

Chapter 3

E-Government Services: Creating Value Through Services' Quality

Rimantas Gatautis

Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania

Elena Vitkauskaite

Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania

ABSTRACT

Adoption of ICT in the public sector has rapidly progressed over the last decade. Many national and local governmental institutions move towards more sophisticated public electronic services aiming to increase service provision efficiency and effectiveness as well as develop services attractive for citizens. However, such digitalization represents supply-driven approach while governmental institutions and software development companies move public services online. Demand side user satisfaction and acceptance usually is ignored supposing ICT-based services pretend to be modern services. Public electronic services' acceptance heavily depends on citizens' attitudes. In this context, citizens' understanding of public electronic service quality plays an important role. The current chapter's propose is to show public electronic service quality assessment model considering three perspectives – environment quality, delivery quality, and outcome quality. The proposed model is verified empirically assessing three different public electronic services in Lithuania.

INTRODUCTION

E-Government strategies across the European Union (EU) display great diversity and various degrees of success. Diversity is a function of the different historical and sociopolitical contexts in which these strategies are implemented. Relative degrees of success are related to the coexistence of sets of factors within strategic frameworks that ensure not only continuity and coherence of implementation but also the creation of conditions

of demand of e-Government services on the part of civil society. One of the key factors of successful development of e-Government services is quality of services. From the user perspective quality is one of the key factors assuring value of service.

The services in the virtual environment or electronic services contain a wide spectrum of operations starting from pure sales via internet to the pure services – free or as the part of service agreement. The share of public institutions' services provided through virtual environment

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is constantly increasing worldwide. Electronic services are relatively new kind of activity from theoretical and practical point of view. In that context a question arises – what methods should be applied in estimation of public electronic services' quality and what dimensions should be treated as critical.

The development of public electronic services is rather supply driven process – governmental organizations and software development companies are dedicating effort to digitize public services. However researchers (Codagnone, et al. 2006; Millard, 2008) outline importance of citizen perspective or demand perspective – services will not be accepted by user if they are not seen as high quality services. In this case citizens rather continue using physical services instead of electronic ones.

The issue of electronic service quality is addressed in research, but research focused towards public electronic service quality is insufficient. Considering this, the goal of this chapter is to propose the public electronic service quality assessment framework taking into consideration the latest state of art of electronic services and public electronic services quality assessment research and provide empirical evidences of framework validity.

QUALITY OF E-SERVICES AND ITS PECULIARITIES

Electronic Service

Electronic service (hereinafter – e-Service) is widely recognized term among scientists and practitioners. E-Service can be defined as a service in virtual environment (Rust & Lemon, 2001). According to Reynolds (2000), e-Services are web-based services provided via internet. De Ruyter, Wetzels & Kleijnen (2000) claim that an e-Service is an interactive, content-centered and Internet-based customer services, driven by the customer and integrated with related organization-

al customer support processes and technologies with the goal of strengthening customer-service provider relationship. According to Rahman (2004) e-Service is a service delivered via internet by using advanced telecommunications, information, and multimedia technologies. Besides, Surjadjaja, Ghosh & Antony (2003) claim that electronic service is not simply a combination of terms “electronic” and “service”. Electronic service is transaction between service provider and customer performed via internet. In case of pure electronic services entire process happens in virtual environment, i.e. purchase of a ticket online. Therefore, electronic service within this chapter is perceived as delivery of services between a service provider and a customer of a service in virtual marketplace.

It should be noted that e-Services vary from pure e-Services to extra services next to sales of tangible goods. According to Surjadjaja et al. (2003) e-Services can be provided as stand-alone offer to customer, or it can supplement goods sold online (pure electronic commerce).

King, Lee & Viehland (2004) identified following list of main e-Services:

- Tourism and travel services.
- Recruitment and other labour market services.
- Realty, insurance and stock exchange services.
- Banking and personal finance services.
- Services of digital goods provision.
- Ordering and delivery of some food products.

King et al. (2004) listed those electronic services without distinction between pure electronic services and pure electronic commerce.

In order to make a service accessible and attractive to customer, it should be considered that service is made not only of core service, but from supplementing services as well. All these services combined together make service offer, which could

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