Chapter 18
Vision 2020:
A Case Study of Web 2.0 Application to Public Governance in Taiwan

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ABSTRACT

There has been a noticeable change in the roadmap for e-governance development in recent years. In accordance with recent public reforms targeted at achieving good governance, the focal areas of e-governance have started to shift from improving provider-centered services, readiness of tangible infrastructure, and administration reengineering to developing citizen-centered initiatives, information disclosure, and public participation. Recent developments in Web technologies offer opportunities as well as challenges for government to address these emerging issues. Web technologies and applications have entered the phase identified more generally under the conceptual umbrella of Web 2.0. The core value propositions of Web 2.0 are multifaceted, such as using the Web as a single platform for versatile interactions, users also serving as producers, facilitating collective intelligence with greater ease, richer user experiences, and continuous upgrade of applications based on user feedback. These features are considered facilitative of a bottom-up, decentralized, deliberative, and participatory governance structure.

In 2008, a website named Vision 2020 was launched by the Taiwan central government. The website was designed with Web 2.0 features, aimed at encouraging interaction between the elite and the general public in order to build vision of what the country should be like in the year 2020. Since Web 2.0 technologies facilitate participation, this chapter attempts to examine Vision 2020 features, such as its "Web 2.0-ness," levels of e-participation, and the relationship between the two.

The chapter introduces a novel website model adopted in Vision 2020. An evaluation framework is presented for assessing the extent to which a website facilitates electronic participation via Web 2.0 technologies. Then, the Vision 2020 website is thoroughly examined in terms of the evaluation framework. Recommendations for the design and implementation strategies of government websites aimed to increase e-participation are offered.

INTRODUCTION

In conjunction with the recent trend of pursuing good governance, building a more citizen-centric government has become increasingly important for democratic governments around the globe. How to utilize internet technologies to make the policy process more bottom-up, deliberative and boundary-spanning is a great challenge to many governments. This challenge is driven by the need for government to accommodate diverse and evolving social demands. Among various efforts toward citizen-centric reforms, the positive experience of Web 2.0 applications that encourage participation in market and political campaigns has drawn the attention of e-government reformers, who have been seeking remedies for the relatively low rate of on-line participation via government websites.

Since the bursting of the dot-com bubble in the early 2000s, the concept of Web 2.0 has taken the lead in Internet development. The core values of Web 2.0 are: the web as platform, user as producer, collective intelligence, rich user experience, and perpetual beta status. Through two-way interactions between user-user and user-website, individuals can collaborate, share and exchange critical information to ensure viable mutual participation and create virtual social networks that influence opinion formation and even coordinate action in the real-world (O'Reilly, 2005; Osimo, 2008).

According to a recent digital-divide survey, about 40% of internet users in Taiwan read public news on line.[1] This signals the importance of the Web as a public arena waiting for the government actors to take proactive measures. Under the recent trend of Web 2.0, the government is increasingly thinking of using Web 2.0 applications to further develop citizen-centered e-government initiatives. In November 2008, a Web 2.0 inspired website named "Vision 2020" was established by the central government. It was designed to attract ordinary citizens to participate in the cause of building a common vision for Taiwan. However, as the government has shown increasing interest in adopting Web 2.0 applications, it is becoming more urgent to evaluate the effects of adopting this new technology. In this chapter, the authors introduce the new business model underlying Vision 2020 and we provide a preliminary performance evaluation report. In light of the assumption that Web 2.0 technologies promote bottom-up participation, our objectives are to examine Vision 2020's features, such as its "web 2.0-ness," levels of e-participation, and the relationship between the two.

BACKGROUND

In the Time of Rebuilding Participatory Democracy

Throughout the evolution of representative democracy, the governance structure has encountered a serious challenge in that citizens are becoming increasingly indifferent to democratic procedures. Mitigating people's alienation from public affairs has been a critical issue faced by democratic regimes (Fraunholz & Unnithan, 2008). Since

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