

Chapter 105

E–Government Portal Updates’ Evaluation: A Comparative Analysis

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ABSTRACT

More than a decade has passed since the launch of the first e-Government one-stop web portals, which concern central points for digital access by citizens, enterprises and government. Due to the broad audience that these portals serve, various analyses have been performed concerning their effectiveness with regard to service delivery; trustworthiness with regard to service availability; usability; accessibility; and user satisfaction etc. The results from these analyses have extreme interest for governments, since they reflect government strategic planning, internal efficiency and effectiveness, while they have been utilized for their upgrades. E-Government portal upgrade appears to be something usual and various updates have been observed in most portals during this timeframe. This paper addresses and important issue: “do e-Government portal updates enhance user satisfaction?” To this end, a comparative qualitative evaluation of some major e-Government portals is performed, with the use of the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) during 2009 and 2012.

1. INTRODUCTION

E-Government has been introduced since the early 1990s as the means to transform government processes to more effective, efficient and transparent ones; to engage citizens in policy and decision making; and to modernize public processes in general (Anthopoulos & Fitsilis,

forthcoming). This government transformation has been based on various initiatives, according to a corresponding e-strategic planning, which concern –among others- investments on information and communication technologies (ICT); civil servants’ training on ICT skills; diffusion programs such as, campaigns; public process reengineering; and respective legislature’s alignment etc.

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All these efforts result in citizen points of access that deliver public information and services to target audiences.

Alternative points of government access are named channels (Janssen et al., 2003; Vasilakis et al., 2007; Reddick & Turner, 2012) and concern web portals, call centers, traditional office visits etc. Channels' performance reflects public sector's efficiency and effectiveness, since service and information delivery is the outcome of the public internal processes. Effectiveness deals with the quality of public services and the degree of its independence from political willing; the quality of policy formulation and implementation; and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies (World Bank, 2012). On the other hand, government efficiency concerns public sector performance or productivity rates and it is mainly associated with public spending effects to socio-economic indicators (Hauner & Kyobe, 2008). Both these definitions justify that these points of access deliver information and service flows according to the existing public sector's efficiency and effectiveness and to this end, their performance is important to be measured.

This paper focuses on web channels and more specifically to the one-stop e-Government portals, which concern single-points, centrally official websites, from which citizens access their governments (Wimmer, 2002; Anthopoulos et al., 2007). The existence of one-stop e-Government portals requires (Wimmer, 2002) interconnected agencies; service integration; and content and service presentation in a logical manner. Such portals are supposed to be unique for national cases, as well as for supranational efforts. Indicative representatives concern USA.gov (for the U.S. Federal Government); Gov.uk (for the U.K. Government) etc., while youreurope.eu is a representative supranational case.

The evaluation of e-Government portals and websites has been approached by various scholars, while e-Government assessment alone is of great scientific and political interest. However, the evalu-

ation of one-stop portals' updates has not been investigated. More specifically, although most of these portals have been updated –even more than once- from their initial appearance, which could be justified by corresponding technological evolution, service integration or usability improvements, the outcome from these updates has not been measured. For instance, USA.gov initially appeared as FirstGov (in late 1990s) (Thompson et al., 2003) and it was updated to at least 3 versions until today.

With regard to portals' updates, this paper aims to answer the following questions: “*how can end-user satisfaction from one-stop e-Government web portals be measured?*” and “*do e-Government portal updates enhance user satisfaction?*.” These two questions are crucial to be answered for e-Government scholars. More specifically, the answer to the first question will explore existing satisfaction measurement methods from e-Government portals. On the other hand, the answer to the second question will demonstrate whether one-stop portals' updates succeed in their mission, which should be the end-user satisfaction against previous versions.

The remaining of this paper is structured as follows: section 2 presents the context of one-stop e-government portals and compares user satisfaction methods. In section 3 the research method and the corresponding domain study are illustrated, while the extracted findings are summarized and discussed. Finally, section 4 contains results and future thoughts.

2. BACKGROUND

This section presents the theoretical context of one-stop e-Government portals and e-Government satisfaction. One-stop e-Government concerns a single point of access to public information and services offered even-by different public authorities (Wimmer, 2002). The existence of online one-stops requires agencies' interconnec-

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