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Exploring Digital Divide in India: A Framework for Inclusive Information Communication

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Abstract

The surge of cheap internet access and digital devices in India, especially for the rural population, has transitioned India into the second-level digital divide beyond access to effective use and eSkill. Here, the divide emerges based on quality of use, digital literacy and usability. Review of secondary literature suggests that gender, socio-cultural norms, economic disparity, geographical location (rural/urban), level of education, age and language play a key role in creating digital disparity. To address this complex, a multidimensional, integrative approach using human-centric design, government initiatives and inclusive policies are needed. This paper first examines India's second-level digital divide in detail, identifying its key causes, and next reviews existing interventional approaches and models to dissipate it, through a secondary review. It then proposes a holistic model for combining a number of approaches that include design interventions, especially sensitive to Indian needs, as well as digital-literacy policy, public-private partnership strategies, and inclusive schemes, especially addressing gender and rural-urban divide. The model maps key parameters of second-level digital against a composite of integrated design, policy, and community-driven solutions. The contribution of the model is to provide a pathway for stakeholders to address the Indian digital divide and create greater digital inclusion, empowerment, and socio-economic parity and also empower them to actively participate in information communications.

Keywords: Digital Literacy, Human-Computer Interaction, India, Information Communication Technology, Marginalized Communities