

## **Government Websites in India: Local Language Usability**

*Peeyush Bajpai*

Co-Founder, Director Raftaar.com , New Delhi

Internet today is not only an information delivery platform but also a citizen communication platform. For most people it is becoming the first point of contact with the government. With increasing penetration, people from rural areas, semi-urban areas and small towns accessing government information and services will increase. With it will increase the demand for local language content, interface and communication. Present estimates put the number of Internet users in India to be approximately 30 million of which more than 50% are from Tier II and III towns. It is also estimated that almost 59% of the users are looking for local language content (IOL 2007).

This paper estimates that the present on line content in Hindi is approximately 10 million pages. Of this almost 2 million Hindi pages are from websites of government ministries, institutions and undertakings providing information and in certain cases services. However, is this set of pages relevant, usable and user friendly? Of the listed 3609 websites in the NIC directory, how many are truly in Hindi or the regional language. Given this scenario, will the government be able to effectively utilize the web? This paper tries to answer this by analyzing a sample of the government websites. This paper assesses the quality of the websites and rates them on their usability. It discusses the set of constraints that are faced by a local language user in accessing the Internet. It also discusses some of the success stories and presents a framework for ensuring development of high quality and usable websites.