Chapter IX

Effectiveness of E-Government Online Services in Australia

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Abstract

Electronic government (e-government) breaks down the barrier of distance and time, and offers the potential for government to better deliver its contents and services, and interact with citizens and businesses. Australia has been recognized as one of e-government leaders internationally. All the three levels (federal, state and local) of Australian government organizations have increasingly embraced e-government. With few years of e-government practices in Australia, it is critical to evaluate the current applications and explore more effective strategies for the next phase of e-government. This study aims to identify what factors affect the effectiveness of Australian e-government online services. In the study, a research model is proposed and data collections are completed based on two questionnaire-based surveys from internal and external users of Australian e-government Web sites respectively. Furthermore, data analyses are conducted to test proposed hypotheses. The findings show that Web presence quality and information quality influence effectiveness of e-government online services more than system quality from user perspectives. Several recommendations and future trends are also presented in the chapter.
Introduction

The Internet offers a tremendous opportunity for government to better deliver its contents and services and interact with citizens, businesses, and other government partners (Chen, 2002). Electronic government (e-government) breaks down the barrier of distance and time, and therefore offers the potential to enhance government service quality. E-government online services may not only provide benefits to citizens and businesses, but also offer the potential to reshape the public sector and remake the relationships between the citizens, businesses, and government (West, 2000).

A number of definitions of e-government have been offered in the existing literature (Devadoss, Pan & Huang, 2003); however, no single definition has been widely accepted (Scholl, 2003). The applications of information technology to government services are commonly referred to as e-government (Gordon, 2002; Holmes, 2001; Marchionini, Samet & Brandt, 2003; Scholl, 2003). Tapscott (1996) defined e-government as an Internet worked government, while Sprecher (2000) considered e-government as any way technology is used to help simplify and automate transactions between governments and constituents, businesses, or other governments. Wimmer and Traunmuller (2000) considered e-government as a guiding vision towards modern administration and democracy. According to them, e-government is concerned with the transformation that government and public administration have to undergo in the next decades. World Bank Group (worldBank, 2002) defined e-government as the use by government agencies of information technology (such as wide area networks, the Internet, and mobile computing) that have the ability to transform relations with citizens, businesses, and other arms of government, while New Zealand government (Anonymous, 2002) defined e-government as government agencies working together to use technology so that they can better provide individuals and businesses with government services and information. Taking a more comprehensive view, Aicholzer and Schmutzer (2000) saw e-government covering changes of governance in a twofold manner: (1) transformation of the business of governance, that is, improving service quality delivery, reducing costs and renewing administrative processes; (2) transformation of governance itself, that is, re-examining the functioning of democratic practices and processes. These definitions may be slightly different for each organization based on the community’s values, goals and culture. However, a complete definition of e-government has to identify with consideration of all its users. In this study, we consider e-government users in two categories, internal and external users. The external users are citizen and business, while the internal users mainly imply the administration staff of a government agency or other government agencies.

E-government is much more than getting information and services online. It is transforming government administration, information provision and service delivery by the application of new technologies. It is delivering government services in ways that are most convenient to the client and citizen, while at the same time realizing efficiency gains, and streamlining government processes (Rimmer, 2002). E-government applications are very comprehensive. The challenges to e-government are not only technological but also economic, legislative and political; for example, electronic business, electronic management, electronic democracy and electronic politics (Pilipovic et al., 2002). Based on the involved parties, the most important classes of e-government applications are: govern-
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