

Chapter 38

Electronic and Mobile G2C Services: Municipalities Provision and Citizens' Reaction

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ABSTRACT

Electronic and mobile government services represent a tremendous impetus to move forward in the 21st Century with the potential to bring about a higher quality and more cost effective services to enhance the relationship between citizens and government. In this chapter, the municipalities' electronic services provided to citizens are examined based on the literature review and the assessment of their websites. As a result, a typology of electronic and mobile services is proposed. Furthermore, the users' perspective is inquired in order to depict the awareness, the usage and the attitude of citizens in relation to the electronic and mobile services provided by the municipalities in Northern Greece. Therefore, electronic services are used only by a small percentage of Greek citizens due to lack of awareness and trust in electronic government. Mobile services are regarded to be beneficial, while high cost and lack of network connection seem to be barriers for their usage.

INTRODUCTION

The global evolution of electronic and mobile government is a reflection of technical developments, competitiveness and efficiency pressures to modernize public administrations. The e-government is expected to raise the quality of public services,

reduce the costs of their provision and lead to more transparent government (José dos Santos, 2005). M-government has been considered either as an additional, new channel that complements the existing e-services or as a response to the creation opportunity of new services that exploit the benefits of mobility (Ostberg, 2003; Gorlenko

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& Merrick, 2003; Fidel, Scholl, Liu, & Unsworth, 2007). It has been designed to provide citizens (G2C), businesses (G2B), employees (G2E) and governmental organizations (G2G) with more effective and efficient services, as well as to ensure convenient access to faster and personalized services anywhere, anytime (Borucki, Arat, & Kushchu, 2005).

Regarding e-services, the EC has developed and published a list of online public services for citizens. Although some actions towards structuring basic framework constructs of the fixed internet services have taken place (Capgemini, 2007), it is vague whether the municipalities have adhered to the European standards and developed high-level electronic services. Regarding mobile services, on the other hand, there are scarce examples that are implemented in the public sector in various countries, such as UK (Borucki et al., 2005), Saudi Arabia (Abanumy & Meyhew, 2005) and South Africa (Patel & White, 2005), which constitute ad-hoc mobile applications in many public domains such as health, traffic, education, etc. Which of them are critical for the improvement of the citizens' routine and for the authorities' convenient service delivery? Could these m-services be formulized in categories and follow a specific typology?

This chapter focuses on both electronic and mobile services provided to citizens by the local authorities. This study is being approached in several phases. First, a literature review based on relevant academic papers, journal articles, research projects and European official documents has been undertaken to understand and draw out definition and classification approaches, associated with e- and m-government services. Furthermore, the presence of various barriers and drivers influencing the development and implementation of e-m government services are examined.

The second stage of the research involves a website investigation, aiming to draw the picture of their adoption degree by the Greek municipalities,

and a survey exploring the citizens' perspective, regarding e-m services adoption.

The objective is to examine the reality of these services at the municipal level in Northern Greece in comparison to the proposed typology of electronic and mobile services.

In specific, the aim of this research is to investigate to what extent Greek municipalities provide e-services to the citizens, as well as the citizens' reaction to e- and m-services. Getting feedback from the literature review and the findings of a website investigation, a quantitative research is conducted via a questionnaire to explore the citizens' perspective towards electronic and mobile local government services. Therefore, feedback from this research enriches the present literature. The framework of the study explaining the two research stages is visually presented in Figure 1.

This study is organized in four sections. In section 2, a literature review giving the governmental e- and m-services' background is presented. This is followed by Section 3, where the applied methodology and study's results are analyzed including the proposed typology and the survey's statistics. The final section concludes with a discussion commenting on the data gathered and recommends some ideas for future research directions.

LITERATURE: ELECTRONIC AND MOBILE GOVERNMENT BACKGROUND

Advances in e-government oriented technologies and services are taking place with a considerable speed worldwide. E-government efforts aim to benefit from the use of most innovative forms of information technologies, particularly web-based Internet applications, in improving governments' fundamental functions. These functions are now spreading the use of mobile and wireless technologies and creating a new direction: mobile government (Kushchu & Kuscu, 2003).

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