Research Article

Exploring and Assessing Government Website as an Instrument of E-Governance at the Local Government Level in Pangasinan

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ABSTRACT

This research primarily aims to gain an understanding of the current status of local governments in terms of e-governance through the use of government websites. This study is a mixed-method research, a combination of the quantitative and qualitative research approach. For the qualitative part, the researchers conducted face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews, and systematic observations in exploring the trends, thoughts, and opinions of the participants to delve into a deeper understanding of the contents and features of city government websites. For the quantitative approach, a survey was conducted over 2,410 households using a questionnaire to determine the awareness, extent of availability, and satisfaction of the respondents on the resources and services accessible online. The extent of availability was determined by the respondents who are aware of the government website. And based on the respondents who availed of the resources, the extent of satisfaction was measured. The researchers considered the barangays under the Central Business District (CBD) of the cities of Dagupan, Alaminos, Urdaneta, and San Carlos to be the sources of data.

Analysis of the responses demonstrated that almost half of the respondents of the four cities are aware of the web presence of the government websites of the four cities. In terms of satisfaction with the availed services, the majority of the respondents are slightly satisfied. The results also indicated that online resources and services online are not fully utilized. Hence, these are not enough to satisfy the needs of the respondents.

On this basis, it is recommended that the national government should come up with a policy on the strict implementation of e-Governance through the use of government websites at the local government level. With this national policy in place, the local governments can also come up with local policies on the strict implementation of online services such as online registration, payment through banks or Bayad Centers, online processing of business permits, and other services.

KEYWORDS

CITE THIS ARTICLE AS:

INTRODUCTION

The paradigm shift from government to governance underscores the role of the local government as an enabler; as an institution that can develop and adopt ways of doing things to be able to respond to the varied and complex demands of the community. For after all, it is the community that presents the organizing principle for the local government. In other words, the local government exists for the local community (Legaspi, 2001).

Based on the above premise, it is argued and recognized that the changes and demands from the local environment impinge on the operations and functions of the local government as a service delivery mechanism. One significant and important change is the rise and use of information and communication technology as a tool for service delivery. The internet has become a significant way for persons, corporations, and governments to obtain information, connect, and do transactions (Streib & Willoughby, 2005). Thus, the ICT tool plays a vital role in the promotion of local economic development and in the transformation of public service delivery, and the promotion of participatory democracy.

Complementing the use of ICT in governance is the use of digital media or digital governance or e-governance which has placed a great demand for ensuring transparency, efficiency and accountability in government transactions and businesses as well as demand for better decision –making processes, public policy building and access to information.

Local government websites are recognized and widely used as e-governance tools to enhance the quality and speedy delivery of public services. They are also considered to be instruments for participatory governance where the local government and the various sectors in the community are brought together for planning, decision-making processes and implementation of programs and projects. Scott (2005), suggests conducting more research to assess the effects of local government websites on citizen involvement, democratic practice, and public trust.

In a survey conducted by the United Nations (UN) in 2004, the Philippines was ranked 47 out of 191 UN member states in terms of e-government readiness. In line with this, the country considered a regional development approach as support to the viewpoint of inclusive growth. This challenge placed the country's government to create several policy initiatives to optimize an e-Government Master Plan pursuant to Executive Order No. 47 series of 2011 (Philippine Council for Industry, Energy, and Emerging Technology Research and Development (CIEERD), 2018). At present, the country is still facing the challenge to sustain its remarkable growth and making it more inclusive towards e-government development (Khalid & Lavilles, 2019).

The Philippine government through the initiative of the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) (2014) posted its eLGU project which is anchored in revolutionizing local governance by enabling Local Government Units (LGUs) to be electronically inclined thereby improving the delivery of public service, promoting transparency in government transactions and increasing public access to government information services, and so on. In 2012, the DICT conducted an assessment study on e-government development jointly undertaken by the National Computer Center of the Philippines

and the National IT Industry Promotion Agency of the Republic of Korea. Upon recommendations of some activities to attain the ICT goals of the country, the DICT developed the E-Government Master Plan (EMP) (DICT 2014). Thus, In 2019, the DICT published its E-Government Masterplan 2022 which serves as the blueprint to standardize the government information system. The plan includes the DICT's main objective to achieve "One Digitalized Government" for the Philippines (DICT, 2019).

At this juncture, a significant question is raised. To what extent has the government website served as an instrument of e-governance at the local government level? In response to this question, a research study has been conducted in Pangasinan province particularly in four cities, namely: Dagupan, Alaminos, San Carlos, and Urdaneta. The main objective of the study is to explore and make assessments on the utilization of the website as a tool for e-governance in the said city governments. Specifically, it seeks to address the following concerns:

What are the available resources and services on the website of each city government?

- Are the citizens of each city aware of the presence of the website to include its resources and services available online?
- To what extent do the citizens avail of the services online?
- To what extent are the citizens satisfied with the resources and services online?
- What are the problems encountered by the citizens and the city governments in accessing and maintaining the government website
- What policy proposals can be formulated to improve e-governance at the local level through the use of the website?

Conceptual Framework

Governments have used ICTs to incorporate their core purposes and improve their delivery of services for the past two decades. Scholars and practitioners have conceptualized these various ICT developments and described them jointly as e-government (Manoharan, 2018). E-governance implies technology driven governance. World Bank defined it as an application of ICT to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability of government (Savic, 2006). As a tool, its utilization touches several dimensions in the governance process. Aside from the delivery of government services, it is involved in the exchange of communication information transactions between the governor and the governed; reaching out and providing accessibility of services to the less privileged and underserved members of the community; and provides integration of systems and processes in the government bureaucracy.

E-governance plays a vital role in providing interactions between the government and the citizens. There are four aspects of interactions in e-governance (Ndou, 2004):

G2C – Government to Citizens. This emphasizes the benefits that citizens can derive from the efficient delivery of services; accessibility, availability and improved quality of services.

G2B – Government to Business. This is aimed at providing an enabling environment for the business sector by creating more transparency transactions; by cutting red tape and reduce corruption incidents at the transaction level to reduce operational cost.

G2G – Government to Government. This points out the necessity of having full interactions between and among government entities to ensure convergence of services.

G2E – Government to Employees. The use of ICT tools help improve interactions among the employees which would lead to fast and efficient way of doing things at the job/work level. In effect, this would lead to more job satisfaction among the employees.

The above aspects of interactions in e-governance put into center stage the role of government website as an instrument in the governance process. The local government unit (LGU) website is recognized as a tool for enhancing the processes of interactions between the governor and the governed such as in the delivery of public services and in mobilizing citizen participation in governance. A number of local and international studies have explored and assessed this kind of role of the LGU website.

In a study that focuses on the implementation of e-governance in Nigeria, Adeyemo (2011) citing Okot-Uma and Rogers (2004) identified four generic milestones which can serve as a "checklist" of salient features for any initiative leading to e-governance implementation which includes the following: 1.) the stakeholder statement requirements, 2.) the baseline assessment, 3.) blue-print for e-governance, and 4.) the implementation.

The study of Ilago (2001) reviewed the application and content of the local government websites. The research pointed out the limited use of the website in the form of information sharing. The quality of information contained in the website are described to suffer from timeliness, redundancy and relevance.

Siar (2004) presented a more comprehensive study of the utilization of the website as a tool for e-governance where she made an assessment of city government websites in the Philippines. She found that although most of the city governments have put up their websites, these are underutilized due to a number of factors such as the lack of ICT organization in the LGU; lack of appreciation of the value of website as a tool for e-governance; inadequacy of local budget for implementation of e-governance; and change in leadership which often would lead to change in priorities. She noted that the pieces of information provided in the websites are only geared toward promoting citizens' awareness and understanding of their community's characteristics.

Lagura (2017) conducted a study on the city government websites in Davao Region which made use of the same parameters utilized in Siar's research. He found that the quality of the website contents show substandard adoption and underutilization. He added further though that his study did not look into the design development, accessibility, usability and security and implementation of websites.

Alampay (2006) also conducted a study on the local government website where he discussed the status of the e-project of the national government under the Estrada Administration. Based on the research, almost all of the local governments (99.5%) had web-presence as of September 2005. Nevertheless, this web-presence did not necessarily translate into actual services. In fact, much information in the LGU websites had not been updated since 2002.

Similar studies on city government websites in the USA had been conducted to assess the website as a tool for policy information and provision of services online. West (2001) noted in his survey of city government websites that information material considerably vary across cities. He further noted that a large number of cities need to respond to the problems concerning privacy, security, and special needs of populations such as the handicapped. This shows the need for accessibility of the disabled and the underpriviledged.

As a tool for enhancing citizen's access to government services, Lallana (2002) stressed that the website/internet should contribute to citizen empowerment by "allowing information sharing among people and organizations, between citizens and the civil service". He went on to say that governments are "compelled to improve quality of services, expand accessibility of these services and increase responsiveness to their constituents".

Parallel to the above studies are the researches done by Sy (2002) and Stoiciu (2012) where both pointed out the problem of digital divide in the provision of public services online. Stoiciu defined digital divide as a social issue where it is linked to the amount of information between the citizens who have access and those who do not have access to the ICT. This gap in ICT accessibility could be based on income, race, ethnicity, gender, or other similar criteria. Based on these studies, there appears to be a strong correlation between digital divide and poverty.

This study is also focused on the LGU website. However, the research goes beyond assessing the content of the website as a tool for e-governance. Recognizing the website as a tool for interaction between the governed and the governor, between the citizens and the government, the study looks deeper into the citizens' awareness of the content of the website; on whether they have availed of the services, and on whether they have been satisfied with the services. Below is a schematic diagram of the conceptual framework of the study.
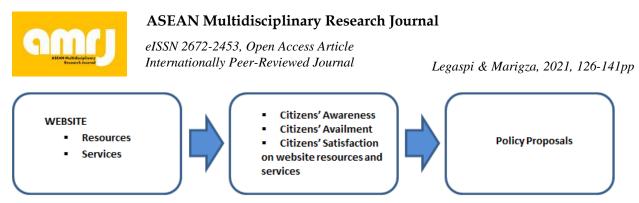
Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Using the above scheme, the study analyzes the contents of the city government website in terms of the resources and services offered to the citizenry. It assesses the extent of the citizens' awareness of the existence of the website and its resources and services, as well as the level of satisfaction of the citizens of the services they have availed of through the use of the website.

METHODOLOGY

The study made use of both qualitative and quantitative methods of research. Content analysis was applied to analyze the available resources and services in the website. Added to this was the conduct of personal interviews with the Management Information Officer of each city government and barangay residents. Telephone interviews and systematic observations were also made. Through the interviews, the researchers explored the trends in thoughts and opinions of the respondents and delved deeper into understanding their problems on the use of the city government website.

The quantitative approach made use of the survey through the use of a questionnaire which was distributed to the households in the identified Central Business District (CBD) of each city. The research sites included the four cities of Pangasinan — Dagupan, Alaminos, San Carlos, and Urdaneta. There were 24,084 households in all the CBDs of the four cities and 10% of the total households (2,410) was considered as sample size. Table 1 below presents the total number of households in the barangays in the Central Business District of each city. It is assumed that the urban barangays would have more access to the website considering that WIFI is more available in the urban areas than in the rural barangays; hence, the study chose to include only those barangays in the identified central business district.

Table 1. Number of Households per Barangay in the Central Business District of each City

Barangay	Total Number Of Households	10% Sample Size
Dagupan City		
Barangay I (T. Bugallon)	166	17
Barangay Ii & Iii (Nueva)	496	50
Barangay Iv (Zamora)	256	26
Lucao	2195	220
Pantal	4273	427
Poblacion Oeste	1020	102
Tapuac	1031	103
Alaminos City		
Poblacion	2363	236
Palamis	1310	131
Tanaytay	441	44
Amandiego	415	42
Pogo	460	46
Urdaneta City		
Nancayasan	1598	160
Poblacion	1842	184
San Vicente	2383	238
San Carlos City		
Tandang Sora	158	16
Bugallon-Posadas Street (Pob)	166	17
Lucban (Pob)	243	24
Bonifacio (Pob)	137	14
Mabini (Pob)	179	18
M. Soriano	239	24
Perez Boulevard (Pob)	166	17
San Pedro-Taloy	612	61
Palaris (Pob)	162	16
Roxas Boulevard (Pob)	322	32
Rizal (Pob)	581	58
Quezon Boulevard (Pob)	341	34
Pnr Station Site	217	22
Burgos Padlan (Pob)	312	31
Total	24084	2410

The statistical tools used in the research included frequency distribution and Likert scale. The latter was used in measuring the extent of awareness, availment, and satisfaction of the respondents.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Table 2 shows the resources available online in the government website of the four cities. It can be seen from the table that the resources appear to be encompassing about the city, from history to citizens charter and profile of the city officials.

Table 2. Resources Available Online in the Government Website of the Four Cities

Resources	Contents
City Profile	History, Vision and Mission, Geography, Directions, Climate, Population, Physical Profile, City Hymn
Transparency Board	Annual Budget Report. Annual Procurement Plan. Statement of Debt Service. Statement of Receipt and Expenditure. Bid Results. Cash Flow. Fund Utilization.
Resolutions and Ordinances	Resolutions and Ordinances of the city
Citizen's Charter	Service standards
Job Vacancies	Career opportunities
Announcements	Public notices
News	Current events of the city
Tourism	City Fiesta and Festival
Upcoming Projects and Development	Plans and projects of the city
Business	Business Permit Processing. Issuance of Mayor's Clearance. Issuance of Permit. Issuance of Community Tax Certificate. Venue for Payment of RPT. Venue for payments.
Profile of the Officials	Mayor, Vice-Mayor, Councilors, Department Heads, Barangay Captains
Contact	Telephone numbers and name of the heads of the different offices of the City Government.

Asked on whether the respondents are aware of the presence of the website, more than half of the respondents (66%) admitted that they are aware of it. Table 3 indicates the awareness of the respondents by city.

Table 3. Awareness of the Respondents on the Presence of Government Website

CITY	AWARENESS			
	YES	NO	TOTAL	PERCENT
DAGUPAN	647	298	945	68%
ALAMINOS	304	195	499	61%
URDANETA	365	217	582	63%
SAN CARLOS	282	102	384	73%
OVERALL	1598	812	2410	66%

Among the four cities, respondents from San Carlos (73%) appear to be much aware of the presence of the website. Based on interviews, this could be traced to the dissemination of information by the barangay officials during barangay gatherings and meetings. In regard to the reasons why the residents are not aware of the presence of the website, most of the reasons given show that they are not interested; they have no idea; and they do not have a need for it. This again points out the lack of proper dissemination of information including discussions and orientation on the available resources and services online. This further shows that the residents do not recognize the relevance of the website. As noted in the study of Siar (2004), this could be due to the lack of technological access. This lack of access could be due to the social/income class of the citizens. As recognized, the moneyed class can easily have access through IT gadgets that they can afford to buy while the poor who do not have the resources do not have this access. This means that the so-called digital divide among the citizenry appears to be a constraint. According to Sy (2002), "this is not simply an issue of connectivity, lack of access, or low computer and internet literacy but more of the interplay of social divisions of class, income, education, gender, age, ethnicity, and social geography".

In looking at the extent to which the respondents have availed of the resources and services online, about 19% to 27% have availed of the resources across all identified resources in the four city websites (please see Table 4.1 to 4.12). This shows that the residents are not that interested to avail of the identified resources online. One interesting case is on the resource on business. It may be assumed that the business sector would be interested to avail of this resource from the website. However, as found in the study, only about 21% have availed of this particular resource. Seemingly, many of the respondents would prefer to have transactions over the counter rather than through online. Conducted visits on the city websites showed that contents on this resource are confined to information guide or steps on how to do a particular transaction. Due to the absence of interactive applications embedded in the website, business transactions could not be done online. This defeats the purpose of providing the needed services by the business sector.

Under the category of always availment of resources and services online, the resources on Tourism got a rating of 25%. Perhaps, this could be due to the fact that news in the city and festivities can be more alluring to the residents which catch more their interests compared with data and figures on upcoming projects and developments which got a rating of 12%. The resource on Transparency Board which presents financial operations of the city government had a rating of 8%, the lowest among the other resources online. Again, financial statements do not get the interests of the barangay residents.

Table 4.1. Level of Availment relative to Resources on City Profile

City Profile														
	No Response		Never		Rarely		Seldom		Often		Always		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Dagupan	158	24%	46	7%	163	25%	59	9%	163	25%	58	9%	647	25%
Alaminos	137	45%	9	3%	46	15%	27	9%	56	18%	29	10%	304	18%
Urdaneta	62	17%	58	16%	70	19%	51	14%	68	19%	56	15%	365	19%
San Carlos	68	24%	17	6%	79	28%	38	13%	60	21%	20	7%	282	28%
Overall	**425**	**27%**	**130**	**8%**	**358**	**22%**	**175**	**11%**	**347**	**22%**	**163**	**10%**	**1598**	**22%**

Table 4.2. Level of Availment relative to Resources on Transparency Board

Transparency Board														
	No Response		Never		Rarely		Seldom		Often		Always		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Dagupan	164	25%	67	10%	134	21%	73	11%	164	25%	45	7%	647	25%
Alaminos	144	47%	29	10%	38	13%	24	8%	53	17%	16	5%	304	17%
Urdaneta	66	18%	57	16%	81	22%	50	14%	57	16%	54	15%	365	22%
San Carlos	78	28%	51	18%	63	22%	30	11%	43	15%	17	6%	282	22%
Overall	**452**	**28%**	**204**	**13%**	**316**	**20%**	**177**	**11%**	**317**	**20%**	**132**	**8%**	**1598**	**19%**

Table 4.3. Level of Availment relative to Resources on Ordinances and Resolutions

Ordinances and Resolutions														
	No Response		Never		Rarely		Seldom		Often		Always		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Dagupan	167	26%	52	8%	125	19%	62	10%	181	28%	60	9%	647	28%
Alaminos	138	45%	9	3%	43	14%	24	8%	64	21%	26	9%	304	21%
Urdaneta	66	18%	56	15%	67	18%	59	16%	62	17%	55	15%	365	18%
San Carlos	78	28%	25	9%	72	26%	32	11%	49	17%	26	9%	282	25%
Overall	**449**	**28%**	**142**	**9%**	**307**	**19%**	**177**	**11%**	**356**	**22%**	**167**	**10%**	**1598**	**22%**

Table 4.4. Level of Availment relative to Resources on Citizens Charter

Citizens Charter														
	No Response		Never		Rarely		Seldom		Often		Always		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Dagupan	165	26%	71	11%	132	20%	69	11%	167	26%	43	7%	647	26%
Alaminos	143	47%	15	5%	42	14%	21	7%	63	21%	20	7%	304	21%
Urdaneta	63	17%	43	12%	60	16%	61	17%	77	21%	61	17%	365	21%
San Carlos	83	29%	42	15%	58	21%	27	10%	57	20%	15	5%	282	20%
Overall	**454**	**28%**	**171**	**11%**	**292**	**18%**	**178**	**11%**	**364**	**23%**	**139**	**9%**	**1598**	**23%**

Table 4.5. Level of Availment relative to Resources on Job Vacancies

Job Vacancies														
	No Response		Never		Rarely		Seldom		Often		Always		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Dagupan	160	25%	43	7%	112	17%	64	10%	197	30%	71	11%	647	30%
Alaminos	134	44%	12	4%	49	16%	24	8%	52	17%	33	11%	304	17%
Urdaneta	65	18%	36	10%	70	19%	74	20%	63	17%	57	16%	365	20%
San Carlos	102	36%	12	4%	24	9%	31	11%	76	27%	37	13%	282	27%
Overall	**461**	**29%**	**103**	**6%**	**255**	**16%**	**193**	**12%**	**388**	**24%**	**198**	**12%**	**1598**	**24%**

Table 4.6. Level of Availment relative to Resources on Announcements

	Announcements													
	No Response		Never		Rarely		Seldom		Often		Always		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Dagupan	153	24%	41	6%	94	15%	54	8%	220	34%	85	13%	647	34%
Alaminos	136	45%	5	2%	41	13%	20	7%	58	19%	44	14%	304	19%
Urdaneta	60	16%	46	13%	62	17%	69	19%	72	20%	56	15%	365	20%
San Carlos	66	23%	18	6%	61	22%	22	8%	75	27%	40	14%	282	27%
Overall	**415**	**26%**	**110**	**7%**	**258**	**16%**	**165**	**10%**	**425**	**27%**	**225**	**14%**	**1598**	**26%**

Table 4.7. Level of Availment relative to Resources on News

	News													
	No Response		Never		Rarely		Seldom		Often		Always		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Dagupan	155	24%	30	5%	93	14%	50	8%	203	31%	116	18%	647	31%
Alaminos	136	45%	3	1%	43	14%	13	4%	60	20%	49	16%	304	20%
Urdaneta	62	17%	44	12%	50	14%	82	22%	69	19%	58	16%	365	22%
San Carlos	68	24%	9	3%	60	21%	27	10%	79	28%	39	14%	282	28%
Overall	**421**	**26%**	**86**	**5%**	**246**	**15%**	**172**	**11%**	**411**	**26%**	**262**	**16%**	**1598**	**26%**

Table 4.8. Level of Availment relative to Resources on Tourism

	Tourism													
	No Response		Never		Rarely		Seldom		Often		Always		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Dagupan	160	25%	31	5%	101	16%	63	10%	189	29%	103	16%	647	29%
Alaminos	130	43%	6	2%	35	12%	24	8%	49	16%	60	20%	304	20%
Urdaneta	65	18%	37	10%	66	18%	68	19%	73	20%	56	15%	365	20%
San Carlos	69	24%	16	6%	53	19%	23	8%	83	29%	38	13%	282	29%
Overall	**424**	**27%**	**90**	**6%**	**255**	**16%**	**178**	**11%**	**394**	**25%**	**257**	**16%**	**1598**	**27%**

Table 4.9. Level of Availment relative to Resources on Upcoming Projects

	Upcoming Projects and Developments													
	No Response		Never		Rarely		Seldom		Often		Always		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Dagupan	166	26%	46	7%	125	19%	62	10%	181	28%	67	10%	647	28%
Alaminos	135	44%	7	2%	47	15%	26	9%	58	19%	31	10%	304	19%
Urdaneta	63	17%	38	10%	67	18%	63	17%	67	18%	67	18%	365	18%
San Carlos	71	25%	27	10%	58	21%	29	10%	75	27%	22	8%	282	27%
Overall	**435**	**27%**	**118**	**7%**	**297**	**19%**	**180**	**11%**	**381**	**24%**	**187**	**12%**	**1598**	**24%**

Table 4.10. Level of Availment relative to Resources on Business

	Business													
	No Response		Never		Rarely		Seldom		Often		Always		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Dagupan	166	26%	63	10%	140	22%	63	10%	159	25%	56	9%	647	25%
Alaminos	143	47%	13	4%	37	12%	31	10%	52	17%	28	9%	304	17%
Urdaneta	68	19%	55	15%	77	21%	65	18%	49	13%	51	14%	365	21%
San Carlos	78	28%	35	12%	75	27%	20	7%	50	18%	24	9%	282	27%
Overall	**455**	**28%**	**166**	**10%**	**329**	**21%**	**179**	**11%**	**310**	**19%**	**159**	**10%**	**1598**	**21%**

Table 4.11. Level of Availment relative to Resources on Profiles of City Officials

Profiles of City Officials													
	No Response		Never		Rarely		Seldom		Often		Always		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Dagupan	165	26%	63	10%	115	18%	63	10%	176	27%	65	10%	647	27%
Alaminos	139	46%	10	3%	33	11%	27	9%	57	19%	38	13%	304	19%
Urdaneta	73	20%	35	10%	61	17%	77	21%	54	15%	65	18%	365	21%
San Carlos	78	28%	32	11%	74	26%	22	8%	45	16%	31	11%	282	26%
Overall	**455**	**28%**	**140**	**9%**	**283**	**18%**	**189**	**12%**	**332**	**21%**	**199**	**12%**	**1598**	**21%**

Table 4.12. Level of Availment relative to Resources on Contact Information of City Offices

Contact Numbers of City Offices													
	No Response		Never		Rarely		Seldom		Often		Always		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Dagupan	164	25%	112	17%	121	19%	65	10%	147	23%	38	6%	647	23%
Alaminos	140	46%	19	6%	38	13%	25	8%	54	18%	28	9%	304	18%
Urdaneta	66	18%	50	14%	75	21%	59	16%	46	13%	69	19%	365	21%
San Carlos	75	27%	39	14%	67	24%	26	9%	52	18%	23	8%	282	24%
Overall	**445**	**28%**	**220**	**14%**	**301**	**19%**	**175**	**11%**	**299**	**19%**	**158**	**10%**	**1598**	**20%**

Going to the satisfaction level of the respondents, the table below indicates that most of them (42%) are slightly satisfied with the resources and services available online; only about 19% are very satisfied and 7% are very much satisfied. This could be due to the limited resources and services that are available online. In addition, the contents of the websites of the four city governments are static and not regularly updated. This makes the information irrelevant. This finding supports the study of Siar (2004) where she concluded that there is a "dearth of substantial information and resources that could enhance the quality and speed of service delivery, promote transparency, facilitate public participation in decision making, and ultimately, bring government, citizens, business, community organizations and other groups in society together in the governance process".

Table 5. Level of Satisfaction on Availed Services and Resources

	Not Satisfied		Slightly Satisfied		Moderately Satisfied		Very Satisfied		Very Much Satisfied		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Dagupan	39	9%	173	40%	102	24%	93	22%	23	5%	430	100%
Alaminos	8	5%	62	40%	38	25%	32	21%	15	10%	155	100%
Urdaneta	60	24%	127	50%	15	6%	27	11%	25	10%	254	100%
San Carlos	11	6%	66	37%	59	33%	38	21%	5	3%	179	100%
Overall	**118**	**12%**	**428**	**42%**	**214**	**21%**	**190**	**19%**	**68**	**7%**	**1018**	**100%**

The problems encountered by the respondents in regard to the utilization of the website substantially support the above findings of the research. Based on the responses, the problems have to do with the slow speed of the internet connection, slow response of the website, limited resources and limited online services. Table 6 below shows the problems encountered by the respondents.

Table 6. Problems Encountered by the Citizens in Accessing the City Government Website

Problems encountered by the citizens.	No. Respondents	Rank
Slow speed of the internet connection.	88	1
Slow response of the website.	72	2
Limited resources.	53	3
Some links have empty content.	45	4
Limited online services.	44	5
Broken links.	43	6
Some services are not working.	39	7
Contents are no updated.	30	8
User-unfriendly.	24	9
Confusing site map.	23	10

Interviews with the Management Information System staff and the Information Officers of the city governments likewise reveal similar and complementary problems from the management side of the local bureaucracy. These include the lack of competent web programmers and developer; limited plantilla positions for programmers and website developers; low salaries for these technical positions which remain unattractive for technically competent persons; lack of proper training for programmers and web developers; and limited budget for the development and maintenance of the website. These management problems contribute substantially to the static and not updated information contained in the website; to the lack of awareness and utilization of the residents; and to the finding about the slightly satisfied level among the users of the website on the services offered through the website.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The study assessed the website of the four city governments of Pangasinan as a mechanism for e-governance. Aside from examining the contents of the website, the study looked into the level of awareness, availment and satisfaction of the barangay residents in the central business district of the cities on the resources and services in the website. Findings show that the information contained in the website are not updated, thus, they remain static. This situation loses the essence of attractiveness of the use of the website most especially among the younger segment of the population.

A major finding of the study is that almost half of the respondents are not aware of the existence or presence of the website. This could be attributed to a number of factors one of which pertains to the lack of proper information regarding the presence of the government website and its uses. Another factor may be attributed to the local government priorities. It may be a fact that the website is not recognized to be important in the delivery of services by the local leadership and administration; hence, it is not given the necessary support in terms of funds and personnel.

Due to the non-awareness of the presence of the website, the resources and services contained in the website are not fully utilized. This means that the website as a tool for the delivery of services and a tool for public participation in the governance process does not serve its purpose.

In regard to the satisfaction level of the residents who have made use of the website, almost half of them are slightly satisfied. Again, this could be traced to: 1) static and not updated information in the website; 2) slow speed of internet connection; 3) slow response of the website; 4) limited resources and services; and 5) absence of interactive applications embedded in the website. This lack or absence of interactive applications make the use of the website uninteresting and not useful.

On the whole, the study has shown that the role of the website as a mechanism for the delivery of efficient public services and local participation in the governance process has yet to emerge strongly. A lot of problems contribute to this state of the under-utilization of the website. Aside from technological problem of access, it appears that political and social problems also affect and influence the use of the website. Politically, there is a question of leadership and political priorities at the local level which may affect the presence and maintenance of the website. Socially, there appears to be a digital divide among the citizenry which also makes a dent on the usage of the website. This divide could be influenced by social class divisions, income, education, ethnicity, age, gender, and social geography (Sy, 2002; Stoiciu, 2012).

POLICY PROPOSALS

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following policies are proposed:

- A strict implementation of e-governance policy on the use of government website is needed both at the national and local government levels. This will enhance further the G2G dimension of e-governance where there is a need for greater convergence of provision of services and implementation of development programs and projects among government entities. This would facilitate the speed of service delivery to the local community.

- Revisit the Local Government Code. Incorporate in the Code the creation of an office for e-governance through the website. This office should be staffed with technical people like programmers and web developers who would properly maintain the website and develop online apps to make the website more interactive. In a way, this would attract more website users and would lead to more active participation from the citizenry in the planning and decision-making processes.

- At the local government level, policies on the strict implementation of online services should be put in place and be observed. This would include policies to create online database systems, expand the online services to be provided to the community, and to regularly update information about events and happenings in the local area.

- The national government should facilitate the full implementation of free public WIFI connection for the citizens so that they can be connected online anytime, anywhere. They can access their government website anywhere through their cellphones or tablets.

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