

Citizens and e-Government: The Strategic Importance of Awareness Campaigns

Spain is a country with a sophisticated penetration of the Internet and its services which is still in the growth phase. This is reflected in the 2011 edition of the “Survey on the Equipment and Use of Information and Communication Technologies in Households” by the National Statistics Institute (INE). **Carried out in the second quarter of 2011, it reflects the use of Internet services in 2010.** 69.3% of the population between the ages of 16 and 74 are Internet users. However, **the most sophisticated services reflect a user population of under 40% in all cases.** The fact that e-Government Services have more users than Social Networks or On-line Banking¹ reflects the driving effect of the former on the rest, mainly among the older generations.

Servicio Internet	Servicios relacionados con viajes y alojamientos	Administración Electrónica	Participar en Redes Sociales	Banca Electrónica	Comercio Electrónico
% Población usuaria	39,2 %	39,1 %	35,1 %	28,2 %	27,2 %

Law 11/2007 gives citizens the right to choose a channel for their dealings with the Public Administrations. In a relationship that has traditionally been asymmetrical, in which the authorities defined the conditions without any decision-making margin for citizens, the Law on Citizens' Electronic Access to Public Services indicates a change in the balance of power between both parties involved, in favour of the citizen.

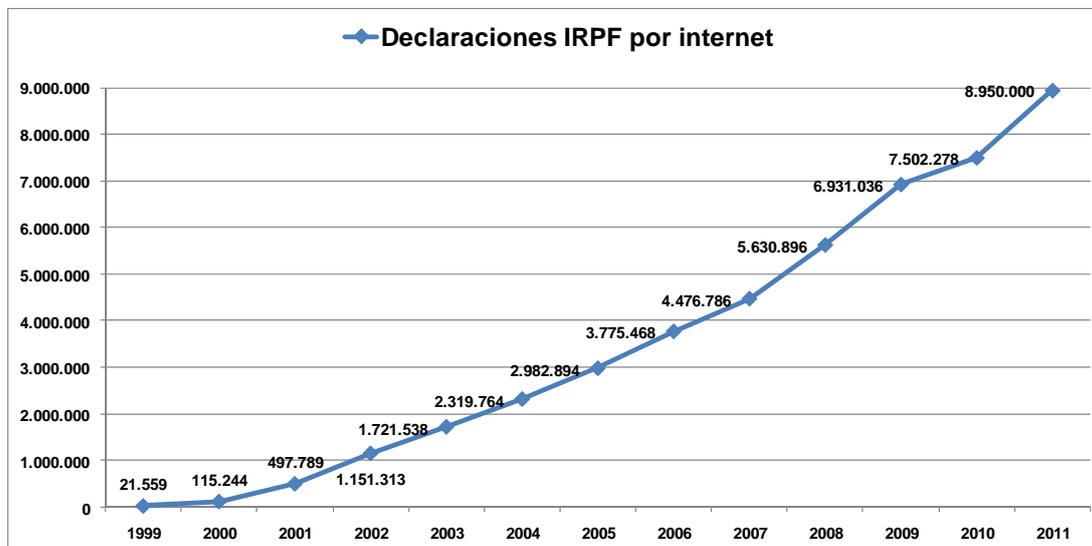
¹ Data on the e-Government and e-commerce user population refers to the past 12 months, whilst all other figures refer to the past 3 months.

In the decision-making process on the choice of channel for dealings with the public administrations, the face-to-face channel enjoys an advantageous position thanks to tradition. Governments must foster the promotion of the use of the Internet to overcome the logical social resistance to change. Only by **investing in raising awareness of the services** is it possible to make the transition to a digital government and enable the county to benefit from its social advantages.

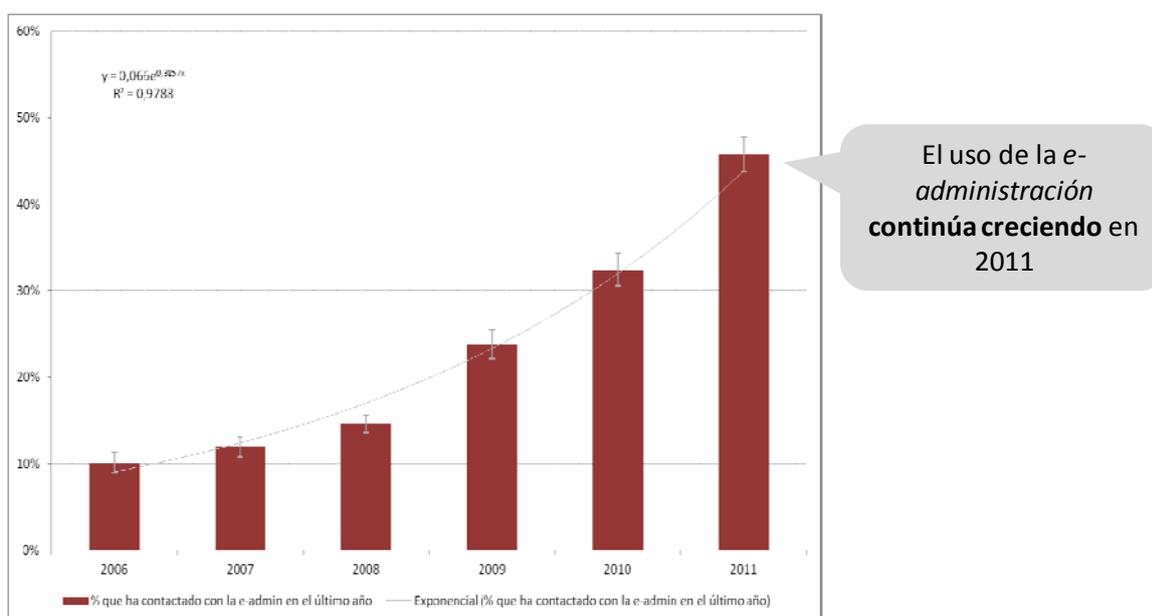
e-Government awareness campaigns as a lever to increase its use are among the measures recommended by international organisations (OECD, European Commission, United Nations). In line with this strategy, the Ministry for Civil Service implemented a campaign in the first half of 2011 to promote the use of the “**20 Most Prominent Services**”, whereby its website has recorded over 1.3 million visits in the first six months.



In addition to this special campaign, the traditional campaign to promote the use of electronic channels to **submit Income Tax Declarations** is implemented in May and June. In this field, 2011 has been a particularly significant year. With respect to 2010, there has been an **increase of more than one and a half million Income Tax Declarations submitted by Internet**, reaching a total of 8,950,000. It must also be taken into account that one of the elements that has boosted this progress is the possibility to submit Income Tax Declarations with a specific code provided by National Tax Office, which has led to the increase in users of this on-line service.



The effect of the aforementioned awareness campaigns can be appreciated by comparing the results of the survey by the National Statistics Institute with the survey on “The importance of public services for citizen well-being” carried out by the Sociological Research Centre (CIS) on behalf of the Public Service Evaluation Agency (AEVAL). This survey was carried out in the **third quarter of 2011**, hence reflecting the impact of the Income Tax and the “20 Most Prominent Services” campaigns on the global use of e-Government in Spain. According to CIS, 45% of the population is now using this channel.



In addition to the considerable increase in direct use with respect to 2010, the CIS survey continues to reflect the indirect use of e-Government phenomenon. Around 15% of the non Internet user population is aware of the possibility of the mediation of a third party on their behalf before the Public Administrations via the Internet. This takes the use of e-Government, as a sum of direct and indirect use to over 50%, whereby this figure coincides with that of studies into the volume of on-line processing compared to face-to-face dealings with the General State Administration carried out by the e-Government Observatory.

Although both of the aforementioned evaluation tools, the INE and CIS surveys, have different objectives (analysis of the Information Society compared with the analysis of Public Services) and consequently ask different questions, their probabilistic margins do not significantly differ in terms of statistics. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is an increase in the use of e-Government by citizens, whereby the annual jump lies in the growth of the Income Tax Declaration campaign.