

Chapter 8

A Literature Review on Quality Models for Online E-Government Services

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ABSTRACT

The study presented in this chapter will serve as a basis for the development of a suitable methodology whose purpose is to evaluate the quality of Local e-Government online services. Citizens expect quality public services, and their online dimension is no exception. The quality of these services should be analysed and accounted for, in order to maximize and develop strategies that improve the offered services, increasing the levels of satisfaction of their recipients. In this sense, this first study puts forth a systematization of the relevant bibliography, focusing on the quality of two types of services: traditional and e-Government. Each methodology was analysed in order to identify the main quality dimensions used. Up to the present moment, the identification of a service quality evaluation method particularly focused on local online e-Government wasn't achieved, and this justifies the development of an investigation project whose main purpose is to create such methodology in this field.

INTRODUCTION

An e-Service in the government context consists in the provision of transactions by the online channel. For example, requesting and paying a licence for building.

The provision of services in governmental portals is a constant which has influenced the strategies of electronic services offered by several Governments all over the World. More than offering services, development related policies have tried to widen the scope of their actions, bringing together the nec-

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essary aspects for an accurate alignment between the implementation of public services and the needs of the population. Consequently, Local Public Administrations are nowadays faced with a challenge of administrative modernization, which tries to draw citizens closer to their services and, concurrently, to dematerialize their processes (Rocha & Sá, 2013; Sá & Rocha, 2012).

Over the last years, the quality of services in the public sector has given way to significant concerns. Many organizations have started to self-assess and measure the quality of the services they provide (Papadomichelaki, Magoutas, Halaris, Apostolou, & Mentzas, 2006).

The European Commission (2013), in a press release, declared that in the universe of EU Citizens, 46% use the Internet to look for a job, to use the public library, to submit tax declarations, to register births, to request a passport or to use other public administration services. In the same document, it is said that 80% of the citizens believe that the public services offered on the Internet allow them to save time, 76% appreciate their flexibility and 62% claim to save money with them. Consequently, it is of the utmost importance to create and study methodologies and concepts that measure, in the context of local municipalities, the quality of online e-Government services, in order to improve both the services and the satisfaction level.

In the course of this study, a bibliographic review was carried out and relevant methodologies that are used to measure the quality of two types of services were analysed: traditional and e-Government services. The present chapter is the first step in a path that will lead to the creation or adaptation of a methodology that is capable of globally evaluating the quality of services in a local online e-Government context, by focusing on the dimensions of several existing methodologies. The main purpose of this chapter is, therefore, to put into context and prepare the way for a more in-depth study which adapts or creates, if necessary, a comprehensive evaluation methodology for local online e-Governments.

Accordingly, in the following sections, the framework was set and quality was defined according to two types of services - traditional and e-Government services - and relevant methodologies that were validated in several studies were analysed, focusing particularly on the main dimensions used by the authors to put into practice their service quality measurements. This being the first step in a long path, the intention is that, by the end of this chapter, the reader understands the direction and the method that will be followed in order to use, adapt or create a methodology that is capable of measuring the quality of local online e-Government services.

SERVICE QUALITY

Ever since the dawn of civilization, human beings resort to others for the provision of services. These services vary from their most traditional format to modern day electronic services.

According to Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985), when the consumer purchases a good in the traditional way, he evaluates that purchase according to several factors, such its style, texture, colour, tags, package, etc. On the other hand, the purchase of services is often intangible.

Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Malhotra (2005) contend that the term 'traditional service quality' includes the quality of every interaction experienced by clients outside of the Internet, as well as their personal experiences with companies. When a citizen resorts to an organization for the provision of a service, whether the interaction follows the traditional or the electronic format, there is a constant need to evaluate the quality of this interaction. The perspective of the client concerning the quality of the service that was provided is fundamental to measure his satisfaction.

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