

The impact of e-service quality and information quality on perceived value in career guidance e-services for students

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Abstract

Purpose. This paper aims at empirically examining a career guidance service in terms of e-service quality, information quality and perceived value.

Methodology. E-survey is carried out by means of a questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed to assess through a linear regression analysis how students estimated a career service offered online in terms of e-service quality, information quality, and their impact on perceived service value.

Findings. Students have perceived as very important to use career guidance e-services. In addition, the perceived value depends on both e-service quality of the e-platform and information quality of the report. Efficiency is the most important dimension of perceived e-service quality of the e-platform, while adequacy appears to be the most important dimension of the report.

Practical implications. Universities should invest into career guidance services to reduce the gap between education and job opportunities.

Originality/value. To the authors' knowledge, this is the first research that empirically evaluates the impact of perceived e-service quality and information quality on perceived value with specific reference to career guidance e-service.

Keywords

career development; career counseling service; orientation tool; University; web site; personal skills

1. Introduction

Since the Seventies, some scholars highlighted how universities have both the opportunity and the responsibility to create appropriate educational programs to students' career decision making (e.g., D.W., 1975; Durant and Taggart, 1985; Davidson, 2001; Venable, 2010). Career guidance influences subsequent career decision-making in the short and long term (Whiston, 2002). Perdrix et al. (2012) reported that, even after 1 year, most students (64%) had implemented the plans and achieved the goals they had created during their career counseling sessions.

In response to the need for career counseling and guidance services (Stăiculescu et al., 2015, universities (should) adapt their offering to the needs of their beneficiaries and provide a multitude of high quality services (Suárez et al., 2013). Universities rely on externalization of guidance e-services for students.

Limited research was carried out about quality and satisfaction issue with reference to career guidance e-services (Burns et al., 2013). No contributions have been developed about the relationship between quality and perceived value on these services.

This paper aims at empirically examining a career guidance service in terms of e-service quality, information quality and perceived value. With specific reference to this e-service, this study examines the perceptions of students' quality to explore the impact of e-service quality and information quality on perceived value. It especially considers an innovative online assessment and career service tool assessing the profiles of young people in relation to the requirements of the labor market.

The paper is structured as follows. After the conceptual model, the methodological approach is proposed. The research results are described and discussed. Finally, implications and conclusions are presented.

2. Conceptual model

Based on the findings of Pearson et al.'s (2012) work, this study tries to examine the influences of perceived e-service quality and information quality in creating perceived value with specific reference to career guidance services for students.

More specifically, e-service quality is a consumer's overall evaluation and judgment of the quality of the service delivery in the Internet marketplace (Santos, 2003). It includes the following factors:

- ease of use,
- entertainment,
- efficiency, and
- system availability.

Information quality is the opportunity of finding useful and reliable information in the online environment (Cheung and Lee, 2005). It includes the following variables:

- a) relevance,
- b) understandability,
- c) adequacy,
- d) scope, and
- e) reliability.

The perceived value can be influenced by the perceived e-service quality and the perceived information quality.

The theoretical model is based on the well-established conceptual principles for the e-service quality, information quality, and perceived value found into online several service settings (Carlson and O’Cass, 2010; Pearson et al.’s, 2012).

3. Method

In this study a quantitative approach is adopted. It is based on e-survey by means of a questionnaire.

The questionnaire was developed to assess through a linear regression analysis how students estimated a career service offered online in terms of:

- e-service quality,
- information quality,
- their impact on perceived service value.

Students from the University of Verona were involved in the e-survey.

119 questionnaires (average age 22) were collected to assess the perceptions of respondents on e-service quality, information quality and perceived value about the career guidance e-service including both e-platform and report.

Perceived e-service quality is measured using a 5-point scale sliding from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree) by means of 4 variables (ease of use, entertainment, efficiency, and system availability) and of 12 items adapted by Carlson and O’Cass’ (2010) and Pearson et al.’s (2012) scales.

Information quality is measured using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree) by means of 5 variables (relevance, understandability, reliability, adequacy, and scope) and of 15 items adapted by Pearson et al. (2012) scale.

Students’ perceived value is measured using a 5-point Likert scale sliding from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree) by means of 3 items adapted by Pearson et al.’s (2012) scale.

The questionnaire also includes the following sections: demographic (gender and age), education and training (course, year of course, performance, and experience in career guidance service), and work experience (working student, typology, and duration).

Cronbach’s alpha is used to determine the internal consistency of the constructs. All Cronbach’s alpha exceeds the recommended benchmark of 0.70 (Barclay et al., 1995). Data were analyzed in SPSS Statistics 24 through linear regressions.

4. Results and discussion

The impact of ease of use, entertainment, efficiency, and system availability on perceived e-service quality about the web platform has been measured with a linear regression analysis performed with perceived e-service quality as the dependent variable and the four dimensions of perceived e-service quality as the independent variables.

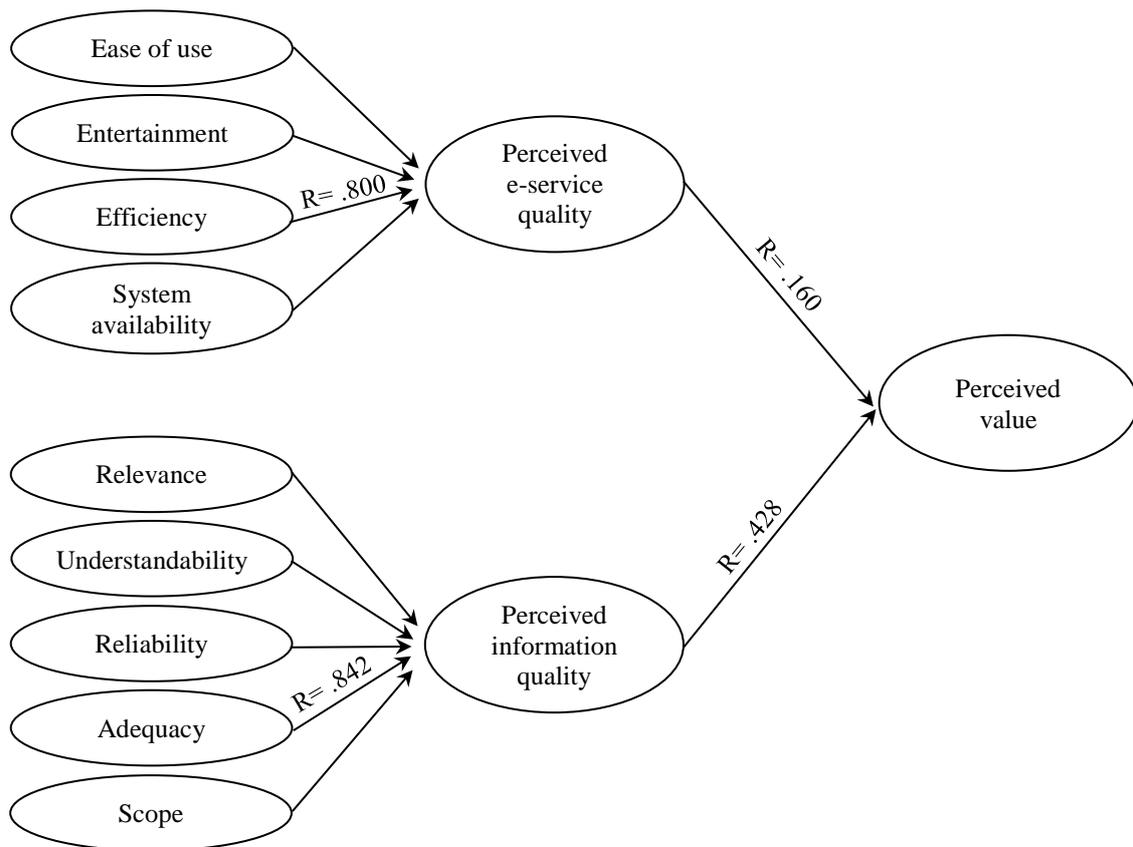
The impact of relevance, understandability, reliability, adequacy, and scope on perceived information quality of the report has been measured with a linear regression analysis performed with perceived information quality as the dependent variable and the five dimensions as the independent variables.

The impact of students’ perceptions of e-service quality and information quality on their perceived value has been measured.

R square of both these variables is significant at the .00 level.

Figure 1 shows the main results obtained by specifying the main adjusted R square.

Figure 1 - Regressions results



The results indicate that:

- students have perceived as very important to use career guidance e-services,
- students have perceived a high value of the service because it allowed them to better identify their strengths and areas of improvement,
- the perceived value depend on both e-service quality of the e-platform and information quality of the report,
- the report is perceived as more positively than e-platform.

More specifically, students have perceived a high value of the service because it allowed them to better identify their strengths and areas of improvement about their personal skills. They have highlighted both the e-platform’s usefulness, mainly expressed in terms efficiency, system availability and ease of use, and the credibility and trustworthiness of the information included in the report obtained after completing the e-questionnaire.

5. Implications and conclusions

From the theoretical implications point of view, the findings of this study confirm the effectiveness of the scales elaborated with reference to industries other than the one analyzed here such as sport management (Carlson and O’Cass, 2010) and e-commerce (Pearson et al., 2012).

In terms of managerial implications, service organizations such as Universities should invest into career guidance services, given that they contribute to reduce the gap between education and job opportunities.

In the design phase of career guidance e-services, organizations should pay attention to not only the e-platforms that are easy of use, appealing, efficient, and with a continuous system availability, but also reports that include relevant, understandable, reliable, and adequate information.

A number of limitations should be considered. It is important to extend the sample and involve more organizations in a next study. We have chosen to examine only some items for this study in relation to their appropriateness to a career guidance e-service. Through a factor analysis, the items can more effectively be selected (after all, using more robust measures could enhance the validity of studies).

Future research could also analyze the role of perceived e-service quality and information quality in influencing behavioral intentions of students such as satisfaction and loyalty.

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