

Digital India: Challenges & Opportunities

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Introduction

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.

Digital India Program is a national campaign to transform India into a globally connected hub. It includes various proposals and incentives given to companies, basically the manufacturing companies both domestic and foreign to invest in India and make the country a digital destination. The emphasis of Digital India campaign is on creating jobs and skill enhancement in the Broadband Highways, e-Governance, and Electronic delivery of services, Universal access to Mobile Connectivity, Electronics Manufacturing, and Information for All etc. The campaign's aim is to resolve the problems of connectivity and therefore help us to connect with each other and also to share information on issues and concerns faced by us. In some cases they also enable resolution of those issues in near real time. This initiative is focussed to help India gain a better rural connectivity with a stable governmental policies in the background coupled with benefits and incentives via the campaign. Simultaneously the initiative is designed to create jobs and enhance skill development which will ultimately lead to increase in GDP and revenues from tax.

Vision of Digital India

The vision of Digital India programme is to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. The Digital India programme is centred on three key vision areas:

Digital Infrastructure as a Utility to Every Citizen

- Availability of high speed internet as a core utility for delivery of services to citizens
- Cradle to grave digital identity that is unique, lifelong, online and authenticable to every citizen
- Mobile phone & bank account enabling citizen participation in digital & financial space
- Easy access to a Common Service Centre
- Shareable private space on a public cloud
- Safe and secure cyber-space

Governance & Services on Demand

- Seamlessly integrated services across departments or jurisdictions

- Availability of services in real time from online & mobile platforms
- All citizen entitlements to be portable and available on the cloud
- Digitally transformed services for improving ease of doing business
- Making financial transactions electronic & cashless
- Leveraging Geospatial Information Systems (GIS) for decision support systems & development

Digital Empowerment of Citizens

- Universal digital literacy
- Universally accessible digital resources
- Availability of digital resources / services in Indian languages
- Collaborative digital platforms for participative governance
- Citizens not required to physically submit Govt. documents / certificates

Literature Review

Digital India” initiative has been an intriguing subject matter of numerous researches from various disciplines because of its great significance and influence on the economy as a whole and particularly the technological sector. Being a recent move, there have been various researches on different aspects of the initiative ranging from the economical to social and ethical dimensions. Some of these researches retrieved through internet searches have been reviewed here.

Prof. Singh began with the basic overview of what Digital India entails and led a discussion of conceptual structure of the program and examined the impact of “Digital India” initiative on the technological sector of India. He concluded that this initiative has to be supplemented with amendments in labor laws of India to make it a successful campaign. (2)

Sundar Pichai, Satya Nadella, Elon Musk researched about Digital India and its preparedness to create jobs opportunities in the information sector. (3) He concluded that creating new jobs should be continued with shifting more workers into high productivity jobs in order to provide long term push to the technological sector in India.

Microsoft CEO, Satya Nadella intends to become India’s partner in Digital India program. He said that his company will set up low cost broadband technology services to 5lakhs villages across the country.

Arvind Gupta intends to say that Digital India movement will play an important role in effective delivery of services, monitoring performance managing projects, and improving governance. An Integrated Office of Innovation & Technology to achieve the same ,and for problem solving, sharing applications and knowledge management will be the key to rapid results, given that most departments work on their own silos. Tracking and managing the projects assume significance because India has been busy spending money in buying

technology that we have not used effectively or in some cases not even reached its implementation stage. Sharing, learning's need to be best practices across departments Tracking and managing the projects assumes significance because India has been busy spending money in buying technology that we have not used effectively or in some cases not even reached implementation stage. Sharing learning's and best practices across departments needs to be driven by this Office of Technology.

Research Methodology

The specific types of information and / or data needed to conduct a secondary analysis will depend on the focus of study. For this research purpose, secondary data analysis is usually conducted to gain in-depth understanding of the “Digital India” initiative. Secondary data review and analysis involves collecting information, statistics, and other relevant data at various levels of aggregation in order to conduct a requirement analysis of the rural area and mostly the paper is based on the information retrieved from the internet via journals, research papers and expert opinions on the same subject matter.

Objective of the Paper

It is worth noticing that India over a period of time has become a direct service economy from being an agrarian economy but it also implies that not much focus has been given to technological sector.

The Objective of the Digital India Group is to come out with innovative ideas and practical solutions to realise Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a digital India. Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi envisions transforming our nation and creating opportunities for all citizens by harnessing digital technologies. His vision is to empower every citizen with access to digital services, knowledge and information. This Group will come up with policies and best practices from around the world to make this vision of a digital India a reality. The Digital India initiative has to pass through various hindrances and challenges to be fully potent and successful. This paper thus elucidates various challenges faced by both domestic and from global investors and then recommend suggestions to pave way for the successful implementation of an ambitious campaign launched with high hopes.

Challenges, Recommendations & Suggestions

The Digital India campaign can't be a successful campaign merely by implementation or by incentivizing industry. For a hugely rewarding success, the campaign should move forward taking along other policies, amending redundant laws, focusing on necessary infrastructure building etc. One such hindrance in the way of Digital India is the first is the digital infrastructure, which requires to be put in place. For this the telecom infrastructure will form the base. On top of this layer we need the IT infrastructure in the form of apps, software etc. The second set is content that needs to be relevant to the citizens and address their real-time

requirements. The third layer is capacity. Unless we have the all these three sets (i.e. telecom infrastructure, content, capacity) we won't be able to meet the supply commence rate of the demand.

If this point is not taken proper care of then there would be clashes between the people in the rural areas and the government which will result in delay in commencing the project which will ultimately defeat the Digital India campaign's spirit of quick and hassle free ease of doing business. If this government takes the agenda forward and does not leave any of the constituent parts gasping for funds, the opportunities are huge for the country in general and for willing participants in the IT sector as well! There is much to be done, from the creation of smart cities to the comprehensive availability of broadband, from connectivity in education, healthcare, agriculture, and manufacturing to a National Digital Literacy Mission (NDLM) that Nasscom Foundation has already taken up with the Department of Electronics & IT (DeitY). What is important to understand is that like any elephant, Digital India has many parts and each has to be addressed to make the big vision a reality. Another recommendation as to digital connectivity is to reduce the judicial clearances and stability in ruling which can act as a major impetus to the technological sector as it will attract high investor confidence with the judicial rulings being fair and pro-business. Going by the present practices, the imposition of certain amendments with retrospective effect has garnered much noise in the past and should immediately be taken notice of. The more stable, quick and fair the judgment in basically cases relating to the business and taxation sectors, the better the chances of attracting more business leaders to invest more. The Judicial clearances and stability in ruling can act as a major impetus to the technological sector as it will attract high investor confidence with the judicial rulings being fair and pro-business. Going by the present practices the imposition of certain amendments with retrospective effect has garnered much noise in the past and should immediately be taken notice of. The more stable, quick and fair judgments in these cases relating to the business and taxation sectors, the better the chances of attracting more business leaders to invest more. As another recommendation, Prime Minister Sh. Narendra Modi in his inimitable style touched all the right chords in his speech, which included in its ambit the opportunities for access to better healthcare, education, and information for better livelihood that is at the core of the digital opportunity. A lot will be expected from the national broadband mission to lay the digital infrastructure on which many of these national applications can be mounted. In the last couple of years,

Nasscom Foundation with its 'Follow the Fiber' approach and the active partnership of technology majors Intel, Google, and Microsoft has shown that village wide digital literacy is possible with successful outcomes in three villages in different parts of the country and more on the way. Hence, But providing a better transparent legislation with not only comprehensive availability of broadband, from connectivity in education, healthcare, agriculture, and manufacturing but also ensuring the implementation of the same would be a step forward in making India a preferred destination with regard to connectivity. Lastly improving the relations between the government and the corporate with regard to favourable

taxation policies, quicker clearances of projects, minimal interference and removal of inaccessibility problems is the need of the hour for Digital India to bear fruits.

Conclusions

Digital India' initiative is a refreshing move and quite the need of the hour for the weakened technological sector. The Government of India hopes to achieve growth on multiple fronts with the Digital India Programme. Specifically, the government aims to target nine 'Pillars of the Digital India' that they identify as being.

- Broadband Highways
- Universal Access to Mobile Connectivity
- Public Internet Access Programme
- e-Governance-Reforming Government through Technology
- eKranti-Electronic delivery of services
- Information for All
- Electronics Manufacturing
- Digital or IT for Jobs
- Early Harvest Programmes.

However, it requires to be rightly substantiated with amendments to various legislations that have for long hindered the growth of Indian technology. India should focus more on developing domestically led connectivity, promoting research and innovation-led development to establish itself strongly on the international stage as an economic superpower and particularly a thriving technological hub.

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