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Attitude and Perception of Rural People Towards Digital Infrastructure: A Study with Reference to Select Rural Areas of Mangaluru Taluk

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ABSTRACT

The Digital India programme can be viewed as a truly revolutionary initiative. This programme will transform the lives of people in many ways and will empower the society in a better manner. The Digital India drive is a dream project of the Indian Government to remodel India into a knowledgeable economy and digitally empowered society, with good governance for citizen by bringing synchronization and co-ordination in public accountability, digitally connecting and delivering the government programmes and services to mobilize the capability of information technology across government departments. The program targets to make government services available to people digitally and enjoy the benefit of the information technology. It brings out various schemes like E-Health, Digital Lockers, E-Sign, E-Education, etc. The program aims to benefit every section and sector of the country by creating an ecosystem for delivery of user centric and qualitative digital services. This research is an effort to understand the attitude and perception of rural masses towards digital infrastructure to implement Digital India programme and to find some remedies for providing better future to everyone. The motto of this research is to find out how the government services can be available to every citizen electronically and improve the quality of life of every citizen

Keywords: Digital India, e-Services, Information Technology, Government Schemes, Rural People.

1. Introduction

Technology transforms people's lives. It empowers and connects. Digital India is a mega umbrella plan of the Government of India that intends to transform India into a digitally-empowered knowledge economy with a focus on citizen-centric program such as universal access to broadband, mobile connectivity, electronic delivery of services and centralizes digital system. Technology is key to the vision of a Digital India. The program targets to make digital services available to people and enjoy the benefit of the newest information and technological innovations. It brings out various schemes like E-Health, Digital Locker, E-Sign, E-Education and nationwide scholarship portal. Digital India vision is going to be imperative to propel the country into its next phase of growth. The users will be benefited by way of saving time, money, physical & cognitive energy spent in lengthy processes. This program will also lead to paperless work and reduced cost expenses. It enables to deliver services and facilities over mobile phones and internet. Digital India is an ambitious programmeto create a countrywide digital infrastructure to serve the people of the country. First major aim of this initiation was to connect 250000 villages with high-speed i-network so that people get aaccess like their urban peers.

2. Objectives of The Study

- To comprehend the Digital India programme in general
- To identify the perceptions and awareness of rural masses towards Digital Infrastructure
- To suggest the measures to improve the digital infrastructure in the study region based on the findings of the study.

3. Research Methodology

The study undertaken includes both primary and secondary data. The primary data is collected by survey using interview method and structured questionnaire distributed among the respondents residing in rural area of Mangaluru Taluk. The secondary data is obtained from various journals, blogs and websites. The study covers the information given by rural customers. For the study, rural areas of Mangaluru Taluk have been considered. Sample size is 500.

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4. Digital India Programme Includes:

4.1 Communication infrastructure and services:

a) BharatNet:

This is the backbone of the Digital India programme. It will provide internet and telecommunication services to every part of the country, including connecting the villages spread all over India through broadband. This is the world's largest rural broadband connectivity project.

b) BSNL Next Generation Network:

BSNL has prepared a massive plan to use the advanced technology of Next Generation Network (NGN) to provide telecommunication services using various modes such as voice, data network (internet), wireless network and multimedia video conferencing and fixed mobile convergence (FMC). In the first phase BSNL aim is to cover four million customers.

c) Network providers Wi-Fi Services (Wi-Fi hotspots, affordable connectivity On the Go):

BSNL and Reliance has chalked out a plan to roll out Wi-Fi in 2500 cities and towns, including major tourist places across India. Jio with BSNL have signed for intra-circle ties which aim to provide affordable seamless connectivity through mobile in urban and rural masses.

4.2 Products:

a) DiGi Locker:

This system provides an online storage space to Indian citizens having Aadhaar cards to store all important personal documents, including other official documents issued by various Government departments and agencies. The system also helps in secured sharing of data through a uniform resource identity

b) (URI) link.

National scholarships portal (All government scholarships under a single website):
This is a one-stop solution for implementing the entire scholarship process. Here, in a single website, one can apply and register for different scholarships provided by different central and state ministries, governments and other agencies. One can receive application forms and process online. This helps in effective and faster processing of scholarships and delivery of funds to the beneficiaries'accounts.

c) E-Hospital:

This system facilitates in making an on-line appointment with doctors at specialised government hospitals. The aim is to relieve the common man from waiting for long hours or running around in hospitals searching for doctors. The patient can also check his reportsonline. Presently, e-Hospital service is available in some hospitals. The plan is to extend service to different hospitals spread across the country.

d) E-Sign:

This is another product introduced in Digital India. The e-Sign or electronic signature facilitates an Aadhar card holder to digitally sign a document, which can be integrated with service delivery applications.

e) Digitise India Platform (DIP):

This is to digitise physical records and reduce piles of papers in record rooms and offices.

4.3 Portals:

Digital India portal and Mobile App:
Digital India Portal is the dedicated portal for Digital India and it also has its mobile based application as Digital India Mobile App.

a) My Gov Mobile App:

MyGov is a mobile version of the citizen engaging platform, where citizens can share opinions and offer suggestions related to various issues and problems pertaining to the society and the country as a whole.

b) Swach Bharat Mission App:

This App has been developed to generate more awareness about the cleanliness campaign among the people and connect them with various programmes related to the Swachch Bharat Mission.

c) RTI App:

The Right to Information Act is one of the most important tools one can use to cross-check or raise questions about government tenders, processes, fund allocations and more. The government has made the process simpler by launching a website (rtionline.gov.in) for filing RTI requests to Central ministries and departments; State departments, local municipal bodies and gram panchayats, however will still need RTI requests to be sent by post.

5. Data Analysis

5.1 Age wise Classification of Respondents

The age wise classification of respondents is essential to know the number of respondents who belong to the differentiated age group of 21-40, 41-60 and above 60years.

Table 1: Age wise Classification of Respondents

Age	No. of respondents	Percentage
21-40	258	52
41-60	189	38
61 and Above	53	10
Total	**500**	**100**

N = 500 **Source: Survey Data**

Table: 1 shows the age wise classification of respondents. Among the500 respondents, majority were in the age group of 21-40 years, accounting for 52%, 189 in the age group of 41-60 years, accounting for 38% and 53 were in the age group61 and above accounting for 10%. It was found that a large number of respondents are in the age group of 21-40 years in the study undertaken.

5.2 OCCUPATION

This classification is to know the usage of digital infrastructure with their occupation of the respondents. Keeping this in mind the data has been gathered and exhibited in Table 2.

Table 2: Occupation of the Respondents

Occupation	No. of respondents	Percentage
Employed	285	57
Business	22	04
Profession	13	03
Others	180	36
Total	**500**	**100**

N = 500 **Source: Survey Data**

Table: 2 shows the occupation of the respondents. Out of 500 respondents, majority of 57% were employed, 36% of the respondents are classified as others which include retired public, homemakers and students. The remaining 4% and 3% of respondents engage in business and Profession. It is found that a large number of respondents were employed in Government and private sectors.

5.3 Awareness about Digital India Programme

This classification is necessary to know the awareness of respondents towards Digital India programme. Keeping this in mind the data has been gathered and exhibited in Table 3.

Table 3: Awareness about Digital India Programme

Awareness	No. of respondents	Percentage
Aware	474	95
Not aware	26	05
Total	**500**	**100**

N=500 **Source: Survey Data**

Table: 3 shows the awareness of respondents about Digital India programme. Out of totalrespondents, Majority were aware about Digital India programme initiated by Government of India.

5.4 Perception of The Respondents Towards Digitalising of The System

To know the perception of respondents towards Digitalisation this classification has been made and data collected has been exhibited in Table 4.

Table 4: Perception of the Respondents towards digitalising the system

Perception	No. of respondents	Percentage
Ready	154	31
Not Ready	346	69
Total	**500**	**100**

N = 500 **Sources: Survey Data**

Table: 4 shows the perception of the respondents towards digitalizing the whole economy. 69% of rural masses say the system is not ready for Digital India whereas 31% view the system is ready.

5.5 Usage of Digi-India Products

This classification is to know the usage of Digi-India products among the respondents. The data has been gathered and exhibited in Table 5.

Table 5: Usage of Digi-India Products

Usage	No. of respondents	Percentage
Using	235	47
Not using	265	53
Total	**500**	**100**

N = 500 **Sources: Survey Data**

Table: 5 shows the usage of Digi-India products among the target rural masses in the study region. Out of 500 respondents, majority of 265 do not use Digi-India products and remaining 235 respondents avail the Digi-India services and products in there day to day life.

5.6 Evaluation of Digital Infrastructure

This classification is necessary to know the rating of digital infrastructure in the study region. The relevant information has been gathered and exhibited in Table 6.

Table 6: Evaluation of Digital Infrastructure

Evaluation	No. of respondents	Percentage
Highly satisfied	00	00
Satisfied	284	57
Not satisfied	216	43
Total	**500**	**100**

N = 500 **Sources: Survey Data**

Table: 6 shows the rating of digital infrastructure in the study region. Among the total respondents only 57% are satisfied with the present digi-infrastructure and 43% say they are not happy digital arrangements in rural areas.

6. Findings:

- It was found that majority were aware about Digital India programme initiated by Government of India but, they are not aware about using digital amenities.
- The study area have very poor digital infrastructure which is a major drawback for them to avail the digi-services.
- The rural masses opinion is that the system is not ready for Digital India

7. Suggestions:

- The base for Digital India is infrastructure. So, the prime focus should be same for both urban and rural areas.
- The system should take initiative to create awareness about the usage of digital services among the rural masses.
- Network providers should place emphasis on rural region towards digital services.
- Schools and Panchayaths play a vital role in educating the public by conducting camps and digital learning programs.

8. Conclusion:

The Digital India program is just the beginning of a digital revolution in India, once implemented properly it will open various new opportunities for the society. The idea of Digital India programme is path breaking and has the potential for positive changes to uplift the rural sector of India. The mission targets to make government services are available to people digitally and people get advantage of the latest information and communication technology. Gandhi ji felt that 'India resides in its villages' with digital India technology will surely help the villages to grow and prosper. The success of this programme will only happen if people join hands with Government. Solving the existing issues will take some time but initiatives if implemented properly will put India in the list of digitalised nation.

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