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CRYPTOCURRENCY: DAWN OF A NEW ECONOMY

SAPNA ALUMNA D. A. V. COLLEGE CHANDIGARH

ABSTRACT

People started using the Internet because it gave borderless, permission-less, fast and cheap access to the world's information and communication. Similarly, Bitcoin enables borderless, permission less, fast and cheap access to the world of finance. After the 2008 financial crisis and the current global financial crisis, the world is increasingly realizing the weaknesses of our current financial system. A majority of central banks in the world now have 0 interest rates. Countries like Russia, Latin America have seen record breaking currency devaluations. Bitcoin provides the vision of a new era in the financial world. By purchasing bitcoins, it allows ordinary people to protect themselves from the possibility of a sudden drop in the purchasing power of their money because of a debt ridden government. The current western financial infrastructure based on banks, credit card companies and a mishmash of different payment networks is at a very early stage in India. 60% of our population is unbanked and credit and debit card penetration is in single digit percentages. Our PM and the RBI both have financial inclusion as a top priority. Just like mobile phones helped India skip the landline generation in connecting a billion Indians, embracing Bitcoins can help India skip the current generation of financial infrastructure and move India directly to the future of finance. The current paper is an attempt to study the future growth perspectives of cryptocurrency like Bitcoin's in India and how people of India can take advantage from these digital currencies. The research was done on the basis of secondary data taken from books, journals, newspaper articles and magazines. The research findings show that cryptocurrencies have extensive growth prospect in India. India is perfect as a society to be at the forefront of developing a vibrant crypto-currency economy.

KEYWORDS

Cryptocurrency, Bitcoins, Miners, Ethereum, Litecoin, Ripple, Namecoin, PPCoin.

INTRODUCTION

and a world when everything seems to be going the virtual way, why not virtual currencies? As it happens, cryptocurrencies have been in existence for quite some time and many believe they are the future of currency. The market value is proof of this.

A cryptocurrency is a digital or virtual currency that uses cryptography for security. A cryptocurrency is difficult to counterfeit because of this security feature. A defining feature of a cryptocurrency, and arguably its most endearing allure, is its organic nature; it is not issued by any central authority, rendering it theoretically immune to government interference or manipulation.

The first cryptocurrency to capture the public imagination was Bitcoin, which was launched in 2009 by an individual or group known under the pseudonym Satoshi Nakamoto. As of September 2015, there were over 14.6 million bitcoins in circulation with a total market value of \$3.4 billion. Bitcoin's success has spawned a number of competing cryptocurrencies, such as Litecoin, Namecoin and PPCoin.

BITCOIN IS THE INTERNET OF MONEY

A financial infrastructure based on Bitcoin and its underlying technology Blockchain will herald a revolution just like the Internet. Very similar to the Internet, Bitcoin is a free to join, open source, decentralized network. Bitcoin is a sound currency which has all the best characteristics of sound money. And the Bitcoin network is the fastest, cheapest and easiest way to send money from one person to the other. Already progressive governments like the UK and Singapore are pro Bitcoins and trying to attract Bitcoin companies to operate in their jurisdiction by providing them favourable working conditions.

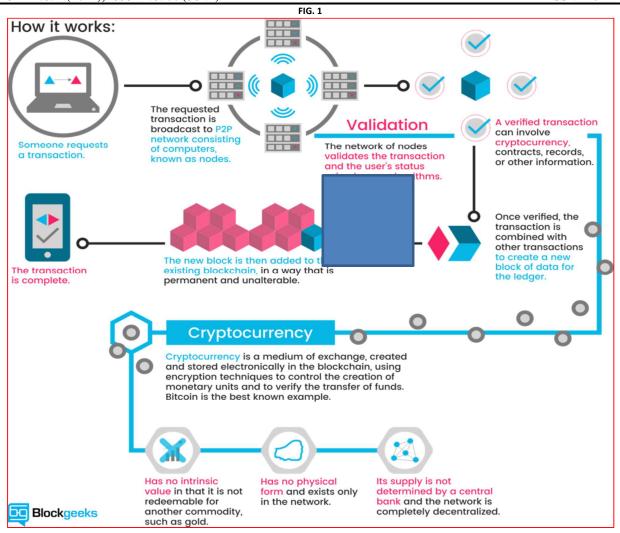
WHAT ARE CRYPTOCURRENCIES REALLY?

If you take away all the noise around cryptocurrencies and reduce it to a simple definition, you find it to be just limited entries in a database no one can change without fulfilling specific conditions. This may seem ordinary, but, believe it or not: this is exactly how we can define a currency.

Take the money on your bank account: What is it more than entries in a database that can only be changed under specific conditions? You can even take physical coins and notes: What are they else than limited entries in a public physical database that can only be changed if you match the condition than you physically own the coins and notes? Money is all about a verified entry in some kind of database of accounts, balances, and transactions.

HOW MINERS CREATE COINS AND CONFIRM TRANSACTIONS?

Let's have a look at the mechanism ruling the databases of cryptocurrencies. A cryptocurrency like Bitcoin consists of a network of peers. Every peer has a record of the complete history of all transactions and thus of the balance of every account. A transaction is a file that says, "Bob gives X Bitcoin to Alice" and is signed by Bob's private key. It's basic public key cryptography, nothing special at all. After signed, a transaction is broadcasted in the network, sent from one peer to every other peer. This is basic p2p-technology. Nothing special at all, again.



The transaction is known almost immediately by the whole network. But only after a specific amount of time it gets confirmed. Confirmation is a critical concept in cryptocurrencies. You could say that cryptocurrencies are all about confirmation. As long as a transaction is unconfirmed, it is pending and can be forged. When a transaction is confirmed, it is set in stone. It is no longer forgeable, it can't be reversed, it is part of an immutable record of historical transactions: of the so-called blockchain. Only miners can confirm transactions. This is their job in a cryptocurrency-network. They take transactions, stamp them as legit and spread them in the network. After a transaction is confirmed by a miner, every node has to add it to its database. It has become part of the blockchain. For this job, the miners get rewarded with a token of the cryptocurrency, for example with Bitcoins.

WHAT ARE MINERS DOING?

Principally everybody can be a miner. Since a decentralized network has no authority to delegate this task, a cryptocurrency needs some kind of mechanism to prevent one ruling party from abusing it. Imagine someone creates thousands of peers and spreads forged transactions. The system would break immediately. So, Satoshi set the rule that the miners need to invest some work of their computers to qualify for this task. In fact, they have to find a hash – a product of a cryptographic function – that connects the new block with its predecessor. This is called the Proof-of-Work. In Bitcoin, it is based on the **SHA 256 Hash algorithm**.

REVOLUTIONARY PROPERTIES

Basically, cryptocurrencies are entries about token in decentralized consensus-databases. They are called **CRYPTO currencies** because the consensus-keeping process is secured by strong cryptography. Cryptocurrencies are built on cryptography. They are not secured by people or by trust, but by math. It is more probable that an asteroid falls on your house than that a bitcoin address is compromised. Describing the properties of cryptocurrencies we need to separate between transactional and monetary properties. While most cryptocurrencies share a common set of properties, they are not carved in stone.

TRANSACTIONAL PROPERTIES

- 1.) Irreversible: After confirmation, a transaction can't be reversed. By nobody. And nobody means nobody. Not you, not your bank, not the president of the United States, not Satoshi, not your miner. Nobody. If you send money, you send it. No one can help you, if you sent your funds to a scammer or if a hacker stole them from your computer. There is no safety net.
- 2.) **Pseudonymous:** Neither transactions nor accounts are connected to real world identities. You receive Bitcoins on so-called addresses, which are randomly seeming chains of around 30 characters. While it is usually possible to analyse the transaction flow, it is not necessarily possible to connect the real world identity of users with those addresses.
- 3.) Fast and global: Transaction is propagated nearly instantly in the network and is confirmed in a couple of minutes. Since they happen in a global network of computers they are completely indifferent of your physical location. It doesn't matter if I send Bitcoin to my neighbour or to someone on the other side of the world.
- 4.) Secure: Cryptocurrency funds are locked in a public key cryptography system. Only the owner of the private key can send cryptocurrency. Strong cryptography and the magic of big numbers make it impossible to break this scheme. A Bitcoin address is more secure than Fort Knox.

5.) **Permission less**: You don't have to ask anybody to use cryptocurrency. It's just a software that everybody can download for free. After you installed it, you can receive and send Bitcoins or other cryptocurrencies. No one can prevent you. There is no gatekeeper.

MONETARY PROPERTIES

- 1.) Controlled supply: Most cryptocurrencies limit the supply of the tokens. In Bitcoin, the supply decreases in time and will reach its final number somewhere in around 2140. All cryptocurrencies control the supply of the token by a schedule written in the code. This means the monetary supply of a cryptocurrency in every given moment in the future can roughly be calculated today. There is no surprise.
- 2.) No debt but bearer: The Fiat-money on your bank account is created by debt, and the numbers, you see on your ledger represent nothing but debts. It's a system of IOU. Cryptocurrencies don't represent debts. They just represent themselves. They are money as hard as coins of gold.

To understand the revolutionary impact of cryptocurrencies you need to consider both properties. Bitcoin as a permissionless, irreversible and pseudonymous means of payment is an attack on the control of banks and governments over the monetary transactions of their citizens. You can't hinder someone to use Bitcoin, you can't prohibit someone to accept a payment, you can't undo a transaction.

As money with a limited, controlled supply that is not changeable by a government, a bank or any other central institution, cryptocurrencies attack the scope of the monetary policy. They take away the control central banks take on inflation or deflation by manipulating the monetary supply.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF CRYPTOCURRENCIES

While Bitcoin remains by far the most famous cryptocurrency and most other cryptocurrencies have zero non-speculative impact, investors and users should keep an eye on several cryptocurrencies. Here we present the most popular cryptocurrencies of today.

BITCOIN - The one and only, the first and most famous cryptocurrency. Bitcoin serves as a digital gold standard in the whole cryptocurrency-industry, is used as a global means of payment and is the de-facto currency of cyber-crime like dark net markets or ransomware. After seven years in existence, Bitcoin's price has increased from zero to more than 650 Dollar, and it's transaction volume reached more than 200.000 daily transactions.

ETHEREUM - The brainchild of young crypto-genius Vitalik Buterin has ascended to the second place in the hierarchy of cryptocurrencies. Other than Bitcoin its blockchain does not only validate a set of accounts and balances but of so-called states. This means that Ethereum can not only process transactions but complex contracts and programs. This flexibility makes Ethereum the perfect instrument for "blockchain"-application. But it comes at a cost. After the Hack of the DAO – an Ethereum based smart contract – the developers decided to do a hard fork without consensus, which resulted in the emerge of Ethereum Classic. Beside this, there are several clones of Ethereum, and Ethereum itself is a host of several Token like DigixDAO and Augur. This makes Ethereum more a family of cryptocurrencies than a single currency.

RIPPLE - Maybe the less popular – or most hated – project in the cryptocurrency community is Ripple. While Ripple has a native cryptocurrency – XRP – it is more about a network to process IOUs than the cryptocurrency itself. XRP, the currency, doesn't serve as a medium to store and exchange value, but more as a token to protect the network against spam. Ripple Labs created every XRP-token, the company running the Ripple network, and is distributed by them on will. For this reason, Ripple is often called pre-mined in the community and dissed as no real cryptocurrency, and XRP is not considered as a good store of value. Banks, however, seem to like Ripple. At least they adopt the system with an increasing pace.

LITECOIN - Litecoin was one of the first cryptocurrencies after Bitcoin and tagged as the silver to the digital gold bitcoin. Faster than bitcoin, with a larger amount of token and a new mining algorithm, Litecoin was a real innovation, perfectly tailored to be the smaller brother of bitcoin. "It facilitated the emerge of several other cryptocurrencies which used its codebase but made it, even more, lighter". Examples are Dogecoin or Feathercoin. While Litecoin failed to find a real use case and lost its second place after bitcoin, it is still actively developed and traded and is hoarded as a backup if Bitcoin fails.

MONERO - Monero is the most prominent example of the cryptonite algorithm. This algorithm was invented to add the privacy features Bitcoin is missing. If you use Bitcoin, every transaction is documented in the blockchain and the trail of transactions can be followed. With the introduction of a concept called ring-signatures, the cryptonite algorithm was able to cut through that trail. The first implementation of cryptonite, Bytecoin, was heavily premined and thus rejected by the community. Monero was the first non-premined clone of bytecoin and raised a lot of awareness. Monero's popularity peaked in summer 2016 when some darknetmarkets decided to accept it as a currency. This resulted in a steady increase in the price, while the actual usage of Monero seems to remain disappointingly small.

Besides those, there are hundreds of cryptocurrencies of several families. Most of them are nothing more than attempts to reach investors and quickly make money, but a lot of them promise playgrounds to test innovations in cryptocurrency-technology.

					FIG. 2			
* #	Na	ime	Market Cap	Price	Available Supply	Volume (24h)	% Change (24h)	Price Graph (7d)
1	0	Bitcoin	\$11,382,240,050	\$712.76	15,969,336 BTC	\$67,288,200	-1.60%	munny
2	*	Ethereum	\$904,848,975	\$10.54	85,831,133 ETH	\$4,069,260	-1.21%	mym
3	•\$	Ripple	\$290,446,848	\$0.008121	35,765,131,899 XRP *	\$2,386,420	0.26%	~~~
4	0	Litecoin	\$184,904,214	\$3.82	48,378,029 LTC	\$2,258,970	-1.05%	mmm
5	٠	Monero	\$83,466,495	\$6.27	13,311,446 XMR	\$3,134,490	5.38%	m
6		Ethereum Classic	\$80,817,441	\$0.942637	85,735,486 ETC	\$603,573	2.21%	why
7	Ð	Dash	\$66,519,213	\$9.68	6,874,532 DASH	\$596,632	-0.77%	month
8	٥	Augur	\$52,038,360	\$4.73	11,000,000 REP *	\$396,072	6.38%	Many
9	•	NEM	\$37,322,550	\$0.004147	8,999,999,999 XEM *	\$86,817	4.40%	manhor
10	0	Waves	\$35,727,500	\$0.357275	100,000,000 WAVES *	\$133,650	-3.94%	mmm

CRYPTOCURRENCY BENEFITS AND DRAWBACKS

Cryptocurrencies make it easier to transfer funds between two parties in a transaction; these transfers are facilitated through the use of public and private keys for security purposes. These fund transfers are done with minimal processing fees, allowing users to avoid the steep fees charged by most banks and financial institutions for wire transfers.

Central to the genius of Bitcoin is the block chain it uses to store an online ledger of all the transactions that have ever been conducted using bitcoins, providing a data structure for this ledger that is exposed to a limited threat from hackers and can be copied across all computers running Bitcoin software. Many experts see this block chain as having important uses in technologies, such as online voting and crowdfunding, and major financial institutions such as JP Morgan Chase see potential in cryptocurrencies to lower transaction costs by making payment processing more efficient.

However, because cryptocurrencies are virtual and do not have a central repository, a digital cryptocurrency balance can be wiped out by a computer crash if a backup copy of the holdings does not exist. Since prices are based on supply and demand, the rate at which a cryptocurrency can be exchanged for another currency can fluctuate widely.

Cryptocurrencies are not immune to the threat of hacking. In Bitcoin's short history, the company has been subject to over 40 thefts, including a few that exceeded \$1 million in value. Still, many observers look at cryptocurrencies as hope that a currency can exist that preserves value, facilitates exchange, is more transportable than hard metals, and is outside the influence of central banks and governments.

STATE OF BITCOINS IN 2016

Since the beginning of the year, global economic landscape witnessed a disastrous start with all major stock exchanges around the world taking a nosedive. Some respected financial services firms like UK's RBS have even suggested their investors to sell everything. They have predicted a global recession, worse than 2008 comparing the current scenario with that before the Lehman Brothers crises. The world is in an unprecedented economic crisis with the value of commodities and currencies nose diving. In such gloomy situations, investors will prefer to diversify their portfolio, especially where the future lies. Since the supply of Bitcoins is fixed, its increasing demand has pushed the price of Bitcoin from a few Rs in 2010 to more than Rs 25,000 currently. In the next 5 years as the supply reduces further and more and more people adopt Bitcoins, the price is expected to scale new highs. Generally, when market is going to witness some sort of scarcity or controlled supply in a promising concept – like Bitcoin, the demand starts rising with positive sentiments. That said, markets start making speculative moves and this pushes its price upwards thus building pressure to grab the opportunity and get share in the revolutionary future.

Global Bitcoin trade is skyrocketing touching 35 billion USD per month in December 2015. Billion dollar companies like Dell, Expedia, Overstock, Rakuten (Japan's Flipkart) have started accepting Bitcoins on their websites.

Bitcoin companies raised almost 1 billion USD in VC funding in 2015. All the major banks and credit card companies have got involved with Bitcoins last year. So in just 6 years of its existence, Bitcoin has achieved spectacular success.

In India, Bitcoin adoption has had a slow start but awareness is growing rapidly. Bitcoin trade in India grew exponentially and is at an estimated Rs 500 crores per year. There are around 50,000 Bitcoin wallets in India and around 700-800 Bitcoins are traded every day. RBI, in its recent report on financial stability, has appreciated the strengths of the underlying 'blockchain' technology. India's leading law firm Nishith Desai Associates and the Center for Internet and Society, both have published white papers stating that Bitcoins is legal in India under all existing laws. After early adopters, Bitcoins is attracting a new class of users like professionals, HNIs and all institutions. As the Bitcoin community matures, we shall see an increase in the quality of analysis of Bitcoins price. Users are now using bitcoin for eCommerce, airtime top up, paying bills, buying gift vouchers from popular online retail sites. Bitcoin transactions in India are about Rs 500 crores a year. We believe India will see an explosion in bitcoins over next 2 years. China does a volume of more than Rs 10,000 crores per 'day' (no typos here) India is where U.S and China were in 2013. About 40% of the population across the country does not have bank accounts. Bitcoin wallets could be used in remote areas without the need for brick and mortar banks.

CONCLUSION

The market of cryptocurrencies is fast and wild. Nearly every day new cryptocurrencies emerge, old die, early adopters get wealthy and investors lose money. Every cryptocurrency comes with a promise, mostly a big story to turn the world around. Few survive the first months, and most are pumped and dumped by speculators and live on as zombie coins until the last bag holder loses hope ever to see a return on his investment.

INDIA, A POTENTIAL HOTSPOT

India is a potential hotspot for growth of cryptocurrencies and the community. It seems the cryptocurrencies user community in India has quite a strong base, exceeding 50K in number. But the regulatory body such as RBI seems far from regulating or accepting it. However, this has given an opportunity for the cryptocurrency community in India to expand, develop cryptocurrencies-related businesses in the space, and educate people on the opportunities for economic growth associated with cryptocurrencies.

India is the world's biggest remittance market at more than \$70 billion. The majority of the remittance is small amounts of around \$200. For small amounts especially, users end up paying up to 15% in fees to companies like PayPal, Western Union or to banks through transfer and exchange rate fees. Bitcoin makes it extremely easy to send a small remittance back home. This could save India up to \$7 billion in fees paid to third party and add to country's wealth.

The revolution is already happening. Institutional investors start to buy cryptocurrencies. Banks and governments realize that this invention has the potential to draw their control away. Cryptocurrencies change the world, step by step. You can either stand beside and observe – or you can become part of history in the making.

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