

Smart Grid Technology for Social Acceptance and Urban Energy Efficiency

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Abstract

The rapid urbanization and growing energy demands in contemporary cities present a dual challenge of achieving energy efficiency while fostering social inclusivity. Smart grid technology emerges as a pivotal solution, offering enhanced energy management through real time data exchange, distributed energy resources, and demand-side management. This study, titled "Smart Grid Technology for Social Acceptance and Urban Energy Efficiency" explores the intersection of technological innovation, social inclusion, and sustainable urban planning. The study emphasizes the critical role of social acceptance in ensuring the successful adoption of smart grid technologies. Through a socio-economic lens, it investigates how equitable access, stakeholder engagement, and tailored policy frameworks can facilitate widespread acceptance across diverse urban populations. The research contextualizes these findings in the Indian urban landscape, where disparities in energy access and affordability remain significant barriers to inclusivity. Drawing on comparative case studies from the UK, Europe, Hong Kong, Denmark, and New York, this study highlights best practices and lessons learned in integrating smart grid solutions. These global insights provide a foundation for developing culturally and economically adaptable strategies for India. The research further delves into the potential of smart grids to support decentralized renewable energy systems, promote energy equity, and enhance resilience in urban infrastructure. The findings underscore the importance of aligning technological advancements with socio-economic realities, ensuring that smart grid systems not only advance energy sustainability but also foster inclusive urban development.

Keywords: Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI), Home Area Network (HAN), Wide Area Network (WAN)

Introduction

As urbanization and climate change accelerate, sustainable and inclusive energy systems are vital. Smart grid technology offers a transformative solution for enhancing energy efficiency, resilience and sustainability in urban areas. By integrating real time monitoring, data driven decision making, and renewable energy sources, smart grids enable a bidirectional flow of energy and information. Key components like smart meters, sensors and distributed energy resources optimize energy production, transmission and consumption while reducing energy losses. Smart grids also empower consumers with insights into energy usage and support demand side management practices. Their potential extends beyond technology, fostering social equity and decentralized energy access, especially in socio-economically diverse regions like India. This research emphasizes the alignment of technological innovation with social

inclusion, aiming to create resilient and equitable urban energy systems. By mitigating climate change and supporting sustainable urban development, smart grids play a crucial role in the global energy transition.

Need

The rising energy demand in rapidly urbanizing regions, coupled with climate change challenges, calls for innovative solutions that balance efficiency, equity and sustainability. Smart grid technology offers advanced energy management, renewable integration and grid resilience. However, successful implementation in diverse and fragmented contexts like India depends on social acceptance and inclusivity. India's urban centers face unequal energy access, affordability issues and aging infrastructure. Smart grids can address these challenges through decentralized energy systems and efficient resource allocation, but barriers like lack of awareness, affordability gaps and technological skepticism among marginalized populations can hinder adoption. The study explores how smart grids can foster social acceptance while enhancing urban energy efficiency. The research highlights the socio-economic dimensions of energy transitions and supports sustainable, equitable urban development.

Smart Grids

Smart grids are highly developed electrical distribution networks that make use of modern communication, sensors and control technologies in order to optimize and manage power generation, distribution and consumption. Additionally, it allows the utility and the customers to communicate with one another in real time, which results in an improvement in the analysis and control of power flows.

Key features of smart grid include:

- 1. Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI):** Smart meters provide detailed data on energy use. Consequently, this opens the way for accurate billing, remote reading and real time monitoring of power use.
- 2. Automated Control and Monitoring Systems:** Smart grids use advanced sensors, automation and monitoring to track electricity generation, transmission and distribution in real time. This enables grid operators to respond efficiently to power demand, voltage changes and potential failures, enhancing system reliability and efficiency.
- 3. Distributed Energy Resources (DERs):** Smart networks integrate distributed energy resources like EVs, storage, solar and wind. They draw power when needed and feed surplus back, enabling decentralized generation and improving management of intermittent renewables for a more efficient and resilient grid.
- 4. Demand Response and Energy Efficiency:** Smart grids empower consumers to manage energy use with real time pricing data and automated feedback. This enables demand response programs, where users reduce consumption during peak hours, helping prevent outages and maintain grid stability.
- 5. Grid Resilience and Self-Healing:** Smart grids enhance resilience with advanced monitoring and control, quickly identifying faults, isolating affected area, and redirecting power. This self-healing capability reduces downtime and improves overall grid reliability.
- 6. Improved Integration of Renewable Energy:** Smart grids simplify renewable energy integration by enabling real time power flow monitoring and control. They optimize supply, enhance reliability, reduce waste and regulate intermittency, fostering a more sustainable and efficient electrical infrastructure.

Evolution of smart grids

Smart grids replace traditional unidirectional power systems with two way communication, data analytics and decentralized energy sources. They enhance efficiency, agility and sustainability in electricity production, distribution and consumption to meet the growing demand for clean, efficient energy worldwide.

Traditional electricity grids, over a century old, rely on centralized power plants using fossil fuels, hydro or nuclear energy. They have key limitations:

- 1 One way energy flow
- 2 Inefficiency in long distance transmission
- 3 Limited monitoring
- 4 High environmental impact
- 5 Inflexible
- 6 Costly maintenance

Lacking smart capabilities, they struggle with integrating renewable energy sources, responding to outages and adapting to modern energy demands, making them less efficient and sustainable compared to smart grid. Traditional power systems rely on centralized fossil fuels based generation, facing inefficiencies and environmental harm. The rise of renewables like solar and wind promotes decentralized, bidirectional energy flow, reducing ecological impact and enhancing grid flexibility. Smart grids integrate digital technologies and communication networks for real time monitoring, improving efficiency, reliability and sustainability. Energy storage solutions further stabilize the grid by managing intermittent renewables. Digitalization, through IoT sensors and data analytics, enhances energy optimization, equipment diagnostics and demand response. These advancements create a more resilient, adaptive and sustainable energy infrastructure, and transform power systems to meet modern energy demands effectively. Smart grids enhance energy management by enabling real time forecasting, optimal dispatch and load control. Integrate with smart meters, they facilitate bidirectional communication between power plants and consumers, optimizing power distribution and reducing losses. Machine learning improve fault detection, preventing failures and enhancing reliability. By continuously monitoring supply and demand, smart grids mitigate power outages and ensure system stability. These advancements make electrical systems more efficient, sustainable and resilient.

Literature

Various types of smart grid techniques

The smart grid modernizes the electric power system with advanced communication, automation and real time data management. It integrates distributed and centralized generation, enhances efficiency, and improves reliability through demand side management and distributed generation. Smart meters connect household appliances via Home Area Network (HAN), utilizing technologies like Zigbee and WiMAX. They regulate power, transmit data via Wide Area Network (WAN) and provide billing and emergency notifications, optimizing electricity distribution.

1. **Communication techniques:** Smart grids utilize various communication technique for efficient data transfer. Zigbee, a low power technology based on IEEE 802.15.4, enables automation meter reading and home automation. Wireless mesh networks use self-reliant nodes for reliable, decentralized communication. GSM facilitates data and voice transfer via cellular networks. Cellular communication, including 2G, 3G, WiMAX and LTE connects smart meters to utility data centers,

ensuring widespread deployment and reliable data sharing over large areas.

2. **Data mining techniques:** Expert systems automate short term load prediction with minimal human input. Regression techniques relate load models to factors like weather but struggle with non-stationary data. Support vector machines outperform auto regression models in forecasting. Time series techniques analyze historical data for predictions, while Fuzzy logic maps inputs to outputs, managing transformer loads with qualitative ranges but requiring defuzzification for precision.
3. **Consumption prediction techniques:** ARIMA predicts future values using past time series data, ideal for real time electricity load forecasting. The NYISO model selects the five highest load days from the past ten to assess energy use. CASCE follows a similar approach but includes a morning adjustment for accuracy. CAISO calculates baselines using the last three days from ten selected days, incorporating morning adjustments for improved performance.
4. **Privacy preserving techniques:** Aggregation methods reduce data flow between AMI systems and utilities, using Privacy Preserving Nodes (PPNs), Zero Knowledge (ZK) protocols and homographic encryption for confidentiality. Without aggregation, a trusted third part manages data, distinguishing between HFID and LFID data, using blind signatures for verification. User centric privacy techniques ensure only smart meters and control centers access real readings, balancing security and efficiency.

Economic, Social and Environmental benefits

Smart grids modernize outdated power systems by enhancing efficiency, reliability and sustainability. They enable two way communication, optimize energy distribution and integrate renewable sources. Economically, they reduce outages and costs through smart metering. Socially, they empower users with demand side management and market participation. Environmentally, they cut emissions and support clean energy. Installing smart grids fosters economic growth, educates stakeholders, and ensures a sustainable energy future, highlighting the interconnected benefits across economic, social and environmental dimensions.

1. **Economic benefits:** Smart grids enhance electricity efficiency, reduce losses and lower costs for stakeholders. They enable real time pricing, easing peak demand and improving reliability. Large scale networks in North America, Asia and Europe benefit from reduced energy waste and cost savings. According to EPRI, smart grids transform the industry by improving financial flows, supporting investments and increasing overall economic and technological efficiency.
2. **Social benefits:** smart grids enhance social aspects through Demand Side Management (DSM), enabling flexible energy use and remote appliance control. They provide environmental benefits by offering real time consumption feedback, encouraging energy reductions of 4% to 15%. Adoption depends on public attitudes, workforce skills and education. Raising awareness fosters acceptance, benefits consumers and providers, and support economic growth and effective smart grid integration.
3. **Environmental benefits:** Smart grids improve air quality, health, and energy efficiency while lowering electricity costs and CO₂ emissions by 58% from 2005 levels. They support economic growth, energy security, and sustainability by integrating renewable sources and reducing fossil fuel dependence. Despite challenges, they enhance consumer engagement and market participation, fostering a greener, more efficient energy system that balances economic, social, and environmental benefits.

Enhancing efficiency and renewable with smart grids

A competitive electricity market and regulatory reforms can drive investment in advanced technologies, improving flexibility and reducing costs. Smart grid policies, including dynamic pricing a consumer

protection, should consider behavioral studies. Collaboration on standards shared experiences and best practices can accelerate deployment, especially in developing countries with expanding electricity infrastructure. Effective planning ensures optimal resource utilization and peak demand reduction.

1. **Economic potential for expanding energy efficiency** : energy efficiency programs, crucial for emerging economies, enhance consumer welfare by reducing energy use while maintaining service levels. Unlike energy conservation, efficiency focuses on delivering the same output with less energy, such as CFLs replacing incandescent bulbs. Fuel switching and efficiency improvements can lower costs but may increase consumption due to rebound effects, typically reducing anticipated savings by 10-30%.
2. **Economic potential for expanding distributed renewable resources**: The US energy information administration projects non hydro renewable generation to triple by 2040, though its market share will only double to 12% due to rising demand. Solar PV will see major growth, benefiting from smart grids. Natural gas will expand, reducing coal reliance but raising uncertainties about renewables future. Economic and policy factors will shape this transition, with a balanced energy mix—natural gas, nuclear, renewables and efficiency offering the best path forward.

Smart grid customers' acceptance and engagement

Smart grids drive major social change by optimizing energy consumption and integrating diverse energy resources. Consumer acceptance is crucial for successful deployment, requiring effective communication from utilities and policymakers. SGs enhance grid efficiency enable demand management and promote interactive energy use. Informed consumers modify energy behaviors through choices, incentives and automation marking a shift towards integrated technology in energy management and transforming the power industry worldwide.

1. Consumer as one of the domain

Smart Customer: the set of technologies which empower consumers to monitor and control their energy consumption

Smart Utility: the utility which improves its operational efficiency and maximizes revenue realization through implementing monitoring, control and pricing as well as providing its customers with innovative energy management programs

Smart Market: It is a market structure allowing the integration of the advanced technologies, decision logics, and information at the other two pillars and creating an economically efficient solution in this futuristic dynamic paradigm

2. Customer engagement in smart grid

Utility consumer relationships are shifting from one sided supply models to partnerships in energy management. Smart grid adoption requires behavioral change, promoting efficiency and sustainability. Consumer engagement depends on habitual and one shot decisions, influenced by enablers and barriers. The innovation decision process knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation and confirmation determines adoption rates, shaping how quickly SG technologies integrate into society.

Research agenda on social acceptance of smart grid

Smart grids support distributed generation (DG) from renewables but often neglect social acceptance, which is crucial for deployment. Many technical studies assume actor participation without addressing institutional barriers. Institutional factors shape smart grid adoption, requiring a Common Pool Resources approach. Self-governance, cooperative micro grids, and distributed storage (e.g., EVs) enhance

renewable integration, but flexible regulations are essential to enable widespread adoption and optimize energy resource management.

1. Consumer assets

In smart grids, the term "user" or "consumer" includes households, enterprises, and groups that may also act as energy producers through distributed generation (DG). As prosumers, users control both energy and data flows, making their behavior and equipment essential to smart grid design. This shift fosters a dynamic energy system where consumers actively manage consumption and contribute to energy stability. Smart appliances, home energy management systems, and demand response programs empower users to optimize energy use, reduce costs, and enhance grid efficiency. Cooperative microgrids further facilitate decentralized energy sharing, improving resilience and sustainability. Effective policies and regulations are crucial for integrating consumers into smart grids, ensuring reliability while promoting active participation. By enabling a more interactive and flexible energy system, smart grids enhance energy security, accelerate the adoption of renewable sources, and improve overall grid performance. Consumer engagement is a driving force behind the success of smart grids, shaping the future of sustainable energy.

2. Consumer control

A critical question in smart grids is whether utilities will grant consumers limited or full control over their energy load and generation. With advanced metering, consumers managing their energy use and production become active participants, especially within micro grids. Full consumer control could revolutionize the power supply but faces institutional and regulatory resistance.

In micro grids, control extends beyond energy consumption to managing distributed generation (DG) units and storage systems. However, storage solutions like batteries remain costly, limiting widespread adoption. Flexible demand, linked to devices with inherent storage capacity—such as cooling systems, electric boilers, and electric vehicles—plays a crucial role in demand-side management.

By enabling consumers to adjust their energy usage in response to real-time conditions, smart grids enhance grid stability, reduce costs, and improve energy efficiency. Achieving a balance between consumer autonomy and regulatory frameworks is essential for the success of smart grids, ensuring resilience, sustainability, and greater integration of renewable energy sources

Case Study Review

Socially smart grids, United Kingdom

This explores the social smartness of smart grids by connecting technical and social analyses through a multi criteria appraisal in the UK. Findings highlight key criteria for socially and technically smart grids, advocating for distributed, inclusive and democratic energy solutions through responsible innovation and stakeholder engagement.

- 1 Societal engagement with smart grids:** Social science research identifies three key aspects of societal engagement with smart grids: Sociotechnical imaginaries, Public perceptions, User engagement. Studies reveal gaps between states led vision and public values, highlighting concerns about trust, equity and data security. Research on smart grid trials shows mismatches between design and real world use, calling for broader, citizen driven decision making to create socially responsive smart grids.
- 2 Methods and Materials:** The Multi-Criteria Mapping method appraises smart grid futures by fostering inclusivity, transparency and diverse perspectives. It involves generating options, participant led appraisal and data analysis, balancing technical and social dimensions while incorporating expert and public input for comprehensive policy evaluation. Framing and option development: This expands

smart grids research by integrating social, political and technical factors, exploring diverse future scenarios. It identifies key actors, engagement type's ad scales creating eight appraisal options to represent different governance and participation models, balancing technical feasibility with inclusive decision making. Interviews and analysis: Participants received study materials before two hour interviews, where they selected up to six smart grid options for appraisal. They define criteria and scored options (0-100) with optimistic and pessimistic ratings. In total, 141 criteria were developed and later grouped by similarity.

Consumer engagement, Europe

This analyses European smart grid projects, highlighting increased consumer engagement focus, public funding importance and residential sector emphasis. Projects aim to understand consumer behavior and empower active energy users. Key challenges include trust building and targeted engagement strategies, with growing interest in innovative consumer centric approaches.

- 1 Social acceptance:** The shift to smart grids requires active consumer participation for efficiency and security, with the EU emphasizing engagement and education. A review of 219 European projects shows limited focus on consumer involvement, highlighting the need for greater attention. Findings reveal key challenges and underscore the importance of building consumer confidence for smart grid success.
- 2 Methods and Materials:** Of 219 European smart grid projects, 55 focused on consumer engagement. Analysis of 38 projects highlights efforts to understand behavior, promote active participation, and build trust revealing key trends, achievements and challenges in consumer involvement.
- 3 Objectives and activities:** Observing and understanding the consumer, Understanding consumer behavior is key to smart grid engagement strategies. Project analyze responses to regulatory, technical and market changes, using tools like AMI and consumer interfaces to assess energy use, pricing reactions, and EV charging patterns. Studies, such as Eco grid EU and Mini Berlin, explore demand response and grid balancing. Insights help segment consumers by values and motivations though many remain in research rather than active engagement. Market research informs targeted strategies, but real world behavior, especially collective household decisions, remains complex and unpredictable. Engaging the consumer, Successful consumer engagement in smart grids involves raising awareness through education and tailored strategies for behavior change. Information is shared via brochures, consultancy, and fairs but infrastructure alone is insufficient. While 70% of projects provide information, only 40% use active social marketing, with a growing focus on consumer centric approaches.

Consumer perceptions, Hong Kong

Smart grids enhance sustainability by integrating IT for dynamic, consumer responsive energy management. A Hong Kong study highlights the need for demand side strategies, showing consumer's interest in smarter billing, energy choices and new technologies. Findings emphasize informed, price sensitive engagement to drive sustainable urban energy policies.

- 1 Consumers and smart grids:** Global smart grid adoption varies, with strong consumer engagement in Ontario but mixed response elsewhere. The US emphasizes smart metering and dynamic pricing, while Hong Kong reliant on fossil fuels sees slow progress. Demand side measures gained traction post-Fukushima, but regulatory barriers limit renewables. Low residential participation in energy programs highlights challenges in consumer engagement.

2 Methods and Materials: Assessed Hong Kong resident's views on smart grid adoption through a telephone survey with 505 respondents (69% response rate). To reduce bias phone numbers were randomly selected, and data were adjusted to match demographics. Questions covered electricity supply, system performance and smart grid components avoiding technical jargon. University of Hong Kong ensured survey reliability through pilot testing and analysis.

Consumer acceptance, Denmark

Smart grids adoption depends on interactions between human and non-human actors, highlighting the interdependence of technical and social dimensions. Denmark's experience provides key insights into consumer involvement in smart grids development, reinforcing its leadership in advancing a flexible and intelligent electricity grid.

- 1 Smart grid consumers:** Denmark leads in renewable energy integration, with 93% of wind power on distribution grids. This requires active demand management and consumer involvement to stabilize volatility. Consumer flexibility helps reduce grid expansion costs and supports the transmission system operator in balancing renewables energy variability for greater efficiency and stability.
- 2 Consumer behavior on smart grid:** Smart grid adoption depends on both technology and behavioral change, as energy habits are shaped by social norms and economic factors. Established consumption patterns resist change, requiring tailored frameworks, especially for industrial consumers that integrate technical and behavioral insights to bridge the gap between readiness and acceptance.
- 3 Methods and Materials:** Consumer acceptance and participation in smart grids, showing that appliances like refrigerators offer high flexibility in electricity use. Real time pricing encourages users to shift consumption to off peak hours, supporting demand response programs. This adaptability enhances smart grid efficiency, optimizing energy distribution reducing costs and contributing to a more balanced and sustainable energy systems. Both human and non-human factors influence smart grids adoption. Consumers often lack awareness, but engagement depends on needs, beliefs and trust in impartial companies. Limited finances and knowledge hinder participation, while regulations primarily effect suppliers. Building trust through active feedback fosters involvement, reducing resistance. Key actors like demand response facilitators, must actively engage consumers. Aligning shared interests strengthens networks, supporting smart grid adoption and technological standards. Customers focus is crucial in smart grid adoption, enhancing core processes but having limited influence on decisions. Consumers prioritize ROI, ease of use and payback over savings. Co-creation and interactive solutions drive engagement, while active energy management fosters integration. Key factors include contextual awareness, pricing, flexibility and liberalization. Direct feedback aids behavior change, though uncertainties may hinder adoption, while technology refinement drives future innovations.

Social acceptance, New York

Achieving net zero emissions with grid reliability requires smart grids for demand side management. A two wave survey (2016, 2019) on New York's smart grid initiative showed stable acceptance in two areas but declining in others, highlighting evolving social acceptance and challenging optimistic views on user centered smart grids. Longitudinal studies are needed for deeper insights.

- 1 Social acceptance and the smart grid:** Smart grids use digital technology for two way communication enabling real time energy management and cost optimization. They support renewable integration and prosumer participation via micro grids. Social acceptance, influenced by fairness,

climate awareness and price sensitivity, is crucial but often studied short term. Long term research is needed to understand how acceptance evolves through ongoing consumer technology interactions.

- 2 Methods and Materials:** Study context, from 2017 to 2019, Ithaca, New York, piloted NYSEG's "Energy Smart Community" (ESC), installing smart meters in 12,000 homes. ESC promoted time-of-use pricing, detailed energy data, and smart home incentives. Partnering with Cornell and local groups, NYSEG launched an extensive outreach campaign, including direct mail and peer-to-peer engagement via the "Energy Navigator" program. Survey data, A four-wave mail survey (2018) of 2,000 homeowners in Ithaca's target area had a 30.5% response rate (609 participants), with a follow-up phone survey confirming representativeness. A second survey (2020) had a 35.6% response rate (533 participants, 219 original). Both measured social acceptance of smart grid technologies, considering procedural justice, climate perceptions, price sensitivity, and solar energy support. Outcome, the study examined social acceptance of smart grids over time through two surveys in upstate New York, with 609 and 533 respondents, 219 participating in both. Smart meter acceptance remained stable (3.37 to 3.31), but support for other smart grid elements declined. Over time, procedural fairness became crucial for smart meter acceptance, while price consciousness influenced time-variant pricing and energy tools, challenging assumptions about sustained consumer acceptance.

Conclusion

The adoption of smart grid technology presents a transformative opportunity to enhance urban energy efficiency while fostering social inclusivity. This research underscores that technological advancements alone are insufficient, social acceptance and equitable access must be prioritized to ensure widespread adoption. Case studies from the UK, Europe, Hong Kong, Denmark and New York reveal that successful smart grid integration requires proactive stakeholder engagement, tailored policy frameworks and trust building measures. In the Indian context, addressing affordability, awareness and infrastructure disparities is crucial to overcoming barriers to adoption. Smart grids have the potential to not only optimize energy consumption but also democratize access to clean and sustainable power. By aligning innovation with socio economic realities, policymakers and urban planners can create resilient, equitable and energy efficient urban environments. Ultimately, the success of smart grid technology hinges on a holistic approach that integrates technical, economic and social dimensions, ensuring that the benefits of a modernized energy systems are accessible to all.

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