

INCREASING ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT: A SOLUTION FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE WESTERN REGION OF ROMANIA

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Summary: The current information society is based on simplified operations using new information technologies. Using information technologies simplifies and streamlines the conduct of economic activities, increases efficiency and provides a somewhat less bureaucratic environment for the new digital economy.

Since we are all members and active players in this digital economy, the use information and communication technologies determines businesses to keep up with the constant changes that appear over night thus helping them register obvious improvements regarding, performance, operation mode and communication methods.

This paper is based on a survey and examines the role of electronic communication in organizations interaction with the local government, as well as the importance and benefits of using electronic services. Organizations express their openness and interest for electronic services, on one hand, and the lack of attraction for the local public government website, on the other hand, therefore we will try to identify the main reasons that limit the interaction by electronic means between organizations and local public government and formulate some answers that may lead to a better delivery of government services and improved interactions.

Overall, the study confirms that the business environment is ready to embrace all new informational technologies as well as the fact that organizations are aware of the benefits of using electronic means of communication in relation to the local public government, and in certain circumstances tend to prefer more this type of electronic communication.

Keywords: electronic services, business environment, local public government, information and communication technologies, electronic communication

1. Introduction

The implementation of new information and communication technologies brings major changes on all business activities and on the area in which they operate. We consider that the computerization of economic activities is one of the most important components and the “secret” of a successful business. At the same time is a very important step for the entry of enterprises in the new digital economy. One of the challenges

The current information society is based on simplified operations using new information technologies. Using information technologies simplifies and streamlines the conduct of economic activities, increases efficiency and provides a somewhat less bureaucratic environment for the new digital economy.

With the implementation of these information and communication technologies in all activity fields, we can see several benefits such as: adoption of new work methods, decrease of the unemployment rate, competitive environment, research development and improved public services.

Electronic government refers to the implementation and use of instruments and systems available through information and communication technologies with the purpose of providing improved public services to citizens and enterprises. These technologies are already used in private enterprises, as well as in public enterprises, but electronic government does not involve only the use of instruments but much more.

The main objectives of this scientific demarche is the intent to offer some answers to the current issues as well as to try and identify some possible solutions that could help in the development and improvement of the business environment of the Western Region of Romania.

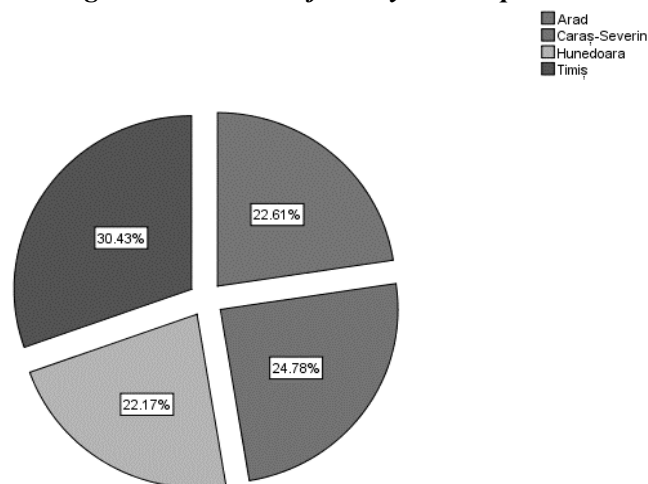
2. Research methodology

The research method consisted of the development of an online questionnaire by using Google Drive application, during the period June-September 2014. With Google Docs within the application the results obtained from the respondents were automatically registered in a data base generated by this service. The program used to analyze and interpret data was SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), which is generally used for processing and interpretation of statistical data.

The target group of this study consists of 230 enterprises from the Western Region of Romania. This questionnaire is intended to analyze the role of electronic communication in the interaction of organizations with the local government, as well as the importance and benefits brought by the implementation and use of electronic services.

Regarding the location of the undertakings participating in the study, questionnaire responses showed that 30.40% of the enterprises are located in Timis county, 24,80% are located in Caras-Severin, 22.60% of respondents are headquartered in Arad County and 22.20% of enterprises are located in Hunedoara county. Considering the shares of Western Region enterprises, most of them are located in Timis county, nearly 50%, while the smallest share is represented by Hunedoara county, approximately 10%.

Figure 1: Location of surveyed enterprises



Source: SPSS processing of data obtained from surveyed respondents

3. Data analysis and main findings

In order to demonstrate the importance of using information and communication technologies, I considered it is important to identify the main means of communication used in the professional activity of enterprises (Figure 2). The results present the following:

69.10% of respondents use most often communication via phone, and fax; communication by email is proffered by 66.10% of respondents; 37.8% of enterprises participating in the study

prefer classical communication, and communication through magnetic media is preferred by 22.2% of respondents (Figure 2).

Figure 2 Means of communication used in enterprises' economic activity

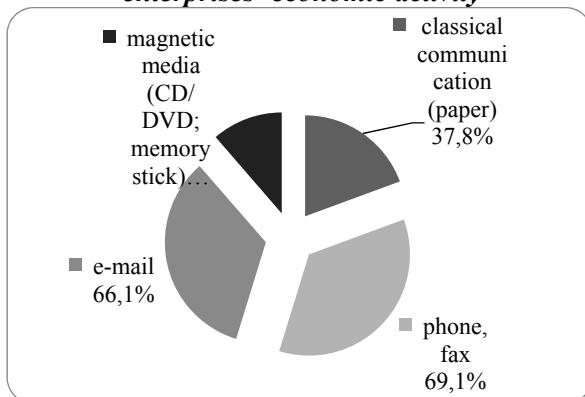
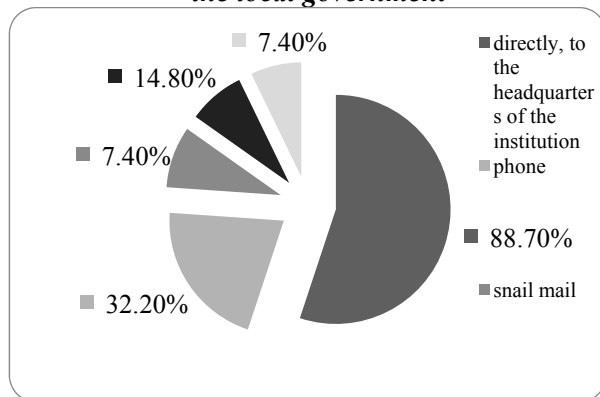


Figure 3 Contact methods used in relation with the local government



Source: SPSS processing of data obtained from surveyed respondents

Secondly I analyzed the main communication methods used by enterprises in their interaction with the local government (Figure 3). Regarding the contact methods used most often in relation to local government, over 80% of respondents affirmed they still prefer the classic version or in some cases are forced to resolve some issues in person, directly at the headquarters of the institution. It is worth noting that electronic methods register a high percentage of almost 30%, 14.80% of respondents said they use e-mail and the phone and website each registered 7.40%.

The third aspect analyzed referred to the familiarization of enterprises with the city hall website and the usability of this contact modality (Figure 4). After analyzing the data the following were found: 10.40% of respondents said they had visited the website quite often, 4.8% of enterprises often claimed to have visited the website very often, a percentage of 22.60% of businesses said they rarely visited the site and 23.90% of respondents stated that they have not visited the website at all.

Figure 4 Familiarization and usability of the city hall website

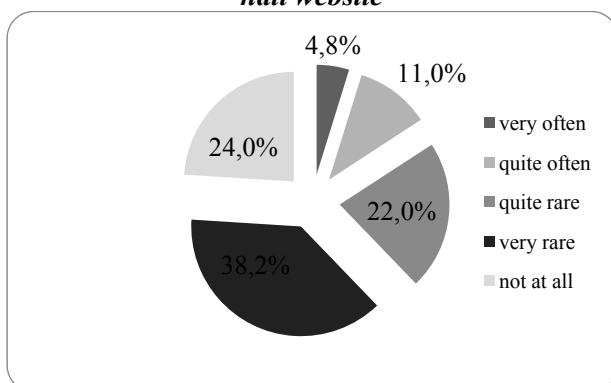
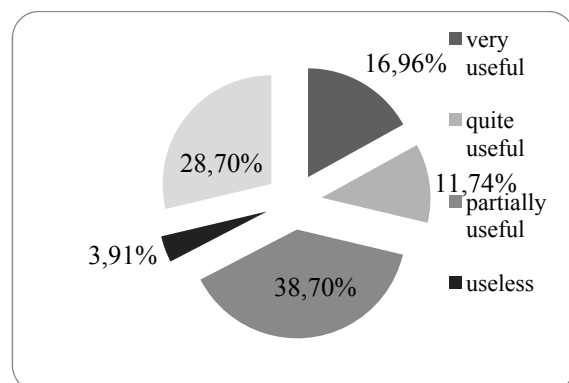


Figure 5 Efficiency of the city hall's website



Source: SPSS processing of data obtained from surveyed respondents

Another component of our study was to determine the effectiveness of the city hall website in informing final consumers (Figure 5). After analyzing the data, the majority of respondents considered that the site is partially useful, namely 38.7%, a percentage of 28% of respondents stated that they have used this medium; 17% of respondents consider the site to be very useful, and 3.9% of respondents consider the site to be useless in terms of information.

Our attention was focused to assess the level of satisfaction of respondents regarding the use of electronic means in relation with the local government. The most often used electronic method of communication is considered to be via e-mail, that is why during this study we addressed the question “If you contacted the local government via e-mail what is your level of satisfaction?” 17.4% of respondents said they are satisfied, and 3.5% of respondents are very satisfied (Figure 6).

Figure 6 Level of satisfaction in using e-mail in relation to local government

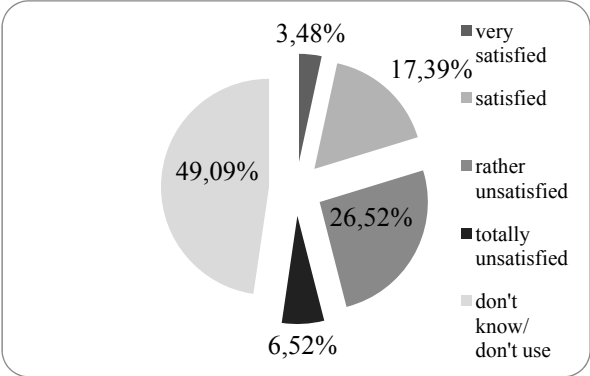
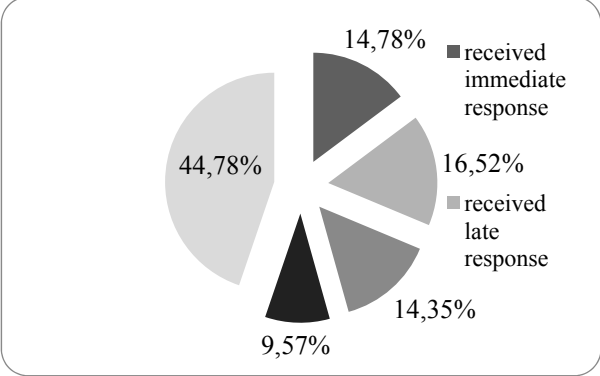


Figure 7 Circumstances noticed when using e-mail in relation to local government

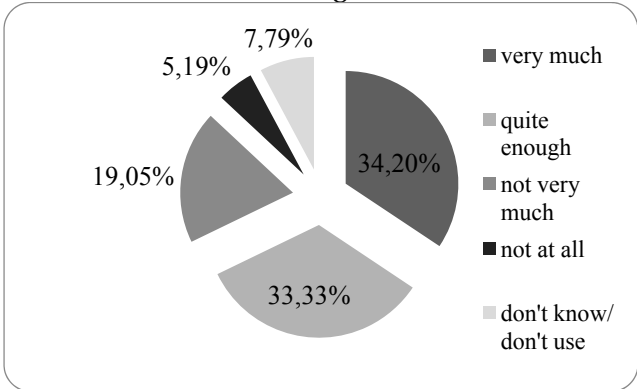


Source: SPSS processing of data obtained from surveyed respondents

It should be noted that we have a percentage of over 30% of respondents who said they are rather unsatisfied, respectively totally unsatisfied, this should alarm the bodies, identifying problems and improving e-communication between the administration and the end user. The fact that there is a significant degree of dissatisfaction among respondents regarding the communication via e-mail with the local administration I considered it important to identify the circumstances that determined dissatisfaction among users (Figure 7). Nearly 15% of survey participants received an answered immediately after contacting local authorities through e-mail 16.5% of respondents received a late response, 14.30% of respondents were not understood in their request, requiring further clarifications and nearly 10% of respondents have not received a response after using e-mail as a means of communication with the local government.

Furthermore I wanted to analyze the subjects' perception on the use of electronic services and their benefits in terms of reducing the time allocated to e-interact with the local government, basically the intent was to determine if respondents believe that the use of electronic services saves time in their relation with the local government and thus helps improve their activity.

Figure 8 Respondent's perception regarding the time saved by using electronic services in relation with the local government



Source: SPSS processing of data obtained from surveyed respondents

As can be seen from Figure 8, of the undertakings participating in the study, a percentage of 34.2% believe that the use of electronic services reduce very much the time allocated to their interaction with the local government, 33.3% of enterprises believe that the time spent with interaction is reduced pretty much through the use of electronic services. In contrast, 19% of respondents affirmed that the use of electronic services does not reduce very much the time spent interacting with local government and 5% believe that the time for interaction is not reduced at all by the use of electronic services.

4. Conclusions

In Romania, most enterprises are quite reluctant when it comes to the use of electronic services not necessarily when it comes to their economic activity, but mostly when it comes to their interaction with local governments and public authorities, even though they are aware of the technological progress and the necessity and benefits brought by the use of information and communication technologies.

From the results of this scientific approach we found that there is a certain degree of reluctance from businesses when it comes to the use of electronic means, so we wanted to see what are the main reasons that impede their online interaction with public administration, and obtained the following results: on privacy issues and data security, almost 70% of respondents consider this very important reason that limits their interaction. Almost 40% of respondents believe that electronic interaction is limited because electronic procedures are complicated and that they consume too much time (about 30% of respondents consider this important), not knowing the methods to use these services. And the reason that the online interaction is limited because there are no known electronic procedures available is considered to be important by 30% of respondents.

In conclusion it is not enough to have access to the newest technology, it is also important to use it in order to improve your activity, and this should be applied both by enterprises, as well as by public authorities. The local government should take some actions to inform better the end users regarding all their services and should encourage the use of information technologies and electronic services in all activities where it is possible. On the other hand, businesses should try to get out of “their comfort zone” and be more opened to new ways that could help their economic activity.

5. Acknowledgement:

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