Abstract

Penetration of network technology has promoted growth of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) resulting in phenomenal change in global information economy. As an effect, government agencies of almost all countries have adopted ICT to reengineer the existing administration at all jurisdictional levels into effective, transparent, accountable and efficient system. The endeavour of grouping different independent and interdisciplinary functional bodies together in government with the objective of serving citizens has been termed as ‘e-government’.

Indian government has prioritized implementation of e-government projects in the five year plans allocating substantial budget to initiate e-government practices. A national level e-government plan has been proposed with focus on network and service delivery. To communicate with citizens and other stakeholders directly, government agencies have designed web sites and web portals. Citizens are eager to welcome interactive, integrated information and services from the government but have their own expectations.

This study attempts to identify the important factors determining service quality of portals and examine if the satisfaction of use depend on the service quality. E-government implementation takes place in stages and perception of service quality for users may vary with the stage of e-government. Initial stage is static ensuring web presence of government organization with essential information. Second stage is interactive where people can send emails and contact the concerned departments. Third phase is a matured phase involving transaction and two way communications between the administrators and the users. Since at this stage users have direct contact with public administrators, we considered web portals involving transaction to conduct our study.

A conceptual model has been established based on two popular models and a validated framework: TAM, D&M IS model and e-service quality framework proposed to establish E-S-Qual scale (Parasuraman,
Zeithaml, & Malhotra, 2005). The models were chosen based on the success of several research studies conducted in the field of e-commerce. Though e-government owes its inception from e-commerce yet it has its own typical characteristics, thus the models have been modified to some extent to accommodate the features of e-government. The proposed model define 8 contributory factors for overall service quality of government portal. They are: citizen convenience, transaction transparency, technical adequacy, comprehensive information, reliability, communication, security & privacy and citizen relation.

Both quantitative and qualitative approaches have been used to design the questionnaire. A survey based on the questionnaire was conducted on two most popular government portals. Structural Equation Modeling (Confirmatory Factor Analysis) was used to verify model fit of the data collected. The analytical results confirmed the proposed relationships within the model. Results also indicated that theoretical components of information system and e-commerce can be applied successfully in the context of G2C services. The study corroborated that in Indian context, service quality of government portals is strongly influenced by two most important factors: comprehensive information and communication, specifically if the portals involve transaction. It was also found that factors like reliability, security & privacy, citizen relation, technical adequacy were positively related to the overall service quality of portals. A key finding is that though citizen convenience and transaction transparency are significant factors encompassing characteristics of citizen centricity, yet their effects on service quality assessment are not consequential, an observation that warrants further exploration. Analysis also established that satisfaction derived by citizens from using online services depend on service quality of the portal to a considerable extent.

Overall learning from the research can be explained in terms of highlighting the importance of factors those affect e-service quality of government portals and its influence on overall satisfaction attained by the users.
To my ever loving

Son, Deep, Husband, Devjit

and

Parents,

Asit Kumar Chakrabarti & Krishna Chakraborty