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Abstract

This thesis is a study on Information and Communication Technology implications (ICT) in the state of Assam. The study was intended at assessing the overall impact of Dharitree in Sonitpur district. The research examines how the use of IT has redefined governance and what has been its remittance with its stated emphasis on transparency, accountability, and active participation which is the quintessence of good governance. Because of the embeddedness to the organizational and non-organizational environments of the research problem being investigated, the study used Triangulation Method to understand the factors affecting the adoption and use of ICT applications in Sonitpur district of Assam. The use of both quantitative and qualitative strategies in the same study is a viable option to obtain complementary findings and to strengthen research results.

The study has both theoretical and practical contributions. In terms of theory, this study was informed by two robust theories namely Rogers' (2003) DOI and TAM theoretical perspectives. This gives the study and findings breadth and depth, for, as Silverman (2001) said, "Theory, then, should be neither a status symbol nor an optional extra in a research study. Without theory, research is impossibly narrow. Without research, theory is a merely an arm chair contemplation" (p. 110). Using theory to examine the practice broadens the world view and helps in understanding the gaps in the research problem being investigated. There is a dearth of literature on interpretive studies in IS using the DOI and TAM perspectives.

The study has served to contextualize the theoretical constructs of TAM and Diffusion of Innovation bringing in new perspectives when studied under different contexts. The goal of the study was to understand the barriers and enablers of ICT adoption in Assam. The findings from the analysis have added new knowledge regarding diffusion of ICT within the unique socio-cultural, institutional and technological context. There has been no previous substantial research on ICT implications in Assam to this effect. It is important that the diffusion models derived

from the developed world needs to be re-looked at because the conditions in which such technology operates are very different given the vast digital divide that is prevalent in most parts of India and Assam is no exception. There is a prevalent digital divide which quantifies the gaps in accessibility and use of Internet and other ICT's across the state. The gaps perhaps is because it requires skills and hence, the need of a knowledge-intensive society.

To meet this requirement there is a need to assess the problems and prospects and the impact of ICT projects implemented in Assam. It has been found that there is general lack of awareness regarding benefits of e-governance. Besides, any effort to implement ICT applications and workflow technologies or bringing out a change in the system is met with resistance from the government servants. There has to be an attitudinal change among government officials who are at the helm of affairs. Designing of any ICT application requires a very close interaction between the government departments and the agency developing the solutions.

E-governance subsumes a number of research domains such as computer science, information systems, public administration and political science. Scholl (2007) argues that e-government research draws on public administration, information systems and computer science, using procedures and methods prevalent in those fields, and that unique clusters of research problems are investigated that fall outside those disciplines. Therefore, e-government as a field of research belongs to a "class of integrative interdisciplinary sciences addressing evolving clusters of research problems systematically underserved and understudied within the boundaries of established disciplines" (Scholl, 2007, p. 29).

The conclusions as well as the constraints of this study bring forth some fruitful and interesting possible avenues for future research that might be needed in furthering the study. The most important avenue for future research lies in continuing research on the other models of e-governance such as C-G, G-C, G-G, G-B and B-G etc. A more thorough understanding of the e-governance could be achieved by considering the interplay of the different stakeholders more explicitly. However, this research was explicitly designed at examining G-C mode of governance. This detachment can be seen to provide a first step towards developing a model for understanding the ICT adoption. Therefore, the next step could be to study on the other forms of e-governance.