Chapter 5.35
Towards Measuring True E–Readiness of a Third–World Country:
A Case Study on Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT

This chapter talks about measuring true e-readiness of a third-world country. As a case study, e-readiness measurement is done on Sri Lanka. First, this chapter assesses e-readiness of Sri Lanka using a measuring tool that utilizes 52 socio-economic indicators. Second, based on the assessment, this chapter reveals that the measurement does not indicate true e-readiness of the country, as the tool does not model or incorporate parameters for measuring the domestic digital divide that exists between communities or groups within the country. Third, this chapter proposes a method for incorporating the domestic digital divide measures in e-readiness calculations.

INTRODUCTION

Many governments across the globe have now resorted to employing e-government initiatives to better position themselves in the Information Age. For these governments, it is important to have some understanding of the level of preparedness in comparison with their performances. The level of preparedness to adopt e-government initiatives and activities is referred to as e-readiness (Ifinedo & Davidrajuh, 2005).

Measuring E-Readiness

There are many tools in use for measuring e-readiness. These tools make use of differing parameters that are classified under a number of categories such as infrastructure, access, applications and services, economy, use of the Internet, skills and human resources, e-business climate, pervasiveness (per capita usage), and so forth; the Bridges Organization (2001) provides a comprehensive coverage of many of the tools and their sources. Some of the organizations that have tools or models for measuring e-readiness include the Center for

International Development at Harvard University, the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Electronic Commerce Steering Group, McConnell International, and The World Information Technology and Services Alliance (WITSA). These tools measure a country's level of preparedness, providing the opportunity for evaluating their performances against their own set objectives in national development plans, and benchmark their progress against the best performing countries; thus, one can measure disparities existing in access and use of ICT between countries (the "international digital divide").

True E-Readiness

Though the previously mentioned tools compare a country's e-readiness with the rest of the world, these tools rarely model or incorporate parameters for measuring the domestic digital divide that exists between communities or groups within a country. This chapter proposes a method for incorporating the domestic digital divide measures in e-readiness calculations.

Structure of This Chapter

In the next section, a tool for measuring e-readiness is presented. Using this tool, e-readiness of Sri Lanka is measured. In the second section, the results of the measurement are analyzed in order to identify the problems associated with omitting domestic digital divide measures in e-readiness calculations. In the third section, a set of proposals is presented for incorporating domestic digital divide measures in e-readiness calculations.

MEASURING E-READINESS

As there are many tools available for measuring the e-readiness of a country, different countries tend to use differing tools, guides, and measures in their bid to assess their ability to function and compete in an increasingly networked world. For example, the India e-readiness measure utilized a version that it finds appropriate for the task of assessing development in its states (Department of Information Technology, 2005). For measuring e-readiness of Norway, Davidrajuh (2004) used a tool developed by Bui et al. (2003). Two of the most robust e-readiness tools available are those by the World Bank (2002) and the Economist Intelligence Unit (2004) that covers seven building blocks. Suffice to say that some of the e-readiness tools tend to measure the same metrics using different names.

In this work, a tool developed by Bui, Sankaran, and Sebastian (2002) is used. This tool is selected because it is easily extensible, easy to use, and has a large set of indicators.

The Tool

The tool developed by Bui et al. (2002) consists of three basic building blocks. The three basic building blocks are:

1. Demand forces
2. Supply forces
3. Societal infrastructure

The three basic building blocks are divided into eight major factors, and each of these major factors has a set of indicators. The major factors and the number of indicators that come under these factors are:

1. Demand forces
   a. Culture, understanding and effectiveness: 4 indicators
   b. Knowledgeable citizens: 6 indicators
2. Supply forces
   a. Industry competitiveness: 7 indicators
   b. Access to skilled workforce: 6 indicators

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