

Chapter 26

Assessment of Levels and Interrelationships of ICT Deployment, Web Readiness, and Web Presence Quality of Nigerian E-Government Websites

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ABSTRACT

Electronic government (e-government), facilitated through government websites are becoming the fastest delivery modes of government services, as they make services available to users, anywhere, anytime. Previous studies focused on the accessibility or quality of these websites in terms of web readiness and/or web presence quality measures. However, no known study has investigated the interrelationships among web readiness, web presence quality and information communication technology deployment for government services (ICT deployment) in Nigeria. The study used a questionnaire (test-retest Spearman r 0.79 for all construct items) to collect data from a sample of 117 public servants in 20 government agencies, on their knowledge of ICT deployment in their agencies; and a checklist for the content analysis of 207 Nigerian government websites, measuring their web readiness and web presence quality. The study recommended that government agencies should re-align ICT deployment with the information, services and features of their e-government websites.

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INTRODUCTION

Electronic government (e-government) refers to the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to provide information and government services to citizens, business organizations and other stakeholders. In other words, e-government entails the development and use of different technology-driven platforms and channels for mediating interactions between the government and the governed (Tiamiyu & Ogunsola, 2008).

E-government has brought improvements and changes in the roles and responsibilities of the government and the governed. Improvements are expected in the efficiency of governments' internal processes and in the quality of their interactions with individuals and businesses (Curtin, Sommer and Vis-Sommer, 2003; Siew & Leng, 2003). It has also helped in reshaping the public sector (West, 2004; Guo and Lu, 2005; Kaan, 2007; Yaghoubi, Haghi & Asl, 2011), and increased government transparency (Wong & Welch, 2004; Akunyili, 2010; Adebisi, Ayo & Adebisi, 2010).

The Layne and Lee's (2001) model of e-government development recognizes three or four stages of development of e-government, beginning with the information "publishing" or "catalogue" stage, wherein focus is on the provision, through government websites, of information about governments, their objectives and policies and services, and their officials and documents. This is followed by the transaction stage, wherein focus shifts to the actual provision of government transactions with citizens and other stakeholders. The third stage is the integration stage, wherein government information and services become integrated vertically among different hierarchically-related agencies of government and/or horizontally among agencies and stakeholders at the same levels. The final stage is often referred to as the stage of maturity. E-government maturity emerges when e-government services are put online at a high level of performance in order to help citizens to get the best value from their online interactions with the government (Jupp, 2003). Maturity of e-government implies that citizens can obtain information, as well as interact and complete various transactions with government remotely online without necessarily appearing physically at government offices.

In Nigeria, for instance, increased utilization of ICT for the delivery of government services was emphasized in 1999 by the President Obasanjo administration (Choudrie, Umeoji & Forson, 2012). At that time, almost all government services were provided to citizens and other government agencies through the traditional manual methods. This implies that services were accessed through personal visits of customers to government offices, assisted only by postal mails, radio or analogue television broadcasts and limited land-based telephone communications (Tiamiyu, 2005). Then, the fastest delivery modes of government information dissemination and transfer services to customers were primarily the telegraph, cablegram, facsimile, radio, telephone, and analogue television (Okwueze, 2010). Most Nigerians did not really understand and enjoy the inherent benefits of use of modern information technologies by governments, until after the turn of the century, and particularly until the hitherto frustrating telecommunication sector of the country was liberalized in 2003.

Since the early 2000s, there have been efforts made towards electronic connection between the Nigerian government and its people. Some of these efforts in the direction of e-government led the Nigerian government to launch the National Information Technology Policy in March 2001. The implementation began with the establishment of National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), under the Ministry of Science and Technology, to champion development of information technology (IT) in Nigeria and promote the implementation of the national IT policy (Fatile, 2012). This has led to the creation of websites by many government agencies, though most of these. Websites are not much inter-

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