education, health and financial services. However, it is important to note that ICT (Information and Communications Technology) 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. The Digital India program is just the beginning of a digital revolution, once implemented properly it will open various new opportunities for the citizens.

The Digital India programme aims at pulling together many existing schemes. These schemes will be restructured, revamped and re-focused and will be implemented in a synchronized manner. Many elements are only process improvements with minimal cost implications. The common branding of programmes as Digital India highlights their transformative impact. While implementing this programme, there would be wider consultations across government, industry, civil society, and citizens to discuss various issues to arrive at innovative solutions for achieving the desired outcomes of Digital India. DeitY has already launched a digital platform named as “myGov” (<http://mygov.in>) to facilitate collaborative and participative governance. Moreover, several consultations and workshops have been organized to discuss the implementation approach of the vision areas of Digital India.

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