



Sustainable Inclusion of Women In Digital India

N. Padmavathy ¹ and R. Kandavel ²

^{1,2} Professor, Jeppiaar University, Chennai 600119, India.
dean_ahm@jeppiaaruniversity.ac.in

Abstract. In 2014, Government of India took an initiative to achieve Inclusive growth in India and to transform India by 2018 into a country with good digital space for holistic development". India has 1.38 billion people which is leading in highest population country in the world. The IMAI Kantar ICUBE 2020 Report predicts that by 2025, the number of active internet users is estimated to be 900 million which is an increase of 622 million in 2020, representing an increase of almost 45% over the next five years. The National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) 2020–2021 revealed that in January 2022, there are 626 million people are using internet in India. At the beginning of 2022, 47.0% of Indians were online. Approximately one-third of Indian women use the internet, according to NFHS-5 data. A 2022 analysis by the Asian Development Bank and social networking platform LinkedIn states that there is a disparity that exists in which women were denied of possibilities at employment where digital skills are in great demand. Tamilnadu has 46.9% female internet users and 70.2% male internet users. Hence, there is an urgent need to recognize the review the existing situation of women in digital inclusion in India. Hence, this article focuses on women in digital inclusion to understand the digital divide between men and women in India.

Keywords: Digital India, Women Inclusion, Sustainable Economy.

1 Introduction

Digital Space As per the Digital Divide 2022 India Inequality Report, India is ranked 47th in the world for Internet affordability. Based on a Global Index of Digital Quality of Life, across 110 Countries, India has the worst gender gap in the Asia-Pacific region, at 40.4%. Seventy percent of people in India have poor or no access to digital services. The lack of comprehensive and extensive gender-disaggregated statistics makes it difficult to conduct a thorough analysis of women's Internet access and usage. It is predicted that in India, between 2023-2028, around 265.1 million users (+26.29 percent) will be using Internet in India. According to Cisco's annual study, there will be over 907 million internet users in India by 2023. This is because the number of devices and connections is expected to rise at a higher rate than the population, specifically at a 7% CAGR. SDG 9c's goal, is to ensure that every woman should have access to Internet by 2020, indicates that access is a significant priority for global growth. However, if things continue as they are, universal access won't be achieved before 2042. One proposal to

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address this problem is to redefine the "affordable Internet" aim as the "1-for-2-goal," which focuses on access to 1 GB of internet should not be more than 2% of monthly income of a person.(A4Ai, 2016). The Broadband Commission (2017a) advocated better awareness of affordability challenges, lower device and service costs, enhanced network signal, safe public access facilities for women.

2 Review of Literature

According to [14], since the late 1980s, Internet has seen a cutting advancement in technology. At the same time, heated discussions concerning the Internet's ability to empower women and advance their liberation have also raged. Feminist thinkers in particular have taken advantage of this chance to ask if Internet can empower women. Perhaps, it is observed that the systematic theoretical framework is needed to examine the functions of Internet access which facilitates women's growth. This lays the groundwork for potential theoretical connections to be made between women's empowerment and digital media. According [7]), access to the Internet has been redefined. It is now more about what people can do with an Internet connection than access to Internet connection at workplace, house etc. Having equal access to the Internet does not ensure having equal utilisation of it, and that it's critical to ascertain not just who uses it but also how and where it's being utilised [2]. [1] analysed gender digital divide in the Uttar Pradesh and revealed the fact that even where women have access to internet services and internet enabled devices, they are unable to spend much time on internet due to 'household chores and prevalent socio-cultural mores'. [12] found that countries that supported the growth of technology had seen tremendous growth in all sectors which increases GDP of the country. The "Digital India Program "not only provided employment to the younger generation but also stimulated economic development. According to Luvy [5], the goal of the Digital India program is to push the country towards a technology driven Economy. [9] stated that the novel force to promote mobile access and internet will facilitate India to make huge strides in the digital space. India's expectation from the Digital India programme is to enhance the Information Technology edge to get utmost significance through e-Government and e-Service worldwide.

[11] observed that the role of Digital India in the empowerment of rural India, the challenges it faces, and what other initiatives could be taken to make it even more effective so that the digital divide between urban and rural India can be bridged and our villages can also benefit from the digital revolution that is happening all over the world.

In their 2018 study, [3] evaluated Digital India's potential effects on gender equality and women's empowerment from a gender perspective. Digital India is a flagship programme for policymakers, a symbol of a resurgent India that is becoming a major player in the global digital economy for members of the political class, and an inspiring example of increasing social mobility or a paradigm shift on how citizens interact with the state for the general public.

According to [8], the goal of the Digital India initiative was to shift India into a comprehensive economy with technology. The Indian government has unveiled 115 initiatives related to digital India specifically empowering women in rural and urban

areas. [6] emphasized that Digital India is a programme designed to transform India into a country with access to technology to all. [10] argued that digital India has varied economic effects, including increased employment opportunities, improved service delivery, and advancements in technology. [4] observed that Digital India programme focuses on building digital infrastructure which ensures that inclusive growth which helps in achieving \$1 trillion by 2025.

3 Research Gap

South Asia has the largest gender disparity in mobile internet use globally, ranging from 36% to 41%, according to the GSMA report 2023. Compared to men, women are 19% less likely to use mobile internet. While the percentage of Indian men who use mobile internet has increased to 50%, the percentage of Indian women who use internet is 30%. In LMICs, there is an underlying 7% gender disparity in mobile ownership. Affordability (especially of phones), literacy and digital skills, safety and security, and other factors are some of the barriers that separate men and women. Even though they paid for their own mobile phone, women were less likely than men to select the mobile model. Women face obstacles to owning mobile phones due to a variety of social, economic, and cultural factors that contribute to the gender gap in mobile. An estimated 900 million women live in LMICs and do not use mobile internet; nearly two thirds of these women are from South Asia or Sub-Saharan Africa. Researching the topic aids in keeping an eye on the rapidly changing landscape of digital inclusion and gender equality, which is more important than ever before. According to GSMA estimates, the mobile industry would receive an additional \$230 billion in revenue by 2030 if the gender gap in mobile ownership and use in LMICs is closed. An estimated 810 million women must begin using mobile internet by 2030 in LMICs, which translates to an average of 100 million women annually. Sadly, the gender disparity in mobile internet usage will not disappear on its own as the rate of digital inclusion slows down in LMICs.

4 Research Methodology

Research Design applied in this study is analytical research design. Data taken for the study is Secondary data to understand the inclusion of women in digital India. As per the census 2011, Tamilnadu has 36,009,055 females. Secondary data was taken by reviewing research articles, journals, magazines, online newspapers, TRAI Report, GSMA Report etc.

The objective of the current study include:

- To know the demographic characteristics of women in Digital Inclusion.
- To understand the digital media habits of women.

5 Results and Discussion

In India, the stage for a transformative and gender-equal digital revolution has been set. We must take advantage of the mutually reinforcing forces of economic empowerment, social empowerment and digital empowerment, all of which are on the rise in India. Full digital access and technology for women and girls would open a wide window of opportunities so that they can aspire to be well informed, develop more comprehensive world-views and make the most of their potential for their own benefit and society. Following table shows the digital assets of women in India. According to the UN Women's 2022 Gender Snapshot, the exclusion of women in the digital world has cost the GDP of low- and middle-income countries \$1 trillion over the past decade. If nothing is done, this loss is expected to grow to \$1.5 trillion by 2025. Digital development offers enormous opportunities to overcome developmental and humanitarian challenges and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030. According to Census 2011[13], in India, percentage of households with access to computer/laptop with internet is 2.5% and without internet is 6.0%.

Table 1: Table showing the Digital assets of Women

Assets	Female	Male
Desktop /Laptop With Wifi	2.5	3.2
Desktop /Laptop without Wifi	6.0	6.4

Source: Census 2011

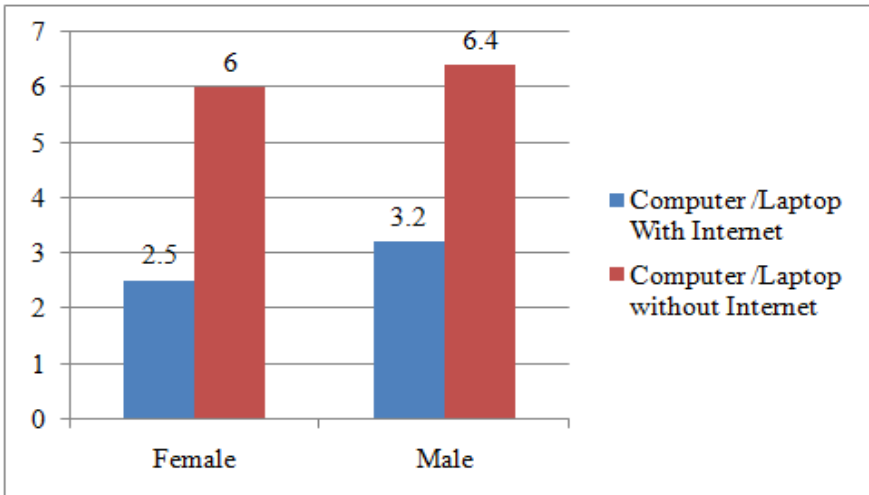


Fig.1: Chart showing the Digital Asses of Women

Table 2: Table showing the Digital Habits of Women

Digital Usage	Female (%)	Male (%)	Total Users (million) 2023
Social Media Users	26.5	73.5	467.0
Facebook	23.7	76.3	314.6
Youtube	31.2	68.8	467.0
Instagram	26.7	73.3	229.6
Linked IN	29.8	70.2	99.00
Twitter	14.7	85.3	27.25

Source: Meta Advertising Report 2023

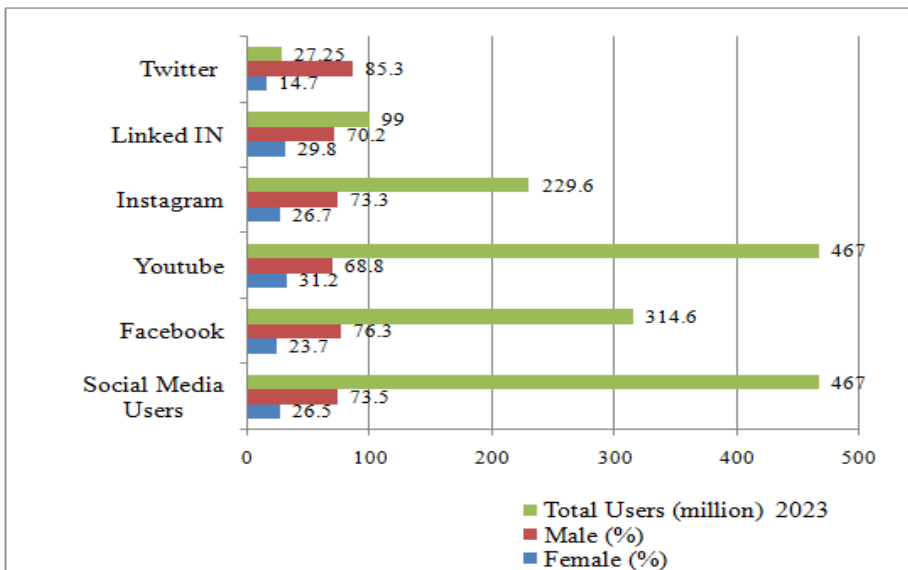


Fig.2: Chart showing the Digital Habits of Women

As of January 2023, around 467.0 million social media users are in India. Further it is found that only 26.5 percent are women and 73.5 percent are men who are using social media in India. According to information published in Meta's promotional materials, Facebook had 314.6 million users in India at the beginning of 2023. In India 23.7 percent female and 76.3 percent male are using facebook advertising audience in the beginning of 2023. Updates from Google Ad Resources revealed the fact that at the beginning of 2023, YouTube had 467.0 million users in India, out of which 31.2 percent of YouTube's ad audience was female and 68.8 percent was male. Figures released by Meta Advertising Tools found that Instagram had 229.6 million users in India at the beginning of 2023. At the beginning of 2023, 26.7 percent of India's Instagram advertising audience was female and 73.3 percent was male. Data published in LinkedIn's promotional materials show that LinkedIn had 99.00 million "members" in India as of

early 2023. In India 29.8 percent of LinkedIn's advertising audience was female and 70.2 percent was male. Twitter had 27.25 million users in India at the beginning of 2023. As of early 2023, 14.7 percent of Twitter's advertising audience in India was female and 85.3 percent was male. The data clearly shows that there is a huge digital divide between men and women in India when it comes to digital habits in India.

6 Conclusion

In India internet originated in 1995 with the objective of increasing economy and India's growth is expected to touch \$1 trillion ecosystem by 2025. However, there are many obstacles on India's path to becoming a \$1 trillion economy, such as a widening digital divide, diverse population profile and underdeveloped technological infrastructure. Women make up 50% of the global population but account for only 37% of global GDP. If half of the population cannot contribute fully to an economy, it cannot function. About 3.9 billion of the world's population are women and girls in South Asia. According to Broadband commission 2017, detail research should be conducted on digital gender gap both at national and sub national levels. Hence, this research will bring some changes in policies by addressing the underlying factors that prevents women in digital inclusion for sustainable future. As per NHFS Report (2019-2021), India has a severe digital divide, with gaps in internet usage and access to digital infrastructure based on gender, residential area, rural-urban, caste or age. Digitalization can bring new opportunities for women, but the existing digital divide risks many vulnerable women behind. Digital India will improve the quality of women's life.

To promote positive change, G20 ministers are responsible for the digital economy. This research supports the G20's shared goal of closing the digital gender gap and creating a more inclusive digital future. G20 ministers committed to sharing national practices to reduce the digital gender gap. This important commitment of G20 ministers accounts for the digital economy in efforts to enable G20 economies to promote gender equality globally (Sustainable Development Goal [SDG] 5) and implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and support inclusive global growth. Closing the gender digital divide with the G20 countries can focus on Skills for Girls to achieve the "25 x 25" gender target.

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