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## Digital governance and public acceptance: Lessons from the Thai government's digital service use

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### Abstract

This paper called "Digital Governance and Public Acceptance: Lessons from the Thai Government's Digital Service Use" studies Thai nationals' perceptions about digital government services in focus group discussions among urban youth, working adults, rural, and elderly (n = 34). The thematic analysis revealed five overarching themes: 1. convenience, 2. trust and data protection concerns continued, 3. left behind: rural and elderly due to digital divide, 4. usability and design limitations, and 5. single, citizen-centric platform expectations. Efficiency and accessibility of digital services are valued, while concerns about inclusiveness, transparency, and service silos continued to be significant. This study makes a novel contribution by applying focus group methods to explore citizen perspectives in the Thai context, offering qualitative depth that complements prior quantitative studies on e-government adoption. The findings highlight that confidence building, bridging the digital divide, designing with a citizen-centric approach, and integrating services across agencies are paramount. Policy recommendations include enhancing data protection, investing in digital literacy, and institutionalizing citizen participation in digital governance. Citizen-centered design drives inclusive and credible digital transformation.

**Keywords:** citizen participation, digital divide, digital governance, public trust, usability, public acceptance

## Background and Significance

The digital revolution has been one of the century's key transformational changes, recasting economies, societies, and also intergovernmental relations with people. Around the world, public administrations are employing digital technologies to reshape service delivery, underpin higher transparency, and build more responsive governance systems. The concept of digital government has evolved from its historical emphasis upon efficiency to more sweeping visions of inclusivity, participation, and trust. In both developed and developing contexts, digital means are increasingly seen as facilitators of citizen participation and of creating public value in manners that bureaucratic processes could not. Psychological antecedents of citizens using digital government services are trust, risk, security, and privacy (Gupta et al., 2024).

In this global evolution, Thailand has emerged as a regional champion of digital transformation under the Thailand 4.0 policy agenda, which makes explicit reference to digital governance as a driver of modernization and competitiveness. The development of platforms like Paotang in financial transactions, Mor Prom in healthcare, and countless web portals in taxation, welfare, and administrative services are instances of aspirations of citizen-state interactions by the state. They came to much critical use in moments of the COVID-19 pandemic, when digital modes came to be invaluable in facilitating urgent services in spite of scenarios of social distancing. But while such platforms reveal the aspirations of the state, evidence suggests that reception by citizens and actual uptake are uneven. For instance, Achieving a Successful E-Government: Determinants of E-Government Development The success model from the Thai citizens' perspective suggests that trust in systems, quality of service, and trustworthiness are strong predictors—yet take-up is anything but widespread across demographic profiles (Nookhao & Kiattisin, 2023). According to the Digital Government Development Agency (2023), more than 40 million users registered on the Paotang platform, while the Mor Prom system reported over 52 million active accounts for vaccination and health services by the end of 2023—showing significant but still segmented adoption concentrated among urban and younger populations.

Various structural issues hamper widespread adoption of digital services in Thailand. Firstly, the persisting urban-rural digital divide further inhibits inclusivity as connectivity, affordability, and digital literacy differ markedly at demographic and territorial levels. Recent investigations of spatial dynamics of the digital divide at sub-district levels in Thailand reveal that geographical and infrastructure gaps are strong predictors of low utilization of e-government services in rural districts and remote areas. Secondly, concern regarding data protection and cybersecurity makes people reluctant to wholeheartedly use government sites, especially in the face of rising fears of surveillance and data exploitation. Perceived risk, perceived security/privacy, trust in the government, and trust in the internet are part of the strongest psychology-based predictors of adoption of e-government, as indicated by meta-analytic evidence (Gupta et al., 2024). Thirdly, readiness of public agencies themselves is inconsistent, as several of them remain trapped in siloed or compliance-based bureaucratic cultures that resist people-oriented design.

These concerns imply that digital transformation is anything but a technical concern, being fundamentally political and socially configured, wherein perceptions and experiences of civilians take center stage.

Despite such proximate concerns, much of the recent work in Thai e-government has centered on technical fixes, policy frameworks, or summary measures of adoption. Though worthwhile, such measures often underemphasize the importance of learning more about how citizens themselves perceive, encounter, and evaluate digital government services. The Nookhao & Kiattisin (2023) research utilizes a large-scale survey and structural model to establish predictors of adoption, yet does not investigate much about how citizens encounter concerns such as usability, privacy, or equity in daily use. While digital divide studies document disparities and reach, such work holds back from producing rich qualitative insight among those directly affected. Without such insight, designers risk building systems that sound efficient in theory yet remain out of sync with daily realities, expectations, and concerns of people who will be affected. This leaves a significant research gap in understanding the lived experiences and interpretive meanings citizens attach to digital government platforms. A qualitative approach, particularly through focus groups, is essential to capture these nuanced perceptions, contextual barriers, and expectations that quantitative surveys cannot fully reveal.

This paper therefore aims to bridge that gap by investigating how Thai citizens perceive and accept digital government services through focus group interviews. Through putting citizen voice at the forefront, research works both to shed light upon what digital platforms bring and what limits their acceptability. The findings should provide practical insights into enhancing inclusivity, building confidence, and achieving public value in Thailand's digital transformation agenda. More broadly, this paper contributes to international debates around digital governance by highlighting the overriding importance of citizen perception in determining both legitimacy and sustainability of digital reform. In so doing, it signals why digital government's future must be understood beyond technology by being explored in terms of people's real lives that it aims to transform.

## Objective

1. Examine Thai citizens' perceptions and lived experiences with digital government services, focusing on how institutional and service-level factors—such as service quality, platform design, and communication—shape users' accessibility, usability, and security concerns.
2. Analyze how these perceptions influence public trust and acceptance of digital governance, with particular attention to the mediating roles of inclusivity and transparency in the citizen-state relationship.
3. Propose evidence-based policy recommendations to strengthen citizen-centered digital governance by addressing institutional gaps, enhancing trust-building mechanisms, and promoting sustainable digital transformation in Thailand.

## Literature Review

### Governance and Institutional Transformation

An initial distinction concerns Digital Governance versus traditional E-Government. While early models of e-government focused primarily on digitizing public services-placing forms and processes online-contemporary digital governance represents a broader institutional shift. It involves the strategic use of digital technologies not only to improve efficiency but also to enhance public decision-making, transparency, and citizen participation (Scholl, 2020). Recent scholarship has emphasized integrated service delivery, cross-agency collaboration, and the creation of public value through participatory approaches (Distel & Lindgren, 2023). Thus, digital governance is best conceptualized as an institutional transformation redefining structures, roles, and administrative routines rather than a mere technological upgrade.

### Trust, Privacy, and Technology Acceptance

A substantial body of research has examined the psychological and contextual factors influencing citizens' adoption of digital government services. Models such as the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) identify perceived usefulness, ease of use, and social influence as major determinants. These frameworks have since evolved to include trust and perceived risk-especially in relation to privacy and data protection-reflecting growing public concern about security and surveillance (Gupta et al., 2024). A meta-analysis covering 68 empirical studies confirmed that trust in government, trust in the internet, and perceptions of data security are among the most significant predictors of e-government adoption (Barbosa et al., 2022; Li, 2021). Institutional trust also underpins legitimacy in digital engagement. Both competence-based trust (service reliability, responsiveness) and values-based trust (integrity, fairness, openness) are vital in shaping citizens' confidence in online interactions. When governments demonstrate consistent performance and transparent communication on data protection, citizens' trust in digital channels strengthens accordingly.

### Digital Divide and Social Inclusion:

Despite rapid technological progress, the digital divide remains a major obstacle. Gaps in connectivity, literacy, and affordability-often differentiated by geography, age, and income-limit equitable access to e-government (van Dijk, 2020). Studies in Thailand show that adoption remains uneven, particularly between urban and rural populations, due to disparities in infrastructure and digital capability. As the OECD (2024) notes, inclusion depends not only on connectivity but also on cultivating user confidence and providing institutional support mechanisms for those at risk of exclusion. Hence, digital transformation must be accompanied by measures to strengthen trust, build digital literacy, and address demographic inequalities.

### UX, Service Quality, and Citizen Experience

Service quality and usability are decisive for sustaining engagement. High information quality-defined by accuracy, completeness, and timeliness-and reliable service performance correlate with user satisfaction and repeated use. During crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, platforms that maintained

clarity and responsiveness achieved higher citizen approval. Research in user experience (UX) design emphasizes citizen-centered features such as accessibility, transparency, and mobile adaptability, which reduce perceived risk and enhance usefulness (Aldrees & Gračanin, 2023). Transparent communication on data usage and responsive feedback mechanisms further enhances institutional trust.

### **Toward Citizen-Centered Digital Governance in Thailand**

Thailand's Digital Government Development Plan (2023–2027) illustrates a strong policy commitment to citizen-centered design, interoperability, and data governance. However, most empirical research remains quantitative, focusing on adoption intention rather than lived experience. Surveys such as Nookhao & Kiattisin (2023) confirm that trust and service quality predict intention to use digital platforms like *Paotang* and *Mor Prom*, yet qualitative insights into how citizens actually perceive and navigate these systems are still limited. This gap is especially salient among rural, elderly, and digitally marginalized groups. A qualitative exploration, therefore, becomes essential to capture the everyday meanings, frustrations, and expectations shaping citizens' acceptance of digital governance.

To conclude, the literature underscores of digital governance is a multidimensional transformation that extends beyond technological modernization toward building citizen trust, ensuring inclusion, and enhancing public value. Existing research has established strong evidence on the roles of trust, usability, and digital readiness in shaping citizens' acceptance of e-government. However, most studies remain dominated by quantitative approaches that measure intention rather than experience. This leaves a critical gap in understanding how citizens in diverse contexts—especially rural, elderly, or digitally marginalized populations—actually perceive, interact with, and evaluate government platforms. Addressing this gap requires a qualitative lens capable of revealing the lived meanings and contextual dynamics behind digital adoption. Consequently, this study contributes by foregrounding citizens' voices to enrich theoretical and policy perspectives on Thailand's digital transformation and to advance a more human-centered understanding of digital governance.

### **Conceptual framework**

This study's conceptual framework is grounded in interdisciplinary research on digital governance, technology acceptance, institutional trust, and digital inclusion. It offers a structured approach to understanding how Thai citizens perceive and engage with digital government services, focusing on the interplay among citizen perceptions, institutional/service-level factors, and public trust and acceptance. As illustrated in Figure 1, the conceptual framework demonstrates the relationships among institutional factors, citizen perceptions, and public trust and acceptance.

This framework incorporates five key variables drawn from established theoretical models and empirical research. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) provide the behavioral foundation, emphasizing perceived usefulness, ease of use, and social influence (Venkatesh et al., 2003). These have evolved to include trust, perceived risk, and

data privacy as essential predictors of e-government adoption (Gupta et al., 2024). Digital governance theory extends beyond technical efficiency to include strategic, citizen-centered design and cross-agency collaboration aimed at creating public value (Scholl, 2020). Similarly, trust and legitimacy—as identified by Brezzi (2021) and OECD (2024) are crucial for digital engagement, consisting of competence-based trust (reliability, responsiveness) and values-based trust (fairness, integrity). Furthermore, the digital divide persists as a barrier to inclusion, particularly among rural, elderly, and low-income populations (van Dijk, 2020). Finally, user experience (UX) and design quality—including accessibility, mobile adaptation, and transparency in data protection—play decisive roles in shaping perceptions and acceptance (Aldrees & Gračanin, 2023).

Citizen perceptions capture how individuals interact with digital platforms such as Paotang, Mor Prom, and other e-service portals. They reflect accessibility, usability, and satisfaction levels that form the affective basis of trust. Institutional and service-level factors, including responsiveness, design, and communication, shape these perceptions and, consequently, citizens' confidence in digital services.

Trust and acceptance act as both mediating and outcome variables. High-quality, transparent, and inclusive service design strengthens institutional credibility, leading to higher adoption and sustained use. Demographic characteristics such as age, education, and digital literacy serve as moderators influencing these dynamics within Thailand's digital governance landscape.

In essence, the framework presents a dynamic system where institutional and service-level factors shape citizen perceptions, which, in turn, affect public trust and acceptance. The qualitative design of this study allows for an in-depth exploration of these relationships to advance inclusive and trustworthy digital transformation in Thailand.

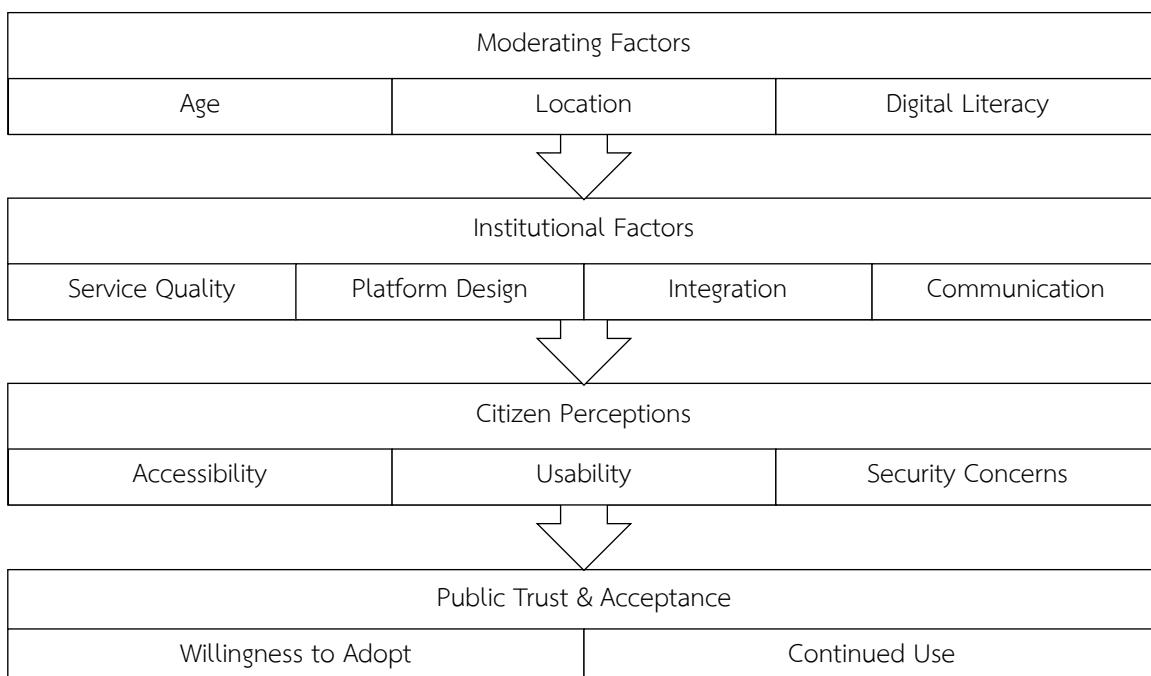


Figure. 1 Conceptual framework

## Methods

The work herein adopts a qualitative research design in using focus group discussions (FGDs) in capturing in-depth perceptions, experiences, and expectations of Thais in terms of digital government services. The qualitative design is appropriate in exploring complex social phenomena such as trust, inclusivity, and acceptance that may not be completely understood by quantitative surveys.

The sample size ( $n = 34$ ) is justified as sufficient for thematic saturation across five focus groups, ensuring coverage of diverse demographic and experiential backgrounds (Guest et al., 2020). Moreover, the configuration aligns with standard qualitative research practice, where 4–6 focus groups are commonly sufficient to reach thematic saturation (Krueger & Casey, 2015). The inclusion of five groups enabled comparisons between generational, urban–rural, and digital literacy differences without compromising analytical depth.

### 1. Population and sample

Respondents were chosen by means of purposive sampling to guarantee demographic background heterogeneity as well as heterogeneity in digital life. Four major groups emerged which are

- 1.1 Active internet platform users among urban youth (Millennials and Gen Z).
- 1.2 Urban adults (employment-eligible citizens) who use government services frequently.
- 1.3 Rural individuals with limited access to digital infrastructure.
- 1.4 Senior citizens who may face challenges in adopting digital services.

Each focus group consisted of 6–8 participants, and 5 focus groups in total ( $n = 34$ ).

### 2. Research tools

This study used a semi-structured focus group guide designed to reflect the research objectives and conceptual framework. It featured open-ended questions about participants' experiences with platforms like *Paotang* and *Mor Prom*, organized around four themes: service quality, user experience, trust in government, and future expectations. The flexible format allowed facilitators to adapt in real time, while ensuring consistent coverage across all groups—including urban youth, working adults, rural residents, and elderly participants. The use of semi-structured guides follows established qualitative methodology standards, emphasizing flexibility and depth while maintaining consistency across discussions (Krueger & Casey, 2015).

### 3. Data collection

Focus group interviews took place in Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Khon Kaen, and Songkhla during January – March 2025. Each focus group was 90–120 minutes in duration and was moderated by experienced facilitators. The semi-structured guide included:

- 3.1 Experience in transacting in government digital platforms (e.g., *Paotang*, *Mor Prom*, e-service portals)
- 3.2 Accessibility, convenience, and reliability perceptions
- 3.3 Fears about privacy, security, and trust

### 3.4 Enhancement of digital service expectations.

#### 4. Data analysis

Data was transcribed and then underwent thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021). An inductive approach was applied, allowing patterns and themes to emerge from participants' narratives rather than imposing pre-existing theoretical constructs. Coding occurred in three steps: initial coding, producing of categories, and incorporation into higher-order themes. Triangulation across different demographic groups was also implemented to enhance validity, and member checking was conducted with a small number of participants.

#### Results

Thematic analysis of the focus group discussions identified five overarching themes reflecting how Thai citizens perceive and engage with digital government services which are 1) perceived benefits and convenience 2) institutional/service-level factors and trust 3) digital divide and accessibility 4) citizen-centered expectations and public acceptance and 5) moderating factors such as age, location, and digital literacy. This thematic prevalence showed that convenience and trust-related concerns were mentioned by about 80% of participants, followed by accessibility (70%), citizen-centered expectations (65%), and moderating factors (60%).

##### Theme 1: Perceived Benefits and Convenience (Citizen Perceptions)

Participants across all groups recognized the convenience and efficiency offered by digital platforms. Urban youth, in particular, described applications like *Paotang* as "transformative," especially for routine transactions such as accessing subsidies. One participant noted, "Using *Paotang* is much more convenient. I don't have to wait in line like before, and everything can be done with my phone" (P1-Youth). Working-age adults also highlighted the time-saving nature of online services like license renewals and tax filings. This theme appeared in all five focus groups (100%), confirming that perceived usefulness and accessibility are the strongest motivators of engagement.

##### Theme 2: Institutional/Service-Level Factors and Trust

Participants discussed several service-level limitations—ranging from inconsistent updates and fragmented systems to poor responsiveness. Many noted that even though services exist online, they are "still not fully connected," requiring multiple logins or in-person verification. One participant commented, "Even if it's online, I still have to go to the district office to confirm documents. It's not seamless" (P4-Adult). Approximately 75% of participants mentioned frustrations related to system design and coordination between agencies. Moreover, concerns about data privacy and institutional trust remained significant: "I worry that my data might be used elsewhere without my consent" (P5-Elderly). These insights highlight that trust is closely linked to institutional competence, communication transparency, and inter-agency integration—key service-level determinants of acceptance.

### Theme 3: Digital Divide and Accessibility

The digital divide emerged as a consistent barrier to equal participation. Rural participants reported unreliable internet, device shortages, and limited digital literacy, often leading to dependency on others. “The app text is too small and complicated. I always ask my son for help” (P3-Rural). Elderly participants, in particular, found it difficult to navigate multi-step verification and security measures. Roughly two-thirds ( $\approx 68\%$ ) of participants emphasized accessibility and literacy gaps as central obstacles. This reinforces the importance of inclusivity in both design and implementation, ensuring that digital transformation does not widen existing inequalities.

### Theme 4: Citizen-Centered Expectations and Public Acceptance

Participants expressed strong preferences for more integrated, transparent, and citizen-focused platforms. Fragmentation across government apps was a recurring frustration: “There should be just one platform for everything, not ten different apps” (P2-Youth). Around 65% of participants mentioned this issue, suggesting a strong public demand for a single, unified digital portal. Participants also proposed enhancements such as voice assistance, larger fonts, and offline service options to serve marginalized groups. Importantly, several participants highlighted the need for citizen participation in co-designing services—a theme aligning with international best practices in participatory digital governance.

### Theme 5: Moderating Factors—Age, Location, and Digital Literacy

Differences in age, regional setting, and digital literacy strongly shaped how participants perceived and trusted government platforms. Younger and urban users tended to be early adopters and more confident in using apps like *Paotang* and *Mor Prom*, while older and rural participants showed more hesitation and reliance on family assistance. “I can use the app easily, but my parents still go to the district office” (P1-Youth). This theme appeared in 60% of discussions, often emerging naturally while discussing accessibility and usability. It emphasizes that digital inclusion policies must account for contextual diversity—especially by providing tailored outreach, local training, and simplified service interfaces.

Across all five themes, citizens acknowledged the efficiency and potential of digital governance, yet their lived experiences revealed persistent challenges in trust, design integration, and equitable access. These results empirically validate the conceptual framework, demonstrating how institutional/service-level quality, citizen perceptions, and moderating factors jointly shape public trust and acceptance in Thailand’s digital transformation.

## Discussion

The findings of this study reveal both the promise and complexity of Thailand’s digital governance efforts. Five key themes—convenience, trust and security, digital divide, usability and design, and integration and expectations—reflect the nuanced experiences of citizens and offer targeted insights for improving digital public services. In interpreting these themes, this discussion draws on both structural explanations—such as policy design, institutional coordination, and digital infrastructure—and cultural

explanations, including social norms of hierarchy, deference to authority, and collective attitudes toward technology and the state. This dual lens helps explain why trust and adoption dynamics in Thailand differ from those observed in more individualistic and high-trust societies like Estonia or Singapore.

#### Convenience as a Structural Enabler

Convenience emerged as a major factor influencing citizens' acceptance of digital platforms. This is consistent with global scholarship on e-government adoption, which highlights ease of access and time-saving benefits as core motivators. Thai participants pointed to practical advantages in using applications such as *Paotang* for financial transactions or license renewals—experiences that echo positive outcomes reported in Singapore's Smart Nation initiative. However, while convenience may facilitate initial use, sustained adoption depends on broader structural factors including system reliability, policy continuity, and inter-agency coordination. At the same time, cultural factors such as trust in authority and preference for human-mediated interactions continue to shape citizens' comfort with digital transactions.

#### Trust, Security, and Institutional Culture

Despite recognizing digital benefits, participants across all groups expressed deep concerns about data privacy, security, and system transparency. These concerns align with international findings that identify perceived risks and lack of institutional openness as barriers to adoption. In contrast, countries like Estonia have cultivated high levels of trust through robust legal safeguards and clear communication around data use (van Dijk, 2020). For Thailand, this reflects not only structural gaps in data governance but also cultural legacies of skepticism toward centralized authority. Strengthening institutional trust therefore requires addressing both the technical aspects of cybersecurity and the cultural expectations of fairness, transparency, and moral governance.

#### Digital Divide and Inclusiveness: Structural Constraints vs. Cultural Norms

Rural residents cited poor internet connectivity, while elderly participants struggled with digital literacy and accessibility. These findings reflect broader regional disparities. Structurally, such gaps point to uneven infrastructure and resource allocation, but culturally, they reveal generational differences in attitudes toward digital autonomy and collective dependency. Addressing these challenges requires not only infrastructure investment but also culturally sensitive interventions—such as peer-learning, community-based support, and temple-based digital training for senior citizens—that resonate with Thai social institutions.

#### Usability and Service-Level Design: From Description to Comparative Insight

Participants described instances where online processes still required offline follow-ups, illustrating the persistence of bureaucratic silos. This structural rigidity reflects a legacy of proceduralism in Thai public administration, where compliance often overrides user-centric design. Culturally, citizens' tolerance of such inefficiencies may stem from adaptive acceptance within hierarchical systems. Without integrating citizen input into platform design, digital reforms risk reproducing the same inefficiencies they aim to eliminate—a lesson echoed in comparative governance literature.

### Integration, Expectations, and Theoretical Implications

Participants voiced clear expectations for more integrated and citizen-centered services. Suggestions for unified portals, chatbot support, and multilingual access align with global digital governance models. From a theoretical standpoint, these findings extend the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) by emphasizing the contextual mediators of trust and inclusiveness. Whereas TAM and UTAUT focus primarily on cognitive and behavioral determinants, this study introduces institutional/ service-level quality and socio-cultural legitimacy as critical antecedents of acceptance. This extension highlights that citizen adoption of digital government in emerging contexts depends not only on perceived usefulness and ease of use, but also on perceptions of procedural fairness, moral alignment, and cultural trust.

### Toward a Comparative Understanding

Overall, the findings suggest that Thailand's digital governance stands at a critical juncture. Citizens broadly recognize the potential benefits of digital services, but ongoing concerns around trust, inclusion, and usability continue to hinder widespread acceptance. Comparatively, these findings underscore how structural reforms (e.g., policy integration, interoperability) and cultural reforms (e.g., transparency, participatory governance) must progress in tandem to ensure sustainable digital transformation. The interplay between these two dimensions distinguishes Thailand's case and contributes to broader theoretical debates on digital governance in transitional democracies.

### Body of knowledge

This study contributes to public administration and sustainable development by showing how citizens' perceptions influence the success of digital governance. Based on diverse focus groups in Thailand, it finds that acceptance depends on trust, inclusivity, and transparent service design rather than technology alone. The study integrates structural and cultural perspectives and extends TAM and UTAUT by highlighting trust and legitimacy as key mediators. It reframes digital transformation as a governance process rooted in equity, accountability, and citizen-centered sustainability.

### Suggestions

#### 1. Suggestions for applying research results

This study highlights the dual reality of Thailand's digital governance: while digital government platforms are widely appreciated for their convenience and efficiency, they continue to fall short in terms of trust, inclusiveness, and usability. Younger and urban participants frequently praised the practical benefits of applications such as Paotang and Mor Prom, particularly for streamlining transactions and accessing public services. However, rural and elderly participants pointed to ongoing challenges, including limited digital access, low literacy, and confusing user interfaces. Concerns about data privacy, opaque communication, and the fragmentation of services further undermined trust—underscoring that digital

transformation should be viewed as a governance process involving legitimacy, transparency, and citizen engagement rather than a purely technical reform.

1.1 In the short term, policy actions should prioritize strengthening data protection and communication transparency through clear privacy guidelines, public awareness campaigns, and accessible complaint mechanisms. Enhancing rural connectivity and launching targeted digital literacy programs for elderly and low-income citizens can immediately reduce access barriers.

1.2 In the long term, reforms should focus on consolidating fragmented digital services into an integrated “one-stop” platform, supported by interoperable databases and citizen participation in platform co-design. Institutionalizing cross-agency collaboration and continuous user feedback mechanisms will ensure adaptability and inclusiveness as technologies evolve.

1.3 Rather than normative expectations, these recommendations derive from empirical findings showing that citizens’ trust and adoption behaviors are contingent upon both structural improvements and participatory governance mechanisms. By gradually combining short-term service enhancements with long-term institutional reforms, Thailand can advance toward a digital government that is efficient, equitable, and trusted—contributing to more sustainable and legitimate governance outcomes.

## 2. Suggestions for future research

2.1 This study has several limitations. First, while the use of focus group discussions effectively captured rich qualitative insights, the design is inherently limited by potential group conformity and social desirability bias—participants may have moderated their views to align with perceived social norms or authority presence. Second, the relatively small and purposive sample ( $n = 34$ ) provides depth rather than representativeness; hence, findings may not generalize to all Thai citizens. Third, the dynamic nature of digital governance means public attitudes are likely to evolve as technologies and institutional capacities change.

2.2 Future research should employ mixed-method designs combining large-scale surveys and in-depth interviews to validate these qualitative insights. Longitudinal approaches would help capture temporal changes in trust, inclusion, and adoption patterns, while cross-national comparisons—especially across ASEAN—could illuminate how cultural and institutional factors jointly shape citizens’ acceptance of digital governance.

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