Chapter 7

E-Governance Survey on Municipalities Web Sites

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ABSTRACT

E-Governance aims to provide high quality of government for citizens. It covers services, information delivery and interactive community/government communication. This goal can be achieved by adopting the ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) tools in the government web site’s design and contents. This communication channel allows a redefinition of the traditional role played by each one of the actors of the relation. The government as provider of: services, information, transparency and interactive communication. The citizens acting as active subjects with their government, using services, receiving information, controlling the government’s decisions and returning feedback to them. This feedback includes opinions, complaints and suggestions delivered by the web sites’ interactive tools. This research surveyed if the implementation of ICT tools regarding national and international norms and regulations for web sites development and content, increases the fulfillment of the key concepts of e-governance: e-democracy, e-services, e-transparency and active and passive communication. 30 local government web sites of Argentine were analyzed by checking if they implemented the ICT tools expressed by the seven basic concepts of design and contents: Navigability, Veracity, Friendliness, Functionality, Accessibility, Usability and Information through 152 weighed aspects that fulfill these seven concepts. The analysis of the score obtained by the web sites showed their e-governance development level and what aspects they have to implement to improve e-governance quality.

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**DESIGN AND CONTENTS**

**Environment**

Assuming that one of the aims of the municipality’s web sites is to increase the development and comfort of their citizens, this paper analyzes the aspects that will allow those sites to get a more effective approach to their citizens, increasing the delivery of services, information and participation.

Taking as a premise the intuition (the possibility to use new or unknown software by making an analogy with the applications that are frequently used), this analysis wants to establish similarities and differences on web sites’ design and functionality. National and international norms, regulations and publications are taken as a basis, in order to determine the most important aspects to perform the analysis. Finally, some aspects that have not been found in the quoted sources were included, according to the needs, capabilities and restrictions of the studied communities.

There are a high percentage of citizens that uses internet only to check email and other percentage doesn’t have enough resources (economical and/or technological) to access a computer. Within this environment Argentina begins to consider e-Governance as a tool to simplify citizen’s life.

Technological ignorance of a big percentage of citizens creates a very difficult barrier to avoid when terms like connectivity, Internet, Broad Band, and so on, are mentioned. Lots of communities choose a technological isolation and continue to do a lot of administrative procedures personally.

Administrative procedures generally mean long queues. A lot of people that tries to access web sites by curiosity or motivation of changing, finds a lot of interfaces, different types of connectivity, very despair pages and generally loosely design, turning this motivation in confusion.

It would be much easier for people that are no familiar with web site browsing, to find menus at the same position, have a site map to quickly find wanted information, and so on. If web sites would follow standards it would be easier to find required information in less time.

Design’s standards allow relating previously acquired concepts on using software tools, with others that are being used for the first time, allowing the user to count with basic knowledge for using the new software. Government’s web sites should have the same appearance and fulfill the same standards. These standards will be essential when using Internet to realize e-governance.

**eGovernance**

Following UNESCO (Castro & Mlikota, 2002), “e-governance regards adopting ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) normative by the public government with the aim of improving the delivery of information and services to their citizens. Therefore, it promotes the community participation in the decision making process in order to increase the government’s responsibility, transparency and effectiveness”.

**Research Central Axis**

The research focuses in testing the degree of fulfillment of municipalities’ web sites of Buenos Aires Urban Cone with several aspects groups by levels of basic topics that interacts each other to reach quality.

The 30 communities that surround Buenos Aires City have approximately 9.000.000 inhabitants, more or less 25% of Argentina’s total population according to 2001 Census (INDEC - Statistics and Census National Institute, 2001). National University of La Matanza (UNLAM), is placed in one of the Buenos Aires Urban Cone districts. A high percentage of the students of this University are citizens of these communities, so this research wants to be a contribution to the place where it belongs.

Figure 1 shows the geographical placement for the 30 municipalities that conform the Buenos Aires Urban Cone.
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