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Mobile Apps in E-Governance Projects in India: Where Do We Stand?

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Abstract

India is the climbing mobile subscribers arcade in the telecommunication domain all over the globe with zillions of mobile users in every age group and in every class whether it's literate or illiterate. Mobile phones have turn out to be the most vital component in Indian families. As per the digital Indian society the tariff plans in India are very low-priced as compared to other nations. Simultaneously e-governance is in its flourishing state, all courtesy to our Prime Minister's endeavours in this direction. Mobile user community in India has two categories simple mobile users and smart mobile users with further division of smart mobile users into users with internet access and users without internet access. Department of electronics and information technology (DeitY) has launched Mobile Seva in 2012, which aims at providing government services to people through mobile phones and tablets. The governance can boost for sculpting the power of telecommunication set-up on a nation's e-government growth. In this respect; ICT strategies for e-government growth essential to address and comprise activities that embrace governance [1]. This paper aims to analyse the pattern of different e-governance mobile apps based projects in various domains.

Keywords: E-governance; mobile apps; mobile seva; ICT; m-governance.

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1. Introduction

With significant developments taking place in the arena of e-Governance, the Indian Government is able to bid decent governance for the convenience of the citizens of the country. But now a days India is moving from E-governance to m-governance, especially when we talk about government to citizens (G2C) and citizens to Government (C2G) communication. This is all because mobile has entirely transformed the realm of communication in this century especially in India. Mobile devices are observed as operational tools to bring revolution in governance. In the initial stages mobile was mainly used as a way of communication but the Government agencies today find it appropriate to not only propagate crucial information but also to deliver services to the citizen. Mobiles are now being used to provide services like health, education, banking, judiciary transport, and so on. If we talk about the rural citizens of India we have simple mobile users and when we talk about urban India then we have simple mobile phone users as well as smart mobile device users whether its phone or tablets. As per the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India report [2] “The number of telephone subscribers in India increased from 964.20 million at the end of November, 2013 to 970.97 million at the end of December, 2014,”. The Mary Meeker report says that India was at third largest smartphone base with 113 million in 2013 and is expected to grow by 45% in 2014 [4]. This small device is seen by the Indian Government as a major missile to simplify the lives of Indians as far as basic services are concerned. The two year old mission mainly cultivates and offers mobile apps for government and citizen usage. There are nearly more than 300 apps in various domains. For instance, the passport facility app “m-Passport Seva” empowers customers to find centres, determine fee for a particular service, track application status and more. Then, there are other apps for intra-departmental use like the employee Leave Management System app, at present this app is live only in the state of Rajasthan. The project covers approximately thousand government divisions and agencies from all over the country [3]. In 2014 this project “mobile governance” led the second position at the esteemed United Nations public services awards [3]. As a citizen if we go through the website for mobile apps, we will find various apps under various domains and we can also find state wise listing of the apps. The objective of this paper is to portray the current position of these apps and showcase the domain wise existence of the Apps, covering the number of downloads and challenges faced by the users. By the end of this paper we would be able to conclude to an extent whether our Government has been successful in drawing the attention of its citizens and compel them or aware them to use these services in day to day life.

2. Why Mobile devices for e-government services

Everybody is aware of the fact that ICT is the best tool to improve good governance, i.e. E-governance. It accelerates pellucidity and creates unrestricted stream of information among different departments inside the government. But now a days mobile devices are grasped as an innovative edge between government and citizens. We have perceived that mobile devices are state-of-the-art when we talk about the connectivity across the world. On top of that smart mobile devices have proved to be blessing along with their apps as well. The reason behind this can be

- Accessibility
- Mobility
- Economical

3. Current status of mobile seva apps

If we look at the mobile seva appstore provided by department of electronics and technology in order to avail various e-services, it has categorization of nearly twelve domains with the specific number of apps per domain and number of downloads per app. If we don't look at the state wise apps and go by only domains we can summarize the following data.

Table1: Summarized data of number of apps and number of downloads domain-wise in mobile seva appstore

S.No	Domains	Approximate No of Apps	No of Downloads
1	Aadhar	4	10184
2	Electoral	16	27953
3	Health (government)	3	968
4	Health (General)	16	17354
5	Indian Post	1	6799
6	Judiciary	16	7164
7	Language	35	18160
8	M-learning	3	723
9	Municipal Corporation	6	2214
10	Social	2	391
11	Transport	3	291
12	Others	3	3354

Source: [5].

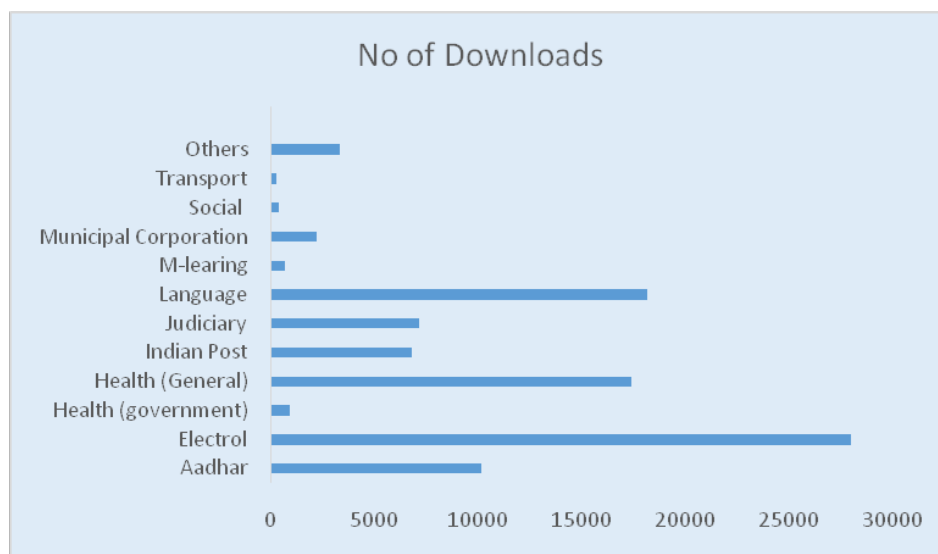


Figure1: Graph shows the number of downloads per domain in the mobile seva app store

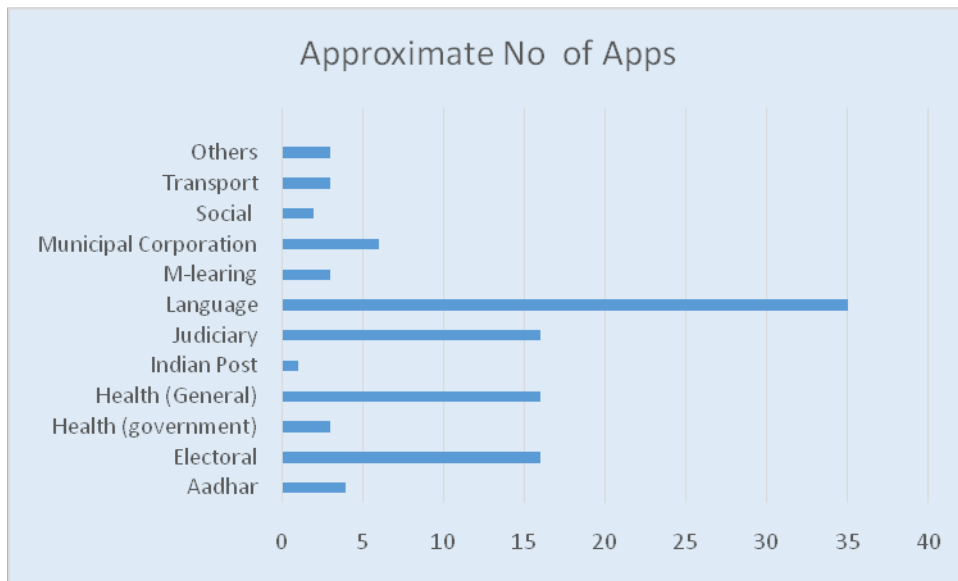


Figure 2: Graph shows the approximate number of apps per domain in mobile seva app store

The above trends forces us to perceive that maximum number of apps are in language domain and maximum number of downloads has been done so far in electoral domain. Another very important domain is Indian Post, it's indeed a very important domain but it has only one app and the number of downloads are pretty good for one app however still not very promising. In nutshell these figures are not satisfactory if we go by the statistics of smart mobile phone users in India especially in urban area. The mobiles have the ability to push information rather than the user needing to pull information. The Unique Identification (UID) project is a perfect example for the use of mobile technologies.

Table2: Top 10 mobile seva apps in terms of number of downloads

S.No	Apps	No of downloads
1	UP One	8877
2	M-Gov AppStore	7593
3	Right to Information Directory	6976
4	Indian Post Status Tracking	6782
5	Voter Information Search Using SMS	6739
6	MPMKVVCL	6633
7	AADHAAR enrolment status	6370
8	ECI Polling Station Location	6251
9	Ministry Directory	6122
10	ECI EVM Tracking	4606

Source: [5].

These are the top ten mobile seva apps not even a single app has come into five figures. If we go by the website the current status of number of downloads reached up to 257140 [5]. The download counts for most of these apps has remained around the three-digit mark [4].

3. Measures that may possibly be helpful in cumulative the figures of downloads of mobile seva apps

On the basis of the study of m-governance in India and the challenges for the usage of these mobile seva apps, there is a need to implement proper measures for the effective operation and execution of m-government in India. The following measures can be implemented in increasing the usage of these mobile seva apps among our citizens.

- a.** Awareness: The growth of m-governance plan is dependent on the attentiveness about the initiative. Therefore the Government of India should publicise the information about these apps the way commercial e-commerce website publicises their apps. Let's take an example of "Vaccination alert" which is a general app in the health domain. This app is very useful but it has very low number of downloads. The prime reason for such a low download is lack of publicity about the app. The government can take initiative to market this app in government hospitals as well as in private hospitals too or it can market this app from the municipal department from where the parents approach for the birth certificates. Other measures to create the awareness can be
 - Create a Facebook account: if social media is used tactically it can prove to be as the world's greatest tool for marketing and market analysis [6].
 - Emphasize on emails also: Provide an attractive one-liner about the app along with the link to download it [6].
- b.** Appropriate platforms: Most apps however are absent from the android app store, google play making them hard to notice [4]. Its mandatory now a days, app should support all the configurations whether it is for open source like android or for closed system like apple products.
- c.** Master app: There should be one main app that can refer to all the other apps on the mobile seva app store.
- d.** Security: security and authentication measures for protecting of sensitive data of users and guaranteeing the confidentiality of the user's data is essential on the m-governance platform.
- e.** Local Language support: apps should be delivered in regional languages also and not restricting the language to only English or Hindi. This will enable the services to reach each and every segment of the society.
- f.** Well-timed reviews: Timely reviews of the apps is a key to improve the services and Government should be keen to resolve any negative reviews or other areas of improvement suggested by the users [6].
- g.** User friendly apps- while designing the apps, Government should not forget the end customers for the app and make customer friendly.
- h.** Proper support and maintenance - if the Government believes in never ending services without hassles to its citizen's then on-going support and maintenance of these projects are equally important. To achieve

this there should be support infrastructure in place.

4. Conclusion

Use of mobile technology for e-governance is about recognising and elucidating actual complications, originate with genuine outcomes in order to mend the ways people live. Several, minor solutions will ultimately empower the citizens. There are multiple reasons to use these mobile devices for governance, but in India the number of mobile seva users are very low as compared to our total mobile device users in general. We can increase these numbers by taking several measures seriously so that our citizens can make use of these services in future.

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