Editorial: e-services delivery

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in the emerging areas of operations management and information systems. He has edited a couple of books. He is the Editor of *Benchmarking: An International Journal*. He has edited special issues for a number of highly reputed journals. He is currently interested in researching benchmarking, management information systems, e-commerce (B2B), information technology/systems evaluation, performance measures and metrics in new economy, technology management, logistics and supply chain management. He actively serves on several university committees.

1   Introduction

The boom of e-commerce and e-business is back. The improvement and advancement of internet and network technology have increased many new online customers and retained existing customers in e-businesses. This phenomenon has not only enabled new e-business start-up, but it has also changed the customer experience in purchasing and administering online. Such growth calls for a better delivery of e-services.

This Special Issue of *International Journal of Services Technology and Management (IJSTM)* on e-services delivery aims to present current research and development in e-services delivery that cover theoretical, conceptual, practical, empirical or case-based work. The objectives of this Special Issue are to accumulate contributions from academics and practitioners, drawing from their studies and experience in e-services delivery from a range of industry sectors, for example, banking, tourism, education, leisure, healthcare and others, or government bodies; and to highlight new ways of improving e-services delivery.

This Special Issue contains six papers ranging from contributions from researchers and practitioners in Bangladesh, Canada, China, Germany, Taiwan, the UK and the USA. The papers cover a broad range of contributions including impact of e-services delivery on supply chain management, demand chain management, e-government and the use of new technology such as mobile commerce for improving e-services delivery. A mix of theory building and empirical study papers that have strong relevance to the practical world are available. The normal *IJSTM* review guidelines were followed. We provide a brief overview of the papers, which appear in this issue.

Pearcy and Giunipero in their paper, 'The impact of electronic reverse auctions on purchase price reduction and governance structure: an empirical investigation', notes that the availability of various e-services has changed the buying experience for many purchasing professionals. An increasingly popular e-service, the electronic reverse auction has generated substantial interest due to its purported ability to provide lower purchase prices to buying firms even though it has the potential to negatively impact buyer–supplier relationships. It is argued that due to the emerging nature of the reverse auction process, empirical research in the aforementioned areas is relatively sparse. The purpose of their research is to address these gaps in the academic literature. A survey of 142 purchasing professionals employed in diverse industries in the USA revealed that an electronic reverse auction use was significantly related to purchase price reductions for the buying firm when purchasing standardised direct materials and Maintenance, Repair and Operating (MRO) supplies, but not for customised direct materials. The results also suggested that buying firms develop different types of governance structure (short-term or relational) with suppliers depending on the purchase category.

The paper, 'Service supply chain management in e-government operations', by Michaelides and Kehoe presents a case study looking at community care operations, as the first tier of a services supply chain in government, provided by a private company. The research focuses on the application of internet technologies to enable a more effective use of operational resources of the private care service provider. This paper also describes the benefits of using a web-enabled prototype in terms of achieving transparency of information relating to care worker availability thus achieving fast acceptance of referred clients. The redesign of the business processes of the company to enable inclusive working with local authorities is also explained. This is essential to maximise value for money, improve competitiveness as well as client care quality. It was identified that the core business operations supported by the solution are scheduling of care workers, automatic generation of care worker schedules, payment of care workers and the invoicing of the local authority process.

Roy in his paper, 'E-service delivery and new governance capacities: 'Service Canada' as a case study', highlights that the internet has given rise to online service delivery (or e-service) in the public and private sectors alike. A critical assessment of both the Canadian federal government's e-service experience to date and the prospects of success for Service Canada – the latter being new entity for citizen-centred service delivery in a multi-channel environment, are explored. The primary interest of this research lies in better understanding of the governance dimensions to this transformation and the extent to which these dimensions are well aligned. The Service Canada experience to date illustrates the governance complexities surrounding the introduction and pursuit of e-services in a public sector context. More than a technological challenge, online delivery channels must co-exist in a multi-channel world where the interface between government as a service provider and the citizen as customer is driving a more ambitious restructuring of roles and relationships.

The paper, 'Strategies, issues and challenges for enabling e-governance in Bangladesh', by Sarker and Rahma purports that everywhere in the world, especially in Asia, Africa and South America, governments are using the information and communications technologies in enhancing sustainable development. Bangladesh that lags far behind in this regard needs to put the ICTs at the core of its advancement programmes and strategies. These technologies can also expedite the country's progress in economic, social and political spheres. The traditional methods of growth and development will be replaced by the latest technology-based ways of development. They discuss in detail the potential application of e-governance including how and where e-governance can be introduced immediately to bring transparency, efficiency and faith in the operation of the governments. A few constraints and challenges are explored along with the strategies to implement e-governance in Bangladesh. A '7 stages strategy' to enable e-governance in Bangladesh is also proposed.

Lee, Li, Simons and Lee in their paper, 'Comparing usage of mobile commerce in Taiwan, USA and Germany', reports three case studies on the usage of mobile commerce in Taiwan, USA and Germany. Using grey relational analyses, the respective usage patterns of mobile commerce in these countries are distinguished. The key findings are that the usage patterns change with respect to the area, and thus no single application checklist is practical in this industry; grey relational analysis can be used as a method for identifying the usage patterns of mobile commerce; and consumers in different areas do not consider the applications as equally important.

The paper, 'Unbundling and delivering CRM applications as e-services: a case study in customer segmentation', by Sampaio and He claims that the development of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) capabilities by increasingly sourcing and combining 'best of breed' services from different providers is a key lever for reducing implementation risks and costs linked to CRM projects. Central to a 'best of breed' and incremental CRM implementation strategy is the decomposition or 'unbundling' of CRM functionality into a portfolio of services that can be sourced from application service providers and/or developed internally within the client organisation. Their research proposes an unbundling approach for decomposing enterprise applications into e-services, addressing IT issues and methodological steps relating to the decomposition of CRM applications into self-contained e-services and developing the service blueprint to deliver the e-service. In particular, this paper conducts a walk trough the unbundling process, describing a case study that was conducted to illustrate the unbundling of customer segmentation functionality towards packaging and delivering the functionality as an on-demand e-service.

We could not have done this by ourselves and we totally appreciate the efforts and support of all who were involved in making this Special Issue possible, which includes the authors, referees, Chief Editor of Inderscience, editorial staff of *IJSTM* and the Editor of the journal. The guest editors gratefully acknowledge the assistance provided by the Chief Editor of Inderscience, the Editor of the *IJSTM* and the referees who reviewed the manuscripts for this Special Issue.