

A Proposed Study of a Unified e-Portal for Citizens and Residents in the Sultanate of Oman

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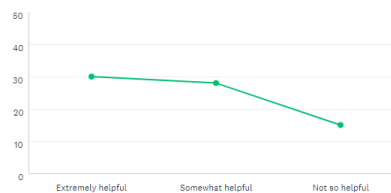
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Abstract: This study aims at suggesting a shared medium for all of the Omani government sectors. All governments increasingly use modern information technology (IT) to support their operation. In recent years, the main effort is investing into improving the quality and efficiency of service delivery, mainly through different e-government initiatives. E-Portal offers a wide variety of possibilities for delivering public services in new ways. One of the possible solutions, which has recently become a popular development trend of e-government officials, are E-portals, which not only join but also integrate services in the competence of different public institutions into one single window or entry point (Fan and Yang, 2015), accessible via the internet. The study is based on interviews and an online survey for data collection. The results show in figure #1 that there is an urgent need for a shared point to the services offered by the Omani government. This study promotes the foundation of integrated access to all the government institutions.

How satisfied are you with integrate all government services in the single portal?

Answered: 73 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Extremely helpful	41.10%	30
Somewhat helpful	38.36%	28
Not so helpful	20.55%	15
TOTAL		73

Fig (1) integrate all government services

Key words: E-portal – E-Service- E-Government-Oman

1- Introduction

E-portal simply means modern government that performs all its functions and provides all its services through intensive use of electronic means for information processing, computers, networks, internet etc. Electronic means are not only used for internal information processing and communication within public institutions, but also for communication with other institutions, citizens and businesses. Figure 1

demonstrates three business relations that are most important for the introduction of e-government and involve the main business partners of government, i.e. citizens, businesses and NGOs (Vintar, Kunstelj and Leben, 2002).

Table(1) E-government in the “X2Y” matrix (Vintar, Kunstelj and Leben, 2002)

	Citizens	Government	Business	Third Sector (NGO)
Citizens	C2C	C2G	C2B	C2N
Government	G2C	G2G	G2B	G2N
Business	B2C	B2G	B2B	B2N
Third Sector (NGO)	N2C	N2G	N2B	N2N

The whole effort derives from the changing paradigm in designing communications between the government and the citizens. We need to reorganize the processes of services provision and delivery on the basis of customers’ needs rather than the internal needs of the government, as has been the practice so far (Mahizhnan and Andiappan, 2002). It is about the transition from the existent authoritative role of the government to a service role and the related redirection of the major attention from administering the law to executing processes and their final results – services delivery.

1.1. Problem Statement

The current problem lies in the fact that the existent organization of government in sultanate Oman is based on a division of work between several fields or competences. Accordingly, administrative procedures and services are adapted and distributed over several public institutions. However, the problems of customers (citizens and businesses) do not usually apply merely to one single competence or one single public institution. Moreover, businesses are often involved as well. For example if the citizen moves from one place to another, he/she has to change the address, change their personal documents, move the telephone number, inform the TV programme provider, bank, insurance company, school, employer and so on. If the customer wants to solve his/her problem as a whole, he/she has to apply several different processes (administrative procedures as well as business processes) at several different public institutions and businesses .For each of them they have to fill in an application and enclose different documents. The data on applications are often duplicated, and so are documents. Office hours of some organizations may complicate and delay the procedure even further. But what is more important is the fact that in a particular situation the customer alone has to find out what processes and in what order he/she has to apply them, at which organizations and how. Therefore, the applications are often incomplete, which usually delays the start of the official handling of the case. Consequently these processes are complicated, time consuming and expensive, and the customers are not satisfied.

So, the main problem of this study is isolation from the other ministries through its website and there is no link between it and this mean double work and a waste of time.

Also, the citizens and residents have multiple accounts using to logging in ministries website to process any online services, consider an obstacles in e-service.

1.2. Objectives

This study suggests an integrated access to all the government institutions.

1.3. Research Field

A mixed method was implemented for data collection which are interviews and online survey.

2- LITERATURE REVIEW

Jackson P. (1999) states that the public administration sector has been the target of much criticism all over the world. The reason is the same everywhere – taxpayers want to see the efficiently functioning and cheaper executive power. This will of Lithuanian citizens is pronounced more clearly as the bureaucracy and work style inherited from the Soviet times are still deeply rooted in the society. The improvement of services and culture immediately is seen everywhere: in the banks, insurance companies, even trade centres – the accomplishments that public institutions cannot boast yet.

Reinermann H. (2001), states that The Government-established the Sunset Commission which set out the public administration reform guidelines to address these issues and outline certain public administration rules. Therefore the driving force of the e-Government might be the application of business management for public administration purposes, i.e. IT use for more effective information management and the creation of improved relations with consumers, partners and suppliers. This type of public administration reforms will also help initiate decisions, their implementations and, most of all, co-operation of citizens with the government.

Maxi (2002), states that implementing the E-Government projects will create the Internet services that will facilitate easy access to public institutions. Certainly, very soon there will appear a relatively large number of users willing to receive Government services via digital channels and get familiar with these services along the way. It is quite reasonable to suppose that Internet users and receivers of Government services on the Internet will soon expect to receive the same quality of services and from commerce. This means the sizeable increase of the number of customers and the demand of Internet services. The increase of customers and demand will lead to e-commerce growth and supply increase. It will encourage people who have no computers to purchase them and start using e-commerce services.

(Ke and Wei, 2004) states that Singapore's e-portal has a Strong leadership with vision is crucial for e-government success. They realized the importance of encouraging citizens to use them. Citizens lacking access to the Internet at home were provided access to e-government services through community self-service terminals.

One of the key questions in developing such portals is:-

How to structure and design services in order to improve their quality and efficiency and not to make them even more time consuming and complicated?

Namely, a citizen interacting with the government often knows only what he/she wants (for example to build a house, to move or to start a new business), but does not know which administrative procedures apply in his or her particular case, which public institution is competent for handling that case and what else is needed to complete the procedure (what application, which supplements, where and how to find all the necessary information, e t c).

Analyzing of the effectiveness of SharePoint integration of the system

3- Research methodology

The current study was carried on the Sultanate Oman with random sample of citizens and residents depended on:

- Survey
- Interview (Technical & Expert) to collect data to conclude the results of the study.

This study aims at suggesting a shared medium for all of the Omani government sectors. The tools implemented in this study are validated by piloting them with colleagues. It was observed that they are appropriate for this kind of study. The data analysis was done using a program called the 'survey monkey'. All the statistics were interpreted through pie graphs and tables as figure 2 below shows.

How likely is it that you would recommend using e services to a friend or family member?		
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Agree	69.86%	51
Neither agree nor disagree	9.59%	7
Disagree	20.55%	15
TOTAL		73
How satisfied are you with integrate all government services in the single portal?		
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Extremety helpful	41.10%	30
Somewhat helpful	38.36%	28
Not so helpful	20.55%	15
TOTAL		73
How many accounts do you have to access to different webportal of ministries?		
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1	32.43%	24
2	16.22%	12
More than 3	51.35%	38
TOTAL		74
How easy is it to remember the accounts access details on ministries websites?		
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Easy	48.65%	36
Dimcult	51.35%	38
TOTAL		74

fig (2) Result of the Survey

The solution to these problems lies in the introduction of services designed around the customers. The life-event approach considers government operation from the perspective of everyday life. Its main purpose is to overcome the existent structure and complexity of public institutions. One life-event has to comprise all services as well as the corresponding processes needed to solve the customer's problem from the beginning to the end. In this way, all services needed to solve a particular problem or situation, are either linked or integrated into one single service.

4- Research Objectives

- 1- Introducing a concept of the e-portal for citizens and residents in the Sultanate of Oman
- 2- Determining the characteristics of e-services based on life-events and to develop levels of their maturity,
- 3- Determining the quality, effectiveness and efficiency improvements of using the approach and to evaluate the maturity of some e-services of E-portal for citizens and residents in the Sultanate of Oman
- 4- Providing citizens and residents access to all online services from one single portal
- 5- Navigation for the people between all eservices.(Busaidy and Weerakkody, 2011)
- 6- Informing People about latest updates and news
- 7- Encouraging people to use electronic services
- 8- Reducing annual expenses
- 9- Activating SLA (Service level Agreement) feature

5- RESULTS

Figure 2 presents a summary of the results. With the creation of new ways of the delivery of services, former service delivery means should be left intact; it should be also assured that with the growth of the numbers of Internet customers, resources for the maintenance of the usual means of the customer services should be reduced.

- 1- Non-digital services cannot be discontinued until it has been assured that all present or potential customer have access and know (or can otherwise) how to use new service delivery means(Ahmed and Khodher, 2016).
- 2- Public information must be easy to accede. To make the Internet an important and reliable information source all public information must be easy to accede on the Internet. It must be logically structured, with information research and the initial research window (according to the so-called 'one stop shop' principle) installed. Information preparation and submission system for consumers will be defined in the 'Government Portal' concept and given a priority status.

- 3- IT introduction will inevitably change legal environment; it will inevitably result in the drafting of relevant legislation regulating e-Government activities and change of certain present laws in force as well as the development of by-laws (e.g. the above legislation on the dissemination of public information on the Internet and the recognition of the validity of e-mail and amended public procurement laws).
- 4- The development of the new services of the Government should include their delivery through digital channels. The legislation submitted by the Government will present no obstacles to the transactions in the e-dimension (e.g. no exclusive physical signature requirements or other restrictions).
- 5- No priorities will be given to any technicalities, operational systems or software producers in the process of the implementation of the e-government projects. Functionality, security, scalability and price will be the key factors at play. (Zhou and Hu, 2008)
- 6- Internet-based services should be easy to accede by popular and widely used protocols and facilities. Decisions concerning the type of services should be made according to consumer needs in the case of every individual project. The delivery of services should be ensured by at least one of popular protocols. Later, if needed, services can be made available by as many popular protocols as possible (e.g., WAP, WWW), thereby ensuring the qualitative access, better options for a customer to choose technologies available to him and equal opportunities for the development of technologies.
- 7- Information should be structured and delivered through interfaces in the manner of making them freely accessible to a customer. These interfaces should run in line with generally accepted standards and require no use of commercial software.
- 8- Information should be available in open formats. The document formats used by public institutions should not make information users purchase commercial operational systems or software. Only fully defined (with definitions available publicly) and free formats can be used.
- 9- The E-Government projects can be developed on the basis of a diverse technical base under the guidance of various institutions with a view to different needs. The choice of the decision of an individual institution will not be regulated in the process. Projects in general and individually will have to meet standard requirements for the e-Government project interfaces. The exchange of information between projects should also be assured in conformity with relevant information security requirements.
- 10- Integration all services in one portal to be centralized, the government should eliminate human dependencies and having a complete systematic lifecycle process.

- 11- Single sign on account for all government services.
- 12- Make it easy with more option and increases the speed.

6- RESULTS DISCUSSION

To make sure that we have a trustful and credible information, we used the following methods:

6-1 Survey

It has been distributed to the people who used the e-services, and the result were to provide all the electronic services in one portal so that they all can be accessed to the services through this portal.

6-2 Interview (Technical & Expert)

In addition, we did interviewed with some specialists from the government and decision-makers and it has been inferred that the problem being faced is the difference among the old database languages, and that people cannot give up on easily. Additionally, they are looking forward to have a modern method that works on connecting and grouping different database languages in one portal.

6-3 Experiences of countries

Based on some experiments, this project will provide the successful technological development of the Sultanate of Oman, below are some countries have succeeded same this project (E-Government, 2016)

- Singapore
- United Kingdom
- Australia
- Republic of Korea

7- CONCLUSION

The study offers huge opportunities to improve public services and make them more convenient for the needs and perceptions of its users rather than the government. However, public institutions will have to move beyond seeing themselves as separate and distinct entities and adopt the vision of One Government that collaborates, shares information and relies on its collective knowledge to provide the public with integrated services based on life-events.

The analysis of the present state showed that electronic service delivery is moving slowly from dispersed web presentations of individual public institutions to the development of government portals collecting and coordinating information and interaction services from different public institutions as well as

businesses. First transaction services have also appeared. However, fully developed life-event based services are still far from reality. The existent examples are a good start, but nothing more than that. A highly sophisticated window to government cannot be a substitution for poor and fragmented back-office processes. Therefore, the development of life-event based services will first require a reorganisation, transformation and integration of the existent back-office processes across multiple public institutions. Only then will it be possible to make real the benefits for the citizens, businesses and other parties involved.

8- RECOMMENDATION

This study recommends the use of communal medium of communication between the users of the Omani government users (citizens and residents) and the services offered. This will spare the users the creations of many accounts to the different services such as the health care, education, business ...etc.

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البوابة الإلكترونية للمواطنين والمقيمين في سلطنة عمان

الملخص: في الوقت الحاضر، تعمل كل الوزارات والهيئات الحكومية في سلطنة عمان بمنعزل عن بعضها، حيث إن كل واحدة تدير موقعها الإلكتروني وهذا يعتبر عيب على الحكومة بشكل عام وبشكل خاص على المستخدم للخدمات الإلكترونية المقدمة من هذه الوزارات. الفكرة من هذا المشروع هي عمل بوابة إلكترونية؛ تحتوي على جميع الخدمات الإلكترونية الحكومية، وذلك عن طريق ربط هذه البوابة بقواعد البيانات الحالية وبمختلف أنواع لغاتها البرمجية لدى الوزارات والهيئات الحكومية، حيث إن المستخدم بمجرد ولادته (المواطن) أو دخوله السلطنة من (الوافد) يتم حصوله على الرقم المدني وخلق حساب خاص به (اسم المستخدم عبارة عن الرقم المدني، والرقم السري يكون افتراضي)، وبهذا يكون له حساب خاص في هذه البوابة الحكومية. بمجرد دخول المستخدم عبر حساب إلى البوابة فسوف يكون باستطاعته المتابعة والتقديم في كل الخدمات الإلكترونية في السلطنة بغض النظر عن الوزارة المقدمة لهذه الخدمات. ويتم استخدام تقنية التصميم للبوابة بحيث يمكنها التحديث من مختلف لغات البرمجة، وذلك لأنه في الوقت الحالي- توجد قواعد بيانات مختلفة اللغات لدى الوزارات وترغب بتشغيل هذه البوابة بدون المساس بقواعد البيانات الحالية، وذلك لأهميتها وللتقليل من تكاليف المشروع، حيث إن هذه البوابة الإلكترونية سوف تعتبر بوابة عبور بين المستخدم والخدمات الإلكترونية الحكومية. وهناك مجمل أهداف للمشروع منها: يحتاج المستخدم حساباً واحداً فقط لاستخدام الخدمات الإلكترونية بعكس الآن؛ حيث يحتاج إلى حسابات متعددة (كل وزارة بحسابها)، وتقليل التكاليف الحكومية من الصيانات الدورية والكوادر الفنية والتراخيص وغيرها (سوف تكون تكاليف بوابة واحد، أما الوقت الحاضر أكثر من ثلاثين بوابة). التشجيع على ثقافة استخدام الحكومة الإلكترونية، وبذلك بتسهيلها للمستخدم، والحصول على ثقة المستخدم، حيث إن الفرق بين الرقابة على عدد كبير من البوابات تختلف بالتركيز الرقابي الإلكتروني على بوابة واحد.

الكلمات المفتاحية: البوابة الإلكترونية - الخدمة الإلكترونية - الحكومة الإلكترونية - سلطنة عمان