

SEO Sample Article

Client: Indian Business Portal

Subject: The Internet in India

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The Internet in India

Internet History and Culture

The history of the Internet in India can be traced back to the early 1990's when ERNet, a division of the Department of Electronics (DoE), and NICNet (Department of Statistics) began to experiment with Internet services. But it was not until 1995 that government owned VSNL (Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited), became the country's 1st official Internet Service Provider (ISP).

In 1997, the rise to power of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was accompanied by a series of legislations that opened up opportunities for business online. One of the most significant changes during this period was The New Telecommunications Policy of 1999, which ended VSNL's ISP monopoly and mandated that any Indian company with a maximum foreign equity of 49% could provide hosting services.

Over time this policy has led to a rise in the number of Indian web hosting companies, although the tough unregulated market has caused many to close.

These pieces of legislation ushered in a new era of internet growth that has increased steadily. As early as 2000, foreign companies including Yahoo, Ebay and MSN began establishing web portals in the country and examining India's strong e-commerce potential.

While the industry has been mainly free from content regulation, some high profile instances of censorship have occurred and as of July 2006, the Indian government had directed ISPs to block seventeen websites, including some hosted on the Geocities, Blogspot and Typepad domains.

According to studies into the demographics of internet users in India, most users are located near the country's main population centers including Delhi and Bangalore. While figures on the exact number of internet users varies, it was estimated that between 22 and 30 million people were online in 2007 with a 3% penetration of India's market, although penetration in major urban areas is believed to be as high as 9%. Industry experts have predicted this number to balloon to 100 million by 2010, making India one of the world's fastest growing markets.

The early years of the internet saw users connecting primarily in public spaces such as Internet cafes and kiosks, but this is rapidly changing. Reports from consulting company JuxtConsult suggest that beginning in 2007, the majority of internet users are opting for personal computing, with 59% of new users using home based connections, up from 19% the year before.

Despite this growth, lack of reliable high speed internet continues to be an impede business success. Most users still rely on dial up connections although faster services, including t1 speed internet, are available. The national communication company Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd. (BSNL) is the major provider of broadband 8 mbps internet connections, however customers have complained about the wait for installations and the unreliability of connections.

Business Outlook

India's e-commerce and IT sectors continue to hold promise and are expected to grow steadily in the coming years, despite a weak global economy and lack of infrastructure. The growth is largely driven by requests for outsourced services including web site design and Search Engine Optimization.

Throughout India, web site design services are readily available in major cities and the low cost of web design is one of the main factors companies cite when choosing to outsource web design to India.

Although accurate figures on the amount spent on online advertising are difficult to verify, trends suggest rapid growth and the need for Search Engine Optimization Companies and Search Engine Optimization Specialists steadily increasing.

Even with this new growth, entrepreneurs considering starting an SEO company in India are advised to be cautiously optimistic. Competition among web site promotion firms on the rise, although there are still opportunities for expert search engine optimization and marketing professionals.

While outsourcing for SEO, web and graphic design have proved to be profitable, e-commerce in general is still in the nascent phases even as Internet advertising expenditures continue to grow. While industry giants Yahoo, Google, Microsoft and Rediff.com are doing well and continue to dominate the e-commerce landscape, most portals are still working towards financial success, citing cost of customer acquisition and lack of reliable high speed broadband as major sticking points.