

Chapter 14

Measuring B2C Quality of Electronic Service: Towards a Common Consensus

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INTRODUCTION

In our efforts to study the dimensions affecting the electronic service quality (eSQ) measurement in the Business to Business (B2B) domain, we were faced with a problem of the lack of consensus on the Business to Consumer (B2C) eSQ measurement dimensions, which makes it difficult for researchers in this field to generalize their findings on the B2B domain.

Due to this lack of consensus on the subject, we have decided to propose a B2C electronic Service Quality “eSQ” model of consensus summarizing the past research efforts in this domain. In order to test - in future research- if the model proposed here for B2C eSQ can be extended to the B2B domain or

not. This study tries to explain some of the current scales used in measuring electronic service quality in the Business to Consumer “B2C” domain, propose a model of consensus for the eSQ B2C based on an extensive literature review of the collective work done by the researchers in this field.

BACKGROUND

The eService topic is currently one of the most discussed segments in the eCommerce domain. Maybe due to the increasing competition between many of the service providers in the virtual world. This article discusses the topic of electronic service quality and how to measure it, and summarizes the huge work done by some researchers in the B2C domain. Moreover, it tries to discuss some of the

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models used in that domain, and propose metrics that would help us to form a consensus on the eSQ for B2C.

Electronic Service Quality Definitions

In order to measure the electronic service quality, it should be defined first. The origin of the eSQ can be traced back to the service quality. Collier & Carol (2006) define e-service quality as “customer’s perceptions of the outcome of the service along with recovery perceptions if a problem should occur”.

Zeithaml (2002) defines the electronic service quality as “the extent to which a web site facilitates efficient and effective shopping, purchasing and delivery”, which had significant impact on the companies in the service sector. In this sector, the definition usually focuses on meeting customer’s needs and requirements, and tries to explain how the service delivered can meet the company’s expectations (Lewis & Booms, 1983).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Electronic services are no longer regarded as trendy internet applications; rather, customers have become more and more demanding. Also, they are less tolerant to poor services performance, and it is the delivery of high services quality that makes customers come back and buy again (Fassnacht & Koese, 2006).

Many studies were conducted to put some metrics to measure e-commerce services quality. One of the most popular studies is the study of (Parasurman, Zeithmal, & Malhotra, 2005). This study set out to conceptualize, construct, refine, and test a multiple item scale (E-S-QUAL) for measuring the service quality delivered by web-

sites. The E-S-QUAL was refined, and a subscale of E-S-QUAL called E-ReS-QUAL containing items focusing on handling service problems and inquiries was introduced.

Collier & Carol (2006) suggested that customers evaluate the process of placing an order by evaluating the design, information accuracy, privacy, functionality, and ease of the use of a website. (Trabold, Heim, & Field, 2006) found several interesting differences across the different e-retailing sectors, and mainly focused on analyzing the impacts on the overall e-service quality dimensions of online retailers, along with several other sectors in the B2C environment. These dimensions have resulted in finding differences in service quality among different market sectors.

The study by Fassnacht & Koese (2006) resulted in a conceptualization with three dimensions, and nine sub dimensions that offer an understanding of Quality of Electronic Services (QoES). The three dimensions are environment quality, delivery quality, and outcome quality. The sub dimensions are: graphic quality, clarity of layout, attractiveness of selection, information quality, ease of use, technical quality, functional benefit, and emotional benefit. Jun, Yang, & DaeSoo (2004) revealed some important findings about online service quality. The study identified six key online retailing service quality dimensions as perceived by online customers: reliable prompt responses, access, ease of use, attractiveness, security, and credibility.

In order to deliver and maintain the service quality, an organization must first identify what constitutes quality to those whom it serves (Grönroos, 1984; Grönroos, 1984) classified service quality into two categories: Technical quality, which is primarily focused on what consumers actually received from the service; and Functional quality, focused on the process of service delivery (Fassnacht & Koese, 2006).

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