Chapter 68

One-Stop Government Portals:
Transformation or Navigation?

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ABSTRACT

E-government is seen as a promising approach for governments to improve their service towards citizens and become more cost-efficient in service delivery. This is often combined with one-stop government, which is a citizen-oriented approach stressing integrated provision of services from multiple departments via a single access point, the one-stop government portal. While the portal concept is gaining prominence in practice, there is little known about its status in academic literature. This hinders academics in building an accumulated body of knowledge around the concept and makes it hard for practitioners to access relevant academic insights on the topic. The objective of this study is to identify and understand the key themes of the one-stop government portal concept in academic, e-government research. A holistic analysis is provided by addressing different viewpoints: social-political, legal, organizational, user, security, service, data and information, and technical. As an overall finding, the authors conclude that there are two different approaches: a more pragmatic approach focuses on quick wins in particular related to usability and navigation and a more ambitious, transformational approach having far reaching social-political, legal, and organizational implications.

1. INTRODUCTION

Governments are under an increasing pressure to improve their service towards citizens and become more cost-efficient in delivering those services. E-government is seen as a promising approach

to address these two, often conflicting concerns. E-government approaches strive to enhance and transform the access to government information, knowledge and services with information and communication technology as an enabler (e.g., Allan et al., 2006). Some of the most important

objectives of e-government are the enhancement of the effectiveness of government services and the improvement of the quality of service delivery. Therefore, public services should be provided in a citizen-centric way (e.g., van Velsen et al., 2009).

One-stop government refers to a citizen-oriented and integrated provisioning of services from multiple departments via a single access point (Wimmer & Tambouris, 2002). It is a key concept for achieving the objectives of e-government (Böhm et al., 2010). The one-stop paradigm is not restricted to the public administration but is also applied in the business sector. 'One-stop shop' as a more general term stands for the possibility of completing all tasks together at one point. It is independent of the chosen contact channel, be it face to face, phone, the Internet or other means (Kubicek & Hagen, 2000). The idea to provide one contact point for citizens and businesses is not new. As early as in the 1970s, government experimented with the installation of related agencies in one building or very close to each. However, this was not very successful. Bureaucratic hurdles and resource constraints hindered an extended implementation of these so called 'citizen offices' (Trochidis et al., 2008). Nowadays, the one-stop concept is gaining prominence again in government due to the possibilities of ICT and the fact that users are habituated to having this shopping option in the private sector and thus demand it for government services and information as well (Ho, 2002). A one-stop government portal is "a single point of access to electronic services and information offered by different public authorities" (Wimmer, 2002a). According to Wimmer (2002a), initiatives in the domain of e-government, such as one-stop portals, need to focus on a "user-friendly, cost-effective and interoperable public services and systems" in order to "meet the user demands for flexible access, for everybody, from anywhere at any time."

While the one-stop government portal concept is gaining prominence in practice, there is little know about its status in academic literature. So far no comprehensive review of the research on one-stop government portals has been done. It is not known whether, and if so where, a plethora of research exists or which aspects need further research. Some studies show limitations of such portals in terms of usability and usefulness (Choudrie & Ghinea, 2005; Sarikas & Weerakkody, 2007) as reported by (Detlor et al., 2012). Furthermore, government services, typically accessible via a one-stop portal are less frequently utilised as reported by other authors (Kanat & Özkan, 2009; Seltsikas & O'Keefe, 2010). However, government or community portals show merits in other cases when focussing on, for example, information quality (Detlor, et al., 2012). These examples show that while the one-stop government portal concept has been researched, the vast majority of this research is focussed on a specific case or uses a limited number of viewpoints and mainly address technological challenges (Tambouris, 2008; Trochidis, et al., 2008).

The objective of this study is to identify, understand, and synthesise key themes related to the one-stop government portal concept in academic research. The analysis of existing literature aims to present an integral overview of current insights and applications. For a comprehensive understanding of the one-stop government portal different viewpoints need to be taken into account such as user, service, organizational, technical, security, legal, social-political and data & information (Wimmer, 2002b). For this study, the different viewpoints will be utilised to provide structure to the different themes found in literature. We will have a look at the *challenges and preconditions* where we focus on stated challenges in literature that are of interest to the research community and relevant for practitioners in designing and maintaining their respective one-stop portals, and also at the *initiatives* from practice and the realisation of theoretical or practical solutions where we address how governments and researchers around the world have addressed the issues.

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