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INTERNET COMMUNICATIONS IN THE POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

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ABSTRACT

As Internet communications develop, they influence all spheres of society, including politics. The participation of society in the exercise of power and the influence on the adoption of political and managerial decisions are the most important attribute of a democratic society and a guarantee of taking into account and implementing the interests of citizens. One of the most relevant for the modern world methods of political influence on the decision-making process is the influence mediated by Internet resources. The introduction of Internet communications contributes to the transformation of all elements and stages of the process of political and managerial decision-making: decision-making agents; communication networks, direct and feedback channels between individual agents, which are formed at the preparatory stage; stage of adoption and implementation of the decision.

INTRODUCTION

The active development of Internet communications creates new opportunities for the activities and interaction of citizens, political institutions, and society.

There are different ways of influencing citizens on the adoption of political and managerial decisions. Parties, mass media, public organizations, pressure groups, and other civil society institutions can act as intermediaries between society and the government. The goals of involving society in the political process are mechanisms of political influence such as elections, referenda, and other forms of citizens' will. Political influence is expressed in various forms of political action (voting, appeal to public authorities, rallies, etc.) and less often inaction (for example, boycotting elections as an expression of active hostility to the political system and its institutions). One of the most relevant tools for political influence on the decision-making process in the modern world is Internet resources.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The theoretical and methodological basis of the study of Internet communications in the process of political decision-making is the works by T.A. Almarabeh[1], D. Bell [2], Clift Steven L. [3], A. Corrado и C. Firestone [4], R. Davis [5], L.K. Grossman [6], D. Morris [7], A. Toffler [8], A.A. Degtiareva[9], A.N. Iurtaeva [10].

To study communication interaction in the political and managerial decision-making process, a systematic approach was applied. The structural and functional method made it possible to consider Internet communications as a factor in the transformation of the process of political and managerial decision-making, as well as to identify the process characteristics (stages) and structural features (mechanism) of decision making, to study the totality of stable relationships and interactions between these elements.

RESULTS

The Internet effect on the decision-making process can be defined as the probabilistic impact on the determination and selection of the best possible alternative to the decision made via Internet communications. Like traditional forms of political influence, Internet influence is an opportunity to achieve the desired effects and, unlike power influence, does not imply a guaranteed change in the behavior of the subject. The peculiarity of Internet influence as a specific type of political influence is that it is exercised mainly through an active form - Internet-mediated political participation.

One of the key elements of the structure of the political decision-making process is agents, which include all the participants in decision-making: leader, elite, civil society, etc. The introduction of Internet communications in the activities of public authorities contributes to the expansion of channels of influence of citizens on the process of making political and managerial decisions and provides the ability to exercise control over the activities of public authorities and officials (for example, through a system of electronic elections and appointments), which will increase confidence to government bodies.

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We should also consider the role of Internet communications in providing new foundations for the effective functioning of the state apparatus. Thus, the introduction of Internet resources in the activities of public authorities within the framework of the concept of electronic government forces a radical revision of the public administration system. According to D. Osborne and P. Plastrick, now the public sector is starting to work on fundamentally new approaches:

- decentralization of governance within government structures and delegation of responsibility to lower levels of government;
- reducing the public service system;
- searching for more efficient (in terms of costs and results) methods of production of services, such as the conclusion of contracts for the implementation of services, market mechanisms and paid services for consumers;
- customer orientation, including published standards for the quality of social services, etc. [11]

The introduction of Internet communications moreover leads to a change in the professional requirements for public servants, allowing us to talk about the possible turning of public servants into "knowledge managers": the introduction of new technologies requires them to be able to use software controls, to understand any situation that has arisen.

As noted by A.N. Iurtaev, a common feature for all countries implementing e-government projects was the reduction of government posts, especially in the area of administrative and service activities. Different steps were taken to solve this painful problem: in Denmark, for example, the hiring of new employees to the place of those who retired was stopped. The Netherlands abandoned the practice of attracting temporary employees to work in government bodies. Released workers in the Netherlands, Spain, and Finland, are being retrained to perform other functions [10].

The next essential element of the structural system of the decision-making mechanism is the network of communications, channels of direct and feedback between individual agents.

Internet communications provide new tools for citizens to apply to public authorities, thereby contributing to the organization of effective feedback channels. Subject to a real consideration and solution of the problem of citizens, the population forms a positive image of power, trust in it. In addition, the time for considering appeals is significantly reduced: for example, e-government systems are equipped with an internal service for monitoring the established deadlines for considering citizens' appeals.

The interaction of citizens with the government is based on the "single window" principle when citizens and private companies can perform all operations in one place, accessible 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. This leads to a significant reduction in time, material, bureaucratic costs and at the same time benefits both citizens, society, and the state.

We should in general note the creation of new tools for citizen participation in politics. The introduction of Internet communications in the activities of public authorities has provided citizens with a great opportunity to express their attitude to what they expect from public services. For example, the introduction of Internet communications as part of the implementation of the concept of e-government, according to Stephen L. Clift, that "E-government provides an opportunity for governments to explain and demonstrate their legitimacy and provide basic civic education online that will increase citizen understanding of the responsibilities of government" [3]. Another researcher notes that "Helping trust-building between governments and citizens. This will help the Electronic government to achieve the main idea from its existence" [1].

Another area of transformation of the communicative component of the decision-making process is the effectiveness of interagency interactions within decision-makers. The introduction of Internet communications helps to increase the interaction of public authorities horizontally and vertically. The use of Internet resources in the activities of political institutions allows us to overcome the main administrative barrier of horizontal interaction - interagency barriers. As the chief designer of the "Electronic Government of the Republic of Tatarstan" A.N. Iurtaev noted, a single portal was created in Tatarstan - tatarstan.ru - which includes on a single basis the sites of all government bodies, operating in a single information field with a single document flow. Numerous attempts to overcome interdepartmental barriers turned out to be unsuccessful, as indicated by A.N. Iurtaev, precisely because of the very organizational principle of bureaucratic structures: the process of making managerial decisions is divided into solutions to relatively simpler tasks and distributed between departments and specialists [12]. In addition, Internet communications within the E-Government project is an additional and operational channel of vertical interaction, for example, in the sphere of relations "state for officials", "state for state". Recognizing the fairly wide possibilities of Internet communications in ensuring inter-agency interaction, of course, it should be noted that we are not talking about replacing the "ordinary" government with its electronic form but about decentralizing powers and transferring certain functions of the state in the provision of public

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services to the electronic government. The policy of many states includes expanding the possibility of using information technology in their activities, as this allows them to ensure the transparency of their activities and take into account public opinion on many socially significant issues.

Principles that underlay the functioning of Internet communications, among which are usually the transition from the departmental orientation of the state's activity to orientation toward the needs and tasks of citizens, compliance with the rules for working with citizens and business structures, their transparency and accessibility for citizens, contribute to the transformation of the decision-making model. Another important characteristic of the decision-making process is its dynamism and staging. Based on the classical phases of the political and managerial cycle, the following stages of the process of making political and managerial decisions can be distinguished: preparatory stage (formation of an agenda - a set of problems that need to be addressed); decision-making stage (preparation and selection of a draft decision, its agreement and approval); stage of implementation of the decision, which also involves the assessment and monitoring of the results of its implementation [9]. The consistent implementation of Internet communications is transforming all stages of the process of making political and managerial decisions. New resources are being created for the influence of citizens on:

- the preparatory decision-making stage by identifying those problems that need to be addressed (for example, appeals to public authorities);
- the direct selection of the best alternative and decision-making (electronic voting, legislative electronic petitions);
- assessment and monitoring of results in the implementation of political management decisions (information openness of all stages and procedures of budget planning at the local government level).

It is also worth noting that the use of Internet communications leads to an increase in the efficiency of the decision-making process, since it significantly speeds up the workflow, the procedure for coordinating and approving the decision, and improves interagency interaction.

The introduction of Internet communications indeed expands the possibilities of election campaigns and has a significant impact on the process of making political and managerial decisions. An example is an unprecedented case of using the Internet format to develop the Icelandic Constitution in 2012. To prepare the text of the Basic Law, a Council of 25 citizens was established. Throughout the entire process of creating a document via social networks (Facebook, Twitter, and even YouTube), proposals from citizens were collected (a total of 3,600 comments on the work of the Council and 370 amendments to the Constitution). The final version was approved by referendum. In other words, the Internet format made it possible to maximize the number of factors that influence the decision-making process and determined the main form of communication between these actors. Citizens could electronically influence at all stages of the decision-making process: each Internet user could take part in preparing the document, choosing the best alternative and evaluating it. Thus, the use of Internet communications has contributed to the transformation of all elements of the structure and dynamics of the adoption of the Basic Law of Iceland. The experience of Iceland is highly regarded by researchers as a lesson in direct democracy and the wide participation of citizens in the activities of public authorities [13].

SUMMARY

Thus, the extensive development of Internet communications expands the channels of influence of citizens on the political and managerial decision-making process, significantly boosts the workflow, the procedure for coordinating and approving the decision, which in general leads to an increase in the efficiency of the decision process. Governments and parliaments of many countries are expanding the possibilities of using information technology in their activities to ensure transparency of their actions, providing information to citizens, business structures, and taking into account public opinion on many socially significant issues.

CONCLUSION

Summing up, the distinct features of Internet communications are interactivity, the creation of feedback channels, the implementation of the principle of information transparency and new dialogue platforms with state authorities. These features represent a fundamentally new type of political communication.

The introduction of Internet communications in the activities of public authorities contributes to the expansion of channels of influence of citizens on the process of making political and managerial decisions and provides the ability to exercise control over the activities of public authorities and officials. The use of Internet communications in the activities of public authorities leads to a change in professional requirements for officials and increases the effectiveness of interagency interactions. In addition, Internet communications provide new tools for citizens to apply to state authorities, thereby contributing to the organization of effective feedback channels. The consistent use of Internet communications contributes to

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the democratic transformation of all elements and stages of the process of political and managerial decision-making.

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