Chapter 4
Usage Intention of E–Government Services in Macao

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ABSTRACT

To implement electronic-government (e-government) services successfully, it is important to know the factors that influence their acceptance. In this study, we investigated the influence of trust and compatibility in the context of usage intention of e-government services in Macao. In Macao, government services are easily accessible via government departments and offices. Switching to e-government services would require users' trust and having the services fit into the users' way of life. The results of our analyses found that trust and compatibility are positively related to usage intention and that the independent variables accounted for 63 percent of the variance in usage intention. We discussed the implications of the research findings.

INTRODUCTION

Governments worldwide are now using the Internet to provide people with more convenient access to information and services. It has become increasing common for people not to queue at government offices to request for services. Instead, they stay at home or office and use electronic-government (e-government) services to help them browse for information or to conduct online transactions. E-government services, therefore, bring great convenience to the users. They also benefit the

providers because the services ease the workload of the counter staff and improve their operating efficiency.

Many countries are keen to offer e-government services to potential users such as citizens, businesses, and tourists. Lee et al. (2005) documented the development of e-government services in many countries and found that they are in various stages of implementation. They found that in more advanced countries such as America and Canada, e-government services include being able to perform a number of functions – for example, obtaining relevant and up-to-date information, downloading forms, scheduling appointments, and making transactions such as paying tax online. In countries where establishing the Internet infrastructure is still a challenge, it is more difficult to develop such services. A United Nations report has classified countries into five stages of e-government development, vis-à-vis emerging, enhanced, interactive, transactional, and seamless (UNASPA, 2002). Regardless of the stages, it is important to ensure that people are receptive to use e-government services or else investments in these projects may be wasted. In this regard, Swartz (2004) has noted that only 20 percent of people with Internet access use e-government services. To increase usage, we need first to understand the factors that influence its adoption. The objective of this chapter, therefore, was to investigate the factors that might be related to the usage of e-government services.

The research setting for this study was in Macao. Macao is a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China and it is located in the Guangdong province, on the western bank of the Pearl River Delta. It was a Portuguese colony for more than 400 years before it was handed over to the Chinese sovereignty in 1999. As at 2008, its population was around half a million and the land size was 27 square kilometres (Macao Yearbook, 2009). Indeed, Macao is a very small and compact place. We conducted the research in Macao because e-government services are relatively new in Macao. Given that people in Macao normally visit government offices when they need help on government matters, it would be useful to determine if people are receptive to using e-government services. In the current research, we set out to determine the factors that would attract people to use Macao e-government services even though many government departments in Macao are easily accessible. We note that many government offices in Macao provide one-stop services and they have established performance pledges for their customers (Chou, 2004).

The Macao government is keen to develop electronic services as an alternative avenue for its services as most residents already have easy access to the Internet (Cheung and Wang, 2004). The vision of the government is to provide government information and services via one portal that connects the government public network and its internal network. The Macao government started providing electronic service more than a decade ago and officially launched its e-government portal in December 2004 (Rong, 2005). To date, however, there are limited studies about e-government services in Macao. This study can help to understand the factors underlying the diffusion of e-government services and can assist the providers to strengthen their strategies to encourage greater adoption among the residents.

This chapter is organized as follows. In the next section, we provide the background on the development of e-government services in Macao. Following that, we elaborate on the main focus of the chapter, which is about e-government services adoption in Macao. In this section, we discuss the factors that might influence the adoption of e-government services in Macao and test the factors based on a sample of data gathered from a questionnaire survey. We then go on to future research directions and end with a conclusion.

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