Gender and E-Government Adoption in Spain

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ABSTRACT

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) models, which include trust as a central factor, are currently standard tools for studying the process of new technology acceptance, but some further research is needed to gauge how different variables could influence this process. This is the case of gender factor, given that there is no general accord in the literature as to the role of this variable. Thus, the present research focuses on hypothetical gender-based differences that could affect the explanatory model for e-Government adoption by citizens. The results of the study show that the effects of gender on e-Government involvement are nearly none—probably because these technology-based activities are quite broadly implemented in Spain by now. This in turn implies both, that in Spain e-Government usage level is similar between genders and that the behavior explaining model is virtually the same, with no gender traits acting on it—apart from a slightly particular role played by compatibility in the female case.

Keywords: Administration, Adoption, e-Government, Gender, Government

1. INTRODUCTION

Use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) by governments and public administrations contributes to the development of a profound institutional change: from the public management perspective, by improving its efficiency; and from a political perspective, by fostering citizen participation. ICT can be used to build new venues for citizen participation and offers the potential to bring on government processes that are increasingly transparent and receptive to citizen opinion. The interaction between the administration and society aims to redefine the terms according to which the administration relates to citizens. Increased ICT use could aid in improving public services, but in many cases administrations do little more

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than publish their information online; the next step is to use technology to change their internal processes and develop collaboration between different institutions (Beynon-Davies & Martin, 2004; Ford & Murphy, 2008).

The term “e-Government” has been coined to capture this entire potential for change and to depict the most ambitious dimension of ICT’s contribution to all levels of public administration. Electronic government refers to governments’ use of technology, particularly Internet-based applications, to enhance access to and delivery of government information and service to citizens, business partners, employees, other agencies, and government entities. It has the potential to help build better relationships between government and the public by making interaction with citizens smoother, easier, and more efficient (Layne & Lee, 2001). In other cases, it is defined as a new way of organizing public management to increase its efficiency, transparency, accessibility, and its ability to provide proper responses to citizens with intensive and strategic use of ICT, both in the internal management of the public sector and in its everyday exchanges with citizens and public service users. According to this point of view, intensive ICT adoption offers a particular way of structuring management in public entities aimed at improving both public service and internal operations (Rivera, 2006). Successful e-Government initiatives are not simply technological innovations, but rather processes that involve rethinking and redesigning the entire way in which governments operate (Schaupp et al., 2010).

E-Government has become an essential strategy for many governments in their efforts to increase accessibility and facilitate improved diffusion of public sector services. It is important to bear in mind that the success of e-Government initiatives can be determined by contextual factors associated with the demand for electronic services and by the organizational structures and processes that characterize the administrations in charge of technology maintenance (Luna-Reyes, Hernández García, & Gil-García, 2009). The rapid uptake of new technologies is occurring among most groups of citizens, regardless of income, education, age, and gender. Nonetheless, noticeable gaps still exist between different levels of these attributes. Citizens’ adoption of online public services has been obstructed by factors such as, digital divide, accessibility, and lack of trust (Akman, Yazici, Mishra, & Arifoglu, 2005; Al-Sobhi, Weerakkody, & El-Haddadeh, 2012).

In Western literature, the digital divide has been an important academic and policy concern over the last two decades. While the first generation of studies of the digital divide focused on internet access, more recent research has considered the importance of the skills and usage gaps (Polat, 2012). Although there is also a significant gap between genders in internet usage, most of e-Government initiatives have been implemented without taking into account the potential gender-based differences in technology usage behavior (Sarabdeen, & Rodrigues, 2010).

Once we have confirmed the possibility of carrying the explanatory models for new technology adoption over to the area of e-Government, we must further explore the behavior of these models by including the role of several moderating variables (Rufín, Medina, & Sánchez-Figueroa, 2011; Venkatesh, Davis, & Morris, 2007; Venkatesh, Morris, & Ackerman, 2000; Zhang, 2009).

One of these variables mentioned in the literature concerns gender, which has drawn considerable attention in the field of e-Commerce on account of its interaction with attitudinal and behavioral variables (Okazaki, 2007). Although initially gender-based differences were indeed observed in technology development and adoption (Ahuja, 2002; Ong & Lai, 2004; Sánchez-Franco, Villarejo, & Martín, 2009), other studies qualify this view considerably by suggesting that as technology use becomes increasingly widespread, the gender gap narrows in terms of its use (Knight & Person, 2005; Okazaki, 2007). At any rate, the impact of gender in the use of e-Government has long been attracting interests of academics, but in order to establish a secure trend towards the shrinking of the gender gap
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