Digital India – What People Think About It?

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Abstract

The research objectives were to analyze people's perceptions about the initiative, determine demographic differences in these perceptions, identify implementation challenges, and suggest improvement measures. Four null hypotheses were tested, positing no significant differences in perception based on gender, age, occupation, and marital status. The methodology employed a descriptive and analytical approach using primary data from 141 respondents through structured questionnaires, analyzed using ANOVA and percentage methods. Results confirmed all null hypotheses, indicating that perception of Digital India features remains consistent regardless of demographic variables. Most respondents believe the initiative will uplift living standards and develop the Indian economy, though government awareness efforts were deemed insufficient. Major implementation challenges include illiteracy, slow internet speed, connectivity issues, cybersecurity concerns, and high costs. Recommendations include enhancing digital literacy, building technical skills, promoting digital adoption across all societal strata, defining the private sector's role, and improving rural digital infrastructure. The initiative has already shown significant impact with millions using services like DigiLocker and MyGov platform.

Keywords: Digital Inclusion, Public Perception, Internet Accessibility, Government Initiatives, Technological Adoption.

1. INTRODUCTION

To empower the society in an efficient and effective way, digital transformation and upgradation is essential. The Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi launched Digital India Campaign on 1 July 2015 with Power to Empower motto. The primary objective of Digital India initiative was to transform rural areas into digitally empowered network. Accelerating growth in the area of electronic services is the vision of this programme and it focuses on the digital development by providing all the facilities and services to people digitally. This will boost the generation and growth of employment opportunities in the country (Shallu, Sihmar & Meena, 2019). Innovations and advancements need to be done at a large scale in the field of technology to connect the whole country virtually and digitally so that nation can transform to a digitally empowered society. Digital India Initiative is centered on three components:

a. Development of digital infrastructure
b. Delivery of government services digitally
c. Enhancing digital literacy.

The Jan Dhan Scheme (connect every home with the banking system), Access to the internet, which includes one-third of the country's population, Aadhaar (biometric identification programme), government initiatives to boost entrepreneurial drive, and finally the adoption of GST to formalise financial services are some of the evidences of the country's digital revolution. (Sharma & Singh, 2018). The government also launched "DigiLocker", a digital locker. The goal of Digital Locker System is to reduce the use of physical papers by allowing agencies to share e-documents. MyGov.in has been created as an innovative tool to foster citizen-government collaboration. Citizens and government organisations will use the Swachh Bharat Mission Mobile App to achieve the mission's goals. The government has launched BharatNet, a high-speed digital highway project that would connect lakhs of Gram Panchayats across the country using optical fibre. This project also faces some difficulties, such as funding and public awareness. If Digital India is implemented correctly, it will have a positive impact on India's development (Shetty, 2019).

Why Digital India Programme is Important?

In spite of increasing use of industry of Information Technology and digital technologies, digital gap of India is expanding and creating economic divides between people who can and cannot afford technology, as well as limiting the digital progress of India. To fill this gap, the Government of India launched the “Digital India” initiative which covers several programmes like mobile e-health services, e-governance, digital finance. The "Digital India" effort enables the country to build its digital infrastructure through different programmes such as Aadhaar, BharatNet, and public Wi-Fi hotspots. India, with over 56 crore internet users, is the second largest internet market after China. By 2023, the country is predicted to have more than 65 crore internet users. In spite of the vast number of internet users, internet penetration rate of India was anticipated to be around 50% in 2020, and over half of India's population had internet connection in that year. Furthermore, the inexpensive mobile data prices in India have made the internet accessible to a large portion of the population. The Government of India collaborated with leading technological companies to implement the Digital India programme successfully.

- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) and Google teamed to launch the 'Build for Digital India' programme in 2019, which encourages engineering students to build up market-ready, digital solutions.
- MeitY partnered with Amazon Web Services (AWS) to open a quantum computing applications lab in India in January 2021, with the goal of accelerating quantum computing-driven research and development and enabling new scientific breakthroughs.

- To open NDLM (National Digital Literacy Mission) centres and provide digital literacy training in India, the government partnered with private sector businesses (such as Amdocs, Zensar Technologies, Google, Cognizant, Intel, Cyient, Microsoft etc.).

Important Initiatives Under Digital India Programme and their Current Status

- *BharatNet:* Under the Bharat Net Programme, optical fibre network of 5,74,332 km has been connected in about 1,78,942 lakh Gram Panchayats as of June, 2022.
- *MyGov*: It was launched in 2014 with the goal of bringing the government nearer to the citizen by offering an interface (online forum) for idea interchange. As of June 2022, there were more than 2.35 crore members registered.
- *DigiLocker*: Over 110.41 million registered users of DigiLocker in India as of June 2022.
- *Common Service Centres (CSCs):* There were over 2.5 lakhs CSCs and 687 districts had CSC as of 2020.
- *Digitization of Post Offices*: The government plans to turn 1.5 lakh post offices into multiservice centers as part of the Digital India initiative. As of February 2020, India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) had authorized more than 1,36,000 post offices to bring banking services at the customer's door, including access to all Aadhaar-linked bank accounts, resulting in 2.5 times increase in rural banking facilities.
- *Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyaan*: In 2017, the scheme was launched to make people digitally literate in rural areas. As of June 2022, more than six crore candidates were registered, out of them about 3.80 crore were certified.
- *e-Hospital*: It was created to provide medical services in a fast and efficient manner. As of June 2022, 751 e-Hospitals were established.

Highlights of Union Budget with respect to Digital India

- The Gujarat International Finance Tec-City in Gandhinagar has been proposed as a location for the development of a world-class fintech centre (GIFT).
- Funds totaling US$ 1200 million (Rs. 9,000 crore) were allocated to appreciate service providers for building and expanding their cellular infrastructure.
- To digitise the Indian Railways funds worth Rs. 1.15 lakh crore (US$ 15.32 billion) has been allocated.
- From February 1, 2021, by registering their mobile number on the electoral commission's website, all voters will be able to access their "Digital voter ID card".

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Gaur and Padiya (2016) evaluated different trends and challenges for digital transformation. Standard of living of people will improve by the Digital India program and it is very important for the country. In Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, land clusters have been allocated for the IT

Hardware and electronic manufacturing. On the Make in India Program for IT Hardware and electronics, Digital India Initiative will have massive impact and it would create right environment for its demand and manufacturing.

Sheokhand and Gupta (2017) discussed the nine pillars for the implementation of the initiative. The paper also assesses the effect of digitalization on the various sectors of the economy such as agricultural, industrial and services sectors, and tries to figure out various obstacles faced by the Digital India Initiative in successful implementation. The study concluded that the efficiency and effectiveness of work being done is improved by the digitalization. Uncertainties are being reduced and available resources are better utilized because of automation of agricultural sector. Digitalisation of industries resulted in better product design and improved profit margins which ultimately lead to healthy competition and development of the sector. Digitalization of services has improved the level of customer satisfaction and quality of services has been improved by timely and wider reach of services.

Vanita and Sachdeve (2017) highlighted the different challenges and opportunities of Digital India Programme. In the study, the researchers considered key projects of Digital India Programme like e-books platform (e-basta), e-sign, e-greeting portals, digital locker system, Jeevan Praman, e-hospitals, National Scholarship Portal etc. The researchers also discussed the nine pillars of Digital India. Some opportunities were also pointed out by the researchers like it generated new employment opportunities and universal accessibility, rural areas got connected with e-hospitals so that rural population can get quality healthcare services from the best doctors. Some suggestions are given to deal with the challenges for successfully implementation of Digital India Programme, these are digital literacy, skill building and digital adoption etc.

Rekha and Shanthi (2018) examined the perception of people regarding Digital India initiative. The study found that the Digital India Initiative has had a considerable effect on the country's digital economy. People responded positively on the features of Digital India Initiative. The study also suggested some measures be taken to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of this initiative. Government should conduct many literacy programmes at school, colleges and universities. People should practice digital activity in their daily routine.

Vandana (2018) discusses the benefits the country gets if the Digital India Initiative is implemented successfully. Improving digital infrastructure, digital delivery of services and improving digital literacy are three major aspects/aims of digital India campaign. The study also focused on various projects which are going on under the Digital India Campaign and various challenges which the nine pillars of initiative are facing.

Shallu, Sihmar and Meena (2019) analysed the impact of digitalization on economy, society and environment as well as the nine pillars of Digital India Initiative and its advantages and

disadvantages. The study concluded that digitalization creates new job opportunities, innovation, ease of doing work and growth in the economy. Because of digitalization, problem of tax evasion and parallel economy is reduced.

Shetty (2019) analyzed the awareness regarding Digital India Initiative among youth. The research found that while people are aware of the project, they are unaware of its details. Government is suggested to conduct awareness programmes in colleges and universities collaborate with corporates and conduct training programmes. India has huge potential to grow and develop; it just needs right guidance and path.

Sinha (2021) highlighted the ways in which the Digital India programme will help in removing corruption and red tapism through the digitalization. The paper discusses some features of digitalization and some positive changes of digitalization by comparing a situation with digitalization and without digitalization. The study states that Digital India Initiative help to reduce corruption and red tapism if it is designed in such a way that it does not leave ambiguity. It should be designed according to the activities involved in the process.

3. OBJECTIVES

- **a.** To study the people's perception about the Digital India Initiative.
- **b.** To determine the differences in people's perceptions of Digital India based on their demographic profiles.
- **c.** To figure out some challenges faced by Digital India Initiative.
- **d.** To suggest some measures for the successful implementation of the programme.

4. HYPOTHESIS

Ho_1: There is no significant difference between gender and their perception.
Ho_2: There is no significant difference between age and their perception.
Ho_3: There is no significant difference between occupation and their perception.
Ho_4: There is no significant difference between marital status and their perception.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present paper is descriptive and analytical in nature. Primary and Secondary data were analysed for the research. Primary Data were collected through a structured questionnaire to infer the perception of people towards the Digital India Initiative launched on 1 July 2015. Journals, Reports, News Articles were analyzed. ANOVA and percentage is used to analyse the data collected through questionnaire.

6. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

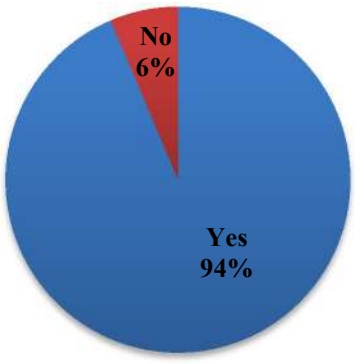
Data were collected from total 141 respondents, out of them 83 were females and 58 were males.

Demographic features of Sample

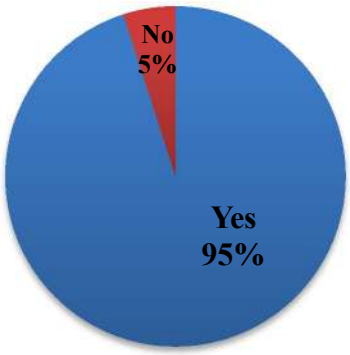
1. Gender	
Male	58 (41.1%)
Female	83 (58.9%)
2. Age	
Below 18	1 (0.7%)
18-25	71 (50.4%)
26-30	47 (33.3%)
31-40	14 (9.9%)
41-50	5 (3.5%)
50 above	3 (2.1%)
3. Occupation	
Government employees	18 (12.8%)
Private employees	20 (14.2%)
Self employed	13 (9.2%)
Professional	5 (3.5%)
Student	85 (60.3%)
4. Marital Status	
Single	110 (78%)
Married	29 (20.6%)
Widow	2 (1.4%)

Respondents were asked four casual questions to take an overview what they think about the Digital India Initiative.

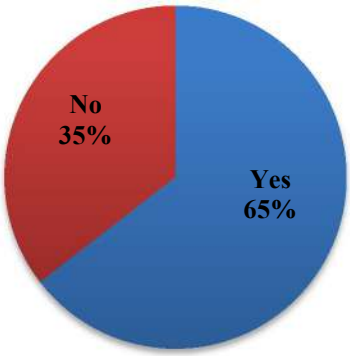
1. *Will Digital India Initiative Uplift the Standard of Living?*



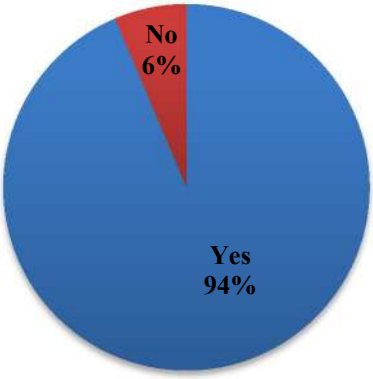
2. *Do You Think E-Governance is a Good Decision?*



3. *Do You Think Goverment Efforts on Awareness of Digital India Programme are Sufficient?*



4. *Will Digital India Initiative Help to Develop Indian Economy?*



From the above questions, it can be infered that most of the people think the Digital India Initiative is a good decision by the Government of India to transform India digitally. Digital India

Programme and its nine pillars will help India to be a USD 5 Trillion economy and it will help people to improve their standard of living. It would help to bring transparency because of the introduction of e-governance. The problem of tax evasion and red tapism will get reduced because the flow of funds is more transparent now in the economy. Everything is under record. Yet government need to take several steps to implement the initiative efficiently and effectively because a large portion of people thinks government need to do more, its efforts are not sufficient enough.

Table 1

ANOVA – Digital India Features Mean

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Gender	0.0649	1	0.0649	0.271	0.604
Residuals	33.2720	139	0.2394		

Table 1 indicates that the gender has no significant difference ($p > 0.05$) with respect to importance of digital India Features i.e. Male and Female both perceive the same with various features of Digital India Initiative like Digi Locker is essential for safeguarding the documents, the initiative will make rural area more empowered society, UPI made money transfer more convenient and secure, it will generate new employment opportunities, E-Commerce Sites would help for Rural Development, E-Signature has become an essential for identity, Online submission of Government forms/applications/documents/certificates/grievances is easy now, Train reservation/Flight booking is convenient because of Internet Facility and app, Online banking is much more convenient now, EdTech Industry (Unacademy, Byju's, Udemy etc.) has grown with good pace in recent past.

Table 2

ANOVA - DIF Mean

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Age	1.96	5	0.393	1.69	0.141
Residuals	31.37	135	0.232		

Table 2 indicates that the age has no significant difference ($p > 0.05$) with respect to importance of Digital India Features i.e. whether he/she is of young, middle age generation or old age generation, everyone perceives the same with various features of Digital India Initiative like Digi

Locker, UPI, railway reservation, flight booking, hotel booking, generation of new employment opportunities, filling grievances, E-Signature, rural empowerment, EdTech Industry, online banking etc.

Table 3

ANOVA - DIF Mean

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Occupation	1.78	4	0.445	1.92	0.111
Residuals	31.56	136	0.232		

Table 3 indicates that the occupation has no significant difference ($p > 0.05$) with respect to importance of Digital India Features i.e. whether he/she is student, government employee, private employee or professional, everyone perceives the same with various features of Digital India Initiative like Digi Locker, UPI, railway reservation, flight booking, hotel booking, generation of new employment opportunities, filling grievances, E-Signature, rural empowerment, EdTech Industry, online banking etc.

Table 4

ANOVA - DIF Mean

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Marital Status	0.580	2	0.290	1.22	0.298
Residuals	32.757	138	0.237		

Table 4 indicates that the marital status has no significant difference ($p > 0.05$) with respect to importance of Digital India Features i.e. whether he/she is single, married, widow or divorced, everyone perceives the same with various features of Digital India Initiative like Digi Locker, UPI, railway reservation, flight booking, hotel booking, generation of new employment opportunities, filling grievances, E-Signature, rural empowerment, EdTech Industry, online banking etc.

Challenges Faced by Digital India Initiative

Digital India Programme is an aspiring project launched by the Government of India. Yet there are so many difficulties in the successful implementation of the project and the government needs to resolve these challenges for the efficient and effective growth of the country. Some common challenges are:

a. *Illiteracy*: The bulk of the people in the country still cannot use digital devices and services. The bulk of people are unable to operate even a simple cell phone.
b. *Often face Slow Internet Speed*: Majority of population faces the problem of slow internet speed. We are in the era of 4G and 5G is about to come but still the internet speed is not up to the standard. The situation is far more severe in rural areas. Furthermore, due to work pressure, the servers are overburdened.
c. *Connectivity issues while travelling*: It is very common in India. While travelling by train or by road, people face connectivity issues a lot.
d. *Cyber Crimes and Lack of Trust:* The importance of cyber security is still being overlooked. People are cautious to conduct business or transact online due to security fears. The importance of cyber rules is underappreciated. Furthermore, the vast majority of people still distrust technology and prefer to complete tasks manually. Inadequate cyber services are one of the reasons behind this.
e. *Expensive*: Electronic equipment and internet services remain excessively expensive for the typical Indian resident. When many people lack the financial means to meet their basic necessities, purchasing technical equipment is out of the question.
f. *Technical Issues*: Technical concerns include insufficient frequency bandwidth, firewalls, filters, anti-virus software, hacker protection, and buffering, to name a few.

Suggestions

Some suggestions are recommended for the successful implementation of digital India programme.

a. *Digital Literacy*: In spite of increased smart phone adoption and internet traffic, India's digital literacy remains low. It is vital to improve digital literacy for the benefit of the Digital India Programme to reach all segments of society.
b. *Skill Building*: To facilitate the efforts and activities planned under the Digital India framework, a strong talent base is required. The extension of e-governance services, upgrade and maintenance, and decision-making on all technical efforts will be enabled by the development of technical capabilities within ministries and state governments.
c. *Digital Adoption*: All strata of Indian society must adopt digital technology for Digital India to succeed. This would not only assist the country achieve its aim of empowering people, but it will also help the country develop demand for Digital India.
d. *Defining the private sector's role*: For the private sector to participate in skill development programmes, a framework must be created that outlines the private sector's role, content, investment expectations and employment security.
e. *Institutional implementation of digital skills programmes*: Skill development and digital literacy should be integrated into institutional training in India's schools, colleges, and universities. To ensure that all students have sufficient digital abilities, curricula and interactive courses should be required.

f. *Improve access to digital infrastructure in rural and distant areas*: The rate of development of digital infrastructure (particularly fiber networks) needs to be accelerated. To provide digital services to remote places, current infrastructure assets owned by the government (such as post offices, CSCs and government buildings) need to be expanded.

7. CONCLUSION

To sum up, the digital India initiative plays a vital role in structurally and dramatically reshaping the country through technology advancement. This primary research was carried out to assess and comprehend public perceptions of the Digital India Campaign. The findings plainly show that the Digital India Initiative has had a considerable effect on the country's digital economy. The project has begun to have an impact on individuals' and businesses' life. Several project schemes have been adopted effectively. Four million people are now using services like DigiLocker. Over 10 lakh users communicate with the government using the MyGov which is a government-to-citizen platform that allows citizens to communicate with the government. Now India has the world's second largest internet user population. This presents a major potential to use digital technologies to transform residents' lives. Over the next few years, the Digital India programme is expected to benefit individuals by creating job opportunities, improving the quality and speed of service delivery, and improving financial and social outcomes. Businesses will reap the benefits of increased productivity, enhanced ease of doing business, and increased innovation and investment. Under Digital India, next-generation technologies such as telepresence are being adopted.

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