

Chapter 82

Citizen Attitudes About Open Government and Government 2.0: A Path Analysis

Taewoo Nam

Sungkyunkwan University, South Korea

ABSTRACT

The analysis on the secondary data from the Pew Internet and American Life Project's national survey (Government Online) found what influences American citizens' attitude about Open Government and Government 2.0, which can be identified as a new goal and tool, respectively, of e-government. This study employs a path analysis based on standardized structural equation estimation, which decomposes the causal relationships among multiple variables into standardized direct and indirect effects. The analysis suggests some noteworthy findings. Heavy users of e-government services and those with trust in government are likely to have positive attitudes toward the new phase of e-government, Open Government and Government 2.0. Socio-demographic conditions have indirect effects on citizen attitudes through the mediating effect of e-government use.

1. THE NEW PHASE OF E-GOVERNMENT

E-government is entering into the new phase. Some academics see Open Government as a new direction of e-government (Harrison et al., 2011; Wimmer, 2011). Two primary triggers promote the transition from the existing e-government to Open Government. First and foremost, the U.S. president Barack Obama and his administration have envisioned Open Government as a new direction for the U.S. government since his first year, by issuing *The Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies* (Executive Office of the President, 2009a) and the Open Government Directive (Executive Office of the President, 2009b). He has committed his administration to a presumption of openness in government. Second but not least, a potential of information and communication technologies (ICTs) for openness

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offers possibilities for an unprecedented level of transparency, participation, and collaboration, which are three guiding principles of the administration's Open Government Directive (Heckmann, 2011). Especially social technologies—for example, social media and collaborative technologies of Web 2.0—may have a great impact on achieving the three hallmarks of Open Government.

There are some academic efforts that consider Open Government within the context of e-government and its broader implications for the future of public administration (Gascó, 2015; Hansson, Belkacem, & Ekenberg, 2015; Harrison et al., 2011; Linders & Wilson, 2011; Wilson & Linders, 2011; Wijnhoven, Ehrenhard, & Kuhn, 2015; Wimmer, 2011). Notably, Harrison et al. (2011) argue that the current U.S. administration's Open Government Initiative blurs traditional distinctions between e-democracy and e-government by incorporating historically democratic practices, now enabled by emerging technologies, within administrative agencies. Open Government can be a target stage of e-government development and maturity. Open Government itself cannot be new as long as the public have expressed the need for Open Government, but Open Government offers something new for e-government. Open Government may be taken as a new goal of e-government.

A new tool may help government achieve the new goal. Government adopts the ubiquitous, prevailing fashion of Web 2.0, which is the second generation of Web access and use, characterized as participatory, pervasive and integrated (Mintz, 2008). With a variety of technological potentials of Web 2.0, e-government can become more transparent, participatory, and collaborative. A new term, Government 2.0—the government's merger with Web 2.0 (Johannessen, 2010)—is worthy of attention. It denotes the use of Web 2.0 technologies to socialize government services, processes, and data (DiMaio, 2009). E-government's use of collaborative technologies is at the heart of Web 2.0. It permits a two-way and multi-way interaction between government and citizens via online comments, live chats, and message threads. Indeed there is something new in today's e-government, different from "government as usual" (Golembiewski & Gabris, 1995; Holzer & Halachmi, 1996). Today's government is exposed to new opportunities, enabled and facilitated by Government 2.0 as a new tool, to accommodate citizens' values: e.g., accessibility to information and services, efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery, and transparency and accountability in operation and administration (Lathrop & Ruma, 2010). This happens not merely in the U.S., but in many other countries.

This study sheds light on the two buzzwords currently resonating in the public sector: Open Government and Government 2.0, which can be taken as the new ends and new means, respectively, of e-government. In consideration of openness to whom, the new aspects of e-government need to be viewed from citizens' eyes. For that, this article focuses on citizen attitudes toward Open Government and Government 2.0. This study raises a research inquiry that can be statistically examined: "What determines citizen attitudes about the new goal and tool of e-government?". To answer that question, the study analyzes the U.S.-based random-sampled data from Government Online survey that the Pew Internet and American Life Project conducted. The study examines the influence of determinates drawing from prior literature: i.e., ICT use, e-government services use, trust in government, perceived value of e-government, and socio-demographic conditions.

The article is organized as follows. The next section of literature review discusses the background behind the new phase of e-government. The subsequent section derives potential determinates of citizen attitudes from previous empirical research. As a result of these literature-based discussions, a research model is constructed. After describing details of the secondary data used and measurements, this paper presents the results of the path analysis based on standardized structural equation estimation. The final section concludes with further discussion of key findings and practical and research implications.

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