

Chapter 41

A Descriptive Analysis of Contents of Asian E-Government Websites

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ABSTRACT

Advances in information and communication technologies (ICTs) continue to drastically impact the activities of individuals, families, communities, businesses, governments, as well as other national and global entities. They often give rise to new institutions and systems such as electronic government (e-government). E-government improves the efficiency of governments' services and facilitates government-to-citizen and other types of communications. Nowhere is the impact of ICTs and e-government more pronounced than in developing countries, such as those in Asia, a continent that is home to the largest democracy in the world (i.e., India), where an appropriate use of ICTs can enable them to become part of the global information society. There had been encouraging signs in Asia with respect to e-government adoption and implementation of relevant services. Asian countries provide e-government services, mainly through websites that range from static to fully fledged web portals. However, there is a lack of e-government literature that provides detailed analyses of contents of Asian e-government services. This chapter is intended to address this. In addition to describing Asian e-government services, it also provides recommendations with respect to future works, and identifies prospects for e-government services.

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INTRODUCTION

There has been an encouraging development in Asia in terms of e-government adoptions and implementations in the last few years. Asia is home to a third of the world's population and the largest democracy (India). Although it lags behind Europe and North America in rate of adoption and use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), there are more Internet users in Asia than anywhere else (Internet World Stats, 2009). However, the Internet penetration rate (as a percentage of the total population on the continent) remains one of the lowest at 17.4% (Table 1), while the number of Internet users grew by an impressive 475% over the last decade (Internet World Stats, 2009). The continent has made such remarkable strides that the question is not whether ICTs and allied technologies (like e-government) play a role in social and economic development. It is rather how effectively and efficiently they can be incorporated into every sector of society, including business/commerce, government, education, and entertainment. All of this points to the fact that Asian countries individually, and the continent as a whole, have one of the ingredients of not

only successful e-government services but also of social and economic development.

Developing countries are using ICTs for governance in innovative ways. ICTs and e-government services present a number of opportunities for development of both rural and urban communities (InfoDev, 2002), albeit against some significant obstacles and challenges. Not all Asian countries are, however, taking full advantage of opportunities provided by e-Government. Such initiatives would encourage citizens to participate in government activities. They would act as participatory tools through which citizens can contribute actively toward a better government as well, thereby bolstering the core notion of democracy. Furthermore, "in economic terms, the ability of citizens to access government services anytime, anywhere helps to mitigate the transaction costs inherent in all types of government services" (Lee, Kirlidog, Lee, & Lim, 2008, p. 843). For this to happen, e-government services need to be effective, standard, impersonal, efficient, convenient, and transparent.

All Asian countries and their governments have had a significant presence on the Web. They have been providing e-government services through websites ranging from informational to

Table 1. A profile of Asia

| | Asia | World |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Population | 3,780,819,792 (56.35%) | 6,710,029,070 |
| Land area | 17.2 million sq mi (30%) | 57.31 million sq mi |
| Internet Users | 657,170,816 (41.17%) | 1,596,270,108 |
| Internet penetration (% Population) | 17.4% | 23.8% |
| Internet user growth (2000-2008) | 474.9% | 342.2% |
| E-Readiness Index | 0.4467 | 0.4514 |
| Web Measures index | 0.3725 | 0.3540 |
| Human Capital index | 0.7916 | 0.7825 |
| Infrastructure index | 0.1670 | 0.2104 |
| E-Participation index | 0.2084 | 0.1909 |
| Telecom infrastructure index | 0.179332 | 0.570928 |

Sources: (United Nations, 2007; Internet World Stats, 2009)

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