Chapter 9
Mobile Government in Egypt: Opportunities and Challenges

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ABSTRACT
Modern governmental agencies aim to present their services to citizens in an efficient manner. The methods employed for delivering these services are usually based on traditional computer applications. However, the computer applications suffer from limitations related to the services themselves as well as time and place. To overcome these limitations, governments are keen to use non-traditional and innovative forms for services delivery. In this context, mobile devices and applications built for such technologies can be efficiently used for delivering governmental services to citizens. This way of Government to Citizen (G2C) interaction is often referred to as m-Government. The Egyptian government has implemented many IT-based projects in the last decade. Currently, it aims to transform these projects to mobile platform. In this chapter, the authors discuss m-Government in Egypt and its related issues. The chapter begins by a survey for the available e-Government services in Egypt. So, the current Egyptian mobile situation is stated. Consequently, the chapter analyzes the possible opportunities for the government presenting m-Government services. Finally, the challenges facing the mobile applications industry in Egypt are discussed. At the same time, this chapter introduces some possible solutions for these challenges. The analysis of the Egyptian situation shows that the Egyptian society has many opportunities for developing m-Government applications. These opportunities should be exploited. Moreover, the existing challenges facing m-Government in Egypt can be avoided by good governance. The cooperation between all authorities in the republic is a must for the effectiveness and efficiency of m-Government projects.

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INTRODUCTION

Mobility is the new era of the Information and Communications Technologies (ICT). The mobile technology is the only always-on technology. The mobile added features including any-time and any-where access, personality, flexibility and the ability to determine user location can change the daily life of the citizens. The wide spreading of mobile broadband supports mobile applications stimulation. Mobile applications and services could provide the most affordable ways for millions of people to access information, markets, finance, and governance systems previously unavailable to them (Christine et al., 2011). Mobile users are becoming the next generation of the Internet users. Mobile users are able to access Internet and other services such as email, social networks, and Web portals. The new mobile generation (4G) provides higher data rates supporting interactive, and more complicated, applications such as video streaming and Video On Demand (VOD) systems.

Across the globe, the total number of the worldwide subscriptions approximately reaches 6 billion in 2011 (Global Mobile Statistics, 2012) which represents a penetration rate about 80%. By 2015, the number of mobile phone connections is expected to exceed the global population (Christine et al., 2011). At the same time, the mobile penetration rate in Egypt is above 112%, and it is expected to increase hugely during the few next years. The GSM-based services were first launched in Egypt in 1996. Currently, there are three mobile operators in Egypt. Those operators provide enhanced data services, such as SMS, MMS, ringtone downloads, video clips, greeting cards, mobile banking, and other services. This huge mobile penetration rate in Egypt has not exploited well yet. Many of the Egyptian people don’t consider their mobile devices as reliable tools. Most of them still view their mobile phones only as a tool for calling, or for fun. However, mobile devices can bridge the communications between the rural and the urban zones, brings tangible economic benefits, and acts as agents of social mobilization, especially with the spreading of smart phones. The smart phones allow people to access e-mail, browse the Internet, use applications stores, and much more services.

The mobile government (m-Government) is the next wave of the evolution of e-Government. m-Government is the process of transforming e-Government services on mobile devices. m-Government is not a replacement of the existing e-Government but it is a complementary part to it. The most important benefits when using m-Government are: cost reduction, service efficiency, public sector modernization, convenience and flexibility, better services to the citizens, and the ability to reach a larger number of people through mobile devices (M-Government, 2012).

Mobile applications could be used for interacting between government and citizens in many fields such as business, public safety, health, and many other fields. For example, in the health sector, mobile applications can be used for patient registration, appointments organization, disease detection, disease diagnosis, and management of medical observations. Using these applications, on mobile platform, causes a noticeable increase on work productivity and service efficiency.

There are many opportunities for m-Government implementation in Egypt. The most important opportunities are: existing of strong ICT infrastructure, desire of the Egyptian government for migration from existing e-Government services to m-Government services, availability of efficient mobile networks (3.5 G and higher), and the higher penetration rate which more and more overcomes the spreading of other computing devices. Despite the existing opportunities for m-Government in Egypt, there are still some challenging issues. The most important challenges are related to funding, culture, awareness, and social issues.

This chapter discusses the opportunities and the challenges of m-Government implementation in Egypt. In the following section, we discuss the current situation of the Egyptian mobile applications industry. The section also discusses the pen-
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