Chapter 14
Adoption of E-Government Services:
The Case of Electronic Approval System

Sinawong Sang
Seoul National University, Republic of Korea

Jeong-Dong Lee
Seoul National University, Republic of Korea

Jongsu Lee
Seoul National University, Republic of Korea

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to assess and test the factors that influence user adoption of e-Government services: the Electronic Approval System (EAS). This study uses the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the extended TAM (TAM2), the Diffusion of Innovation (DOI), and trust to build a parsimonious yet comprehensive model of factors that influence user acceptance of the EAS. We collected data from a total of 112 public officers in 12 ministries in Cambodia. We assessed the model with regression analyses. The findings in this article show that the determinants of the model (perceived usefulness, relative advantage, and trust) explain 30.5% of the variance in user acceptance of the EAS. At the same time, image, output quality, and perceived ease of use explain 38.4% of the variance in user perception of the usefulness of the EAS. In this article, we discuss our findings, implications, and suggestions for future research.

INTRODUCTION

Since the adoption of a liberal political system and market economy in the late 1990s, Cambodia, a developing nation with an emerging economy, has enthusiastically pursued various political, economic, social, and public administration reforms to accelerate its economic growth and help alleviate poverty. As a reform measure, the government has implemented e-Government, in a form known as the Government Administration Information System (GAIS). GAIS is intended as

a tool to improve the process of government in order to meet a variety of challenges, including corruption, poor public administration, and lack of adequate transparency and accountability in the exercise of public decision-making powers and the delivery of public services. The GAIS was to connect and computerize the government with four core practical applications: the Electronic Approval System (EAS), the Real Estate Registration system, the Resident Registration system, and the Vehicle Registration system, as well as the presence of the government on the World Wide Web.

The real estate, resident, and vehicle registration systems are in operation and are widely used. However, the EAS is not yet widely used (Phu, 2003).

Indeed, the main purpose of the EAS is to allow ministries to exchange documents both internally and externally. It incorporates all traditional manual functions to allow users to use the system with ease (Phu, 2003). It allows users to send, approve, store, and retrieve documents electronically, in order to replace manual processing of paper and signatures. This is because most problems that previously arose at government offices, departments, or ministries were caused by a complicated maze of administrative processes. Paper forms are the main way to collect routine administrative approvals. Every day, government employees roll paper forms into manual typewriters to record the basis of an administrative approval. After typing, the forms are reviewed, checked, signed, transported, entered in computer databases, filed, retrieved, archived, shredded, dumped, and burned. The workload of paper forms is considerable. Frequently, agencies lose documents without knowing who was responsible, and documents are unreasonably delayed without reasonable cause (Phu, 2003).

The functions of the EAS include:

- Approval: The Approval features include reporting processes such as drafting, submitting, approving, sending, receiving, and accepting electronic documents. The approval process is restricted by an individual's position and permissions granted: thus, a user can only do what he or she is allowed to do. The drafter can draft, submit, send, and resend the document. The approver can approve, modify, suspend, and examine the draft. The Document Manager can accept and distribute the document. Aside from these basic approval processes, the system offers many other features to facilitate electronic document approval.

- Mail: The system lets users exchange messages, not only with other members of their organization but also with people outside the system. It offers an easy-to-use HTML editor as well as a plain text pad, so that users can create vivid messages with just a few clicks.

- Bulletin board: The system offers versatile bulletin boards that can be used for such purposes as sharing ideas or making announcements. It offers several types of boards, such as public announcement boards, department boards, and secured boards. Bulletins can have an unlimited number of attachments for easy distribution of documents, software, or patches. The board has another distinctive feature called "Reservation Posting". This feature allows users to set the post date, so that the bulletin will be posted automatically at the designated time.

- User and organization chart: The system offers an easy way to search for members of the system. The internal search offers detailed information on departments and users, and the external search lets users search other organizations through a central database server. Users can search using keywords or by navigating through the organizational chart.

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