Political Ideology and Municipal Size as Incentives for the Implementation and Governance Models of Web 2.0 in Providing Public Services

Manuel Pedro Rodríguez Bolívar, University of Granada, Granada, Spain

Laura Alcaide Muñoz, University of Granada, Granada, Spain

ABSTRACT

The growing participation in social networking sites is altering the nature of social relations and changing the nature of political and public dialogue. This paper aims to contribute to the current debate on Web 2.0 technologies and their implications for local governance, through the identification of the perceptions of policy makers in local governments on the use of Web 2.0 in providing public services (reasons, advantages and risks) and on the change of the roles that these technologies could provoke in interactions between local governments and their stakeholders (governance models). This paper also analyzes whether the municipal size is a main factor that could influence on the policy makers' perceptions regarding these main topics. Findings suggest that policy makers are willing to implement Web 2.0 technologies in providing public services, but preferably under the Bureaucratic model framework, thus retaining a leading role in this implementation. The municipal size is a factor that could influence on policy makers' perceptions.

KEYWORDS

1. INTRODUCTION

The advent of social media using Web 2.0 technologies is called on to play an important role in implementing open government and in rendering online public services (Noveck, 2009). It is especially relevant in the municipal context, where local governments are increasingly embracing Web 2.0 technologies in order to encourage direct citizen involvement (Peters, 2001). Indeed, social media have become a central component of e-government in a very short period of time (Bertot, Jaeger, & Hansen, 2012). These instruments differ from first-generation web-based resources in the potential they have to transform public administration services, enabling participation and involvement of citizens in public sector services (Mintz, 2008) (see Table 1 in the Appendix).

Nonetheless, policy makers must be aware that the existing public service culture of hierarchical control and direction must change radically to encourage and reward engagement. This way, the implementation of Web 2.0 technologies in public administrations is forcing a reconsideration of the

administrative structures of governments and the fostering of open, user-driven governance (Bertot, Jaeger, & Grimes, 2010a; Bertot, Jaeger, & Grimes, 2010b; Bertot et al, 2010c; Millard, 2009). In fact, a lively debate in the political arena is the governance model to be used when Web 2.0 technologies are embraced by public administrations.

In addition, according to the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974; McQuail, 1995), citizens will probably make greater demands for some form of reward for their involvement in the co-production of e-services, making it necessary to ensure the perception of user-added value and greater control by citizens of the e-services process, as has been achieved in the private sector (Wirtz, Piehler, & Ullrich, 2013).

Therefore, Web 2.0 could require government organizations to face certain risks, including the possibility of the digital divide, a focus on the politically charged short-term delivery of goals and results, the absence of a long-term strategy for managing the risk and renewal cycle involved in service innovation (Cromer, 2010). So, what is needed at this point in the evolution of Web 2.0 technologies and applications is to open up a debate regarding policy makers' perceptions of the reasons, benefits and risks of Web 2.0 investments in the context of a proven framework for effective governance of public services – one that highlights potential advances in citizen-centric governance and weighs these against both the costs and the inevitable risks posed by any new technology. Such a debate could foster the introduction of Web 2.0 technologies in public services delivery.

Policy makers become relevant in this framework because they are involved in the policy-making process within local government, and they have direct involvement in the implementation of Web 2.0 technologies in public sector delivery. Nonetheless, the implementation of Web 2.0 technologies could be different according to the size of the municipality. The largest cities have generally been at the forefront in the adoption of innovations in e-government (Moon, 2002) and have more need to do so for public sector delivery, due to the greater complexity involved (Torres, Pina, & Acerete, 2005) and because they are obliged to develop and deliver efficient services to the public (Cegarra, Córdoba, & Moreno, 2012). Thus, the size of the local government could introduce differences regarding the use and experiences on public sector services under the Web 2.0 era. This could make policy makers to have different perceptions about the reasons, advantages, risks and governance models in the implementation of Web 2.0 technologies for providing public services.

Despite the great significance of the future implementation of Web 2.0 technologies in public administration and calls for studies to analyze the impact of legal, institutional, and political challenges regarding the use of IT in local governance (Criado, Sandoval-Almazan, & Gil-Garcia, 2013; Sandoval-Almazan et al, 2012), little research has been conducted in the field of political science to analyze the use of these technologies to reform public service delivery.

Therefore, this paper aims to contribute to the current debate on Web 2.0 technologies and their implications for local governance, through the identification of the perceptions of policy makers in local governments on the use of Web 2.0 in providing public services (reasons, advantages and risks) and on the change of the roles that these technologies could provoke in interactions between local governments and their stakeholders (governance models). This paper also analyzes whether the municipal size is a main factor that could influence on the policy makers' perceptions regarding these main topics.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 introduces the concept of governance and discusses the governance models and the influence of municipal size on the implementation of Web 2.0 technologies in providing public services. Section 3 describes the methodology of our study. The results obtained are presented in Section 4, which is followed by the discussion and the main conclusions drawn.

Related Content

MCDM for Candidate Selection in E-Voting

Rasim Alguliyev, Ramiz Aliguliyevand Farhad Yusifov (2019). *International Journal of Public Administration in the Digital Age (pp. 35-48).*

www.irma-international.org/article/mcdm-for-candidate-selection-in-e-voting/225797

EAGLE_Index: Enhancement of an Accountability Guide for Learning E-Government

Carlos Santos, Augusta da Conceição Santos Ferreira, Rui Pedro Figueiredo Marquesand Graça Maria do Carmo Azevedo (2018). *Handbook of Research on Modernization and Accountability in Public Sector Management (pp. 103-129).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/eagleindex/199460

The Outreach of Participatory Methods in Smart Cities, From the Co-Design of Public Services to the Evaluation: Insights From the Athens Case Study

Elisa Pautasso, Antonella Frisiello, Mario Chiesa, Enrico Ferro, Fabrizio Dominici, Gregory Tsardanidis, Ioannis Efthymiou, Giannis Zgerasand Vasilis Vlachokyriakos (2021). *International Journal of Urban Planning and Smart Cities (pp. 59-83).*

www.irma-international.org/article/the-outreach-of-participatory-methods-in-smart-cities-from-the-co-design-of-public-services-to-the-evaluation/270437

Collaborative Defence Procurement: How to Make It Work

Baudouin Heuninckx (2017). *Emerging Strategies in Defense Acquisitions and Military Procurement (pp. 109-128).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/collaborative-defence-procurement/160515

Core Values: e-Government Implementation and Its Progress in Brunei

Kim Cheng Patrick Low, Mohammad Habibur Rahman, Mohammad Nabil Almunawar, Fadzliwati Mohiddinand Sik Liong Ang (2013). *From Government to E-Governance: Public Administration in the Digital Age (pp. 207-216).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/core-values-government-implementation-its/69018