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Investigating the Nature of Expectations and Its Influence on Attitudes Towards Malaysian Government E-Services

Meng Seng Wong, Business School, University of Nottingham, Malaysia
Stephen Jackson, Ontario Tech University, Canada

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the nature of expectations and its influence on attitudes towards government electronic services (e-services) in Malaysia. Based on a discussion of findings from in-depth focus group studies with government providers and users of e-services in Malaysia, a conceptual model is devised which explores both the extrinsic and intrinsic forces (in the form of e-government stimuli) influencing the articulation and actualization of stakeholder expectations, which can sway attitudes toward e-services. Key contributing factors (e.g., technological issues, managerial/institutional challenges, resource constraints, user needs), which have inhibited the extent of benefits realization when using e-services are explored. The model also introduces the concept of situational context—the importance of considering e-services in relation to its specific setting or circumstances at play.

KEYWORDS

Electronic Government, Electronic Services, Expectations, Government Administration, Malaysia, Stakeholder Attitudes

INTRODUCTION

The implementation of electronic government (e-government), defined as the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance how services are delivered, is increasingly being adopted by governments around the world, as an avenue to facilitate administrative reform and reach stakeholders by providing e-services through the Internet (Foley & Alfonso, 2009; Soong, Ahmed, & Tan, 2020). Despite the potential of ICT to revitalize government services, the uptake of e-government has been witnessed with varying degrees of success. It is disappointing to find that many government councils, after implementing e-government services, have not reaped the desired benefits that they first envisioned (Khadaroo, Wong, & Abdullah, 2013; Wong, Jackson, & Philip, 2010). The high failure rate of e-government initiatives has impelled practitioners and researchers to examine the factors which have impeded its uptake and use (Heeks, 2006; Jackson & Wong, 2017). Given that challenges faced are not solely technical, and are often more social and behavioral in nature, this has

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prompted studies to investigate the technological and non-technological factors which can both enable and constrain e-government efforts (Jackson & Wong, 2017, Khadaroo et al., 2013).

One important area of research in information systems is understanding user expectations. Studies (Fearon & Philip, 2005; Jackson & Fearon, 2014) have shown that when stakeholder expectations surrounding ICT are not met, or when expectations are unrealistic, the result is often poor benefits realization success. While there is increased awareness of the need to meet and, where possible, exceed citizen expectations as a way to enhance user satisfaction with government services (Noda, 2019; Deng, Karunasena & Xu, 2017; Twizeyimana & Andersson, 2019), how and why stakeholder expectations are devised and realized needs to be investigated further. More specifically, our understanding of both the extrinsic and intrinsic forces influencing the articulation and actualization of expectations, and how these can influence (or has the potential to influence) attitudes towards government e-services, particularly in a Malaysian context, still remains an area to be explored in greater detail. Indeed, Alruwaie, El-Haddadeh, & Weerakkody (2020) acknowledge that within e-government studies, research on e-services is in need of further attention. As noted by the authors "although previous studies on e-government have provided insights into service quality criteria in general, and e-services in particular, additional research in this topic is required" (pp.1). Moreover, although a variety of evaluation methods, tools and approaches (e.g. SERVPERF, SERVQUAL and Importance Performance Analysis, to name a few) have been utilized to assess the quality of government e-services (Nishimoto et al., 2014; Wong & Jackson, 2017), expectations are often treated as a variable to be objectively measured through the use of quantitative surveys. The importance of comprehending the experiences and opinions of different stakeholders in relation to the context which these sentiments are embedded has been raised (Jackson & Wong, 2017).

Against this backdrop, reflecting on our own insights from empirical research based on in-depth focus group studies with government providers and users of e-services in Malaysia, we propose a conceptual model for exploring these issues in more depth. The model not only explores both the extrinsic and intrinsic forces (in the form of e-government stimuli) influencing the articulation and actualization of expectations, which can sway stakeholder attitudes toward higher education e-government services, but also explores key contributing factors (e.g. technological issues, managerial/institutional challenges, resource constraints, user needs) which have inhibited the extent of benefits realization when using e-services. Drawing on the concept of situational context, the model also stresses the importance of considering e-services in relation to its specific setting or circumstances at play.

This paper is organized as follows. The context and background to the study have already been highlighted. Next, literature relating to e-government (considering expectations) is briefly reviewed. This is followed by the background to the case and then a description of the research method. Research findings are then provided in relation to the devised conceptual model. After this, the findings are discussed, and the implications, limitations of the study and future research are outlined.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, interest in exploring and understanding e-government has been on the rise (Alruwaie et al., 2020; Jackson & Wong, 2017). This is evidenced by the growth in academic articles and conference proceedings dedicated to its study. Some of the key theories and models which have been applied to the study of e-government i.e. assessing the quality of e-service provision, as well as examining the use and adoption of e-services include social cognitive theory, expectation confirmation theory, SERVQUAL and importance-performance analysis (Alruwaie et al., 2020; Nishimoto et al., 2014; Wong & Jackson, 2007). It is not the purpose of this paper to review all theories, models and evaluation tools which have been used to examine the use and adoption of e-government services (see, for example, Ibrahim, Hilles, Adam, & El-Ebiary, 2017; Rana, Williams, Dwivedi, & Williams, 2012). Instead, we attempt to broadly outline different perspectives in e-government research, but

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