

A Study on User Satisfaction of E-Governance Services Provided Through Akshaya Centers with Special Reference to Vadakkekad Panchayath in Thrissur District

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ABSTRACT

Information and communication technologies (ICT) have flooded the broader field of good governance for development through faster, inexpensive, and more systematic approach. Citizen empowerment is one of the key components of good Governance. This study tries to understand the service quality of Akshaya centers through SERVQUAL model and chi-square is used to understand association between variable. The respondents are satisfied with the existing service of Akshaya centers meanwhile they make so many suggestions improve quality.

Keywords: ICT, SERVQUAL model, Akshaya Centres, E-Governance.

INTRODUCTION

Kerala is the first State in India to take initiative for the mass transformation of ICT by the implementation of district-wide e-literacy project 'AKSHAYA' in 2002, with an intention of 'Empowering Kerala'. The venture paved the way for the migration of Kerala to the first e-literate state. Akshaya; an ambitious endeavor of the State of Kerala was inaugurated by Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, on November 18, 2002. The Government's focus on digitization of the State has entailed a revolution in the design and operation of public services through the reinvention of service delivery channels. Emergence of digital organizations to create services led to better opportunities to meet citizens' needs directing to increased social inclusion.

Though originated as an initiative to address the backwardness of Malappuram district, Akshaya was conceived as a landmark ICT project by the Kerala State Information Technology Mission (KSITM) to bring the benefits of this technology to the entire population of the State. The modus for this was establishment of grass roots level ICT centers at the Panchayath/Municipal ward level. The Malappuram Akshaya pilot project started as the beginning of a State wide flagship programmed was very much successful and it was subsequently declared the first totally e-literate district in the country. With the Malappuram experiment becoming a big success Akshaya eservice has been implemented in eight districts including Malappuram in the second stage. In the third phase Akshaya activities are being rolled out in the remaining six districts of the State. On completion of the third phase rollout, the project will provide self-employment to around 3000+ persons and direct employment to about 3-5 persons in each of the multipurpose community technology centers called Akshaya e Kendra and would bring in an investment of around Rs. 100 crores in the State. Out of this 87.50 percent is envisaged for the rural sector. These targets are already being fulfilled. Each e- Kendra, set up within 2-3 kilometers of every household caters to the requirements of around 1000-3000 families to make available the power of networking and connectivity to common man.

The state of Kerala introduced the call center unit called FRIENDS, Akshaya center's etc. to provide the ICT facility to the masses. But in this the Akshaya centers are considered as the key undertakings in this project. The main focus of Akshaya is to bridge the prevailing digital divide and to act as a medium for the socio-economic development of the people. The

Akshaya centers mainly caters to the welfare of the rural people as well as their economic and social development by providing them with technological accessibility.

Akshaya Project

Individuals and their democratic governance systems as a whole stand up for achieving benefit from better access to information and services. This will provide a transformative platform for the public sphere and increases their reach ability to the Government. As the population continues to grow in developing countries like India, more and more people will get isolated to the group of digital 'have-nots' unless Governments work together to dramatically expand access to information and knowledge. In order for e- government to be more inclusive, it must reach out to all segments of the population with e-services that meet the needs of the digitally disadvantaged by bridging the digital divide. Akshaya Centers have been emerged as a finest network of effective Common Service Centers (CSC) envisioned to deliver a multitude of G2C, G2B as well as B2C services to the public under a single roof. Presently, around 2,650 Akshaya e-centers spread across Kerala with at least 2 centers in each Panchayats. By bringing ICT to all segments of people Akshaya acts as a vehicle for improved quality of life, accessibility to information, transparency in governance and overall socio-economic growth. In short, Akshaya is acting as an instrument in rural empowerment and economic development. The project is a catalyst in creating massive economic growth and creation of direct and indirect employment in the State by focusing on the various facts of e-learning, e-transaction, e- governance etc. The project is having a longstanding impact on the social, economic and political scenario of the State. This Study mainly focuses on quality of e- governance and user satisfaction through Akshaya centers with a special reference to Vadakkekad panchayath in Thrissur District.

Statement Of The Problem

Villagers face discomfort, harassment, and corruption on the part of public officials and are often given incorrect information about government programs and services. With ICT, it is possible to locate service centers that provide documents, land records and other public services physically closer to citizens. Potential benefits of Akshaya include increased transparency, less corruption, better delivery of government services and greater government responsiveness. So, this study aims at analyzing the awareness and acceptance of e-governance services provided through Akshaya center in Kerala.

Objectives Of The Study

1. To know the awareness of E governance services of Akshaya provided in Vadakkekad Panchayath.
2. To study the service quality of Akshaya centers.
3. To find out is there any relationship between Gender and expectation of services from Akshaya.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

E-Governance plays a significant role in our economy and Akshaya centers plays a major role in delivering E-governance services efficiently and effectively to the common people so that there is no more delay and difficulties in availing the government services. The project is catalyst of creating massive economic growth and creation of direct and indirect employment in the state by focusing on the various facts of e-learning, e- transaction, e-governance etc. The prime objective of Akshaya is to provide ICT accessibility and services to reach the common man and thus to bridge the gap between "information rich and the information poor". This study gathers significance in the sense that whether the Akshaya centers are able to satisfy their users by disseminating e- governance services in a speedy, efficient and convenient manner. So, the study aims at, analyzing user satisfaction of e-governance services provided through Akshaya centers with special reference to vadakkekad panchayath.

Research Methodology

Descriptive research design is used in present study. Purposive sampling is used in this study. Sample consists of 100 customers in vadakkekad Panchayath. Data are collected from both primary and secondary sources. Data directly collected from respondents using questionnaire. Data are collected from sources such as website, journals, articles, books etc. Percentage analysis, chi square and servqual model are used in this research. The study used SERVIQUAL model used to understand service quality of Akshaya centres to analyze the variables.

Review of literature

Azeez and Syed (2016) in a research paper named "Customer satisfaction of Akshaya center: A study in Azhikode Grama Panchayath Kannur District, kerala", tried to analyze the services offered by the Akshaya centers and find out the satisfaction of customers. The study is designed as an empirical one based on the survey method. The samples under the study are taken from the customers of Akshaya center at Azhikode Panchayath in Kannur District of Kerala state. And the sample size of the study is 60. The Akshaya services are capable of fulfilling the urgent needs of customers and computer

literacy. They suggested that the staff of Akshaya should be more co-operative and friendly to their customers and also Government should take necessary initiative to popularize the Akshaya Project.

Krishnan and Sreehari (2016) in a research paper named “A Study on e- governance and user Satisfaction through Akshaya Centers in Kerala; with special reference to Marangattupilli Panchayath in Kottayam District”. It makes an attempt to analyze the user satisfaction which determines the service quality of e- governance through Akshaya Centre’s. This study is an exploratory in nature. Primary data has been collected from 200 respondents from the Marangattupilli panchayath. They suggested that Akshaya centers should improve their e-governance services by: 1) Conduct usability survey for the assessment of the Akshaya center in Kerala. 2) Make an awareness programmed about the e governance services and the Akshaya center in the panchayath respectively. 3) Create an evolution system for all Akshaya center in Kerala.

Kumar, Abraham and Girish (2015) carried out a study named “The Role of Akshaya and Friends in Rural Area”, attempted to show that the majority of citizen in Kerala are happy with the e-governance system. Because it simplifying the human effort and save time. Comparison between the role of Akshaya and friends in rural area show that Akshaya plays an important role, it covers all most all public utility services. Akshaya is near to home service provider, easy accessibility, save time and efforts etc. are key features of success. They concluded that the Use of educated and skilled persons for data entry and operations and also provide better training and guidelines to the persons who handling the e governance system.

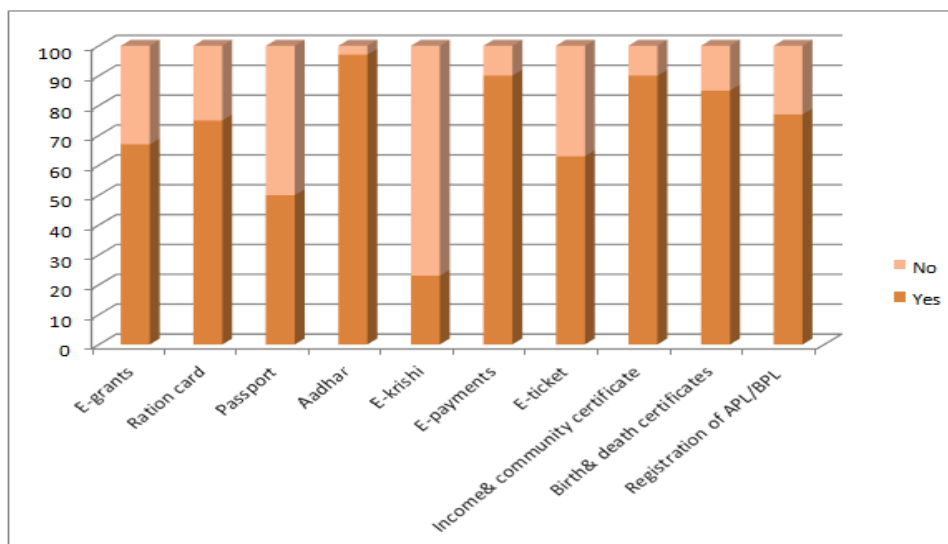
Data analysis and interpretation

Service awareness of customers in Akshaya

Particular	Yes	No	Total
E-grants	67	33	100
online application of Ration card	75	25	100
Passport	50	50	100
Aadhar	97	3	100
E-krishi	23	77	100
E-payments	90	10	100
E-ticket	63	37	100
Income and community certificate	90	10	100
Birth and death certificates	85	15	100
Registration of APL/BPL families	77	23	100

(Source: primary data)

Service awareness of customers in Akshaya



The study indicates that the major service, the respondents aware of is Aadhar it means that majority of the respondents are using the Aadhar related services. Followed by the e-payment, income and community certificate. The online application of ration card comes to the next position based on the awareness of services by customers. e-krishi services comes very least awareness by customers. It means that most of the respondents are not using these services.

SERVQUAL model

A sample of 100 users from a panchayath through convenient sampling using five-point Likert scale to test service quality of Akshaya.

Variables used for measuring service quality in Akshaya

Variables of SERVQUAL model used for measuring service quality	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
RELIABILITY			
Error-Free Services	100	3.66	1.257
Assured Charges	100	3.87	1.390
Right Service in Right Time	100	3.73	1.127
Promised Services	100	3.83	.995
RESPONSIVENESS			
Providing Timely Information	100	3.66	1.121
Providing Prompt Service	100	3.77	1.136
Willingness to Help	100	3.96	.974
Respond to Requests Promptly	100	3.80	1.119
ASSURANCE			
Knowledge & Competence of Staff	100	3.44	1.076
Safety & Security	100	3.75	1.029
Trustworthy & Honest	100	3.87	.917
Helping Mentality	100	3.66	1.165
EMPATHY			
Individual Attention	100	3.75	1.184
Keep Customers Informed	100	3.62	1.090
Convenient Business Hours	100	3.84	1.022
Understanding of Customer Complaints	100	3.83	1.101
TANGIBILITY			
Modern Equipment & Facilities	100	3.02	1.363
Physical Facilities	100	3.38	1.221
Visually Appealing Materials	100	3.40	1.155
Appearance of Staff Are Neat & Tidy	100	3.19	1.125

(Source: primary data)

The mean and standard deviation of five dimensions of service quality

Dimensions	N	Mean	Std.Deviation
1.RELIABILITY	100	3.77	.94
2.RESPONSIVENESS	100	3.79	1.087
3.ASSURANCE	100	3.68	1.046
4.EMPATHY	100	3.76	1.098
5.TANGIBILITY	100	3.24	1.215

(Source: Primary Data)

The analysis reveals that the mean score of the variables shows a value greater than three in all dimensions. Which means the users are much satisfied with services provided by the Akshaya. The standard deviation measures the spread of the data about the mean value. A low standard deviation indicates that the values tend to be close to the mean (also called the expected value) of the set, while a high standard deviation indicates that the values are spread out over a wider range. This study reveals that low standard deviation around it's mean in all dimensions. Which means the values tends to be close to mean. Therefore, the results of the table show that the service quality is high in Akashya.

CHI-SQUARE TEST

A sample of 100 users from a panchayath through convenience sampling to test is there any relationship between gender and expectation of services of Akshaya.

Null Hypothesis (H0): "The two attributes gender and expectation of services of akshaya are independent", i.e. not related

Alternative Hypothesis(H1): "The two attributes gender and expectation of services of Akshaya are dependent", i.e. related

Cross tabulation of gender and expectation of services of Akshaya

			gender		Total
			male	female	
Future expectation	continue	Count	29	3	32
		Expected Count	15.7	16.3	32.0
	diversify	Count	18	45	63
		Expected Count	30.9	32.1	63.0
	Close	Count	2	3	5
		Expected Count	2.5	2.6	5.0
Total	Count		49	51	100
	Expected Count		49.0	51.0	100.0

The 3*2 contingency table

Calculation of chi-square test

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	32.870 ^a	2	.000

Likelihood Ratio	36.565	2	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	25.283	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	100		

a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.45.

Calculated value and table value

Calculated value	Table value
32.870	5.99

The table value at 5% significant level with 2 degree of freedom is 5.99. Since the calculated value of chi-square is more than table value. so, reject the null hypothesis. There is significant association between the opinion of different categories. Male respondent prefers to continue with same facilities and female prefer to diversify with more IT related services. Hence concluded that gender and future expectation on services of Akshaya are related or dependent.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. The services of Akshaya centers are mainly used by youngsters.
2. There is no much significant difference in male and female while using services of Akshaya centers.
3. The respondents with plus two and above qualification use akshaya centers more.
4. Among the respondent's students depend on Akshaya centers more.
5. The study shows that majority of the respondents have access akshaya near to their home.
6. The majority of the respondents are aware of computer.
7. The analysis shows that among the various services of Akshaya most of the respondents are aware of aadhar related services at the same time least aware of e Krishi.
8. The study shows majority of respondents strongly agreed that akshaya provides error free services.
9. From the study we could see that majority of the respondents strongly agreed that assured price is charged for the provided services.
10. Majority of the respondents agreed that Akshaya provides right services at right time.
11. The study shows that majority of respondents agreed that akshaya Delivers the promised service.
12. Majority of the respondents agreed that akshaya provides timely information for the customers.
13. The study shows that majority of respondents agreed that akshaya offers prompt services to the customers.
14. The study shows that majority of respondents agreed that employees are willingness to help customers.
15. The study shows majority of respondents agreed that employees of Akshaya response on customers request promptly.
16. Majority of the respondents agreed that Employees of Akshaya have knowledge and competence to work. The study shows majority of respondents are agreed that Safety and security are provided in Akshaya.
17. The study shows majority of respondents are agreed that employees express trustworthy and honest towards customers.
18. The study shows majority of respondents agreed that employees have helping mentality.
19. Majority of the respondents are agreed that employees provide individual attention to the customers who approach Akshaya.
20. The study shows majority of respondents agreed that employees always keep their customers well informed.
21. The study shows majority of respondents agreed that akshaya provides convenient operating hours to their customers.
22. The study shows majority of respondents agreed that employees have the capability of understanding customer queries.
23. The study shows that respondents are not happy with the use of modern equipment and facilities in akshaya.
24. The study shows that majority of respondents are neutral opinion regarding the physical facilities of Akshaya.
25. The study shows that majority of respondents are not happy with visually appealing materials of Akshaya.
26. The study reveals that majority of respondents are neutral opinion regarding customers of Akshaya expect more neat and tidy appearance from employees
27. The study reveals that majority of the customers wants to diversify Akshaya with more IT related services.
28. The analysis reveals that users of Akshaya are much satisfied with services provided by the Akshaya and also service quality is high in Akshaya. The analysis shows that gender and future expectation of services of akshaya are related or dependent.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Akshaya should bring more visually appealing materials.

2. Majority of the customers satisfied with the current services of Akshaya and they want to diversify the services of akshaya.
3. Akshaya should make use of modern equipment and facilities.
4. Akshaya should popularize the services provided especially in e Krishi.
5. Government should take necessary initiative to popularize the Akshaya project
6. The government should conduct awareness programs among the public to make them aware of services of Akshaya.
7. The staff should provide clear cut information regarding the documents required for the purpose concerned, at a time to avoid delay in services.
8. More training facilities are to be imparted to the employees of Akshaya

CONCLUSION

This study was undertaken to analyze the user satisfaction of e-governance services provided through Akshaya centers with special reference to Vadakkekad Panchayath in Thrissur District. The user satisfaction of Akshaya was analyzed and interpreted with the help of primary data directly collected from customers, so as to identify the strength and weakness of Akshaya. It plays an important role for better implementation of e governance in Kerala. It would be better for Akshaya to look forward on modernization and diversification with more IT related services. Akshaya may concentrate more on e-governance services also. The opening of Akshaya with more centers at panchayath level helps to caters welfare of the rural people as well as their economic and social development by providing them with technological accessibility. The present study is only a descriptive one. There is ample scope for further research. The insight from the study can be made use of in formulating future policies of Akshaya.

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