Factors that Explain the Perceived Effectiveness of E-Government: A Survey of United States City Government Information Technology Directors

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the perceived effectiveness of e-government through a survey of city government Information Technology (IT) directors in the United States. The existing survey literature on e-government has primarily examined the features of e-government in terms of content and accessibility. This study is different in that it examines the performance of e-government through the lens of IT directors who should have knowledge on how effective e-government is for their city government. This research uses the citizen-initiated contacts with government literature as a way of understanding e-government effectiveness. Exploratory factor analysis reveals that e-government effectiveness is explained by management capacity, security and privacy, and collaboration in city governments. Of the three factors, the regression analysis carried out in this research indicated that management capacity and collaboration influenced e-government effectiveness. There was no evidence that security and privacy had a statistically significant impact on e-government effectiveness. The results of this study confirm much of the existing qualitative research that management capacity and collaboration are critical elements of e-government adoption. [Article copies are available for purchase from InfoSci-on-Demand.com]

Keywords: E-Government; Local Government; Management; Performance; Survey

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This article examines the effectiveness of e-government in city governments in the United States. A survey was conducted of Information Technology (IT) Directors in large cities to determine their views on the effectiveness of e-government for their local governments. E-government for the purposes of this study, is the public sector’s use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to deliver...
information and services to citizens through the Internet or other digital means, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This definition is broad enough to allow for the influence of new and emerging e-government technologies, but focuses specifically on citizen interaction with government through IT.

E-government research has proliferated since the rise of the Internet in the 1990s as a mainstream method of citizen-initiated contacts with government. The Internet was originally envisaged to be a major transformational force to empower citizens to affect major change in governments (Ho, 2002). The evolution of e-government has been noted to be incremental rather than transformational (West, 2004; Norris and Moon, 2005). The literature in public administration on e-government was written during the high point of interest in the Internet as one method to decentralize government hierarchies and focus public sector organizations on results.

Much of the e-government literature to date has examined the overall adoption of e-government in terms of its level of sophistication and breadth of information and service offerings. However, there is much less research that evaluates the effectiveness of e-government for public managers (Streib and Navarro, 2005; Reddick and Frank, 2007). This knowledge gap in the literature is where this study contributes to this growing and important body of knowledge. This study is different from existing surveys on e-government because it examines effectiveness through a national survey of IT directors in large-sized cities in the United States. As resources for e-government become increasingly scarce for city governments, this study attempts to address what impact e-government has actually had on city governments.

Citizen participation through e-government has been argued that it will lead to increased accountability of governments and increase citizen trust and confidence in public officials (West, 2004; Welch, Hinnant, and Moon, 2004). The Internet has been touted as one service channel that can increase trust and confidence in citizen-initiated contacts with government (Thomas and Streib, 2003). Therefore, one way of examining why citizens contact government can be found in the extensive literature on citizen-initiated contacts with government; with much of this literature essentially predating the Internet.

In order to examine the effectiveness of e-government this study covers the following. There is an examination of the citizen-initiated contacts with government literature, showing the connection between these studies and the e-government literature. There is a review of the existing e-government survey research to determine where this study fits into this body of knowledge. Following this, the research model and methods of this study are presented. The most important part of this article is the factor analysis and a regression models of the factors that explain e-government effectiveness. The conclusion outlines the importance of the factors that explain e-government effectiveness.

CITIZEN-INITIATED CONTACTS AND E-GOVERNMENT LITERATURES

The existing literature on citizen-initiated contacts examines contacts by citizens being essentially related to needs, awareness, and their socio-economic status (Thomas, 1982). There is little systematic information on the impact of the sources of citizens’ contacts with bureaucracy or their satisfaction with that contact (Moon, Serra, and West, 1993; Serra, 1995). Research indicates that perceived needs for a service was the most important predictor of all forms of citizen-initiated contacts (Thomas and Melkers, 1999; Thomas and Melkers, 2000). Therefore, the need for a service with municipal government can be used to examine citizen-initiated contacts with e-government.

There are several studies that examine citizen-initiated contacts by citizens (Jones; Greenberg, Kaufman, and Drew, 1977; Vedlitz, Dyer, and Durand, 1980; Sharp, 1984; Vedlitz and Dyer, 1984; Hirlinger, 1992; Thomas and Melkers, 1999), but there is much less research
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