

## **E-Government and Its Role in Achieving Sustainable Competitive Advantage**

AbdalKarim Farhat<sup>1</sup>, Abdellatif Chakor<sup>2</sup>

### **Abstract**

*"The research discusses the impact of the rapid dissemination that occurred with the information revolution, technology advancement, and the communications revolution, and the various concepts that emerged from it, including the concept of e-government. The world has become a single entity where organizations interact with all its components. Some theorists have likened the world to a small village, requiring organizations to deal with all environmental variables by utilizing available opportunities and mitigating threats that may negatively affect their ability to survive, sustain, grow, and stabilize.*

*E-government has become the distinct hallmark of the knowledge and learning era. In order for organizations to effectively benefit from knowledge, it must be integrated within a comprehensive and systematic organizational framework. The researcher attempted to present the concept of e-government, information technology, competitive advantage, and how to leverage e-government in traditional organizations to achieve a competitive edge. It is necessary for management to equip itself with all its capabilities, potentials, and devices to confront and challenge competitors in the markets. It should strive to make the best use of all available economic and technological resources and avoid wasting any available resources.*

*Fundamentally, competition management requires management to identify its strengths and weaknesses and examine the strengths and weaknesses of its competitors in order to formulate an integrated strategy for the operations and activities of organizations."*

**Keywords:** *Electronic management, information technology, competitive advantage.*

### **1. Introduction**

Problem of Research:

The use of information and communication technology in general, and the application of the concept of e-government in particular, is considered one of the most important approaches through which public and private service management can be developed. This development will contribute to the creation of new values that support the welfare of citizens, respect their time and effort, facilitate community affairs, and thus support comprehensive and sustainable development in all its diverse forms.

New concepts have emerged, such as e-government, e-decision-making, e-procurement, e-transactions, e-management, e-business, e-signature, e-banking, e-libraries, e-commerce, e-universities (virtual universities), e-money, e-wallets, smart cards, e-banking, and e-marketing, to meet the needs of communities more efficiently. These

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<sup>1</sup> Lecturer at the Faculty of Economics, Business Administration Department, Omar Al-Mukhtar University, Al-Bayda, Libya, Abdalkarim.farhat@omu.edu.ly

<sup>2</sup> Professor at the Faculty of Legal, Economic and Social Sciences, Economics and Management Department, Souissi-Mohammed V University, Rabat, Morocco, abdellatif.chakor@um5r.ac.ma

terms and others are widely circulated at present. If these concepts dominate the world now, it can be said without hesitation that the concept of e-government is a concept surrounded by ambiguity, instead of having a comprehensive vision of what the situation will be like when the proposed technical, qualification, and legal plans are implemented to meet the requirements of launching e-government.

Whether it is about the real-world environment or the virtual Internet environment, any organization that seeks to achieve effectiveness in providing its services to the public, achieve efficiency in the exchange of activities between its departments and institutions, and achieve cost savings in performance and expenses, the idea of e-government is based, among its pillars, on the integration of all informational and interactive activities and services.

According to the nature of the problem of this research, the question to be answered is:

Does e-government have an impact and a role in creating sustainable competitive advantage?

Importance of the Research:

The importance of this research lies in addressing a significant subject in this era, which is e-government. It demonstrates the close relationship of e-government and its role in enhancing the competitive advantage of traditional organizations, thus highlighting the importance of factors influencing the achievement of sustainable efficiency. The significance of e-government lies in it being a modern managerial approach that relies on new information technologies, focusing on computers, satellites, and the communication revolution to facilitate the use of the Internet to contribute to the development, updating, and quality enhancement of organizational products and services at minimal costs and time. Additionally, it enables the organization to quickly and easily connect with its business environment. It has become necessary for all organizations to adopt this modern managerial approach in order to align with leading organizations worldwide, as these organizations conduct all their operations electronically and do not engage with organizations that do not utilize electronic methods. The use of e-government saves time, effort, and costs, and contributes to the completion of tasks with accuracy, speed, and customer satisfaction.

Research Objectives:

The general objective of the research is to study the impact and role of e-government in creating sustainable competitive advantage. To achieve this objective, the following need to be accomplished:

1. Identify the concept and importance of e-government and information technology, and their impact on creating sustainable competitive advantage.
2. Recognize the advantages and disadvantages of e-government.
3. Identify the obstacles of e-government and the factors that help overcome them.
4. Understand the correlation between e-government and sustainable competitive advantage.

Research Hypothesis:

The study is based on the hypothesis that e-government is the most effective approach and method that contributes to enhancing the capacity and efficiency of sustainable competitive advantage for traditional organizations.

Research Methodology:

This research adopts the descriptive analytical methodology in order to study the phenomenon and dissect its components. Consequently, it organizes and collects new formative data regarding the role of e-government and its impact on creating sustainable

competitive advantage for traditional organizations. The research utilizes the method of surveying published scientific output (both electronically and in print) to attempt to obtain solutions and answers to the research problem. The research primarily searches for answers online and in electronic databases available in university libraries. Additionally, relevant journals in the field of business administration, information science, and behavioral and applied sciences have been consulted regarding the published literature on this topic.

Discussion:

Concept and Importance of E-Government:

E-government is one of the modern concepts that have emerged from information and communication technology in this digital world. The term "e-government" first appeared in 1997 when it was used by IBM in its initial campaign to distinguish electronic business activities from electronic commerce activities. E-government is defined as "an integrated and flexible approach to delivering unique business value by connecting systems to the processes through which core business activities are executed, in a simplified and flexible manner, using internet technology." It is worth noting that e-commerce is one of the components of e-government (Farhi, Farah, 2015).

The importance of e-government lies in its ability to improve various services that connect customers and employees, facilitate communication, and enhance the speed of information exchange compared to traditional paper-based systems. It also contributes to improving economic competitiveness. The use of the Internet has enabled small and medium-sized companies to enter economic competition, while reducing the expenses associated with paper-based industries (Al-Tikriti, 2002).

Advantages and Benefits of E-Business:

E-government is considered essential in our current time as it is broader and more comprehensive than traditional management. Like any field, it has positive and negative aspects. The main advantage of e-government can be summarized in one sentence: increased efficiency and cost reduction. Achieving this advantage leads to several other benefits, including:

1. Continuous improvement of service levels and providing better services to customers.
2. Easy and fast delivery of customer information, such as debts, service quality, payment, and more.
3. Reduction of transaction costs.
4. Wide geographical reach.
5. Continuous communication with everyone (customers and partners).
6. Customer satisfaction.
7. Access to a larger number of people by operating 24/7.
8. E-government is a distinct, effective, and unprecedented means of accessing markets.

In addition, e-government provides several other advantages, including:

1. The ability to penetrate new markets and expand organizational operations.
2. Improving the strategic performance of the organization through providing electronic communication channels and functional integration.
3. Reducing the cost of administrative and non-administrative tasks, which means gaining advantages over other competitors or at least providing a basis for implementing differentiation and cost leadership strategies.

4. Managing the organization's relationships with its customers easily and flexibly by providing a suitable working environment for each customer through the use of e-management tools, systems, or web-based business gateways (Al-Tikriti, 2002).

Drawbacks of E-Government:

1. High cost of electronic systems and the need for efficient and technically skilled experts.
2. Renewing and updating systems require significant financial resources.
3. Training and qualifying employees incur high financial costs.
4. Difficulty in providing internet connectivity in workplaces, homes, and streets.
5. Concerns about security and privacy in e-government tilt the scale towards traditional management.

Reasons for the Lack of Progress in E-Government in Some Countries:

The following are general reasons that have caused some countries to lag behind the rest of the world in e-government:

1. Scarcity of qualified human resources with appropriate technical education.
2. Lack of economic resources to support education and scientific research.
3. High illiteracy rates in computer usage.
4. High unemployment rates.
5. Mismatch between inputs and outputs (resulting from lack of planning and failure to understand the field reality).
6. Inadequate communication network infrastructure.
7. Insufficient IT infrastructure and lack of support for IT software, as well as neglecting support for the technological infrastructure.
8. Lack of workforce possessing technical expertise and specialization in information technology.

Factors that contribute to the advancement of e-government:

The factors that contribute to building the future of electronic transaction management can be summarized as follows (Al-Ala'iq, 2005):

1. Completing the legal framework for information technology and communication.
2. Establishing government incubators for knowledge economy projects.
3. Creating research centers to develop IT-related industries.
4. Establishing training centers in IT fields and software development to enhance human resources in both public and private sectors.
5. Collaborating efforts between the public and private sectors to direct investments towards developing infrastructure and technology.
6. Reviewing education strategies and updating higher education programs to include IT courses.
7. Developing a national strategy to invest in internet resources and ensure the spread of this technology in society.
8. Launching national programs to develop IT companies.
9. Establishing institutions and implementing necessary policies and procedures to support the financial, banking, and other facilities for these organizations.

10. Providing direct government support to small businesses operating in the software industry and IT services.
11. Accelerating the construction and development of e-government projects due to their crucial role in transitioning to e-government.
12. Creating a professional environment for investment in global IT companies through direct investment, strategic alliances, and joint projects.
13. Establishing electronic links between research institutions to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and expertise among countries.
14. Establishing databases for IT professionals.
15. Encouraging applied scientific research and studies in universities, institutes, and scientific institutions that address the economic, legal, legislative, social, and cultural aspects of information technology.
16. Establishing centers for economic innovation where researchers can produce scientific and applied knowledge in the fields of IT utilization and management in various business activities.
17. Studying the role and impact of information technology in educational programs at all levels of education, considering it as part of human resource development and enhancement strategy.
18. Organizations and institutions should work on reengineering their processes and activities.
19. Promoting e-culture through various available means and developing programs to address information development challenges.

#### Why e-government?

The present time necessitates the dissemination and practice of e-government because it responds to regulatory signals and utilizes and achieves tremendous power through precise and peaceful methods. It carries out repetitive tasks with absolute accuracy, in addition to storing a vast amount of information and data on small-sized disks that do not require large storage spaces. E-government has the ability to perform computational operations quickly and accurately. E-government is associated with the development of a quality culture, increasing the effectiveness of work teams, forming positive attitudes towards work, enhancing the efficiency and motivation of individuals, improving organizational interactions and communications, and positively impacting product performance and increasing marketing rates. It is also closely linked to the effectiveness of decision-making. E-government fundamentally influences increasing the competitive capabilities of organizations and affects the regulatory patterns in their effectiveness.

E-government has become an essential element in the strategic thinking of any general or specific administrative work, whether industrial or service-oriented. It is now incumbent upon every administrator to learn the impact of information and communication technology on management and the execution of tasks.

Administrative work is the idea of automating performance in the relationship between two work frames. It extends to all administrative, productive, financial, and service activities and is not limited to the relationship between the seller or supplier and the customer. It extends to the relationship between the establishment, its agents, employees, and customers. It also encompasses work performance, evaluation, and control. Within e-government, there is an automated electronic factory, an electronic bank, an electronic insurance company, and automated government services, which are evolving concepts in the present time towards a more comprehensive concept known as e-government. Any establishment may establish a network (e.g., a local internet) to manage its operations, employee performance, and interconnectivity. On the other hand, e-commerce is a

commercial activity, especially the contracts of buying and selling, requesting and receiving services, conducted through technological mechanisms and within a technological environment.

In fact, the foundation of e-government lies in obtaining smart systems for preparing periodic reports on the workflow within an organization and organizing the workflow itself. In traditional business management methods, it was customary to obtain vital reports related to the performance, capabilities, and relationship of the organization with its surrounding environment on a monthly basis, or at best, on a weekly basis. However, this approach is not effective in the highly competitive business environment that organizations face today. Organizations need information not on a monthly, weekly, or daily basis, but rather instantaneously in this new information age.

Therefore, it has become necessary for organizations to rely on highly advanced information systems that provide comprehensive and detailed reports on various operations of the organization, including accounting, sales, inventory, employees, customers, competitors, markets, and other information, in real time. This is exactly what business management software accomplishes (Harris, 2002).

Digital companies extensively use the internet in managing e-government, facilitating internal procedures and operations, as well as relationships with customers, suppliers, and other external entities. The internet is a network of numerous global computer networks that connect millions of individuals and organizations in most countries worldwide. It serves as the largest information superhighway in the world.

The internet can be used as a foundation or infrastructure for e-business management for several reasons (Kandilji & Al-Janabi, 2009):

1. The internet has rapidly become the infrastructure for electronic management options. It provides global access to user-friendly and standardized technology that can be adopted by all organizations. This technology can be adopted and utilized regardless of the computer systems or information technology platforms used.
2. It enables direct communication between transaction parties, eliminating intermediaries and simplifying communication processes. The internet technology ensures direct access and retrieval of information from thousands of databases distributed in different regions of the world.
3. It provides round-the-clock services, as the internet and web-based platforms are available 24 hours a day.
4. It allows for expansion in connectivity channels, attracting customers who otherwise would not engage with the organization.
5. It reduces communication expenses, significantly decreasing costs for sellers, buyers, and other associated expenses. The internet provides cost-effective alternatives for coordinating activities, reducing costs and facilitating business and service transactions for organizations.
6. Various e-business models have emerged and are available on the internet, including virtual interfaces, crowded markets, information brokers, gateway providers, content providers, electronic content distributors, direct search exchanges, auctions, publishing institutions, and online service providers.
7. The internet facilitates marketing capabilities through product and service offerings and valuable information using the user-friendly and dynamic nature of the web. By utilizing the internet and its multimedia capabilities, companies can simultaneously reach and serve customers. The internet can help companies generate profits through new avenues, such as adding value to existing products and services or introducing new product and service foundations.

### Competitive Advantage:

In recent years, there have been rapid changes in all fields, which have compelled many organizations to strive for excellence by enhancing their performance through adopting means and methods that can achieve the appropriate competitive advantage based on their capabilities and potentials. They continuously improve and develop these advantages in order to maintain the desired superiority. This is especially important because customer demands and preferences are characterized by constant change, necessitating preparedness for such changes by adopting strategies that allow for delivering the best, exceptional, and unique offerings, and even anticipating customer expectations as a path to continuous excellence. At the same time, it is important to provide products that are non-harmful and environmentally friendly whenever possible, by adopting elements of continuous improvement to achieve the best sustainable competitive advantage.

The concept of competitive advantage refers to an organization's ability to formulate and implement strategies that place it in a better position compared to other organizations operating in the same industry. Competitive advantage is achieved through better utilization of technical, material, financial, and organizational resources, as well as capabilities, competencies, knowledge, and other potentialities that the company possesses, enabling it to design and implement its competitive strategies. Achieving competitive advantage is linked to two fundamental dimensions: the perceived value by the customer and the company's ability to achieve differentiation (Abubakar, 2007).

### The Importance of Competitive Advantage:

The importance of competitive advantage is highlighted by the numerous benefits it brings to the organization that embraces it, serving as a driving force for its continuous development and sustained superiority. The importance can be summarized as follows (Czepilc, 1992, 2) (Lyanich, 2003, 195):

1. Competitive advantage serves as an indicator of an organization's ability to possess a leading position in a highly competitive market.
2. It serves as the core of organizational work, as adopting competitive advantage allows for the formulation of strategies with a suitable competitive edge.
3. Competitive advantage is the most powerful weapon in the hands of the organization to confront current and potential competitors.
4. Competitive advantage is a fundamental pillar in the study of strategic management, to the extent that it is considered synonymous with management by some.
5. It serves as a fundamental criterion for the success of the organization compared to others in the same sector.

### Characteristics of Competitive Advantage:

The desired benefits of implementing competitive advantage require a focus on results, the presence of harmony and concentration within each company, and a focus on customers and their retention, in addition to leadership and goal stability, and finally, the area of development and engagement of individuals (Sulaim, 2010).

According to Dirisu et al. (2013), there are several characteristics that distinguish competitive advantage, as follows:

1. Following a policy of continuous change, seeking the development of the organization, improving its performance, and maximizing its profits.
2. Competitive advantage is characterized by its ability to attract and retain skilled employees who possess exceptional abilities, skills, and creativity, capable of innovating new plans and policies for the organization.

3. One of the most important characteristics of competitive advantage is that it emphasizes and adopts innovation in its strategy, striving for uniqueness in delivering services and goods to customers.
4. It should be renewable based on external environmental factors on one hand, and the internal capabilities and resources of the organization on the other hand.
5. Flexibility in designing and implementing plans that align with the changes and transformations occurring in the market environment, achieving a good reputation for the company and expanding the target market.
6. Continuity and commitment to achieving the goals and objectives that the company aspires to, and striving to develop long-term strategic plans that ensure the organization's sustained excellence and distinctiveness.
7. The use of these competitive advantages should align with the goals and results that the organization aims to achieve in both the short and long term.

Sources of Competitive Advantage:

The sources of competitive advantage are as follows:

1. Innovation: Innovation is a primary source for achieving a high level of competitive advantage in a dynamic environment and a key element in organizational strategies. With the significant advancements in technology and communications, innovation has become a fundamental pillar and a crucial aspect of strategic performance. Therefore, it is of utmost importance for organizations to adapt to the external environment, respond to organizational changes imposed by strong market competition, and strive to achieve sustainable competitive advantage, maximize profits, and attract a larger customer base (Babalola, 2013).

Innovation is defined as the strategies employed by organizations that are based on the principle of introducing new ideas, generating unique and unmatched practices, and keeping pace with the technological requirements, modern plans, and management methods of the era. Implementing innovation enables organizations to achieve a competitive advantage that surpasses their competitors (Boubaya, 2012).

Innovation serves as a successful tool and a solid foundation for organizations to develop and enhance their performance. It plays a vital role in marketing products and services in a modern and contemporary manner, creating added value for goods and services. Additionally, innovation contributes to cost reduction, enables organizations to offer unique and distinctive products and services, and achieves a high level of competitive advantage in the market (Sachitra et al., 2016).

2. Time: Time represents a primary source for achieving competitive advantage, which requires companies to be prompt in meeting customer requirements and adapting to changing environmental conditions. It involves work fragmentation, anticipating constant changes, and updating mechanisms to ensure that customers receive products and services quickly, avoiding bottlenecks and increasing costs.

Time is one of the most important sources that can provide a significant competitive advantage to an organization. Time is equivalent to money, productivity, quality, and innovation. Effective time management leads to cost reduction, high and distinctive quality, maximized profits, and strengthens the organization's position in the market. Proper time management also reduces planning cycles in the product development process, improves performance, and enhances product development and improvement. Time management plays a role in delivering products and goods to the market within a short period, benefiting customers and attracting a larger potential customer base. The importance of time lies in the ability to design and develop strategic plans, manage the organizational structure, and achieve profits within a short period, which reflects



positively on the organization's reputation, brand development, and market position (Sachitra et al., 2016).

3. Knowledge: Knowledge is one of the most strategic assets for any organization that wants to compete in the competitive market and achieve success. It helps in discovering new, more effective ways than those used by competitors. Knowledge also aids in leveraging important information and experiences possessed by the organization, which are essential for various managerial activities such as problem-solving, decision-making, and strategic planning (Hamshari, 2013).

In light of the above, innovation, time, and knowledge are solid foundations that assist and drive the organization to achieve a competitive advantage comparable to its competitors. The more decision-makers and top management focus on these sources, the more they will assist the company in achieving its goals and expanding its strategic plans.

E-Governance and Achieving Sustainable Competitive Advantage:

E-governance has emerged as one of the key topics in recent times in many countries around the world, particularly since the advent of the new global economic system. This trend has been facilitated by globalization and the technological advancements in communication and information technology, especially the internet. The modern communication system, with its advanced technologies, has led to widespread dissemination and a better understanding of customer needs. As a result, businesses have increasingly focused on building a competitive structure based on intellectual capital, which involves possessing high-efficiency human resources to sustain success and continuity in the information age (Basserda, 2009).

E-governance represents a contemporary intellectual development that has quickly transformed from frameworks and new approaches in studying and understanding management to a more adaptable practice for rapid changes in the business world. Its role has grown significantly as organizations realize that building and sustaining competitive advantage primarily relies on intellectual assets, identifying and investing in information assets, and fostering continuous innovation in both products and processes. Continuous innovation is a key factor in prolonging this advantage as it enhances competitiveness in terms of quality, cost, flexibility, delivery time, and creativity. Achieving this requires a comprehensive and continuous review of the organization's inputs and obtaining what enables the organization to excel through flexibility in production methods and sources. It also involves focusing on the cost-quality balance, improving internal processes, and adopting a unique organizational culture that allows for the utilization of modern technologies. This leads to the development of employees' skills, encourages innovation and creativity, and aims to achieve unique intellectual accomplishments to surpass others in the market. E-governance enables competition in terms of time, meaning minimizing the time required to complete tasks to the lowest possible level. This allows organizations to reach customers and meet market requirements ahead of their competitors. Additionally, e-governance plays a crucial role in assisting management in competing for time by providing immense capabilities for data processing (Basserda, 2009).

Overall, e-governance and its effective implementation contribute to achieving sustainable competitive advantage by leveraging intellectual assets, embracing continuous innovation, improving internal processes, and exploiting modern technologies. It enables organizations to respond swiftly to market demands, deliver products and services efficiently, and maintain a competitive edge in the dynamic business environment.

Undoubtedly, the ability of management to effectively utilize e-governance and employ it in the development of production and products is crucial. E-governance also contributes to reducing the time required for performance, thus achieving maximum productivity in the shortest possible time. It further aids in reducing the cost of raw materials and minimizing the workforce needed for production by replacing less skilled and efficient

workers with more skilled ones. E-governance provides endless opportunities for the development, design, and introduction of new products, leading to expansion, market penetration, and the opening of new markets.

How is the transition to e-governance carried out?

The elements of transitioning to e-governance include: studying the surrounding environment and identifying opportunities and challenges, building the organization's capacity to deal positively with changes, redefining the organization's mission and strategic objectives based on market orientation, and restructuring the organization to accommodate new technologies and integrate them into a cohesive framework. It involves following strategic management methodologies and strategic thinking to seek non-traditional solutions to problems and focus on e-governance that provides the highest added value, moving away from traditional activities with limited informational content. This is achieved through the use of various modern methods and techniques, breaking free from the constraints of time and distance in thinking and performance, integrating communication and information technologies into the organization's systems and processes, following an information management approach, and developing and investing in the organization's core capabilities to build its competitive strength and adopt a competitive management approach. It also involves managing available resources and potentials through mobilization and intensifying their use to achieve a stronger competitive advantage.

Furthermore, the elements of the transition to e-governance include process reengineering to ensure quality assurance and build competitive capabilities to achieve customer satisfaction. It involves adopting the principles of total quality management in management and organizational processes and activities. It also includes restructuring human resource management systems and mechanisms to emphasize the importance of investing in employees' intellectual capacities, fostering teamwork and performance within work teams, and building strategic alliances and network relationships with elements of the surrounding environment to support the organization's productive, marketing, and developmental capabilities. Additionally, it encompasses designing advanced systems for customer relationship management and fostering customer loyalty to the organization. The overall significance of these facts supports the research hypothesis.

### **Recommendations:**

In light of the aforementioned facts, the researcher recommends the following:

1. Encouraging collaboration and coordination among organizations in the field of e-governance.
2. The necessity of striving to provide sufficient infrastructure for the components of e-governance.
3. Government entities should design their websites on the Internet, develop existing websites, and activate them.
4. Promoting a culture of electronic knowledge and e-governance.
5. Qualifying and training personnel responsible for operating e-governance systems.
6. The higher education system should focus on building human leadership capable of dealing with all electronic work in a knowledge-driven world.
7. Continuously striving to generate and acquire knowledge that meets strategic and competitive requirements, capable of facilitating educational processes and disseminating necessary and sufficient knowledge to all relevant parties in a timely manner.

8. Managers of higher education organizations should realize that the pursuit of advanced information technology alone does not constitute a competitive advantage. It is achieved through providing knowledge, expertise, and skills in employing this technology to contribute to achieving a competitive edge.

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