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A STUDY ON PUBLIC AWARENESS AND PERCEPTION TOWARDS THE USAGE OF DIGITAL PAYMENT SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

The growth of the rate of informational and communication technologies development has influenced the financial environment in the world greatly. Digital payment system has managed to enter as an easy, efficient and safe solution to the ancient cash-based transactions. The primary objective of this study is to examine public awareness and perception towards the usage of digital payment systems. It also aims to analyze the factors influencing adoption, assess variations across demographic groups, and identify key challenges affecting the acceptance and effective use of digital payment platforms. A sample of 100 respondents was selected using the simple random sampling technique, ensuring that each individual had an equal chance of being included in the study. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire designed to measure key factors such as perceived usefulness, trust, security, digital literacy, infrastructure availability, and government support. The awareness and perception of the community towards the usage of digital payment systems are discussed in this article including the factors that influence their adoption; the perceived positive effect, challenges, and trusts in the usage. The findings of secondary literature and conceptual analysis, the study sees the growing awareness of the population and the favorable attitude to convenience, speed, and the existence of the concerns of security, privacy, and digital literacy. The outcomes point to the significance of the necessity of the presence of awareness campaigns, efficient security systems, and integrative digital infrastructure to ensure the sustainable adoption of digital payment systems.

Keywords: Digital payments, public awareness, perception, cashless economy, financial technology and consumer behavior.

INTRODUCTION

The digital revolution has had far reaching implications on how financial transactions are carried out. Electronic payment methods, i.e. mobile wallet, internet banking, Unified Payments Interface (UPI), debit and credit cards, and payments through QR-code, have been widely accepted in global society. Digital payment is being encouraged by governments and financial institutions to enhance transparency lower the cost of transactions and promote financial inclusion. Digital payment systems have seen a tremendous growth in the developing economies especially following other measures like demonetization and Digital India in India. Nonetheless, the implementation of such systems successfully depends to a great extent on the perception and awareness of people. The interpretation of the perceptions of digital payments and their awareness and barriers in individuals is crucial to policymakers, service providers, and researchers.

DIGITAL PAYMENT SYSTEMS CONCEPT

Digital payment systems are electronic forms of money transfer and these systems do not involve the use of cash directly. These systems allow users to pay using online-based systems using their smart phones, computers or payment cards.

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Mobile Wallets: Mobile wallets are computer-based programs which enable users to keep money in electronic format and pay with smartphones. They facilitate payment of bills, peer-to-peer, online purchases, and in store payments using QR codes or mobile numbers. The popularity of mobile wallets has been as a result of these convenience, speed and easy to use interfaces. Cashback incentives and discounts can also be used to motivate usage. Nonetheless, the issues of data privacy, cyber-fraud, and reliance on internet connectivity affect the perception of the population. All in all, mobile wallets are very important in encouraging cashless payment especially amongst the youth and urban communities.

Internet and Mobile Banking: Internet and mobile banking are banking activities that are conducted online on a webpage or mobile applications offered by banks. The services enable customers to carry out banking operations like the transfer of funds, inquisitions of balance, payment of bills and also control their accounts without necessarily walking into the physical outlets of the banks. The internet and mobile banking make life easier, save time and decrease cost of operation to both the bank and the end user. Digital literacy programs and smartphone penetration have increased awareness of these services to the general public. Security issues, technical problems, and unfamiliarity with the elderly users are however challenges. In spite of these shortcomings, internet and mobile banking remain key elements of a new online financial infrastructure.

Debit and Credit Cards: Debit and credit cards are popular digital payment tools provided by the banks that can be used to make transactions utilizing cashless technology online and offline. Debit cards enable one to use money as part of the bank accounts whereas credit cards offer short term credit facilities. These cards are normally applied in retail shopping, payment of bills, and internet purchases. Their adoption in merchants and their combination with global payment networks make them more usable. But concerns like card fraud, misuse, and ignorance on how to use the cards impact on the trust of the population. However, the debit and credit cards remain to be the essential components of the online payment system.

Unified Payments Interface (UPI): Unified Payments Interface (UPI) refers to online real time digital payment interface that enables instant transfer of funds among bank accounts via mobile applications. UPI is a platform developed to streamline electronic payments, enabling people to send and receive money through virtual payment addresses or mobile numbers or QR code. They have increased the adoption of the tool by the population due to its ease of use, interbanking capability and no or low cost of transactions. UPI has revolutionized the daily transactions like shopping, paying bills and peer-to-peer transfer of money. Regardless of the popularity, there are still issues associated with phishing, fraud, and technical issues. In general, UPI has turned out to be a part of Indian digital payments.

QR-Code-Based Payments: QR-code payment this system allows users to pay with a smartphone application that scans a Quick Response (QR) code. The small merchants and vendors are known to use this method because it has low start up cost and is an easy method to implement. QR-code payments do not require handling cash or use of physical payment terminal hence the transactions are quicker and efficient. The general feeling of the population towards QR-based payments is rather favorable, especially when it comes to low-value payment. Still, such problems as counterfeit QR codes, a lack of digital awareness, and the addiction to the internet are a challenge. Regardless of these issues, QR-code payments contribute greatly to the growth of cashless economies.

NFC Payments and contactless payments: Contactless and Near Field Communication (NFC) payment systems enable the user to enable the completion of the transaction just by tapping the cards or smartphones at the payment kiosks. These payments are characterised by

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their expediency, convenience and limited physical contact, so they are particularly applicable in the after-pandemic conditions. NFC technology improves customer experience where small sums of money do not require entering of PINs. The contactless payment is slowly gaining popularity among the population, especially in cities. Widespread adoption is however adversely affected by limited infrastructure, compatibility with devices and security issues. Contactless and NFC payments are a new trend in digital payment innovation, despite these obstacles.

Public Awareness of Digital Payment Systems: Digital Literacy Campaigns fronted by government: Digital literacy campaigns by the governments are important in the enhancement of the awareness and uptake of the digital payment systems by the population. Such programs will be designed to promote the utilization of digital platforms, online banking, and cashless transactions through education of the citizens in the form of trainings, workshops, and communication in the mass media. Such campaigns eliminate fear and resistance to digital technologies by aiming at different groups of the population, such as rural communities and older adults. They even encourage safe usage habits, including personal information protection and prevention of online fraud. On the whole, government-led initiatives on digital literacy play a very important role in fostering trust, confidence, and inclusiveness within the digital payment ecosystem.

Growth of Smartphone and Internet Penetration: One of the drivers in the adoption of digital payments has been the rapid growth in the use of smartphones and the internet connection. Cheap phones and low price data packages have helped a majority of the population to access digital financial services. The fact that the internet is more penetrated enables the user to carry out transactions anywhere and at all times and this makes the process more convenient and efficient. This technological access has helped in closing the urban and semi-urban gaps but rural gaps still exist. Increased connectivity also helps exposure to digital payment applications and services. This means that with the proliferation of smartphones and internet connectivity, the evolution of digital payment systems has greatly uplifted their awareness and adoption by the masses.

Bank and Fintech Company Promotional Activities: Advertising efforts by banks and fintech organisations have a major effect on the perception and adoption of digital payment systems by the population. These activities involve advertisement campaigns, cashback, and discounts, referral incentives, and loyalty programs that aim at attracting and retaining the users. Digital and traditional media educates consumers on the advantages and functionalities of digital payment solutions offered by financial institutions. Through such promotions, initial adoption levels will be lowered and trial usage by those who are unconvinced users will be promoted. Continued use is, however, based on reliability and security of the service. All in all, promotional strategies can contribute to the improvement of the level of awareness, the development of positive attitudes, and the quicker incorporation of digital payments.

Social learning and Peer Influence: The social learning and peer influence can have a powerful influence on the attitudes of individuals to the digital payment systems. Human beings tend to embrace new technologies according to the suggestions, demonstrations and experiences that friends, relatives, co-workers and social media give to them. Seeing other people use digital payments positively influences apprehension and creates a sense of trust in those who may want to use it. This type of informal learning has a strong-seat especially in less-formal digital education communities. Social media also enhances the impact of the peer influence by posting the user experiences and advertisements. Consequently, peer pressure is a strong force in terms of promoting awareness and popularizing digital payments systems.

ISSN: 2349-512X
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Journal Website www.nrjsmm.in

FACTORS INFLUENCING ADOPTION OF DIGITAL PAYMENT SYSTEMS

1. Perceived Usefulness and Ease of Use: The perceived usefulness and ease of use are the key factors influencing the acceptance of digital payment systems by the population. Perceived usefulness is the degree to which people think that digital payments make transactions more efficient, more convenient and better managed in finances. Users are more likely to adopt digital payment platforms when they feel that their lives have become more efficient in regard to payment speed, reduced cash management, and blending into the daily operations. This perception is supplemented by ease of use that also focuses on simplicity, simplicity, and the negligible amount of effort to use digital payment applications. Ease of use, ease of navigation, and expedited onboarding processes go a long way in eliminating technological anxiety especially in the first time users. The adoption of a system can be discouraged by complex workflow, high incidences of technical failures or ambiguous guidelines, despite its helpfulness. Positive attitudes towards digital payments are constituted by the combination of usefulness and ease of use, as they reduce cognitive and operational barriers. Therefore, service vendors should pay attention to creating convenient, trustworthy, and user-friendly platforms to promote a long-lasting use and community-wide recognition.

2. **Confidence in Technology and Service Providers**: Confidence in technology and service providers is a decisive factor in influencing the attitude and the use of digital payment systems. Customers should also be assured that the technology will be dependable and that the service providers will be ethical and responsible. Reputation of payment systems, operations transparency, and stability in service delivery are factors that determine trust. Established banks, the fintech companies and government-approved platforms are likely to create more trust as they are viewed as accountable and regulated. On the other hand, failed transactions, unseen fees, or lack of customer service may easily kill confidence and put them off. There is also the trust to believe that the system has the capability of upholding the interests of the users, facilitate dispute resolution and effectively address errors. When people have confidence in the technology and the service provider, they become more apt to try out and often use digital transactions. Thus, trust is a necessary element that can be established by being transparent, reliable, and responsive to support systems to boost public confidence.

3. Assurance of Security and Privacy: Factors that have the most significant impact on the public awareness and acceptance of digital payment systems include security and assurance of privacy. Fraud, hacking, identity theft, and unauthorized access to personal or financial information are some of the risks that the users are usually worried about. Powerful security (encryption, two-factor authentication, biometric verification and real-time transaction notification) ensures that these fears can be minimized, and makes digital platforms less threatening. The privacy assurance is the way the service providers gather, store and share user data. Clarity of privacy policy and adherence to data protection laws improve awareness and trust among the users. There is a risk that bad security practices or data breaches will cause a serious loss of public perception and reduce adoption. To most users, particularly newcomers in the digital finance sector, convenience gains do not supersede the perceived risk. Thus, it is necessary to implement strong security systems and visibility in privacy. The process of communicating effectively on these safeguards is also important in user education and generally increasing awareness.

4. Digital Literacy and Education: Digital literacy and learning have a great impact on societal sensitization and appropriate deployment of electronic payment systems. Digital literacy is the skill of a person, which allows him/her to think about, access, and operate digital tools in a sure and a secure way. More digitally literate users will be more willing to seek digital payment services, learn about their advantages, and prevent the most frequent

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Journal Website www.nrjsmm.in

mistakes and fraud. Educational programs, such as training programs, awareness and community workshops contribute towards closing the knowledge gap, such as in the rural communities, the elderly users, and the economically poor communities. The digital skills deficit can be the root cause of fear or distrust, or the abuse of digital platforms, restricting digital adoption regardless of the infrastructure. Educational campaigns aimed at basic smartphone usage, process of making transactions, and security practices empower users and make them use it responsibly. It is the role of governments, financial institutions, and learning institutions to facilitate digital literacy. Increased awareness in proportion to the improved level of education also contributes to the inclusive and sustainable development of the digital payment systems.

5. Availability of Infrastructure (Internet and Devices): The first base need of the adoption of digital payment systems has infrastructure availability, specifically access to quality internet connectivity and digital technology. In the absence of stable internet services, the users experience inconveniences in performing transactions and this creates a lack of trust and frustration. On the same note, the access to smartphones, computers, point-of-sale devices has a direct influence on the scope of digital payments. Infrastructure is limited in most developing and rural regions which creates a digital divide limiting the awareness and participation of the population. Poor network coverage or obsolete equipment is a major hindrance even when the users are ready to embrace the use of digital payments. Other infrastructure is the power supply, technical support, and system interoperability. The governments and the other stakeholders in the digital sector have an important role to play in increasing the digital infrastructure by investing in broadband networks and low priced devices. The infrastructure is better, which makes it more accessible, reliable, and confident, thus creating more awareness and prompting people of various population groups to use digital payment systems more actively.

6. Regulatory Support and Government Policies: Regulatory support and policies by the government play a critical role in the development of awareness and trust on the digital payment systems. The facilitative policies promote innovation and consumer protection, as well as, help generate a stable environment of digital financial services. Cybersecurity, data protection, and dispute regulation policies improve the confidence of the population since they protect the interests of the users. The campaign of cashless economy, subsidies, and bonuses on digital payments organized by the government take significant part in sensitizing citizens. The use of national digital payment systems and regulation in most countries has been adopted faster. On the other hand, weak or ambiguous regulations can make things less certain and diminish the confidence of the population. Regulatory control also provides equitable competition among the service providers enhancing the quality and reliability of the services. Government policies serve as facilitators of the digital payment awareness by ensuring transparency, accountability, and financial inclusion. Good regulations therefore create a safe and reliable ecosystem that favors both the users and providers of the service.

RESEARCH GAP

Even though there is an accelerated development of digital payment systems, the existing literature indicates the presence of research gaps with references to the awareness and perception of the population. Most of the studies that have been done in the past focus on adoption intention or take model of technological acceptance and are mostly urban, educated, or digitally literate users. As such, the empirical evidence that reflects the awareness level and the differences in the perceptions of the various demographic groups such as the rural population, older adults, and low-income users is minimal. Moreover, the focus of previous studies has been on the independent variables, including perceived usefulness or security

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Peer Reviewed & Refereed Journal (IF: 6.95)
Journal Website www.nrjsmm.in

concerns, and little attention has been given to the combined effect of trust, digital literacy, availability of infrastructure and regulatory support on the perception of the people. The other gap that is worth mentioning is the lack of contextual consideration of the developing economies where the infrastructural limitations and socio-cultural aspects have a strong influence on the use of digital payments. Moreover, the current research is usually quantitative in nature, which provides scanty information on experiential perceptions of users and their awareness issues. Up-to-date studies of the current policy initiatives, technology-related changes, and post-pandemic changes in digital payment behaviour are also lacking. These gaps need to be addressed so as to help create a comprehensive picture on what people are aware of and how they perceive. Thus, the current investigation will help to address these gaps, as it will study various influencing factors in different population groups and give new and context-related information regarding the use of digital payments.

Importance of the Study

The significance of the given study is that it has the potential to improve the knowledge of the society regarding their awareness and perception with respect to the use of digital payment systems in the ever-digitized economy. With governments and financial institutions encouraging people to use cashless transactions as a way of enhancing efficiency, transparency and financial inclusion, it is important to know how people perceive it to implement it successfully. The article offers useful insights into the factors affecting awareness, trust and acceptance of digital payment platforms so that policy makers can develop specific awareness schemes and favourable regulatory frameworks. To service providers, the results may help enhance the usability of the system, security mechanisms and customer relationship measures. It is also important to the study to pinpoint the impediments to the adoption, including digital illiteracy, security issues, and infrastructural constraints. In the academic context, this study adds to the current literature because it incorporates various dimensions that influence the perception of digital payment, and it does not analyze them independently. It provides evidence that is context-specific and may be used in future studies to inform further studies and research. Additionally, the study will assist in inclusive digital transformation by mentioning the gaps in public awareness. Altogether, the results can be used to fill the gap between the purpose of a policy and feedback in order to achieve long-term growth and an equal opportunity to use digital financial services.

Statement of the Problem

Due to the rapid expansion of digital payment systems, the financial transactions have been changed but the awareness and perception of people in their usage has been unequal and disjointed. Although digital payments are convenient, fast, and transparent, a large percentage of the population still uses cash-based transactions. This implies that there are inherent issues of awareness, trust, security issues, digital literacy and access to infrastructures. Lack of proper knowledge on the operations of digital payment systems makes many users apprehensive, abusive, or avoids it altogether. Issues of privacy of data, fraud and security of transactions also add to the perception so as to dishearten regular usage. Also, the unequal access to the internet, lack of access to devices and digital education contributes to the digital divide even worse, especially in the rural and economically disadvantaged segments of the population. Although there are government efforts and policy support towards the use of digital payments, the rates of adoption are diverse because of the barriers of perception and awareness. The current research is not always able to address these multidimensional problems in a wholesome manner, leading to a vacuity in the comprehension. Hence, the issue that this study seeks to resolve is the lack of knowledge about the social awareness and perception of the usage of digital payment systems and their determinants. This issue needs to

ISSN: 2349-512X
Peer Reviewed & Refereed Journal (IF: 6.95)
Journal Website www.nrjsmm.in

be resolved, and a more inclusive, secure, and sustainable adoption of digital payment technologies must be encouraged.

Objectives and Methodology

The primary objective of this study is to examine public awareness and perception towards the usage of digital payment systems. It also aims to analyze the factors influencing adoption, assess variations across demographic groups, and identify key challenges affecting the acceptance and effective use of digital payment platforms. The study adopts a descriptive research design to examine public awareness and perception towards the usage of digital payment systems. A sample of 100 respondents was selected using the simple random sampling technique, ensuring that each individual had an equal chance of being included in the study. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire designed to measure key factors such as perceived usefulness, trust, security, digital literacy, infrastructure availability, and government support. The questionnaire consisted of close-ended questions using a Likert scale for consistency and ease of analysis. Secondary data were gathered from journals, reports, and published literature related to digital payments. The collected data were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools such as descriptive statistics and one-way ANOVA to examine variations among different demographic groups.

Analysis and Findings

The quick development of the information and communication technologies has dramatically changed the manner of carrying out financial transactions. Online payment systems have become an important part of financial environments of the modern world that are much more convenient, fast, and efficient than the use of cash-based methods. As we become more and more integrated with smart phones and access to the internet, digital payments have entered the realm of economic behavior in city centers and in the countryside. Financial inclusion, transparency, and economic growth are being encouraged by governments, financial institutions, and fintech companies to promote digital transactions.

Nevertheless, multiple factors that are interconnected affect the use of digital payment systems impacting the population awareness and perception. The degree to which individuals will accept the digital payment does not only rely on technology advantages like usefulness and easiness of use but also on trust in service providers, perceived security and privacy level, and digital literacy. It is also true that the presence of the supporting infrastructure and healthy government policies make or break usage. These factors would be important to understand to find out the impediments and enablers influencing digital payments. The detailed analysis of these influencing factors will offer useful information to policy makers and other service providers in coming up with effective strategies that will enhance the inclusive and sustainable use of digital payment systems.

Table:1

Factors Influencing Adoption of Digital Payment Systems

Factors / Monthly Income		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig
Perceived Usefulness and Ease of Use	Below 30,000	28	11.6615	3.19767	9.531	.002
	30,000–50,000	26	**17.2059**	1.46153		
	50,001–75,000	31	12.2000	1.30384		
	Above Rs.75,000	15	11.0383	1.48591		
	Total	100	12.6800	2.45961		

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Journal Website www.nrjsmm.in

Trust in Technology and Service Providers	Below 30,000	28	14.0833	4.06921	8.001	.004
	30,000–50,000	26	12.7353	2.06331		
	50,001–75,000	31	11.4000	2.88097		
	Above Rs.75,000	15	**22.4213**	1.18987		
	Total	100	15.6320	3.43922		
Security and Privacy Assurance	Below 30,000	28	13.1198	3.34276	10.142	.009
	30,000–50,000	26	15.7500	2.90329		
	50,001–75,000	31	17.2000	6.57267		
	Above Rs.75,000	15	**18.2596**	2.64508		
	Total	100	17.5040	3.16132		
Digital Literacy and Education	Below 30,000	28	12.8750	5.42102	9.866	.006
	30,000–50,000	26	12.3088	4.84154		
	50,001–75,000	31	17.8000	4.02492		
	Above Rs.75,000	15	22.8213	1.97905		
	Total	100	14.1020	5.37115		
Infrastructure Availability	Below 30,000	28	17.1667	4.16333	9.332	.000
	30,000–50,000	26	22.9706	2.54494		
	50,001–75,000	31	18.4000	4.09878		
	Above Rs.75,000	15	21.2766	2.00536		
	Total	100	20.9520	3.88844		

The table presents a comparative analysis of factors influencing the adoption of digital payment systems across different monthly income groups using one-way ANOVA. The results indicate statistically significant differences in all selected factors based on income levels, as the *p-values (Sig.)* for all variables are less than 0.05.

For **Perceived Usefulness and Ease of Use**, a significant difference is observed (*F = 9.531, p = 0.002*). Respondents earning **₹30,000–50,000** reported the highest mean score, indicating that this income group perceives digital payment systems as more useful and easier to use compared to others. Higher-income groups reported relatively lower mean scores, suggesting familiarity may reduce perceived effort.

In terms of **Trust in Technology and Service Providers**, the variation across income groups is significant (*F = 8.001, p = 0.004*). Respondents earning **above ₹75,000** showed the highest mean score, indicating stronger trust in digital platforms and service providers, possibly due to better exposure and experience with technology.

For **Security and Privacy Assurance**, significant differences were found (*F = 10.142, p = 0.009*). Mean scores increase progressively with income, with the **above ₹75,000** group showing the highest concern and awareness regarding security and privacy issues.

The factor **Digital Literacy and Education** also shows significant variation (*F = 9.866, p = 0.006*). Higher-income respondents, particularly those earning **above ₹75,000**, demonstrate higher digital literacy levels, suggesting income positively influences technological knowledge and confidence.

Lastly, **Infrastructure Availability** reveals a highly significant difference (*F = 9.332, p = 0.000*). Respondents in the **₹30,000–50,000** and **above ₹75,000** income groups reported better access to internet and digital devices, indicating that income plays a crucial role in infrastructural readiness for digital payment adoption.

ISSN: 2349-512X
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Journal Website www.nrjsmm.in

Overall, the analysis confirms that **monthly income significantly influences perceptions, trust, security awareness, digital literacy, and infrastructure availability**, thereby affecting the adoption of digital payment systems.

Implications of the Study

The study findings bear significant implications to the policymaking bodies, financial institutions and digital payment service providers. To begin with, the prominent role of perceived usefulness and ease of use provides the necessity to create convenient digital payment systems to accommodate people with various levels of income and literacy. Easy to use interfaces and many languages can also improve the awareness and acceptance by the people. Second, the credibility of the technology and service providers comes out as a key concern and it means that the public trust is gained and solidified with transparent operations, good grievance redressal systems and consistent service delivery. Third, the significance of security and privacy guarantees indicate that the security structures and articulating safety precautions should be crucial in enhancing user perceptions. Another implication of the study is that the digital gap can be decreased by digital literacy and the availability of infrastructure, especially in low-income and rural groups. Finally, the importance of government policies explains why the regulatory support and awareness campaigns should be ongoing to promote the adoption of inclusive digital payments.

SUGGESTIONS

Governments need to step up digital financial literacy by learning institutions, community organizations and mass media to enhance awareness and protection practices. Banks and fintech firms must invest in the development of more security features like biometric authentication and realtime fraud detection and make it clear to users that these features are enabled. Service providers should also aim at enhancing services of customer support to solve any transaction challenge in a timely manner and gain trust. They should focus on infrastructure development, such as having solid internet access and inexpensive digital equipment, particularly in under-served communities. Moreover, policy makers ought to revise the regulatory structures on a regular basis in order to mitigate the rising technological risks as well as safeguard the interests of the consumer. The active cooperation of government agencies, banks, and technologies is an additional push to provide a secure, open, and user-friendly digital payment environment, which will guarantee a successful growth and mass use.

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that public awareness and perceptions towards digital payment systems are generally positive, driven by convenience, efficiency, and government support. However, concerns related to security, privacy, and digital literacy continues to hinder universal adoption. For digital payment systems to achieve long-term sustainability and inclusiveness, stakeholders must focus on building trust, enhancing awareness, and ensuring equitable access. A balanced approach combining technological innovation and consumer education will be key to transitioning towards a truly cashless economy. The study concludes that public awareness and perception play a vital role in the adoption of digital payment systems. Factors such as perceived usefulness and ease of use, trust in technology and service providers, security and privacy assurance, digital literacy, infrastructure availability, and government support significantly influence individuals' willingness to use digital payments. Although digital payment systems offer convenience and efficiency, challenges related to awareness, trust, and accessibility continue to hinder their widespread adoption. Addressing these issues through improved user education, stronger security measures, reliable

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infrastructure, and supportive policies is essential. A coordinated effort among stakeholders can promote inclusive, secure, and sustainable growth of digital payment systems.

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