Chapter 8
Voters and Mobile:
Impact on Democratic Revolution

Oarabile Sebubi
Botswana International University of Science and Technology, Botswana

ABSTRACT

The objective of democracy is to allow people the freedom to vote at ease and according to their individual choices. Mobile Election has high potentials of transforming and improving efficiency of the current electoral process, thereby enabling convenient and ubiquitous elections, hence, revolutionizing the institution of democracy. With so much potential though, its adoption is extremely low worldwide because the barriers to adoption are extremely high as mobile election is still lacking in addressing the critical and sensitive requirements of the electoral process worldwide. This chapter explores the potential impact of mobile elections to democratic establishments such as politics and voter participation. It then adopts a comparative analysis approach in exploring the barriers to adoption and possible solutions. Lastly, it provides recommendations for future research in the areas of voter trafficking, network and data security, inter-operability issue, digital/democratic divide issue, and voter satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

Mobile media is one of the contemporary research areas that have attracted a lot of attention from scholars interested in their emerging importance as a means of accessing, sharing, and disseminating news and information regarding politics, political events, and elections (Martin J., 2014; Martin J. A., 2015). One of such mobile media involves the use of mobile phone communication technologies to drive service delivery. Mobile communications have the potential to radically transform governments and to provide access to public information and services in areas where infrastructure required for Internet or wired phone service is not an option (OECD/International Telecommunication Union, 2011).

Mobile election is a special form of electronic service, commonly known as electronic voting (e-voting) driven by mobile phone based media. It is emerging as the future reformation of the current electoral process with a high likelihood of revolutionizing the democratic institution. Democratic election is a geographically dispersed activity which has to be organized and implemented within very tight time

frames, providing a cost-effective voting service for all eligible voters whilst maintaining high standards of integrity, security and professionalism and to achieve this is a major challenge to electoral management bodies (ACE Electoral Knowledge Network, 2015).

Therefore, mobile election, considered the core part of the democratic process, is the perfect solution to this challenge. It provides excellent democratic opportunities with the following benefits: increases citizen participation in the democratic process in both modern and developing societies. It allows voting to be done via mobile devices from home, work or while on the move, thereby, removing the inherited limitations of other voting systems that dictates physical interactions with the polling location and consequently, enhancing voter participation in elections. Above that, it makes voting easier for eligible voters and grant that their votes will be counted (Abdelghaffar, 2012).

Currently, most electoral management bodies around the world use new technologies with the aim of improving the electoral processes and one such is mobile election (ACE Electoral Knowledge Network, 2015). Mobile election, like other forms of mobile services offer *Enabled mobility* for more responsive public service delivery. The main reasons for the emergence of mobile services are the wider acceptance of these technologies by the public sector, high penetration of mobile devices, and ease of use for citizens, easier interoperability, and its ability to bring government closer to citizens and finally, it is less cost compared to computer-based services. Motivational factors for mobile services encompass better service accessibility, availability, responsiveness, quality, efficiency, and scalability. It also promotes better stakeholder participation, as well as improved communication (OECD/International Telecommunication Union, 2011).

The key objective of mobile phone voting is to eliminate going to polling booths, paper ballots, time and cost efficiency, tiredness and violence due to standing in line in pooling booths to cast their vote and to lessen the numbers of polling booths agents. Above that, it provides mobility feature which enhances turnout ratio in election (Ullah, 2013).

Mobile election has a wide range of application in areas such as shareholders' meetings, public policy initiatives, award nominations, opinion surveys, and school, club, and association elections. Each of these systems will have different requirements for security and auditability, depending upon their use (Mercuri, 2002). This chapter narrows the discussions only to multiparty/democratic elections.

METHODS

The chapter adopts an interdisciplinary literature review approach. In terms of topic, the review covers articles that discuss *mobile elections* and *democratic revolution*. The assumption here is that there is a strong correlation between mobile election and democratic revolution and the review is of the opinion that democratic revolution is possible with the adoption of mobile election. To perform such an analysis, the review devised different themes deemed to be relevant worldwide in the adoption of mobile election, as well as in ensuring that mobile election as an e-service yields tremendous change to the democratic institution. Therefore, discussions outlined below detail the process followed in selecting documents for the review. The review is restricted to documents that support chosen themes which are in turn categorized into broad analytical categories. There are two broad analytical categories for the review which reflects on the current issues pertaining to the topic of study from two angles, mobile election and democratic revolution dimensions.

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