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Ramlah Hussein

International Islamic University - Malaysia, ramlah@iiu.edu.my

Norshidah Mohamed

International Islamic University - Malaysia, norshidah@iiu.edu.my

Abdul Rahman Ahlan

International Islamic University - Malaysia, arahman@iiu.edu.my

Murni Mahmud

International Islamic University - Malaysia, murni@iiu.edu.my

Umar Aditiawarman

International Islamic University - Malaysia

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Modeling G2C Adoption in Developing Country: A Case Study of Malaysia

Ramlah Hussein

Department of Information System
Faculty Of ICT, International Islamic University
Malaysia
ramlah@iiu.edu.my

Norshidah Mohamed

Department of Information System
Faculty Of ICT, International Islamic University
Malaysia
norshidah@iiu.edu.my

Abdul Rahman Ahlan

Department of Information System
Faculty Of ICT, International Islamic University
Malaysia
arahman@iiu.edu.my

Murni Mahmud

Department of Information System
Faculty Of ICT, International Islamic University
Malaysia
murni@iiu.edu.my

Umar Aditiawarman

Department of Information System
Faculty Of ICT, International Islamic University
Malaysia

ABSTRACT

Electronic government or e-government has long been known as a breakthrough of a new form of communication and transaction between the government and citizens, the government and industries, and among the government agencies. Simply, e-government is meant not only to help the government to accomplish its daily administrative activities but also to provide an easier way to communicate with external entities such as citizens and businesses throughout the utilization of information and communication technology (ICT). With the implementation of e-government in Malaysia, study about Government to Citizens (G2C) adoption could be significantly important in reflecting its progress. Against this backdrop, this research intends to study G2C adoption in Malaysia by adopting Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) theory as a framework. Other factors that are believed to be influencing citizens' intention to use G2C system are also examined in the study.

Keywords

G2C adoption, TAM, perceived risk, trust, political efficacy.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Internet Technology has encouraged governments to take part in the virtual world throughout the development and deployment of electronic government in order to better serve the citizens. In the middle of information age and with the proliferation of innovations in ICT from time to time, governments have been cautiously taking this opportunity to reform their tasks in order to deliver information and services more efficiently and effectively through various ICT tools.

Electronic government or electronic governance or e-government has long been sounding as a breakthrough of communication and transaction between the government and citizens or government and industries. Simply, e-government is meant not only to help government to accomplish its daily administrative activities but also to provide an easier way to communicate with external entities such as citizens and businesses throughout the utilization of ICT. According to Gronlund and Horan (2004), e-government can be defined as "the use by government agencies of information technologies that have the ability to transform relations with citizens, businesses, and other arms of governments. These technologies can serve a variety of different ends: better delivery of government services to citizens, improved interactions with business and industry,

citizen empowerment through access to information, or more efficient government management. The resulting benefits can be less corruption, increased transparency, greater convenience, revenue growth, and/or cost reductions.” (pp. 718-719).

One of the most important reasons e-government is to embrace citizens and businesses closer to their governments. Consequently, the interactions and transactions can be established anywhere and anytime. Analogous to e-commerce technology, which allows businesses to transact with each other more efficiently and effectively (B2B) and brings customers closer to businesses (B2C), e-government aims to make the interaction between government and citizens (G2C), government and business enterprises (G2B), government and its own employee (G2E), and inter-agency relationships (G2G) more friendly, convenient, transparent, and inexpensive.

To date, there are many literatures that have shown empirical evidence that e-government is running smoothly in developed countries compared to developing countries. This is the reason why there are so many studies that have been conducted to identify the challenges and opportunities of e-government system in developing countries, not only by international organizations (eg. UN, WorldBank, OECD, etc) but also by practitioners and researchers. Some studies focused on how to adopt the successful plan and the strategy of e-government implementation from developed countries, which in most cases full considerations need to be taken because of many major differences from both sides (eg. cultural issues, IT infrastructure, government system, etc).

Generally, the study adopts TAM as basic research model to explain the status of e-government adoption by citizen and expands the model to identify determinants of TAM in the context of e-government adoption in Malaysia.

BACKGROUND OF STUDY

In 1996, the government of Malaysia initiated Multimedia Super Corridor Malaysia (MSC-Malaysia) as a platform to build a competitive market for the ICT companies and industries. MSC Malaysia has hosted more than 900 multinational and local companies that focused on ICT and multimedia products, services, solutions, and research and development. As one of the MSC Malaysia Flagship Applications, e-Government initiative was introduced to improve the way in which the government delivers the services to its citizens and industries. The projects under the e-Government flagship that have been started since ten years ago were aimed at building a more effective and efficient way to communicate and transact with the citizens and industries. One of the projects is Online Tax System or e-Filing.

In 2006, the Inland Revenue Board Malaysia (IRBM) on behalf of the government introduced the e-Filing system. The objectives of e-Filing are to facilitate tax compliance and to provide taxpayers service through the use of Internet technologies and WWW. By using e-Filing system, taxpayers are able to prepare, report and pay their tax online. Administratively, e-Filing may offer a potential benefit to the government because the process of tax return by the citizens can be managed effectively via the enabling technologies. It is reported that the number of e-Filing users has outnumbered the expectation of 500,000 users become 874,814 users in 2007; an increase of 369.5 percent since it was first introduced (Bernama, 2008). But the obstacles that remain concern taxpayers who are really anxious about the technology, lacking of technical skills, or do not trust of any online transaction. This has led the researchers to investigate the factors that might contribute to taxpayer's intention to use e-Filing system.

LITERATURE REVIEW

With the implementation of e-government in Malaysia, a study about Government to Citizens (G2C) adoption could be significantly important in reflecting its progress. Apparently, most of the established studies on e-government adoption are rooted from the theoretical model of e-commerce adoption. Some of the theories that constitute user's intention to use technology such as, Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Diffusion of Innovation (DOI), Perceived Characteristics of Innovating (PCI), Trust and Perceived Risk, were empirically tested in e-commerce adoption research (Pavlou, 2003; Gefen et al, 2003; McKnight et al, 2002).

Since both e-commerce and e-government have the same characteristics, there is no doubt that such studies of technology adoption in e-commerce could also be applicable in e-government context. Therefore, this study aims to integrate the constructs from established e-commerce adoption models that are mainly based on TAM, and web trust. In addition, some constructs such as, perceived risk, and political self efficacy are believed to be the determinants of e-government adoption.

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

Studying the acceptance and use of ICT has been the focus of many researchers in IS research for the last two decades. Adopted from the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) originated by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), Davis (1986) in his study developed Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which is specifically meant to explain computer usage behaviour. TAM is one of the most common theories applied in IS research and has established itself as a parsimonious powerful model in explaining and predicting technology acceptance (Davis and Venkatesh, 1996). The purpose of TAM is to provide an explanation of the determinants of computer acceptance in general as well as a basis for tracing the impact of external variables on internal beliefs, attitudes and intentions (Davis et al., 1989).

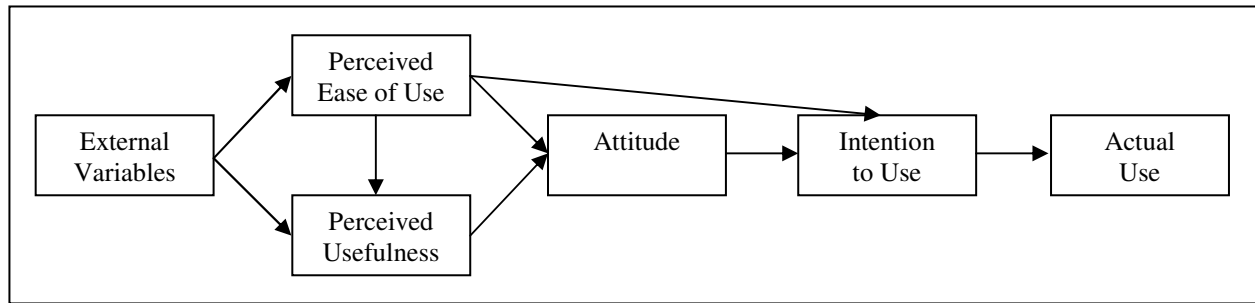


Figure 1. Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by Davis (1989)

TAM posits that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use influence computer user's intention and actual usage behaviour. According to Davis (1989), perceived usefulness is defined as "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance". Meanwhile the perceived ease of use refers to "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would free of effort". The proliferation use of TAM theory as a research model in predicting usage behaviour of new technologies in recent years has also led researchers and practitioners apply this theory in the Internet and WWW context (Gardner and Amoroso, 2004; Klopping and McKinney, 2004; Chen et al., 2001). However, only few researchers extended the TAM theory by associating with other variables or theories to study e-government adoption. In most of their studies Carter & Belanger (2005; 2008) and Phang et al. (2005) combined Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) theory with TAM to provide a comprehensive model of e-government adoption. Other studies conducted by Al-Adawi et al. (2005) and Warkentin et al. (2002) also combined TAM with Trust and Perceived Risk.

Trust and Perceived Risk

The dimensions of trust and perceived risk could be the factors that contribute to citizen's intention to use of e-government system. It cannot be denied that trust become a central issue in all daily interactions, communications, transactions and practices, especially when it's done remotely, through the internet. Although there is little agreement in the literature about how to define citizen trust in government or how it is gained and lost, most researchers agree that it is an important determinant of public action and cooperation (Thomas, 1998; Welch and Hinnant, 2003; Pavlou, 2003).

In his research, Rotter's (1971) defined trust as "an expectancy that the promise of an individual or group can be relied upon". This definition has led to some of the definitions of citizen's trust in e-government context. Zucker (1986) divided trust into three modes, these include; characteristics-based trust, process-based trust, and institution-based trust. Characteristics-based trust is associated with personal characteristics such as, gender, age, race, nationality, etc. Researchers (Welch and Hinnant, 2003; Warkentin et al., 2002) agreed that this mode of trust may not feasible and difficult to apply in e-government environment. Since characteristics-based trust is related to social issues, it may explicitly contradict the legal statutes if it is applied in the study.

Process-based trust is a trust based on individual's prior experience when dealing with government. This mode of trust can be created in e-government context if the government could ensure the e-government technologies are well prepared and maintained with high security system before it is implemented. Furthermore, encouraging and convincing the citizens that they would have same experience when they use e-government compared to traditional system are also one of the factors in

building up citizen's trust. Lastly, institution-based trust is associated with individual perceptions of the institutional environment such as; the structure, regulation and legislation that make an environment feel safe and trustworthy.

Belanger and Carter (2008) suggested two types of trusts in e-government context. Firstly, trust of the Internet, is identified as a key predictor of e-service adoption (Carter and Belanger, 2005; McKnight et al., 2002; Pavlou, 2003). This type of trust is associated with the institution-based trust because of the communities that exist on the internet are varied according to their norms, expectations, and values (Pavlou, 2003). Secondly, trust of the government, is related to citizen confidence in the ability of an agency to provide online services.

The information and services provided by the government through the internet are not automatically building up people trust on how they are delivered. Privacy, security, and fraud on the internet are still surrounding people's concern in adopting e-government technologies. Nelson (1997) also added that user's trust in web-based technologies is affected by such issues in networks security, confidentiality, reliability of information, and jurisdiction. Thus citizen must have confident in both the government and the technologies (Carter and Belanger, 2005).

Trust is essentially needed only in uncertain situations since trust effectively means assume risks and become vulnerable to trusted parties (Hosmer, 1995). According to Pavlou (2003), trust is found to be a significant antecedent of perceived risk. If there was no risk and actions could be taken with complete certainty no trust would be required (Al-adawi et al., 2005). Prior researches have discussed the relationship between trust and perceived risk (Pavlou, 2003; Belanger and Carter, 2008; Al-Adawi et al., 2005; Jarvenpaa and Tractinsky, 1999). It was found that perceived risk decreases when trust occurs. However, since risk itself is difficult to measure objectively, established research has predominately defined perceived risk as "the citizen's subjective expectation of suffering a loss in pursuit of a desired outcome" (Warkentin et al., 2002; Belanger and Carter, 2008). Researchers (Pavlou, 2003; Warkentin et al., 2002; Belanger and Carter, 2008) agreed that trust is viewed as a determinant of intention to use directly or indirectly via perceived risk.

Political Self-Efficacy

Political self-efficacy is believed to be a significant factor that contributes to citizen's trust in dealing with government. Prior studies have been conducted to measure the determinants of trust in e-government context.

However, only few studies have been found to measure citizen trust in using e-government from political self-efficacy aspect. As citizen political self-efficacy has been exist long before the e-government was developed, it is necessary to involve this construct in the study. According to Compeau and Higgins (1995), based on original definition of self-efficacy first coined by Bandura (1986), self-efficacy was defined as "...the belief that one has the capability to perform a particular behavior". This leads to the definition of political self efficacy as defined by Parent et al. (2004) as, "the citizen's sense that they have an impact on political developments and their perception of government responsiveness".

Parent et al. (2004) divided political self-efficacy into two types. Firstly, internal political self-efficacy is where the citizen feels that they have a contribution and an impact to the political development. Secondly, external self-political efficacy refers to the citizen's perception of overall responsiveness of the government in fulfilling their needs. The findings showed that political self efficacy significantly influenced and explained the citizen's overall trust in government, in turn; the government would be responsive to the citizen needs. It was suggested that government not only to focus on how to improve e-government performance, but also to stress on how to encourage citizens with high pre-existing level of trust to use e-government system.

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

A number of well established research models have contributed to the development of the conceptual framework of technology adoption and the determinants. Among them are Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), Diffusion of Innovation (DOI), Technology Adoption Model (TAM), Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of technology (UTAUT) and Perceived of Innovating (PCI). Based on previous research, TAM is seen as the most parsimonious model to explain user's intention to use a new technology. The TAM model has been tested in various setting including, e-mail, e-learning, e-banking, e-commerce and e-government. Following previous studies about e-government adoption, current study adopts TAM as a main research model. Furthermore, factors that were believed to be the predictors of e-government adoption are also included and tested in the proposed research model.

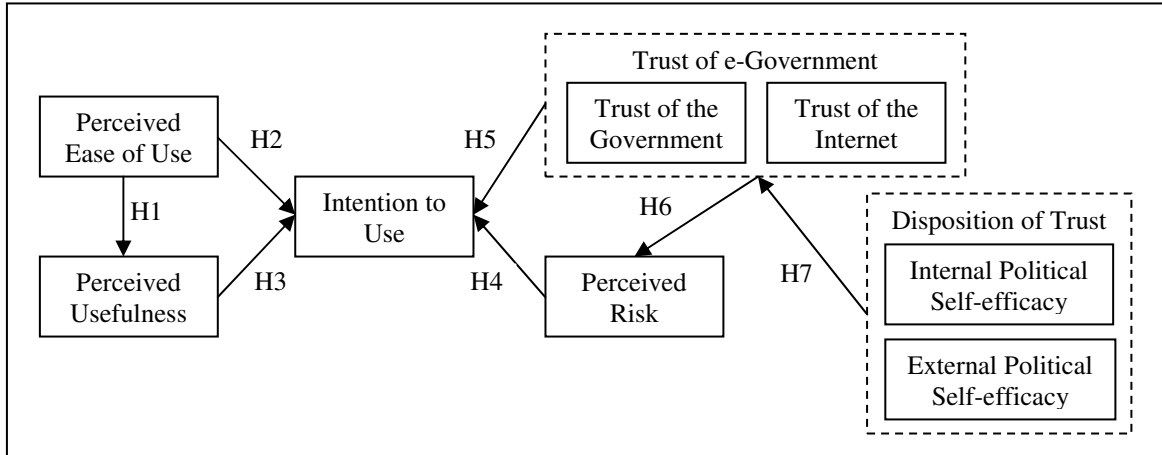


Figure 2. Research Model

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is shaped with quantitative approach. At the initial stage, the study tends to explore the phenomenon of e-government implementation and its adoption by citizen. In order to obtain a clearer picture about the current implementation of e-government and how it is being used by the citizen, two methods were employed in this preliminary study. The first method is by critically reviewing the past literatures which mainly related to e-government adoption in Malaysia. Thus, the research problem can be defined and the objectives and research framework can be conceptualized based on previous works. Secondly, to ascertain the proposed model with the current phenomenon, an interview with practitioners, government agencies and citizens was held. The objective of conducting preliminary study is to gain a better understanding in e-government adoption by citizens as well as to identify the factors that might contribute to e-government adoption. To evaluate G2C adoption, *online tax service* is selected for this study. As this system is one of the services provided by the central government and mostly used by the citizens.

The next phase is to design the measurements that reflect all the factors involved in the study. The measurements about G2C adoption from previous studies were adopted and adapted. A seven point-Likert scale is applied for each item of the questionnaire except for the citizen’s demographic section. The Likert-scale ranges from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree. A sample of 500 respondents that comprises of employees and academic staff of higher learning institutions in Malaysia will be selected.

PILOT STUDY

Pilot study was conducted to reduce biases in format and content of the questions. Twenty two participants comprised of professors and lecturers were voluntarily participated in the pilot study. The reasons for choosing these groups of people is that the authors believed that these respondents have a better understanding about e-government system and have used the system to transact with the government. The reliability test was performed using SPSS (release 16) for Windows to evaluate the measurements. For this purpose, the Cronbach’s alpha technique was adopted. According to Hair et al. (1998), if the factor scores above 0.7 of the Cronbach alpha values, then the factors is considered as reliable (see Table 1).

The demographic profile of the respondents for the pilot study is shown in Table 2.

Factors	Items	Cronbach Alpha
Trust of the Internet	3	0.947
Trust of the Government	4	0.839
Internal Political Self-efficacy	5	0.839

External Political Self-efficacy	4	0.831
Perceived Risk	2	0.805
Perceived Ease of Use	4	0.935
Perceived Usefulness	4	0.961
Intention to Use	4	0.832

Table 1: Reliability Test

Item		Frequency	%
Gender	Male	10	45.5
	Female	12	54.5
Age	20-35	8	36.4
	36-45	10	45.5
	46-55	3	13.6
	Over 56	1	4.5
Race	Malay	20	90.9
	Indian	0	0
	Chinese	0	0
	Others	2	9.1
Education	Bachelor	1	4.5
	Master	7	31.8
	Doctorate	14	63.6
Computer Skill	Novice	0	0
	Intermediate	15	68.2
	Expert	7	31.8

Table 2. Summary of the Respondent’s Demographic Profile

CONCLUSION

This study should provide a benefit to both researchers and practitioners, in this context government per se. Hence, the findings might give contributions theoretically and practically.

The lack of studies in the area of e-government specifically G2C adoption is one of the reasons why such study is needed to be conducted in order to obtain a clearer picture of what is going on and the current status of e-government implementation in Malaysia. Some of the theoretical models such as TAM and other contributing factors such as Trust, Perceived Risk, Internal and External Political self-efficacy, have been adopted to explain G2C adoption. Thus, the findings of current study is expected not only to strengthen or refute the previous works that adopt the theories mentioned above, but also, in general, to enrich the body of knowledge and theory of e-government adoption by citizen. Furthermore, the research model could be used as a reference for any further studies to cater different form of e-government technology.

Practically, G2C system has been implemented in the country for years. But the impact has not yet been experienced fully by the citizens so far. Although a number of studies have been conducted by the government, institution, independent researchers as well as practitioners, most of them were focusing on the infrastructure, policies and organizational perspectives. Hence, the findings of this study are expected to provide an empirical evidence of e-government adoption from the citizen's perspective. The findings also can be used considerably by the government to evaluate current system that could come with the improvement in the future. Initially, this study could provide a platform for evaluating the e-government technology in different form and application.

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APPENDIX : Questionnaire Items

No.	Constructs/Author	Items
1a.	Trust of the Internet (Belanger and Carter,	The Internet has enough safeguards to make me feel comfortable using it to transact personal business with our government.

	2008)	I feel assured that legal and technological structures adequately protect me from problems on the Internet. In general, the Internet is now a robust and safe environment in which to transact with our government.
1b.	Trust of the Government (Belanger and Carter, 2008)	I think I can trust our government. Our government can be trusted to carry out online transactions faithfully. I trust our government to keep my best interests in mind. In my opinion, our government is trustworthy.
2a.	Internal Political Self-efficacy (Niemi et al., 1991)	I consider myself to be well qualified to participate in politics. I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country. I feel that I could do as good a job in public office as most other people. I think that I am better informed about politics than most people. I think that I am better informed about government than most people.
2b.	External Political Self-efficacy (Niemi et al., 1991)	Sometimes politics seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on. Sometimes government seems so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on. People like me don't have any say about what the government does. I don't think public officials care much what people like me think.
3.	Perceived Risk (Pavlou, 2003)	The decision of whether to use the <i>online tax</i> service is risky. In general, I believe using the <i>online tax</i> service over the internet is risky.
4.	Perceived Ease of Use (Davis, 1989; Belanger and Carter, 2008)	It would be easy for me to learn how to use the <i>online tax</i> service. It would be easy for me to become skillful at using the <i>online tax</i> service. I believe interacting with the <i>online tax</i> service would be a clear and understandable process. I would find the <i>online tax</i> service to be flexible to interact with.
5.	Perceived Usefulness (Davis, 1989; Belanger and Carter, 2008)	I think the <i>online tax</i> service is useful. I think the <i>online tax</i> service is valuable. I think the <i>online tax</i> service would be beneficial to me. Overall, using the <i>online tax</i> service would be advantageous.
6.	Intention to Use (Davis, 1989; Belanger and Carter, 2008)	I would use the <i>online tax</i> service for gathering information about government agencies. I would use the <i>online tax</i> service provided over the web. Interacting with our government over the web is something that I would do. It is likely that I would transact with the <i>online tax</i> service in the near future.