Chapter 4

Effectiveness of E–Government in Delivering Services

Ronnie Park
Nova Southeastern University, USA

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the effectiveness of delivering e-government services in terms of how citizens value the service and how e-government has changed citizens’ expectation of contacting government by digital means. This chapter articulates the following issues as they are related to the effectiveness of e-government services. It starts by addressing e-government strategies in developing and developed countries throughout the world, then discusses the inherited nature of e-government from e-commerce and the differences between them. Next, it considers various barriers to the success of e-government and how to overcome those barriers. The chapter concludes with a list of the value items collected from an empirical study, and explores how they might improve e-government’s effectiveness in delivering services.

INTRODUCTION

Government agencies have been exploring better ways to provide new and improved services to the public through the use of emerging technology. In the 1990s, the proliferation of network-based Information Systems (IS) represented a turning point in the strategic direction for government agencies to achieve their objectives through its use (Kalakota & Whinton, 1997; West, 2004). Given that more government entities invest heavily in e-government, e-government has become an evolving and important research area (Chen, Chen, Huang, & Ching, 2006).

The success of e-government depends on how governments entice citizens to use its online services (Dwivedi, Weerakkody, & Williams, 2009). Citizens are likely to use these services if they feel that they provide better value than conventional government services, as values are the basic principles that guide actions and preferences (Keeney, 1992). E-government values are largely derived
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from enhanced information dissemination, expended use of transactions online, and increased citizen participation. Values might be economic, personal, or social. Economic value could include cost and time savings; personal value could mean convenience or security; social value could be protection of the environment or participation in decision making. A common value is economic. Largely, citizens would like the benefits of using e-government services to be reflected in terms of cost and time savings (Wang & Liao, 2008). E-government value is an important construct for academics and professionals studying e-government (Chang, Torkzadeh, & Dhillon, 2004).

While e-government and e-commerce share technical and functional characteristics, the differences are mainly in the inherited nature of public administration and governance. E-government links people not just to each other and the e-commerce marketplace, but also to the public marketplace of ideas, debate, priorities, initiatives, innovation, services, transactions, and results (Council for Excellence in Government, 2001). It is profoundly changing the way society communicates, works, and learns (Council for Excellence in Government, 2001). To explore how citizens value e-government service and how it changed citizens’ expectations of government, a case study of service users was conducted. The study resulted in a list of 38 value items that would contribute to the effectiveness of delivering e-government services. The objectives of this chapter are to increase the reader’s knowledge, and to propose areas for future research into e-government phenomena.

BACKGROUND

E-government is narrowly defined as “the delivery of government information and services online thorough the Internet or other digital means” (West, 2004, p.2). The principles of e-government include building services around citizens’ choices, improving accessibility to government and its services, facilitating social inclusion, presenting information responsibly, and using government resources effectively and efficiently (Office of the e-Envoy, 2008). The e-government framework can be characterized as (a) transformation areas – internal and external; (b) users, customers, actors and their interrelationships – citizens, businesses, government organizations, employees; (c) e-government application domains – e-services, e-democracy, e-administration (Ndou, 2004).

E-government can be viewed as (a) transformation of the business of government, i.e., improving service and renewing administrative processes, and (b) transformation of governance itself, i.e., re-examining the functioning of administrative practices and processes (Aichholzer & Schmitzer, 2000). E-government can be thought of as a conceptual lens through which the changing role and shape of government in the 21st century can be examined. This era is expected to be more digital, knowledge-intensive, driven by innovation, and interdependent than any previous time (Roy, 2003).

As e-government is pervasive at all levels of government, becoming a global phenomenon (Schuppan, 2009), strategies vary because each vision is driven by its own unique set of political, social, economic, and environmental factors. A key factor driving the achievement of any e-government program is the vision of e-government, articulated and adopted by a government administration (Grant & Chau, 2005).

The mission that emanates from these e-government visions varies by different countries. Some countries focus on service delivery while others are weighted towards transparency or economic development by administrative reform (Ma, Chung, & Thorson, 2005). The following examples illustrate various e-government strategies for the different regions of the world (Grant & Chau, 2005; U.S. Office of Management and Budget, 2002; Ma et al, 2005; National Computerization Agency, 2002; Ciborra & Navarra, 2005).
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