

Bahrain Experience in Supporting Small and Medium Enterprises by the Utilization of E-Government

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Abstract : The focus of this study is answering the following question: How do e-government services in Bahrain support the productivity of SMEs? This study examines the current E-government function in enhancing SME productivity in Bahrain through analysing the efficiency of e- government by viewing its facilitators and barriers from the perspective of different stakeholders. The study aims to identify and develop best practice guidelines with the end-goal of creating a standardised channel of communication between e-government and SMEs that fulfil the requirement of SME owners, and thus achieve the prime objective of e-government. E-government services for SMEs have been offered in Bahrain since 2005. However, the current services lack the required mechanism for SMEs to fully take advantage of these services because of lagging communication between service provider and end-user. E-government employees believe that a lack of awareness and trust are the main stumbling block, whereas the SME owners believe that there is a lack of sufficiency in the content and efficiency provided through e- services. A questionnaire has been created based on a pilot study that highlighted the main indicators of e-government efficiency and SMEs productivity as well as previous studies conducted on this subject. This allowed for quantitative data to be extracted. Also interviews were conducted with SME owners and government employees from both case studies, which formed the qualitative data for this study. The findings portray that both the service provider and service receiver largely agree on the existence of most of the technical and administrative barriers. However, the data reflects a level of dissatisfaction from the SME side, which contradicts with the perceived level of satisfaction from the government employees. Therefore, the data supports the argument that assures the existence of a communication gap between stakeholders. To this effect, this research would help build channels of communication between stakeholders, and then induces a plan unlocking the potential of e-government application. The conclusions of this study will help devise an optimised E-government strategy for Bahrain.

Keywords : e-government, SME, e-services, G2B, government employees' perspective, entrepreneurs' perspective, enterprise

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