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The imperative of influencing citizen attitude toward e-government adoption and use

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ABSTRACT

With the imperative of e-government for better transparency, accountability and public services, the problem of low-level citizen adoption of e-government services has been recognized in developed and developing countries. This pressing problem needs socio-technological, political, and cultural perspectives. In this study we develop an integrative research model by extending extant Technology Acceptance Model through the incorporation of a set of social, political, and cultural constructs: trust, perceived public value, and national culture. The model is then tested using a large-scale, multi-site survey research of 413 Jordanian citizens. Our results find strong evidence that citizen attitude toward using e-government services is the most significant determinant of citizen intention to adopt and use e-government services. Citizen attitude, in turn, is jointly determined by perceived public value and perceived ease of use. These results have managerial implications that the government needs to pay closer attention to influencing citizen attitude toward using e-government services.

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1. Introduction

Electronic government (e-government) refers to the use of information and communication technology (ICT) tools and applications to enhance government transparency and accountability in public administration by improving public services delivery, access to information and services and public governance (Chatfield & Alhujran, 2009; Ciborra & Navarra, 2005; Panagiotopoulos, Al-Debei, Fitzgerald, & Elliman, 2012). The characteristics of good public governance include improved transparency and accountability. The promise of greater government transparency and accountability is often the reason for developing countries to take part in e-government projects (Chatfield, Alanazi, & Alanazi, 2015; Chen, Jubilado, Capistrano, & Yen, 2015; Ciborra & Navarra, 2005). Indeed, the main emphasis of e-government is not the implementation of new ICT systems to automate the traditional public service processes or add a new online service delivery channel *per se*, but rather it aims at improving transparency, accountability and governance of the public sector services and in so doing it can improve government performance and create new public value for citizens and businesses (Chatfield & AlHujran, 2007; Panagiotopoulos et al., 2012; Wang, 2014).

Achieving these goals require greater public engagement in e-government services. However, despite the noticeable efforts in this domain, many governments worldwide are still facing the pressing problem of low-level adoption of e-government services by citizens (Al-Hujran, Aloudat, & Altarawneh, 2013; Belanger & Carter, 2008; Gupta, Dasgupta, & Gupta, 2008; Hamner & Al-Qahtani, 2009; Kumar, Mukerji, Butt, & Persaud, 2007; Lin, Fofanah, & Liang, 2011; Rana & Dwivedi, 2015). This pressing problem needs urgent research attention since the success of e-government is highly dependent upon citizens' adoption and use of e-government services (Carter & Bélanger, 2005; Ozkan & Kanat, 2011; Panagiotopoulos et al., 2012). This highlights the importance of understanding the multi-faceted factors that may influence citizens' adoption of e-government services. Although technology adoption from the user perspective has been extensively studied in such contexts as e-commerce and the Internet (Al-Debei & Al-Lozi, 2014; Tung & Rieck, 2005), relatively few studies have focused on citizen adoption of e-government services (Beldad, De Jong, & Steehouder, 2011; Gauld, Goldfinch, & Horsburgh, 2010).

Unlike adoption and use of various information technologies in private-sector organizations which are mostly mandatory, citizen adoption of e-government services is *voluntary* and often occurs in turbulent socio-political environments such as changes in political leadership and budget cuts. As such, the adoption of

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e-government services should not only be examined from a technological perspective; but also a more comprehensive, integrative approach, which accommodates social, political, and cultural perspectives, is needed to advance our knowledge in this domain (Carter, Christian Shaupp, Hobbs, & Campbell, 2012). Undoubtedly, without a clear and coherent understanding of what motivates the public to use e-government services, governments would not be able to make informed strategic decisions to increase the e-government adoption and use (Gilbert, Balestrini, & Littleboy, 2004; Carter et al., 2012).

Prior research on e-government adoption has largely focused on the developed countries. In consequence, little attention was received to examine e-government adoption and use in developing nations in general and the Arab nations in particular. This gap is significant given cultural and social characteristics of developing countries including Arab nations differ significantly from those of the Western nations (Baker, Al-Gahtani, & Hubona, 2010; Olasina & Mutula, 2015). Due to these differences, it is reasonable to expect that the factors influencing individuals' acceptance of technologies in Arab countries might fundamentally differ from those related to industrialized Western countries, such as those of North America and Western Europe (Al-Gahtani, 2004). For example, in Saudi Arabia, technology acceptance success factors have been reported to differ from those of developed nations (Al-Gahtani, 2004). Therefore, by drawing and extending extant Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), in this paper we aim to investigate the influence of socio-technological, political, and cultural factors on citizens' intention to adopt and use e-government services.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. In the next section, relevant literature is reviewed and then the integrative research model development and hypotheses are presented and discussed. In Section 3, research methods employed in this study are described. Data analysis and results are presented in Section 4, while in Section 5 a discussion of the results is offered. In Section 6, the implications of this research for theory and practice are discussed. Finally in Section 7, the conclusions of this research including research limitations and future research directions are presented.

2. Literature review and research model

2.1. E-government in Jordan

Jordan is "one of the rare countries in the Middle East with a history of commitment to good governance and ICT-related initiatives" (Ciborra & Navarra, 2005: p.142). In recent years, Jordan's efforts to provide e-government services to public have been recognized (Alomari, Sandhu, & Woods, 2010). Although e-government program in Jordan is still at the initial stages, Jordan has developed relatively advanced e-government service delivery capabilities in two-way interaction and e-democracy (Chatfield & Alhujran, 2009). In addition, the United Nations' e-government readiness reports ranked Jordan as one of the top 5 among the Arab countries (UN, 2003, 2005). Nonetheless, e-government in Jordan faces the problem of low usage levels of these electronic services (Al-Hujran et al., 2013; Al-Jaghoub, Al-Yaseen, & Al-Hourani, 2010; Mofleh, Wanous, & Strachan, 2008; Rana & Dwivedi, 2015). More than 85% of Jordanians never used e-government websites and electronic services (Al-Jaghoub et al., 2010).

Moreover, Jordan mainly relies on global experts to set up e-government initiatives (Elsheikh, Cullen, & Hobbs, 2008) and perceive such initiatives as pure IT projects. This is in most cases catastrophic as little attention is given to the specific national context of Jordan in terms of culture, politics, social issues, traditions, trust, public values, literacy and gender segregation. According to

Heeks (2003), the major reason behind e-government initiatives failure in developing countries is the gap experienced between the design and reality of e-government systems implementation. Accordingly, we believe that it is imperative for the government of Jordan to consider the social, demographic, political, and cultural influences in the e-government context so as to make it successful. Considering these factors would help countries including Jordan reducing the gap between design and reality of e-government under specific context of each country.

For Jordan, a better understanding of the factors that influence citizen adoption of e-government services is a critically important policy issue. Improvements in this domain would be helpful to policy makers in regards to the design of e-government services. It would also be useful to public organizations in improving their service delivery processes so as to increase the level of citizens' adoption of these services. Moreover, government agencies would find this valuable in retaining their current users and attracting new ones.

2.2. E-government adoption

Citizen adoption of e-government services is an important issue for the success of e-government initiatives (Carter & Bélanger, 2005; Ozkan & Kanat, 2011; Liu et al., 2014). Indeed, e-government services cannot improve public service delivery if they are not used by the public (Panagiotopoulos & Al-Debei, 2010). This raises the question of how to increase the level of citizen adoption of such services, especially in Arab countries. However, to date, there has been little research exploring factors that determine the adoption of e-government services by citizens in developing countries (Lin et al., 2011) including the Middle East (Alomari, Woods, & Sandhu, 2012). A recent review of the e-government literature conducted by Joseph (2013) also showed that there is an urgent need for e-government research studies that focus on regions such as the Middle East.

Prior research classified extant e-government adoption literature into two streams (Reddick, 2005). On the one hand, the first stream studies e-government adoption from the supply-side perspective, which reflects factors that are important or related to the supplier of public services (i.e. local, state, or national government). To date, this perspective explored factors that affect government organizations' adoption and implementation of e-government services (Coursey, Yang, Kasserkert, & Norris, 2007; Ferro & Sorrentino, 2010; Norris & Moon, 2005; Norris & Reddick, 2013; Li & Feeney, 2014). Examples of these factors include organization characteristics (e.g. size, red tape, culture and top management support), IT infrastructure, financial resources, and skilled personnel. On the other hand, the second stream studies e-government adoption from the demand-side perspective which focuses on "customers" of public services (i.e. citizens). Some scholars have utilized a number of theoretical frameworks to examine citizens' adoption of service provided by the government (e.g. Lin et al., 2011; Al-Hujran et al., 2013; Liu et al., 2014; Rana & Dwivedi, 2015). Examples of these factors include trust, risk, security, usefulness, and ease of use, attitude, quality, satisfaction, and computer experience.

However, while much of the literature has focused on the supply-side e-government adoption, relatively little is known about why and under what circumstances the public adopt e-government services (Gauld et al., 2010; Reddick, 2005). Therefore, the focus of this paper is citizen adoption (demand-side) of e-government services. In addition, even though there has been some initial efforts to study the citizens' adoption of e-government services in Jordan (Alomari et al., 2012; Mofleh et al., 2008; Alawneh, Al-Refai, & Batiha, 2013; Al-Hujran et al., 2013), none have examined how cultural (i.e. national culture) and

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