

A study on awareness level of Crypto currencies in Students at J P Nagar, Bangalore with special reference to Bitcoins

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Abstract:

Crypto currencies are digital currencies or assets that are basically designed to work as a medium of exchange something very much like the legal tender cash and its equivalents. Bitcoins is an innovative payment network which is cryptocurrency and first digitalised currency. There is no central authority or bank to regulate it. This concept is of recent origin introduced in the year 2008. As of today, nearly half of the targeted coins i.e. 21 billion coins are released into market. This study is a primary and secondary data-based study to understand the concept of the new terminologies in bitcoins and to analyse the awareness level of the students regarding cryptocurrencies. The researcher has made a sincere effort to understand the meaning, mining process, security aspects, regulation mechanism, benefits and problems associated with bitcoins and to find out the awareness level of students regarding crypto currencies. The data has been collected by administering questionnaire to 50 students and secondary data has been compiled by collecting information from internet, newspapers etc. It can be concluded that the phenomenon is quite new and lacks regulatory measures and that it is declared not legal in India and that the regulatory authorities - RBI, SEBI and Government of India are prepare a framework for safeguarding the interest of gullible and vulnerable investors. As of now it is not a legal currency in India. It can be concluded from the study that the concept is still in nascent stage in India and the awareness level is very less around 20% in students who are the backbone of tomorrows enterprising country.

Key words: crypto currency, bitcoins, mining, regulation, benefits and problems, awareness level and impact on economy

Introduction:

Crypto currencies are virtual currencies that can serve as a medium of exchange. It is a digital currency produced by public network rather than any government and cryptography to make sure that payments are made and receipts are received safely. One of the popular crypto currency is the BITCOIN. The word bitcoin first occurred and was defined in the white paper that was published on 31 October 2008. It is

A compound of the words bit and coin. Bitcoin is a new kind of money that was created in the year 2009. It is an innovative payment network which is cryptocurrency and first digitalised currency. There is no central authority or bank. It is abbreviated as BTC or XBT. It is more like a commodity that is being purchased or invested or traded in unorganised markets. Bitcoins are electronic currency, otherwise known as 'cryptocurrency'. Bitcoins are a form of digital public money that is created by painstaking mathematical computations and policed by millions of computer users called 'miners'. There are no physical bitcoins, only balances kept on a public ledger in the cloud, that – along with all Bitcoin transactions. Bitcoins are electricity converted into long strings of code that have money value.

In 1983 the American cryptographer David Chaum conceived an anonymous cryptographic electronic money called ecash. Later, in 1995, he implemented it through Digi cash. In 1996 the NSA published a paper entitled How to Make a Mint: the Cryptography of Anonymous Electronic Cash, describing a Cryptocurrency system first publishing it in a MIT mailing list and later in 1997, in The American Law Review (Vol. 46, Issue 4)

Bitcoins are completely virtual coins designed to be 'self-contained' for their value, with no need for banks to move and store the money. The current market capitalisation of bitcoins as of Dec 2017 is around USD 20000 crores.

Review of literature:

David Yermack (2014) suggest that no effective way exists to hedge bitcoin against the value of other currencies, and the absence of any swap, forward, or other derivative markets for 17 bitcoin exacerbates this problem. Bitcoin transactions also are risky due to the absence of basic consumer protection, such as the provision of refunds that result from disputes between merchants and customers. While local laws may provide ground rules for resolving such disputes, because a government has no legal way to foreclose and take possession of bitcoins, it ultimately has little ability to step in and enforce its laws.

Satoshi Nakamoto has proposed a system for electronic transactions without relying on trust. He started with the usual framework of coins made from digital signatures, which provides strong control of ownership, but is incomplete without a way to prevent double-spending. To solve this, he proposed a peer-to-peer network using proof-of-work to record a public history of transactions that quickly becomes computationally impractical for an attacker to change if honest nodes control a majority of CPU power.

Need for the study:

Since the concept is new and emerging, the researcher felt the necessity to have basic knowledge about the bitcoins and pass the benefits even to the academic community at large. Also, it is most talked about concept of payment and investment opportunity for few aggressive investors. An attempt is made by the researchers to make the concept known to students by studying the awareness level regarding the same.

scope:

The scope of this paper is to understand the nuances of bitcoins which is of recent origin. Effort has been made by the researchers to investigate the technicalities of bitcoins and the study is restricted to awareness level of students regarding the crypto currency with special reference to bitcoins.

Objective of the study:

1. To understand and present the concept of bitcoins.
2. To understand the mechanism of working of bitcoins.
3. To evaluate and analyse the utility and profitability of investing in bitcoins.
4. To analyse the awareness level of students regarding the bitcoins.

Methodology:

This paper is a theoretical paper and the researchers want to understand and present the concept of bitcoins, procedure for securing it, its utility and its profitability. The data has been collected using secondary source from articles, newspaper, websites like Wikipedia, Investopedia etc.

Also an attempt has been made to analyse the level of awareness among students by administering the questionnaire to 50 respondents

Theoretical Concepts:

Stock of Bitcoins: There are more than two billion dollars' worth of bitcoins in existence. Bitcoins will stop being created when the total number reaches 21 billion coins, which will be sometime around the year 2040. As of 2017, more than half of those bitcoins had been created.

Regulation:

Bitcoin currency is completely unregulated and completely decentralized. There is no national bank or national mint, and there is no depositor insurance coverage. The currency itself is self-contained and uncollateral, meaning that there is no precious metal behind the bitcoins; the value of each bitcoin resides within each bitcoin itself.

Uses:

The following are the places where the bitcoins can be utilised.

- It can be exchanged for other currencies.
- It can be exchanged for Products and services.
- Can be used in hotels and bookings.
- Can also be used as the mode of payment.
- It can also be held as investment.

Process:

- Download the bitcoin wallet.
- Create an account.
- Mining of bitcoins (through solving math problems).
- Buying bitcoins between individual and exchange.
- Then can be used as medium of exchange.

Created by the process of mining, Bitcoins are traded from one personal 'wallet' to another. A wallet is a small personal database that can be stored on computer drive, on smartphone, on tablet, or somewhere in the cloud.

Costs of Bitcoins

There are very small fees to use bitcoins. However, there are no ongoing banking fees with bitcoin and other cryptocurrency because there are no banks involved. The owners of some server nodes will charge one-time transaction fees of a few cents every time money is sent, and online exchanges will similarly charge when bitcoins are cashed in for dollars or euros. Additionally, most mining pools will either charge a small one percent support fee or ask for a small donation from the people who join their pools. While there are nominal costs to use Bitcoin, the transaction fees and mining pool donations are much cheaper than conventional banking or wire transfer fees.

Bitcoin Production Facts

Bitcoins can be 'minted' by anyone in the general public who has a strong computer. Bitcoins are made through a very interesting self-limiting system called cryptocurrency mining and the people who mine these coins are called miners.

It is self-limiting because only 21 million total bitcoins will ever be allowed to exist, with approximately 11 million of those Bitcoins already mined and in current circulation. Bitcoin mining involves commanding home computer to work around the clock to solve 'proof-of-work' problems (computationally-intensive math problems). Each bitcoin math problem has a set of possible 64-digit solutions. For a single personal computer mining bitcoin, there is an earnings of 50 cents to 75 cents USD per day net of electricity costs. For a very large-scale miner who runs 36 powerful computers simultaneously, that person can earn up to \$500 USD per day, after costs.

It is not actually suitable for a small-scale miner with a single consumer-grade computer, as it is likely that people may spend more in electricity that they will earn mining bitcoins. Bitcoin mining is only profitable if run on multiple computers and join a group of miners to combine the hardware power. This very prohibitive hardware requirement is one of the biggest security measures that deters people from trying to manipulate the Bitcoin system.

Bitcoin Security

They are as secure as possessing physical precious metal. Just like holding a bag of gold coins, a person who takes reasonable precautions will be safe from having their personal cache stolen by hackers. The offline method is more hacker-resistant and absolutely recommended for anyone who owns more than 1 or 2 bitcoins.

More than hacker intrusion, the real loss risk with bitcoins revolves around not backing up the wallet with a failsafe copy. There is an important.dat file that is updated every time the bitcoin is received or sent, so this .dat file should be copied and stored as a duplicate backup every day bitcoin transactions are done.

Analysis:

The researcher has analysed the primary data collected from the students using just percentage analysis and have arrived at the following findings. The findings section is divided into two namely-findings from the primary data and findings from the secondary data.

Findings:

The researcher has the following findings from the primary data

- 1) It has been found that 88% of the respondents are not aware of Crypto currencies which accounts for more than four-fifths of the respondents.
- 2) Nearly three fourths feel that it is a digital currency which has been guessed correctly based on the options given.
- 3) Almost 41% said they are not much aware of the term bitcoin and equal number said that they are hearing it for the first time. Only 15% are familiar with the term bitcoins.
- 4) Of the people who are aware, 20% got the awareness from internet and all others from other sources like friends, relatives and teachers etc.
- 5) As the awareness level was very low many of them could not recognise its benefit to the economy. Only 35% felt that it may be beneficial to the economy.
- 6) Around 68% of the students felt neutrally and said that bitcoins can become a potential investment opportunity in the near future.
- 7) As the awareness and knowledge about bitcoins was limited in students, 63% did not have an answer to the legality of the bitcoins and 46% were unaware of its ban in India .
- 8) Majority of them considered it as highly risky and expressed a neutral opinion regarding any potential investment by them in future.

The researchers, through the secondary data, found that there is a lot of controversy around bitcoins which include the following

- 1) Its difficult to understand and requires sound knowledge of computers and computer terminologies.
- 2) Bitcoins are not created by any central bank, nor regulated by any government.
- 3) There is a possibility of fraudulent activities due to lack of any regulators.
- 4) There is possibility of security threat and huge financial risks.
- 5) They completely bypass banks as it is transferred through peer to peer network between individuals.
- 6) They are irreversible and do not carry the benefit of being insured which is available in conventional payments.
- 7) Since it is cryptocurrency, there is a possibility of data being hacked.
- 8) Also, there is a possibility of exploitation of the vulnerable investing community due to ever surging rise in prices

Bitcoin-Indian and World Scenario:

The bitcoin price in India has crossed Rs 11 lakhs. The monetary authority in India has earlier cautioned the users about the virtual currency. The IT authorities have conducted surveys on brokers of bitcoins across the country to find the tax evasion if any. The RBI, SEBI and government of India are planning to prepare a framework for safeguarding the interest of gullible and vulnerable investors.

China has also clamped down the bitcoin operations and asked its two major platforms namely BTCC and OKCoin, to stop all trading operations. Bitcoin hit another all-time peak on 12th December 2017, two days after the launch of the first-ever bitcoin futures on a US exchange and ahead of the start of another futures contract looking forward, as investors grew optimistic that the \$20,000-mark is within reach. Extraordinary surge in Bitcoin prices has caught the fancy of the public.

Conclusion:

It can be concluded that Bitcoins are a new phenomenon and requires more understanding of the concept and requires knowledge of the computers. Also the awareness level among students regarding crypto currencies and especially bitcoins is very low and needs to be improved a lot. Though it has many advantages, country like ours need more time to understand the flow of the phenomenon as the public find their comfort in the areas they are aware off. Business houses are accepting bitcoins which includes Microsoft and tiger direct and many airlines are using it and many professionals are also providing services in exchange for Bitcoin. Bitcoin, a virtual currency, is not regulated in India and its circulation has been a cause of concern among central bankers the world over. As of now Bitcoins are not recognised as legal currency in India and that a strict framework is required for its regulation and control.

Limitation:

The study is partly based on secondary data and hence the data suffers from all the limitations of secondary data like lack of control over the quality of data, inappropriateness of data, reliability of information etc. Also, the researcher has made an attempt to study only the awareness aspect among students. As the data is collected from 50 respondents only, the results cannot be generalised to entire population.

Scope for Further research:

There is a scope to conduct primary research on bitcoins to find out utility and profitability among other respondent groups and the legality of the same.

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