

E-Government Service Quality: The Moderating Role of Awareness and the Mediating Role of Consistency

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the key e-government service quality dimensions affecting customer satisfaction in e-government services. The ‘consistency’ mediation role between customer satisfaction and e-service quality is explored besides the moderation role of ‘awareness’ between customer satisfaction and e-service quality. A quantitative approach is adopted, where a semi-structured web-based questionnaire is developed and sent to 800 users of e-government services. A total of 350 responses were considered valid records. Data collected is analyzed using the structural equation modeling, where SPSS and AMOS are employed. Significant results revealed that awareness is not proven to moderate the relationship between e-service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction. Finally, consistency partially mediates the relationship between e-service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction.

KEYWORDS

Customer Satisfaction, E-Government, E-Service Quality, Mediating and Moderating Factors

1. INTRODUCTION

Quality of e-service is one of the most significant factors that play a major role in the success or failure of online organizations. Organizations invest heavily in providing online services to customers in order to enhance their competitive advantages, improve relationships with clients and increase satisfactions. The clear potential of utilizing ICT in government services has led many governments to make great investments in ICT (Chohan and Hu, 2020).

E-government is the application of ICT used by governments to generate a comfortable, transparent and less costly environment for interacting with citizens (Ullah et al, 2021). Worldwide, governments are upgrading their procedures for remodelling their services to provide online public services (Sharma et al, 2018). Offering e-governmental services by countries provides many advantages to citizens. Less frustration, effort, money and time wasted in face to face government services are at the top of the list that make e-government portals a more convenient option (Samsor, 2020). Those

facts encouraged governments worldwide to try and provide efficient and effective service to a number of stakeholders (Sharma et al, 2018).

Recently, the importance of e-services and specifically e-government has increased even more after the pandemic period of Covid-19 experienced worldwide (Dawi, N. et al, 2021). When face-to-face interaction became very limited and nearly unavailable, e-government solutions become more vital. Thus, e-government services turned to become a necessity rather than a luxury. However, users are still uncertain and suspicious towards the use of e-government services (Sharma et al, 2018). The quality of the service offered through e-government websites plays an important role and could even be considered a constraint regarding citizen's intention to use (Qalati, S. et al, 2021). This brings in motivation to investigate the perceptions of e-service quality from user's perspectives.

Although e-service quality has been extensively referred to in literature, governments seem to take few steps towards understating the main factors that affect customer satisfaction (Pakurár et al, 2019). Governments have clearly increased the provision of e-services to citizens, regardless of the quality level of the service provided. Studies state that although governments have made obvious initiatives, the service quality level still remains inadequate, and the most needed features are not well-provided (Li and Shang, 2020; Al-Nidawi et al, 2018; Sharma, 2015). Although users' perceptions of the dimensions determining e-service quality have been the focus of a number of studies, (Li and Shang, 2020; Camilleri, 2019; Rita et al, 2019), to the best of the authors knowledge, the mediating and moderating factors that affect customer satisfaction were not reviewed in literature. Not to mention the negligible knowledge of customers' perception, especially within an extraordinary context; namely the pandemic. This brings a calling need to study the factors that influence customer satisfaction on e-government websites.

Accordingly, the study at hand is needed in order to investigate the key e-government service quality dimensions affecting customer satisfaction while understanding the mediating and moderating factors that affect customer satisfaction in e-government services. The study is expected to help decision makers at governmental agencies make informed decisions, and contribute to leveraging the decision makers' awareness. Thus, it paves the road towards high usage rates of e-government services, which provides citizens with a more useful and a reliable option. This should in turn help governments have a competitive advantage, satisfy their citizens, and maintain better relationships with them. In order to achieve the research aim, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the key e-government service quality dimensions affecting customer satisfaction?
2. What are the mediating and moderating factors that affect customer satisfaction in e-government services?

To answer the research questions, the available e-service and e-government quality models and the main dimensions that effect customer satisfaction have been studied. Using in-depth literature review, researchers found that the majority of the models investigated focused on the following variables to measure customer satisfaction towards e-services; *responsiveness* (Fang et al, 2020), *trust* (Rita et al, 2019; Sharma and Sharma, 2019; Sharma et al, 2018), *Fulfillment* (Velooso et al, 2020), *reliability* (Khan et al, 2020; Raza et al., 2020) and *effectiveness* (Hendrayati et al, 2020). Accordingly, those variables were assumed to be the independent variables of the research framework shown below in section 3. The study also proposed the *consistency* and *awareness* dimensions as mediating and moderating factors to customer satisfaction. From there, the study framework and hypotheses were examined through structured equation modelling.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. In Section 2, presents the theoretical background, where the literature review dealing with E-Service Quality in general and, more specifically, E-government Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction. The main variables that led to developing the research framework and the research hypotheses are also discussed. This is followed by the research framework and constructing variables in Section 3. Section 4 explains the research design,

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