

Chapter 2

A Digitalized Framework for Enhancing Customer Service Delivery in Zimbabwean Local Authorities

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ABSTRACT

There has been a growing need for local authorities in Zimbabwe to improve their customer service delivery. There has been a growing interest in the use of digital technologies to enhance customer service delivery in local authorities. The primary objective of this project is to create a digital framework that will enable local authorities to provide more effective services overall and expedite the customer service process. A quantitative research methodology was followed, which was based on

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the application of the positive research philosophy. The research population was comprised of 15 out of 20 local authorities in Zimbabwe. Key research findings revealed that traditional methods of rendering service delivery to stakeholders in Zimbabwe's local authorities were criticised for human error, manual review time, and limited scalability. The study's conclusions showed that the limited services provided by local governments are mostly provided by mandate between those authorities and a small number of citizens with significant sway over the system.

INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, there has been a marked emphasis on the digitization of public sector operations, encompassing local governing bodies. A study conducted by the United Nations Trade Development highlights a growing trend, predicting that government expenditure on digital transformation initiatives will cost \$5.6 trillion annually from 2023 to 2030 for the 48 developing economies studied (UNCTAD, 2024). This forecast clearly articulates the increasing acknowledgement of the potential advantages that digitalization can bring, particularly in augmenting the quality-of-service delivery and heightening citizen satisfaction. Furthermore, a number of nations have already made remarkable strides towards integrating digital infrastructures into their customer service delivery models.

A case in point is Estonia, which has gained international acclaim for its highly efficient e-government services that permit citizens to avail of an extensive array of public services online. Similarly, other countries such as Singapore and South Korea have successfully integrated digital platforms and automation techniques to bolster citizen engagement and improve the efficiency of their service delivery. Consequently, the implications of digitizing customer service delivery for the local authorities are manifold, affecting both the authorities themselves and the citizens whom they cater for. By embracing a digital framework, local governing bodies have the opportunity to enhance their operational efficacy, drastically reduce costs, and boost their levels of transparency and accountability. The result of these changes is a likely increase in citizen satisfaction, and subsequently, a higher level of citizen trust in the government.

Technological advancements such as automation, data analytics, and internet-based platforms offer fantastic opportunities for local authorities in developing countries like Zimbabwe to streamline their operations, eliminate inefficiencies, and, in the process, offer superior services to their constituents. In contrast, the current scenario of customer service delivery in Zimbabwe's local authorities is riddled with numerous obstacles. The prevalent use of outdated manual and paper-based processes often results in substantial delays and errors, along with a lack of transparency.

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