Evaluating and Ranking the Effective Factors on the Quality of Electronic Services in Post Office of Markazi Province Based on the WEBQUAL Model

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Abstract

The quality of electronic services is effective on creating trust among online customers and satisfying their needs and wants. In this regard, evaluation of such services is one of the main effective factors on maintaining online customers. The present study was conducted for evaluating and ranking the effective factors on the quality of electronic services in post office of Markazi province based on the WEBQUAL Model. For this purpose, a total of 384 customers was selected randomly and asked to indicate the questionnaire. The research data were analyzed using one sample t-test. The findings reveal that the quality of online services is favorable in this organization. However, responsibility and innovativeness are two main factors of WEBQUAL which are not favorable among respondents.

Keywords: online services quality, WEBQUAL, customers, post office

1.   Introduction

In the online environments, companies should seek to maintain themselves through developing differentiation strategies. Concentration on the important services and relations is one of the most important parts of such strategies (Smith, 2000). Indeed, quality is a critical factor in attaining organizational success (Cox, 2001). In this regard, the evaluation of service quality is important focus of both theoretical and practical studies (Akinci, 2010). The quality of online services is another important concept in this area. However, it is should be noted that constructive dimensions of service quality and their evaluative factors are changing (Tate, 2007). Evaluation of online services quality is one of the main approaches by which we can understand quality of different information and communication applications implementation such as electronic commerce, electronic government, electronic banking, and electronic training, and so on (Zahedi, 2008: 93-118). The improvement in quality of online services paves the ground for customer trust. In addition, existence of trust in electronic transactions not only improves customers' satisfaction, but also reduces its uncertainty and risks (Pavolou, 2003). It also improves reciprocal dependencies and provides expectations of successful transactions in the online environments (Schurr, 1985). In addition, improvement in the customer trust results in more purchase intention (Abzari, 2011).

The review of literature reveals that Yang et al. (2004) suggested six critical factors for evaluation of retailer services quality including reliability, accessibility, ease of use, safety, precise, and trust. They suggested that online retailers, who want to attain higher levels of perceived services quality, should focus on four factors including reliability, precise, ease of use, and accessibility. Sahadeva et al. (2008) conducted a survey among 350 participants in India. They found that efficiency, implementation, accessibility, and privacy-keeping are the most important dimensions of online services quality which result in user satisfaction and trust. Lee et al. (2011) do a survey with 360 international visitors in 30 website of tourism services in Taiwan. They found that beneficiary and trust are two main factors which mediate the positive relationship between online services quality, perceived value, and satisfaction. Sajedifar et al. (2012) study the effect of online services quality on the online customer trust in the city of Tehran. They found that quality of online services influences customer trust positively. Biniaz and Zahedi (2008) study the measurement of online services in Raja Railroad Company. They employed EQUAL model for measuring quality of online services in that case. They found that users had great

satisfaction of online services. However, they satisfaction was low in terms of some factors such as service interaction. Beykzad and Molavi (2009) studied quality and online services and customer satisfaction. They attempted to explore dimensions of online services quality in the banks. Esmaeili et al. (2009) studied the quality of online services and examined its dimensions. Indeed, they attempted to explore dimensions of online services from customers and suppliers' perspective. Heydarzade and Adelpor (2010) studied the evaluation of role and effect of online services quality, overall services quality, and customer satisfaction in consumer purchase process in online environments. They found that appearance of website is effective on the overall services quality. They also found that there is a significant relationship between customer satisfaction and appearance of website. In addition, responsibility and privacy-keeping are two main dimensions of services quality which influence customer satisfaction. They did not found any significant relationship between trust, reliability, personalization, and overall services quality and customer satisfaction. Beykzade et al. (2011) studied the relationship between online services quality and online satisfaction of customers in Islamic Azad University of Bonab. They found that there is a significant relationship between online services quality and student satisfaction. The reliability was a prioritized factor from students' perspective in this study. In addition, efficiency, privacy-keeping, responsibility, compensation, and communications are other effective factors on the customer satisfaction. Yaghobi and Alizade (2011) studied the relationship between quality of online banking services and customer satisfaction. They found that there is a significant relationship between dimensions of services quality and customer satisfaction. Tarokh and Zalzade (2008) compared the models of online services evaluation. The purpose of this study was to compare models of online services quality models. The examination of previous models based on the customer needs reveal which needs and wants are not satisfied in times of customer's interaction with website. In other words, it reveals shortages and weaknesses of online services quality. As a result, comparison of differences between existing conditions and favorable conditions will be possible. Based on the review of literature, the purpose of this study is to evaluate and rank the effective factors on quality of electronic services in post office of Markazi province based on the WEBQUAL model.

Review of literature

Services refer to actions, processes, and performances, which are not tangible and sensible (Valarie, 1999: 145). It is should be noted that services quality can be evaluated based on the experiential quality and reliability. Indeed, quality is intangible (Ravanband, 1998: 51).

Service quality

- Service quality refers to sustainable congruency between customer expectations and service performance (Zaitmal et al., 2000).
- Service quality also refers to the perceived difference between customers' expectations and their evaluation of which they receive (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

Electronic services

- Electronic service is in its infancy in terms of both theoretical and practical applications. The concept of electronic services is not a simple combination of service and electronic. Indeed, electronic service has its own meaning which includes interaction between services provider and client (Yousefi, 2013).
- Electronic services refer to the reciprocal services which provided for clients through internet. Zithamel et al. (2002) suggested one of the most important definitions of online services quality. Based on this definition, service quality is an area in which efficient services are provided for clients in the good conditions.

Quality of electronic services

- Quality of electronic services is an efficient and effective area in which clients are provided with favorable services (Parasoraman et al., 2005).
- Xitmal et al. (2000) define quality of online services as a continuum in which customers and clients are provided with efficient and effective services.

WEBQUAL

WEBQUAL is a practical instrument for evaluating users' evaluation of quality of informational network services (Barnez and Wigen, 2001) which is developed based on the quality of function development. The last

concept refers to a systematic and structured process which seeks to develop informational services (Eslabi, 1990). The use of quality of function development starts with user need as a basis and foundation of qualitative needs. In the second step, qualitative criteria are determined, users are provided with feedback, and basis of quality measurement is developed (Garvin, 1984: 25-43).
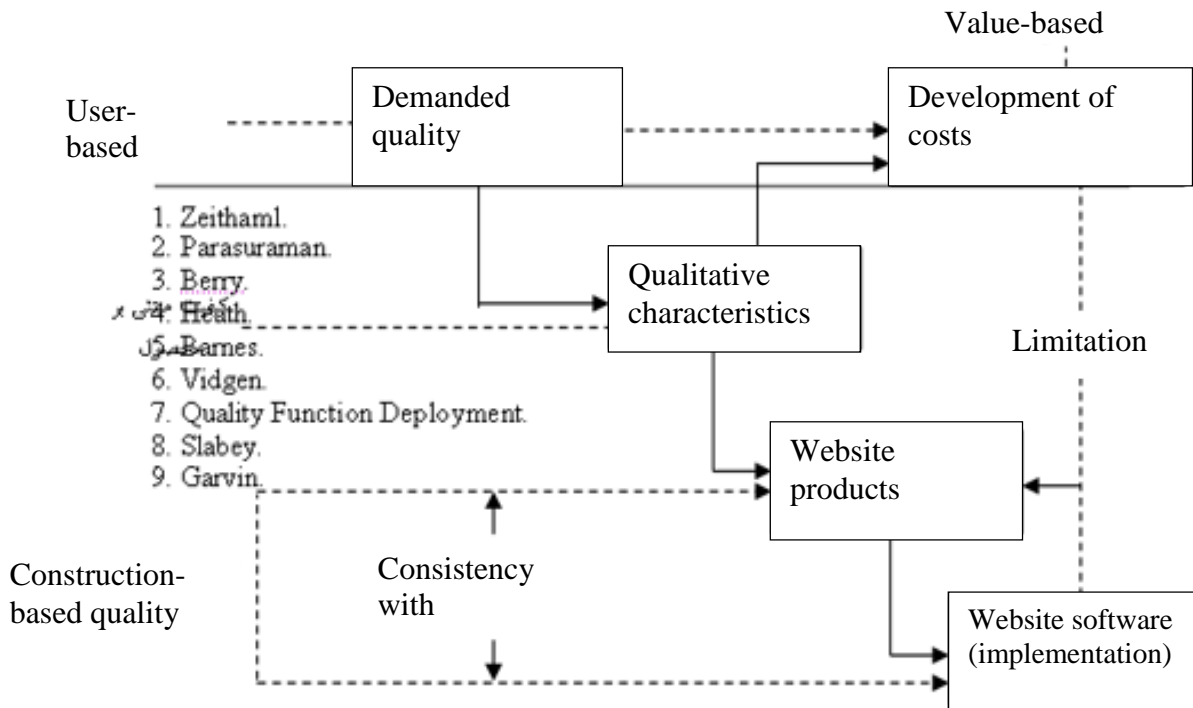

Fig. 1: quality of function development and networks development (Garvin, 1984: 25-43)

2.   Research methodology

The present study is a practical research from purpose view and is a descriptive-survey one from research methodology perspective. In order to collect the research data, both library and field methods have been employed. The statistical population includes users of electronic services in online website of Markazi province in 2013. A total number of 385 users were selected randomly. The reliability of questionnaire examined through Cronbachs' Alpha Coefficient. The coefficient was 0.87 which confirm reliability of the questionnaire. In order to analyze the research data and test the hypotheses, one sample t-test and Freedman test were employed in the SPSS.

3.   Findings

The descriptive findings of this study are indicated in table 1.

Table 1: descriptive findings of study

Variables	Frequency	Average	Standard deviation
Interactivity	385	3/956	0/764
Trust	385	4/231	0/650
Responsibility	385	2/335	0/637
Design	385	4/584	0/419
Direct perception capability	385	4/300	0/522
Visual appealing	385	3/348	0/638
Innovativeness	385	2/710	0/823
Affective appealing	385	3/103	0/427
Integrated communications	385	3/814	0/688
Work processes	385	3/517	0/702
Continuous replacement	385	3/372	0/650
Consistency between information and function	385	3/161	0/490

The results of table 1 revealed that the average of design is 5.584 has the most average. On the other hand, responsibility has the least average. Since standard deviation of variables refers to their differences, it can be said that a large part of agreement is about design.

Investigating the condition of electronic services quality

The results of t-test are indicated in table 2.

Table 1: the results of t-test for first hypothesis

Measure	t-value	df	Sig	Standard deviation
Findings	59.846	384	0.001	0.536

Based on the significance level of first hypothesis, the average of online services quality is greater than moderate level (3.00). The hypothesis is supported.

Investigating the priority of the dimensions of online services quality

In order to prioritize dimensions of online services quality, Freedman test was employed. The results of this test are indicated in table 1.

Table 3: the results of prioritization of the dimensions of electronic services quality

Variables	Average rank	Priority	Sig
Interactivity	8.17	4	
Trust	9.23	3	
Responsibility	2.26	12	
Design	10.64	1	
Direct perception capability	9.56	2	
Visual appealing	5.56	8	
Innovativeness	3.57	11	
Affective appealing	4.57	10	0.01
Integrated communications	7.57	5	
Work processes	6.32	6	
Continuous replacement	5.70	7	
Consistency between information and function	4.47	9	

Based on the results of Freedman test, design has the most average and responsibility has the least average.

Investigating the conditions of the dimensions of electronic services quality

The results of t-value are indicated in table 4.

The results of t-test for secondary hypotheses

Variables	t-value	df	p-value	Standard deviation
Interactivity	24/545	384	0/001	0/956
Trust	37/144	384	0/001	1/231
Responsibility	-20/470	384	0/001	-0/664
Design	74/025	384	0/001	1/584
Direct perception capability	48/816	384	0/001	1/300
Visual appealing	10/722	384	0/001	0/348
Innovativeness	-6/892	384	0/001	-0/289
Affective appealing	4/734	384	0/001	0/103
Integrated communications	23/213	384	0/001	0/814
Work processes	14/454	384	0/001	0/517
Continuous replacement	11/225	384	0/001	0/372
Consistency between information and function	6/474	384	0/001	0/162

Based on the results of table 3, it can be said that responsibility and innovativeness are two main factors which have not favorable conditions in post office of Markazi province. In addition, difference between other dimensions is significant and shows this shows that average of these factors is greater than 3.00.

4. Conclusion and empirical suggestions

The present study is a systematic effort to investigate the effective factors on electronic services quality in the post office of Markazi province based on the WEBQUAL model. The findings revealed that users' perception of services quality in the online environments is different from their perception of services quality in other environments. The results of t-test revealed that the conditions of online services quality are favorable in post office of Markazi province. The results of this hypothesis are consistent with findings of past researchers such as Biniaz and Zahedi (2008) and Beykzade et al. (2011). Most studies have been conducted in this area in other organizations. In the knowledge-based organizations, quality of online services may be evaluated favorably, but in our study is not favorable.

The results of Freedman test revealed that the importance of dimensions of online services quality is different. In this regard, design has the most importance and responsibility has the least average. The findings are consistent with results were reported by past researchers such as Heydarzade and Adelpor (2010), Biniaz and Zahedi (2008), Beykzade et al. (2011), Yang et al. (2004), and Sahadf and Porani (2008). They found that the dimensions of online services quality have different importance. Although these factors have different importance in different organizations, but it is should be noted that their importance depends on different factors.

The results of t-test revealed that responsibility and innovativeness have not favorable conditions, but they were evaluated favorably. The review of literature by researchers revealed that there is not any similar study in this area. As indicated previously, application type and services type are two main effective factors on the importance of services quality from customers' perspective.

The following empirical suggestions can be developed based on the findings of this study.

The managers of post office should adopt a long-term systematic thought and provide customers with an appropriate environment.

Mangers should employ new methods for encouraging customers.

It is necessary that a performance evaluation system be developed in which capabilities and competencies of services are examined.

It is suggested that qualitative methods are used in examining models of online services quality.

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