Identifying needs and expectations of potential users of the virtual platform to foster healthy and active ageing in Andalusia

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Abstract

The governance approach is being applied in Andalusia to the development of the Public Health Law. This approach understands the context, the needs and expectations of the people to whom public policies are aimed to and try to achieve with them the most appropriate solutions. One experience of establishing this approach has been the design of a virtual platform for the promotion of active ageing: *enbuenaedad*. 570 persons were consulted. Focus groups, community forums, and professional forums were used to collect the information. 1,811 expectations were analyzed related to the contents, formats and utilities of the web platform. Older people expressed the need of simplicity and clarity of the format of the interfaces, tutorials and a step by step style of navigation. The results achieved in each phase are returned to the participants through a web container. This contributes to the clarity and transparency of the process. The effectiveness of the application of this approach has been demonstrated with the rapid acceptance of the virtual platform by older people.

Governance and public health

Governance represents a cooperative form of government in which public institutions and civil society participate actively in the formulation and application of public policies [1]. Governance is tangible. It is not just a matter of style. Governance translates into facts, is orderly, transparent and clear [2].

This approach is being aimed to the development of the Public Health Law in the region of Andalusia. Since its promulgation in 2011, the Regional Ministry of Health of Andalusia has placed special emphasis on the effective participation of citizens and professionals in the design and implementation of public health interventions [3]. One of the priority interventions is aimed at the promotion of active and healthy ageing [2]. In this area the Regional Ministry of Health of Andalusia opted for the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to improve the quality of life of people as they get older. The design of a virtual platform to foster active and healthy ageing was proposed. Needs and expectations of older people and professionals, such as potential users of the web portal, were identified previously to the development of the design [4-6]. The objective was to understand the context, expectatives and needs of older people in order to develop with them the most appropriate technological solutions.

Context

To know the relationship of older people with ICT data from the survey of the Institute of Statistics and Cartography of Andalusia (IECA, 2015). In 2007 only 6% of people over 65 years used Internet. In 2014 this figure reached until 26%. The most frequent uses were through messages of the App *WhatsApp*, also search for information, especially news, health issues or training activities.

To go further qualitative research with two focus groups were carried out. Participants affirmed the smartphone is fully integrated into their daily lives. They remarked they behave like "linear" navigators, which means that they need to go step by step, and that they do not like to *explore*. It could be complex for them if the navigation does not respond to that logic. They also express their expectation to be able to get access to the information from a virtual platform which could also be considered as "official and confident". They hoped the platform would allow them to easily find the information they are looking for with a safe navigation.

Needs and expectations

To identify the needs and expectations of the potential users of the virtual platform 8 community forums and 2 professional forums were held. 363 persons from all over Andalusia participated in the community forums. 60.3% of participants were women and 39.7% men. 28.5% of participants belonged to the group interval from 55 to 64 years, and 17.8% to the group over 65 years. Participants represented different sectors: the Public Health Administration (23.1%); citizens (21.5%); health, social and educational services (16.8%); City Councils and Provincial Councils (9.6%). %); and Associations (7.4%).

These expectations were grouped into six areas: social participation and leisure; learning, lifestyle; information; health care; security, and affectivity (Picture 1). Regarding the platform's design, 365 expectations were collected and grouped into: simplicity and clarity of the format (35%); use of audiovisual content (25%); availability of tutorials (19%); guarantee of accessibility for people with functional diversity (11%); availability of communication tools (5%); and participation (5%).

Two professional forums were also convened. In one of them, named Scientific Committee, 20 health professionals participated including both directors of Integral Plans and primary care professionals. In the other one, named Partnership Committee, participated 29 professionals representing the public administration, private companies, the social economy sector, the university and research centres. During these two forums 264 expectations were collected and grouped into the four pillars of active ageing (Table 1 and Figure 1).

The process of analyzing expectations has been clear and orderly. Obtained results of each phase have been communicated to the participants through a web container; thus contributing to the transparency of the process. The needs and expectations of older people became technical requirements for the design of the web platform. After the prototypes were developed started the validation phase.

Design validation

To validate the prototypes, the community forums (108 participants), the Scientific Committee (14 professionals) and the Partnerships Committee (24 professionals) were called again. A total of 532 expectations were collected, which were refined and classified into 17 categories.

The contributions focused on improving accessibility by increasing the size of the letter, more intuitive labeling, improving iconography, rationalizing the use of colors, reducing the buttons on the main menu, promoting the use of filters and search engines, inclusion of pictures in which the target population felt more recognized with, and videos with text and audio.

Expectations regarding the contents were grouped into the four pillars of active ageing: health, security, participation and lifelong learning. In the field of health, the focus was on having communication access with health professionals, tools for the management of appointments and medication control, and information about resources. Regarding security pillar the focus placed on local and national police advice. Participation included the territorial location of social activities and easy access to available resources. And last but not least, lifelong learning remarked expectations to find courses on healthy lifestyle and self-esteem.

Conclusions

Constant consultation with the different groups of potential users of the virtual platform *enbuenaedad* allowed the research group to develop a design that is adapted to their needs and expectations. For the cooperative construction of this intervention, face-to-face (forums) and virtual communication channels (web container) have been necessary. These spaces of communication add clarity and transparency to the process. The effectiveness of this approach has been demonstrated by the rapid acceptance of the web platform and the thousands of visits it receives weekly.

Funding

Table 1. Professionals' expectations about the platform content

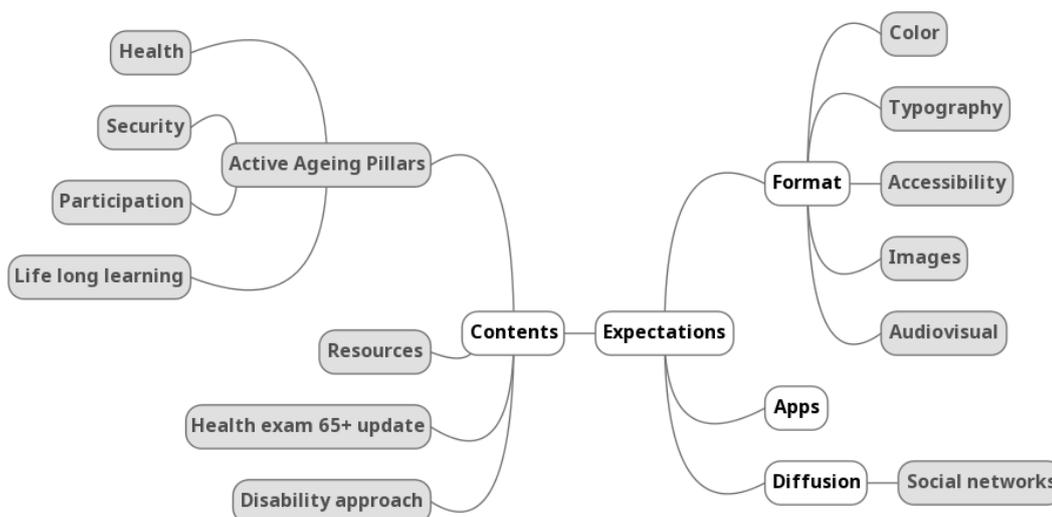| Committee	Active Ageing Pillars					
	Health	Security	Participation	Learning	Others	Total
Partnership	65	33	41	38	9	186
Scientific	43	0	18	17		78
Total	108	33	59	55	9	264

Figure 1. Expectatives from the forums

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