

Chapter 82

Open Government Success Factors in Government Websites: The Mexican Experience

Rodrigo Sandoval-Almazán
Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México, Mexico

ABSTRACT

Open Government Websites are a different perspective for presenting government information. In the Mexican case, it is mandatory by law since 2002 to present some government data through Websites. Despite this strong impulse of transparency, there is not enough measurement for the success or the failure of this novel practice. This chapter analyses data collected from a benchmarking of three year measures of open government portals during 2007, 2009, and 2010. From this data, three success factors are identified: trust, search engine, and legal issues. The success factors for open government portals are a contribution that must be verified by further research. This chapter is organized in seven sections. In the first section is the introduction of open government and the background of the Mexican case; the second section presents a literature review about open government and success factors; the third section describes the methodology of the open government portals measurement during 2008-2010; the fourth section discusses the results of this benchmarking and identifies three success factors: trust, search engine, and legal component; the fifth section describes these three findings and provides some recommendations for practitioners; the sixth section discusses the limitations of success factors and the limitations of this kind of research; a final section of future research presents some research paths, and a final conclusion section closes the chapter with a summary of findings and discussion.

1. INTRODUCTION

Public administration agencies have a long tradition of information guardians, and some of them believe that they are the owners of public informa-

tion (Nam, 2011). After the Obama Directive of Open Government, the evolution of the freedom of information era has become a real trend word wide (White House, 2009).

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This new trend of open data, open government Websites, and new legal models, which allows citizens to retrieve information, uses data and creates new data from government sources. It is part of this change of transparency and a more open knowledge (Lathrop, 2010). This idea is linked with accountability and more trust on governments as a secondary goal, but more important than the first one (Bertot et.al 2010; Petrik, 2009).

Open Government could be understood as an integrated platform to drive government data into openness and accountable information for citizens. For the purpose of this research, the open government idea is more than a trend or a technical perspective and is based on an integrated platform with legal components and technological advances in order to pursue its main goal.

Open government, as an information tool, has two recent examples: research over the National Security directive declassification by Gordon (2010), that addresses directly one common problem on public administrations and states some regulation approaches, as well as the research of McDermott (2010) who summarizes activities and regulations on the open government initiative of the Barack Obama's administration (White House, 2009). These two examples have become leading paths for several governments around the world, one side focused on documents access and the other side on changing the government structures to provide access. However their perspective leads to open data practices and Website regulations to expand citizen access on documents or data.

Either one way or the other, the problem remains: government Websites are still grey, complex, and difficult to reach some data. How can citizens get easy access to government information? This question is difficult to answer, unless we surveyed citizens in different locations and time spans and assess government Websites. However, we can measure government sites about how successful they were in terms of benchmarking of different capacities. Following this idea, in order to identify success factors, I compared Mexican

government Web sites, using a maturity model, based on seven components: trust, information value, improvement, accountability, information system, legal obligation and internal agencies open government. As a result of this three year comparison—2007, 2009, and 2010—it appears there are some success factors for the open government.

In Mexican public administration, the open government idea emerges in 2001 with the law of transparency and access to government information. This law, states in its ninth article that all government levels are obligated to make public their information in an electronic way, this means using Internet (Sandoval-Almazán, 2009). In order to achieve such goal, many Mexican Websites become more transparent. In order to understand this change, a longitudinal study was held from 2007 to 2010, searching over 32 local open government Websites (Sandoval-Almazán, 2010). The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the results of this measurement and to propose several success factors for open government Websites.

This chapter will be divided on seven sections. The first introductory section is placed here and the background of the Mexican case; the second section presents a literature review about open government and success factors; the third section describes the methodology of the open government portals measurement during 2007-2010; the fourth section discusses the results of this benchmarking and identifies three success factors: trust, search engine and legal components. The fifth section presents some solutions and applications for practitioners. The sixth section remarks conclusions and limitations of the research, and the seventh section presents the future research on this field.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review approaches four main areas. The first area introduces the historical background of open government research; the second one presents international studies of open government,

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