

Chapter 4.19

The Prospects of Mobile Government in Jordan: An Evaluation of Different Delivery Platforms

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ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to assess the viability of mobile governmental services in Jordan as a precursor to embracing mobile government as a complementing medium of communication. Reflecting on Jordan's experience with electronic governmental services, it is evident to say that the first wave of electronic governmental services was delivered through the Web as the sole communication channel. Despite the success of a number of governmental entities to utilise such a communication channel, the penetration of the Internet in the Jordanian society is very low which dampens such limited cases of success. Currently, the e-government initiative is considering mobile phones for the future waves of its electronic service delivery on a multi-channel platform. This chapter articulates the concerns

and issues surrounding the viability of mobile government in terms of availability of bandwidth and reach. The chapter will provide a number of statistics and other qualitative reviews concerning previous experiences in the Jordanian electronic government initiative.

INTRODUCTION

It is evident to say that the past few years have witnessed the emergence of many communication channels and media based on information and communication technologies and networks as an alternative to the more "traditional" face-to-face, phone and fax modes of business conduct. The most prominent of these channels and communication media were the Internet and the

Mobile/Cellular network. The Internet started as a distributed system for information and knowledge interchange, and evolved to become the medium for several crucial applications, such as e-commerce, e-banking, e-government, e-business, and so forth, that share business processes and connect different organisations. Abu-Samaha (2005) points out that contents delivered via such channels, that is, digital libraries, electronic markets, virtual stores, electronic business, and electronic commerce, are primarily perceived as electronic replacements to the traditional modes of conducting trade, business, and transactions; that is, converting such transactions into a stream of electrons representing data, products, services, and payments. Such move from physical, face-to-face to electronic modes and channels is expected to provide organisations with many benefits; some of these include: expanding market reach (global availability, small compete with large organisations), generating visibility at very low cost, strengthening business relationships (EDI and B2B using XML), offering new services online; reducing cost (through paperless inter- and intra-business activities; that is, exchanging e-mails to support conducting daily activities within and across organizational boundaries), shortening time to market and expediting time to respond to changing market demands, improving customer loyalty, real-time training and conferencing; personalization of goods; enabling employees to carry out tasks internally and externally, reducing cost of creating, processing, distributing, storing, and retrieving paper-based activities, reducing inventories and overheads, saving time to look for resources; obtain useful expertise from the Internet, savings in communication costs; promoting current and future products and/or services, and disseminating information (Abu-Samaha, 2005; Amor, 2002, p. 17; Lawrence, Corbitt, Tidwell, Fisher, & Lawrence, 1998; Simpson & Swatman, 1998; Turban, Kuy Lee, & King, 1999, p. 15). Conducting business electronically is believed by many professionals and academics to be the “most

promising” innovation of the future. *Turban and Potter (2001)* explain that a highly sought business strategy is “a multifaceted concept, ranging from electronic transfer of funds between buyers and suppliers, to Internet-based marketing, to intranet- and extranet-based information networks for both inter- and intra-organizational support”.

Electronic government can be perceived as an implementation of electronic business/commerce (EB/EC) within governmental domains from an operational point of view. Though e-government concept possesses a number of distinguishing features when compared to electronic business, such as strategic and operational reasons for investment, expected benefits and outcomes, and targeted audience (citizens, businesses, and other governmental and non-governmental entities). Ginige and Murugesan (2001) propose a classification of Web-based applications, where these applications are grouped into seven categories (Table 1).

Based on Table 1, it can be said that electronic governmental systems/services can provide a variety of services, information and application to its beneficiaries—that is, information, interaction, transaction, collaboration, and Web portals. As well, it is evident to note that electronic government applications and services are one of those applications/services that do not fit exactly into a specific category/class; on the contrary, they seem to span many different categories/classes.

Reflecting on Jordan’s experience with electronic governmental services, it is evident to say that the first wave of electronic governmental services was delivered through the Web as the sole communication channel. Despite the success of a number of governmental entities to utilise such a communication channel, the penetration of the Internet in the Jordanian society is very low which dampens such experiences of success. Currently, the e-government initiative is considering mobile phones for the future waves of its electronic service delivery on a multi-channel platform using mobile/cellular phones/network

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