Chapter 13

Satisfaction Levels with E–Government Services in Saudi Arabia: Users’ Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

The recent revolution in technology has encouraged governments throughout the world to change their approaches to providing services to their citizens. Accordingly, some countries have set up e-government portals as one such approach to deliver services efficiently, economically, and promptly. The synergy of information with communication technology has the potential to make e-government a major advance; some citizens, however, are not satisfied with e-services introduced in several countries due to factors including lack of computer skills, limited availability of the Internet, and less than total coverage of necessary infrastructure. Effective E-government has several immediate benefits: 1) to lessen the need of travelling to and queuing in the various government departments; and 2) to combine access to different departments together in one government portal. A case study might be the e-government developments in Saudi Arabia, where, in the last few years, huge amounts of money have been expended to establish e-government service. In this context, the question arises whether the expenditure has been worthwhile. In the current research, the satisfaction levels with these services were surveyed among a set of users in order to determine drawback to using the system or any obstacles to access. Objectives were established in order to achieve the aims, and research questions devised to examine the usage of e-government and the service’s usability, as well as to identify the barriers and factors that can affect the use of e-government. The relationship between these barriers and overall satisfaction levels with respect to e-government projects is also analyzed.

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INTRODUCTION

Modern governments are becoming increasingly aware of the potential of electronic government to improve service delivery and productivity both between government departments and between them and their citizens. This awareness has been brought because of the rapid uptake of Internet technologies into almost every aspect of everyday life. It is indeed difficult to visualize how governments around the world could function without electronic services. Introducing these electronic services by the government to reform traditional routines requires both human and financial commitment, and allocation of state resources. The invention of the Internet has allowed cost effective, easy, and comfortable ways of communicating to mankind and has also transformed the way and manner in which different populaces of a geographical defined region communicate, relate and do business with each other. The Internet has proven to be a powerful tool in reinventing government. Consequently, many governments around the world have exploited its power to help rule its citizenry and, more importantly, to bring government services closer to a larger number of people than before.

Even though the traditional government which involves physical visit by government officials or citizens to government establishments performed well in the past, today’s governments however have emphasized the necessity to better rule citizens satisfactorily and efficiently through the use of adequate systems and technology (Gupta, Kumar & Bhattacharya, 2004). Unlike in previous times, modern governments all over the world perform their duties through a chain of multi-channels and departments to ensure that its services gets delivered to its citizens in a timely and effective manner. Some of these departments liaise with each other, or with direct customers (citizens), or even with businesses as a routine activity to ensure that reasons for their establishment are justified. In many countries, however, governments still struggle to deliver good services to clients due to numerous barriers and obstacles that militate against its smooth implementation, in Saudi Arabia, for example some of the population is sparsely distributed and mobile.

This investigation attempts to reveal these factors in order to facilitate e-government usage in both the less developed and developing countries in the form of solutions to mitigate these barriers and promote its acceptance and proliferation, whiles freeing government to perform its duties through the dot-com with much ease and confidence. In Saudi Arabia, during the last decades, many e-government projects have been initiated. This chapter is therefore directed at investigating some of the factors that might facilitate, or otherwise, easy acceptance and usage of e-government services in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and to examine the level of usability and satisfaction of citizens with them. In so doing, the current research aims to highlight some key organizational, technological, and cultural factors that positively or negatively affect the process of e-government adoption in the Kingdom. The results of the chapter present a unique picture of the Saudi situation and add significant literature to the government of KSA in initiating any successful e-government policy.

RELATED WORKS

In practice, the establishment of e-government schemes has proved to be somewhat challenging: in particular, the trust of populations in such schemes still seems to be quite low, despite continuous efforts to increase their safety of these systems. Information and communication technologies (ICTs), however, offer opportunities for governments to improve their services through e-government. Digital Governance (2003) states that; “e-government is the use of information and communications technologies (ICT) to transform