Evaluating the Performance of e-Government in Egypt: A Public-Value Approach

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ABSTRACT

This empirical article studies the performance of e-government in Egypt from the perspective of citizens within a public value based conceptual framework. This study adopts a theoretical model that integrates two streams of research: (i) the updated DeLone and McLean IS Success Model and (ii) Public Value and proposes a conceptual framework. The model is empirically tested and validated through structural equation modelling analysis. Democracy, reflexivity and productivity were found to be the three distinct value types desired as outcomes by citizens. Trust in e-Government mediated the relationship between the quality constructs and net benefits, whereas citizen satisfaction only mediated the relationship between information quality, system quality and net benefits and has no mediating effect on the relationship between service quality and net benefits.

KEYWORDS

E-Government, Egypt, Evaluation of Performance, IS Success Model, Net Benefits, Public Value

1. INTRODUCTION

Electronic government (e-government) is generally referred to as the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) for transforming public organizations to make them more accessible, effective and accountable. It can be used not only for improving the delivery of public services and enhancing the effectiveness of public organizations through increased their efficiency, accountability and transparency, but also for achieving various socially desirable outcomes such as improving the quality of life, providing better access to education and training, and bridging the digital divide (Karunasena & Deng, 2012). These potential benefits of e-government motivate various governments to adapt various e-government strategies and policies for making e-government more citizens centric with real value to citizens (Zhao, 2011). Therefore, e-Government has witnessed rapid development and huge capital investments all over the world in the past few years (Nasim & Sushil, 2010), to improve internal efficiency and provide better and quality services to the citizens. In view of this, researchers in the e-Government field are becoming increasingly concerned about whether e-Government is meeting the expectations of the citizens it is designed to serve in spite of the huge investments (Alshawy & Alhalawany, 2009; Helbig et al., 2009).

In order to improve service delivery, citizens’ feedback must be taken into consideration and this can only be done through evaluation (Jones et al., 2007). As explained further by Jones, Hackney and Irani (Jones et al., 2007), evaluating e-Government services therefore should be based on the experience and feedback of the citizens who actually use these systems. However, the most commonly used evaluation approaches have been the traditional ones which have mostly focused on return on

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investment, cost-benefit, payback period etc. (Alshawy & Alhalawany, 2009; Irani & Love, 2002) and have largely ignored the broader socio-economic and socio-political goals that characterize service delivery in the context of e-Government (Alshawy & Alhalawany, 2009; Grimsley & Meehan, 2008). In addition, several studies which have investigated the impact of e-Government have been from the government side with little emphasis on the citizens’ side (Helbig et al., 2009; Reddick, 2005). To address these drawbacks, the public value approach, a concept originally introduced by Mark Moore (Moore, 1995) in his book “Creating Public Value: Strategic Management in Government”, presents a framework within which both tangible and intangible benefits of e-Government can be addressed (Omar et al., 2011). Public value has been described as “a comprehensive approach to thinking about public management and about continuous improvement in public services” [10: 9]. According to Kearns (Kearns, 2004), it refers to the value citizens get from government and can serve as a benchmark with which to evaluate performance of government.

From the review of literature, not much has been done in terms of empirical research to evaluate the impact of e-Government using the public value approach in Egypt. Therefore, this research is seeking to fill the existing gap in literature on the public value creation of e-Government from the perspective of citizens using the DeLone and McLean IS Success Model as theoretical background.

2. E-GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENT IN THE EGYPTIAN CONTEXT

There have been a number of studies related to e-Government initiatives, e-Government development and e-Government implementation challenges and opportunities in Arab countries (Mohammed et al., 2006; 2009; Elsheikh et al., 2008; Akemi and Omar, 2009; Tino, 2009). Most of these studies, however, shed some light on developing successful e-Government projects. Some other contributions produced frameworks aimed at better understanding e-Government as a concept. Each attempt tackled the complexity of e-Government from a certain perspective. Unfortunately, Egypt is still lagging far behind other Arab countries, particularly Gulf countries that launched their e-government programs recently. However, there have been some studies related to the Egyptian information society initiatives, such as Egypt’s information society strategy, the progression and assessment of ICT sector in Egypt and the emergence of e-commerce in Egypt with a focus on the challenges faced that are related to a number of social, technological, financial and legal issues (Kamel and Hussein, 2002; Aladwani, 2003; Brahmi, 2007; Neil and Bernd, 2009; United Nations, 2016). While, a small number of studies addressed e-Government issues in general, such as strategies towards interoperability in e-Government and different e-Government frameworks (Azab et al., 2006; Ralf, 2011; Riad et al., 2011), but comprehensive pictures of research done on evaluation of performance of e-Government can hardly be found in the Egyptian literature, this is where our contribution fits.

Egypt’s e-government program was launched by Ministry for Communications and Information Technology (MoSAD) in partnership with Ministry of State for Administrative Development (MoSAD). This program was divided into two stages. The first stage (2001-2007) incorporated setting and approving the e-government strategic plan, implementing and assessing pilot projects, and starting geographical & sectorial deployment of some projects. The second stage (2007-2012) aimed at expanding successful pilot projects on national level, and the development of government administrative body (MoSAD, 2009).

The government of Egypt inaugurated e-government portal (www.egypt.gov.eg) in January 2004. Some services were placed in the portal to pilot test the project such as telephone e-billing, birth certificate, issuing, etc. (Azab et al., 2006). Egypt’s e-government stated with the following vision that comprises three main doctrines (MoSAD, 2009) (1) “public-centric service delivery” (the government orientation to develop a one stop-shop e-services approach emphasized on citizens’ needs and expectations), (2) “Community participation” (citizens’ needs are continuously being analyzed and considered, and private/public sector organizations are active participants in e-government implementation and management), and (3) “Optimal utilization of government resources” (i.e.
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