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Assumptions of E-government Services Quality Evaluation

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Aside from the growth of electronic commerce, the implications of the web are being felt in many other areas. One such area is electronic government (e-government). E-government has the potential to transform profoundly people's perceptions of civil and political interaction with their government. Through the web, expectations of the service levels that e-government sites must provide have been raised considerably. Organizations providing e-government are becoming ever more aware of the need to improve their offerings regarding to citizens and other stakeholders needs. The article presents analysis of several e-government services quality evaluation assumptions. The choice of the theme is based on some aspects. First, electronic delivery of services creates complex issues for the public sector. Question of quality in public sector should be one of essential issues. It is important to investigate what kinds of factors influence customers' attitudes and behaviors towards e-government. Second, e-government is a relatively new subject of research so e-government services quality conception and aspects of quality evaluation is quite limited despite the importance of such process. Institution can make real progress just if it improves its activity paying attention to customers' needs and expectations.

This article reveals the analysis of e-government conception in order to clarify important aspects for e-government services quality evaluation. The structure, architecture and transforming process from government to e-government is not the objective of this article. After the analysis of scientific literature the quality of e-government services is defined. Notwithstanding variety and complexity of quality definitions as the most suitable was chosen definition regarding determination who can and/or should judge or evaluate quality. Several discussions how customer and citizen should be treated in the public organization are presented. These discussions just emphasize the perception that the main justice of e-government services quality is citizen (or other stakeholder group) and services quality evaluation process should start from revealing citizen (or other stakeholder group) needs. Using systematic, logical and comparative analysis of concepts and conclusions published by different authors theoretical assumptions of e-government services quality evaluation were formulated: quality evaluation process depends on e-government maturity stage, quality criteria from customer view point should be established and regular measured and quality criteria can various by maturity stages. Analysis extent is limited by the article size limitation.

Keywords: *e-government, e-government services quality, system quality, process quality.*

Introduction

The adoption of information and communications technology and related practices in the commercial sectors, such as e-commerce, and the diffusion of the internet among the general population have resulted in a rising level of comfort and familiarity with technologies in many context (e.g. communicating with people, electronic marketing, and academic activities). This has increased the expectations of citizens that public sector organizations will provide services similar to those in the commercial sector with the same effectiveness and efficiency. Today e-government becomes one of the most important parts of government strategies. Transition from government to e-government is not only desirable for citizens, but at the same time it creates advantages for the government itself. Various researches implemented in different countries show that transition from government to e-government created as more qualitative services as gave the effect of saving costs as well. E-government like revolution in public management brings changes not only in services. It changes fundamental relation between government and citizen. Broadly, e-government involves the use of information and communication technologies to transact the business government. At the level of service, e-government promises a full service available 24 hours a day and seven days a week, greater accessibility, the capability to obtain government services without visiting government offices, and reducing service cost. At the level of basic factors (government accountability and general acceptance of state institutions) e-government contributes to the functioning of democracy by online provision of government information which would otherwise be difficult to obtain or unavailable, and though online debates and plebiscites.

The main target of e-government is to improve the meeting of needs of three main stakeholders – citizens, business subjects and government – and to facilitate interaction and communication between them. One of the main principles of excellence seeking organization – meeting of customer needs – must become essential for public management organization as well. Although, the customer, so central to business excellence ideology, is a complex concept in relation to the public sector (Donnelly, 1999). Today lots of attention is paid for analyzes of e-commerce and e-business conceptions development and adaptation in business, but theoretical grounding of e-services quality and the evaluation of customer satisfaction characterizes as variety of e-service quality conceptions and different treating aspects of evaluation of e-services quality.

Problem of the research. Since e-government is a relatively new research area, its quality conception and quality evaluation process have not been widely discussed in the literature (Shackleton, Fisher, Dawson, 2006; Barnes, Vidgen, 2003). Therefore, the authors review and study e-government strategy and architecture concepts fragmentary groping quality question (Saxena, 2005; Ebrahim, Irani, 2005; Davison, Wagner, Ma, 2005; Hazlett, Hill, 2003). However, these studies did not address the aspect of e-government service quality evaluation. The managers and researches must analyze quality conception and evaluation process. By explicitly identifying the quality definition, criteria and conception they are using, managers are better able to move organizations toward the achievement of quality, and researches can make progress toward assessing the impact of quality on organizational performance and other variables of interest.

Scientific novelty. Analysis of scientific literature indicated that research in e-government services quality evaluation is relevant and new problem of management science.

Research subject – e-government service quality, evaluation of quality from customer position.

Research objective – to identify and analyze assumptions of e-government services quality evaluation.

Tasks: to perform a theoretical analysis of the concept of e-government service quality; to analyze the development of e-government and its impact on quality evaluation process; to identify e-government services quality criteria.

Research methods – systematic, logical and comparative analysis of concepts and conclusions published in scientific literature, formulation of conclusions.

E-government conception

Since the development of the World Wide Web, considerable attention has been focused on the adaptation of web based technologies to the business environment, notably in the business-to-business and business-to-consumer sectors. More recently, new sectors have been gaining attention, including those that involve government, such as government-to-business and government-to-citizens. It is perhaps not surprising that governments (whether, local, regional, national, or even supranational) have been slower to clamber onto the web-enabled bandwagon: governments are traditionally more conservative entities, slower to change, and slower to adopt new initiatives, than operators in the commercial field (Marche, McNiven, 2003).

E-government commonly refers to the processes and structures pertinent to the electronic delivery of government services to the public. For instance, according to Gartner Consulting, e-government involves the use of information and communication technologies to support government operations and provide government services (Fraga, 2002). However, 'e-government' does not only mean the use of all sorts' information and communication technologies by public institutions to improve both their relations with their users and their internal functioning. It provides a wide variety of information to citizens and businesses through internet. The role of e-government is not only to provide information and services to citizens, which could be provided by commercial firms. E-government can develop the strategic connections between public sector organizations and their departments, and make communication between government levels (e.g. central, city, local). This connection and communication improve the cooperation between them through facilitating the provision and implementation of the government strategies, transactions, and policies, and also better use and running of government processes, information, and resources (Cabinet Office, 2000; Heeks, 2001). Governments can also transfer funds electronically to other governmental agencies or provide information to public employees though an intranet or internet. Cabinet office (2000) ir Tyndale (2002) both agree that e-government has improved communication between different parts of government so that people do not need to ask repeatedly for the same information from different service providers. However, e-government goes even further and aims to fundamentally transform the production processes in which public services are generated and delivered, thereby transforming the entire range of relationship of public bodies with citizens, businesses and other governments (Leitner, 2003).

Summarizing different aspects of e-government conception given in scientist literature proposed defining of e-government is: e-government is a sophisticated process based on using information and communication technologies with different kind of services as result designated for satisfying stakeholders needs. Saxena (2005) broadens definition with the following dimensions that reflect the functions of governments as well:

- e-services – the electronic delivery of government information, programmes, and services;
- e-commerce – the electronic exchange of money for goods and services, such as citizens paying taxes and utility bills, renewing vehicle registration, and paying for recreation programmes, or government buying office supplies and auctioning surplus equipment; and
- e-management – the use of information and communication technologies to improve the management of government (from streamlining government processes to improving the flow of information within government offices).

Analysis of e-government quality definitions

Research into service quality has been popular for more than two decades, but it is only recently that it has been applied to the e-commerce environment. Analysis of e-government quality concept is very limited. After detailed research in definition of quality emphasized that for researchers and practitioners, understanding the nature of quality is more than a philosophical issue (Reeves and Bednar, 1994). Because no definition of quality is best in every situation, managers and researches must examine the strengths and weaknesses of different definitions to guide their works. By explicitly identifying the quality definition they are using, and recognizing its strengths and weaknesses, managers are better able to move or-

ganizations toward the achievement of quality, and researchers can make progress toward assessing the impact of quality on organizational performance and other variables of interest.

Determent who can and/or should judge or evaluate quality is a key factor in any research investigation (Reeves, Bednar, 1994). The most pervasive definition of quality currently in use is the extent to which a product or service meets and/or exceeds a customer's expectations. Defining quality as the extent to which a product and/or service meets and/or exceeds expectations allows managers and researchers to include subjective factors (i.e., courtesy, helpfulness, confidence, appearance) that are critical to customers judgments but difficult to quantify into assessment of quality. It is possible to capture what is important to customers rather than establishing standards based on management judgments that may or may not be accurate. It must be noticed that this view is most complex view to quality conception and it difficult to measure quality. But taking into account the role and functions of e-government this point of view into quality is the most acceptable. Because research in e-government quality concept is limited, it is worth analyzing different authors positions in e-commerce sector and in e-service generally.

Developed from Internet marketing and the traditional service quality literature, the concept of service quality in e-commerce can be defined as the consumers overall evaluation and judgment of the excellence and quality of e-service offerings in the virtual marketplace. In contrast to their evaluation of traditional service offerings, customers are less likely to evaluate each subprocess in detail during a single visit to Web site; rather they are likely to perceive the service as an overall process and outcome (van Riel et al., 2001).

For online consumers, e-service quality of a high standard is the means by which the potential benefits of the internet are realized (Yang, 2001). Parasuraman (2000) proposed that flexibility, convince, efficiency, and enjoyment are examples of major positive themes in the online environment. Negative themes included security concerns, risk of obsolescence, impersonalisation, and lack of control. Most of these determinants are strongly related to service quality. The interactive nature of the internet means that firms must facilitate the searching, retrieving, and integrating of information if they are to respond efficiently to consumers enquiries (Yang, 2001).Because it is much easier to compare the technical features and prices of products online than it is through traditional channels, online service becomes especially important for consumers. Online consumers thus expect at least the same, or even higher, levels of service quality as do offline consumers.

A well – designed Web site creates an interest in the firm and its offerings, and it should also offer the users opportunities to reconstruct the Web site in their minds so that it matches their cognitive structure (Gronroos et al., 2000). E-service quality can not only offer online commercial companies competitive advantages in the market place, but also involve customers in the product development process, through quick feedback and enhanced customer relationship.

Analysis of scientific literature permits to formulate such conclusions:

- customer judges about e-service quality;
- e-service quality is linking with benefit of internet;
- e-service quality determinants must be identified and their validity checked by customers;
- requirements for web site – a part of e-service quality.

One of the main principles of Total Quality Management – satisfaction of customers (stakeholders) needs in lowest price – assuring not only surviving in competitive market but providing competitive advantages for private company should be implemented in public sector as well. Ability to acquaint itself with the needs and desires of the users (citizens) and to adapt the way of working whenever possible in accordance with their desires is one of government excellence attributes (Saxena, 2005). Number of authors emphasizes the importance of customer in government activity (Osburne, Gaebler, 1992; Hazlett, Hill, 2003; Donnelly, etc.).

Osbourne and Goebler (1992) proposed that citizens should be regarded and treated as customers, suggesting that the delivery of government services should be redesigned with a customer focus. This view is challenged by Mintzberg (1996), who usefully distinguishes customers from clients, citizens and subjects. He points out that you don‘t have to call someone a customer in order to treat them well or ensure that services are designed with them in mind. Customers buy products, clients buy services, but citizens have rights „that go far beyond those of customers or even clients“ (Mintzberg, 1996). Furthermore, citizens not only have rights, but also duties, as subjects: to pay taxes, to be drafted in armies and to respect laws (or suffer the consequences). To suggest that citizens are equivalent to and should be treated as customers not only grossly oversimplifies the nature of the relationship between government and citizen, but it perverts it (see also Ciborra, 2003).

Citizens are more likely to develop loyalty towards those e-government portals that are Citizen-centric, that are designed to address their needs.

A key difference between e-government and e-business concerns loyalty. E-businesses have tried to develop customer loyalty with customer relationship management (CRM) so as to encourage customers to return time and again to buy their services or products. So long as customers need to buy, they may indeed return. However, with e-government, loyalty is rather different. E-governments should encourage digital loyalty. i.e. the preference of citizens to use digital services over other forms (e.g. counter, mail, fax. telephone), since digital services should be much cheaper to provide. Yet at the time, since governments by definition operate as a monopoly, they may perceive that they do not need to spend extra effort to compete with other providers. That said, some government services such as the Post Office (not a government service in some countries) may well face private-sector competition in the form of courier and parcel delivery firms, so it is unwise to assume absolute monopoly status.

At a higher level, a government can also be consid-

ered to be in competition (e.g. for investment or human resources) with neighboring governments, whether in nearby cities, regions or countries. In this sense, Singapore and Hong Kong compete with each other for international business: the quality and extent of their e-government services are part of competitive environment. Nevertheless, e-government services should be designed so as to help citizens get in, find their information or transact their business, and then get out as efficiently as possible. It is useful here to refer to "stickiness". In an e-business context, "stickiness" suggests keeping a customer on a web site as long as possible, in the hope that the customer will buy something. In consequence, web sites are often designed to be maximally sticky. In contrast, few e-government web sites need such levels of adhesiveness! In most cases, it is more appropriate that the citizen can easily access the service, complete a transaction, and get out. This suggests that optimal stickiness rather than maximal stickiness is desirable (Davison, Wagner, Ma, 2005).

Table

Summary of literature review

E-government maturity stages	Author
1. Online presence. 2. Basic capability. 3. Service availability. 4. Mature delivery. 5. Service transformation.	Accenture, 2003
1. Providing information (enabling information search by citizens via the internet). 2. Two way communication (evolving into providers of two-way communication services such as simple groupware functionalities like web forms, e-mail and bulletin boards). 3. Transaction services (facilitating transaction services for businesses and citizens). 4. Transforming process (transforming practices and services from government to the agents and the community (e.g. e-voting or opinion poll)).	Chen, 2002
1. Virtual information space. 2. Virtual communication space. 3. Virtual distribution space 4. Virtual Transaction space.	Stamoulis et al., 2001
1. E-management: • Basic information, • Web site navigation, • Contact details. 2. E-service: • Product and service details, • Product and service support. 3. E-commerce: • Transaction handling. 4. E-Decision making/E-Governance: • Sense of community, • Links.	Quirks, 2000

Summarizing citizen and customer concepts it is necessary to emphasize that citizen conception differs from customer in e-government in some aspects. One more aspect should be taken into consideration, i.e. according to e-government services and functions citizen is one from stakeholders group (business and non business companies, other institutions). This conclusion just more empowers government institutions to pay attention to the identification of needs and expectations of their stakeholders, creating and providing qualitative services according to these needs and improving their e-government processes according to the stakeholders needs.

Stages of e-government maturity

E-government means providing public access via the internet to information about all the services offered by central government departments and their agencies; and enabling the public to conduct and conclude transactions for all those services. The range from providing the information to implementing transactions is marked. Evaluation of e-government services quality depends on stages of e-government maturity. Several authors propose different e-government maturity stages (see Table).

Literature presents different classification of e-government maturity stages which have common features. Taking into consideration that e-government service sophistication depends on maturity stage and seeking to identify the main aspects of e-government service quality evaluation the most suitable stages model is created by Chen (2002). It presents e-government development model as well as services different levels.

E-government services quality criteria

To measure e-government services quality, it is obligatory to identify quality criteria from customer view point and to verify it by empirical research. As e-government researches pay more attention to e-government strategy and architecture rather e-government quality question, so understanding and learning from the experience of the private sector can be a useful way to progress. One of the problems arising in trying to review different dimensions of e-quality in private sector is large variety. Different e-service quality criteria systems given in scientist's literature may be classified into some groups:

1. *Criteria systems related to Web site*: use, content, structure, linkage, search, appearance (Abels et al., 1999); frequency of changes, number of links to and from the web site, complexity and extensiveness, number of pictures, enhancements, number of advertising banners of other firms (Dholakia, Rego, 1998).
2. *Criteria systems related to features of traditional services*: reliability, responsiveness, access, easy of use, attentiveness, credibility, security (Yang, 2001); tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy (Iwaarden, Wiele, Ball, Millen, 2002).
3. *Mixed criteria systems*: incubative dimensions (ease of use, appearance, linkage, structure and layout, content), active dimension (reliability, efficiency, support, communication, security, incentive) (Santos, 2003); technical adequacy, web content, web appearance (Aladwani, Palvia, 2002); dimensions of products quality (performance, features, reliability, durability and etc.), dimensions of services quality (tangibles, reliability, respon-

siveness and etc.), dimension of virtual operations quality (performance, features, structure, aesthetics, reliability and etc.) (Madu C., Madu A., 2002); easy of use, customer confidence, on-line resources, relationship services (Cox, Dale, 2002); web interface, interaction, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy (Jayawardhena, 2004).

Considering satisfaction in the web-usage environment, Pitt et al. (1995) observe that information is the dominant concern of the user, while the delivery mechanism is secondary. While distinguishing between information quality and system quality may not be widespread in traditional information system studies, such a distinction is clearly possible on the web due the feasibility of separating content from the content delivery system. So e-government service quality criteria can be divided into information quality (information purpose, structure, timeliness, reliability, scope, usefulness and etc.) and process quality (access, usability, navigation, links and etc.). Such division is useful in measuring e-government services quality taking into consideration the conception of e-government and maturity stages of e-government. These two groups of criteria concerns to all e-government maturity stages.

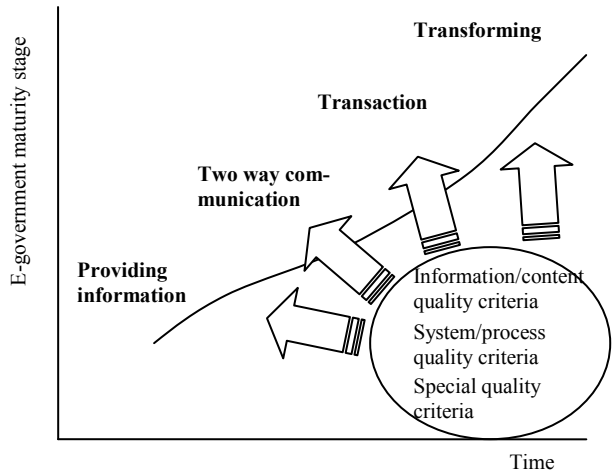

Figure. E-government maturity stages and quality criteria

Information/content quality criteria and system/process quality criteria for different maturity stages can differ or can be repeated or the importance of measures can vary. Each stage starting from two way communication will have third group of quality criteria – special typical for this stage (transaction speed, communication ability, security and etc.).

Conclusions

The undertaken study enabled to draw the following conclusions:

1. The concept of e-government has recently begun to receive increasing attention, adopting new governance models that rely on the extensive usage of information and communications technologies, as well as on innovative business processes. The government to e-government transition process offers governments a unique opportunity to enhance not only their operational transparency, clarity of purpose and responsiveness to citizens, but also their own internal efficiency and effectiveness. E-government is a sophisticated process based on using information and communication technologies with different kind of services as result designated for satisfying stakeholders needs.
2. Determent who can and/or should judge or evaluate quality is a key factor in any research investigation. The most pervasive definition of quality currently in use is the extent to which a product or service meets and/or exceeds a customer's expectations. Defining quality as the extent to which a product and/or service meets and/or exceeds expectations allows managers and researchers to include subjective factors (i.e., courtesy, helpfulness, confidence, appearance) that are critical to customers judgments but difficult to quantify into assessment of quality. Taking into account the role and functions of e-government this point of view into quality is the most acceptable.
3. In research literature the view point to customer and citizen differs. The main differences are: customers have rights, citizens have rights and duties; private company essential goal to satisfy customer is determined by seeking to keep customer loyal to company; citizen satisfying reasons are: to implement and strengthen democracy and to encourage people to use internet despite going to physical public institutions in this way saving costs. Notwithstanding these differs, the main arbiter of e-government services quality is citizen (or other e-government stakeholders). This factor empowers government institutions pay attention to identification of needs and expectations of their citizens, creating and providing qualitative services according these needs and improving their e-government processes according the stakeholders needs.
4. Evaluation of e-government services quality depends on stages of e-government maturity: provision of information, two–way communication, transaction services, transforming process.
5. Information/content and system/process quality criteria can differ or stay the similar during different e-government maturity stage. Each stage starting from two way communication will have third group of quality criteria – special typical for this stage (transaction speed, communication ability, security and etc.). Second stage of these researches should be establishing of criteria model and testing it by empirical research.

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Elektroninės valdžios paslaugų kokybės vertinimo prielaidos

Santrauka

Informacinių ir komunikacinių technologijų taikymas ir interneto naudojimo mastai suteikė naujų galimybių organizacijoms. Tai sąlygojo piliečių lūkesčių augimą, kad viešojo administravimo organizacijos teiks panašias paslaugas kokybės ir efektyvumo prasme, kokias teikia privatus sektorius. Viešųjų elektroninių paslaugų teikimas pastaruoju metu yra viena svarbiausių, o neretai ir pati svarbiausia, daugelio pasaulio valstybių vyriausybių strategijos dalis. Perėjimas nuo viešųjų paslaugų teikimo įprastais būdais prie viešųjų paslaugų teikimo elektroninėmis formomis yra ne tik pageidaujamas piliečių, bet ir suteikia pranašumų pačioms vyriausybėms. Įvairiose šalyse atlikti tyrimai rodo, kad daugelis paslaugų, pradėjus jas teikti elektronine forma, sąlygojo labai gerus rezultatus ir ne tik pagerino paslaugos kokybę, bet ir leido sumažinti paslaugų teikimo kaštus. Be to, elektroninė valdžia yra tarsi viešojo valdymo revoliucija, kuri keičia ne tik viešųjų paslaugų teikimo būdą, bet ir fundamentalius santykius tarp valdžios ir piliečio. Bendrąja prasme elektroninė valdžia apima informacijos naudojimą ir komunikacines technologijas vykdyti viešojo administravimo veiklai. Paslaugų aspektu, elektroninė valdžia garantuoja visas paslaugas 24 val. per parą ir septynias dienas per savaitę, didesnį prieinamumą, galimybę gauti viešąją paslaugą, nesilankant viešojo administravimo institucijose. Be to, elektroninė valdžia įneša svarų indėlį į demokratijos stiprinimą, priartindama piliečius prie valdžios institucijų.

Pagrindinis viešųjų elektroninių paslaugų teikimo tikslas – pagerinti trijų pagrindinių suinteresuotųjų šalių – gyventojų, verslo įmonių ir vyriausybės – poreikių tenkinimą bei palengvinti jų tarpusavio bendravimą ir komunikavimą. Vartotojų poreikių tenkinimas – vienas pagrindinių tobulumo siekiančių organizacijų principų – turi tapti esminiu ir viešojo sektoriaus organizacijoms, nors, kaip teigia Donnelly (1999), toks suvokimas viešajame sektoriuje yra sudėtingas.

Tyrimo problema. Elektroninės komercijos sampratos plėtojimui ir adaptavimui versle šiuo metu skiriama daug dėmesio, tačiau elektroninių paslaugų kokybės koncepcijos bei elektroninių paslaugų vartotojų poreikių ir lūkesčių tenkinimo matavimo teorinis pagrindimas pasižymi didele tiek pačios elektroninių paslaugų kokybės sąvokos traktavimo įvairove, tiek ir skirtingai interpretuojamais elektroninių paslaugų kokybės matavimo aspektais. *Viešųjų elektroninių paslaugų kokybės tyrimai labai riboti.* Daugiau dėmesio skiriama elektroninės valdžios (*toliau* e-valdžios) strategijos ir architektūros analizei nei kokybės klausimui. Tiek vadovai, tiek ir tyrinėtojai turi analizuoti kriterijus, veikiančius vartotojo suvokimą apie paslaugos kokybę. Tik detalizuojant silpnuosius ir stipriuosius paslaugos kokybės aspektus, vadovai galės tobulinti organizacijos veiklą siekiant koky-

bės, o tyrinėtojai galės siekti pažangos vertinant, kaip kokybė veikia organizacijos veiklą, rezultatus ir kitus kintamuosius. Elektroninės valdžios paslaugų kokybės tobulinimas, remiantis vartotojų poreikiais, padės siekti tiek didesnio piliečių pasitenkinimo elektronine paslauga, tiek ir darys įtaką demokratijos principo stiprinimui.

Tyrimo tikslas – identifikuoti ir išanalizuoti elektroninės valdžios paslaugų kokybės vertinimo prielaidas.

Elektroninė valdžia yra valdžios institucijos procesas, pasižymintis savita struktūra, kurio rezultatas yra viešojo administravimo paslauga, skirta visuomenei. Gartner Consulting organizacijos požiūriu, elektroninė valdžia apima informacinių ir komunikacinių technologijų naudojimą teikiant viešojo administravimo ir valdžios institucijų paslaugas (Fraga, 2002). Tačiau elektroninė valdžia yra ne tik įvairaus pobūdžio informacinių ir komunikacinių technologijų naudojimas siekiant pagerinti valdžios institucijų bendravimą su savo vartotojais ir vidinį funkcionavimą, bet ir priėjimas prie informacijos, transakcijos paslaugos ir piliečių dalyvavimas (Marchioni ir kt., 2003). Elektroninės valdžios paskirtis yra ne tik teikti informaciją ir paslaugas piliečiams (tai galėtų atlikti ir verslo subjektai). Elektroninė valdžia gali sukurti viešojo sektoriaus organizacijų ir jų departamentų strateginius ryšius bei sudaryti galimybę įvairioms valdžios institucijoms bendradarbiauti tarpusavyje (Zakareya, Zahir, 2005). Pasitelkusi elektroninę valdžią, vyriausybė gali persiųsti tam tikrus fondus kitoms institucijoms ar agentūroms. Elektroninė valdžia gerina komunikaciją tarp skirtingų valdžios institucijų, todėl piliečiams ar organizacijoms nereikia pakartotinai kreiptis dėl tos pačios informacijos į skirtingus paslaugos teikėjus (Tyndale, 2002). Kaip teigia Leitner (2003), elektroninės valdžios tikslas – fundamentaliai transformuoti viešojo sektoriaus procesus, drauge transformuojant ir daugelį santykių tarp valdžios institucijų, valdžios institucijų ir piliečių bei valdžios institucijų ir verslo subjektų.

Vienas pagrindinių visuotinės kokybės vadybos principų – suinteresuotųjų organizacijos veiklą grupių esamų ir numatomų poreikių tenkinimas mažiausia kaina – garantuojančių ne tik privačios organizacijos išlikimą, bet ir konkurencinį pranašumą rinkoje, turi būti įgyvendintas ir viešojo sektoriaus institucijose. Administravimas, orientuotas į vartotoją (pilietį), yra vienas iš tobulumo siekimo elektroninėje valdžioje tikslų (Saxena, 2005). Daugelis autorių (Osburne ir Gaebler, 1992; Hazlett ir Hill, 2003; Donnelly, 1999 ir kt.) pabrėžia piliečio kaip vartotojo akcentavimo svarbą. Pasak jų, piliečiai turi būti traktuojami kaip vartotojai, o valdžios institucijų teikiamos paslaugos turi būti kuriamos ir teikiamos orientuojantis į vartotojų poreikių tenkinimą. Mintzberg (1996) sukritikavo tokį požiūrį. Jis siūlė aiškiai atskirti vartotojus nuo klientų, piliečius nuo subjektų. Jo teigimu, neprivalu ko nors įvardyti vartotoju, kad su tuo kuo nors tinkamai elgtumeis ar užtikrintum, kad paslaugas teiki būtent tam kam nors, atsižvelgiant į pastarojo poreikius. Anot Mintzberg (1996), vartotojai perka produktus, klientai – paslaugas, o piliečiai turi teises, o tai yra netgi aukščiau už vartotojus ar klientus. Reikėtų atkreipti dėmesį, kad piliečiai, be teisių dar turi ir pareigas, pvz.: mokėti mokesčius, deklaruoti pajamas, gerbti įstatymą ir pan. Valdžios institucija, pasitelkusi elektroninę valdžią, gali palengvinti ir supaparastinti pilietinių pareigų vykdymą. Taigi tiesioginis piliečio traktavimas kaip vartotojo, ne tik labai supaprastina ryšį tarp valdžios ir piliečių, bet ir savotiškai jį iškreipia (Ciborra, 2003). Apibendrinant reikėtų pabrėžti, kad elektroninės valdžios paslaugos vartotojo sąvoka yra platesnė nei elektroninio verslo vartotojo sąvoka, tačiau tai tik dar labiau įgalina valdžios institucijas orientuotis į piliečių ir kitų organizacijų poreikių tenkinimą kuriant ir teikiant kokybiškas elektroninės valdžios paslaugas.

Susidomėjimas elektroninės valdžios paslaugos kokybe nėra toks didelis kaip elektroninės valdžios kaip proceso įdiegimu. Pastaruoju metu plačiai pradėtas analizuoti bendras elektroninės paslaugos kokybės supratimas. Apibendrinant internetinio marketingo ir tradicinės paslaugų kokybės literatūroje pateikiamas paslaugos kokybės koncepcijas, elektroninės paslaugos kokybę (e-paslaugos kokybę) būtų galima apibrėžti kaip bendrą vartotojo vertinimą ir sprendimą apie virtualiojoje erdvėje teikiamų e-paslaugų tobulumą ir kokybę (Santos, 2003).

Elektroninės valdžios paslaugos kokybę reikia vertinti atsižvelgiant į elektroninės paslaugos išvystymo lygį. Yra skiriami keturi elektroninės valdžios paslaugų išsivystymo lygiai: informacijos teikimo etapas, interaktyvumo etapas, transakcijų etapas ir transformavimosi etapas.

Elektroninės valdžios paslaugų kokybės vertinimai labai riboti. Kadangi elektroninės valdžios paslaugos savo specifika yra artimos elektroninės komercijos paslaugoms (tam tikrais aspektais), todėl naudinga panagrinėti privataus sektoriaus patirtį, siekiant geriausius būdus ir metodus pritaikyti viešojo sektoriaus organizacijose. Įvairioje mokslinėje literatūroje, nagrinėjančioje elektroninės komercijos ir bendrai elektroninių paslaugų specifiką, randamas elektroninių paslaugų kokybės matavimo iš vartotojo pozicijos sistemas galima suskirstyti į tris grupes: kokybės kriterijų sistemos, vertinančios tinklalapio kokybę, kokybės kriterijų sistemos, vertinančios tradiciškai priimtinų paslaugų bruožus ir mišrios kokybės kriterijų sistemos. Atsižvelgiant į elektroninės valdžios paslaugų pobūdį, specifiką ir vystymosi etapus, efektyvu elektroninės valdžios paslaugų kokybės matavimo kriterijus klasifikuoti į dvi grupes: informacijos/turinio kokybės vertinimo kriterijus ir sistemos/proceso kokybės vertinimo kriterijus. Šie kriterijai vertinant paslaugas įvairiose brandos stadijose skirsis priklausomai nuo paslaugų išvystymo lygio.

Raktažodžiai: *elektroninė valdžia, elektroninės valdžios paslaugų kokybė, informacijos kokybė, proceso kokybė.*

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