



Chapter V

An Exploratory Study of Electronic Government and State Portals in Mexico

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Abstract

Many governments have embraced the information revolution by developing information and communication technologies (ICTs) to improve services to citizens. In Mexico, the number of government Web sites has increased from none in 1994 to about 2,800 in 2005. However, there is relatively little research about Mexican government portals. This chapter preliminarily evaluates the quality and functionality of four state government portals in Mexico. It also analyzes their evolution from 2002 to 2005 and uncovers some general trends. In general, Mexican state government portals seem to be mainly information catalogs with some transactional capabilities. However, the observed

portals show a pattern of transitioning to a more user-centered design and integrating more electronic services. In addition, Mexican state portals show an increasing concern for transparency and citizen participation.

Introduction

The expansion of information and communication technologies (ICTs) is without a doubt one of the main developments of the last few decades (Thomas & Streib, 2003). ICTs impact on social organization has been compared with that of the steam engine during the industrial revolution.¹ Moreover, the development of ICTs has been considered one of the main catalysts of a new society based upon information and knowledge (Drucker, 1994; Winograd, 2002).

The Internet has probably had the most impact of all ICTs on society. Due to people's acceptance of the Internet, the number of computers connected to it has doubled every year since the early 1980's. In this way, the number of Internet enabled computers around the world has increased from less than 1,000 to more than 73 million in the year 2000 (Commer, 2000). This connectivity has promoted the development of a diversity of applications for information, products and services such as electronic mail, chat rooms, Web blogs, Web pages, electronic commerce, distribution lists, Web feeds, and virtual private networks. This plethora of applications and services has lead to the creation of Web portals, which are developed to facilitate access to information, products or services on the Internet (D. B. Gant, Gant, & Johnson, 2002). Portals can be vertical (when organized around a specific theme) or horizontal (when they cover a diversity of themes) (Eisenmann, 2002).

Governments are also involved in ICTs use and innovation, and many applications have been developed to improve services to citizens. They have joined this trend not only because citizens are looking for the same level of service that they get with private corporations but also because of the increasing governmental tendency of managing for results and citizen satisfaction (Arellano-Gault, 2004; Bardach, 1998; Barzelay, 1992; J. P. Gant & Gant, 2002; Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). In fact, advances in ICTs and the increase in their applications in government are promoting the design of an electronic administration that can lead to better relationships between the state and

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