

Citizens' Trust in Digital Government: Toward Citizen Relation Management

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1. Background of Research

In the information age, it seems that the application of information technology is an indispensable tendency for the evolution of organizations in 21st century, regardless of public or private organizations. The application of information technology into public affairs briefly includes the electronic democracy, which is governance-oriented, and e-government, which is service-oriented. No doubt that the application of information technology will improve the efficiency of public sector obviously and the participation of the citizen through the electronic forum. But there are still some problems and issues that we should be concerned about, even though it is so convenient and attractive.

The most important two issues about e-government are its efficiency and trust problems. In this research, we will discuss and explore the issue on citizens' trust in digital government. We will suggest the way to improve the citizens' trust in e-government, then, we could enhance the performance of digital government.

2. Research Purpose

In the information age, information technology has changed the life of people and made people convenient for better quality of life. But there are also some people, even though many people love e-commerce and like to shop on the Web site, who do not trust the service from e-government. This research, therefore, explores the reasons why there are many people do not trust e-government and wouldn't like to use the public service on the Web site, even though the application of e-government is highly efficient.

For these reasons, this research explores factors that affect the citizens' trust in e-government. Then, researchers will apply these factors to improve the design of current e-government, especially, for better citizen relation management. Specifically, the main question of the research is "What are the factors that affect citizens' trust in digital government?"

According to the literature review, we can induce some factors and variables that affect consumers' confidence from e-commerce experience, and select some of them which meet the characteristic of e-government. As shown in Figure 1, they are:

1. Information protection commitment: Whether is there any commitment for individual information protection showed on the Web site?
2. Third-party assurance: Whether is there any "seal" issued by third-party assurance such as

accounting profession on the Web site?

3. Privacy policy: Dose the Web site has its privacy policy and content for citizens?
4. Digital signature: Can citizens use digital signature skill to identify themselves?
5. Accessibility: Is it easy to access the online service of e-government?
6. Past experience: Dose citizen have comfortable experience in e-government in the past?
7. Return policy: Could government provide the payment return warranty to the citizen as private sectors?
8. Professional appearance: Is the Web site of e-government professional enough? Can the citizen feel the professional service by e-government?
9. Security policy: Is there any security commitment on the Web site?
10. Availability of alternative accessible procedures: Is there any information about the alternative access approaches provided to the citizen, if they cannot connect with the Web site of e-government smoothly?
11. Credibility: Dose citizen feel the online service of government believable?
12. Socioeconomic status: Do the citizen who in different socioeconomic status level have different feeling or accessibility about e-government?
13. Education: Dose the different educational level impact the recognition of people for e-government?
14. Citizen Satisfaction: Dose citizen satisfy the service and performance provided by e-government?
15. Information sharing: Dose citizen feel the government share enough public information on the Web site?
16. Response in time: After citizen interacts with government online (included paying tax or fees, e-mailing to officials and so on), dose the e-government respond him/her in time (for example, send an e-mail message to citizen)?

Therefore, according to the discussion above, we could build our research framework as below.

3. Research Method

Because this research explores factors which affect citizens' trust in e-government. This research, therefore, is planning to design a questionnaire, and conduct a survey about citizen's perception of e-government, then we will find out the reasons why they trust the public service on the Web site or not. With regard to the sampling, the research focuses on the State of New Jersey. We are going to employ the "Systematic Sampling Design"¹ from random sampling. We will pick up 1,000 samples to be our respondents, and mail questionnaire to them.

Using questionnaire survey, the research conduct regression analysis to find out factors which affect citizens' trust in government. Then, based on the results, the research suggests recommendation for improving citizens' trust in digital government, especially, for better citizen relation management.

¹ It means systematic sample with a random start (Babbie 2000).

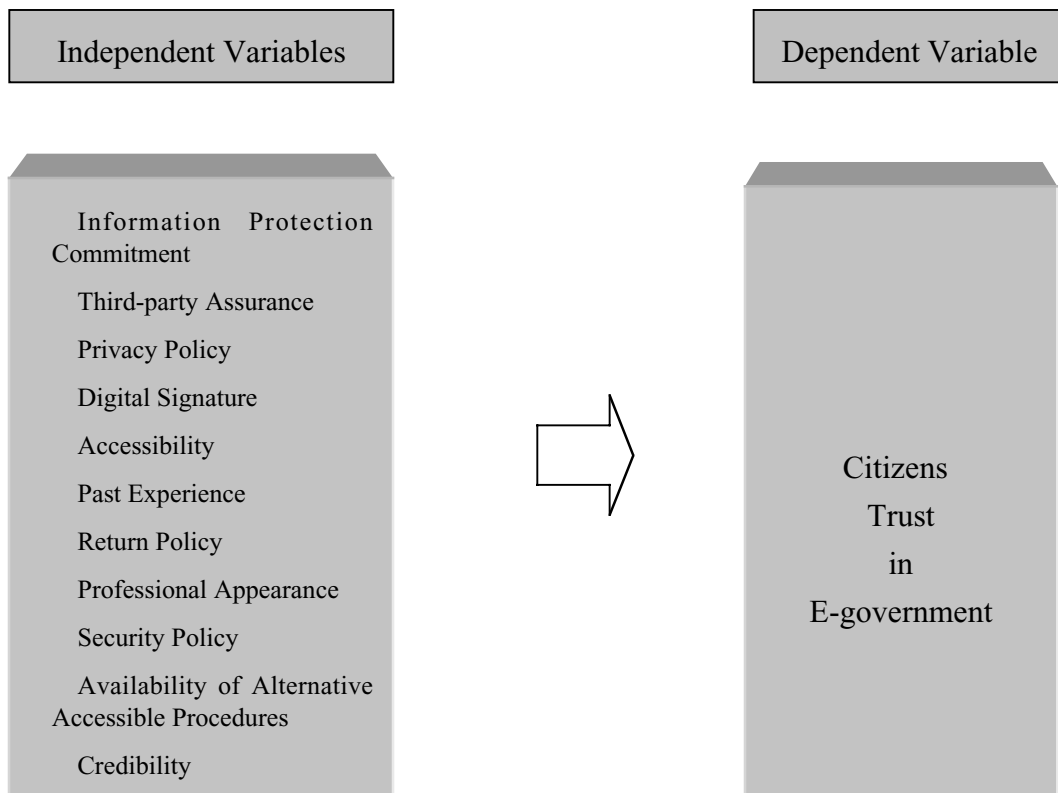


Figure 1. Independent variables for citizen trust of e-government.