Chapter 9
The Case of the Mexican Mobile Government: Measurement and Examples

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ABSTRACT

The mobile government has become a reality in a large majority of countries around the world. However, the use of mobile apps (small software programs for use on mobile devices) to link government Websites and information is a recent trend that is becoming of interest to citizens and public officials. The uses, advantages, and disadvantages have recently become a study field for several scholars around the globe. The mobile government is not new for e-government scholars; however, the explosion of apps and the increase of smart phones have created a new trend in the mobile government field. In order to understand these phenomena in the Mexican society, the authors have gathered data from different sources: government departments, business enterprises, and citizen organizations. Based on this information, they analyze the impact of apps across the country and suggest a classification method that can be used for a better understanding of this new field. In this chapter, the authors discuss five small case studies, which they consider good examples to follow by different government organizations. To accomplish this objective, they divide this chapter into seven main sections. After the introduction, the authors provide a literature review, describe the method of study and classify the apps, discuss the findings with the model application, present the case studies for government apps, discuss ideas for future research on government apps, and then in the final section, they present final remarks and conclusions of the investigation.

INTRODUCTION

The electronic government (or e-government) has become widely accepted for most governments around the world. The use of technology for public administration processes, tax processing systems and political participation such as discussions, feedback and openness has become a constant transformation at different government levels. In this context, software applications, better known as *apps*, have become a disruptive technology for governments. The commercial use of this technol-

ogy in smart phones has increased exponentially and the numbers in use are astonishing high; even though the governments' adaptation has been slow.

In July 2013, Apple Corporation celebrated five years of the *iTunes App Store* with 850,000 apps available in the store and accounted for more than 50 billion of apps, being used over 800 apps per second (Apple, 2013). Android, with 700,000 apps available in the Google Play Store, counted more than 1.5 billion apps' monthly downloads (Developer, 2013). The digital ecosystems, promoted by Microsoft, Apple, Amazon and Google, are increasing their content into islands that threat the Internet freedom and the governance of the net (Berners-Lee, 2010; Iansiti & Levien, 2004).

These new challenges menace neutral networks but provide great opportunities to create competition among companies and improve communication with companies-consumers and citizens-government. In this area of opportunity, new paths of research have been made along the way. One of them is the use of mobile devices that are linked with government apps to share, to exchange and to collect information.

The use of mobile devices has increased in the last years and governments around the world take advantage of this kind of features and communication possibilities (de Kool & van Wamelen, 2008; Sandoval-Almazan & Gil-Garcia, 2012). At the same time, the information wave has emphasized the need of a more open and transparent government (Hans J. Scholl & Luna-Reyes, 2011). For example, the US government has made available about 75,718 data sets of raw data and 68,147 geospatial datasets to the public through the data. gov website. Many other states are following the US initiative, making raw data available to the public (Amaravadi, 2005). The incorporation of new technologies, smart phones and computers has allowed information to be distributed much faster at a very low cost and with a great range to all segments of the population. Small applications running on web pages or in mobile devices

(mobile apps) have become a wide-adopted way of interaction. It is expected that mobile computing will replace desktop computing by 2015 (Milam & Avery, 2012). Again, just in U.S. portal, www. data.gov, about 1,500 web and mobile applications (apps for short) have been developed, more than 200 by citizens themselves. We believe that these trends together have the potential to transform the relationships between government and the public.

Major changes in technology, citizens and politics are changing behaviors. They are also changing the process of doing politics and the relationship between politicians, public servants and citizens (Geiger & von Lucke, 2012).

Despite this emerging context, we still know very little about the level of adoption of apps in government websites and their uses. The purpose of this paper is to provide a methodology for the categorization of government apps, looking for an initial categorization of practices among top-rated governments in terms of the use of information technologies, as well as to provide some examples of current app uses in the Mexican government.

In the Mexican case, the publication of government information through electronic media is mandatory by law since 2002 because of the "Transparency and Access to Public Government Information Law," which focuses on providing a secure access to everyone to federal, local and municipal government information. They handle the information and they need to support this information in order to accomplish this objective. Our research is taking advantage of this official policy and we tried to collect our data – apps – from the government and companies related to government functions.

We divided this chapter into seven main sections. This introduction constitutes the first section. The following three sections present a literature review, describe the method we followed to classify the mobile apps and discuss our findings. The following section introduces several case studies of different mobile apps in the Mexican government.

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