Information & Services asked by the public from the Transport related Government Institutes' Websites in Sri Lanka: special reference to Sri Lanka Transport Board

De Silva, A. Pradeepa Udayangani

Abstract

A recent trend in the provision of public services by government agencies has been to develop internet websites that provide the publiceasier access to government information and services.

As well as the rapid development of World Wide Web increases the number of online users today. Because of these reasons, many government institutes use Websites to disseminate government information to the public. The objective of the study was to identify the necessary information to the public on government websites. This study aim to find out solutions for what sort of information required by public.

In this study, both qualitative and quantitative methodologies were applied. Mainly this is a survey research. To collect primary data for the study, 125 interviews were conducted among university staff and undergraduates to find out required information from the government Website. Three government Websites like Sri Lanka Transport Board, department of Motor traffic & Sri Lanka Railway were used as sample for the study.

After analyzing the data, it was realized that government institutes are unable to reach the expected level of the public by providing online services and relevant information. There is a high demand for online services on government Websites. But a very few government Websites are provided online services for the public. Most of the government Websites were put on lower grade by the evaluation tools.

In order to fill these discrepancies, some major moves are suggested. They are establishing formal web accessibility lows and guidelines, upgrading online services, training to web masters, conducting user survey to collect citizens' suggestions and ideas.

Keywords: Government Websites, Sri Lanka; Transport Related Government Websites; Government Information; Sri Lanka Government

Introduction

Information needs of the man have been increasing day by day. So they used to use any kind of media to fulfill their information needs. Among those all medias, computer and information technology play an important role. As well as, today there is a trend in using the Internet as a universal show room for any information like commercial, education, personal, political, research etc. As a result, the number of Websites are increasing rapidly (Parajuli, 2007). Most of these Websites are designed to distribute valuable information to the people. This is the result of the revaluation of information technology.

The new trend is that the governmental bodies are trying to develop the Websites to bring their modern democracy for residents (Elling, Lentz & Jong, 2007). Government provides information to their residents through the Websites to facilitate

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interaction and offer online services for national and international audiences.

Measurement of the government Website must be created. Beyond provision of information and services, evaluation should be with respect to issues which made from the Websites and the Internet (Middleton, 2007). It is very important if all government Websites are evaluated. That's why, the Websites should be evaluated. Because of these reasons, the research based on transport related government Websites is conducted.

Objectives & Research Questions

To conducted the research, two objectives were formulated as follows,

1. To identify the necessary information to the public.
2. To identify the existing information on the websites.

To fulfill above objectives, three research questions has been formulated as follows,

1. What informationis required by public?
2. What sort of information is available in the government Websites?
3. Do the Websites provide relevant information to the public?

Literature Review

Kumar (2006) revealed that online information expectation of congress citizens (public in USA) is 95% by 2005. Because of this high expected online information, Government Printing Office (GPO) start to collect, organize and disseminate government information in electronic media instated of paper based government publications. As well as, GPO has introduced the

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Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) as a preliminary instrument. Similarly GPO implemented a digital preservation project for legacy collection of the government. Through these projects, GPO expected to provide perpetual access for congress citizens for government information (Kumar, 2006).

Confirming Kumar's findings, Staley (2007) revealed that 77% of all internet users have visited to the Websites of government agencies to collect information. Among these internet users, 41% of users visited Websites to collect official statistics or documents, 34% of users accessed for recreational or tourist information, 28% of users collected information on health or safety. Also 23% of users paid their attention on information, which is applied for government benefits. Adding new things for Staley ideas, Liu, Chen & Wang (2010) discussed about government portal Websites in China. People in China required information from the government Websites is complete information revelation and ordinary services. Another finding disclosed from the study is that e-government development between China and other developed countries have been narrowed (Liu, Chen & Wang, 2010).

Mundy & Musa (2010) has conducted a research on e-government in Nigeria. The results show people in Nigeria and UK like to join with online services through the e-government process. Otherwise citizens were fond of fully participating in the act of governance. The results further revealed that there is a high rank of expectation from the citizens for e-government services.

Lee, Strong, Kahn & Wang (2002), De Lone & Mehean (2003) discussed that majority of citizens visit e-government Websites to collect information. Peppard & Rylander (2005) defined that

information means products and services available online (as cited in Kaisara & Pather, 2009). However majority of citizens expected that government should take possible steps to popularize government Websites and their services. It took 4.1 ranking rate (Liker scale 1-5, 1= strongly disagree and 5= strongly agree). Citizens in South Africa adopted to use e-government services than visit physical government office to do their work although most of participants of the study apprehensive about risks associated with using e-government (Kaisara & Pather, 2009).

Research Methodology

To collect data for the study two research techniques were used. To collect grounded theory for the study, interviews were selected as a method. The first objective of this study is to identify the necessity of the information to the public. 125 interviews were administrated among university staff and undergraduates to collect primary data. 75 respondents from the undergraduates and 50 respondents from the staff member from university of Kelaniya were selected according to the convenient sampling. The non structured interviews were carried out through the staff members and undergraduates.
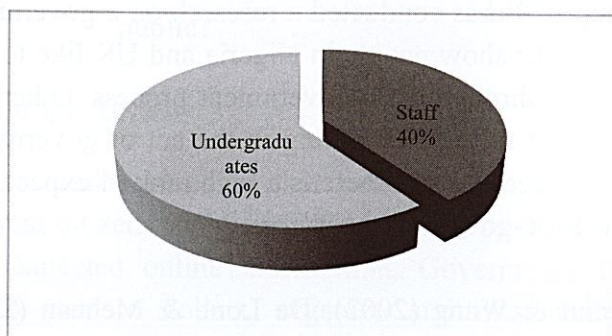

Figure 1: Profile of the respondents of the study *Source: Field survey, 2014*

Another main objective of the study was to identify the existing information on the websites. By using desk research, existing information on department of Motor traffic, Sri Lanka Railway and Sri Lanka Transport board was identified.

Data Analysis
- **Necessity of the Information to the Public**

Table 1 shows the sub categories of above main categories under Sri Lanka Transport Board, Department of Motor Traffic and Sri Lanka Railway. The majority of Sri Lankans expect following information on the web site of government institutions.
- **Existing Information on the websites**

By using desk study of the government web sites, available information of the web sites was recognized. Available information on the government web sites is indicated by using color columns in the table 1.

	Sri Lanka Transport Board	Department of Motor Traffic	Sri Lanka Railway
	• List of all facilities offered by the Sri Lanka Transport board	• All facilities offered by department of Motor Traffic	• All facilities offered by Sri Lanka Railway
	• New facilities offered by the SLTB	• New driving license obtaining procedure	• Facilities for disable persons
Gener al & structu	• The information about bus	• New vehicle registration procedure	• Time tables of the trains, type of trains and route

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red inform ation	schedules, time table and timetable changes.		of the train (Not included)
	• Routes and route numbers according to the provinces	• Standards of vehicles which are imported to Sri Lanka (brand new & recondition)	• New facilities offer by the SLR
	• Information about bus routes and bus fairs	• Driving Licenses renewal procedure	• Information about Railway
	• Personal contacts for complains		• Personals contact for complaining
	• Bus fairs and other facilities of highway buses	• Detail of registration of vehicles with required documents clearly	• Daily trains delaying information as news alert
	• Ticket prices under distance	• Charges schedule for various matters.	• Railway booking according to the salary stages
	• Detail and contact persons of relevant to various sections	• Detail and contact persons of relevant to various sections	• Detail and contact persons of relevant to various sections
	• Broad information about highways (speed level, signals, access & exit points, changes of speed levels)		

	• Schedule of daily bus service at least of intercity		
Historical Information	• History of Sri Lanka Transport Board	• History of the department	• History of the department
News	• Providing latest information	• Provide latest information	• Provide latest information
	• Information about main roads, sub roads, road maintenance, route numbers and ongoing projects		
	• News alert for distributing information about road maintains		
	• Government notifications		
Legislative Information	• Important government policies, rules &regulations, acts, circulars	• Important government policies, rules & regulations, acts, circulars	• Important government policies, rules & regulations, acts, circulars
Pictorial Information	• Picture gallery	• Picture gallery including special occasions, landmarks (Not	• Picture gallery including special occasions, landmarks

	included)		
	• Historical CTB pictures		
Language	• Content available in Sinhala, Tamil and English	• Content available in Sinhala, Tamil and English	• Content available in Sinhala, Tamil and English
	• Sinhala font should be in Unicode	• Sinhala font should be in Unicode	• Sinhala font should be in Unicode
	• Language should be clear and understandable	• Language should be clear and understandable	• Language should be clear and understandable
Location & Mapping services	• GPRS technology as a service.		• Historically and aesthetically important places closed to Railway stations
	• Complete map of Sri Lanka		• Maps of railway roads indicating all railway stations
	• Include maps of roads with special land marks such as Banks, Hotels, and Schools etc.		• Useful Landmarks around the railway stations
	• Google map		• Google maps
	• Road guidelines		• Road guidelines

	• Map of Highway mobile stations		• Nearest hotels
	• Distances to different places		
	• Information about shortest routes and closure of roads		
Online Servic es	• Facilitate online tickets booking.	• Online application submitting to obtain new driving license.	• Online tickets booking facility
	• Online inquiries	• Online inquiries	• Online inquiries
		• Online vehicle ownership transfers. E-facilities (for registration, transformation etc.)	• Online ticket canceling facility, refund facility for users
		• Relevant forms for downloading	• Important forms for downloading
Linked Progra mme	• Linked programmes with Railwaydepartme nt	• Linked programme with other ministries	• Linked programme with transport boards and other ministries
	• Linked programme with Auto Mobile Association		• Linked programme with Auto Mobile Association

	• Access through the link on government web portal	• Access through the link on government web portal	• Access through the link on government web portal
Format & Features of the website	• Simple, clear and current information	• Simple, clear and current information	• Simple, clear and current information
	• Content of website should be relevant to the organizations' mandate.	• Content of website should be relevant to the organizations' mandate.	• Content of website should be relevant to the organizations' mandate.
	• Content of the websites should be organized systematically and should support to the popular web browser and platform.	• Content of the websites should be organized systematically and should support to the popular web browser and platform.	• Content of the websites should be organized systematically and should support to the popular web browser and platform.
	• Easy navigation for users	• Easy navigation for users	• Easy navigation for users
	• Accessibility for disabilities related with guidelines of World Wide Web Consortium's Web Content Accessibility guidelines	• Accessibility for disabilities related with guidelines of World Wide Web Consortium's Web Content Accessibility guidelines	• Accessibility for disabilities related with guidelines of World Wide Web Consortium's Web Content Accessibility guidelines

	Contact information should be provided through the websites such as e-mail address, phone & fax numbers, official address, contact person and designation	• Contact information should be provided through the websites such as e-mail address, phone & fax numbers, official address, contact person and designation	• Contact information should be provided through the websites such as e-mail address, phone & fax numbers, official address, contact person and designation
	• Important form & other documents should be available in standard portable document format	• Important form & other documents should be available in standard portable document format	• Important form & other documents should be available in standard portable document format

Source: Field survey, 2014

Sri Lanka Transport Board

Below figure describes the percentage of required information by the public.
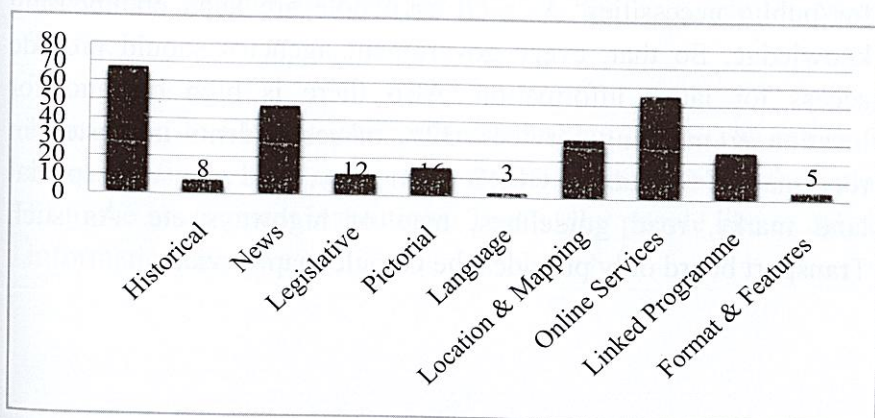
Figure 2: Percentage of required information of SLTB   *Source: Field survey, 2014*

In the context of Sri Lanka Transport Board, highest percentage (68% of respondents) is raised for the general & structured information. Majority of people visit Sri Lanka Transport board to collect information like bus schedules, bus fares, bus routes & route numbers and to receive the facilities offered by the transport board. But transport board is unable to provide variety of information which people ask.

Although 56% of respondents voted for online services Transport board couldn't able to provide online services until now. Most of the people are fond of using online facilities from the government agencies to save their time. The situation is same in other countries also. As an example, Mundy & Musa (2010) revealed that there is a high rank of expectation from the citizens for e-government services in Nigeria. But in Sri Lankan context, government agencies web sites do not develop for e-government step.

Subsequently, highest percentage (48%) is obtained by news. It is very important to provide latest information through the web sites for public necessities. As well as people are keen on updating knowledge. So that, every government agencies should provide access for latest information. Also there is high demand for location & mapping services. 32% of respondents interested in road map of Sri Lanka, GPRS technology, road map with special land marks, road guidelines, map of highways etc. As such Transport board only provides the Google map services.

Department of Motor Traffic

Next turning point is Department of Motor Traffic. Following graph shows that, the percentage of required information on the web site of department of motor traffic.
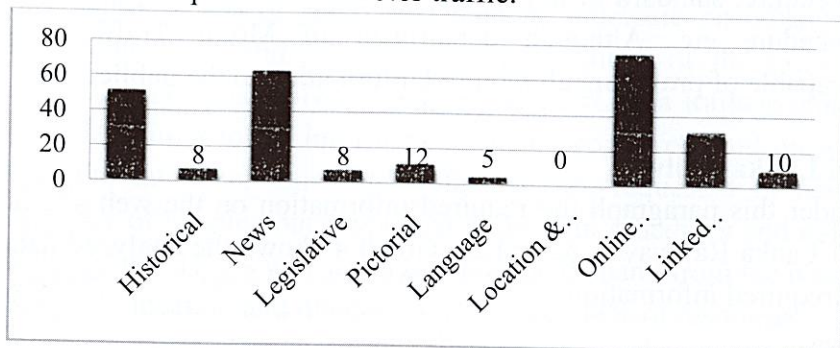

Figure 3: Percentage of required information of DMT   *Source: Field survey, 2014*

In the context of Motor traffic, the highest percentage (76%) of responses is online services. The reason for that is citizens in Sri Lanka pronounce that government agencies consume their time purposelessly. So that people hesitate to visit government agencies for their necessities. They try to fulfill their necessities staying their resident places. That's why people ask on online services from the government institutions. As such inadequate online services are provided by Motor Traffic. An online vehicle ownership transfer is provided through the web site of Motor Traffic.

In addition to 64% of users interested about news. The reason is normally citizens in a country are aware about updated information from the government institutions. That's why people like to collect information on news.

General & structured information was collected 52% from the respondents. Majority of the sample paid their attention on new driving license obtaining procedure, driving license renewal procedure, standard of imported vehicles, new vehicle registration procedure etc. Although department of Motor Traffic was incapable of providing all required information to the public.

Sri Lanka Railway

Under this paragraph the required information on the web site of Sri Lanka Railway is described. Graph 4 shows the analyzed data of required information.
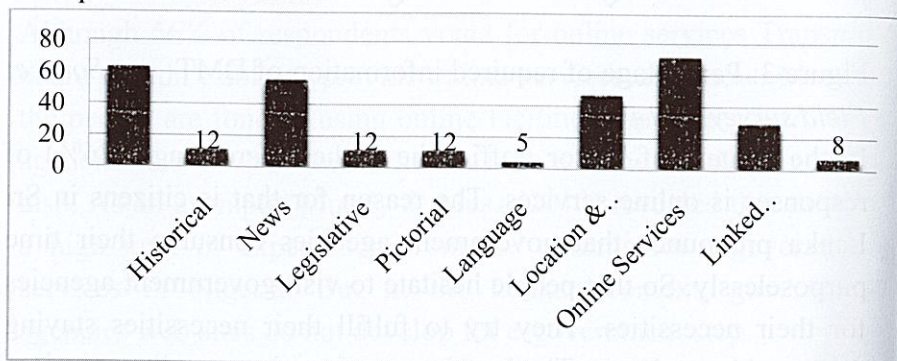
Figure 4: Percentage of required information of SLR   *Source: Field survey, 2014*

Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) in USA distributed information on web sites like FRA's mission, customer service plan, research & development, the safety programme, public affairs, doing business with FRA and high speed rails. In the same way FRA web sites was connected with GRSM links (Gage Restraint Measurement System) for disseminating information for the public (Notess, 1998). The end of 19th century UAS try to disseminate government information through their web sites properly. Nevertheless most of Sri Lankan government institutions is not developed that much which UAS reached. 72% of users

requested in online services of Railway. But Sri Lanka Railway is not in a position to provide online services for public.

Another highest demand went to general and structured information (64% of responses). People anticipate on collecting time table, type and fee of the train, facilities of the railway, contacting persons, railway booking etc. Sri Lanka Railway could provide quite a lot of information which people required on web site. On the other hand 56% of responses requested in news. Majority of people concerns about daily train schedules and delay of the trains. That's why news gets highest demand from the public. Similarly location and mapping services got 48% of responses.

Conclusions & Recommendation

This study clearly demonstrates the available and existing information on the government Websites. Analyzed data was concluded some errors as well as good features of the government Websites. Following paragraphs will describe the conclusions of the study respectively.

Analyzed data personated that, the expectation of general information on the SLTB Website is high. But the provided information on the Website is not up to the expectation. Even though, there is high demand of online services. Provided online services are nil. As such people are expecting wide range of news likewise information about main roads, sub roads, route numbers, and road maintains, ongoing projects, news alters. But SLTB is providing very little latest information on the Website. Under mapping and location services, people are expecting easily accessibility, easily focusable maps on the Website. But SLTB provided only Google maps.

Many people in Sri Lanka use mobile phone to a greater extent. Normally they like to collect information through their mobile phones. But SLTB is unable to provided mobile support services for public. Nevertheless the expectation level of historical and pictorial information was achieved SLTB Website. The three departments of the study (SLTB, DMT & SLR) are handing the services individually. There for introducing inter relational programmes with these three departments and auto mobile association, government web portal will be an advantage of the society.

Department of Motor Traffic has a high demand for online services. DMT is able to provide few online services. It is a very good achievement than other sampled Websites. As such DMT provided satisfactory level on news. Not only that, DMT achieved the satisfactory level of general information field also. DMT provided information on field of historical, pictorial, linked programme, mapping & location services barely.

The context of Sri Lanka Railway, the expectation of online services is high. As such SLR is unable to fulfill citizens' expectations. Citizens like to accomplish their day today work without paying more time pointlessly. So that citizens ask for online services from the government institutes. That is the reason for high expectation of online services. In addition to there is a high demand for general & structural information, news and location & mapping services. Normally citizens are aware of general information and news on any government information. The reason for that most of general citizens deal with government institutes to accomplish their needs. As such SLR website couldn't make citizens satisfied by their services and information.

Recommendations

For this study Sri Lanka Transport Board, Department of Motor Traffic, Sri Lanka Railway under Ministry of Transport Board was used as the sample. Besides, it was realized that most of government Websites should be improved. However the government institute of Sri Lanka should have paid more attention to improve the quality and efficiency of their Websites. Some recommendations are proposed below based on the research findings of the study.

- Establish formal web accessibility lows and guidelines
- Upgrade online services through government institute websites
- Training to Webmaster
- Recruit a centralized post named Web Manager for all government institutes
- Conduct user survey to collect citizen's suggestions and ideas

Summary & Discussion

The aim of this study was to find out whether government Website produce relevant information to the public through their Websites. Analyzed data represented that expectation for online services and current information (news) is very high in the government institutes Websites. This is not a Sri Lankan matter, in Nigeria also there is a high rank of expectation from the citizens for e-government services (Mundy & Musa, 2010). Majority of citizens normally are fond of using online services provided by the government institutes. As such in Sri Lanka majority of government Websites do not provide online services as citizens

wish. But in Norway, ministry of transport provided online services through their websites as an example they provided mapping services and online booking facilities. So that people can accomplish their information needs.

Another fact is that, most of countries use a one Website for all transport related Websites. But it is not appear in Sri Lanka Transport Ministry. SLTB, DMT & SLR have separate URL and these Websites are linked into the Transport Ministry. If these all transport related Websites are each together under one Website, people can easy navigate through the Websites. In American context all transport related Websites are included on the department of transportation.

There is more news on the American Website. As well as this news are latest and well categorized on the Websites. Criado & Ramilo (2003) revealed that, there is more information as such general information of the municipality, local building and entities, council- institutional and internal organizations, services and functions of the councils and relational information on Spanish municipalities. But in Sri Lankan transport website do not provide more information related with the government institutes.

Sri Lankan Websites are in poor level of evaluation. Therefore further development should be implemented.

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