E-Mail as an Official Communication Tool in Bahrain:
Individual and Public Organization Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

This research studies the acceptance of e-mail for communicating official messages among citizens in Bahrain. It also examines the relationships between citizens’ age, educational level, gender, occupation, and organization type and e-mail as an official communication channel. A descriptive and quantitative research approach was applied to test hypotheses pertaining to the idea of using e-mail as an official and reliable communication tool. The findings show that e-mail can be used as an official and reliable tool to communicate information between citizens and the government in Bahrain. The findings also show that e-mail will be more widely used when specific security requirements are met. Thus, reliable electronic mail can provide an advanced means of communication and enhance the recently developed e-Government program. This study contributes to existing research by proposing new construct for examining the acceptance of email as an official communication tool.

Keywords: Bahrain, Communication, E-Government, E-Mail, Information Technology

INTRODUCTION

Through the years, the means of communication have evolved and now include advanced electronic methods. One of the first means of Internet communication was e-mail (Connell & Galbraith, 1982).

The government of Bahrain is seeking to develop a strong Internet-based electronic government program and a number of successful steps have already been taken in this direction (Shehadi, 2011). As part of this program, major projects such as the Government Data Network (GDN), smart cards, and an electronic government portal have been launched to give the Kingdom of Bahrain a position of leadership in electronic government.

Although the Kingdom of Bahrain has witnessed a number of achievements in the electronic government program, it must optimally...
utilize the infrastructure that has been created and move toward the next level of electronic government, which is the delivery of the government’s services to its citizens (Southard & Siau 2004; Chung & Paynter, 2002; Christopher & Reddick, 2005; Ramona, et al., 2008). One major step that the government of Bahrain must take is to develop lines of communication with Bahraini citizens and organizations.

Official communication in Bahrain is done through traditional means: sending official letters and documents by post and occasionally contacting citizens by telephone or face-to-face. In the current postal system used in Bahrain, the sender signs and stamps the message, which must be delivered by the postal worker. The receiver acknowledges receipt of the message.

In light of the modern e-application revolution, the government of Bahrain must replace its traditional means of communication with more advanced and reliable electronic methods. Electronic mail (e-mail) is the best-known and most popular network-based application (Ramona, et al., 2008). It is a way to communicate quickly and economically. Moreover, using e-mail for official communication has become rather popular.

Adopting e-mail as an official means of communication is a critical topic not only in Bahrain, but globally. This topic is significant because of the wide use of e-applications and rapid improvements in the e-Government field. It is hoped that this study’s results will provide a clear and comprehensive picture of the feasibility of using e-mail officially in Bahrain. This study may provide some small but valuable contribution to scientific research, particularly concerning the e-Government field, and it can be considered as the trigger for a revolution in official communication in Bahrain. The following concerns are considered the reasons that motivate the use of electronic communication and highlight the need for an official e-mail exchange system in Bahrain:

1. The implementation of the e-Government portal in Bahrain;
2. The need for a means of fast, reliable, and convenient electronic communication that also can be integrated into emerging e-applications;
3. The need for a new mailing system that can replace the current postal system and support official communication in Bahrain securely and efficiently.

As in any new revolution, adopting e-mail for official communication may have both positive and negative responses; thus, it is important to analyze these responses and determine the level of support for this idea. Communication with both citizens and organizations involves the transmission of sensitive and legally binding information. Consequently, electronic communication must be extremely secure. Although an infrastructure has been developed for the commercial use of e-mails, this infrastructure is not sufficiently secure for the exchange of sensitive, legal, and private official communications. As a result, there is a need to develop a new e-mail exchange system that fulfills security and legal requirements. Thus, the main objective of this study is to investigate the feasibility of using e-mail as an official communications tool in Bahrain. In addition to the study’s main objective, the results of a number of sub-objectives are presented as well; these sub-objectives are described below:

1. To provide a detailed study about e-mail technology, including its advantages and disadvantages as well as a review of case studies that have used e-mail for official communication;
2. To measure the willingness of Bahraini citizens and organizations to use e-mail as an official means of communication;
3. To study the legal issues of using e-mail for official government communication in Bahrain.

The use of e-mail by the Kingdom of Bahrain to communicate with its citizens will be beneficial to both the administration and
A Renewed University Governance: Changes and Perspectives from the Italian Context
www.igi-global.com/article/a-renewed-university-governance/101228?camid=4v1a