



Determining Types of Services and Targeted Users of Emerging E-Government Strategies: The Case of Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

E-government strategies empower citizens through online access to services and information. Consequently, governments – including in developing countries – are implementing e-government. In this study, a survey examined available services and targeted users in Tanzania. Ninety-six government agencies responded: 46% had implemented e-government using websites. Most services (60-90%) relate to disseminating information; online transactions were the least available services. Government-affiliated staff constituted the majority (60-85%) of users. This implies that emerging e-government services mostly address internal needs (government-to-government), and one-way dissemination of information (government-to-citizen). While agencies exhibited a gradual extension to businesses (government-to-business), citizen-to-government and business-to-government relationships were minimal. Finally, the study compares Tanzania's web-presence with select countries, draws its wider implications, and advocates further research on the nature and needs of users. [Article copies are available for purchase from InfoSci-on-Demand.com]

Keywords: *IT in Developing Countries; E-Government User Groups; E-Management; E-Services; G2C Interactions; G2G Interactions; Tanzania*

INTRODUCTION

Many countries worldwide have recognized the importance of implementing e-government strategies as one of the key options for improving the delivery of government services to their citizens. This has been enhanced by developments in information and communication technology (ICT) coupled with tan-

gible economic benefits that are attached to international collaborative networks brought about by various facets of globalization (UN, 2003; Rycroft & Kash, 2004). Implementing e-government strategies has created an avenue for potential citizen empowerment through direct online access to services in which the users submit their inquiries on issues affecting their development. Such an environment has

further challenged participating governments to improve their general performance through increased efficiency, accountability and transparency (Abramson & Means, 2001; Andersen, 2004; Garson, 2004; Heeks, 2002; Ho, 2002; Holliday, 2002; Kalu, 2007; La Porte et al., 2002; Michael & Bates, 2005; UN, 2003). One of the observed major shifts associated with e-government is improved relationship between government agencies and users of government information in terms of delivery of and access to government services.

Therefore, various governments—including those from developing countries—are implementing e-government strategies at various levels of complexity, from simple to sophisticated settings. Moreover, most African countries have been motivated to adopt e-government even though they have to deal with such challenges as poor telecommunications infrastructure and a low level of awareness of the potential benefits of ICTs in development, and relatively low literacy levels (Davidrajuh, 2007; Ifinedo, 2007; Heeks, 2002; Mutula, 2002; Panagopoulos, 2004; Singh & Naidoo, 2005; UN, 2003, 2004). Some of the reasons that might have prompted these countries to implement e-government strategies are associated with the noted advantages drawn from the experiences of other regions of the world. Such advantages have been summarized by the UN (2001) as: potential for more user-centered, transparent and efficient services; cost effectiveness of service delivery; improved quality of services; and spreading all the associated benefits of implementing e-government strategies to the national economy at large. Similar or closely related benefits have been reported by Allen et al. (2001), Bertot et al. (2008), Blackstone et al. (2005), Garson (2004), Heeks (2002), La Porte, et al. (2002), Panagopoulos (2004), Riley (2000), Stowers (2004), and Whitson and Davis (2001).

Much as many governments have adopted e-government, the issue has also attracted researchers from various disciplines. They have conducted such studies as evaluating the status of e-government implementation, related

services and users, and the challenges faced by implementing governments or nations (Andersen, 2004; Ho, 2002; Holliday, 2002; Ifinedo, 2007; Lau et al., 2008; Norris, 2005; Reddick, 2004; Salem, 2003; Singh & Naidoo, 2005). For instance, Reddick (2004) takes note of the methods involved in some of e-government research programs (54):

There are essentially two streams of research on e-government growth in public administration. The first stream is the content analysis of government Web sites for specific features of e-government. The second stream of literature is the e-government surveys of local government officials. There are also studies that combine both content and survey methodologies.

In evaluating the status of e-government growth, the researchers also assess the situation of available services and associated users.

Although some of the researchers have conducted their studies on Africa (e.g. Heeks, 2002; Mutula, 2002; Singh & Naidoo, 2005; Weerakkody et al., 2007), the bulk of the literature has reported results from developed countries as a group, or from developing countries of Asia. Africa remains relatively unexplored in empirical studies mainly because many African countries are in their early stages of implementing e-government. The present exploratory study therefore, endeavors to address the gap by determining the types of available and planned e-government services in the region of Africa. Using Tanzania (well-known by the author) as a case study, it also identifies existing and future targeted users, as well as possible models of relationships or interactions between government agencies and users in e-government implementations. The study seeks to answer the following specific research questions: What types of e-government services have been adopted and what is the extent of adoption? What are the user groups for e-government services? Are there indications of users' interaction with their governments? What is the nature of interactions? The study has addressed these questions through a survey of

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