Chapter 12

An Investigation of the Critical Factors for Evaluating the Public Value of e-Government: A Thematic Analysis

Kanishka Karunasena
RMIT University, Australia

Hepu Deng
RMIT University, Australia

Kushanthi Sajeewani Harasgama
Monash University, Australia

ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to investigate the critical factors for evaluating the public value of e-government in Sri Lanka. A comprehensive review of the relevant literature on the scope of e-government, the sources of public value creation, and the kinds of public value is conducted for developing the theoretical framework of the study. Using the qualitative data collected from Sri Lanka, a thematic analysis is performed for identifying the critical factors for evaluating the public value of e-government. The analysis reveals that the quality of public information online, functionalities of electronic services, provision of information and services through e-enabled counters, user orientation of public service delivery, improving organisational efficiency, openness and responsiveness, enhancing trust, ensuring confidentiality of citizens’ information, achieving social equity, and environmental sustainability are critical for evaluating the public value of e-government.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-4062-7.ch012
INTRODUCTION

Electronic government (e-government) generally refers to as the delivery of government information and services through the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) (Akman, Yazici, Mishra, & Arifoglu, 2005; Horan & Abhichandani, 2006). It has developed rapidly around the world over the past decade (Stojanovic, Stojanovic, & Apostolou, 2006; Nasim & Sushil, 2010; Hassan, Shehab, & Peppard, 2011; Zhao, 2011). This can be demonstrated by more than 98% of the United Nations’ member countries with some kinds of e-government presence online (United Nations, 2010). Such a rapid development worldwide in e-government is due to the capacity of e-government for creating public values such as efficiency, accountability, responsiveness, democracy, and equity for citizens (Nour, AbdelRahman, & Fadlalla, 2008; Kelly, Mulgan, & Muers, 2002). E-government is an innovative way of delivering public services through the use of ICTs (United Nations, 2003; Meynhardt, 2009). As a result, public value can be used as an effective means for evaluating the performance of e-government (Heeks, 2008). Several frameworks are developed for evaluating the public value of e-government in developed countries. Existing frameworks, however, are inappropriate for effectively identifying the critical factors for evaluating the public value of e-government in developing countries (Karunasena & Deng, 2012a).

This study aims to identify the critical factors for evaluating the public value of e-government in Sri Lanka. A theory-driven thematic analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001) is performed on the qualitative data collected in Sri Lanka for identifying the critical factors. The identification of the critical factors would be greatly helpful to e-government stakeholders to understand the effectiveness of e-government in Sri Lanka. This helps the Sri Lankan government to formulate appropriate policies and strategies for the development of e-government. Furthermore, this study is helpful to Sri Lankan government for demonstrating its accountability for the investment in e-government made by international donor agencies.

In what follows, a review of the related literature on e-government developments in Sri Lanka and the concept of public value are presented. This is followed by the discussion of the research design and the data analysis technique used in this study. Finally the research findings and their implications to the continuous development of e-government in Sri Lanka are presented.