Abstract

Trust (the reliability of data) is the “soft” catalyst for “hard” wealth creation in inter-organizational asymmetric partnership for service organizations in the digital or knowledge based economy as a step towards better globalization.

In an increasingly complex world, trust has been and continues to be at the core of social order and economic success of Nations, businesses and society which today are interconnected and interdependent on the extent of digitization and innovative use of the data or information. Just as adoption and innovation of natural resources helped in the evolution of the industrial revolution, it is data which is fuelling the current information revolution towards the future planetary civilization progression. Increasingly data or information is handled, processed, transported or stored in digital systems thus making it a pervasive critical asset for human civilization and its survival. Hence this critical asset, which is data or information, needs to be safeguarded and protected. Security is the most important belief impacting trust and information security is a service quality factor.

In today’s globalization era, international trade, investments and technology are connected inseparably within global supply chains and offshore outsourcing of software services to India, a world leader in global IT outsourcing supply chain trusted for providing superior service quality, is one of the dominant strategies followed by a majority of profit driven business enterprises to achieve a competitive edge and growth.

This overall interdisciplinary study focuses on outsourcing offshoring where the customer trusts the service provider with their data or information with respect to its reliability in terms of confidentiality, integrity and availability. The study identifies service quality gaps at the service providers end and then using existing dimensions, instruments and frameworks for governance, Total Quality Management, Service Quality and organisational performance suitably modified to reflect the context of information security has analyzed field survey data collected from across various Indian cities and companies using partial least square, a Structural Equation Modelling technique.
The customer expects the service provider to ensure and provide good governance of the data at its end. Using good governance practices the service provider is expected to provide superior service quality to the customer. Providing superior service quality results in improved performance for the service provider organization. Offshore outsourcing success is dependent on relationship and partnership elements such as trust which is a dynamic phenomenon, and trust is a process that can be created, developed, maintained or destroyed thus making it complex and subtle which can be continuously improved upon to achieve higher levels of competence or maturity. This study has attempted to deliver an integrated trust maturity framework where trust as understood in the industrial economy and as required in the digital or knowledge economy is converged. In the digital or knowledge economy where asymmetric partnerships are established (such as between the offshore outsourcing service provider and customer), trust is about the reliability of data and can help establish long-term strategic partners.

The trust framework proposed in the study provides processes which are repeatable, adaptive and intelligent to address the complexities of trust in a digital or knowledge economy which in turn help increase the interdependency of the customer on the service provider thus ensuring continued offshoring and outsourcing. Hence, a capability to manage risks and secure customer data or information by the offshore outsourced service provider not only creates value and economic gains but also provides growth opportunities, boosts internal efficiencies, delivers cost effective service delivery, helps form strategic partnerships and provides an opportunity for the country to be further elevated as a visionary and thereby take a strategic leadership role.

This interdisciplinary study while addressing various gaps in extant literature throws up a range of areas for future research thereby implying that this area needs more exhaustive study. There have been very few rigorous studies linking information security governance with other business critical objectives (such as total quality management, quality of service and performance), so this study is possibly a useful contribution to this area in literature along with the contribution of an integrated trust maturity framework which can be used for managing and developing competence, behaviour, sociological and psychological trust which in turn helps build up goodwill and economic trust. This overall study possibly makes a convincing case for information security is free, implying that the returns on security investment are far greater than the cost for information security.