

Internet and changes in Jammu and Kashmir after Abrogation of Article 370

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Abstract

Internet shutdown means disconnection of internet services within a specific location, whether district, state or country. It is one of the useful technologies in the present world, which is useful in every aspect of business and social life. It has various advantages for the growth and development of business. On the other side the shutdown of these internet services impacts socially and economically. In this present study, we want to explain the internet shutdown and its impact on Jammu and Kashmir (JK), where most internet shutdowns are recorded in the world and also want to highlight the changes in JK after the abrogation of article 370 by the government of India.

Keywords: [Internet, Abrogation, Article 370, Internet shutdown, Lockdown, Strikes]

Introduction

Internet shutdown is not new in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), people are witnessed this from past ten years. It can be defined as disconnection of internet services for a certain location. It disconnects people from the rest of world. In present time each and everything is associated with internet, from shopping to banking, education to entertainment, internet shows its presence. Internet is one of the greatest technologies in present time which brings lots of opportunities and advantages to the people. It is one of easiest and cheapest way to collect latest information, which otherwise take months to appear in other media. It is global network which provides various information and communication facilities to the users. It makes our life simple and convenient, there are various online services, and we can perform our banking transaction online, book tickets, taxes payment, bills payment, music, games, entertainment and so forth. With the use of calling and chartroom online programmes like Skype, Whatsapp, and Facebook which are currently popular internet applications, the internet offers us services to stay in touch with family and friends who live far away from us. Around the world, the number of internet subscribers is rising daily. The internet has revolutionised the globe, and it is now utilised in all spheres of life, including commerce, education, entertainment, and others.

Internet shutdown disconnects users from internet. It is one of the great risks for a location where it happens; it disallows the users to use internet facilities which

impacts on their social life, business and education. The population or users of the certain location are unable to make their online banking transaction, online shopping, business communication with suppliers and clients.

J&K is located in north India with highest number of internet shutdowns in India. J&K alone records total of 402 internet shutdowns from year 2012- June 2022 out of 647 total shutdowns in India followed by Rajasthan 85 shutdowns. High speed internet services were suspended in J&K for more than a year and a half following the abrogation of Article 370 on August 4, 2019. To date, this is the longest period of time that an internet service has been suspended anywhere in the world. Only 2G services were restored on January 25, 2020, and high speed internet services were restored on February 5, 2021 (Qadir and Jagarwal, 2021). This 552 day's long internet shutdown happened in J&K after the abrogation of article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir. The government of India had abrogated article 370 in J&K which has given special status to the people of Jammu and Kashmir. During this internet shutdown the economy of the J&K impacts badly. All the online business units shut their shutters, logistics and delivery companies were not able to operate their business. Thousands of educated youth lost their livelihoods due to long lockdown and shutdowns. In the year 2016, J&K also witnesses the long duration internet shutdown for 6 months after the killing of poster boy of Kashmir Burhanwani, which leads protest all over Kashmir valley and results the strikes and

lockdowns for long period of time. After the internet was restored post abrogation of article on 10th Oct. 2021, J&K witnesses decrease in internet shutdowns after long period of time.

On August 5, 2019, all corporate divisions, including secondary schools, universities, medical and engineering institutes, factories, and transportation services, were closed without a formal announcement (Firdosi, 2021). Internet was only source to continue education, business to some extent but unfortunate government had shutdown all the communication and internet services in J&K which impacts on education of the students and researchers, online service providers and common people also fell victim of it. In the present digital world internet plays an important role in every side. It has changed the market place into virtual market. People are buying all their necessary goods and services at their comfort zone without going to crowded market places. During the covid-19 the internet has played an important role for the wellness of the people all over the world. All the education institution, business units were closed due to covid-19 restriction and internet was the only source for students to attend online lectures and exams. Various companies had started work from home (WFH) which becomes possible only through internet which saves jobs of millions of employees all over world. Internet has great advantages for the welfare of people, if using it best ways. All the advantages are possible only if internet facilities are available. On the other side Jammu and Kashmir with highest number of internet shutdowns cannot take these advantages and opportunities much positively due to uncertain internet cuts.

Literature Review

"Internet shutdown is the deliberate interruption of Internet or electronic communications, making them inaccessible or effectively unusable, for a certain population or within a place, frequently to assert control over the flow of information", (Kathuria et al., 2018). The Internet, a global computer network, offers a vast variety of information and communication options. It is the quickest and most efficient way to get up-to-date information that could take months to appear on a print form (Gagan, S., & Rakesh, P., 2013).

The Internet has emerged as the most practical modern technology, both for personal and professional use. Every field makes use of the internet. Nowadays, we may use the internet for anything, including learning, browsing, surfing, and even conducting business. Af-

ter the 370 Article, internet services were temporarily suspended. This had an influence on a variety of things, including business, communication, and students' futures, among others (Magar, 2019).

The nations that saw the most unexpected internet outages in 2016 and 2017 were India, Iraq, Syria, Pakistan Turkey and Brazil (Shandler, 2018). India's 16,315-hour (680-day) shutdown from 2012 to 2017 resulted in economic losses of around \$3.04 million. (Rydzak, J., 2019). As per SFLC (Software Freedom Law Center) report India records a total number of 682 internet shutdowns from year 2012 to Sept, 2022 out of which Jammu and Kashmir alone records total of 415 internet shutdowns.

In Kashmir, internet outages are now frequent occurrences. The local government shuts down the internet in order to maintain law and order, stop the dissemination of rumours and false information, and limit the spread of terrorism (Qadir, S., & Dar, A. A. (2021).

After Burhan Wani, a local rebel, was killed by police forces in the year 2016, the internet was shut down for more than six months (from July 8, 2016, to January 17, 2017, for prepaid services, and from July 8, 2016, to November 16, 2016, for postpaid services). The economy of Kashmir has had a significant impact over the past six months on all sectors, including trade, tourism, and transportation. According to a recent international study, Kashmir has had the largest amount of internet outages worldwide, costing the Kashmiri economy Rs. 1776 billion in losses in 2017 (Qadir, S., & Dar, A. A. (2021).

In 2018, India accounted for 67% of all internet outages worldwide, with Jammu and Kashmir accounting for 47% of those outages. In addition, the government authorities have begun a new practise of cutting down internet access in any region where there has been a shootout between the military and terrorists (Panicker, R. (2020).).

In J&K, there have been a total of 55 internet outages in 2019, down from 65 in 2018 (Vaidya, A., & Vaidya, A., 2020). The 55th internet shutdown of 2019 in J&K was one of the longest internet shutdown in the world.

Before Article 370: The only State with a unique constitution was that one. The Article provided J&K with particular Constitutional provisions that did not apply to other Indian states, such as special autonomy and independent state legislation.

After Article 370: The distinct Constitution is abolished with the removal of Article 370's provisions (Gupta, P. Article 370.)

Table 1: Total number of internet shutdowns in Jammu and Kashmir and India

Year	Total number of internet shutdowns in India	Total number of internet shutdowns in Jammu and Kashmir
2012	03	03
2013	05	05
2014	06	05
2015	14	05
2016	31	10
2017	79	32
2018	134	65
2019	106	55
2020	129	116
2021	100	79
2022*	40*	27*
Total	647	402

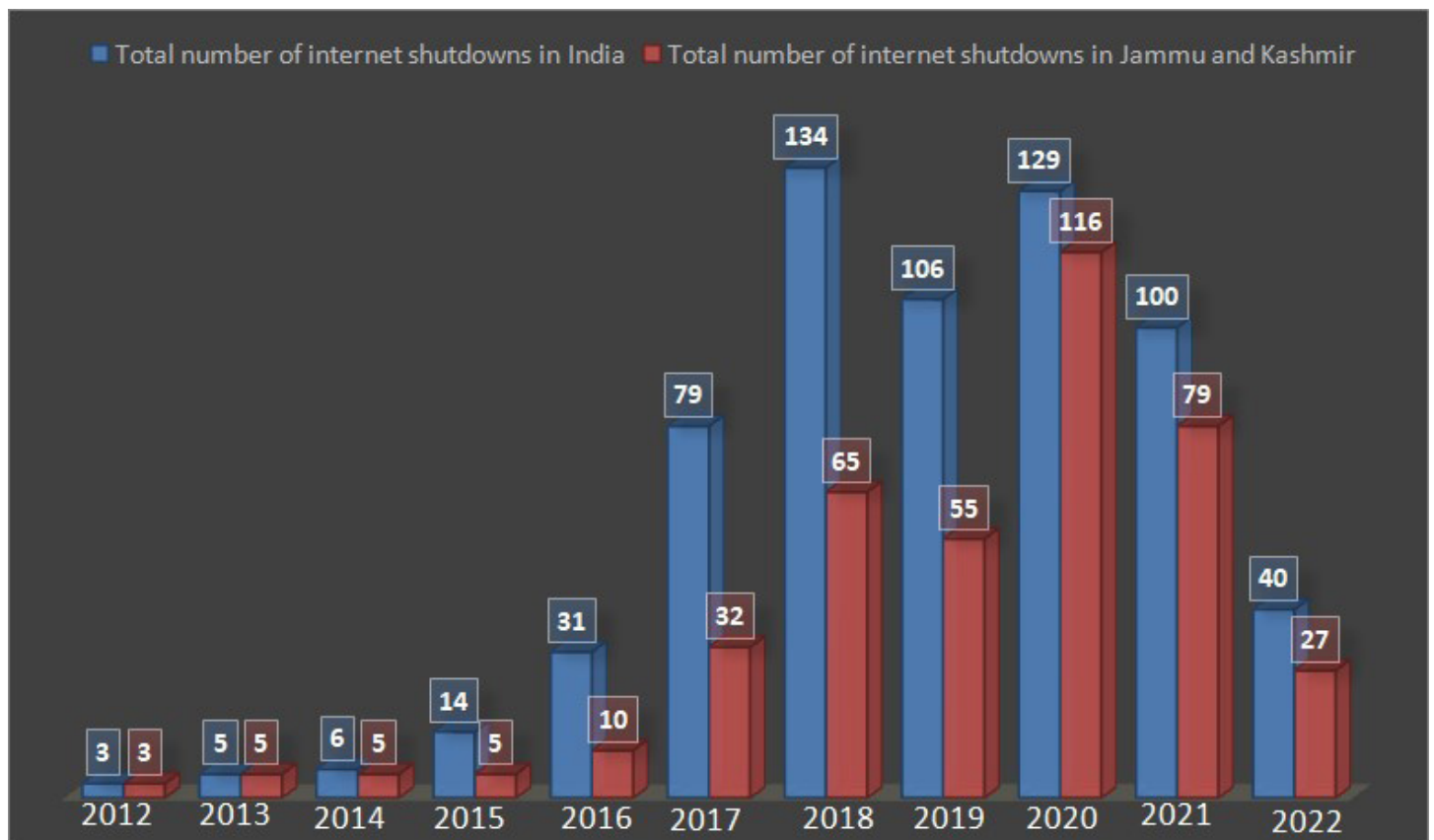


Figure 1: Total number of internet shutdowns in Jammu and Kashmir and India

Source: <https://www.statista.com/>

Since the internet and its users have developed so much over the years, it is now a part of our daily lives. The internet offers us a wide range of benefits, including information and social and economic advancement. It is a sea of information and knowledge that influences our way of life and our business. It provides so many oppor-

tunities for invention and creativity. The internet gives a forum for diverse scholars as well as rapid and simple global communication, which benefits industries that depend on its availability and lets students learn from any part of the world. In truth, India is moving toward becoming a digital India and has the second-largest

number of internet users after China. However, India also has the greatest rate of internet outages worldwide shown in Table 1.

The Internet is used for much more than just communication; it also serves as a platform for e-business and e-commerce, e-governance initiatives, a hub for information and research, and much more (Arya).

India was the third-most economically impacted country in the world in 2019 behind Iraq and Sudan due to its forced internet blackouts, which lasted for well over 4000 hours and cost the country over \$1.3 billion. The research also noted that internet outages in India frequently target specific users and can even reach the level of personal blacklisting. While some internet shutdowns only last a few hours in a small number of city districts, others place a complete ban on all internet services throughout far broader areas of the nation. As a result, the report issues a warning that the actual economic impact will probably be substantially greater than the numbers given.

Change after Abrogation of Article 370

Internet shutdown in J&K increases from year 2012 after the local militants uses social media as medium to influence and recruit new youth in militancy activities. Internet was using as medium to communicate and growth of militancy in J&K. To shutdown the internet services becomes common trend for government in order to stop militancy activities in J&K. The number of internet shutdowns increases year by year till year 2019. Only three internet shutdowns was recorded in year 2012 later increases up to 65 shutdowns in year 2018, 55 in year 2019. In year 2021 when internet was fully restored in J&K after one and half year after the abrogation of article 370 by government of India, results in decline the number of internet shutdowns in J&K. Kashmir witnesses first time in year 2022 that the internet was not snapped on republic and Independence Day of India in J&K after long period of time. In year 2021 only 79 internet shutdowns was recorded in J&K and only 27 shutdowns till June in year 2022. The number of internet shutdowns decreases after the abrogation of article 370 in J&K. All the internet shutdowns in year 2021-2022 remains in some parts of J&K and last only for few hours. No long durational internet shutdown, curfews and strikes recorded in J&K after the abrogation of article 370. The flow of tourist increases as the market remains open because of the great change in the situations of Kashmir after the abrogation of article 370. J&K witnesses 1.62 crore tourists visited from Jan.

2022 to Oct. 2022 which was highest from last 75 years. Tourism is the great source of employment in J&K. This indicates that J&K is returning in its golden era. The flow of tourists, open internet access and normal situations in J&K will help to boost its economy and development.

The various changes in J&K after the abrogation of article 370 are as:

- The flow of tourist increases
- Open internet access/ less internet shutdowns
- No strikes, curfews and lockdowns
- Open market
- Normalcy
- Trade links with outsiders increases
- Virtual market opportunities

Flow of Tourists Increases

In J&K, domestic tourism is on the rise. Even though Kashmir was frequently mentioned in publications between 1948 and 1950, individuals from other parts of the Sub-continent were not particularly interested in visiting this region. The rush began only after Shakti Samant's 1956 film "Kashmir Ki Kali" was published, which instantly made India's urban populace aware of the stunning terrain and region. If the annual percentage rate had continued unabated, the year 2002 should have seen the Valley receiving 1.87 million visitors from other areas of the country, breaking the previous high of over 722,000 lakhs tourists who visited the area in 1988. But due to the state's unsteady law and order condition, this steadily rising tourist flow abruptly decreased to an unbelievable low of 6600 visitors to the valley in 1993. Soon after the abrogation of 370, J&K witnesses in the increase in flow of tourist as 1.88 crore tourists from different states and countries visited J&K from Jan. 2022 to Dec. 2022, which is highest in number from last 75 years.

Open internet access/ decrease in internet shutdowns.

The concept of internet shutdown is not new in J&K. It witnesses highest number of internet shutdown in the world. The rise of shutdowns increase after 2012 when social was used as a means of communication by different militant's organisation in J&K in order to increase the influence of militancy in J&K. Soon after the abrogation of article 370 by government of India, the number of internet shutdowns decrease from previous years. There are only 27 internet blackouts recorded in first 09 months of year 2022, which was 65 in 2018, 55 in 2019 and 116 in year 2020, as shown in figure 2.

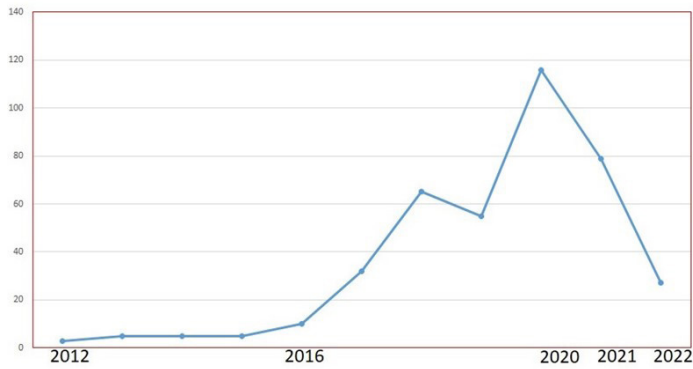


Figure 2: Decrease in internet shutdowns after abrogation of Article 370

No strikes, curfews and lockdowns

The strikes and curfews are common in J&K due to conflict zone. It witnesses the curfews and lockdowns from early 1990's due to cross-border conflicts with Pakistan. The curfews in J&K last from months, in year 2016 after the killing of Burhan Wani the curfew in Kashmir region lasts for more than six months, all the business units, educational institutes were closed during these six months. The region of J&K witnesses these long durations curfews and strikes many times every year from last two three decades. But soon the abrogation of 370 these strikes and curfews are hardly visible now in J&K.

Open Market

After the abrogation of article 370 on 04th Aug. 2019 by government by India, there are various changes visible in J&K. The market in J&K was remaining close various times every year due to strikes calls by various separatist leaders, curfews by government which was directly impacted the market. Soon after the abrogation of article 370, the separatist leaders were detained by the government and curfews and strikes are not now imposed in J&K. The market now remains mostly open in J&K which indicates that Kashmir is leading towards normalcy.

Normalcy

The situation in J&K leading towards normalcy after long period. It was always in news headlines due to strikes, lockdowns, curfews, internet shutdowns, encounters, killings and so on from last three decades. After the abrogation of article 370 in J&K, various improvements are visible now there. The situation becomes normal, market remains mostly open, no more curfews imposed, less internet shutdowns, decrease in militancy activities, which are the good sign for the

growth and development both economically and socially in J&K.

Trade links with outsiders increases

Due to less industrial sector present in J&K, it is dependent on other sides for various products. Those industries that are present in J&K are dependent on other states for machinery and raw material. Due to long term shutdowns and strikes the relation was not building strong in previous years. After the abrogation article 370 the relation between Kashmir and other states are developing well, which is beneficial for the economical growth and development.

Virtual market opportunities

The internet has changed the physical market into virtual market. People are buying all goods and services from their comfort zone. In last ten years from 2012-2022, the internet services are blocked hundreds of times unnecessary for one and another reason in J&K. From last two years after the abrogation of article 370 hundreds for educated young entrepreneur in J&K make their present on e-commerce for the growth of their business. Internet helps them to acquire large market, advertisement, business communication and so on. All these changes in J&K are for the welfare of the people of J&K. The J&K leads towards growth and development from the dark era from last decade. It will take time to complete normalcy in J&K but the result is great after the abrogation of article 370 in the situation of Kashmir as compared to the situation of last three decades.

Conclusions

During this study it's found that internet is one of greatest technologies in the present time, which gives rise to various technologies. Internet is easy and fast source of getting latest information, which otherwise take months to collect. Internet is used in every field of life, whether business, social life or education. It's also found that J&K is the region in the north India with highest number of internet shutdowns in the world. The longest duration internet shutdown in J&K remains for 552 days. But soon after the abrogation of article 370 by government of India on 05th Aug. 2019 various changes are visible in the J&K like, decrease in the number of internet shutdowns, strikes, curfews and lockdowns. J&K is leading towards normalcy after a long period of time, which is good for the economic and social development of J&K.

List of Abbreviations

J&K: Jammu and Kashmir; SFLC: software freedom law centre; WFH: work from home

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