The Impact of e-Governance and Digital India on Citizens

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Abstract: *E-governance has moved beyond government departments by just having a portal. It is no longer confined to merely streamlining and automating processes, it is about transforming the way governments work and reinventing people's participation in the democratic process. Aimed at creating a digitally converged society, the Digital India program provides the greatest opportunity that we have ever had to make rapid and solid advances in social and economic development. Digital India focuses on transforming India into a digitally empowered society and a knowledge economy, thus, impacting all facets, especially of citizen, through the adoption of technology in key sectors including financial services, healthcare, agriculture, energy, infrastructure and education. This paper discusses the impact of digital India on the citizens along with 2 case studies which are being adopted through its usage and unleashing towards prosperity.*

Keywords: *Digital India, Citizens, e-governance, e-transactions etc.*

1. INTRODUCTION

As citizens have become more aware of their right, they have become more demanding in terms of better and quicker services from Government. Effective public service today is more about transparency, efficiency and accountability. E-governance initiatives in India have traditionally being confronted with the dual challenges of automating government departments and taking online services to the common man. But now e-governance has moved beyond government departments just having a portal. It is no longer confined to merely streamlining and automating processes. It is about transforming the way governments work and reinventing people's participation in the democratic process. It is about empowering both the government and the citizen.

India is seeing a dramatic growth in the number of online transactions involving citizens and the government. The number of such e-transactions has grown by more than 200% in the past 2 years. The number of e-transactions is seen to vary greatly across states. Aimed at creating a digitally converged society, the Digital India program provides the greatest opportunity that we have ever had to make rapid and solid advances in social and economic development. Creating a digital society will be at prior competitiveness of nations in the upcoming years. Digital Society is broader than 'digital economy.' A digital society integrates all social spheres and lends a competitive edge to the overall economy. Digital India focuses on transforming India into a digitally empowered society and a knowledge economy, thus, impacting all facets, especially of citizen. It is projected that Digital India has the potential to provide an incremental 20-30% increase in GDP by 2025, resulting in an opportunity of close to \$1 trillion annually by 2025. The impact of this program have been felt across all domains through the adoption of technology in key sectors including financial services, healthcare, agriculture, energy, infrastructure and education.

2. IMPACT ON CITIZENS

The Digital India project has the potential to impact the lives of citizens by creating employment opportunities, enhancing the quality and speed of service delivery, providing access to healthcare and education and improving social and financial inclusion.

Employment

With an estimated overall cost of INR 1,000 billion in ongoing schemes and INR 130 billion for proposed and new schemes, Digital India aims to create 17 million direct and 85

million indirect jobs by 2019. Digital Training Program an initiative started towards training and digital literacy by the government and private sector players such as NDLM, Digital Literacy Mission etc. have been successful in reaching out to millions of people. This has resulted in an increase in employability of the trained personnel, higher adoption of digital technologies and empowerment of a large section of society.

Speed and Quality of Service delivery

It has enhanced the digitization of public services by increasing the reach and efficiency of service delivery. The number of e-governance transactions has doubled from 3.5 billion in 2014 to almost 7 billion in 2015, indicating that e-services are gaining momentum and reaching the bottom of the pyramid. The government is focused on increasing last mile connectivity by providing an affordable broadband network to rural households and institutions. This network will be leveraged to roll out and increase adoption of digital services. The DigiLocker service has provided universal accessibility to citizens, by allowing then to access and share documents. Presently, there are approximately 4 million registered users with 5.0 million documents uploaded on the digital locker facility.

Social inclusion

Digital India has the potential to overcome challenges in the education sector like inadequate infrastructure, high drop-out rate (40% in elementary education), low pupil teacher ratio (28:1) and poor gross enrolment ratio (21% in higher education). The government has allocated INR 1 billion50 to build virtual classrooms and provide online courses to address the teacher shortage and teacher quality problem. Under Digital India, the use of SmartClass solutions has put many private schools in India ahead of the technology adoption. Online education platforms like massive open online courses (MOOCs) will provide easy accessibility from anywhere. The adoption of MOOCs, currently 8.8%52 has been slowly increasing while OLabs (Online Labs) is expected to improve student performance by providing teaching aids and already has 90,00053 registered users.

Digital India has the potential to provide solutions to problems such as poor doctor patient ratio (1:1674), fewer quality physicians, insufficient healthcare infrastructure, lack of equal access to healthcare facilities and advice (24% in rural areas), and high healthcare costs. The e-hospital program is increasing delivery speed of healthcare services by allowing patients to book appointments online. Social Endeavour for Health and Telemedicine (Sehat) will increase coverage by providing healthcare access to citizens irrespective of their geographical location with close to 60,000 CSCs delivering tele-consultation services as part of Sehat.

Financial Inclusion

India Post Payment Banks (IPPB) is expected to benefit 40% of the population which is currently outside the formal banking system by providing digital and online banking services through post office. The mobile and internet banking will increase the coverage and volume of financial transactions which will be kept prime of the recent demonetization and move towards cashless economy.

3. INITIATIVES TAKEN BY THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT

Some of these schemes have already given encouraging results, while others are yet to see significant traction.

E-Hospital: E-Governance Initiative towards Making Premier Healthcare Facilities Accessible

The e-Hospital program enables patients to register, book appointments, pay fee, avail diagnostic reports and seek availability of blood types online in premier medical government institutes like All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Ram Manohar Lohia (RML) Hospital, National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS) and Sports Injury Centre (SIC) as well as any other government hospitals. As in 2016, 56 hospitals in India provide this service with a total of over 472,000 appointments booked online till date. e-Hospital runs an Online Registration System (ORS) which is a framework for connecting various hospitals to citizens through a Aadhaar based online registration and appointment system. The application is hosted on the cloud service of NIC and allows patients to book online appointments with different section of the hospital by using data of the Aadhaar.

The e-Hospital portal provides a simplified hospital registration and appointment process through linkage to the citizen's Aadhaar number. Detailed reports can be viewed of the hospitals linked to e-Hospital along with their departments showing information about new and returning patients, patient history and also lab results. By enrolling on the e-Hospital service, hospitals can provide their appointment slots for online booking by patients. Further, the system facilitates hospitals in managing and monitoring the registration and appointment process. The e-Hospital service has a key role in the growth of the industry through providing wider accessibility to citizens. The services allow citizens to access any government hospital with a click of button and eliminate

queues, better patient experience, management and monitoring of appointments and accessibility of reports through digitization.

Develop pilot Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) – An initiative to provide quality education in an affordable and scalable manner

Massive open online courses (MOOCs) are a distance learning initiative allowing students to access video tutorials, curriculum and instructions online. The Digital India project is initiating pilot MOOCs under the e-Kranti pillar to provide real-time education. This will partly address the challenge of lack of teachers in education system through smart and virtual classrooms. It also has the potential to make education accessible in rural areas and to weaker sections of society through mobile devices. The Union Budget focused on providing entrepreneurship, education and training in 2,200 colleges, 500 government industrial training institutes, 300 schools and 50 vocational training centers via MOOCs. MOOCs enable distance learning's in an effective and cost efficient manner through digital platforms that can be accessed online and on mobile devices. The courses are made available to students through virtual classrooms encompassing instruction, curriculum and tutorials. The high speed network provides adequate infrastructure for MOOCs.

With the increase in data connectivity and improved IT infrastructure, the education sector is moving towards online courses. India has seen a rapid rise in the number of students enrolling for MOOCs indicating that the interest in MOOCs will continue to grow growing forward. The MOOCs have the potential to create a wide scale impact on the poor literacy rate in India which is due to unavailability of physical infrastructure in rural and remote areas. This shortcoming can be addressed by MOOCs that can be undertaken through online and on mobile platforms. The increasing smart phone penetration especially in lower tier towns and rural areas has enabled a large section of the population to access quality education through MOOCs. Moreover, students can refer the topic and read, view or hear material multiple times in several Indian language as per their convenience. With no restriction on class size and usage of social media and online tools, MOOCs can be easily accessed from anywhere.

MOOCs are available to students at much lower educational fees than conventional classrooms and other educational platforms. Due to the higher affordability, the enrolment of students for MOOCs has seen a significant increase.

4. CONCLUSION

To realize the vision of promoting inclusive growth through empowerment of citizens, it is important to reach out to citizens in the remotest of locations and make them part of India's growth story. Globally, technology has been the greatest enabler in causing disruptive change. India's story is no different, and the use of digital technologies to educate and empower citizens is being seen as a game-changer. Given India's vast expanse and differences in demographics across the nation, there is also a vast difference in the level of adoption among the citizenry. To ensure success of its initiatives in the digital space, the government should focus on putting in place regulations that ensure smooth adoption of digital services. Regulations around net neutrality, use of cash cards/ wallet services, etc. should be instituted along with the initiatives of Digital India.

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