Chapter 4
A New SWOT Analysis of an E–Government System:
Singapore Case

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ABSTRACT

E-Government is defined as the utilization of the Internet and other technological means to deliver public services to citizens. Following the success of the iGov2010 plan, Singapore has recently launched an e-Government Master Plan 2011-2015 (eGov2015), which opens a new epoch of relationship between government and the public. This chapter aims to (i) discuss the current state of the e-Government system in Singapore, (ii) provide a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis of this e-Government system, and (iii) make policy recommendations on how to address challenges, facing e-Government in order to enhance public trust via the effective and efficient delivery of public services. This chapter is significant as it (i) addresses the issues from a practical perspective and from the view of users, and (ii) provides a better insight for further research in e-Government systems. Finally, neighbouring countries may benefit from the lessons drawn from the Singapore experience in terms of how to achieve a balance between technology adoption, citizen engagement, and delivery of electronic public services.

INTRODUCTION

E-governance embraces e-Government, being defined as the utilization of the Internet and other technological means to deliver public services to citizens and encourage citizen participation. E-Government is one of the most enabling platforms for government to build trust with citizens and allow active citizen engagement in the delivery of public services, as well as in the decision making process. E-Government also promotes openness, transparency and accountability, and, thus, it can

change the nature of the relationship between the public sector and the private sector, civil society and citizens.

This chapter aims to (i) discuss the current state of the e-Government system in Singapore, (ii) provide a SWOT analysis of this e-Government system, and (iii) make policy recommendations on how to address challenges, facing e-Government in order to enhance public trust via the effective and efficient delivery of public services.

This chapter will focus on the current strategic framework of Singapore's e-Government system, the strengths and weaknesses of this system, using a SWOT analysis. It also explores the opportunities for e-Government, including the emergence of m-government, a new approach to deliver public services, and the active participation of the citizens in Singapore. A series of cyber-attacks disrupting the government websites in many countries, such as the U.S.A., Malaysia, Estonia, Brazil, etc., has also prompted the author to investigate the growing threats of privacy, security and e-terrorism to the development of an e-Government system.

This chapter is significant as it will (i) address the research questions from a practical perspective and from the view of users (citizens), and (ii) provide a better insight for further research in e-Government and e-Governance, given the growing demand of good public governance and better public services. Finally, neighbouring countries may benefit from the lessons drawn from the Singapore experience in terms of how to achieve a balance between technology adoption, citizen engagement and effective public services.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section revisits the concept of e-Government, e-Government system and factors affecting this system.

E-Government and E-Government System

There are many definitions of e-Government. According to the United Nations Division for Public Economics and Public Administration (2002), e-Government refers to the delivery of public services and dissemination of government information to the public via the Internet. E-Government is considered as a platform for the government and its citizens to communicate with each other in a timely and cost-effective manner (Angelopoulos, Kitsios, & Papadopoulos, 2010; Evans, & Ye, 2006; Latre et al., 2010). Heeks (2001, 2005) and Rotchanakitumnuai (2008) commented that information technology (IT) is critical to enhance the performance of the public sector in terms of provision of public services. Davies (2007) also affirmed that the value of a government network would be created by using "sophisticated web of technology to support communication and coordination between a diverse network of stakeholders" (p. 11). To make it simple, e-Government is defined as the delivery of the information and services by the public sector via electronic means (Tolbert, & Mossberger, 2006).

Accordingly, e-Government system is the use of IT applications as parts of an integrated architecture framework to deliver public services and to allow various groups of stakeholders to be connected with government and with one another. However, e-Government system is not only about the deployment of technology or techno-based means, but it is about the interconnection and interdependence between the use of technology, strategy, policy, organisational structure, and stakeholders (Angelopoulos, Kitsios, & Papadopoulos, 2010; Yildiz, 2007). These parts of the system must work in a synchronized manner in order to make the system function well, i.e. to transform government as a whole by making it more transparent, responsive, accessible, effective and efficient.

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