Chapter 7
Government and Mobile: A Gear Change?

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents a comprehensive review of what has been examined in the past and what needs to be explored in the future concerning mobile government (m-government). As an emerging branch of mobile services, m-government intends to help governments to better serve for the public, the business and non-government organizations with the assistance of mobile technologies. Although m-government originated from electronic government (e-government), it is not just a simple extension in respect to technological developments but a transformation from e-government to m-government. What matters most and is worthy of being further enhanced in this revolutionary process is the improvement of government's mobility instead of up-to-date technologies. That is to say, the shift from e-government to m-government is a game change instead of a gear change.

INTRODUCTION

Mobile Government (m-government) refers to an emerging set of strategies conducted by public sectors using latest mobile and wireless communication technologies in order to achieve a more efficient and effective governance and serve better for the intended recipients (El-Kiki, & Lawrence, 2006). Therefore, government administrations equipped with mobile technological infrastructures such as mobile applications and portals on smart phones, portable PCs, and personal digital assistants(PDAs), together with 3G even 4G wireless networks are able to offer the public, the business and non-government organizations quick access to information and services through multi-channels (Kim, Yoon, Park, & Han, 2004; Chang & Kannan, 2002).

Mobile government arises not only as a major branch of mobile studies in the academia, but also as a more effective and efficient service model for governments. With the rapid adoption of mobile technologies, electronic government (e-government) evolves into mobile government (m-government) unsurprisingly. A higher penetration of mobile network and a wider application of Internet-based mo-

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bile devices enable governments to improve their service delivery and increase the interaction between different objects, for instance, citizens, businesses and government employees. Hence, comparing to e-government, the future of m-government looks more promising, particularly in developing regions. A wide range of mobile services have been initiated in emergency management, election and voting, financial and banking businesses, police and agriculture services, etc. Yet, limitations of m-government still exist, such as the instability of mobile infrastructure and the questionable real capacity of improving two-way communication.

Most earlier studies on m-government focus on particular dimensions or m-government in a particular country. Few studies have offered a comprehensive review of what has been done and reveal what lies ahead for further studies. The current chapter fills the gap by summarizing earlier key studies and mapping new dimensions and directions for further studies.

The comprehensive and critical review is based on the search results generated by a combination of use of key words and the snowball method (Napoleon & Bhuiyan, 2010). A search using "mobile government" and "m-government" was conducted at Google Scholar search engine and the online database at the library of University of Melbourne. And the snowball method resulted in 53 most-cited articles.

STATE OF THE ART

At present, m-government is not only seen as the technical assistance to the governance (El-Kiki, & Lawrence, 2006), but also a new paradigm that can transcend its previous service delivery model (Song, 2005; Song & Cornford, 2006). It is believed that, as a competent method for reshaping governance, m-government is capable of bringing target-specific services to mobile audiences and enhancing the mobility of integrated governmental systems. Having transcending the mere potential of mobile technologies successfully, it is not just a supplement to e-government but an updated version with e-government as a basis (Song, 2005).

The current model of m-government contains four main types of relationship: G2C, G2B, G2G and G2E (Mengistu, Zo, & Rho, 2009). Here G refers to government, C refers to citizens, B refers to businesses, and E refers to employees in government organizations. M-government is being largely explored relying on this framework for it is basic yet inclusive. More details will be revealed below as a part of theoretical basis.

Characteristics and Advantages

Two distinctive characteristics of mobile technologies and thus of m-government are "mobility" and "wireless" (Trimi & Sheng, 2008). "Mobility" emancipates users from being tied to fixed locations and generates flexible channels of communication. "Wireless" renders data and information exchange to be freed from physical links even between digital devices. Therefore, instant and dependable access to m-government services stand out opposed to previous inflexible ways (Aloudat & Michael, 2011; Al-Hujran, 2012). Another essential characteristic of m-government is decentralization (Hellström, 2012). As m-government aims to improve democracy and become increasingly service-oriented, m-government is operated under the guidance of a decentralized approach.

Based on characteristics, several advantages of m-government services can be generalized as follow (Ntaliani, 2008). Ubiquity is generally acknowledged to be one as it is derived from mobility, which al-

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