Chapter 16
A Model for Building Trust in E–Government

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ABSTRACT

E-government is a new and complex field which is yet to be clearly understood because of lack of a well developed theoretical framework. E-government provides a platform for different forms of interactions such as business to business (B2B), citizens to government (C2G), government to government (G2G), business to government (B2G), etc. These interactions raise several ethical issues which have implications on citizens' trust in e-government. This chapter proposes a model for building trust of citizens in e-government. The proposed model is premised on five trust pillars: ethical/human; information/content; technical; policy/legal; and political/governance. Each of these pillars has several dimensions adapted from various existing user satisfaction tools or frameworks such as Service Quality (SERVQUAL), trust formation framework, technology acceptance model, information systems success model, and many more. The chapter also covers history of e-government; models of e-government interactions; e-government trust related models; theoretical basis of trust; causes of distrust in e-government; challenges of applications of ICT in e-government; framework for building trust in e-government; and future trends of trust in e-government.

INTRODUCTION

E-government is increasingly being perceived as panacea for a transparent and accountable administration. Yet e-government is a complex phenomenon that is not yet fully understood and grasped by most people. The concepts of

e-government and e-governance can better be understood in the context of government and governance respectively. Government refers to exercising state power, the governing body of a state, or the way by which a state is governed. The term government also refers to an administration, regime, executive, rule, leadership, command or control (Hawker, 2002). Governance is a noun from the term government which Neumayer (2006)

defines as the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. It comprises the mechanisms, processes, and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal and human rights, meet their obligations, and mitigate their differences. Governance encompasses political legitimacy and accountability, administrative accountability, financial and budgetary accountability, transparency, openness, and the rule of law. Governance therefore entails various things, among them, that those who hold public trust should be able to account for the use of the trust to citizens or their representatives. This signifies the superiority of the public interest over the private interest. Secondly, it presupposes the competence of the state to exercise administrative and political power in a fair, transparent and equitable manner, including the protection of personal rights and the rule of law. Thirdly, it implies that no manner of accountability can be realized unless there is the rule of law, transparency and the free flow of information among all stakeholders in the governance process (Mutula & Wamukoya, 2009).

Transparency being a major component of governance means that decisions taken and their enforcement are executed based on clearly stipulated rules and regulations that are known to all stakeholders. This requires that the institutions of governance in both public and private sector including civil society organizations interact and engage with citizens in a manner that contributes to good governance. Governance can be both good and bad depending on whether it brings positive benefits to the governed or the benefits merely serve to benefit the personal interests of a few individuals in government. Therefore, the government as the major actor in the governance process must create an enabling environment for citizen participation in the decision making process and service delivery systems (Mutula & Wamukoya, 2009). E-government is expected to help governments meet these goals.

This chapter is intended to discuss history of e-government, models of e-government interactions, e-government trust related models, theoretical basis of trust, causes of distrust in e-government, challenges of applications of ICT in e-government, framework for building trust in e-government, and future trends of trust building in e-government.

BACKGROUND

E-government, a derivative term from governance, refers to the application of information and communication technology within public administration to optimise its internal and external functions, [thereby providing] government, the citizen and business with a set of tools that can potentially transform the way in which interactions take place, services are delivered, knowledge is utilized, policy is developed and implemented, the way citizens participate in governance, public administration reform and the way good governance goals are met (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2006). E-government may also be perceived as the application of ICTs to facilitate social governance processes or objectives, such as information for political participation, consultation and consensus-seeking among governments, public servants, politicians and citizens (Sheridan and Riley, 2006).

E-governance is an advanced level of e-government where citizen and government engagement takes place electronically. The United Nations (2008) discusses various forms of e-government. *Connected governance* (sometimes referred to as networked governance) is a deepened form of e-governance and refers to governmental collective action to advance the public good by engaging the creative efforts of all segments of society. E-governance aims at improving cooperation between government agencies, allowing for an enhanced, active and effective consultation and engagement with citizens, and a greater involvement with multi-stakeholders regionally and

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