
Chapter VIII

Media Selection and End-User Satisfaction: An Empirical Study of Help-Desk Using SERVQUAL

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we investigate the relationship between the use of different media and customer satisfaction in help desk service. Different dimensions of customer satisfaction were derived based on SERVQUAL: reliability, empathy, assurance, tangibles, and responsiveness. The results support our hypotheses that the use of conventional media (face-to-face and telephone) is related to help desk satisfaction, through reliability and empathy and electronic media

(e-mail and Internet), users show higher satisfaction in tangibles and assurance. Also, hybrid media users (multi-media users by task) show a higher level of satisfaction in reliability and responsibility. The results suggest automating help desks should be considered as a way to provide more options to end-users.

INTRODUCTION

Information technology (IT) support for end-users has emerged as one of the leading concerns of organizations. Continuous adapting and updating of new technologies have made development of effective and efficient help desk services challenging for organizations (Whiting, 1997). Organizations must actively search for new ways to provide better help desk services to satisfy growing customer demands and expectations. A number of commercial products using artificial intelligence techniques such as expert systems and case-based reasoning have become popular. Outsourcing the help desk function has also become a viable option for many organizations (Chalos & Sung, 1998). The move to help-desk automation and remote on-line troubleshooting using Internet-based products usually means that more and more help-desk services are computer-based rather than human-based.

Since end-user satisfaction has become the strategic imperative in business, the primary concern here is how to evaluate these new technology-enabled tools (e.g., e-mail and the Internet) with conventional media support (e.g., telephone and face-to-face), in an effort to provide more effective and efficient end-user support.

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of different media on end-user satisfaction in help desk service. More specifically, we will relate the use of different media use along the dimensions of reliability, empathy, assurance, tangible and responsiveness, based on SERVQUAL (Parasuraman, Zenithal & Berry, 1985, 1988, 1991). The major theme of this paper is to show that use of each media is related to different dimensions of customer satisfaction. The results of this study should enable organizations to better design their help desk functions.

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Most previous studies on media choice have focused on social presence and media richness theory. The researchers define social presence as “the degree to which a medium permits communicators to experience others as being psychologically present” (Fulk, Steinfield, Schmitz & Power, 1987, 1990; Short, Williams & Christie, 1976), or “the degree to which a medium is perceived to convey the actual presence of the communicating participants” (Short et al., 1976). According to social presence theory, communication media are perceived as rating in social presence. Social presence, then, is determined by the degree to which one medium transmits information about facial expressions, directions of looking, postures, and dress,

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