Chapter 10

Empirical Investigation of ICT Usage in Malaysian Public Sector: Extension of Theory of Planned Behaviour

ABSTRACT

Information technology has been playing some important roles in expediting service delivery in public organizations to meet the demands of the people in Malaysia and elsewhere in the world. However, some of the civil servants still have pessimistic perceptions of technology devices with negative attitudes towards them. Some even prefer to remain with their traditional ways of doing the obligatory works assigned to them. In this context, this chapter extends the theory of planned behaviour by examining the antecedents of attitude such as perceived usefulness. The findings of the study show that perceived usefulness of technology devices by respondents has a strong and significant influence on attitude towards the use of the system among the civil servants. The practical significant of this finding is that a technology must be very useful to users and meet their expectations in terms of accomplishment of their goals of using it.

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of information and communications technologies (ICTs) has impacted positively many industries and public organizations all over the world. In its effort to transform Malaysia economy from a commodity-based producing nation to being a manufacturer of industrial products and more recently knowledge based economy, the government is putting greater emphasis on ICT. The needs to adopt ICT is in tandem with efforts to support information gathering, processing, distribution and access to services provided by the government for public consumptions. Hence, the significance and essence of ICT adoption in public sector can be envisaged in many forms. These include, among other things, helping the public sector in creating, producing, processing, packaging, distributing, retrieving and transmitting information electronically in a digital form to meeting the ever increasing demands of the public from the government.
Malaysian government has currently built the ICT town in Cyberjaya and Multimedia Super Corridor in order to compete with the other leading countries in term of technology and satisfy the need of its people at large. Malaysia Super Corridor (MSC) was a plan that has successfully come into effect and it has been implemented for many years. This is the major plan for Malaysia in order to gain the competitive advantage among the others country. From the launched of MSC, Malaysia had created more and more technology in terms of Information Communications and Technologies (ICT). It was an ideal plan that supposed to help the country in achieving it targets. There are several developmental role played by adoption of ICT and had assisted the government in dealing with enormous amount of jobs, services delivery issues. Thus it has helped the government ensure better service delivery, skills development, and better productivity to meet a high economic growth. Therefore, through adoption and usage, ICT skills in public sector are considered to be means of professional development and an answer to society’s requirements.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The big question mark arising in the adoption and development of the ICT in public sectors around the world is not only pertaining to the technology system itself but also rest on the shoulder of the civil servants who use the technologies provided with special references to their attitude, intention and actual behaviour towards usage of the system in Malaysia. Human behaviour is difficult to forecast, it keeps on changing over time. The changes had created positive and negative effects on the government’s targets and achievements. Such behavioural reactions of the civil servants towards adoption and usage of the new technology for service deliveries in Malaysia can be understood and explained via the theory of planned behaviour. As has been earlier discussed in the chapter 7 of this book, the theory of planned behaviour helps understand the link between attitudes, intention and actual behaviour towards a given object such as technology system. The theory was developed by Icek Ajzen to improve on the predictive power of the theory of reasoned action by including perceived behavioral control. It is one of the most predictive persuasion theories. The theory opines that attitude toward behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, together shape an individual’s behavioral intentions and actual behaviours especially when it comes to non-volitional tasks. However, in the course of our preliminary investigation of the underlying antecedents of attitudes among the focus group of civil servants selected from the government agency, user friendly of a given technology system could play an important role in controlling and influencing attitudes. For example, when the focus group respondents was asked on their attitudinal reactions to the use of new technologies provided for delivering services to the public. The selection of the focus group interview was based on the prior experience of those that have applied and used the new installed technologies for accomplishing tasks assigned to them.

For example, 12 focus group members from different departments were asked “when the use of online information (ICT) was introduced into this agency to apply and provide feedbacks to the public demands, can you describe your attitudes towards it and reasons behind it?” The main theme (similarity) found in the various described reasons of positive and/or negative attitude towards the system is the statement “well, it all depends on whether the online technology or ICT introduced is useful or not”. This is an important elicitation variable that must be considered as antecedence of attitude because it can shape and/or influence it. Hence, in the context of the agency where the research is conducted, there is a dare need for extending the existing theory of planned behaviour with “perceived usefulness” of technology system as shown in Figure 1.