Impact Assessment of e-Governance through e-Mitra: Citizens' perspective from Hisar District

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Abstract – The explosive growth of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) throughout the previous decade has tremendous impact on its efficient applications in Government sector. It's expedited higher interface between the general public and therefore the Government departments. Within the developing countries the aim of the e-Governance is to make sure clear, smart, seamless, secure and authentic flow of knowledge, so extending honest and unbiased services to public at remote and inconvenient geographical locations crossing the division barriers.

Keywords: e-Governance, e-Mitra, ICT

Introduction

E-Governance parades doors to huge chance for remodeling governance. It goes on the far side the cybernation of government processes and into realms of excellent governance, which incorporates problems with potency of service delivery, empowerment of citizens, transparency, and answerability.

A new space of electronic governance, wherever most countries within the World are creating serious efforts to use ICT for providing higher citizen services has return of age. It's expedited better interface between the general public and therefore the Government departments and organizations. The aim of the e-Governance is to make sure transparent, smart, seamless, secure and authentic flow of knowledge, therefore extending honest and unbiased services to public at remote and inconvenient geographical locations crossing the interdepartmental barriers.

The key of e-Governance is 'Citizen First'; therefore it is vital that the existing projects are assessed with the focus on the nature and quantum of impact on users. In this context, this study is an attempt to assess the impact of e-governance through e-Mitra in Hisar district of Haryana. e-Mitra is a "Single Window Scheme" where citizens have the opportunity to pay all the utility bills, submit online forms for various examinations, pay taxes and other dues to Government. The project cannot be highlighted as a hi-tech technology solution but probably as an appropriate technology solution based on citizen needs. These centre are currently operational at all 33 districts through public private partnership in the state. The current study examines the working of e-Mitra in Hisar district of Rajasthan based on the satisfaction level of citizens. The finding of the study, presented in this paper highlights level of awareness and its usage, benefits derived in terms of travel time, waiting time, no of trips, cost of travel etc by comparing the traditional system (manual) and e-Mitra system by respondents. It also highlights quantum of time saved of consumer by making use of e-Mitra system and important reasons that helps consumers to prefer e-Mitra to Manual System of availing services.

The "e" in e-Governance stands for 'electronic'. Thus, e-Governance is associated with carrying out the functions and achieving the results of governance through the utilization of what has today come to be known as ICT. The reason why countries around the world are increasingly opting for 'e-Governance' is that governance per se has become more complex and varied in the last few decades and more importantly, citizens' expectations from government have increased manifold.

The primary purpose of governance is that the welfare of citizens. E-Governance has been employed by range of public agencies as a facultative tool which will facilitate attains broader good governance goals. Some governments are starting to link their public sector reforms initiatives that pursue each social and economic goals with e-government methods. The stakeholders who are wedged by the introduction of e-Governance are: citizens/businesses that access services, agencies that deliver services e.g. government and staff of the agencies the following are a number of the advantages to numerous stakeholders on successful implementation of the e-Governance:

- Increase Transparency

- Reducing Administrative Corruptions
- Improving Service Delivery
- Empowerment
- Improving Civil Service Performance
- Improving Government Finances

E-Mitra

E-Mitra is an ambitious e-Governance initiative of Government of Hisar, which is being implemented in all 33 Districts of the state using Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model for convenience and transparency to citizens in availing various services of the Government and Private Sectors under a single roof at their doorsteps using an e-platform. The services are delivered via counters known as CSC (Common Service Centre) kiosks in Rural Areas and e-Mitra kiosks in urban areas and online via **www.emitra.gov.in**. Hence, these counters provide services related to various departments in an integrated and easily accessible manner to people residing in rural as well as urban areas without any need for running around in government offices.

The key objectives of e-Mitra Project is to provide for hassle free one-stop solution to the citizen and provide unified e-services platform to minimize multiple interaction points for the citizen and hence reducing the wastage of valuable time. The services being offered at e-Mitra are as follows:-

- Payment of various utility services - electricity bills, water bills, telephone bills (landline and mobile).
- Online bus ticketing of RSRTC.
- Submission of forms of various examinations including Universities and Haryana Public Service Commission
- Issue of Birth & Death certificates.
- Payment of various dues/fee of Hisarr Municipal Corporation, Hisar Development Authority and Rajasthan Housing Board.
- Public grievance redressal.
- Access to Government Information.
- Immovable Property Rates (DLC).

Significance of the Study

The aim of the research was to assess the development and state of e-Governance initiative with respect to ICT enabled Public Delivery Services for a common citizen with specific reference to e-Mitra in Hisar District. The study tries to examine the e-Mitra project mainly from the perspective of consumers. A detailed evaluation of overall satisfaction of public who have used the services of the centre has been attempted.

The specific objectives of the present study are:
1. To assess the awareness level and usage of e-Mitra centres by consumers
2. To analyze the benefits being derived by the consumers in terms of time to travel, number of trips to be made, waiting time, cost incurred on travel for availing various services, etc.

Research Methodology

The research methodology employed for the study is a blend of quantitative and qualitative methods. Based on the objective of the study and limitations in terms of time and other resources it was proposed that the unit of analysis would be Hisar city for e-Mitra project.

A sample of 200 respondents has been chosen for the present study across the city. The research study was conducted in the Hisar city including the rural (semi-rural) and urban area around the city. The data was collected through a structured questionnaire, which was designed in Hindi. Special care was also taken to include non-users of e-Mitra in the sample for which researcher also visited departmental counters, shops, offices and residences of various consumers for collecting the responses.

The survey instrument was also administered at the e-Mitra centres where consumers were availing various services.

Analysis and Discussion

A. **Awareness and Usage about E-Mitra**

One of the most important questions put to the consumers was about their awareness of e-Mitra and whether they are using the services through it. Table 1 present the distribution of consumers according to their awareness of e- Mitra.

Table 1: Distribution of consumers according to their awareness and usage about E-Mitra	
	Percent
Never heard about e-Mitra	4
Heard of e-Mitra but never used	17
Has availed service from e-Mitra at least once but discontinued totally later on	18
Know e-Mitra and availing services from e-Mitra	61

Of the 200 respondents, only 4% of the targeted consumers have not heard of e-Mitra, while 17% of the consumers have heard of e-Mitra but never used any services through it. Large numbers of consumers (61%) were continuously receiving services from e-Mitra. A small set of people (18%) have availed the service at least once but discontinued later, due to various reasons. The reasons cited were either the location of e-Mitra was not convenient or centre was closed as was not financially viable for the kiosk owner or the local service provider do not make timely payment to kiosk owner. This high ratio of users continuously availing services at e-Mitra indicates its popularity.

B. **Service Usage Pattern of the Consumer**

At e-Mitra, there are arrangements for availing services of various departments. The examination (Table 2) of the awareness about particular service being offered at e- Mitra amongst those who have heard of e-Mitra, indicates that more than 93% of the consumers knows that the payment of utility bills (water, electricity and telephone) can be made at e-Mitra centres, while 54% are aware of availability of RSRTC or Railway tickets. The awareness of other services such as issue of death and birth certificates, payment of dues to Municipal Corporation, Jaipur Development Authority & Housing board and submission of various examination forms, is relatively low. Table 2 shows the percentage of consumers (amongst those who knows that particular service is available at e-Mitra) who are using e- Mitra for utilizing these services. Almost $2/3^{rd}$ of the consumers of the utility bills are using services through e-Mitra. More than $1/3^{rd}$ of the consumers are using e-Mitra for online bus ticketing of Rajasthan Roadways and submitting forms of University and Rajasthan Public Service Commission examinations, while around $1/4^{th}$ of the consumers are using e-Mitra for issue of birth & death certificates and payment of dues of various urban taxes.

This relatively low percentage of use for last two services is because these services are needed either once in a year or whenever required, in other words the frequency of using these services are much less as compared to payment of utility bills which is done almost every month or once in two months. In addition, some of these services have been introduced recently and some of the kiosk owners may not be providing these services

Table 2: Distribution of awareness of different type of services that can be availed at E-Mitra and number of respondents availing these services		
Service	**% of consumers knowing that service can be availed at e-Mitra**	**% of consumers availing services at e- Mitra**
Electricity bills	96	67
Water bills	97	67

Land line & Mobile bills (BSNL & others)	93	60
Online bus ticketing of RSRTC/ Railway	54	38
Submitting forms of RPSC/ University Exams	30	35
Issue of Birth & Death Certificate	26	28
Payment of various dues/fee of JMC/ JDA/ RHB	19	23

C. **Reasons for Preferring e-Mitra to Traditional System**

Respondents who have been using e-Mitra were asked to indicate three reasons, which they consider most important for preferring e-Mitra to traditional system. The major reasons indicated by respondents for the attraction towards e- Mitra are:

(i)   Waiting time in queue

(ii)   Convenience of location

(iii)   Time and efforts required for availing services

(iv)   Convenience of Working hours

(v)   All services at one window.

D. **Opinion on Using ICT for Delivering Citizen Services**

Public opinion is a matter of great importance for projects that try to use technology for service delivery. Success of the project depends largely on the opinion and perception of the people, who are the end beneficiaries of such projects. In the study, an attempt was made to understand the public perception about the application of information technology in enabling better citizen services.

Table 3: Distribution of responses on 'whether use of ICT offers better services'		
Opinion	**Total**	**%**
Strongly disagree	9	4
Somewhat disagree	7	3
Neither Agree nor Disagree	6	3
Somewhat Agree	53	24
Strongly Agree	145	66

Table 3 shows the opinion of the consumers, "do you believe that Information Technology can be used to give better citizen services". Majority (66%) of consumers, strongly agree that IT could act as an efficient tool for providing better citizen services, while 24% users have somewhat agree to above fact. However, 7% of the consumers disagree with the view information technology can be used for providing better citizen services, while 3% were indifferent. This could be seen as a major impact of the project on future e-Governance initiatives in the state.

E. **Willingness to Pay Service Charge to Maintain Present Quality of Service Offered at e-Mitra**

Nothing is free in this world, if you want quality you may have to lighten your pockets. The opinion of the respondents on willingness to pay service charge to maintain the present level of service quality through e-Mitra is shown in table 4. Only 25% of the respondents have mentioned that there should be no charge for the services offered, probably they assume that in the welfare state the government service should be offered without any charge.

Table 4: Distribution of responses on willingness to pay service charge to maintain the present quality	
Opinion	**%**
No charge at all	25
Rupee 1 per payment	42
Five Rupee per payment	24
Ten Rupee per payment	4
1% -2% of bill	5

75% of the respondents are willing to pay service charges for quality service ranging from a token amount of Rupee one to 2% of the billed amount. Majority (42%) are of the view that a token amount of Rs 1 may be charged, while 24% of the respondents are willing to pay Rs 5 per transaction. Low number of respondents (4%) is willing to pay 1-2% of the bill amount. This shows that users do not mind paying service charges for availing quality service from the government, if it is reasonable.

Conclusion

The primary purpose of governance is welfare of the citizens and most of the governments are talking about smart governance, that is nothing however providing responsive, responsible and clear governance the information and Communication Technology plays a necessary role in implementing smart governance, with the assistance of that the services to the citizen will be rendered at anyplace, anytime with least value.

This paper has provided analysis of the perception of citizens and advantages they need derived from services offered through e-Mitra. The analysis has been worn out a comparative framework to bring out the variations within the service offered by typical department counters and e-Mitra centres. The implementation of e-Mitra through private partnership has been ready to offer far better services in terms of saving within the period, reduced variety of trips in availing the services, reduced value of making travel for every trip in conjunction with savings in waiting time for standing within the queue. The users at e-Mitra are willing to procure maintaining the standard of service at these centres. However, in availing services, the dearth of correct awareness has restricted its use to concerning common fraction of the targeted population. Except for awareness creation, it's equally necessary to roll out the centres at the sub-district level and a lot of services is also provided through e-Mitra. It had been learned throughout the study that the govt has already initiated rolling out of a lot of centres at the sub district level through CSC (Common Service Centres)

Overall, the study clearly highlights the actual fact that voter's square measure extraordinarily happy concerning the project. The project has conjointly been ready to demonstrate to the somebody the probabilities of ICT in governance and so been ready to gather support of the general public for future e-Governance comes within the state.

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