

# Chapter 11

## Are ICT Non-Users Absolute Non-Users? Segregation of “Potential ICT Users” From the Non-Users’ Profile

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### ABSTRACT

*The level of ICT usage is one of the criteria to measure rural development. Nevertheless, the increasing presence of the “digital divide” indicates that there are setbacks in accomplishing this progress. A deeper understanding about the categorization of users and non-users of technologies is needed as there is an implicit element called ‘potential users’ among the non-user category that decides level of ICT usage among people. But the fact is that all are not using the technologies in an equal proportion. The variation is based on different reasons. However, there are people who are interested in ICTs and are unable to explore it. This chapter discusses the categorization of ICT users and non-users and the barriers of potential users for technology use. Thus, measures for transforming potential users to innovators are described. Guiding potential users in handling ICTs may pave the way to enhancing the digital enrichment of rural people. The need for digital freedom is found to be the basic requirement of potential users.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The very purpose of the diffusion of technology is social development and, Information and Communication Technologies are not exceptions to it. Devoid of technological access can tend to make a deprived one a recluse. In contrast, one of the consequences of Covid-19 pandemic has seen the reinforcement of ICT use, even among the unwilling, irrespective of the users’ demographic and psychographic differences. It has fomented a fear among the non-users of technology, particularly the underdeveloped

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population, that there is no personal growth without technology. Despite the disproportionate access to technology in the nation, the non-users have begun to feel the need for technology as imperative to help them strike a balance between their ups and downs.

The very first definition of the digital divide by Google (2016) is that it is the gap between those who have and who do not have ready access to computers and the Internet. Perpetuating the utilisation of ICTs is merely explained based on the physical access to it. This implies that the non-users continue to be deprived of proper socio-economic support and access which can be explained primarily in terms of capital. This reflects upon the economic well-being as the objective that drives the process of usage and non-usage of ICTs. Apart from economic drawbacks, there are enormous socio-cultural and psychological setbacks that pre-empt the usage of ICT. The procedural machinery is disseminated among the people who are socially delirious and technologically resistive.

Everett Rogers's (1983) 'Diffusion of Innovation' theory explains that non-users of new technological innovations are 'laggards' and high users are 'innovators'. This theory yields the interpretation that people are responsible for the variation in the use of technology. But the oblique aspect is that the delivery of inappropriate technologies is also a possible obstruction to people who are termed as 'laggards' by Rogers. The inconsistent approach to diffuse the technologies is also a cause for their inappropriate usage. There occurs a mismatch between the provision of technologies and the people's needs and capabilities. This demands a judicious application of ICTs in accordance with the demographic and psychographic needs of the people so as to persuade the 'potential users' to aim at becoming 'innovators'. The need to identify the potential users through their demographics and psychographics is realised in order to convert them into innovators. Besides, the categorization of users and non-users also plays a crucial part to generate ideas that can improve the participation level of the potential users.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

The chapter adopts a thematic approach to explain the concept 'segregation of ICT non-users'. Most of the outputs rely upon authentic literature. Verdegem and Verhoest's (2009) ASA (Access, Skills, Attitude) profiling is the major parameter that is applied to extract the potential users from among the non-users. The characteristics of the potential users are recognised by using the core variables of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model Theory (1994) and Sen's Capability Approach (1999), which are the apt yardsticks used to explain the environmental deterrents to ICT use.

## **3. CATEGORIZATION OF ICT USERS AND NON-USERS**

Cataloguing of ICT users and non-users diverge according to the researchers, sample, context and geography. Verdegem and Verhoest (2009) categorised non-users based on ASA (Access, Skills, Attitude) profile. This profiling enables categories such as the 'incapable refusers' (people who are unaffected by external issues like cost, access etc., but lack the skill to master ICT and have a rather negative attitude towards it), the 'self-conscious indifferent' (those who have skills to master ICT but are disinterested), the 'willing but incapable' (people who are willing to use but they lack necessary skills and access), the 'skilled ICT lovers with limited access' (people who have a positive attitude towards ICT as well as those who are ICT literates but lack access mainly at home), and the 'price-sensitive pragmatists' (people who

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